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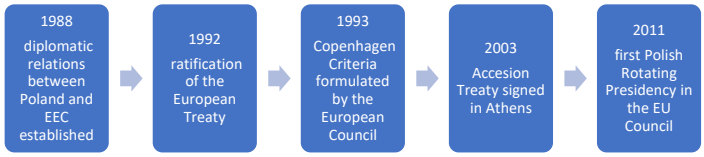
Poland in the European Union

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Rafał Riedel, University of Opole, Poland © Liechtenstein Institute, December 2022

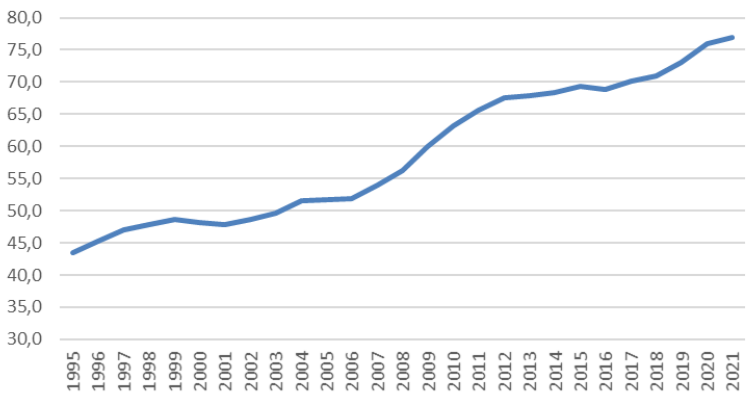
After the transition of 1989, joining the European Communities was one of the two Polish priorities, not only of its Foreign Policy but of the long-term development strategy. The other one was a membership in NATO, which was achieved in 1999. These two events crowned the Western aspirations and the "Return to Europe" orientation that Poland took after freeing itself from the era of communism and post-WWII dependence from Moscow.

Poland's Accession to the European Union Milestones



Poland joined the European Union on the 1st May 2004 as the largest country – in terms of size, population, and economy – among ten new member states. This historical enlargement process took place ten years after the formal application was submitted in 1994. It concluded the four years lasting accession negotiations (1998–2002), and ten years long association period. Poland joined the Schengen Agreement in 2007 and never entered the final stage of the Economic and Monetary Union.

Poland: GDP per capita as % of EU average



In 2003 Accession Treaty ratification referendum took place, in which 77,45% of Poles voted for joining the EU, 22,55% voted against, and the attendance rate reached 58,85%. According to the Polish Constitution the results of the referendum are binding, when the attendance rate exceeds 50%. A year later, during the first elections to the European Parliament, the attendance was only 20.9%. Low attendance levels are characteristic for many post-communist societies as a result of a passive political culture.

Since the moment of accession, the Polish Gross Domestic Product grew cumulatively 85%. It is estimated that the EU membership adds more than 1% annually to the Polish GDP (1,04% according to the Polish Economic Institute). At the moment of accession, the Polish economy was one of the weakest in the European Union, representing 51% GDP per capita (in Purchasing Power Parity) of the EU average (40% in 1990). After almost two decades of EU membership, it is close to 80%. Access to the Single Market adds 4,07% to the Foreign Direct Investments, and 3,2% to the Polish export.

In alternative, non-membership scenario, Polish GDP would be 31% lower, and it would represent app. 60% of EU average. For comparative purposes – in 1991, at the time of the Soviet Union implosion, the Polish and Ukrainian GDP were quite similar, in 2021 (before the Russian invasion against Ukraine) Polish GDP per capita was 3.5 times higher.

Recovery and Resilience Facility – Maximum grant allocations (*) *(in billion EUR, current prices)*

	For 70 % of the amount available	For 30 % of the amount available	Total
Belgium	3.6	2.3	**5.9**
Bulgaria	4.6	1.6	**6.3**
Czechia	3.5	3.5	**7.1**
Denmark	1.3	0.2	**1.6**
Germany	16.3	9.3	**25.6**
Estonia	0.8	0.2	**1.0**
Ireland	0.9	0.1	**1.0**
Greece	13.5	4.3	**17.8**
Spain	46.6	22.9	**69.5**
France	24.3	15.0	**39.4**
Croatia	4.6	1.7	**6.3**
Italy	47.9	21.0	**68.9**
Cyprus	0.8	0.2	**1.0**
Latvia	1.6	0.3	**2.0**
Lithuania	2.1	0.1	**2.2**
Luxembourg	0.1	0.0	**0.1**
Hungary	4.6	2.5	**7.2**
Malta	0.2	0.1	**0.3**
Netherlands	3.9	2.0	**6.0**
Austria	2.2	1.2	**3.5**
Poland	20.3	3.6	**23.9**
Portugal	9.8	4.1	**13.9**
Romania	10.2	4.0	**14.2**
Slovenia	1.3	0.5	**1.8**
Slovakia	4.6	1.7	**6.3**
Finland	1.7	0.4	**2.1**
Sweden	2.9	0.4	**3.3**
EU-27	**234.5**	**103.5**	**338.0**

Iceland Liechtenstein Norway grants Norway grants

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Sources: Eurostat, Polish Economic Institute, CBOS, GUS (Główny Urząd Statystyczny/Main Statistical Office).