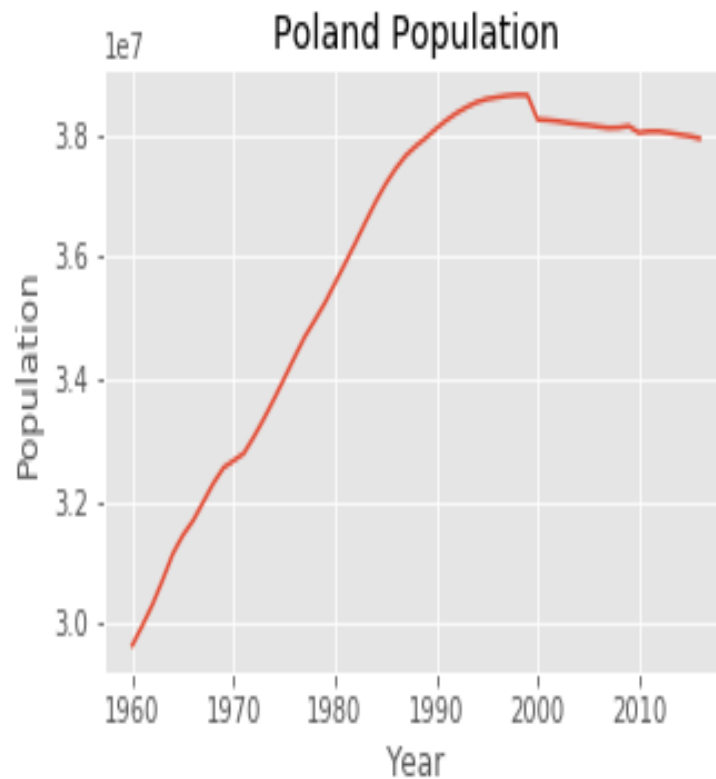# Poland

Poland (Polish: Polska [■p■lska] (listen)), officially the Republic of Poland (Polish: Rzeczpospolita Polska [■■t■■p■■sp■lita ■p■lska] (listen)), is a country located in Central Europe. It is divided into 16 administrative subdivisions, covering an area of 312,679 square kilometres (120,726 sq mi), and has a largely temperate seasonal climate. With a population of approximately 38.5 million people, Poland is the sixth most populous member state of the European Union. Poland's capital and largest metropolis is Warsaw. Other major cities include Kraków, ■ód■, Wroc■aw, Pozna■, Gda■sk, and Szczecin. The establishment of the Polish state can be traced back to A.D. 966, when Mieszko I, ruler of the territory coextensive with that of present-day Poland, converted to Christianity. The Kingdom of Poland was founded in 1025, and in 1569 it cemented a longstanding political association with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by signing the Union of Lublin. This union formed the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, one of the largest (about 1 million km2) and most populous countries of 16th and 17th century Europe, with a uniquely liberal political system which adopted Europe's first written national constitution, the Constitution of 3 May 1791. Following the Partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century, Poland regained its independence in 1918 with the Treaty of Versailles. In September 1939, World War II started with the invasion of Poland by Germany, followed by the Soviet Union invading Poland in accordance with the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. More than six million Poles died in the war. After World War II, the Polish People's Republic was established as a satellite state under Soviet influence. In the aftermath of the Revolutions of 1989, most notably through the emergence of the Solidarity movement, Poland reestablished itself as a democratic republic. Poland is a developed market and regional power as well as a possible emerging world power. It has the eighth largest and one of the most dynamic economies in the European Union, simultaneously achieving a very high rank on the Human Development Index. Additionally, the Polish Stock Exchange in Warsaw is the largest and most important in Central Europe. Poland is a developed and democratic country, which maintains a high-income economy along with very high standards of living, life quality, safety, education and economic freedom. According to the World Bank, Poland has a leading school educational system in

Europe. The country provides free university education, state-funded social security and a universal health care system for all citizens. Having an extensive history, Poland has developed a rich cultural heritage, including numerous historical monuments. It has 15 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 14 of which are cultural. Poland is a member state of the European Union, the Schengen Area, the United Nations, NATO, the OECD, the Three Seas Initiative, and the Visegrád Group. == Etymology == The origin of the name "Poland" derives from the West Slavic tribe of Polans (Polanie) that inhabited the Warta river basin of the historic Greater Poland region starting in the 6th century. The origin of the name "Polanie" itself derives from the early Slavic word "pole" (field). In some languages, such as Hungarian, Lithuanian, Persian and Turkish, the exonym for Poland is Lechites ("Lechici"), which derives from the name of a semi-legendary ruler of Polans, Lech I. == History == === Prehistory and protohistory === Historians have postulated that throughout Late Antiquity, many distinct ethnic groups populated the regions of what is now Poland. The ethnicity and linguistic affiliation of these groups have been heavily debated. The exact time and routes of the original migration and settlement of Slavic peoples in these regions lacks written records and can only be defined as fragmented. The Slavic tribes who would form Poland migrated to these areas in the second half of the 5th century AD. Up until the creation of Mieszko's state and his subsequent conversion to Christianity in 966 AD, the main religion of Slavic tribes that inhabited the geographical area of present-day Poland was Slavic paganism. With the Baptism of Poland the Polish rulers accepted Christianity and the religious authority of the Roman Church. However, the transition from paganism was not a smooth and instantaneous process for the rest of the population as evident from the pagan reaction of the 1030s. The most famous archaeological find from the prehistory and protohistory of Poland is the Biskupin fortified settlement (now reconstructed as an open-air museum), dating from the Lusatian culture of the early Iron Age, around 700 BC. === Piast dynasty === Poland began to form into a recognizable unitary and territorial entity around the middle of the 10th century under the Piast dynasty. Poland's first historically documented ruler, Mieszko I, accepted Christianity with the Baptism of Poland in 966, as the new official religion of his subjects. The bulk of the population converted in the course of the next few centuries. In 1000, Boleslaw the Brave, continuing the policy of his father Mieszko, held a Congress of Gniezno and created the metropolis of Gniezno and the dioceses of Kraków, Ko■obrzeg, and Wroc■aw. However, the pagan unrest led to the transfer of the capital to Kraków in 1038 by Casimir I the Restorer. In 1109, Prince Boles■aw III Wrymouth defeated the King of Germany Henry V at the Battle of Hundsfeld, stopping the German march into Poland. The significance of the event was documented by Gallus Anonymus in his 1118 chronicle. In 1138, Poland fragmented into several smaller duchies when Boles■aw divided his lands among his sons. In 1226, Konrad I of Masovia, one of the regional Piast dukes, invited the Teutonic Knights to help him fight the Baltic Prussian pagans; a decision that led to centuries of warfare with the Knights. In 1264, the Statute of Kalisz or the General Charter of Jewish Liberties introduced numerous right for the Jews in Poland, leading to a nearly autonomous "nation within a nation". In the middle of the 13th century, the Silesian branch of the Piast dynasty (Henry I the Bearded and Henry II the Pious, ruled 1238–41) nearly succeeded in uniting the Polish lands, but the Mongols invaded the country from the east and defeated the combined Polish forces at the Battle of Legnica where Duke Henry II the Pious died. In 1320, after a number of earlier unsuccessful attempts by regional rulers at uniting the Polish dukedoms, W■adys■aw I consolidated his power, took the throne and became the first king of a reunified Poland. His son, Casimir III (reigned 1333–70), has a reputation as one of the greatest Polish kings, and gained wide recognition for improving the country's infrastructure. He also extended royal protection to Jews, and encouraged their immigration to Poland. Casimir III realized that the nation needed a class of educated people, especially lawyers, who could codify the country's laws and administer the courts and offices. His efforts to create an institution of higher learning in Poland were finally rewarded when Pope Urban V granted him permission to open the University of Kraków. The Golden Liberty of the nobles began to develop under Casimir's rule, when in return for their military support, the king made a series of concessions to the nobility, and establishing their legal status as superior to that of the townsmen. When Casimir the Great died in 1370, leaving no legitimate male heir, the Piast dynasty came to an end. During the 13th and 14th centuries, Poland became a destination for German, Flemish and to a lesser extent Walloon, Danish and Scottish migrants. Also, Jews and Armenians began to settle and flourish in Poland during this era (see History of the Jews in Poland and Armenians in Poland). The Black Death, a plague that ravaged Europe from 1347 to 1351 did not significantly affect Poland, and the country was spared from a major outbreak of the disease. The reason for this was the decision of Casimir the Great to quarantine the nation's borders. === Jagiellon dynasty === The Jagiellon dynasty

spanned the late Middle Ages and early Modern Era of Polish history. Beginning with the Lithuanian Grand Duke Jogaila (W■adys■aw II Jagie■■o), the Jagiellon dynasty (1386–1572) formed the Polish–Lithuanian union. The partnership brought vast Lithuania-controlled Rus' areas into Poland's sphere of influence and proved beneficial for the Poles and Lithuanians, who coexisted and cooperated in one of the largest political entities in Europe for the next four centuries. In the Baltic Sea region the struggle of Poland and Lithuania with the Teutonic Knights continued and culminated in the Battle of Grunwald (1410), where a combined Polish-Lithuanian army inflicted a decisive victory against the Teutonic Knights, allowing for territorial expansion of both nations into the far north region of Livonia. In 1466, after the Thirteen Years' War, King Casimir IV Jagiellon gave royal consent to the Peace of Thorn, which created the future Duchy of Prussia, a Polish vassal. The Jagiellon dynasty at one point also established dynastic control over the kingdoms of Bohemia (1471 onwards) and Hungary. In the south, Poland confronted the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Tatars (by whom they were attacked on 75 separate occasions between 1474 and 1569), and in the east helped Lithuania fight the Grand Duchy of Moscow. Some historians estimate that Crimean Tatar slave-raiding cost Poland-Lithuania one million of its population between the years of 1494 and 1694. Poland was developing as a feudal state, with a predominantly agricultural economy and an increasingly powerful landed nobility. The Nihil novi act adopted by the Polish Sejm (parliament) in 1505, transferred most of the legislative power from the monarch to the Sejm, an event which marked the beginning of the period known as "Golden Liberty", when the state was ruled by the "free and equal" Polish nobility. Protestant Reformation movements made deep inroads into Polish Christianity, which resulted in the establishment of policies promoting religious tolerance, unique in Europe at that time. This tolerance allowed the country to avoid most of the religious turmoil that spread over Europe during the 16th century. The European Renaissance evoked in late Jagiellon Poland (kings Sigismund I the Old and Sigismund II Augustus) a sense of urgency in the need to promote a cultural awakening, and during this period Polish culture and the nation's economy flourished. In 1543, Nicolaus Copernicus a Polish astronomer from Toru■, published his epochal work De revolutionibus orbium coelestium (On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres), and thereby became the first proponent of a predictive mathematical model confirming the heliocentric theory, which became the accepted basic model for the practice of modern astronomy. Another major figure associated with the era is the classicist poet Jan Kochanowski. === Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth === The 1569 Union of Lublin established the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, a more closely unified federal state with an elective monarchy, but which was governed largely by the nobility, through a system of local assemblies with a central parliament. The Warsaw Confederation (1573) confirmed the religious freedom of all residents of Poland, which was extremely important for the stability of the multiethnic Polish society of the time. Serfdom was banned in 1588. The establishment of the Commonwealth coincided with a period of stability and prosperity in Poland, with the union thereafter becoming a European power and a major cultural entity, occupying approximately one million square kilometers of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as an agent for the dissemination of Western culture through Polonization into areas of modern-day Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus and Western Russia. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Poland suffered from a number of dynastic crises during the reigns of the Vasa kings Sigismund III and W■adys■aw IV and found itself engaged in major conflicts with Russia, Sweden and the Ottoman Empire, as well as a series of minor Cossack uprisings. In 1610 Polish army under command Hetman Stanis■aw ■ó■kiewski seized Moscow after winning the Battle of Klushino. In 1611 the Tsar of Russia paid homage to the King of Poland. After the signing of Truce of Deulino, Poland had in the years 1618–1621 an area of about 1 million km2 (390,000 sq mi). From the middle of the 17th century, the nobles' democracy, suffering from internal disorder, gradually declined, thereby leaving the once powerful Commonwealth vulnerable to foreign intervention. Starting in 1648, the Cossack Khmelnytsky Uprising engulfed the south and east, eventually leaving Ukraine divided, with the eastern part, lost by the Commonwealth, becoming a dependency of the Tsardom of Russia. This was followed by the 'Deluge', a Swedish invasion of Poland, which marched through the Polish heartlands and ruined the country's population, culture and infrastructure—around four million of Poland's eleven million inhabitants died in famines and epidemics throughout the 17th century. However, under John III Sobieski the Commonwealth's military prowess was re-established, and in 1683 Polish forces played a major role in the Battle of Vienna against the Ottoman Army, commanded by Kara Mustafa, the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire. Sobieski's reign marked the end of the nation's golden era. Finding itself subjected to almost constant warfare and suffering enormous population losses as well as massive damage to its economy, the Commonwealth fell into decline. The government became ineffective as a result of

large-scale internal conflicts (e.g. Lubomirski Rebellion against John II Casimir and rebellious confederations) and corrupted legislative processes. The nobility fell under the control of a handful of magnats, and this, compounded with two relatively weak kings of the Saxon Wettin dynasty, Augustus II and Augustus III, as well as the rise of Russia and Prussia after the Great Northern War only served to worsen the Commonwealth's plight. Despite this The Commonwealth-Saxony personal union gave rise to the emergence of the Commonwealth's first reform movement, and laid the foundations for the Polish Enlightenment. During the later part of the 18th century, the Commonwealth made attempts to implement fundamental internal reforms; with the second half of the century bringing a much improved economy, significant population growth and far-reaching progress in the areas of education, intellectual life, art, and especially toward the end of the period, evolution of the social and political system. The most populous capital city of Warsaw replaced Gda■sk (Danzig) as the leading centre of commerce, and the role of the more prosperous townsmen increased. === Partitions === The royal election of 1764 resulted in the elevation of Stanis■aw II August (a Polish aristocrat connected to the Czartoryski family faction of magnats) to the monarchy. However, as a one-time personal admirer of Empress Catherine II of Russia, the new king spent much of his reign torn between his desire to implement reforms necessary to save his nation, and his perceived necessity to remain in a political relationship with his Russian sponsor. This led to the formation of the 1768 Bar Confederation, a szlachta rebellion directed against the Polish king and his Russian sponsors, which aimed to preserve Poland's independence and the szlachta's traditional privileges. Attempts at reform provoked the union's neighbours, and in 1772 the First Partition of the Commonwealth by Prussia, Russia and Austria took place; an act which the "Partition Sejm", under considerable duress, eventually "ratified" fait accompli. Disregarding this loss, in 1773 the king established the Commission of National Education, the first government education authority in Europe. Corporal punishment of children was officially prohibited in 1783. The Great Sejm convened by Stanis■aw II August in 1788 successfully adopted the 3 May Constitution, the first set of modern supreme national laws in Europe. However, this document, accused by detractors of harbouring revolutionary sympathies, generated strong opposition from the Commonwealth's nobles and conservatives as well as from Catherine II, who, determined to prevent the rebirth of a strong Commonwealth set about planning the final dismemberment of the Polish-Lithuanian state. Russia was aided in achieving its goal when the Targowica Confederation, an organisation of Polish nobles, appealed to the Empress for help. In May 1792, Russian forces crossed the Commonwealth's frontier, thus beginning the Polish-Russian War. The defensive war fought by the Poles ended prematurely when the King, convinced of the futility of resistance, capitulated and joined the Targowica Confederation. The Confederation then took over the government. Russia and Prussia, fearing the mere existence of a Polish state, arranged for, and in 1793 executed, the Second Partition of the Commonwealth, which left the country deprived of so much territory that it was practically incapable of independent existence. Eventually, in 1795, following the failed Ko■ciuszko Uprising, the Commonwealth was partitioned one last time by all three of its more powerful neighbours, and with this, effectively ceased to exist. === Era of insurrections === Poles rebelled several times against the partitioners, particularly near the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. An unsuccessful attempt at defending Poland's sovereignty took place in 1794 during the Ko■ciuszko Uprising, where a popular and distinguished general Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who had several years earlier served under Washington in the American Revolutionary War, led Polish insurrectionists against numerically superior Russian forces. Despite the victory at the Battle of Rac■awice, his ultimate defeat ended Poland's independent existence for 123 years. In 1807, Napoleon I of France temporarily recreated a Polish state as the satellite Duchy of Warsaw, after a successful Greater Poland Uprising of 1806 against Prussian rule. But, after the failed Napoleonic Wars, Poland was again split between the victorious powers at the Congress of Vienna of 1815. The eastern part was ruled by the Russian tsar as Congress Poland, which had a very liberal constitution. However, over time the Russian monarch reduced Polish freedoms, and Russia annexed the country in virtually all but name. Meanwhile, the Prussian controlled territory of Poland came under increased Germanization. Thus, in the 19th century, only Austrian-ruled Galicia, and particularly the Free City of Kraków, allowed free Polish culture to flourish. Throughout the period of the partitions, political and cultural repression of the Polish nation led to the organisation of a number of uprisings against the authorities of the occupying Russian, Prussian and Austrian governments. In 1830, the November Uprising began in Warsaw when, led by Lieutenant Piotr Wysocki, young non-commissioned officers at the Officer Cadet School in Warsaw revolted. They were joined by large segments of Polish society, and together forced Warsaw's Russian garrison to withdraw north of the city. Over the course of the next seven months,

Polish forces successfully defeated the Russian armies of Field Marshal Hans Karl von Diebitsch and a number of other Russian commanders; however, finding themselves in a position unsupported by any other foreign powers, save distant France and the newborn United States, and with Prussia and Austria refusing to allow the import of military supplies through their territories, the Poles accepted that the uprising was doomed to failure. Upon the surrender of Warsaw to General Ivan Paskievich, many Polish troops, feeling they could not go on, withdrew into Prussia and there laid down their arms. After the defeat, the semi-independent Congress Poland lost its constitution, army and legislative assembly, and was integrated more closely with the Russian Empire. During the Spring of Nations (a series of revolutions which swept across Europe), Poles took up arms in the Greater Poland Uprising of 1848 to resist Prussian rule. Initially, the uprising manifested itself in the form of civil disobedience, but eventually turned into an armed struggle when the Prussian military was sent in to pacify the region. Eventually, after several battles the uprising was suppressed by the Prussians, and the Grand Duchy of Posen was stripped of its autonomy and completely incorporated into the German Confederation. In 1863, a new Polish uprising against Russian rule began. The January Uprising started out as a spontaneous protest by young Poles against conscription into the Imperial Russian Army. However, the insurrectionists, despite being joined by high-ranking Polish-Lithuanian officers and numerous politicians, were still severely outnumbered and lacking in foreign support. They were forced to resort to guerrilla warfare tactics and failed to win any major military victories. Afterwards no major uprising was witnessed in the Russian-controlled Congress Poland, and Poles resorted instead to fostering economic and cultural self-improvement. Despite the political unrest experienced during the partitions, Poland did benefit from large-scale industrialisation and modernisation programs, instituted by the occupying powers, which helped it develop into a more economically coherent and viable entity. This was particularly true in Greater Poland, Silesia and Eastern Pomerania controlled by Prussia (later becoming a part of the German Empire); areas which eventually, thanks largely to the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918 and Silesian Uprisings, were reconstituted as a part of the Second Polish Republic, becoming the country's most prosperous regions. === Reconstruction === During World War I, all the Allies agreed on the reconstitution of Poland that United States President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed in Point 13 of his Fourteen Points. A total of 2 million Polish troops fought with the armies of the three occupying powers, and 450,000 died. Shortly after the armistice with Germany in November 1918, Poland regained its independence as the Second Polish Republic (II Rzeczpospolita Polska). It reaffirmed its independence after a series of military conflicts, the most notable being the Polish–Soviet War (1919–21) when Poland inflicted a crushing defeat on the Red Army at the Battle of Warsaw, an event which is considered to have halted the advance of Communism into Europe and forced Vladimir Lenin to rethink his objective of achieving global socialism. The event is often referred to as the "Miracle at the Vistula". During this period, Poland successfully managed to fuse the territories of the three former partitioning powers into a cohesive nation state. Railways were restructured to direct traffic towards Warsaw instead of the former imperial capitals, a new network of national roads was gradually built up and a major seaport was opened on the Baltic Coast, so as to allow Polish exports and imports to bypass the politically charged Free City of Danzig. The inter-war period heralded in a new era of Polish politics. Whilst Polish political activists had faced heavy censorship in the decades up until the First World War, the country now found itself trying to establish a new political tradition. For this reason, many exiled Polish activists, such as Ignacy Paderewski (who would later become prime minister) returned home to help; a significant number of them then went on to take key positions in the newly formed political and governmental structures. Tragedy struck in 1922 when Gabriel Narutowicz, inaugural holder of the presidency, was assassinated at the Zach■ta Gallery in Warsaw by painter and right-wing nationalist Eligiusz Niewiadomski. In 1926, a May coup, led by the hero of the Polish independence campaign Marshal Józef Pi■sudski, turned rule of the Second Polish Republic over to the nonpartisan Sanacja (Healing) movement in an effort to prevent radical political organizations on both the left and the right from destabilizing the country. The movement functioned integrally until Pi■sudski's death in 1935. Following Marshall Pi■sudski's death, Sanation split into several competing factions. By the late 1930s, Poland's government had become increasingly rigid; with a number of radical political parties that threatened the stability of the country such as the Communist Party of Poland banned. As a subsequent result of the Munich Agreement in 1938, Czechoslovakia ceded to Poland the small 350 sq mi Zaolzie region. The area was a point of contention between the Polish and Czechoslovak governments in the past and the two countries fought a brief seven-day war over it in 1919. === World War II === The formal beginning of World War II was marked by the Nazi German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, followed by the Soviet invasion of Poland on 17 September.

On 28 September 1939 Warsaw capitulated. As agreed earlier in the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, Poland was split into two zones, one occupied by Nazi Germany, the other, including all of Kresy, fell under the control of the Soviet Union. In 1939–41, the Soviets deported hundreds of thousands of Poles to distant parts of the Soviet Union. The Soviet NKVD secretly executed thousands of Polish prisoners of war (inter alia Katyn massacre) ahead of the Operation Barbarossa. German planners had in November 1939 called for "the complete destruction" of all Poles and their fate, as well as many other Slavs, was outlined in genocidal Generalplan Ost. Poland made the fourth-largest troop contribution in Europe and its troops served both the Polish Government in Exile in the west and Soviet leadership in the east. In the west, the Polish expeditionary corps played an important role in the Italian and North African Campaigns and are particularly remembered for the Battle of Monte Cassino. In the east, the Soviet-backed Polish 1st Army distinguished itself in the battles for Warsaw and Berlin. Polish servicemen were also active in the theatres of naval and air warfare; during the Battle of Britain Polish squadrons such as the No. 303 "Ko■ciuszko" fighter squadron achieved considerable success, and by the end of the war the exiled Polish Air Forces could claim 769 confirmed kills. Meanwhile, the Polish Navy was active in the protection of convoys in the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean. The domestic underground resistance movement, the Armia Krajowa (Home Army), fought against German occupation. The wartime resistance movement in Poland was one of the three largest resistance movements of the entire war, and encompassed an unusually broad range of clandestine activities, which functioned as an underground state complete with degree-awarding universities and a court system. The resistance was loyal to the exiled government and generally resented the idea of a communist Poland; for this reason, in the summer of 1944 they initiated Operation Tempest, of which the Warsaw Uprising that begun on 1 August 1944 was the best known operation. The objective of the uprising was to drive the German occupiers from the city and help with the larger fight against Germany and the Axis powers. Secondary motives were to see Warsaw liberated before the Soviets could reach the capital, so as to underscore Polish sovereignty by empowering the Polish Underground State before the Soviet-backed Polish Committee of National Liberation could assume control. A lack of Allied support and Stalin's reluctance to allow the 1st Army to help their fellow countrymen take the city led to the uprising's failure and subsequent planned destruction of the city. German forces under direct order from Adolf Hitler set up six extermination camps, all of which operated in the heart of Poland. They included Treblinka, Majdanek and Auschwitz. The Germans transported the condemned Jews from the Third Reich and across occupied Europe to murder them in the death camps set up in the Polish areas annexed by Nazi Germany. Germany killed 2.9 million Polish Jews, and 2.8 million ethnic Poles, including Polish academics, doctors, lawyers, nobility, priests and numerous others. It is estimated that, of pre-war Poland's Jewry, approximately 90% were killed. Throughout the occupation, many members of the Armia Krajowa, supported by the Polish government in exile, and millions of ordinary Poles – at great risk to themselves and their families – engaged in rescuing Jews from the Nazi Germans. Grouped by nationality, Poles represent the largest number of people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. To date, 6,620 Poles have been awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations by the State of Israel–more than any other nation. Some estimates put the number of Poles involved in rescue efforts at up to 3 million, and credit Poles with sheltering up to 450,000 Jews. Around 150,000 Polish civilians were killed by Soviet Communists between 1939 and 1941 during the Soviet Union's occupation of eastern Poland (Kresy), and another estimated 100,000 Poles were killed by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in the regions of Wo■y■ and Eastern Galicia between 1943 and 1944 in what became known as the Wo■y■ Massacres. The massacres were part of a vicious ethnic clensing campaign waged by Ukrainian nationalists against the local Polish population in the German-occupied territories of eastern Poland. At the war's conclusion in 1945, Poland's borders were shifted westwards, resulting in considerable territorial losses. Most of the Polish inhabitants of Kresy were expelled along the Curzon Line in accordance with Stalin's agreements. The western border was moved to the Oder-Neisse line. As a result, Poland's territory was reduced by 20%, or 77,500 square kilometres (29,900 sq mi). The shift forced the migration of millions of other people, most of whom were Poles, Germans, Ukrainians, and Jews. Of all the countries involved in the war, Poland lost the highest percentage of its citizens: over 6 million perished – nearly one-fifth of Poland's population – half of them Polish Jews. Over 90% of deaths were non-military in nature. Population numbers did not recover until the 1970s. === Post-war communism === At the insistence of Joseph Stalin, the Yalta Conference sanctioned the formation of a new provisional pro-Communist coalition government in Moscow, which ignored the Polish government-in-exile based in London; a move which angered many Poles who considered it a betrayal by the Allies. In 1944, Stalin had made guarantees to Churchill and

Roosevelt that he would maintain Poland's sovereignty and allow democratic elections to take place. However, upon achieving victory in 1945, the elections organized by the occupying Soviet authorities were falsified and were used to provide a veneer of 'legitimacy' for Soviet hegemony over Polish affairs. The Soviet Union instituted a new communist government in Poland, analogous to much of the rest of the Eastern Bloc. As elsewhere in Communist Europe the Soviet occupation of Poland met with armed resistance from the outset which continued into the fifties. Despite widespread objections, the new Polish government accepted the Soviet annexation of the pre-war eastern regions of Poland (in particular the cities of Wilno and Lwów) and agreed to the permanent garrisoning of Red Army units on Poland's territory. Military alignment within the Warsaw Pact throughout the Cold War came about as a direct result of this change in Poland's political culture and in the European scene came to characterise the full-fledged integration of Poland into the brotherhood of communist nations. The People's Republic of Poland (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa) was officially proclaimed in 1952. In 1956 after the death of Boles■aw Bierut, the régime of W■adys■aw Gomu■ka became temporarily more liberal, freeing many people from prison and expanding some personal freedoms. Collectivization in the Polish People's Republic failed. A similar situation repeated itself in the 1970s under Edward Gierek, but most of the time persecution of anti-communist opposition groups persisted. Despite this, Poland was at the time considered to be one of the least oppressive states of the Soviet Bloc. Labour turmoil in 1980 led to the formation of the independent trade union "Solidarity" ("Solidarno■■"), which over time became a political force. Despite persecution and imposition of martial law in 1981, it eroded the dominance of the Polish United Workers' Party and by 1989 had triumphed in Poland's first partially free and democratic parliamentary elections since the end of the Second World War. Lech Wa■■sa, a Solidarity candidate, eventually won the presidency in 1990. The Solidarity movement heralded the collapse of communist regimes and parties across Europe. === 1990s to present === A shock therapy programme, initiated by Leszek Balcerowicz in the early 1990s enabled the country to transform its socialist-style planned economy into a market economy. As with other post-communist countries, Poland suffered slumps in social and economic standards, but it became the first post-communist country to reach its pre-1989 GDP levels, which it achieved by 1995 largely thanks to its booming economy. Most visibly, there were numerous improvements in human rights, such as freedom of speech, internet freedom (no censorship), civil liberties (1st class) and political rights (1st class), as ranked by Freedom House non-governmental organization. In 1991, Poland became a member of the Visegrád Group and joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance in 1999 along with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. Poles then voted to join the European Union in a referendum in June 2003, with Poland becoming a full member on 1 May 2004. Poland joined the Schengen Area in 2007, as a result of which, the country's borders with other member states of the European Union have been dismantled, allowing for full freedom of movement within most of the EU. In contrast to this, a section of Poland's eastern border now comprises the external EU border with Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. That border has become increasingly well protected, and has led in part to the coining of the phrase 'Fortress Europe', in reference to the seeming 'impossibility' of gaining entry to the EU for citizens of the former Soviet Union. In an effort to strengthen military cooperation with its neighbors, Poland set up the Visegrád Battlegroup with Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia, with a total of 3,000 troops ready for deployment. Also, in the east Poland created the LITPOLUKRBRIG battle groups with Lithuania and Ukraine. These battle groups will operate outside of NATO and within the European defense initiative framework. On 10 April 2010, the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Kaczy■ski, along with 89 other high-ranking Polish officials died in a plane crash near Smolensk, Russia. The president's party was on their way to attend an annual service of commemoration for the victims of the Katy■ massacre when the tragedy took place. In 2011, the Presidency of the Council of the European Union responsible for the functioning of the Council was awarded to Poland. The same year parliamentary elections took place in both the Senate and the Sejm. They were won by the ruling Civic Platform. Poland joined European Space Agency in 2012, as well as organised the UEFA Euro 2012 (along with Ukraine). In 2013, Poland also became a member of the Development Assistance Committee. In 2014, the Prime Minister of Poland, Donald Tusk, was chosen to be President of the European Council, and resigned as prime minister. The 2015 elections were won by the opposon Law and Justice Party (PiS). == Geography == Poland's territory extends across several geographical regions, between latitudes 49° and 55° N, and longitudes 14° and 25° E. In the north-west is the Baltic seacoast, which extends from the Bay of Pomerania to the Gulf of Gda■sk. This coast is marked by several spits, coastal lakes (former bays that have been cut off from the sea), and dunes. The largely straight coastline is indented by the Szczecin Lagoon, the Bay of

Puck, and the Vistula Lagoon. The centre and parts of the north of the country lie within the North European Plain. Rising above these lowlands is a geographical region comprising four hilly districts of moraines and moraine-dammed lakes formed during and after the Pleistocene ice age. These lake districts are the Pomeranian Lake District, the Greater Polish Lake District, the Kashubian Lake District, and the Masurian Lake District. The Masurian Lake District is the largest of the four and covers much of north-eastern Poland. The lake districts form part of the Baltic Ridge, a series of moraine belts along the southern shore of the Baltic Sea. South of the Northern European Plain are the regions of Lusatia, Silesia and Masovia, which are marked by broad ice-age river valleys. Farther south is a mountainous region, including the Sudetes, the Kraków-Cz■stochowa Uplands, the ■wi■tokrzyskie Mountains, and the Carpathian Mountains, including the Beskids. The highest part of the Carpathians is the Tatra Mountains, along Poland's southern border. === Geology === The geological structure of Poland has been shaped by the continental collision of Europe and Africa over the past 60 million years and, more recently, by the Quaternary glaciations of northern Europe. Both processes shaped the Sudetes and the Carpathian Mountains. The moraine landscape of northern Poland contains soils made up mostly of sand or loam, while the ice age river valleys of the south often contain loess. The Polish Jura, the Pieniny, and the Western Tatras consist of limestone, while the High Tatras, the Beskids, and the Karkonosze are made up mainly of granite and basalts. The Polish Jura Chain has some of the oldest rock formation on the continent of Europe. Poland has 70 mountains over 2,000 metres (6,600 feet) in elevation, all in the Tatras. The Polish Tatras, which consist of the High Tatras and the Western Tatras, is the highest mountain group of Poland and of the entire Carpathian range. In the High Tatras lies Poland's highest point, the north-western summit of Rysy, 2,499 metres (8,199 ft) in elevation. At its foot lie the mountain lakes of Czarny Staw pod Rysami (Black Lake below Mount Rysy) and Morskie Oko (the Marine Eye). The second highest mountain group in Poland is the Beskids, whose highest peak is Babia Góra, at 1,725 metres (5,659 ft). The next highest mountain groups are the Karkonosze in the Sudetes, the highest point of which is ■nie■ka at 1,603 metres (5,259 ft), and the ■nie■nik Mountains, the highest point of which is ■nie■nik at 1,425 metres (4,675 ft). Other notable uplands include the Table Mountains, which are noted for their interesting rock formations, the Bieszczady Mountains in the far southeast of the country, in which the highest Polish peak is Tarnica at 1,346 metres (4,416 ft), the Gorce Mountains in Gorce National Park, whose highest point is Turbacz at 1,310 metres (4,298 ft), the Pieniny in Pieniny National Park, the highest point of which is Wysokie Ska■ki (Wysoka) at 1,050 metres (3,445 ft), and the ■wi■tokrzyskie Mountains in ■wi■tokrzyski National Park, which have two similarly high peaks: ■ysica at 612 metres (2,008 ft) and ■ysa Góra at 593 metres (1,946 ft). The lowest point in Poland – at 1.8 metres (5.9 ft) below sea level – is at Raczki Elbl■skie, near Elbl■g in the Vistula Delta. In the Zag■■bie D■browskie (the Coal Fields of D■browa) region in the Silesian Voivodeship in southern Poland is an area of sparsely vegetated sand known as the B■■dów Desert. It covers an area of 32 square kilometres (12 sq mi). It is not a natural desert but results from human activity from the Middle Ages onwards. The Baltic Sea activity in S■owi■ski National Park created sand dunes which in the course of time separated the bay from the sea creating two lakes. As waves and wind carry sand inland the dunes slowly move, at a rate of 3 to 10 metres (9.8 to 32.8 ft) per year. Some dunes reach the height of up to 30 metres (98 ft). The highest peak of the park is Rowokol (115 metres or 377 feet above sea level). === Waters === The longest rivers are the Vistula (Polish: Wis■a), 1,047 kilometres (651 mi) long; the Oder (Polish: Odra) which forms part of Poland's western border, 854 kilometres (531 mi) long; its tributary, the Warta, 808 kilometres (502 mi) long; and the Bug, a tributary of the Vistula, 772 kilometres (480 mi) long. The Vistula and the Oder flow into the Baltic Sea, as do numerous smaller rivers in Pomerania. The ■yna and the Angrapa flow by way of the Pregolya to the Baltic Sea, and the Czarna Ha■cza flows into the Baltic Sea through the Neman. While the great majority of Poland's rivers drain into the Baltic Sea, Poland's Beskids are the source of some of the upper tributaries of the Orava, which flows via the Váh and the Danube to the Black Sea. The eastern Beskids are also the source of some streams that drain through the Dniester to the Black Sea. Poland's rivers have been used since early times for navigation. The Vikings, for example, traveled up the Vistula and the Oder in their longships. In the Middle Ages and in early modern times, when the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was the breadbasket of Europe; the shipment of grain and other agricultural products down the Vistula toward Gda■sk and onward to other parts of Europe took on great importance. In the valley of Pilica river in Tomaszów Mazowiecki there is a unique natural karst spring of water containing calcium salts, that is an object of protection in Niebieskie ■ród■a Nature Reserve in Sulejów Landscape Park. The origin of the name of the reserve Niebieskie ■ród■a, that means Blue Springs, comes from the fact that red waves are

absorbed by water and only blue and green are reflected from the bottom of the spring, giving that atypical colour. With almost ten thousand closed bodies of water covering more than 1 hectare (2.47 acres) each, Poland has one of the highest numbers of lakes in the world. In Europe, only Finland has a greater density of lakes. The largest lakes, covering more than 100 square kilometres (39 sq mi), are Lake ■niardwy and Lake Mamry in Masuria, and Lake ■ebsko and Lake Drawsko in Pomerania. In addition to the lake districts in the north (in Masuria, Pomerania, Kashubia, Lubuskie, and Greater Poland), there is also a large number of mountain lakes in the Tatras, of which the Morskie Oko is the largest in area. The lake with the greatest depth—of more than 100 metres (328 ft)—is Lake Ha■cza in the Wigry Lake District, east of Masuria in Podlaskie Voivodeship. Among the first lakes whose shores were settled are those in the Greater Polish Lake District. The stilt house settlement of Biskupin, occupied by more than one thousand residents, was founded before the 7th century BC by people of the Lusatian culture. Lakes have always played an important role in Polish history and continue to be of great importance to today's modern Polish society. The ancestors of today's Poles, the Polanie, built their first fortresses on islands in these lakes. The legendary Prince Popiel ruled from Kruszwica tower erected on the Lake Gop■o. The first historically documented ruler of Poland, Duke Mieszko I, had his palace on an island in the Warta River in Pozna■. Nowadays the Polish lakes provide a location for the pursuit of water sports such as yachting and wind-surfing. The Polish Baltic coast is approximately 528 kilometres (328 mi) long and extends from ■winouj■cie on the islands of Usedom and Wolin in the west to Krynica Morska on the Vistula Spit in the east. For the most part, Poland has a smooth coastline, which has been shaped by the continual movement of sand by currents and winds. This continual erosion and deposition has formed cliffs, dunes, and spits, many of which have migrated landwards to close off former lagoons, such as ■ebsko Lake in S■owi■ski National Park. Prior to the end of the Second World War and subsequent change in national borders, Poland had only a very small coastline; this was situated at the end of the 'Polish Corridor', the only internationally recognised Polish territory which afforded the country access to the sea. However, after World War II, the redrawing of Poland's borders and resulting 'shift' of the country's borders left it with an expanded coastline, thus allowing for far greater access to the sea than was ever previously possible. The significance of this event, and importance of it to Poland's future as a major industrialised nation, was alluded to by the 1945 Wedding to the Sea. The largest spits are Hel Peninsula and the Vistula Spit. The coast line is varied also by Szczecin and Vistula Lagoons and a few lakes, e.g. ■ebsko and Jamno. The largest Polish Baltic island is called Wolin known for its Wolin National Park. The largest sea harbours are Szczecin, ■winouj■cie, Gda■sk, Gdynia, Police and Ko■obrzeg and the main coastal resorts – ■winouj■cie, Mi■dzydzdroje, Ko■obrzeg, ■eba, Sopot, W■adys■awowo and the Hel Peninsula. === Land use === Poland is the fourth most forested country in Europe. Forests cover about 30.5% of Poland's land area based on international standards. Its overall percentage is still increasing. Forests of Poland are managed by the national program of reforestation (KPZL), aiming at an increase of forest-cover to 33% in 2050. The richness of Polish forest (per SoEF 2011 statistics) is more than twice as high as European average (with Germany and France at the top), containing 2.304 billion cubic metres of trees. The largest forest complex in Poland is Lower Silesian Wilderness. More than 1% of Poland's territory, 3,145 square kilometres (1,214 sq mi), is protected within 23 Polish national parks. Three more national parks are projected for Masuria, the Polish Jura, and the eastern Beskids. In addition, wetlands along lakes and rivers in central Poland are legally protected, as are coastal areas in the north. There are over 120 areas designated as landscape parks, along with numerous nature reserves and other protected areas (e.g. Natura 2000). Since Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, Polish agriculture has performed extremely well and the country has over two million private farms. It is the leading producer in Europe of potatoes and rye (world's second largest in 1989) the world's largest producer of triticale, and one of the more important producers of barley, oats, sugar beets, flax, and fruits. Poland is the European Union's fourth largest supplier of pork after Germany, Spain and France. === Biodiversity === Phytogeographically, Poland belongs to the Central European province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature, the territory of Poland belongs to three Palearctic Ecoregions of the continental forest spanning Central and Northern European temperate broadleaf and mixed forest ecoregions as well as the Carpathian montane conifer forest. Many animals that have since died out in other parts of Europe still survive in Poland, such as the wisent in the ancient woodland of the Bia■owie■a Forest and in Podlaskie. Other such species include the brown bear in Bia■owie■a, in the Tatras, and in the Beskids, the gray wolf and the Eurasian lynx in various forests, the moose in northern Poland, and the beaver in Masuria, Pomerania, and Podlaskie. In the forests there are game

animals, such as red deer, roe deer and wild boar. In eastern Poland there are a number of ancient woodlands, like Bia■owie■a forest, that have never been cleared or disturbed much by people. There are also large forested areas in the mountains, Masuria, Pomerania, Lubusz Land and Lower Silesia. Poland is the most important breeding ground for a variety of European migratory birds. One quarter of the global population of white storks (40,000 breeding pairs) live in Poland, particularly in the lake districts and the wetlands along the Biebrza, the Narew, and the Warta, which are part of nature reserves or national parks. === Climate === The climate is mostly temperate throughout the country. The climate is oceanic in the north and west and becomes gradually warmer and continental towards the south and east. Summers are generally warm, with average temperatures between 18 and 30 °C (64.4 and 86.0 °F) depending on the region. Winters are rather cold, with average temperatures around 3 °C (37.4 °F) in the northwest and −6 °C (21 °F) in the northeast. Precipitation falls throughout the year, although, especially in the east, winter is drier than summer. The warmest region in Poland is Lower Silesia in the southwest of the country, where temperatures in the summer average between 24 and 32 °C (75 and 90 °F) but can go as high as 34 to 39 °C (93.2 to 102.2 °F) on some days in the warmest months of July and August. The warmest cities in Poland are Tarnów in Lesser Poland, and Wroc■aw in Lower Silesia. The average temperatures in Wroc■aw are 20 °C (68 °F) in the summer and 0 °C (32.0 °F) in the winter, but Tarnów has the longest summer in all of Poland, which lasts for 115 days, from mid-May to mid-September. The coldest region of Poland is in the northeast in the Podlaskie Voivodeship near the borders with Belarus and Lithuania. Usually the coldest city is Suwa■ki. The climate is affected by cold fronts which come from Scandinavia and Siberia. The average temperature in the winter in Podlaskie ranges from −6 to −4 °C (21 to 25 °F). The biggest impact of the oceanic climate is observed in ■winouj■cie and Baltic Sea seashore area from Police to S■upsk. == Politics == Poland is a representative democracy, with a president as a head of state, whose current constitution dates from 1997. Poland ranks in the top 20 percent of the most peaceful countries in the world, according to the Global Peace Index. The government structure centers on the Council of Ministers, led by a prime minister. The president appoints the cabinet according to the proposals of the prime minister, typically from the majority coalition in the Sejm. The president is elected by popular vote every five years. The current president is Andrzej Duda and the prime minister is Mateusz Morawiecki. Polish voters elect a bicameral parliament consisting of a 460-member lower house (Sejm) and a 100-member Senate (Senat). The Sejm is elected under proportional representation according to the d'Hondt method, a method similar to that used in many parliamentary political systems. The Senat, on the other hand, is elected under the first-past-the-post voting method, with one senator being returned from each of the 100 constituencies. With the exception of ethnic minority parties, only candidates of political parties receiving at least 5% of the total national vote can enter the Sejm. When sitting in joint session, members of the Sejm and Senat form the National Assembly (the Zgromadzenie Narodowe). The National Assembly is formed on three occasions: when a new president takes the oath of office; when an indictment against the President of the Republic is brought to the State Tribunal (Trybuna■ Stanu); and when a president's permanent incapacity to exercise his duties due to the state of his health is declared. To date only the first instance has occurred. The judicial branch plays an important role in decision-making. Its major institutions include the Supreme Court of the Republic of Poland (S■d Najwy■szy); the Supreme Administrative Court of the Republic of Poland (Naczelny S■d Administracyjny); the Constitutional Tribunal of the Republic of Poland (Trybuna■ Konstytucyjny); and the State Tribunal of the Republic of Poland (Trybuna■ Stanu). On the approval of the Senat, the Sejm also appoints the ombudsman or the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection (Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich) for a five-year term. The ombudsman has the duty of guarding the observance and implementation of the rights and liberties of Polish citizens and residents, of the law and of principles of community life and social justice. === Law === The Constitution of Poland is the supreme law in contemporary Poland, and the Polish legal system is based on the principle of civil rights, governed by the code of Civil Law. Historically, the most famous Polish legal act is the Constitution of 3 May 1791. Historian Norman Davies describes it as the first of its kind in Europe. The Constitution was instituted as a Government Act (Polish: Ustawa rz■dowa) and then adopted on 3 May 1791 by the Sejm of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Primarily, it was designed to redress long-standing political defects of the federative Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and its Golden Liberty. Previously only the Henrican articles signed by each of Poland's elected kings could perform the function of a set of basic laws. The new Constitution introduced political equality between townspeople and the nobility (szlachta), and placed the peasants under the protection of the government. The Constitution abolished pernicious parliamentary institutions such as the liberum veto,

which at one time had placed the sejm at the mercy of any deputy who might choose, or be bribed by an interest or foreign power, to have rescinded all the legislation that had been passed by that sejm. The 3 May Constitution sought to supplant the existing anarchy fostered by some of the country's reactionary magnates, with a more egalitarian and democratic constitutional monarchy. The adoption of the constitution was treated as a threat by Poland's neighbours. In response Prussia, Austria and Russia formed an anti-Polish alliance and over the next decade collaborated with one another to partition their weaker neighbour and destroyed the Polish state. In the words of two of its co-authors, Ignacy Potocki and Hugo Ko■■■taj, the constitution represented "the last will and testament of the expiring Fatherland." Despite this, its text influenced many later democratic movements across the globe. In Poland, freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Article 25 (section I. The Republic) and Article 54 (section II. The Freedoms, Rights and Obligations of Persons and Citizens) of the Constitution of Poland. Feminism in Poland started in the 1800s in the age of the foreign Partitions. Poland's precursor of feminism, Narcyza ■michowska, founded a group of Suffragettes in 1842. Prior to the last Partition in 1795, tax-paying females were allowed to take part in political life. Since 1918, following the return to independence, all women could vote. Poland was the 15th (12th sovereign) country to introduce universal women's suffrage. Currently, in Poland abortion is allowed only in special circumstances, such as when the woman's life or health is endangered by the continuation of pregnancy, when the pregnancy is a result of a criminal act, or when the fetus is seriously malformed. Homosexuality in Poland was confirmed as legal in 1932. Also, Poland recognises gender change. Trafficking women is 'illegal and rare' (top results worldwide). Poland's current constitution was adopted by the National Assembly of Poland on 2 April 1997, approved by a national referendum on 25 May 1997, and came into effect on 17 October 1997. It guarantees a multi-party state, the freedoms of religion, speech and assembly, and specifically casts off many Communist ideals to create a 'free market economic system'. It requires public officials to pursue ecologically sound public policy and acknowledges the inviolability of the home, the right to form trade unions, and to strike, whilst at the same time prohibiting the practices of forced medical experimentation, torture and corporal punishment. === Foreign relations === In recent years, Poland has extended its responsibilities and position in European and international affairs, supporting and establishing friendly relations with other European nations and a large number of 'developing' countries. Poland is a member of the European Union, NATO, the UN, the World Trade Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Economic Area, International Energy Agency, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, International Atomic Energy Agency, European Space Agency, G6, Council of the Baltic Sea States, Visegrád Group, Weimar Triangle and Schengen Agreement. In 1994, Poland became an associate member of the European Union (EU) and its defensive arm, the Western European Union (WEU), having submitted preliminary documentation for full membership in 1996, it formally joined the European Union in May 2004, along with the other members of the Visegrád group. In 1996, Poland achieved full OECD membership, and at the 1997 Madrid Summit was invited to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in the first wave of policy enlargement finally becoming a full member of NATO in March 1999. As changes since the fall of Communism in 1989 have redrawn the map of Europe, Poland has tried to forge strong and mutually beneficial relationships with its seven new neighbours, this has notably included signing 'friendship treaties' to replace links severed by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. Poland has forged a special relationships with Ukraine, with whom it co-hosted the UEFA Euro 2012 football tournament, in an effort to firmly anchor the country within the Western world and provide it with an alternative to aligning itself with the Russian Federation. Despite many positive developments in the region, Poland has found itself in a position where it must seek to defend the rights of ethnic Poles living in the former Soviet Union; this is particularly true of Belarus, where in 2005 the Lukashenko regime launched a campaign against the Polish ethnic minority. Poland is the sixth most populous member state of the European Union and has a grand total of 51 representatives in the European Parliament. Ever since joining the union in 2004, successive Polish governments have pursued policies to increase the country's role in European and regional affairs. === Administrative divisions === Poland's current voivodeships (provinces) are largely based on the country's historic regions, whereas those of the past two decades (to 1998) had been centred on and named for individual cities. The new units range in area from less than 10,000 square kilometres (3,900 sq mi) for Opole Voivodeship to more than 35,000 square kilometres (14,000 sq mi) for Masovian Voivodeship. Administrative authority at voivodeship level is shared between a government-appointed voivode (governor), an elected regional assembly (sejmik) and an executive elected by that assembly. The voivodeships are subdivided into powiats

(often referred to in English as counties), and these are further divided into gminas (also known as communes or municipalities). Major cities normally have the status of both gmina and powiat. Poland has 16 voivodeships, 379 powiats (including 65 cities with powiat status), and 2,478 gminas.

=== Military ===

The Polish armed forces are composed of four branches: Land Forces (Wojska Lądowe), Navy (Marynarka Wojenna), Air Force (Siły Powietrzne), Special Forces (Wojska Specjalne) and Territorial Defence Force – a military component of the Polish armed forces created of 2016. Plans call for the force, once fully active, to consist of 53,000 people who will be trained and equipped to counter potential hybrid warfare threats. The military is subordinate to the Minister for National Defence. However, its commander-in-chief is the President of the Republic. The Polish army's size is estimated at around 101,500 soldiers (2016). The Polish Navy primarily operates in the Baltic Sea and conducts operations such as maritime patrol, search and rescue for the section of the Baltic under Polish sovereignty, as well as hydrographic measurements and research. Also, the Polish Navy played a more international role as part of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, providing logistical support for the United States Navy. The current position of the Polish Air Force is much the same; it has routinely taken part in Baltic Air Policing assignments, but otherwise, with the exception of a number of units serving in Afghanistan, has seen no active combat since the end of the Second World War. In 2003, the F-16C Block 52 was chosen as the new general multi-role fighter for the air force, the first deliveries taking place in November 2006. The most important mission of the armed forces is the defence of Polish territorial integrity and Polish interests abroad. Poland's national security goal is to further integrate with NATO and European defence, economic, and political institutions through the modernisation and reorganisation of its military. The armed forces are being re-organised according to NATO standards, and since 2010, the transition to an entirely contract-based military has been completed. Compulsory military service for men was discontinued in 2008. From 2007, until conscription ended in 2008, the mandatory service was nine months. Polish military doctrine reflects the same defensive nature as that of its NATO partners. From 1953 to 2009 Poland was a large contributor to various United Nations peacekeeping missions. The Polish Armed Forces took part in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, deploying 2,500 soldiers in the south of that country and commanding the 17-nation Multinational force in Iraq. The military was temporarily, but severely, affected by the 2010 Polish Air Force Tu-154 crash, which killed the Chief of the Army's General Staff Franciszek Gągor and Air Force commanding general Andrzej Błasik, among others. Currently, Poland's military is going through a significant modernization phase, which will be completed in 2022. The government plans to spend up to 130 billion złoty (US $34 billion), however the final total may reach 235 billion złoty (US $62 billion) to replace dated equipment and purchase new weapons systems. Under the program, the military plans to purchase new tracked armoured personnel carriers, self-propelled howitzers, utility and attack helicopters, a mid-range surface-to-air missile system, attack submarines, minehunters, and coastal anti-ship missiles. Also, the army plans to modernize its existing inventory of main battle tanks, and update its stock of small arms. Poland is currently spending 2% of its GDP on defense, and is expected to grow to 2.5% of GDP by 2030. In May 2017 the Ministry of National Defence has assured that the Polish army will be increased to 250,000 active personnel.

=== Law enforcement and emergency services ===

Poland has a highly developed system of law enforcement with a long history of effective policing by the State Police Service (Policja). The structure of law enforcement agencies within Poland is a multi-tier one, with the State Police providing criminal-investigative services, Municipal Police serving to maintain public order and a number of other specialized agencies, such as the Polish Border Guard, acting to fulfill their assigned missions. In addition to these state services, private security companies are also common, although they possess no powers assigned to state agencies, such as, for example, the power to make an arrest or detain a suspect. Emergency services in Poland consist of the emergency medical services, search and rescue units of the Polish Armed Forces and State Fire Service. Emergency medical services in Poland are, unlike other services, provided for by local and regional government. Since joining the European Union all of Poland's emergency services have been undergoing major restructuring and have, in the process, acquired large amounts of new equipment and staff. All emergency services personnel are now uniformed and can be easily recognised. In addition, the police and other agencies have been steadily replacing and modernising their fleets of vehicles.

== Economy ==

Poland's economy is considered to be one of the more resilient of the post-Communist countries and is one of the fastest growing within the EU. Having a strong domestic market, low private debt, flexible currency, and not being dependent on a single export sector, Poland is the only European economy to have avoided the late-2000s recession. Since the fall of the communist government, Poland has pursued a policy of liberalising the economy. It is an example of

the transition from a centrally planned to a primarily market-based economy. The country's most successful exports include machinery, furniture, food products, clothing, shoes and cosmetics. Poland's largest trading partner is Germany. The privatization of small and medium state-owned companies and a liberal law on establishing new firms have allowed the development of the private sector. Also, several consumer rights organizations have become active in the country. Restructuring and privatisation of "sensitive sectors" such as coal, steel, rail transport and energy has been continuing since 1990. The biggest privatisations have been the sale of the national telecoms firm Telekomunikacja Polska to France Télécom in 2000, and an issue of 30% of the shares in Poland's largest bank, PKO Bank Polski, on the Polish stockmarket in 2004. The Polish banking sector is the largest in the Central and Eastern European region, with 32.3 branches per 100,000 adults. The banks are the largest and most developed sector of the country's financial markets. They are regulated by the Polish Financial Supervision Authority. During the transformation to a market-oriented economy, the government privatized several banks, recapitalized the rest, and introduced legal reforms that made the sector more competitive. This has attracted a significant number of strategic foreign investors (ICFI). Poland's banking sector has approximately 5 national banks, a network of nearly 600 cooperative banks and 18 branches of foreign-owned banks. In addition, foreign investors have controlling stakes in nearly 40 commercial banks, which make up 68% of the banking capital. Poland has a large number of private farms in its agricultural sector, with the potential to become a leading producer of food in the European Union. The biggest money-makers abroad include smoked and fresh fish, fine chocolate, and dairy products, meats and specialty breads, with the exchange rate conducive to export growth. Food exports amounted to 62 billion zloty in 2011, increasing by 17% from 2010. Structural reforms in health care, education, the pension system, and state administration have resulted in larger-than-expected fiscal pressures. Warsaw leads Central Europe in foreign investment. According to Eurostat data, Polish PPS GDP per capita stood at 70% of the EU average in 2017, up from 50 percent in the year prior to the accession to the EU in 2004. Since the opening of the labor market in the European Union, Poland experienced a mass emigration of over 2.3 million, mainly due to the higher wages offered abroad, and due to the rise in levels of unemployment following the global Great Recession of 2008. The emigration has increased the average wages for the workers who remained in Poland, in particular for those with intermediate level skills. Products and goods manufactured in Poland include: electronics, buses and trams (Solaris, Solbus), helicopters and planes (PZL ■widnik, PZL Mielec), trains (Pesa SA), ships (Gda■sk Shipyard, Szczecin Shipyard, Gdynia Polish Navy Shipyard), military equipment (FB "■ucznik" Radom, Bumar-■ab■dy SA), medicines (Polpharma, Polfa), food (Tymbark, Hortex, E. Wedel), clothes (LLP), glass, pottery (Boles■awiec), chemical products and others. Poland is also one of the world's biggest producers of copper, silver and coal, as well as potatoes, rye, rapeseed, cabbage, apples, strawberries and ribes. === Corporations === Poland is recognised as a regional economic leader within Central Europe, with nearly 40 percent of the 500 biggest companies in the region (by revenues) as well as a high globalisation rate. The country's largest firms comprise the WIG30 index, which is traded on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. The economic transition in 1989 has resulted in a dynamic increase in the number and value of investments conducted by Polish corporations abroad. Over a quarter of these companies have participated in a foreign project or joint venture, and 72 percent decided to continue foreign expansion. According to reports made by the National Bank of Poland, the value of Polish foreign direct investments reached almost 300 billion PLN at the end of 2014. The Central Statistical Office estimated that in 2014 there were around 1,437 Polish corporations with interests in 3,194 foreign entities. Well known Polish brands include, among others PKO Bank Polski, PKN Orlen, PGE Energy, PZU, PGNiG, Tauron Group, Lotos Group, KGHM Polska Mied■, Asseco, Plus, Play, LOT Polish Airlines, Poczta Polska, Polish State Railways (PKP), Biedronka, and TVP. The list includes the largest companies by turnover in 2016: === Tourism === Poland experienced an increase in the number of tourists after joining the European Union in 2004. Tourism contributes significantly to the overall economy and makes up a relatively large proportion of the country's service market. Poland is the 16th most visited country in the world by foreign tourists, as ranked by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Tourist attractions in Poland vary, from the mountains in the south to the sandy beaches in the north, with a trail of nearly every architectural style. The most visited city is Kraków, which was the former capital of Poland and serves as a relic of Polish Golden Age of Renaissance. Kraków also held royal coronations of most Polish kings. Among other notable sites in the country is Wroc■aw, one of the oldest cities in Poland. Wroc■aw possesses a huge market square with two city halls, as well as the oldest Zoological Gardens with one of the world's largest number of animal species and is famous

for its dwarfs. The Polish capital Warsaw and its historical Old Town were entirely reconstructed after wartime destruction. Other cities attracting tourists include Gdańsk, Poznań, Szczecin, Lublin, Toruń and the historic site of the German Auschwitz concentration camp in Oświęcim. Poland's main tourist offerings include outdoor activities such as skiing, sailing, mountain hiking and climbing, as well as agrotourism, sightseeing historical monuments. Tourist destinations include the Baltic Sea coast in the north; the Masurian Lake District and Białowieża Forest in the east; on the south Karkonosze, the Table Mountains and the Tatra Mountains, where Rysy, the highest peak of Poland, and the famous Orla Perć mountain trail are located. The Pieniny and Bieszczady Mountains lie in the extreme south-east. There are over 100 castles in the country, many in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship and along the popular Trail of the Eagles' Nests. === Energy === The electricity generation sector in Poland is largely fossil-fuel–based. Many power plants nationwide use Poland's position as a major European exporter of coal to their advantage by continuing to use coal as the primary raw material in production of their energy. In 2013, Poland scored 48 out of 129 states in the Energy Sustainability Index. The three largest Polish coal mining firms (Węglokoks, Kompania Węglowa and JSW) extract around 100 million tonnes of coal annually. All three of these companies are key constituents of the Warsaw Stock Exchange's lead economic indexes. Renewable forms of energy account for a smaller proportion of Poland's full energy generation capacity. However, the national government has set targets for the development of renewable energy sources in Poland which should see the portion of power produced by renewable resources climb to 7.5% by 2010 and 15% by 2020. This is to be achieved mainly through the construction of wind farms and a number of hydroelectric stations. Poland has around 164,800,000,000 m3 of proven natural gas reserves and around 96,380,000 barrels of proven oil reserves. These reserves are exploited by energy supply companies such as PKN Orlen ("the only Polish company listed in the Fortune Global 500"). However, the small amounts of fossil fuels naturally occurring in Poland is insufficient to satisfy the full energy consumption needs of the population. Therefore, the country is a net importer of oil and natural gas. The 5 largest companies supplying Poland with electricity are PGE, Tauron, Enea, Energa and Innogy Poland. === Transport === Transport in Poland is provided by means of rail, road, marine shipping and air travel. Positioned in Central Europe with its eastern and part of its northeastern border constituting the longest land border of the Schengen Area with the rest of Northern and Central Europe. Since joining the EU in May 2004, Poland has invested large amounts of public funds into modernization projects of its transport networks. The country now has a developing network of highways, composed of express roads and motorways such as A1, A2, A4, A6, A8, A18. At the end of 2017, Poland had 3421,7 km of highways. In addition to these newly built roads, many local and regional roads are being fixed as part of a national programme to rebuild all roads in Poland. In 2015, the nation had 19,000 kilometres (11,800 mi) of railway track. Trains can operate up to 160 km/h (99 mph) on 7.5% of the track. Most trains operate between 80 and 120 km/h (50 and 75 mph). Part of the system operates at 40 km/h (25 mph). Polish authorities maintain a program of improving operating speeds across the entire Polish rail network. To that end, Polish State Railways (PKP) is adopting new rolling stock such as the Siemens Taurus ES64U4, which is in principle capable of speeds up to 200 km/h (124 mph). Additionally, in December 2014, Poland began to implement high–speed rail routes connecting major Polish cities. The Polish government has revealed that it intends to connect all major cities to a future high-speed rail network by 2020. The new PKP Pendolino ETR 610 test train set the record for the fastest train in the history of Poland, reaching 293 km/h (182 mph) on 24 November 2013. Previously, the speed record had been 160 km/h (99 mph) since 1985. Most intercity rail routes in Poland are operated by PKP Intercity, whilst regional trains are run by a number of operators, the largest of which is Przewozy Regionalne. On 14 December 2014, Polish State Railways started passenger service using the PKP Pendolino ED250, operating at 200 km/h speed on 80 km of line between Olszamowice and Zawiercie (part of the Central Rail Line). Currently, it is the line with highest railway speed in Poland. The air and maritime transport markets in Poland are largely well developed. Poland has a number of international airports, the largest of which is Warsaw Chopin Airport, the primary global hub for LOT Polish Airlines. LOT is the 28th largest European airline and the world's 12th oldest still in operation, established in 1929 from a merger of Aerolloyd (1922) and Aero (1925). Other major airports with international connections include John Paul II International Airport Kraków–Balice, Wrocław–Copernicus Airport, Gdańsk Lech Wałęsa Airport. Seaports exist all along Poland's Baltic coast, with most freight operations using Szczecin, Świnoujście, Gdynia and Gdańsk as well as Police, Kołobrzeg and Elbląg as their base. Passenger ferries link Poland with Scandinavia all year round; these services are provided from Gdańsk and Świnoujście by Polferries, Stena Line from Gdynia and Unity Line from the

Port of ■winouj■cie. === Science and technology === Over the course of history, the Polish people made great contributions in the fields of science, technology and mathematics. Perhaps the most renowned Pole to support this theory was Nicolaus Copernicus (Miko■aj Kopernik), who triggered the Copernican Revolution by placing the Sun rather than the Earth at the center of the universe. He also derived a quantity theory of money, which made him a pioneer of economics. Copernicus' achievements and discoveries are considered the basis of Polish culture and cultural identity. Poland's tertiary education institutions; traditional universities, as well as technical, medical, and economic institutions, employ around 61,000 researchers and members of staff. There are around 300 research and development institutes, with about 10,000 researchers. In total, there are around 91,000 scientists in Poland today. However, in the 19th and 20th centuries many Polish scientists worked abroad; one of the most important of these exiles was Maria Sk■odowska-Curie, a physicist and chemist who lived much of her life in France. In the first half of the 20th century, Poland was a flourishing centre of mathematics. Outstanding Polish mathematicians formed the Lwów School of Mathematics (with Stefan Banach, Stanis■aw Mazur, Hugo Steinhaus, Stanis■aw Ulam) and Warsaw School of Mathematics (with Alfred Tarski, Kazimierz Kuratowski, Wac■aw Sierpi■ski). The events of World War II pushed many of them into exile. Such was the case of Benoît Mandelbrot, whose family left Poland when he was still a child. An alumnus of the Warsaw School of Mathematics was Antoni Zygmund, one of the shapers of 20th century mathematical analysis. Over 40 research and development centers and 4,500 researchers make Poland the biggest research and development hub in Central and Eastern Europe. Multinational companies such as: ABB, Delphi, GlaxoSmithKline, Google, Hewlett–Packard, IBM, Intel, LG Electronics, Microsoft, Motorola, Siemens and Samsung all have set up research and development centres in Poland. Companies chose Poland because of the availability of highly qualified labour force, presence of universities, support of authorities, and the largest market in East-Central Europe. According to a KPMG report in 2011 80% of Poland's current investors are content with their choice and willing to reinvest. === Communications === The public postal service in Poland is operated by Poczta Polska (the Polish Post). It was created on 18 October 1558, when King Sigismund II Augustus established a permanent postal route from Kraków to Venice. The service was dissolved during the foreign partitions in the 18th century. After regaining independence in 1918, Poland saw the rapid development of the postal system as new services were introduced including money transfers, payment of pensions, delivery of magazines, and air mail. The government-owned enterprise of Polish Post, Telegraph and Telephone (Polska Poczta, Telegraf i Telefon) was established in 1928. During wars and national uprisings communication was provided mainly through the military authorities. Many important events in the history of Poland involved the postal service, like the defence of the Polish Post Office in Gda■sk in 1939, and the participation of the Polish Scouts' Postal Service in the Warsaw Uprising. At present, the service is a modern state-owned company that provides a number of standard and express delivery as well as home-delivery services. With an estimated number of around 83,000 employees (2013), Poczta Polska also has a personal tracking system for parcels. In 2017 the company adopted a strategy that assumes increasing revenues to 6.9 billion PLN by 2021; the aim is to double revenues from courier and parcel services and a five-fold growth in logistics services. == Demographics == Poland, with 38,544,513 inhabitants, has the eighth-largest population in Europe and the sixth-largest in the European Union. It has a population density of 122 inhabitants per square kilometer (328 per square mile). Poland historically contained many languages, cultures and religions on its soil. The country had a particularly large Jewish population prior to World War II, when the Nazi Germany's regime led to the Holocaust. There were an estimated 3 million Jews living in Poland before the war—around 300,000 survived. The outcome of the war, particularly the shift of Poland's borders to the area between the Curzon Line and the Oder-Neisse line, coupled with post-war expulsion of minorities, significantly reduced the country's ethnic diversity. Over 7 million Germans fled or were expelled from the Polish side of the Oder-Neisse boundary, after the country's borders were re-drawn by the big three Allied powers (United States, Britain and the Soviet Union) after the war. Post-World War II deportations were ordered by the Soviet authorities, who wished to remove the sizeable Polish minorities from Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine and repatriation of Ukrainians from Poland to the Soviet Union (see territorial changes of Poland and historical demography of Poland for details). According to the 2011 census, 36,522,200 people, or 94.83% of the population, consider themselves Polish, while 596,300 (1.55%) declared another nationality, and 521,500 (1.35%) did not declare any nationality. Other minority nationalities and ethnic groups in Poland are Germans (147,800 according to the census, 92% of whom live in Opole Voivodeship and Silesian Voivodeship), Ukrainians (c. 51,000), Belarusians (c. 49,000), Kashubians, Lithuanians, Russians, Romani, Jews, Lemkos, Armenians,

Vietnamese Slovaks, Czechs, and Lipka Tatars. The Polish language, part of the West Slavic branch of the Slavic languages, functions as the official language of Poland. Until recent decades Russian was commonly learned as a second language, but has been replaced by English as the most common second language studied and spoken. In 2015, more than 50% of Poles declared to speak English – Russian came second and German came third, other commonly spoken languages include French, Italian and Spanish. In recent years, Poland's population has decreased due to an increase in emigration and a decline in the birth rate. Since Poland's accession to the European Union, a significant number of Poles have emigrated, primarily to the United Kingdom, Germany and Ireland in search of better work opportunities abroad. With better economic conditions and Polish salaries at 70% of the EU average in 2016, this trend started to decrease in the 2010s and workforce became needed in the country. As a result, the Polish Minister of Development Mateusz Morawiecki suggested that Poles abroad should return to Poland. Polish minorities are still present in the neighboring countries of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, as well as in other countries (see Poles for population numbers). Altogether, the number of ethnic Poles living abroad is estimated to be around 20 million. The largest number of Poles outside of Poland can be found in the United States, Germany, United Kingdom and Canada. The total fertility rate (TFR) in Poland was estimated in 2013 at 1.33 children born to a woman. === Urbanization === === Languages === Polish (j■zyk polski, polszczyzna) is a Slavic language spoken primarily in Poland and the native language of Poles. It belongs to the Lechitic subgroup of West Slavic languages. Polish is the official language of Poland, but it is also used throughout the world by Polish minorities in other countries. It is one of the official languages of the European Union. Its written standard is the Polish alphabet, which has 9 additions to the letters of the basic Latin script (■, ■, ■, ■, ■, ó, ■, ■, ■), with the notable exclusion of q,v, and x, which are used mainly for foreign words. The deaf communities use Polish Sign Language belonging to the German family of Sign Languages. According to the Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages, 16 other languages have officially recognized status of minority languages: 1 regional language, 10 languages of 9 national minorities (minority groups that have their own independent state elsewhere) and 5 languages of 4 ethnic minorities spoken by the members of minorities not having a separate state elsewhere). Jewish and Romani minorities each have 2 minority languages recognized. Languages having the status of national minority's language are Armenian, Belarusian, Czech, German, Yiddish, Hebrew, Lithuanian, Russian, Slovak and Ukrainian. Languages having the status of ethnic minority's language are Karaim, Kashubian, Rusyn (called Lemko in Poland) and Tatar. Also, official recognition is granted to two Romani languages: Polska Roma and Bergitka Roma. Official recognition of a language provides certain rights (under conditions prescribed by the law): of education in that language, of having the language established as the secondary administrative language or help language in bilingual municipalities and of financial support from the state for the promotion of that language. === Religion === Poland has become overwhelmingly Roman Catholic over the course of the 20th century. In 2014, an estimated 87% of the population belonged to the Catholic Church. Though rates of religious observance are lower, at 52% or 51% of the Polish Catholics, Poland remains one of the most devoutly religious countries in Europe. Contemporary religious minorities include Polish Orthodox (about 506,800), various Protestants (about 150,000), Jehovah's Witnesses (126,827), Eastern Catholics, Mariavites, Polish Catholics, Jews, and Muslims, including the Tatars of Bia■ystok. There are also several thousand neopagans, some of whom are members of the Native Polish Church. Members of Protestant churches include about 77,500 Lutherans in the Evangelical-Augsburg Church, 23,000 Pentecostals in the Pentecostal Church in Poland, 10,000 Adventists in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and others in smaller Christian churches. Religious tolerance in Poland spurred many theological movements such as Calvinist Polish Brethren and a number of other Protestant groups, as well as atheists, such as ex-Jesuit philosopher Kazimierz ■yszczy■ski, one of the first atheist thinkers in Europe. Also, in the 16th century, Anabaptists from the Netherlands and Germany settled in Poland—after being persecuted in Western Europe—and became known as the Vistula delta Mennonites. Since the country adopted Christianity in 966, Poland has contributed significantly to the development of ideals, which upheld and guaranteed religious freedoms. In 1264, the Statute of Kalisz also known as a "Charter of Jewish Liberties" granted Jews living in the Polish lands unprecedented legal rights not found anywhere in Europe. In 1424, a setback occurred when the Polish king was pressed by the Bishops to issue the Edict of Wielu■, outlawing early Protestant Hussitism. However, in 1573, the Warsaw Confederation marked the formal beginning of extensive religious freedoms granted to all faiths in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The act was not imposed by a king or consequence of war, but rather resulted from the actions of

members of the Polish-Lithuanian society. It was also influenced by the events of the 1572 French St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which prompted the Polish-Lithuanian nobility to see that no monarch would ever be able to carry out such reprehensible atrocities in Poland. The act is also credited with keeping the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth out of the Thirty Years' War, fought between German Protestants and Catholics. Until World War II, Poland was a religiously diverse society, in which substantial Jewish, Christian Orthodox, Protestant, Armenian Christian and Roman Catholic groups coexisted. In the Second Polish Republic, according to the Polish census of 1931, Roman Catholicism was the dominant religion, declared by about 65% of Polish citizens, followed by other Christian denominations, and about 10% of Jewish believers. As a result of the Holocaust and the post–World War II flight and expulsion of German and Ukrainian populations. From 16 October 1978 until his death on 2 April 2005, Karol Józef Wojty■a reigned as Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. He is the only Polish Pope to date. Additionally he is credited with having played a significant role in hastening the downfall of communism in Poland and throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Freedom of religion is now guaranteed by the 1989 statute of the Polish Constitution, enabling the emergence of additional denominations. The Concordat between the Holy See and Poland guarantees the teaching of religion in state schools. According to a 2007 survey, 72% of respondents were not opposed to religious instruction in public schools; alternative courses in ethics are available only in one percent of the entire public educational system. Famous sites of Roman Catholic pilgrimage in Poland include the Monastery of Jasna Góra in the southern Polish city of Cz■stochowa, Basilica of Our Lady of Liche■, Divine Mercy Sanctuary, Kraków. Many tourists also visit the Family home of John Paul II in Wadowice just outside Kraków. Orthodox pilgrims visit Mountain Grabarka near Grabarka-Klasztor. === Health === Poland's healthcare system is based on an all-inclusive insurance system. State subsidised healthcare is available to all Polish citizens who are covered by this general health insurance program. However, it is not compulsory to be treated in a state-run hospital as a number of private medical complexes exist nationwide. All medical service providers and hospitals in Poland are subordinate to the Polish Ministry of Health, which provides oversight and scrutiny of general medical practice as well as being responsible for the day-to-day administration of the healthcare system. In addition to these roles, the ministry is tasked with the maintenance of standards of hygiene and patient-care. Hospitals in Poland are organised according to the regional administrative structure, resultantly most towns have their own hospital (Szpital Miejski). Larger and more specialised medical complexes tend only to be found in larger cities, with some even more specialised units located only in the capital, Warsaw. However, all voivodeships have their own general hospital (most have more than one), all of which are obliged to have a trauma centre; these types of hospital, which are able to deal with almost all medical problems are called 'regional hospitals' (Szpital Wojewódzki). The last category of hospital in Poland is that of specialised medical centres, an example of which would be the Sk■odowska-Curie Institute of Oncology, Poland's leading, and most highly specialised centre for the research and treatment of cancer. In 2012, the Polish health-care industry experienced further transformation. Hospitals were given priority for refurbishment where necessary. As a result of this process, many hospitals were updated with the latest medical equipment. In 2016, the average life expectancy at birth was 77.6 years (73.7 years for infant male and 81.7 years for infant female). === Education === The Commission of National Education (Komisja Edukacji Narodowej) established in 1773, was the world's first state ministry of education. The education of Polish society was a goal of the nation's rulers as early as the 12th century. The library catalogue of the Cathedral Chapter of Kraków dating back to 1110 shows that in the early 12th-century Polish academia had access to European and Classical literature. The Jagiellonian University was founded in 1364 by King Casimir III in Kraków—the school is the world's 19th oldest university. The modern-day Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, ranks Poland's educational system in its PISA 2012 as the 10th best in the world, scoring higher than the OECD average. Education in Poland starts at the age of five or six (with the particular age chosen by the parents) for the '0' class (Kindergarten) and six or seven years in the 1st class of primary school (Polish szko■a podstawowa). It is compulsory that children participate in one year of formal education before entering the 1st class at no later than 7 years of age. Corporal punishment of children in schools is officially prohibited since 1783 (before the partitions) and criminalised since 2010 (in schools as well as at home). At the end of the 6th class when students are 13, students take a compulsory exam that will determine their acceptance and transition into a specific lower secondary school (gimnazjum—middle school or junior high). They will attend this school for three years during classes 7, 8, and 9. Students then take another compulsory exam to determine the upper secondary level

school they will attend. There are several alternatives, the most common being the three years in a liceum or four years in a technikum. Both end with a maturity examination (matura—similar to French baccalauréat), and may be followed by several forms of higher education, leading to licencjat or in■ynier (the Polish Bologna Process first cycle qualification), magister (second cycle qualification) and eventually doktor (third cycle qualification). In Poland, there are 500 university-level institutions for the pursuit of higher education. There are 18 fully accredited traditional universities, 20 technical universities, 9 independent medical universities, 5 universities for the study of economics, 9 agricultural academies, 3 pedagogical universities, a theological academy, 3 maritime service universities and 4 national military academies. Also, there are a number of higher educational institutions dedicated to the teaching of the arts—amongst these are the 7 academies of music. == Culture == The culture of Poland is closely connected with its intricate 1,000-year history. Its unique character developed as a result of its geography at the confluence of European cultures. With origins in the culture of the Proto-Slavs, over time Polish culture has been profoundly influenced by its interweaving ties with the Germanic, Latinate and Byzantine worlds as well as in continual dialog with the many other ethnic groups and minorities living in Poland. The people of Poland have traditionally been seen as hospitable to artists from abroad and eager to follow cultural and artistic trends popular in other countries. In the 19th and 20th centuries the Polish focus on cultural advancement often took precedence over political and economic activity. These factors have contributed to the versatile nature of Polish art, with all its complex nuances. === Music === Artists from Poland, including famous musicians like Chopin, Rubinstein, Paderewski or Penderecki and traditional, regionalized folk composers, create a lively and diverse music scene, which even recognizes its own music genres, such as sung poetry and disco polo. As of 2006, Poland is one of the few countries in Europe where rock and hip hop dominate over pop music, while all kinds of alternative music genres are encouraged. The origins of Polish music can be traced as far back as the 13th century; manuscripts have been found in Stary S■cz, containing polyphonic compositions related to the Parisian Notre Dame School. Other early compositions, such as the melody of Bogurodzica and God Is Born (a coronation polonaise for Polish kings by an unknown composer), may also date back to this period, however, the first known notable composer, Nicholas of Radom, was born and lived in the 15th century. During the 16th century, two main musical groups – both based in Kraków and belonging to the King and Archbishop of Wawel – led to the rapid development of Polish music. Composers writing during this period include Venceslaus Samotulinus, Nicholas Zelenscius, and Miko■aj Gomó■ka. Diomedes Cato, a native-born Italian who lived in Kraków from about the age of five, became a renowned lutenist at the court of Sigismund III, and not only imported some of the musical styles from southern Europe, but blended them with native folk music. At the end of the 18th century, Polish classical music evolved into national forms like the polonaise. In the 19th century the most popular composers were: Józef Elsner and his pupils Fryderyk Chopin and Ignacy Feliks Dobrzy■ski. Important opera composers of the era were Karol Kurpi■ski and Stanis■aw Moniuszko whilst the list of famous soloists and composers included Henryk Wieniawski, Juliusz Zar■bski. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries the most prominent composers or musicians could said to have been W■adys■aw ■ele■ski and Mieczys■aw Kar■owicz, with Karol Szymanowski and Artur Rubinstein gaining prominence prior to World War II. Alexandre Tansman lived in Paris but had strong connections with Poland. Witold Lutos■awski, Henryk Górecki, and Krzysztof Penderecki composed in Poland, Andrzej Panufnik emigrated. Traditional Polish folk music has had a major effect on the works of many well-known Polish composers, and no more so than on Fryderyk Chopin, a widely recognised national hero of the arts. All of Chopin's works involve the piano and are technically demanding, emphasising nuance and expressive depth. As a great composer, Chopin invented the musical form known as the instrumental ballade and made major innovations to the piano sonata, mazurka, waltz, nocturne, polonaise, étude, impromptu and prélude, he was also the composer of a number of polonaises which borrowed heavily from traditional Polish folk music. It is largely thanks to him that such pieces gained great popularity throughout Europe during the 19th century. Nowadays the most distinctive folk music can be heard in the towns and villages of the mountainous south, particularly in the region surrounding the winter resort town of Zakopane. Today Poland has a very active music scene, with the jazz and metal genres being particularly popular among the contemporary populace. Polish jazz musicians such as Krzysztof Komeda created a unique style, which was most famous in the 1960s and 1970s and continues to be popular to this day. Since the fall of communism throughout Europe, Poland has become a major venue for large-scale music festivals, chief among which are the Open'er Festival, Opole Festival and Sopot Festival. === Art === Art in Poland has always reflected European trends while maintaining its unique character. The Kraków Academy of Fine

Arts, later developed by Jan Matejko, produced monumental portrayals of customs and significant events in Polish history. Other institutions like the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw were more innovative and focused on both historical and contemporary styles. In recent years, art academies such as the Kraków School of Art and Fashion Design, Art Academy of Szczecin, University of Fine Arts in Poznań and Geppert Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław gained much recognition. Perhaps the most prominent and internationally admired Polish artist was Tamara de Lempicka, who specialized in the style of Art Deco and whose paintings are often collected by celebrities and well-known personas. Lempicka was described as "the first woman artist to become a glamour star." Another notable was Caziel, born Zielenkiewicz, who represented Cubism and Abstraction in France and England. Prior to the 19th century only Daniel Schultz and Italian-born Marcello Bacciarelli had the privilege of being recognized abroad. The Young Poland movement witnessed the birth of modern Polish art, and engaged in a great deal of formal experimentation led by Jacek Malczewski, Stanisław Wyspiański, Józef Mehoffer, and a group of Polish Impressionists. Stanisław Witkiewicz was an ardent supporter of Realism, its main representative being Józef Chełmoński, while Artur Grottger specialized in Romanticism. Within historically-orientated circles, Henryk Siemiradzki dominated with his monumental Academic Art and ancient Roman theme. Since the inter-war years, Polish art and documentary photography has enjoyed worldwide fame and in the 1960s the Polish School of Posters was formed. Throughout the entire country, many national museum and art institutions hold valuable works by famous masters like Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Peter Paul Rubens, Claude Monet and El Greco. The most distinguished painting of Poland is Lady with an Ermine by Leonardo da Vinci, held at the Czartoryski Museum in Kraków. Although not Polish, the work had a strong influence on Polish culture and has been often associated with Polish identity. Other prominent 20th-century artists originating from Poland include Magdalena Abakanowicz, Tadeusz Kantor, Roman Opałka, Igor Mitoraj, Zdzisław Beksiński, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz and Jean Lambert-Rucki. === Architecture === Polish cities and towns reflect a whole spectrum of European architectural styles. Romanesque architecture is represented by St. Andrew's Church, Kraków, and St. Mary's Church, Gdańsk, is characteristic for the Brick Gothic style found in Poland. Richly decorated attics and arcade loggias are the common elements of the Polish Renaissance architecture, as evident in the City Hall in Poznań. For some time the late renaissance style known as mannerism, most notably in the Bishop's Palace in Kielce, coexisted with the early baroque style, typified in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul in Kraków. History has not been kind to Poland's architectural monuments. Nonetheless, a number of ancient structures has survived: castles, churches, and stately homes, often unique in the regional or European context. Some of them have been painstakingly restored, like Wawel Castle, or completely reconstructed after being destroyed in the Second World War, including the Old Town and Royal Castle of Warsaw and the Old Town of Gdańsk. The architecture of Gdańsk is mostly of the Hanseatic variety, a Gothic style common among the former trading cities along the Baltic sea and in the northern part of Central Europe. The architectural style of Wrocław is mainly representative of German architecture, since it was for centuries located within the Holy Roman Empire. The centre of Kazimierz Dolny on the Vistula is a good example of a well-preserved medieval town. Poland's ancient capital, Kraków, ranks among the best-preserved Gothic and Renaissance urban complexes in Europe. The second half of the 17th century is marked by baroque architecture. Side towers, such as those of Branicki Palace in Białystok, are typical for the Polish baroque. The classical Silesian baroque is represented by the University in Wrocław. The profuse decorations of the Branicki Palace in Warsaw are characteristic of the rococo style. The centre of Polish classicism was Warsaw under the rule of the last Polish king Stanisław II Augustus. The Palace on the Water is the most notable example of Polish neoclassical architecture. Lublin Castle represents the Gothic Revival style in architecture, while the Izrael Poznański Palace in Łódź is an example of eclecticism. Traditional folk architecture in the villages and small towns scattered across the vast Polish countryside is characterized by its extensive use of wood as the primary building material. Some of the best preserved and oldest structures include wooden churches, and tserkvas primarily located across southern Poland in the Beskids and Bieszczady regions of the Carpathian mountains. Many wooden synagogues did not survive to the present time as most of them were destroyed during the Second World War. However, numerous examples of secular structures such as Polish manor houses (dworek), farmhouses (chata), granaries, mills, barns and country inns (karczma) can still be found across most regions of Poland. These structures were mostly built using the horizontal log technique, common to eastern and northern Europe since the Middle Ages and also going further back to the old Slavic building traditions, exemplified by the wooden Gród (a type of fortified settlement built between the 6th and 12th

centuries). These traditional construction methods were utilized all the way up to the start of the 20th century, and gradually faded in the first decades when Poland's population experienced a demographic shift to urban dwelling away form the countryside. === Literature === The earliest Polish literature dates back to the 12th century, when Poland's official language was Latin. Within Polish literary customs, it is appropriate to highlight the published works concerning Poland not written by ethnic Poles. The most vivid example is Gallus Anonymus, a foreign monk and the first chronicler who described Poland and its territories. The first documented phrase in the Polish language reads "Day ut ia pobrusa, a ti poziwai" ("Let me grind, and you take a rest"), reflecting the culture of early Poland. It was composed by an abbot named Piotr (Peter) within the Latin language chronicle Liber fundationis from between 1269 and 1273, which described the history of the Cistercian monastery in Henryków, Silesia. The sentence was allegedly uttered almost a hundred years earlier by a Bohemian settler, who expressed pity for his spouse's duty of grinding by the quern-stone. The sentence has been included in the UNESCO Memory of World Register. Most medieval records in Latin and the Old Polish language contain the oldest extant manuscript of fine Polish prose entitled the Holy Cross Sermons, as well as the earliest Polish-language bible, the so-called Bible of Queen Sophia. One of the first printing houses was established by Kasper Straube in the 1470s, while Jan Haller was considered the pioneer of commercial print in Poland. Haller's Calendarium cracoviense, an astronomical wall calendar from 1474, is Poland's oldest surviving print. The tradition of extending Polish historiography in Latin was subsequently inherited by Vincent Kad■ubek, Bishop of Kraków in the 13th century, and Jan D■ugosz in the 15th century. This practice, however, was abandoned by Jan Kochanowski, who became one of the first Polish Renaissance authors to write most of his works in Polish, along with Miko■aj Rej. Poland also hosted a large number of famed poets and writers from abroad like Filippo "Kallimach" Buonaccorsi, Conrad Celtes and Laurentius Corvinus. A Polish writer who utilized Latin as his principal tool of expression was Klemens "Ianicius" Janicki, one of the most renowned Latin poets of his time, who was laureled by the Pope. Other writers of the Polish Renaissance include Johannes Dantiscus, Andreus Fricius Modrevius, Matthias Sarbievius and Piotr Skarga. Throughout this period Poland also experienced the early stages of Protestant Reformation. The main figure of Polish Reformation was John Laski, who, with the permission of King Edward VI of England, created the European Protestant Congregation of London in 1550. During the Polish Baroque era, the Jesuits greatly influenced Polish literature and literary techniques, often relying on God and religious matters. The leading baroque poet was Jan Andrzej Morsztyn, who incorporated Marinism into his publications. Jan Chryzostom Pasek, also a respected baroque writer, is mostly remembered for his tales and memoirs reflecting sarmatian culture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Subsequently, the Polish Enlightenment was dominated by Samuel Linde, Hugo Ko■■■taj, Izabela Czartoryska, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and two Polish monarchs, Stanis■aw I and Stanis■aw II Augustus. In 1776 Ignacy Krasicki composed the first proper novel entitled The Adventures of Mr. Nicholas Wisdom, which was a milestone for Polish literature. Among the best known Polish Romantics are the "Three Bards"–the three national poets active in the age of foreign partitions–Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz S■owacki and Zygmunt Krasi■ski. Adam Mickiewicz is widely regarded as one of the greatest Polish, Slavic and European poets. He is known primarily for the national epic poem Pan Tadeusz, a masterpiece of Polish literature. A Polish prose poet of the highest order, Joseph Conrad, the son of dramatist Apollo Korzeniowski, won worldwide fame with his English-language novels and stories that are informed with elements of the Polish national experience. Conrad's books and published novels like Heart of Darkness, Nostromo and Victory are believed to be one of the finest works ever written, placing Conrad among the greatest novelists of all time. In the 20th century, five Polish novelists and poets were awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature–Henryk Sienkiewicz for Quo Vadis, W■adys■aw Reymont for The Peasants, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Czes■aw Mi■osz and Wis■awa Szymborska. === Cinema === The history of Polish cinema is as long as history of cinematography itself. Over decades, Poland has produced outstanding directors, film producers, cartoonists and actors that achieved world fame, especially in Hollywood. Moreover, Polish inventors played an important role in the development of world cinematography and modern-day television. Among the most famous directors and producers, who worked in Poland as well as abroad are Roman Pola■ski, Andrzej Wajda, Samuel Goldwyn, the Warner brothers (Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack), Max Fleischer, Lee Strasberg, Agnieszka Holland and Krzysztof Kie■lowski. In the 19th-century, throughout partitioned Poland, numerous amateur inventors, such as Kazimierz Prószy■ski, were eager to construct a film projector. In 1894, Prószy■ski was successful in creating a Pleograph, one of the first cameras in the world. The invention, which took photographs and projected pictures, was built before the Lumière brothers lodged their patent. He also patented an Aeroscope,

the first successful hand-held operated film camera. In 1897, Jan Szczepanik, obtained a British patent for his Telectroscope. This prototype of television could easily transmit image and sound, thus allowing a live remote view. Following the invention of appropriate apparatus and technological development in the upcoming years, his then-impossible concept became reality. In 1910, W■adys■aw Starewicz made one of the first animated cartoons in the world and was the first to use the stop motion technique. Polish cinema developed rapidly in the interwar period. The most renowned star of the silent film era was Polish actress Pola Negri. During this time, the Yiddish cinema also evolved in Poland. Films in the Yiddish language with Jewish themes, such as The Dybbuk (1937), played an important part in pre-war Polish cinematography. Following World War II, the government established 'Film Polski', a state-run film production and distribution organization, with director Aleksander Ford as the head of the company. Ford's Knights of the Teutonic Order (1960) was viewed by millions of people in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and France. In 2015, Ida by Pawe■ Pawlikowski won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Other well-known Polish Oscar-winning productions include The Pianist (2002) by Roman Pola■ski. === Media === Poland has a number of major media outlets, chief among which are the national television channels. TVP is Poland's public broadcasting corporation; about a third of its income comes from a broadcast receiver licence, while the rest is made through revenue from commercials and sponsorships. State television operates two mainstream channels, TVP 1 and TVP 2, as well as regional programs for each of the country's 16 voivodeships (as TVP 3). In addition to these general channels, TVP runs a number of genre-specific programmes such as TVP Sport, TVP Historia, TVP Kultura, TVP Rozrywka, TVP Seriale and TVP Polonia, the latter is a state-run channel dedicated to the transmission of Polish language television for the Polish diaspora abroad. Poland has several 24-hour news channels: Polsat News, Polsat News 2, TVP Info, TVN 24 TVN 24 Biznes i ■wiat, TV Republika and WPolsce.pl. The two largest private television networks are Polsat and TVN. In Poland, there are also daily newspapers like Gazeta Wyborcza ("Electoral Gazette"), Rzeczpospolita ("The Republic") and Gazeta Polska Codziennie ("Polish Daily Newspaper") which provide traditional opinion and news, and tabloids such as Fakt. Rzeczpospolita, founded in 1920 is one of the oldest newspapers still in operation in the country. Weeklies include Tygodnik Angora, W Sieci, Polityka, Wprost, Newsweek Polska, Go■■ Niedzielny and Gazeta Polska. Poland also has emerged as a major hub for video game developers in Europe, with the country now being home to hundreds of studios. One of the most popular video game series developed in Poland includes The Witcher. Katowice hosts Intel Extreme Masters, one of the biggest eSports events in the world. === Cuisine === Polish cuisine has evolved over the centuries to become very eclectic due to Poland's history. Polish cuisine shares many similarities with other Central European cuisines, especially German and Austrian as well as Jewish, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Russian, French and Italian culinary traditions. It is rich in meat, especially pork, chicken and beef (depending on the region) and winter vegetables (cabbage in the dish bigos), and spices. It is also characteristic in its use of various kinds of noodles the most notable of which are kluski as well as cereals such as kasha (from the Polish word kasza). Polish cuisine is hearty and uses a lot of cream and eggs. Festive meals such as the meatless Christmas Eve dinner (Wigilia) or Easter breakfast could take days to prepare in their entirety. The main course usually includes a serving of meat, such as roast, chicken, or kotlet schabowy (breaded pork cutlet), vegetables, side dishes and salads, including surówka [su■rufka] – shredded root vegetables with lemon and sugar (carrot, celeriac, seared beetroot) or sauerkraut (Polish: kapusta kiszona, pronounced [ka■pusta k■i■■■na]). The side dishes are usually potatoes, rice or kasza (cereals). Meals conclude with a dessert such as sernik, makowiec (a poppy seed pastry), or dro■d■ówka [dr■■■d■■ufka] yeast pastry, and tea. The Polish national dishes are bigos [■bi■■s]; pierogi [p■■■r■■■i]; kielbasa; kotlet schabowy [■k■tl■t sxa■b■v■] breaded cutlet; go■■bki [■■■w■■pk■i] cabbage rolls; zrazy [■zraz■] roulade; piecze■ roast [■p■■t■■■■]; sour cucumber soup (zupa ogórkowa, pronounced [■zupa ■■ur■k■va]); mushroom soup, (zupa grzybowa, [■zupa ■■■■b■va] quite different from the North American cream of mushroom); zupa pomidorowa tomato soup pronounced [■zupa p■mid■■r■va]; rosó■ [■r■■■uw] variety of meat broth; ■urek [■■■ur■k] sour rye soup; flaki [■flak■i] tripe soup; barszcz [bar■t■■] and ch■odnik [■xw■d■ik] among others. Traditional alcoholic beverages include honey mead, widespread since the 13th century, beer, wine and vodka (old Polish names include okowita and gorza■ka). The world's first written mention of vodka originates from Poland. The most popular alcoholic drinks at present are beer and wine which took over from vodka more popular in the years 1980–98. Tea remains common in Polish society since the 19th century, whilst coffee is drunk widely since the 18th century. Other frequently consumed beverages include various mineral waters and juices, soft drinks popularized by the fast-food chains since the late 20th

century, as well as buttermilk, soured milk and kefir. === Sports === Volleyball and Association football are among the country's most popular sports, with a rich history of international competitions. Track and field, basketball, handball, boxing, MMA, motorcycle speedway, ski jumping, cross-country skiing, ice hockey, tennis, fencing, swimming and weightlifting are other popular sports. The most significant sportspeople from Poland include Robert Lewandowski, Lukas Podolski, Joanna J■drzejczyk, Marcin Gortat, Robert Kubica, Agnieszka Radwa■ska, Kamil Stoch and Irena Szewi■ska. The golden era of football in Poland occurred throughout the 1970s and went on until the early 1980s when the Polish national football team achieved their best results in any FIFA World Cup competitions finishing 3rd place in the 1974 and the 1982 tournaments. The team won a gold medal in football at the 1972 Summer Olympics and two silver medals, in 1976 and in 1992. Poland, along with Ukraine, hosted the UEFA European Football Championship in 2012. The Polish men's national volleyball team is ranked as 3rd in the world. Volleyball team won a gold medal in Olympic 1976 Montreal and two gold medals in FIVB World Championship 1974, 2014 and hosted. Mariusz Pudzianowski is a highly successful strongman competitor and has won more World's Strongest Man titles than any other competitor in the world, winning the event in 2008 for the fifth time. The first Polish Formula One driver, Robert Kubica, has brought awareness of Formula One racing to Poland. He won the 2008 Canadian Grand Prix and now does rallying following a crash in 2011 that left him unable to drive F1 cars. Poland has made a distinctive mark in motorcycle speedway racing thanks to Tomasz Gollob, a highly successful Polish rider. The top Ekstraliga division has one of the highest average attendances for any sport in Poland. The national speedway team of Poland, one of the major teams in international speedway, has won the Speedway World Team Cup championships three times consecutively, in 2009, 2010, and 2011. No team has ever managed such feat. Poles made significant achievements in mountaineering, in particular, in the Himalayas and the winter ascending of the eight-thousanders. The most famous Polish climbers are Jerzy Kukuczka, Krzysztof Wielicki, Piotr Pustelnik, Andrzej Zawada, Maciej Berbeka, Artur Hajzer, Andrzej Czok, Wojciech Kurtyka, and women Wanda Rutkiewicz, and Kinga Baranowska. Polish mountains are one of the tourist attractions of the country. Hiking, climbing, skiing and mountain biking and attract numerous tourists every year from all over the world. Water sports are the most popular summer recreation activities, with ample locations for fishing, canoeing, kayaking, sailing and windsurfing especially in the northern regions of the country. === Fashion and design === Fashion was always an important aspect of Poland and its national identity. Poland belongs to one of the most fashionable and best-dressed countries in the world. Although the Polish fashion industry is not as famed in comparison to the industries of France and Italy, it still contributed to global trends and clothing habits. Moreover, several Polish designers and stylists left a lifelong legacy of beauty inventions and cosmetics, which are still in use nowadays. Throughout history, the clothing styles in Poland often varied due to foreign influence, especially from the neighbouring countries and the Middle East. Because of its geographical position, Poland was metaphorically referred to as a trade route that linked Western Europe with the Ottoman Empire, Crimean Khanate and Persia. This allowed the Poles to absorb several habits, which were present in the Middle East at the time. The high-class nobility and magnates wore attire that somewhat resembled oriental styles. The outfits included a ■upan, Delia, Kontusz, and a type of sword called Karabela, brought by Armenian merchants. Wealthy Polish aristocrats also kept captive Tatars and Janissaries in their courts; this had an impact on the national dress. The extensive multiculuralism present in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth developed the ideology of "Sarmatism". The Polish national dress as well as the fashion and etiquette of Poland also reached the royal court at Versailles in the 18th century. Some French dresses inspired by Polish outfits were called à la polonaise, meaning "Polish-styled". The most famous example is the robe à la polonaise or simply Polonaise, a woman's garment with draped and swagged overskirt, worn over an underskirt or petticoat. Another notable example is the Witzchoura, a long mantle with collar and hood, which was possibly introduced by Napoleon's Polish mistress Maria Walewska. In the early 20th century, the underdeveloped fashion and cosmetics industry in Congress Poland was heavily dominated by western styles, mostly from the United Kingdom and the United States. This inspired Polish beautician Maksymilian Faktorowicz to seek employment abroad and create a line of cosmetics company called Max Factor in California. In 1920 Faktorowicz invented the conjoined word "make-up" based on the verb phrase "to make up" one's face, which is now used as an alternative for "cosmetics". Faktorowicz also raised to fame by inventing modern eyelash extensions and providing services to Hollywood artists of the era like Gloria Swanson, Pola Negri, Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, and Judy Garland. Another Pole that contributed to the development of cosmetics was Helena Rubinstein, the founder of Helena Rubinstein Incorporated Cosmetics Company, which made her one of the richest

women in the world. One of Rubinstein's most controversial quotes was "There are no ugly women, only lazy ones". Established in 1999, the retail store Reserved is Poland's best clothing store chain, operating over 1,700 retail shops in 19 countries. In 2016 it was announced that Reserved is moving into a former BHS store at Oxford Street in London, one of the most prestigious and busiest shopping promenades in Europe. Also, INGLOT Cosmetics founded in 1983, is Poland's largest beauty products manufacturer and retailer, sold in 700 locations worldwide, including retail salons in New York City, London, Milan, Dubai and Las Vegas. == See also == Outline of Poland Geographical midpoint of Europe == Notes == == References == == External links == Poland.gov.en – Polish national portal "Poland". The World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency. Poland at Curlie (based on DMOZ) Wikimedia Atlas of Poland Geographic data related to Poland at OpenStreetMap