



Good together

20 heroes, and more, for Poland's **20th anniversary** in the European Union



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Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz

Minister of Development Funds and Regional Policy

Dear Sir or Madam,

As hard as it is to believe, we have now been in the European Union for 20 years. This is a great success for all of us, because the history of the Union is made up of 38 million Poles. Some of us remember how we entered the Community. Some were already born as EU citizens and know no other life and it is natural to them that they can travel freely, make contacts with their peers abroad or shop online.

The album we are giving you presents 22 stories. They are shared by people who have benefited from the opportunities offered by the European Funds. We meet Jacek, a triathlete from Poznań. He uses an app to check the air quality on a daily basis. We move to Opole, where Marek and other people with Down syndrome have found a place in which they can pursue their passions. We take a look at the Wiatrowy Sad farm in Kałęczew. Delicious natural juices are produced here. We also take a trip along the A1 motorway with a family from Kociewie.

All these stories could not have happened without EU funding. We would not have been able to develop so many necessary projects in such a short time. If Poland had not joined the European Union, our lives would be different. We live in a modern country in the centre of Europe. Together with other states, we form a Community. Let us enjoy this and celebrate.

It is great that we are together!



20 years together

The 12 stars

The EU flag shows a circle of 12 golden stars on a blue background. These symbolise solidarity and harmony between the peoples of Europe, while the number 12 represents completeness and unity. Although the Member States have their own national colours, the EU flag is commonly flown on government buildings as well as in other representative places.



Yesterday and today

The Poland of today and the Poland before it joined the European Union are two very different countries. In the last two decades we have made a civilisational leap. Common goals and values give us a sense of security. However, European Union (EU) membership does not only bring benefits but also challenges.

Just five years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Poland applied for membership of the European Union. We had no doubt that we wanted to bind our future to the democratic countries of the West. To join the EU, however, we had to adapt our laws and economy to EU standards. This task was difficult and required a lot of effort. But we did it!

Poles said YES

The negotiations, which started in 1998, ended successfully after five years. The Accession Treaty, which we signed in April 2003, was confirmed by the Polish people in a popular referendum. It took

place in June 2003. As many as 77 per cent of its participants were in favour of accession to the European Union.

At midnight on 1 May 2004. Poles officially became citizens of a united Europe. On that day, the Union also enlarged to include Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia. This was the largest expansion of the EU to date.

Common values united us

We were convinced to vote YES first and foremost by the values shared by

20 years together

the people of the Union. The economic benefits associated with the inflow of European Funds and participation in the common market only began to be felt later. The Union fosters and nurtures values such as equality, democracy,

respect for minority rights and solidarity, as well as willingness to cooperate, openness to others and respect for diversity. The values embedded in the Treaties are an achievement of which Europeans can be proud.

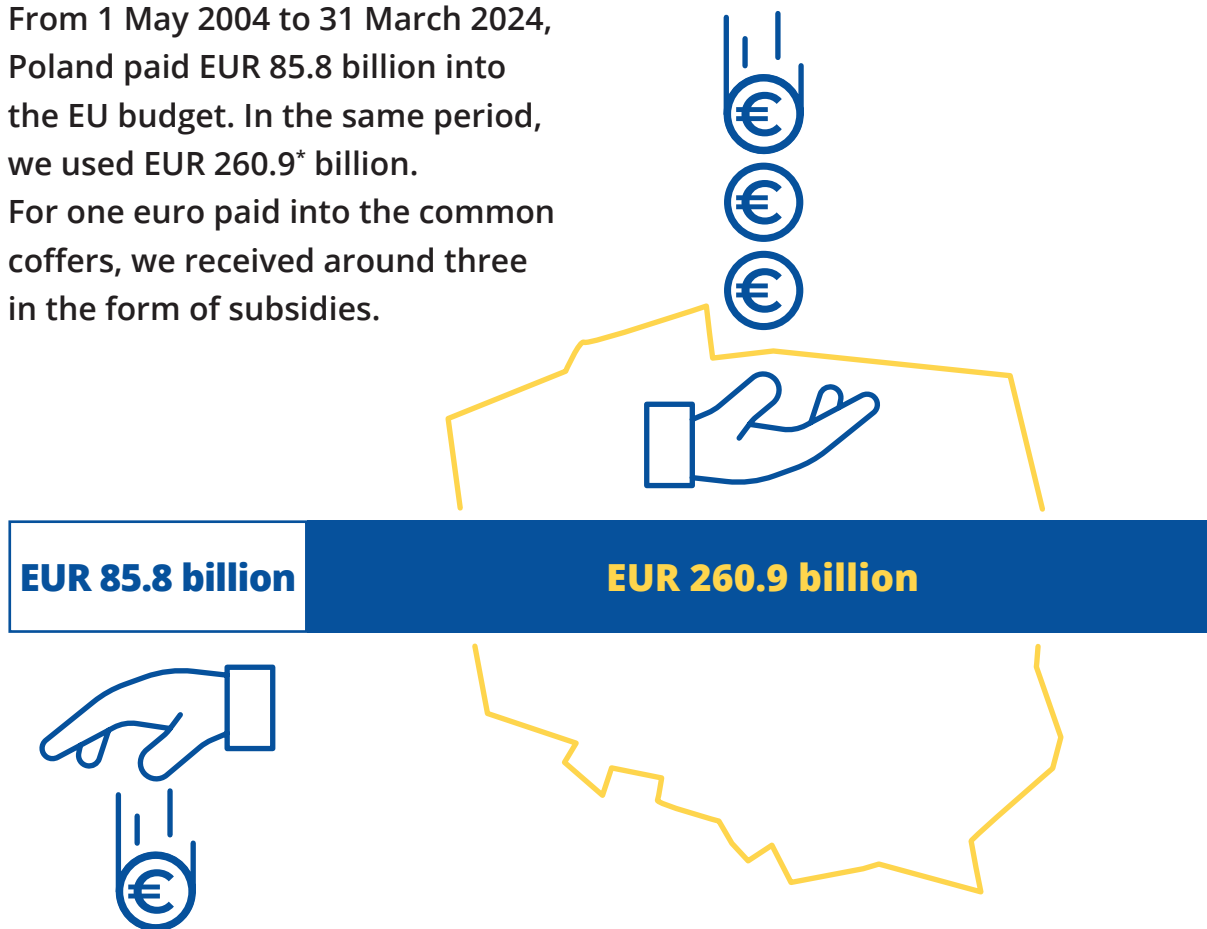


The strength of the European Union is its sense of community

Balance of benefits

From 1 May 2004 to 31 March 2024, Poland paid EUR 85.8 billion into the EU budget. In the same period, we used EUR 260.9* billion.

For one euro paid into the common coffers, we received around three in the form of subsidies.



Source: Ministry of Finance

* The amount received for the National Reconstruction and Enhancement of Resilience Plan of EUR 11.4 billion has been added to the amount of EUR 249.5 billion (receipts to March 2024).



Languages of the Union

Following its accession to the European Union, Polish became one of its official languages. Cultural diversity is a hallmark of the Union. For this reason, it promotes multilingualism in the activities of its institutions. Today, the EU translates every legal act into the 24 official languages of the member states.

Safer together

When we joined the Union, we strengthened our security. However, we realise that security does not come once and for all. This awareness spurs us to actively participate in protecting our borders and to invest in modern rescue services. For our energy security, a stable fuel supply and a greater share of renewable energy are also crucial.

Together with our partners in the EU, we are committed to detecting and responding to cyber threats. We have developed a reputation as a leader in the production of high quality food, which contributes to food security across the Union. We also invest in modern healthcare. And working with EU partners allows us to respond more effectively to such crises as epidemics or natural disasters.



The Union takes care of our digital security

20 years together

We like open borders

We appreciate that we can travel without a passport. We had to wait for this benefit until 2007, when we became part of the Schengen area. The abolition of internal border controls gave a boost to the common market while the abolition of customs duties and bureaucratic procedures stimulated trade, an influx of new technology and investment. These are gigantic

benefits for both small and large Polish companies. For the common market to function well, it is necessary to agree and introduce the necessary regulations. We have been involved in this process from the beginning and we need to be very active.

A market without borders does not only mean benefits for the economy, but also for each of us. It means more freedom and new opportunities!



In the European Union we have freedom of travel



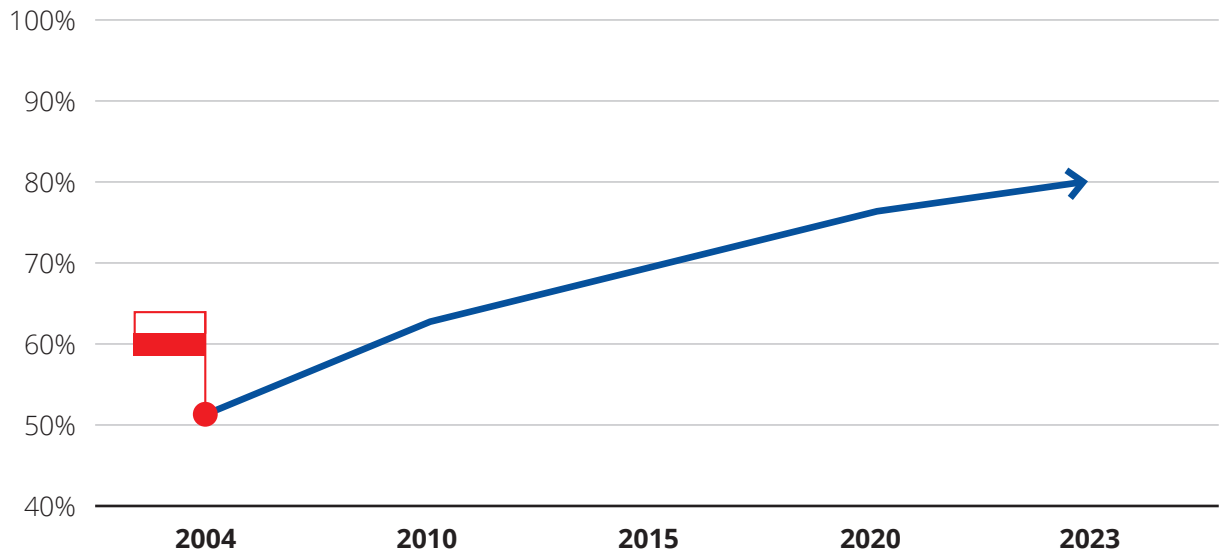
The Union is concerned with accessibility so that people with special needs can develop their passions

Good cooperation

Throughout European history, border areas have been an arena for conflict. The EU's Interreg programmes have helped to break down walls between neighbours. They have encouraged people to work together across borders. Today, they also promote cooperation between countries and regions that are not neighbours or even on different continents. The budget for the Interreg programmes for the whole of Europe for the period 2021-2027 is almost EUR 10 billion.

Growth in wealth

GDP per capita increased from 51 per cent in 2004 to 80 per cent of the EU average in 2023.



Source: Eurostat

We can go to work, study or go on holiday without unnecessary formalities. Open borders have contributed to the success of the Erasmus+ programme. More than 270,000 Polish pupils, students and teachers have travelled abroad, not only for knowledge and experience. They were also able to learn about other cultures, exchange experiences and even make friends. The EU grant system has made travel accessible to people from different backgrounds.

We understand what solidarity is

This is an important word in our recent history. Solidarity is a principle that underpins cooperation between EU member states in various areas. It contributes to the unity and strength of the Union. It manifests itself, among other things, through a cohesion policy, which reduces the differences in social and economic development between regions. Among other things, the Union invests in job creation, education and

healthcare in less prosperous regions. We have been benefiting from this solidarity for 20 years. Our GDP per capita has risen from 51 per cent of the EU average in 2004 to 80 per cent in 2023.

We continue to receive the most from the EU budget. Since 2004, our country has received about EUR 161.3 billion under the cohesion policy, almost EUR 78.2 billion from the Common Agricultural Policy and almost EUR 18 billion from other funds. In total, this amounts to more than EUR 260.9 billion! At the same time, we paid about EUR 85.8 billion into the EU budget. As a result, after 20 years of membership, our balance sheet is almost EUR 175.2 billion to the plus.

We live better

As an important and strong partner, we have greater ambitions. After joining the European Union, confidence in Poland increased and we have become an attractive country for investment. New

20 years together

factories, service centres and research centres have been established over the last 20 years. Investments have contributed to the transfer of modern technologies, increased exports and have lowered the unemployment rate. This last indicator is a particular reason for satisfaction. Since 2004, the unemployment rate in Poland has fallen from twice the EU average (19.8 per cent against an EU average of 10 per cent) to half the EU average (3 per cent against an EU average of 6 per cent). The significantly improved situation of people under 25 on the labour market makes young Polish people look to the future with optimism.

The adoption of EU values such as the rule of law and equality before the law, has contributed to the strengthening of public institutions. In turn, the introduction of transparent procedures for the spending of European Funds has resulted in an improvement in the quality of services. Meanwhile, the application of EU control mechanisms and cooperation with the European

institutions have had a positive impact on the fight against corruption.

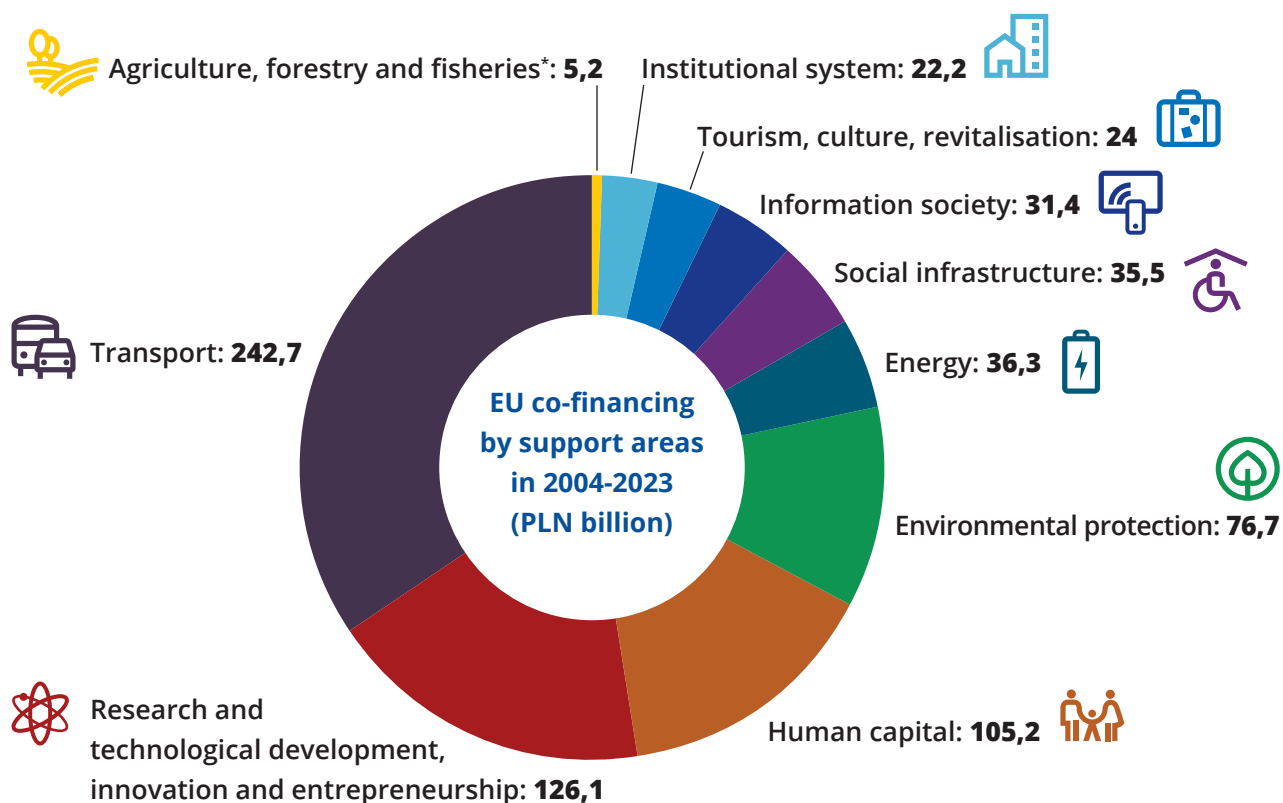
However, it must be remembered that over time the wealthier Polish regions will receive less money from the cohesion policy. The less wealthy will receive more, so that they will be able to shorten the distance to those who are richer, that is, to us. This is what solidarity requires.

Challenges

We are determined to work together with our EU partners to counter the threats facing Europe and the world. Our priority is to ensure security and safeguarding democratic values on the continent. Now this is being put to the test by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Joint action is essential to effectively manage migration, combat global warming and ensure the competitiveness of the European economy. We will build a strong, secure and united Europe, ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

What the EU supports

The value of EU co-financing of projects implemented under the cohesion policy since 2004 has been just over PLN 700 billion.



Source: Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy

* The area of 'Agriculture, forestry and fisheries' refers to the 2004-2006 perspective only.



MUSIC

MUSIC

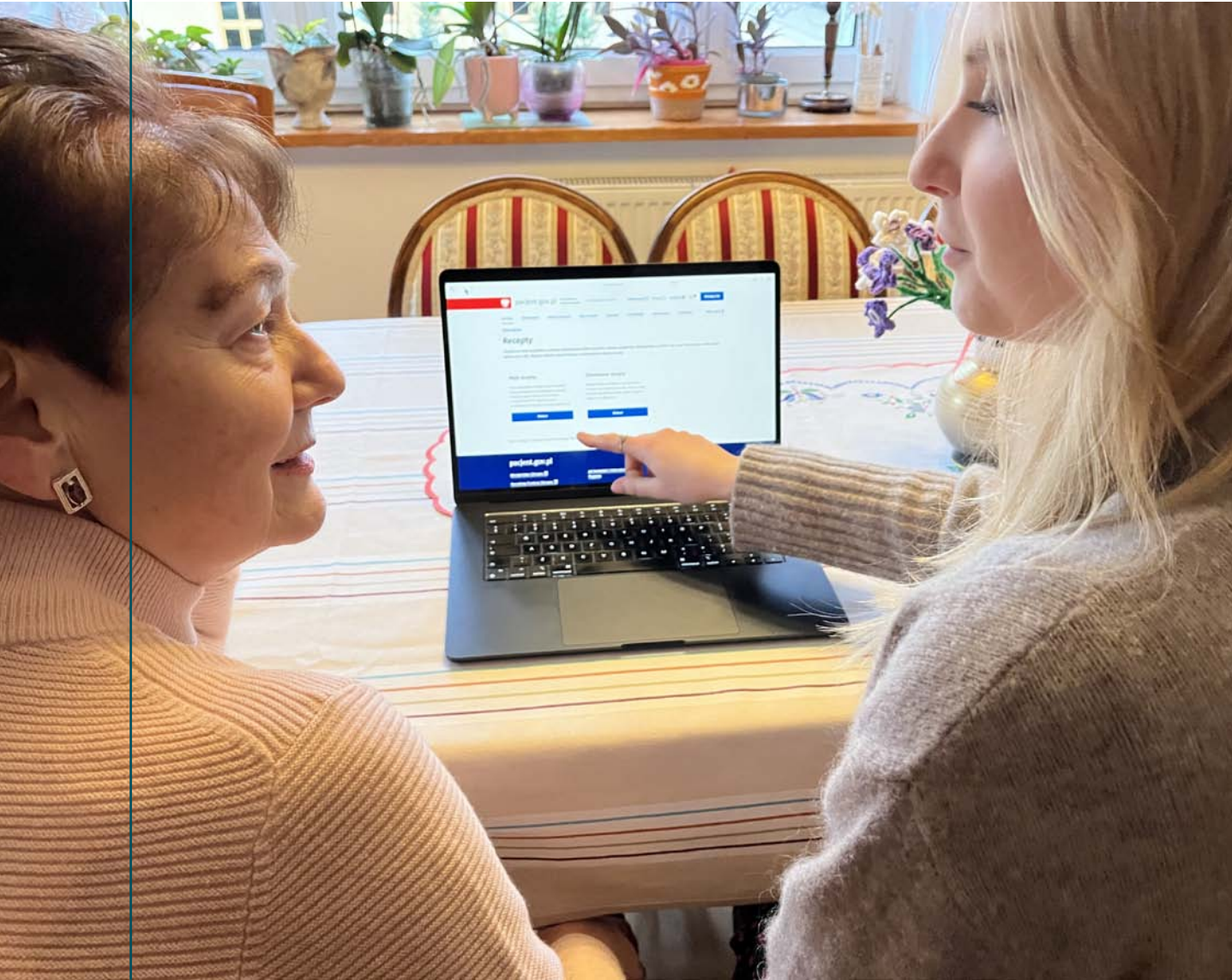
WIE DO OKIEZNIANIA

Modern Poland



Improving performance

The annually updated European Innovation Scoreboard compares the research and innovation performance of Member States. Poland is in the group of 'emerging innovators' with its performance at 63 per cent of the EU average. While innovation in the Union improved by 0.6 percentage points between 2022 and 2023, innovation in Poland increased by as much as 5.2.



You click and you have it

Online public services are one of the greatest achievements of our time. 'I don't have to enter any number, even my identification number, at the pharmacy. It is enough for me to show the QR code and I can buy medicines,' says Danuta Potaman, a pensioner from Gorzów Wielkopolski, who uses the Internet Patient Account (IKP).

Being used to having to go to the office, bank or doctor in person, we could not believe that it was possible any other way. The European Union brought in new standards. For several years now we have been using the IKP, the Trusted Profile, or the mCitizen application. As a result, Poland is at the forefront of Europe in terms of the availability of e-services.



The digital world is for everyone. The elderly appreciate e-prescription. Danuta can count on her granddaughter Julia to help her use the website

Helping all this is an intergenerational exchange of experience. 'At the beginning, my grandmother was afraid that she would click something wrong in the IKP and her prescription would disappear. But now she enters her account herself,' says Julia Turczyńska, Danuta's granddaughter. 'Recently, I even helped her set up the mCitizen app on her smartphone. She's moving with the times,' she says happily.

Danuta is open to new things. And she praises the advantages of e-services. Thanks to them, she can check how long her e-referral for tests is valid and even authorise a close person to view the results. This is useful in times of unexpected health problems. Moreover, this information can also be shared with a doctor or nurse.

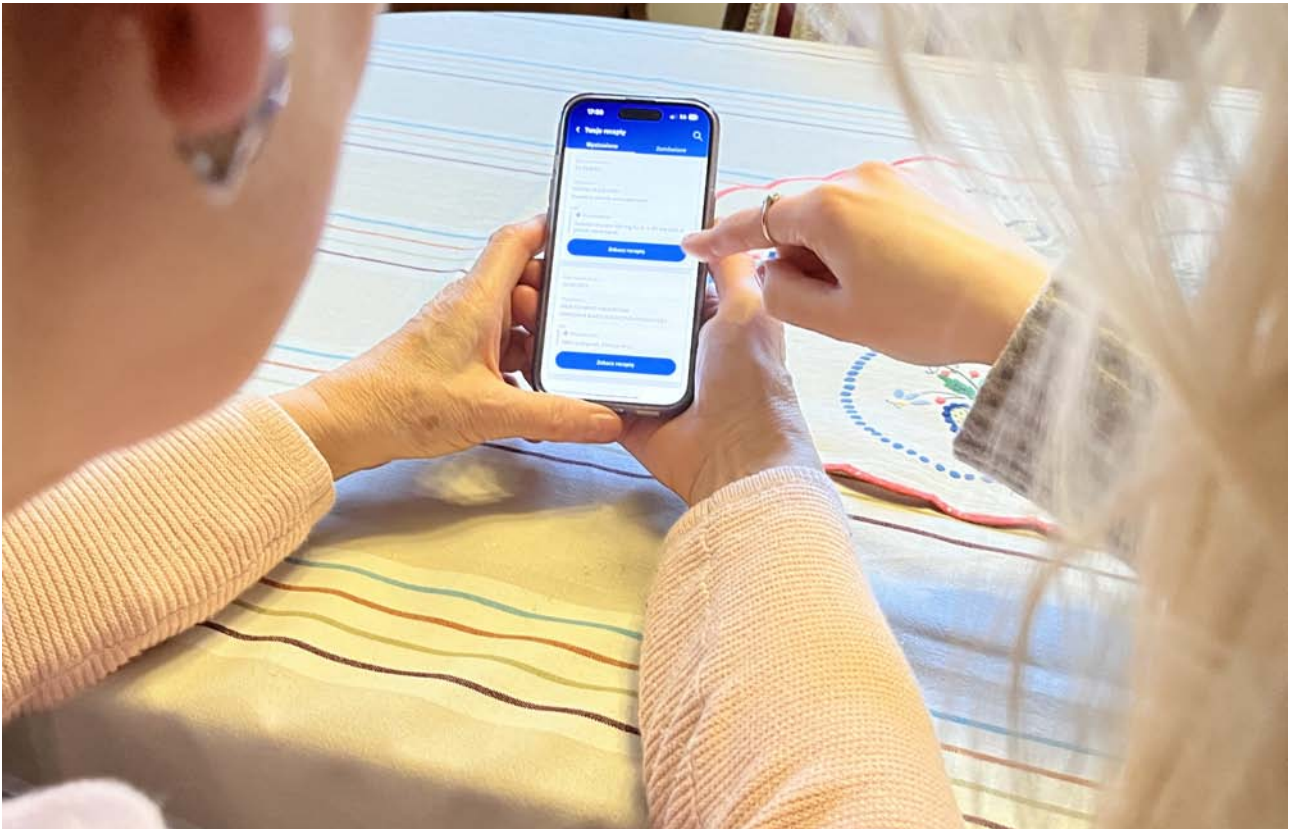
Doing things remotely is very convenient. Do you want to sign a document? Or apply for a passport or a Large Family Card? Thanks to



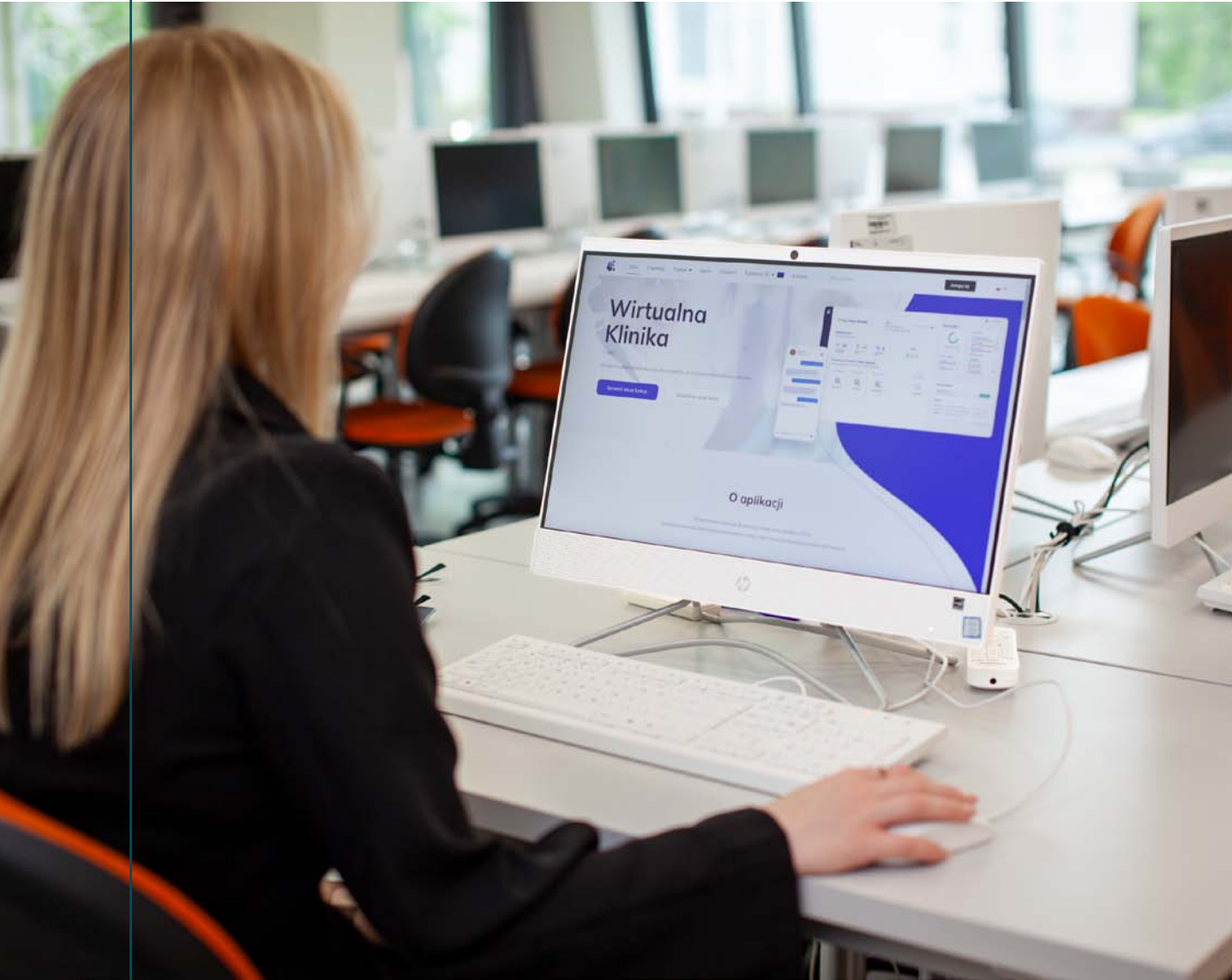
e-services, you can do it faster. You click and you have it!



Digital solutions help us in our lives and at work. Public e-services developed today are increasingly easier and accessible to all citizens. The European Union has also prepared a modern law to better protect our data.



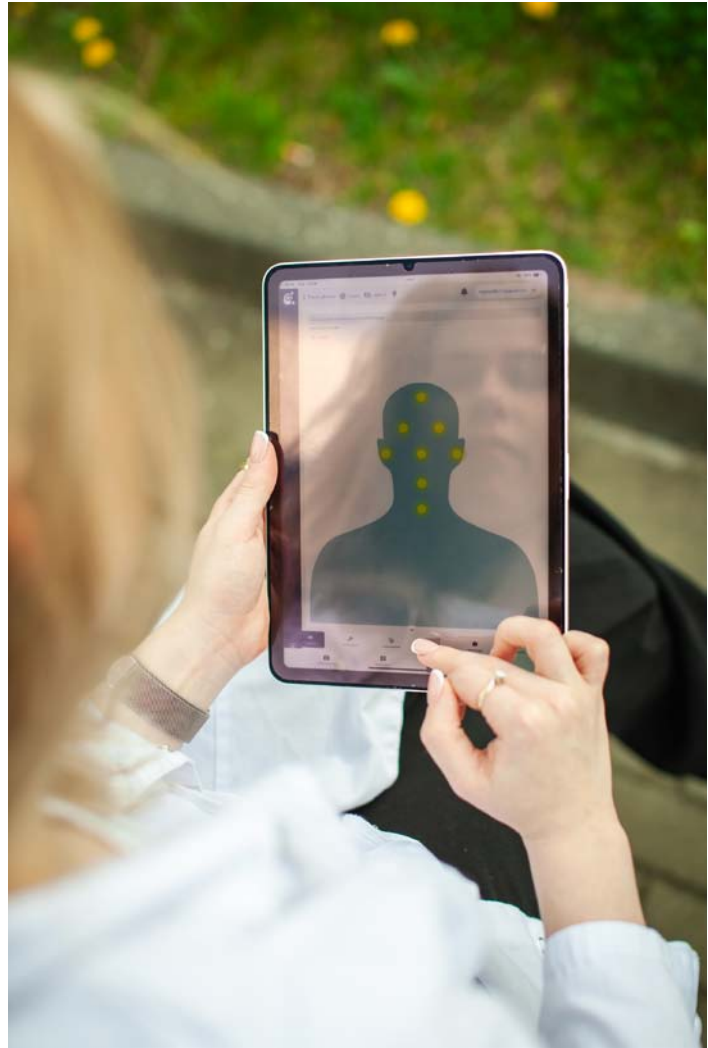
The elderly are not only learning from the young. They also benefit from EU-funded courses



Education for the 21st century

Students of medicine still gain knowledge from heavy textbooks. However, an application based on artificial intelligence can help them develop their practical skills. Virtual Clinic is a platform created and provided by BD Polska sp. z o.o. The realisation of such research and development projects has been made possible by European Funds, because the Union appreciates innovative ideas.

The co-creators of the platform are doctors, who pointed out what is missing in the teaching of the profession. 'In the Virtual Clinic, I learn how to conduct an interview, make a diagnosis and treat patients,' says Magdalena Zawadzka, a fifth-year medical student at the Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin. 'In doing so, I make use of



Virtual Clinic app helps students learn how to diagnose and treat patients



Co-creator of the application Dariusz Wierzba (right) during the Innovative Medical Education Forum

a rich database of educational materials and diagnostic tests.'

The system draws from a wealth of real cases. 'Thanks to this, I am gaining clinical experience,' says the student. She emphasises that the application teaches how to solve problems by oneself. It prepares you to work with patients. It also helps to prepare for exams.

Lecturer and doctor Joanna Michalik from the Medical University of Warsaw has no doubt that the Virtual Clinic helps students learn how to talk to patients and analyse research. 'Teachers can track students' progress and users can compare themselves with others,' she comments. Healthcare professionals are also using the system.

European Union funds are contributing to increased R&D spending in Poland. Thanks to this, we are steadily closing the gap with the most innovative countries in Europe.



Magdalena Zawadzka studying for her exam



Closer to the world

A few years ago, Agnieszka, Bartek and Hania were looking for a place where they could build their desired house. They found a suitable plot of land in Swarżyno in the Kociewie region. 'The proximity of the A1 motorway was very important to us,' admits Bartek. 'It

makes it easy to get to us. It is important because our family and friends live all over Poland,' adds Agnieszka.

The whole family likes travelling because it brings them new impressions. They particularly like the



Hania's parents like the south of Europe. The motorway shortened their journeys



‘jammed towns and villages with narrow streets. The road quickly tired us out,’ says Agnieszka. These changes would not have been possible without EU subsidies. European Funding accelerated the construction of a modern road network throughout Poland.

southern part of Europe. They used to travel from Kociewie to the southern border of Poland in about eight hours. Now the journey takes them just over four. ‘And I drive within the rules’, assures Bartek. The first drive along the motorway was quite a surprise for the family. ‘We were at the other end of Poland very quickly,’ he recalls.

‘Before, travelling required more effort from us. We were driving through

The couple appreciates that the road is now safer. And that is why they enjoy travelling with their daughter, Hania.

However, the A1 motorway is not only about comfortable driving. It also favours spontaneous decisions! When Lech Janerka played in Wrocław, Bartek and Agnieszka did not think long about whether to go. After a few hours, they were already enjoying themselves at the concert.



The A1 motorway, known as the Amber Motorway, is part of the European E75 route that connects Norway to Greece. Since joining the EU, Poland has built or modernised more than 4,000 km of motorways and expressways. We are also investing in bypasses and safe intersections. Thanks to this, among others, the number of the most tragic accidents is falling.



The A1 is the only Polish motorway with a meridian course



The power of sound

Music and industrial design are his passions. And it was with these that he wanted to bind his professional life. He succeeded. But the fact that he would set up a family company and be its CEO was not something he had planned. All because of Musicon. The design of a wooden cylinder with lots of buttons was Kamil Laszuk's graduation thesis at the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław. And it would probably have stayed that way if not for his consistency and patience. It was thanks to these that a prototype was born from an idea honed in 3D, together with the contribution of his parents, who sold their house to invest in the development of the instrument.

Studies have shown that Musicon has great power. It makes children develop auditory, visual and spatial memory 2.5 times faster, and it improves the



Musicon stimulates children's creativity



When playing, the children press the buttons as if they were writing down notes

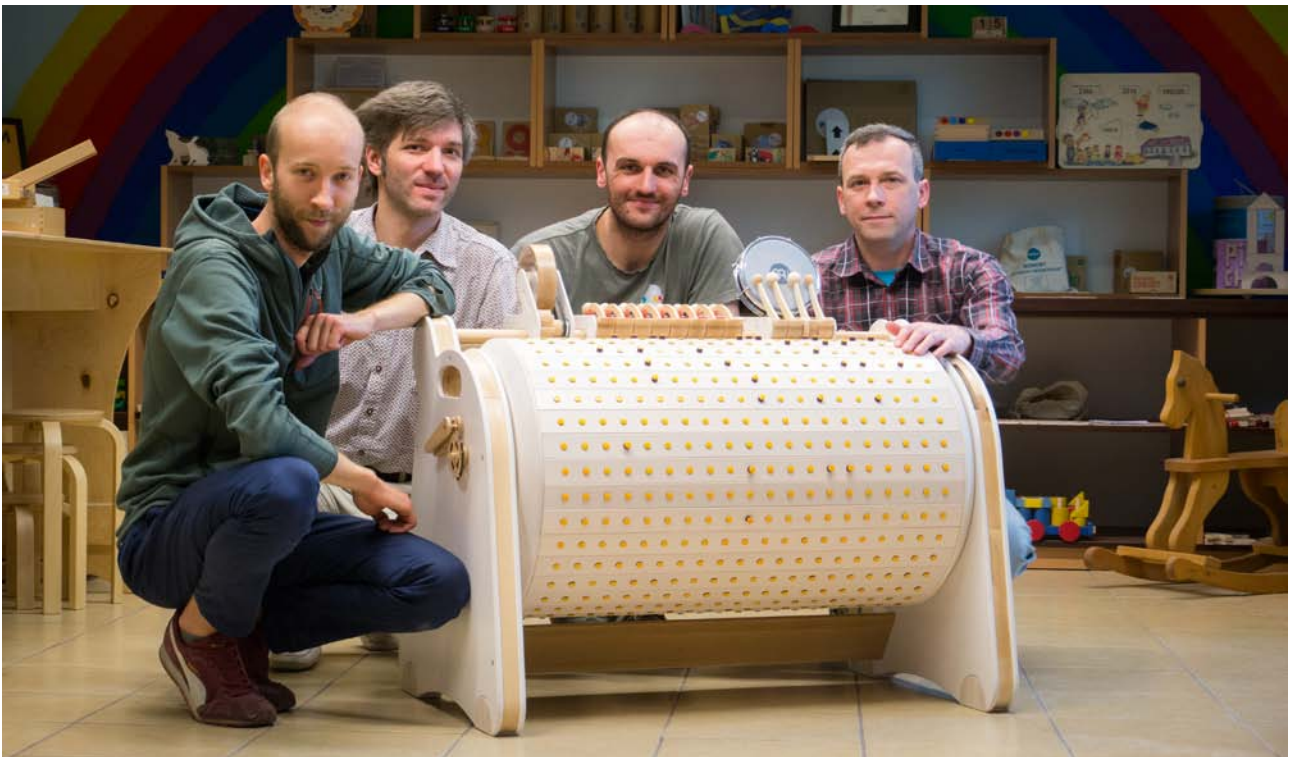
cognitive function of the elderly. For both groups, it helps them to interact and establish relationships with others. As such, it is great for the treatment of children within the autism spectrum and for those who have cerebral palsy.

In order for the instrument to be used by a wider audience, it had to go into production. This happened thanks to the opportunities offered by our presence in the European Union. It is the EU that invests in innovative start-ups. Without this support, things would be much more difficult for young entrepreneurs.

'I treat developing Musicon as a mission. Just like every employee of the company,' says Kamil Laszuk. 'We would like our instrument to be a standard in education and raise it to a higher level; and to make it financially accessible. We are creating new lesson plans using it. We are training teachers. And we are trying to meet demand. Today, the instrument is used by around 250 establishments: kindergartens, therapy rooms, nurseries. By the end of this year, there are expected to be 400, with orders coming in from all over the world, including Australia, Singapore, and the USA.'



Thousands of start-ups, i.e. companies or organisations based on an innovative idea, are created in Poland every year. Many of them develop solutions that bring education into a different, modern dimension. The European Union helps them to develop and succeed, also outside their own country.



Kamil Laszuk (left) with his team developing the instrument



Healthy Poland

A white outline map of Poland is positioned to the right of the text 'Healthy Poland', partially overlapping the word 'Poland'.

Easier medical treatment

The EU makes it easier for its citizens to access healthcare services while in other Member States. This is ensured by the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) and the Directive on cross-border healthcare. If necessary, EU citizens are guaranteed necessary treatment abroad without incurring financial costs.



Full of life

In 1992, he performed the first cochlear implant surgery on a completely deaf person in Poland. His research proved that such an operation was safe and would ensure the patient's hearing and speech development. He later performed the first surgeries in the world on people

with partial deafness. 'At one time, medicine had nothing to offer them. My first patient was a psychology student. Today she runs a business and speaks several languages,' says Professor Henryk Skarżyński, director of the Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing.



Professor Henryk Skarżyński (on the opposite page) says that 2/3 of the amount for the construction of the World Hearing Centre in Kajetany came from the EU



funding for this from the European Funds. As a result, the World Hearing Centre was established in 2012 in Kajetany near Warsaw, where innovative solutions are introduced into clinical practice. During special courses, physicians from all over the world learn how to perform the most complex surgeries from Professor Henryk Skarżyński.

During the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2011, he and his team drew attention to the scale of hearing, vision and speech disorders among children in Europe. He convinced his European partners that this phenomenon could be effectively reduced through universal screening programmes. Today, these are becoming standard in EU countries.

The Institute sought to expand its scientific and clinical base. It received

The Centre is one of the leaders in otolaryngology and biomedical engineering. 'We perform the largest number of hearing-improving operations in the world here. Support from the EU has led us to introduce groundbreaking treatment methods and Poles have access to the latest technologies,' the Professor says. They bring patients back to life in society – they go to regular schools, work, learn foreign languages, develop their artistic passions. They enjoy life to the full!



In 2004, the new members of the European Union spent an average of 6.42 per cent of GDP on health care, compared to 8.46 per cent for the other countries. After accession, the situation improved significantly. We began investing more in healthcare and Poles gained access to the latest treatment methods.



The centre has state-of-the-art surgical practice equipment. Surgeries can be followed live by other doctors



Spread your wings

Polish hospitals and health centres have more and more modern equipment. It helps to make a precise diagnosis, and then enables the appropriate therapy. Much has changed in this area since we joined the European Union. EU money

is not only invested in equipment. Thanks to the funding, the hospitals and health centres adapt their space to the needs of patients. One such place is the Regional Hospital in Toruń. 'We have gained modern and varied equipment.



The Provincial Hospital in Toruń has well-trained staff. It is now the European standard of treatment

Thanks to this, we have been able to increase the range of medical services on offer. Our new hospital offers the chance of lasting recovery. It also meets the expectations of qualified staff,' emphasises Doctor of health sciences Ewa Sztuczka.



Doctor of health sciences Ewa Sztuczka. The hospital in Toruń performs several tens of thousands of surgeries a year

In the 10 rooms of the Central Operating Block, thousands of treatments are carried out each year. They are usually very complex, yet minimally invasive. This is made possible by the Da Vinci robot. 'It proves particularly useful in treating tumours, gynaecology and urology,' says Ewa Sztuczka.

Innovations are present at every step. For example, samples from the operating theatre are sent

to the Department of Clinical Pathomorphology by pneumatic mail. And the result is known after 20 minutes! High-end endoscopic equipment with an excellent vision system enables high-resolution imaging of the abdominal cavity and joints, for example. Images from operating rooms can be transmitted anywhere in the hospital and beyond its walls. This is invaluable when consulting difficult cases. It also works well in teaching activities, conferences and workshops.



More modern hospitals, state-of-the-art medical equipment and innovative treatment methods and diagnostic techniques are now the norm, together with increasing skills of doctors and nurses. Although Polish medical care has been facing difficulties for years, European Funds allow it to come closer to the highest world standards.





To draw happiness

Crayons help develop manual skills and coordination. However, for children with disabilities, traditional crayons are not always suitable.

European Funds make it possible to create innovative solutions, and 'edki' is one of them. This is a set

of therapeutic crayons, which have been developed for children with hand spasticity, where the children have bent and clenched fingers and a drooping wrist. The idea was brought to life by designer Dr Aleksandra Satława, who took part in the Inclusion Incubator project.



'Edki' improve hands. These unique crayons are used in her work by physiotherapist Zofia Karska-Widomska (pictured on the left)



'Edki' is one of 60 innovations created in the Social Inclusion Incubator project

The crayons were simply intended to enable patients to draw. However, it turned out that they could do much

more than this, as practitioners can confirm. 'Their shape activates the hand, fingers, wrist and elbow to straighten. I have noticed that they are irreplaceable when working with children with motor hyperactivity and abnormal tension,' explains Zofia Karska-Widomska, a physiotherapist and osteopath.

Children grip them whichever way is most comfortable for them. Sometimes they massage their arms and legs with them. This makes diagnosis easier as the therapist can see what problems the patient is struggling with. 'When I go to see the children, I only take 'edki'. They are safe and made of harmless materials. Patients have no additional stimuli. The calmer they are during the examination, the more I can see,' adds the therapist.



The European Union is committed to innovation in solving social and health problems. We have developed many of these with the support of European Funds. This money has provided an opportunity to provide accessibility and a better start in the future for many of us, especially for people who face barriers in their daily lives.





Safe Poland



Beyond borders

Although the internal borders of the Schengen Area remain open, it does not mean that they are insecure. The common Schengen Information System allows member states, including Poland, to exchange information on missing persons, suspects or criminals.



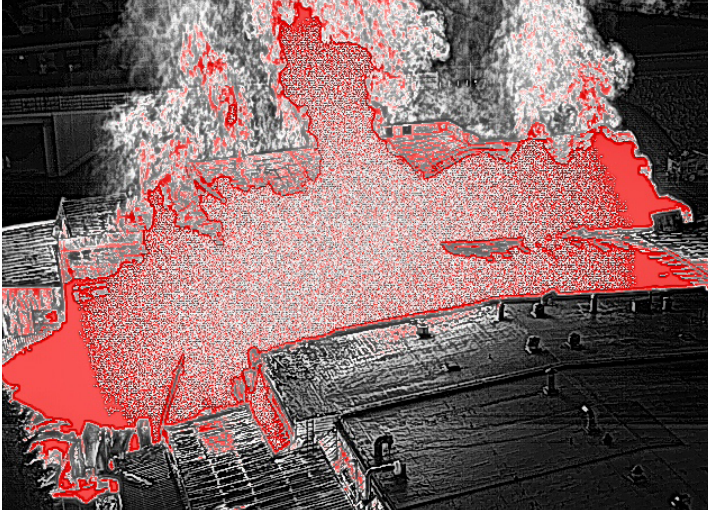
More than a thousand words

During a rescue operation, communication must be reliable. Drone video transmission is playing an increasingly important role in this matter. The Regional Headquarters of the State Fire Brigade (KW PSP) in Rzeszów has a pioneering communication system with total

coverage of the Podkarpackie region. It helps save lives and improves the exchange of information between rescue teams. The purchase of the new equipment was made possible by funding from European Funds. Without this support, the work of firefighters would be more difficult.



The Regional Headquarters of the State Fire Brigade in Rzeszów now has an full overview of the situation during rescue operations. Aspirant Mateusz Telesz follows their progress on monitors



Thermal imaging techniques show precisely where the fire is burning. Such images were provided by a drone hovering over the burning hall (pictured right)

When the emergency services are called to an incident, not all its participants are in the field. There is a command post at the headquarters of the KW PSP in Rzeszów. From there, officers of the State Fire Brigade support the work of the firefighters, who sometimes operate in a place even more than 100 km away.

'I remember a fire at a large production hall. From the perspective of the fire

vehicle, it was impossible to see how big the fire was and where exactly its source was. So the firefighters who were there could not know that the fire was smouldering directly under the roof,' explains junior aspirant Mateusz Telesz. 'Fortunately, our drones have thermal imaging and send us live images. This allows us to determine precisely where the fire is burning and what action we need to take. Without the new system, extinguishing the fire would have been less effective and the losses would have been far greater.'

The same thermal image can be seen in the district, provincial and main headquarters. The actions can therefore be supported by specialists from almost the entire country. 'A picture speaks more than a thousand words. Information provided verbally can be inaccurate,' says aspirant Telesz. The on-duty officer can see the work of the colleagues, is in constant contact with them, and can send the exact help that is needed.



Our country belongs to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. When the magnitude of a disaster exceeds a country's own capabilities, it can call on the help of other participants. The number of relief operations has grown to more than 100 per year in recent years.





Security without borders

A criminal who enters the European Union cannot feel safe. This can be seen perfectly along the Polish-Czech border. 'We have practiced everything. Thanks to this, we operate very efficiently,' says Superintendent Piotr

Harmata of the Voivodeship Police Headquarters in Opole. 'There is in fact no border. That is why we have to exchange information instantly, whether during a chase or a search for a missing person,' he adds.



During the search for people at the border, the Opole police exchange information with their Czech partners. Cooperation across borders yields good results



Superintendent Piotr Harmata. Superb equipment and knowledge of field work techniques increase the effectiveness of the services

The police use modern computer equipment and thermal imaging cameras in their operations. Since we are in the EU, purchasing such equipment and training officers has become easier. The Opole police station received money for this from the European Cross-border Cooperation Programmes.

Piotr Harmata knows very well how important it is to coordinate the work of services from different countries. He still remembers a joint search operation that was unsuccessful. 'It was before we joined the European Union. We found a missing woman at the border. It was too late to save her,' he says.

'Today we avoid such situations. We have become better acquainted with our neighbours. We have very good equipment and we know the techniques of working in the field. In the middle of 2023, Czech police officers were in pursuit of a wanted Ostrava resident. He was apprehended by police officers from Głubczyce,' he adds.

The Superintendent recalls a minor episode. 'During a joint exercise, it turned out that the Czech maps did not cover Polish territory. Of course, we quickly corrected this mistake,' he laughs. Police officers from neighbouring countries can now act effectively.



Poland's entry into the Schengen area has meant that border controls with countries that are part of the EU have disappeared. The free movement of people, goods and services is possible. However, criminals cannot feel they have impunity. Their activities are strongly hampered by the cooperation of police forces across all the EU countries.





A taste of childhood

Grażyna Wiatr runs an orchard farm together with her husband and son. She deals with juice production, just like her grandmother, Stanisława. It was fate that steered her in this direction. 'In 2010, hail destroyed our orchard. At the time, we were exporting fruit abroad. Unfortunately, the bruised apples were not suitable for sale. We didn't want to waste a harvest that only failed to meet aesthetic requirements. So, we pressed the apples for juice,' she says.

The juice was cloudy, but very tasty. The family decided to invest. 'We expanded the pressing plant. Support from the European Union enabled us to buy tractors and modernise the farm,' she says. The range of products has expanded to include dry, herbal and vegetable juices. 'Quality and tradition oblige! Our juices are pressed



Grażyna Wiatr runs the family farm. On the left in the production hall

from whole fruit and contain no preservatives or water. They contain naturally occurring sugars', says the owner of the pressing plant. Because they are cold-pressed, they retain the qualities of raw fruit and vegetables. And they have a completely different taste than the clear ones.

Today, Wiatrowy Sad in Kałużew sells juices all over the country. Juicy fruits, fresh herbs and elderflowers grow on 17 hectares. The products have already won more than 30 awards. The owners appreciate the feedback from consumers. They are pleased that they keep coming back for the juices and suggest how the flavours can be combined. Currently, the pressing process takes place on the farm – from harvesting the fruit to capping the bottle. And underneath each cap there is an inscription, such as 'Drink me tenderly'.



Wiatrowy Sad farm in Kałużew offers a full range of flavours of natural juices



The main task of the European agricultural policy is to ensure food security. The EU allocates one third of its budget for this purpose, with the processing sector also benefiting from this money. Today, Poland is a major food exporter.





Beautiful Poland



A rich culture

Cultural heritage is the treasure of the European Union. In the top five countries in terms of the number of sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, as many as four belong to the EU. These four are Italy, France, Germany and Spain. Poland has as many as 17 inscriptions. Thus, it is one of 23 countries in the world that have more than 15 sites on the list.



A journey through nature

He used to take part in competitions. Now he rides his bike because he simply enjoys it. 'It's relaxation and adventure for me. I love going on trips with friends. We have cycled thousands of kilometres together, including almost the entire Green Velo in eastern Poland,' says Michał Słabiak from Kielce.

This is the longest cycle trail in our country. It was created with support from the European Union, which invests in tourism development in various ways. If it weren't for our presence in the Community, this industry would certainly not have changed so quickly.

The specially mapped route is over 2,000 kilometres long! It runs through the regions of eastern Poland. 'It is fantastic for cyclists, and the Świętokrzyskie section is one of the most interesting. And I am not saying



Michał Słabiak (above). On the Green Velo route there are ruins of Krzyżtopór castle (photo on the left)

that because I am from Kielce. It has been well marked and it's hard to get lost here. And the landscapes. I like the route between Borków and Kielce best. I pass an old mill, a river, forests... It's honey to my heart!' Michał Słabiak says.



Bike tour is a real pleasure for people of all ages

Before Green Velo was created, this corner of Poland mainly attracted tourists because of its Świętokrzyskie Mountains. 'This is slowly changing. I see more and more tourists with bicycles on their cars. The trail has also invigorated the region's inhabitants.

Whole families get on their bikes and visit the area,' says Michał. There are shelters along the route where they can rest or take shelter from the rain. There are accommodation and catering facilities. Safe, healthy and enjoyable.



The Green Velo cycle route is now one of the major attractions of eastern Poland and has helped develop tourism in the region. It allows you to explore beautiful corners of our country in close contact with nature, actively and healthily.





A sailor's paradise

Daniel Żuk has been sailing for 25 years. He moved from his hometown of Lidzbark Warmiński to Reda, but once a year he returns to the region of Warmia and Masuria. He rents a boat and, together with friends or family, lets himself be swept away by the

magic of the Land of a Thousand Lakes for a few days.

'Sailing brings me joy. After just one day on the water, you get rid of all your worries,' Daniel says. But sailing isn't just about relaxation, sometimes



Daniel Żuk with his family and friends (above) regularly cruises the Masurian lakes



European funds support the development of tourism on land and water

you have to work hard – for example, when passing from one lake to another through a lock. Such a manoeuvre has to be done in Ruciane-Nida, between lakes Guzianka Mała and Beldany. The difference in level between these lakes reaches almost two metres. There has been a lock named Guzianka there since 1900. After 120 years, the watermen received a gift in the form of a second

lock, Guzianka II, built among others with money from the European Union. Without this money, the sailors would probably have had to wait many more years for a lock.

‘The new structure has made it easier for boats to cross,’ says Daniel. ‘Above all, it’s faster. We used to wait in line for several hours. Now the waiting

time has been halved. On top of that, safety has also increased considerably. The new Guzianka is wide. It is easier to enter it and to keep the boat in check when taking on and releasing water. The risk of collision with another boat has also decreased,’ the sailor lists. The new lock was necessary due to high tourist traffic in the Masuria region. It can accommodate around 10 large yachts.



The European Union supports investments that help the development of sustainable tourism. The new Guzianka II lock is part of a larger project to modernise the waterways of the Great Masurian Lakes. The investment has increased both safety and comfort of navigation.





In the city of Copernicus

'Copernicus + gingerbread' is a must for any tourist in Toruń. According to the guide Daniel Ludwiński, however, the city offers much more. Its Old Town is included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. 'The authentic character of the city was of key importance for its

entry on the List. Even the street layout is almost unchanged since the Middle Ages,' he notes.

The guide has been observing the beauty of Toruń for years. The city cares for the renovation and conservation of its



Daniel Ludwiński tells tourists about the monuments of Toruń

monuments. For these activities it has received support from the European Union. Without it, it would have been more difficult to restore the Old Town to its former glory. The changes are also appreciated by tourists. 'They come after many years and see the difference. It is only after conservation that the monuments reveal their full beauty to them,' says Daniel Ludwiński.



The revitalisation of the Old Town of Toruń has made it possible to rediscover many monuments. Above, the courtyard of the Old Town Hall

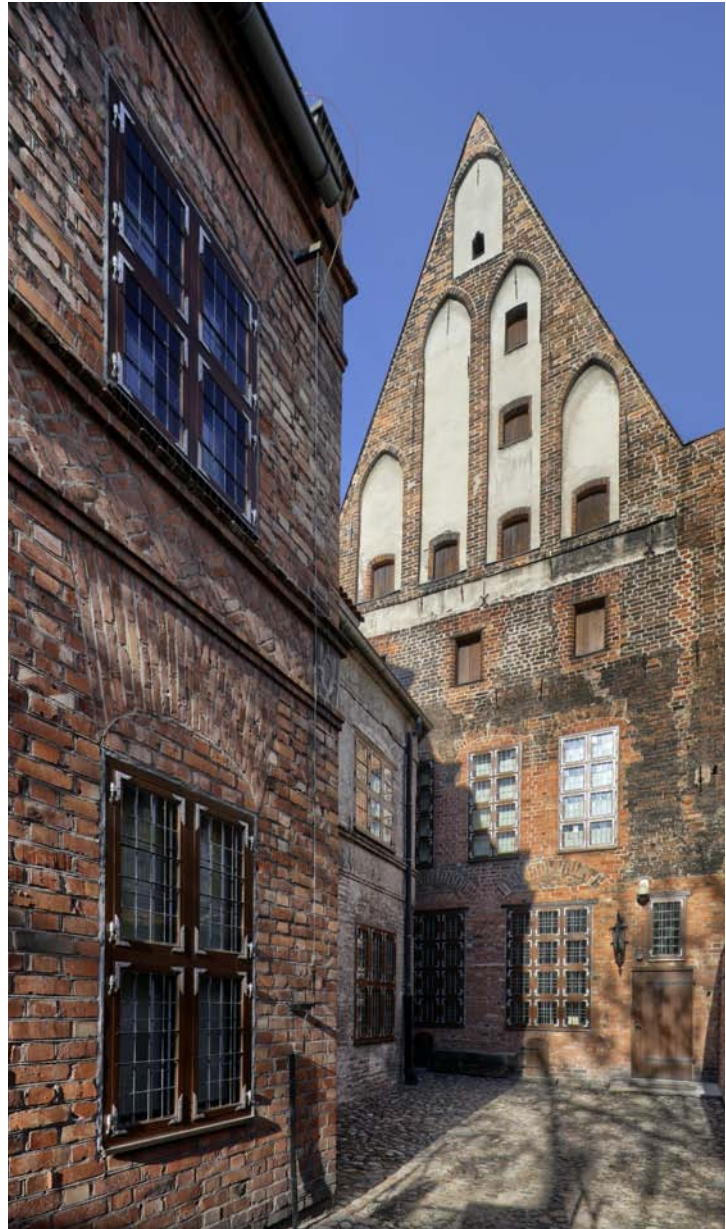
The Copernicus House is an important point on the map of Toruń. 'European Funds have transformed this museum. It combines tradition and modernity,' he explains. 'There is no shortage of historical exhibits about the city's heritage and multimedia. There are touch screens, virtual reality helmets and 3D shows. It is no longer just a museum dedicated

to Copernicus. It is also a story about the development of astronomy.'

Tourists are eager to visit Toruń. Both those seeking entertainment and those who want to increase their knowledge will find something for themselves here. It is a pleasure! 'The next morning you just want to get up and go exploring the city again with a group,' he says.



Looking after cultural heritage is the responsibility of governments and regional and local authorities of each country. However, the European Union is also involved. Many Polish cities have received money from the EU budget for the renovation of monuments.





Accessible Poland



Barrier-free Europe

On 28 June 2025, the European Accessibility Act will come into force in all EU countries. This is a landmark EU directive. It harmonises the requirements that apply to the accessibility of certain products and services. These include computers, ticket vending machines, as well as banking services or online shops. The legislation will make life easier for as many as 87 million people at the least.



Work that gives joy

Made with attention to every detail – such are the products of the TULONE brand: fresh pasta, dumplings, potato dumplings and cookies made in the Białystok manufactory. They are all the work of people with disabilities.

Creative people who are passionate about making their products. They develop the recipes in collaboration with chefs.

It all started with EU funding for the creation of the Occupational Activity Centre (ZAZ) Factory in Białystok. 'The European Union created the conditions for us all to be able to learn, work and develop. It doesn't

matter what our disability is, what matters is that we make our products professionally, and that the employees are committed and put all their heart into what they do,' says ZAZ Factory director Anna Krasnowska.



Employees at the Occupational Activity Centre Factory have found their purpose in life. And that gives them the energy to act



The TULONE manufacture focuses on quality. Every zloty from the sale of products goes for the development and rehabilitation of people with disabilities who work at the Factory

The team is made up of 44 people, including 33 employees with disabilities. They all treat each other as partners, because they are driven by a common goal. They create a place where high-quality products are made and developed.

The employees at the factory have found a second home and friends. They have gained a sense of value. They earn money, learn to manage it and contribute to the household budget. The work gives them a purpose in life.



Ensuring equal opportunities is one of the most important objectives of the European Union's social policy. People with disabilities have a better start. They can develop, work and earn their own living. This gives them a sense of agency and helps them to become independent.





They gained their place on earth

Marek was born with Down syndrome. Today he is 40 years old. His mother, Bronisława Mleczek, has been supporting her son from an early age. However, it was difficult and required many sacrifices. Therapeutic art and other classes were held in different locations across the region. Commuting was time-consuming and tiring.

The activities of the Triso in Opole association simplify matters a lot. It helps people with Down syndrome and their families with rehabilitation and education. It provides psychological support, organises activities and assists them in coping with everyday problems. European funding has played a major role in this. EU money helped rebuild and



At the Triso Activity and Rehabilitation Centre Marek participates in carpentry classes



Marek can do many things on his own. He also loves to create (photo on the right). His parents are proud of him and are happy that he has found his haven at Triso

'We have our own place on earth where we can meet. Marek goes to a speech therapist and to other classes. He loves handwork, especially woodwork. He becomes very animated in woodwork workshops. He creates simple but useful objects, such as decorative baskets or wooden phone cases,' says Bronisława Mleczek.

equip the headquarters of the Activity and Rehabilitation Centre for Children with Trisomy 21 (the medical name for Down syndrome). The work with children, young people and their carers has now taken on a new dimension.

Marek's mother emphasises that the community built around the Triso association gives her a sense of stability. There are people around her who understand the difficulties she faces every day. This is of great value indeed.



Supporting people with special needs is one of the priorities of the European Union. All Member States fund initiatives that allow us to develop and be active – all of us, no matter what problems we face daily.





Just the same

People with disabilities can sail, and walk in the mountains; run a bar or a cinema; and record interviews and reportage. You just need to create the right conditions for them. Because inclusion takes many forms.

The European Union is trying to level the playing field and give us all the opportunity to develop. The participants of the 'Friends' Occupational Therapy Workshops in Poznań realised this. This is where one of the branches of



The participants of the 'Friends' Occupational Therapy Workshop in Poznań learn not only about everyday tasks, such as operating equipment in the kitchen. They underwent a real course in journalism (photo on left)

Internet Radio SoVo was located – it was established with the support of European Funds. ‘We created the programmes ourselves and in doing so crossed our own boundaries. We found out that we have previously undiscovered powers,’ says special educator Kamilla Tomkowiak.

What was the work of preparing the broadcasts like? ‘There were no concessions. We had to conduct a street survey. Or we had to go to a hairdresser’s or police station, and talk there about a specific topic. We did the interview ourselves and Kamilla helped us. I never had stage fright. What for?’ says Ola Maćkowiak. ‘The editing was done by Piotr Żołdak,



The ‘SoVo – accessible internet radio’ project has created 15 units for seniors and 15 for people with intellectual disabilities. That’s a total of 140 amateur journalists

who ... cannot hear. I used to write down for him from which minute to which minute he should cut the recording, what to clear of noise, what to edit with what,’ adds Kamilla Tomkowiak.



The European Union finances the development of many public e-services and digital training courses. These are particularly valuable for people with disabilities.





Open and educated Poland



Travelling broadens your horizons

Erasmus+ is an EU programme that supports, among other things, the international mobility of pupils, students or university staff. Its budget for 2021-2027 is EUR 26.2 billion. This is almost twice as much as in the period 2014-2020. The programme now promotes the participation of young people in, among other things, activities for democracy, ecology and social inclusion. Poland joined the initiative (then called Socrates) in 1998, i.e. while accession negotiations were still underway.



A database at your service

The European Union gave us an opportunity and we took it! To date, the only other similar tool in the entire Community is found in France. The Development Services Database (BUR), as it is referred to, is an intuitive portal that contains thousands of training and counselling offers. What is more, it guarantees their quality. It makes it possible to order services subsidised by the European Funds, but not only. The tool was built from scratch in 2016 by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP).

The Office of Information and Scientific Analysis (BIAN) from Kraków found an offer for itself a few years ago. 'We took advantage of a subsidised consultancy service to develop a new visualisation book and marketing communication,' says company owner Dr Aneta Januszko-Szakiel. 'We liked the simplicity of this solution.'

Selected operators in the provinces are among others those that are responsible for allocating subsidies for



Since the Development Services Database is in operation, it has become easier to find the right training or consultancy service



The Office of Information and Scientific Analysis from Kraków took advantage of the offer in the database. Today, it presents its own services in the database

services. 'In our region, we apply for a voucher for consultancy or training to the Małopolska Regional Development Agency. After the project is completed, the operator and the service provider settle accounts with each other,' explains BIAN proxy Jerzy Szakiel.

Today, the Kraków-based company plays a different role in BUR. 'We advise entrepreneurs on how to manage processes. We coordinate research and

development projects. In order to provide services with EU funding, we had to introduce appropriate standards and pass an audit,' says Aneta Januszko-Szakiel. Entities that offer training or consultancy also receive a great deal of assistance, including financial, technical and content-related support. As a result, they are able to improve the quality of their offer. Visit BUR and see for yourself how you can benefit!



By 2030, at least 60 per cent of adults should have participated in training. This is the target set by the European Union. Thanks to numerous programmes and projects that are co-financed by the European Funds, Poles can more easily acquire and update their competences.





Adventure and learning

Aleksandra Dobroszek studies at the Catering School Complex in Łódź. Her passion is cooking, so she is trying to gain work experience in this direction. In March 2024, she flew to Malaga in Spain with her schoolmates. 'For a fortnight there, I improved my language skills and

learned about a new culture. I saw what it is like to work in a Spanish restaurant,' Aleksandra says.

These young people benefited from the European Erasmus+ programme, which allows them to study for free in other



Aleksandra Dobroszek developed her culinary skills in Spain thanks to the Erasmus+ programme



Such trips offer the opportunity not only for further training, but also to experience a different culture and improve language skills

EU countries. It provides opportunities we could only have dreamt of before joining the Union. The students worked in a place that served breakfasts, lunches and the brunches typical of this part of Europe. They started with the simplest tasks. They prepared the stations, cut up vegetables and fruit. And over time they moved on to

more advanced duties. They learnt in practice the whole process of preparing and serving meals.

'It was an exciting adventure! I had never been so far abroad. And it was the first time I flew by plane,' Aleksandra said happily. In their free time, the students were able to get to know the city and

its people. They also went on excursions and practised their Spanish during field games and conversations with the locals. 'Going abroad was a valuable experience. It gave us confidence. We found out that we can cope with different situations,' concluded Aleksandra. 'I hope that it will also allow me to get the job I want in the future.'



Erasmus+ is a European Union programme that enables young Europeans and their teachers to study abroad and conduct educational and sporting projects. Peers from all over Europe can get to know each other and gain international experience no matter where they live.





By train across Europe

He owes his passion for railways to his dad, who is an engine driver. He was the one who took him on shorter and longer train trips. When Patryk Hajduk grew up, he started travelling with friends. 'We dreamt of taking a trip abroad together. The DiscoverEU programme gave us such an opportunity,' he says. It enables young EU citizens to travel across the Old Continent. By train, of course. And for free.

They sent in their application. 'We did it!' They had won a ticket and were able to set off. The choice fell on Spain and France. Patryk and his friends had not yet been to these countries. A trip for the whole group, and abroad! If we were not in the European Union, as young people we would probably never have taken such a trip. It is a huge expense.



Patryk Hajduk won a ticket in the DiscoverEU programme. He set off on the journey of a lifetime by rail

At the same time, Patryk had the opportunity to fulfil his biggest dream – a TGV trip. 'I'm passionate about



He had always wanted to ride the TGV. He succeeded. Today Patryk studies rail traffic control

high-speed trains. And the French one is legendary. I was not disappointed,' he says. 'We covered the 750 km route between Paris and Marseille in three hours! That really amazed me.'

The TGV journey impressed everyone. However, he was the only one to see it through the eye of a... professional. He was already studying at the Faculty

of Transport at the Warsaw University of Technology. Like his dad, he wants to commit his professional life to the railways. The expedition he took with friends only convinced him that it was the right choice. Soon after, he chose a specialisation: rail traffic control. And he believes he will be involved in the introduction of high-speed lines in Poland.



The European Union encourages young people to explore the cultural wealth of other countries. It also promotes environmentally friendly modes of transport. DiscoverEU winners (part of the Erasmus+ programme) travel for free on trains in Europe and benefit from many discounts.





Ecological Poland



A better climate

EU climate policy began to take shape in the early 1990s. One of the key milestones was the signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992. The European Green Deal of 2019 aims to transform the Community into a climate-neutral area by 2050.



For the sake of health

Weather reports with air quality information make sense. 'I check them daily on the Airly app. I need to know if it will be safe for me to train outside. If the indications are green and yellow, I can run and cycle,' says Poznań triathlete Jacek Krawczyk. He is the 2023

world champion from Lahti over the 1/2 Ironman distance.

The Airly system is based on a network of sensors located throughout Poland. The application reads their measurements and processes them into clear graphs

and maps. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence can calculate how the air quality will change over hours and days. Airly was co-financed by European Funds and it is further proof that the Union appreciates innovative solutions. Without its help, many of such solutions would simply not have been developed. Today, the creator of Airly, a Kraków-based start-up, shares it not only in the country, but also abroad.



Jacek Krawczyk checks the air quality on Airly before training. This helped him prepare for the 2023 start in Lahti (photo above)



Jacek Krawczyk trains 18 hours a week. He makes sure the conditions are appropriate before he sets off

Jacek Krawczyk appreciates the application. 'A few years ago, I was studying in Kraków and, of course, I trained every day. Inhaling smog led to laryngitis,' he recalls. The illness took him out of activity for a month. He could have avoided this if he had been able to check the air quality with Airly back then.

He combines his work as an engineer in a building diagnostics department with 18 hours of training each week. Although he is successful as a triathlete, he emphasises that his aim in competitions is not to win, but to get off to a good start. 'Sport has taught me to be consistent and to plan. I have more challenges ahead of me and Airly will help me in my preparations,' he laughs.



The standards set by the European Union are making us more effective in terms of safety, including in the health care sphere. We have started to pay more attention to air quality. As a result, we protect ourselves better and live longer. The EU also supports investments that reduce emissions into the environment.





On the conquest of the sun

Her biography is material for a number of books. Thanks to a European student exchange, she began her scientific adventure in Spain. 'I completed my master's degree at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in Barcelona. Later, at the University of Valencia,

I started research on the use of perovskites in photovoltaics,' says Dr Olga Malinkiewicz, physicist and inventor, founder of Saule Technologies. Intuition told her that perovskite – a material that absorbs light brilliantly and converts it into electricity – could be



Olga Malinkiewicz with a sample of perovskite (above). Saule cells are a true revolution in energy production worldwide



The Saule Technologies headquarters in Wrocław in 2022 was visited by Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

a competitive alternative to traditional silicon-based photovoltaic cells.

‘Many people told me I wouldn’t be able to do it. However, I felt that perovskites were worth giving a chance. I worked in the lab after hours and at weekends. I knew I would eventually find a solution,’ she recalls. And finally a breakthrough was achieved: she developed cells that have a high

efficiency even in artificial light. What’s more, the material they are made of can be printed like ink even on a flexible substrate such as foil, making them thin, light and flexible. This is revolutionary compared to silicon-based cells.

‘The support from the European Funds for my company has been crucial. I have to emphasise this strongly,’ Olga Malinkiewicz says. ‘The transition

from R&D to industrial production is particularly difficult. No start-up can make it without solid funding. I did something that many thought was impossible. And I did it on my own terms,’ she adds. ‘I would like this to be an inspiration to everyone who wants to follow their dreams; especially when others tell them it’s a waste of time. I dream of my invention changing the world for the better.’



The European Union wants to be a leader in the use of renewable energy sources. We will use them to replace fossil fuels, to reduce global warming. The ideas of Polish scientists and innovators and the products of our entrepreneurs will help to achieve this.



The future of photovoltaics in space belongs to perovskites



The light of life

In some parts of the world, growing plants is difficult due to local conditions. A start-up from Konopnica near Lublin has come up with a ready-made solution. It started the project in a garage. 'We sent our LED lamp to a contest. We won', recalls Rafał Lachowski, Plantalux's development director. The greenhouse lighting that the start-up produces consumes little energy and speeds up plant growth.

'We have found our niche. We have developed a technology that can reduce energy consumption by three times. In Poland, we have been active in innovative cultures, including the production of organic chives', Rafał Lachowski says.



Rafał Lachowski – one of the founders of Plantalux



Intelligent control system allows mapping of sunrises and sunsets

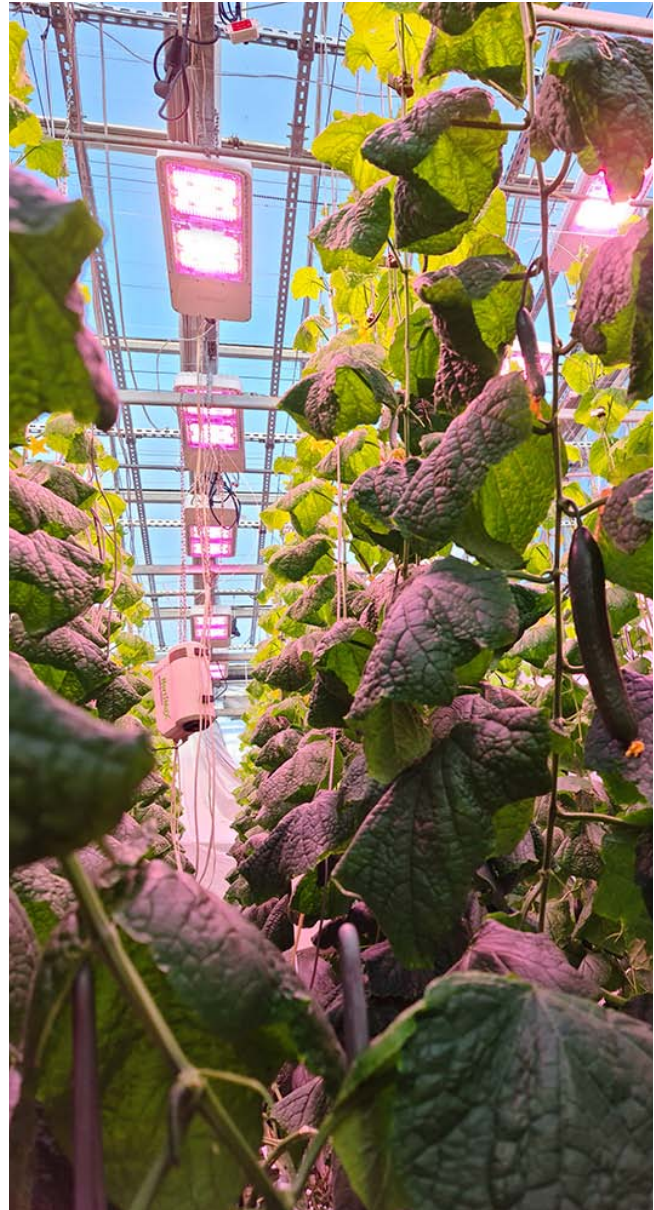
Jacek Lachowski, together with his sons Rafał and Jakub, created LED lamps that can be adjusted to the needs of each plant species. They developed their product and started selling it. Also abroad. Without EU support, this would not have been possible at all.

Today Plantalux enjoys worldwide recognition. The company's lamps are

used in Europe as well as in countries such as Kazakhstan, Thailand and Uruguay among others. 'We delivered more than 5,000 lamps to a customer in Kazakhstan, which illuminated tomatoes on 5.5 ha under glass. This is a huge success for us because this country borders China, a low-cost equipment manufacturer. The customer chose us because they bet on quality', says Rafał Lachowski.



Over the past 20 years, the European Union has supported 77,000 projects by Polish companies. These include businesses that would not have expanded their production without the EU funding. EU support accelerates the development of European companies. But not only this. It also makes it easier for the companies to enter global markets.





Timeline

A symbolic start

Poland entered the EU under the Accession Treaty. We signed it in an important place for European democracy. The ceremony took place on 16 April in 2023 in the Stoa Attalosa building, which is located on the Athens Agora. Famous statesmen and philosophers such as Pericles, Socrates and Plato took part in debates here in ancient times.



The road to the Union



1989

On 9 September in Warsaw, Poland and the European Communities signed an agreement on trade and economic cooperation.



1994

On 8 April, Poland applied for membership in the European Union.



2003

On 16 April in Athens, the Accession Treaty was solemnly signed (photo 3). Two months later, a referendum was held. 77.45 per cent of those who took part voted in favour of EU membership. The turnout was 58.85 per cent. In July, the President of Poland ratified the Athens Treaty.



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3

20 years of Poland in the European Union



2004

We became a member of the European Union. It happened on 1 May, and already in June our first elections to the European Parliament were held.



2005

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) began operating from its headquarters in Warsaw (photo 5). The Agency assists Member States and Schengen-associated countries in managing the EU's external borders and fighting cross-border crime.



2006

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted a directive on the liberalisation of services in the internal market. As a result, prices for services fell while quality was maintained.



4



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2007

On 13 December, the Lisbon Treaty was signed. It strengthened the role of the European Parliament and streamlined decision-making in the European institutions. It introduced the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which guarantees EU citizens, among others, the right to life, liberty and security; as well as personal dignity, freedom of expression and information. In the same year, Poland joined the Schengen Agreement. Border controls disappeared in the countries that signed the agreement. Free movement of people, goods and services began.



2008

Europe was hit by a crisis. The economies of many countries slowed down. Unemployment and debt increased. Poland was the only country in the EU to record a GDP growth.



7



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9



2009

The Eastern Partnership programme was launched at the May summit of the EU and partner countries. It is aimed at: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The programme was initiated by Poland and Sweden.



2010

The President of the European Commission presented the Europe 2020 strategy (photo 11). The document was the European response to the global economic and financial crisis. Europe focused on developing an economy based on knowledge and promoting environmentally friendly technologies.



2011

For six months, Poland assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the EU's most important decision-making body. It chaired Council meetings, represented the Council to other EU institutions and in external relations. Our country will head the EU Council for a second time in 2025.



10



11



12



2012

The European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its work on peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe. The EU delegation was accompanied by the winners of a competition for young people. Among them was Ilona Zielkowska, a student from the University of Gdańsk (photo 13, second from left).



2013

May saw the first edition of the European Funds Open Days. This is a cyclical nationwide action, that is still organised by the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy. It is performed in cooperation with provincial governments. Residents of the regions learn about investments and initiatives supported with EU money (photo 14).



2014

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk was elected President of the European Council, one of the highest posts in the EU. A Pole was the second person in the history of the Union to hold this position (the first was Belgian Herman Van Rompuy).



13



14



15



2015

In December, the 'Paris Agreement' was adopted at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in France. The EU played an important role in the negotiations and advocated for ambitious climate targets and commitments.



2016

Throughout the year, Wrocław (photo 17) held the honours of European Capital of Culture 2016. It was a time of diverse events, including festivals, concerts and conferences. These attracted the attention not only of the city's, region's and country's inhabitants, but also of communities from across the continent.



2017

European Union citizens can enjoy the freedom to use their mobile phones when travelling between EU countries without worrying about additional roaming charges. The abolition of these charges was a key step towards the creation of a digital single market in the EU.



16



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18



2018

The EU and NATO signed a declaration on security cooperation. It focuses on four areas: military mobility, cyber security, hybrid threats and counter-terrorism.



2019

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (photo 20) announced the European Green Deal. The initiative sets out goals and a green transition strategy for the EU to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.



2020

At a summit in Brussels in July, EU leaders reached an agreement on the budget for 2021-2027. They also agreed on a EUR 750 billion financial package for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic (NextGenerationEU). As it did for 2014-2020, Poland negotiated for the second time in a row the largest cohesion policy budget of all the Member States.



19



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2021

The European Parliament and the Council adopted the regulation on the EU digital certificate COVID-19. It entered into force on 1 July 2021, and was operational until the end of June 2023. This was a huge support for, among others, the European tourism industry, which was affected by the pandemic.



2022

Negotiations of the 2021-2027 Partnership Agreement between the European Commission and the Polish government ended. The most important document was agreed, which sets out a strategy for the use of European Funds for the years 2021-2027 with a total volume of EUR 76 billion, or around PLN 348 billion.



2023

At a summit in Brussels, the European Council (photo 24) decided to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. The Council also decided to grant candidate country status to Georgia.



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