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## Poland in the EU Development Policy: Active Participant or Passive Donor?

### Introduction

Although Poland made the first Official Development Assistance (ODA)<sup>1</sup> transfers in 1998, it officially joined the group of aid donors when it joined the European Union (EU) in 2004. Then it was formally removed from the OECD DAC's list of ODA recipients (OECD DAC, 2005) and obliged to participate in the EU development policy. EU development cooperation, which is regulated by the Treaty and strives to eradicate global poverty (*Treaty*, art. 208–212), is considered one of the essential instruments of the organisation's external actions (Zajączkowski, 2010, p. 245; Furness et al., 2020, p. 91–93). It is implemented with the use of various budgetary tools (until 2020, these were, among others, Development Cooperation Instrument – DCI, European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights – EIDHR or European Neighbourhood Instrument – ENI, from 2021, it is primarily the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – NDICI) and extra-budgetary tools (mainly through the European Development Fund – EDF operating until 2020 or ad hoc trust funds), guarantees the organisation (together with its Member States) the status of the world's most generous aid donor, transferring approximately half of the global ODA annually (Smolaga, 2018, p. 281; OECD, 2022b).

At the same time, in 2004, there was a fundamental change in the structure of Polish aid. From 1998 to 2003, most Polish ODA was transferred through bilateral channels (68% on average). Since 2004, most of the aid has been distributed through multilateral channels (73% on average), with the dominant position among them of the European Union (this way, on average, 90% of multilateral ODA is transferred, and at the same time 66% of total ODA). The volume of aid also increased significantly, which was predominantly a side effect of including part of the membership contribution to the EU budget as ODA (about 5% of this contribution). In 2003, the total aid provided by Poland was worth USD 40.26 million. In 2004 it was USD 156.01 million, of which USD 101.59 million was allocated to the European Union. In 2021, Polish ODA reached USD 895.75 million, of which USD 645.79 million was transferred through multilateral channels, including USD 592.76 million via the European Union (OECD, 2022b). The value of aid provided through EU channels increased almost

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<sup>1</sup> ODA covers flows to countries and territories and to multilateral development institutions, provided by official agencies and aimed at promoting economic development and welfare of developing countries, which are concessional in character (OECD, 2022a).

six times in the years 2004–2021, which, however, was not the result of Polish decision-makers' commitment to solving global problems and, above all, was the result of the rather dynamic development of the Polish economy in this period, also reflected in the value of the annual contributions to the EU general budget, related to the amount of generated GNI (Downes et al., 2017, p. 48–55). The obligation to co-finance the EU's development policy also implies that since 2004 Polish multilateral ODA has been subject to smaller fluctuations than bilateral ODA, much more susceptible to changes in current political priorities.

The preference for ODA transfer through multilateral channels is evident among countries just starting their donor activity. In 2007, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) pointed out: "Poland is only gaining experience in providing aid to other countries. Therefore, transferring aid funds to specialised international institutions allows us to use their organisational and logistic potential and thus increase the effectiveness of our aid" (MSZ, 2008, p. 28). Nevertheless, the tendency to transfer Polish ODA through multilateral entities continues despite the passage of years, and the European Union remains the main administrator of Polish aid resources.

Therefore, the main aim of this article is to define the contribution (both in political and financial terms) that Poland makes to the European Union's development policy. It is no less important to verify the state's activity level in shaping this policy, which is related to promoting foreign policy interests (long-term and short-term) in the EU forum. Accordingly, it is necessary to answer the following research questions: How does Poland participate in the EU development policy? What postulates does Poland raise in shaping the EU development policy, and are they effectively pursued? Does Poland initiate the activities of the EU development policy, and if so – which? Does Poland legitimise the goals of its foreign policy through the EU development policy? Is the structure of Polish ODA, based on the transfer through EU channels, beneficial for Poland's foreign policy? The work covers a wide time frame – the years 2004–2021. That allows for a comprehensive analysis of Polish contribution to the EU development policy, an indication of the elements of continuity and changes in the state's postulates, and drawing conclusions that may help redefine Polish participation in this policy, especially in terms of strengthening Poland's position in the organisation's aid activities.

### **Theoretical and methodological approach**

Basing the transfer of Polish ODA on multilateral channels, especially the European Union, is closely related to the motivations of states' involvement in formal international organisations (IOs). As Kenneth W. Abbott and Duncan Snidal pointed out, "State consciously use IOs both to reduce transaction costs in the narrow sense and, more broadly, to create information, ideas, norms and expectations: to carry out and encourage specific activities; to legitimate or delegitimize particular ideas and practices; and to enhance their capacities and power" (Abbott, Snidal, 1998, p. 8). It is possible thanks to the two main attributes of international organisations: centralisation and independence, which increase the efficiency of their activity. On the one

hand, states use centralised financial and non-financial resources for collective actions, which in many cases are considered more effective (and cheaper) than unilateral. Organisations are the executors of the will of their member states, although multilateral forums balance the influence of their members. Centralisation also means coordination of activities, the use of economy of scale, costs and burden sharing, and it also increases the elaboration of norms. On the other hand, independence enables an organisation to initiate differentiated activities and launder its members' particular interests. The neutrality of the organisation itself eliminates the national bias. This allows the IO to act as a trustee, allocator and arbiter. Moreover, the organisations act as community representatives and managers of enforcement (Abbott, Snidal, 1998, p. 10–27). Ultimately, “by taking advantage of the centralisation and independence of IOs, states are able to achieve goals that they cannot accomplish on a decentralised basis” (Abbott, Snidal, 1998, p. 29).

These statements are also consistent with the current state of knowledge about aid transferred through multilateral channels. Multilateral ODA, just like bilateral, may be concessional to a varying degree, and its terms may vary from non-returnable (grants) to high preference and market criteria. Like bilateral aid, it is the domain of public institutions and is used in countries facing similar development and humanitarian challenges (Gulrajani, 2016, p. 7). However, multilateral aid has some advantages over bilateral ODA, both from the donors' and the beneficiaries' points of view. It is less politicised and unrelated to donors' specific interests (Deszczyński, 2011, p. 102). Ensures more effective coordination of activities and reduces aid fragmentation (Easterly, Pfitze, 2008, p. 38–41). Enables the implementation of large and long-term development programmes in the least developed or fragile countries (Milner, 2006, p. 114), at the same time, it is distributed more evenly and reduces the phenomenon of aid “orphans” or “favourites”. Allows for a higher level of risk concerning the failure to achieve the goals (Klingebiel, 2013, p. 6). Places less emphasis on the corruption existing in the recipient state (Palagashvili, Williamson, 2014, p. 18). Transfers standards, norms, knowledge and products more effectively (Deszczyński, 2011, p. 102–103) which makes it more desired by the beneficiaries (Custer et al., 2015, p. 27–51). It is characterised by greater efficiency and reduction of transaction costs while generating benefits resulting from the scale and scope of aid (Kharas, 2007, p. 3). Above all, it focuses more on eradicating global poverty (Mavrotas, Villanger, 2006, p. 4). Despite that, the vast majority of global ODA (on average 2/3 of its value) is transferred through bilateral channels (OECD, 2022b).

Research methods and techniques appropriate for the field of social sciences, especially political science, were used in the study. Consequently, Poland's participation in the EU development cooperation was analysed concerning the state's participation in the work of bodies responsible for implementing this EU policy (institutional analysis), co-shaping the formal, legal and political framework of the organisation's activities in this area (discourse analysis, document analysis) and co-financing of the EU budget earmarked for assistance (financial data analysis). Moreover, the analysis of the subject literature and content analysis was applied, as well as synthesis and description.

### Participation in the work of bodies responsible for the EU development policy

As a Member State, Poland delegates its representatives to the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC; earlier – General Affairs and External Relations Council, GAERC), which in the composition of foreign affairs ministers, deals with all issues related to EU development policy, including its programming, implementation and evaluation (Council of the EU, 2022b). The state is also active in the forums of several working groups operating within the Council, which work on development issues. They are: Working Party on Development Cooperation and International Partnerships (CODEV-PI), African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Working Party, Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFSA) and the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) (Council of the EU, 2022a). Moreover, Poland undertakes cooperation with commissioners competent in the field of development cooperation, the relevant Directorates-General (DG) of the European Commission,<sup>2</sup> committees cooperating with the European Commission (including those dealing with humanitarian aid, development aid and individual financial instruments of the EU development policy), as well as the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The platform for consulting positions on issues related to development cooperation is also EU debates and informal ministers meetings, during which Poland is usually represented by deputy foreign ministers responsible for development issues. For example: in 2006, debates were organised on the harmonisation and coordination of the EU policy, the process of implementing the provisions of the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (especially in the context of the division of responsibilities between donors and recipients of aid; *Paris Declaration*, 2005), as well as the harmonisation of aid procedures and the possibility of implementing the *Joint Africa – EU Strategy* (The Africa-EU Partnership, 2007). As part of the TACIS programme (Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States), a donor coordination meeting for Belarus took place (MSZ, 2006, p. 10; MSZ, 2007, p. 21–22; MSZ, 2008, p. 42–43). In 2012, there was a discussion on new rules for granting budget support, during which Poland (not using this tool as part of its bilateral aid) opted to strengthen the principle of conditionality, i.e. a close link between aid financing and the assessment of the internal situation of a partner country and political dialogue (MSZ, 2013, p. 18–20). In the following years, discussions also concerned the post-2015 development agenda (MSZ, 2014, p. 52–53) and the implementation of the *2030 Agenda* (MSZ, 2018, p. 12–13).

Poland's more significant competencies in the field of development cooperation were also associated with the state's rotating presidency in the Council of the EU, which took place in the second half of 2011. Discussions on development cooperation during the Polish presidency were initiated during the informal meeting of ministers (Sopot, 14–15 July). The proceeding focused, in line with the initiative of Poland, among others on the role of democracy in development. One of Poland's tasks in this period was to co-host the FAC meeting in the development area (14 November). Moreover, Poland chaired the

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<sup>2</sup> In particular: DG for International Partnerships (DG INTPA); DG for the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and DG for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR).

work of the Council's working groups. During the Polish presidency, the sixth edition of the European Development Days, prepared by Poland's MFA and the EC were organised (15–16 December), devoted to the links between development and democracy (European Commission, 2012; European Commission, 2014, p. 86–93).

### **Participation in the decision-making processes of the EU development policy**

Through membership in the bodies of the European Union, Poland participates in the decision-making process regarding the programming and selection of the main directions of the organisation's development policy. The MFA refers to it as "active participation in the management of the EU development cooperation policy" (MSZ, 2009, p. 20). It is the most crucial opportunity to promote the state's interests and strive to achieve its foreign policy goals in the European Union. Concerning EU development policy, two vectors of Polish involvement are visible.

Firstly, as expected (Bagiński, 2002, p. 14–18; Carbone, 2004, p. 250–251), from the moment of joining the European Union, Poland drew the attention of other Member States to the broadly understood Eastern neighbourhood, which in 2009 led to establishing the Eastern Partnership programme as the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (Adamczyk, 2013; Barabasz, Piechocki, 2012, p. 260–268). In the following years, Poland's apparent demand was to balance the Union's interest in this direction, especially with the Southern neighbourhood, mainly the countries in the Mediterranean basin.

Secondly, when designing the EU development aid, Poland – considering its own post-1989 experiences – drew attention to the democratisation and protransformation dimension of development aid. At the same time, Polish decision-makers strove to recognise the state's achievements in political, economic and social transition and to use that knowledge in cooperation with developing countries (Szent-Iványi, 2014). Gaining the support of other Central and Eastern European states, Poland tried to transfer its transition experiences through hybrid EU channels (Horký, 2012, p. 22).

These two closely related paths result not only from the concept of development cooperation adopted by Poland, focusing on supporting democratisation and transformation, primarily in the countries of the state's Eastern neighbourhood (*Ustawa*, 2011, art. 2). They are also complementary to the concept of the state's foreign policy and the international roles articulated by political leaders, including, inter alia, playing the role of a model for successful transformation and an exporter of democracy to the East (Zięba, 2013, p. 287–299). In this view, development cooperation is also a tool for realising donor's particular interests, which in the case of Poland, concern mainly stabilising the Eastern neighbourhood and thus increasing the state's security (including energetic security), strengthening the international position of the country and building favourable economic relations with countries beyond the Eastern border.

It is worth emphasising that these two postulates were consistently articulated in the EU forum by all political groups ruling in Poland since 2004. Moreover, in the middle of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Polish decision-makers' third field of interest at that time was revealed, initially as a tool during the Polish parliamentary campaign

in 2015. The narrative that led the Law and Justice Party to victory in those elections was about using bilateral and multilateral (EU) ODA to solve the refugee and migration crisis and counteract further migrations to Europe (Yermakova, 2019, p. 182–191). Anti-refugee and anti-migration rhetoric, used primarily in domestic political struggle and mainly intended to strengthen the support of the coalition ruling since the end of 2015, then became one of the axes of conflict between Warsaw and Brussels under the guise of the need to “help on the spot” to the countries of origin of the newcomers (*Polska nie przyjmie*). However, it should be noted that this issue was used primarily in domestic political struggle and was mainly intended to strengthen the support of the coalition led by the Law and Justice Party, which has been ruling since the end of 2015.

Polish representatives promoted these positions during the work on the most crucial decisions of the EU development policy. In 2005, the state was involved in creating the *European Consensus on Development* (MSZ, 2006, p. 10), which resulted in a provision “The EU will capitalise on new Member States’ experience (such as transition management) and help strengthen the role of these countries as new donors” (*Joint statement*, 2006, point 33). In 2007, it co-created the *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid* (MSZ, 2008, p. 42–43; *Joint statement*, 2008). In 2017, it worked on the *New European Consensus on Development* (MSZ, 2018, p. 12–13). Polish positions introduced, in particular, the need to maintain a balance between geographical directions of EU development cooperation and striving to strengthen the countries of the Eastern Partnership as aid recipients, as well as supporting the linkage of cooperation with responding to the migration and refugee crisis and focusing EU actions on reducing the leading causes of migration. Again, in the Consensus there was a provision regarding the use by the EU the transition experiences (*Joint statement*, 2017, point 78).

In 2006 and 2013, Poland participated in programming the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> editions of the European Development Fund. The state also co-decided on the allocations of EU resources between development cooperation instruments used in the subsequent financial perspectives (2007–2013 and 2014–2020). Polish postulates effectively covered leaving the Fund outside the EU general budget and maintaining the existing key of payments, taking into account the issue of using the transformational experiences of EU Member States in EU development cooperation (e.g. due to the provision “In its development cooperation activities the Union shall, as appropriate, draw from and share the reform and transition experiences of Member States and the lessons learned”; *Regulation*, 2014, art. 3). Poland was also in favour of applying the so-called *more for more* principle as part of the instrument supporting the EU neighbourhood policy, i.e. increasing aid to countries ready to strengthen cooperation with the organisation, inter alia, by faster signing and implementation of association agreements and agreements on deep and comprehensive free trade areas (MSZ, 2007, p. 21–22; MSZ, 2014, p. 52–53). Poland also participated in works on *the Code of Conduct to Complementarity and the Division of Labour in Development Policy*, effectively striving to recognise the achievements of emerging donors as a comparative advantage (Council of the EU, 2007). During the works on the communication *EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies*, Poland worked on provisions concerning, among others, the transfer of transformational know-how and the need to report on the progress achieved by reforms (*Joint Communication*, 2012).



In 2018, work began on a new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), replacing the existing instruments in the 2021–2027 financial perspective (European Commission, 2018) and simplifying the implementation of assistance activities (Kugiel, 2018, p. 1–2; Jones et al., 2018, p. 6–12). In this context, the Polish position articulated some well-known issues: the necessity to cooperate with all developing countries (including countries with a medium level of development, especially those covered by the Eastern Partnership), taking into account the implementation of EU programmes knowledge and experiences (including transformational experiences) of all Member States and maintaining the separateness of the support instrument from the EU general budget and the non-budget EDF (MSZ, 2019, p. 18–19). On the last point, the state was, however, ineffective – funds from the EU general budget for external actions and the EDF budget were consolidated in the 2021–2027 multiannual financial framework (European Commission, 2021).

Poland also contributed to developing common positions of the European Union, which are presented in other international forums. In 2005, the state participated in drawing up a unified EU position for the UN summit on the review of the *Millennium Declaration* (MSZ, 2006, p. 10). From 2013 to 2015, Poland participated in the process of conceptualising the next generation of development goals as part of the post-2015 agenda, in particular, based on the findings of the UN conference on sustainable development (RIO+20) in June 2012 (United Nations, 2012) and the EC communication entitled *A Decent Life for All: Ending Poverty and Giving the World a Sustainable Future*, released in February 2013 (*Communication*, 2013). Warsaw focused on the issues of universal access to energy and strengthening good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights (as values influencing development and prosperity), working in one of the established working groups on the Sustainable Development Goals (it was composed of 30 representatives delegated by five UN regional groups) and drawing up for a common EU position at the UN on this matter. Thanks to cooperation in this area, issues related to sustainable energy (as goal 7) and those related to democratisation and good governance (as goal 16) have been included in the next global development agenda. In addition, Poland opted to maintain and extend until 2030 the previous arrangements regarding financial commitments for aid (globally – 0.7% of GNI to ODA, EU forum – 0.33% of GNI in the case of countries that joined the organisation since 2004) (MSZ, 2014, p. 53–53; MSZ, 2015, p. 48; MSZ, 2016, p. 11). In connection with the expiring *Cotonou Agreement*, Polish representatives also collaborated in defining the future shape of the EU-ACP relations and developing a negotiating mandate for the EC, preparing the provisions of another agreement with the ACP group (MSZ, 2018, p. 12–13; MSZ, 2019, p. 18–19).

### Participation in the EU Joint Programming

One of the forms of implementation of the development policy by the European Union is also the Joint Programming (JP). The initiative was already included in 2011 by the *Agenda for Change* (*Communication*, 2011) and then in 2017 by the *New European Consensus on Development* (*Joint statement*, 2017). It consists of a joint

EU response to partner countries' needs and development strategies, which allows for division of labour between donors, reduces aid fragmentation and, in consequence, increases the effectiveness of undertaken actions and reduces the related transaction costs. By the end of 2021, the European Union issued joint strategies for cooperation with 21 developing countries. Another 34 states were covered by other dimensions of Joint Programming (the process of analyses, road mapping or feasibility studies) (European Union, 2022a).

In 2013, Poland became a participant in the Joint Programming process in Ethiopia, demonstrating at the same time interest in EU activities for other countries identified by Polish development cooperation as priority partners (MSZ, 2014, p. 52–53). Over the years, Poland joined the JP programming for Armenia, Belarus, Myanmar, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Moldova, Palestine, Senegal and Tunisia. After reforming the list of priority recipients of Polish development aid, Poland remains active in the joint EU initiatives for Armenia, Belarus, Myanmar, Kenya, Laos, Moldova, Palestine, Senegal and Tunisia, being at the end of 2021 a donor for nine partner countries (European Union, 2022b). However, not all these countries are considered priority partners for Polish aid. Moreover, Poland is not the leading donor concerning any of them, nor is it directly responsible for implementing any of the agreed pillars of joint actions. Therefore, it would be desirable for decision-makers to increase the coherence of the geographic directions selected on the EU forum with the goals set by the long-term development programmes presented by the MFA and to increase the state's involvement in the thematic areas in which Poland identifies its comparative advantages. Nevertheless, this initiative is another opportunity for Warsaw to present itself as a reliable partner, fulfilling international obligations and participating in the international division of labour, as well as to transfer knowledge and good practices from much more experienced donors. It also makes it possible to increase the effectiveness of limited Polish ODA.

### **The flagship initiative: the European Endowment for Democracy**

As already mentioned, Poland played a special role in the EU development policy during its presidency in the Council of the European Union (Kugiel, 2009, p. 2). Thanks to this, the country “played a more active role in the international system of providing aid and had the opportunity to present the achievements of Polish development and humanitarian aid to a greater extent” (MSZ, 2012, p. 62). The state used this period to implement its basic postulates regarding EU development cooperation: increasing the importance of recipients from the broadly understood Eastern neighbourhood of Poland and strengthening the democratisation and protransformation vector of aid, e.g. using the experiences of the Member States' transitions.

The most important initiative Warsaw took during its presidency was the creation of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED). The idea of creating a European democratisation fund appeared in Polish political circles much earlier. However, it was officially presented only on 31 January 2011, during a meeting of the FAC, by Minister Radosław Sikorski (Tabaszewski, 2012, p. 170–171). He argued the proposal both



with the socio-political situation in Belarus (primarily the brutal suppression of anti-regime demonstrations) and with the events of the Arab Spring at that time. Despite the initial scepticism of representatives of other EU Member States, the success of the Polish presidency was the adoption of a political declaration on the establishment of the structure. It stated that “The objective of the Endowment will be to foster and encourage ‘deep and sustainable democracy’ in transition countries and in societies struggling for democratisation, with initial, although not exclusive focus, on the European Neighbourhood” (Council of the EU, 2011).

The Fund, which should fill the gap in the EU’s instruments for supporting democratic processes in authoritarian states and the democratisation of states in transition (Tordjman, 2017, p. 4–5), adopted its statute in 2012. It was officially launched in 2013 and began implementing its first projects at the beginning of 2014 (Przybylska-Maszner, 2016, p. 124–125). Its director, since its inception, is Jerzy Pomianowski (in the past, among others, Polish deputy minister of foreign affairs). Radosław Sikorski, commenting on the establishment of the EED, emphasised that: “This is the repayment of the debt we incurred when we received aid” (*Polska otwiera*, 2013). Contributions to the Fund are made voluntarily by twenty-six European countries (mainly the EU Member States). Resources are granted mainly to the countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (Eastern Partnership countries, North Africa and the Middle East), the Western Balkans countries and Turkey. The implemented projects focus on anti-corruption measures, media independence, civil society support, human rights protection and anti-discrimination (EED, 2022a). By the end of 2021, the Fund supported over 600 initiatives (EED, 2022b).

### **Bilateralisation of the EU development aid: the case of the refugee and migration crisis**

Poland’s interest in providing multi-bi aid (Gulrajani, 2016, p. 17; Zajączkowski, 2019, p. 45) grew at the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2016, the share of targeted contributions in bilateral aid amounted to 20%, in 2017 – as much as 47% and in 2018 – 10%. The vast majority of payments at that time supported the institutions of the European Union and the European Investment Bank. It was allocated to initiatives to prevent the inflow of thousands of people to Europe seeking shelter and better living conditions (Czachór, 2021, p. 43–48). These include:

- 1) Established at the end of 2014, the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, under which aid is provided to Syrian refugees, especially children. There are also attempts to reduce the pressure exerted on the countries neighbouring Syria that host refugees (e.g. by creating decent living conditions or supporting social cohesion) (European Commission, 2022a). By 2021, 21 EU Member States, the United Kingdom and Turkey, made voluntary contributions to the Fund. Their total value reached almost EUR 2.4 billion, and the largest donors are Germany (EUR 80 million), Denmark (EUR 53.7 million) and Austria (EUR 18.5 million). Poland’s contribution amounted to EUR 4.2 million (0.18% of the instrument’s budget), and the state is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest donor (*EU Regional Trust Fund*, 2021);

- 2) Launched at the end of 2015, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to tackle root causes leading people to leave places of residence and generating illegal migration. Its budget is EUR 5.0 billion (including EUR 4.4 billion directly from the EU budget and EDF), which is spent, among others, on increasing economic and employment opportunities in Africa, improving management competencies and conflict prevention and improving border management in Libya (European Commission, 2022b). Individual donors (EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom) contributed directly to the instrument's budget of EUR 623.16 million, including Poland's input of EUR 10.55 million, i.e. 1.69% of the total (European Commission, 2022c);
- 3) Approved in 2016, the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey is a crucial element of the European Union's cooperation with Turkey to counter the crisis and limit the influx of migrants and refugees to Europe via the Mediterranean route, including the migrant exchange mechanism. The instrument's budget is EUR 6.0 billion, which is spent in two tranches and covers humanitarian aid and projects in the education, health and social infrastructure sectors (European Commission, 2022d). Half of the instrument's budget was financed by the EU budget, the other – by additional contributions from the Member States. Poland's share in them was less than 3% (Council of the EU, 2016; Council of the EU, 2018);
- 4) The Economic Resilience Initiative launched by the European Investment Bank in 2016 as part of the EU's response to the challenges faced by countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Western Balkans, such as forced displacement, migrations, economic slowdown, political crises, drought and floods. The implemented projects focus on supporting both the public and private sectors (EIB, 2022a). Poland has so far contributed EUR 50.0 million to the Fund established for this purpose, i.e. nearly half of its value (EUR 112.0 million) and is its most significant founder (EIB, 2022b).

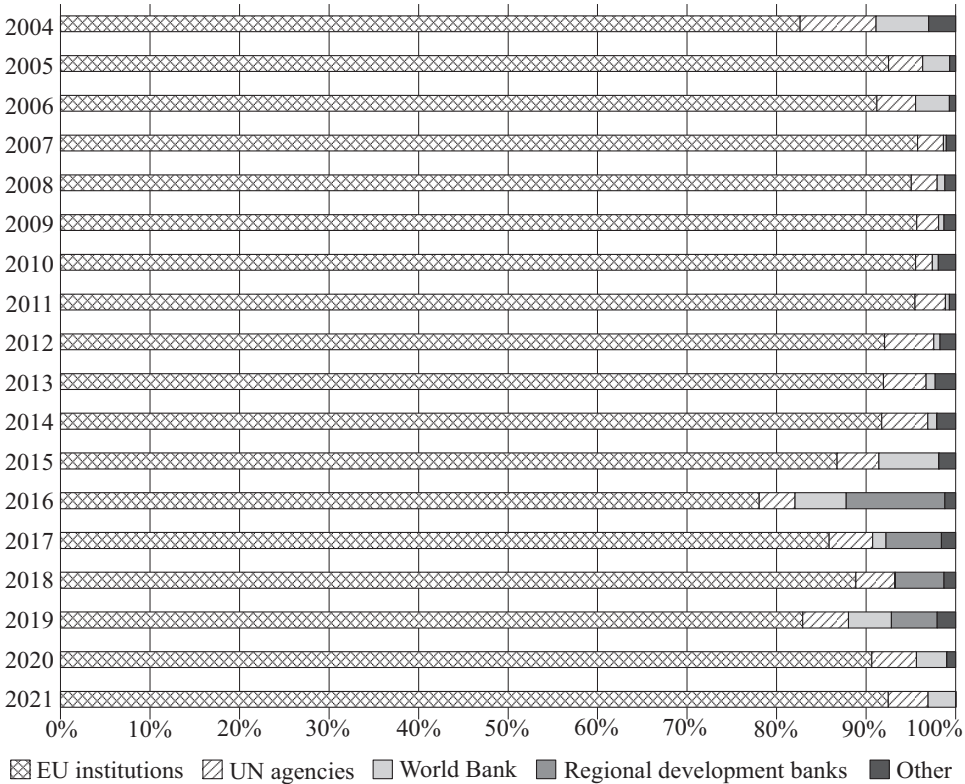
At the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the transfer of bilateral aid through multilateral channels was highly beneficial for Polish decision-makers. Firstly, with a small amount of work (substantive and administrative), there was a significant increase in the volume of bilateral ODA. While in 2015 its value was USD 100.19 million, in the following years, it was USD 146.99 million, USD 222.11 million, USD 238.07 million, USD 207.78 million, USD 207.22 million and USD 262.32 million, respectively (OECD, 2022b). In this way, Poland confirmed its deep commitment to solving global problems. Secondly, the aforementioned initiatives fit perfectly into the rhetoric of “helping on the spot” in the countries of origin of refugees and migrants (Kugiel, 2016, p. 56–57). It was essential in the context of the Polish decision-makers' refusal to agree to join the refugee and migrant relocation mechanism developed at the forum of the European Union. It was supposed to hide the fact that Poland was recognised as a country that did not show solidarity with other European countries, which were affected to a much greater extent by the crisis and did not fulfil the obligations of the Member State (Court of Justice of the EU, 2020). Thirdly, it was an exploited argument in the domestic political debate, as it was supposed to counter the allegations against the ruling party regarding its ignorance concerning migration problems and the resulting conflict with the European Union. Moreover, such a tactic was also supposed

to postpone the spectre of increased migration to Poland and thus increase the party’s political capital efficiently using the anti-immigration postulates of part of the public opinion (CBOS, 2017).

**Co-financing the EU development policy**

As already indicated, contributions to the budgets of the European Union institutions have been the core of the Polish multilateral ODA since 2004. Every year, about 90% of multilateral ODA is transferred by Poland in this way, with the symbolic participation of other recipients, primarily entities of the United Nations system, units of the World Bank Group, regional development banks or other funds and institutions (Chart 1).

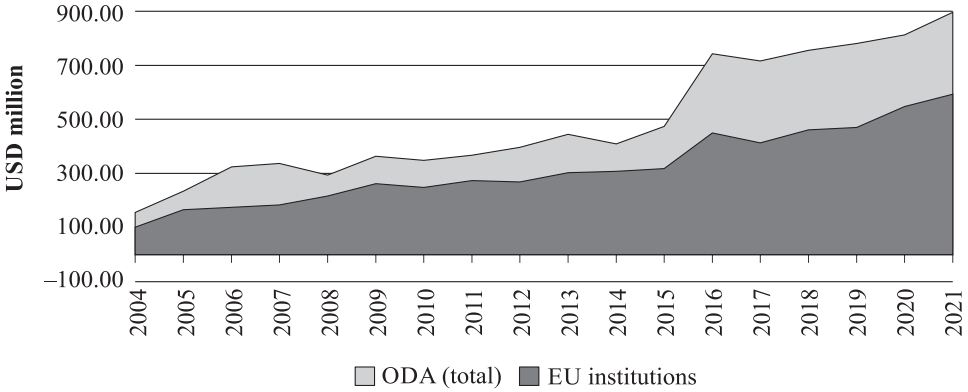
**Chart 1. Contributions to the EU institutions in Poland’s multilateral ODA, 2004–2021 (%)**



Source: OECD, 2022b.

Moreover, considering that Poland transfers the vast majority of its ODA through the multilateral channels (75% on average every year), it should be stated that the EU institutions hold a crucial part of Polish aid (Chart 2).

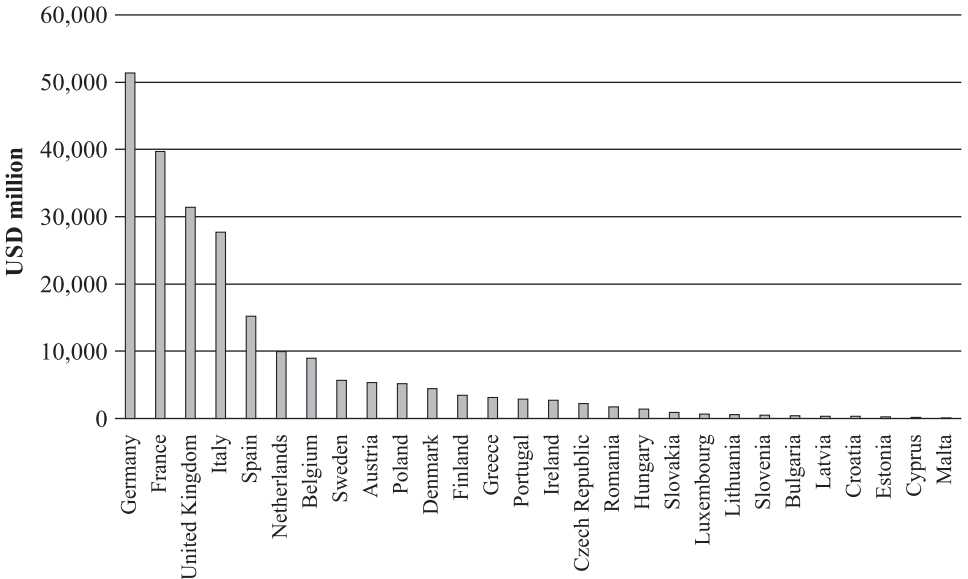
Chart 2. Contributions to the EU institutions in Poland's total ODA, 2004–2021 (USD million)



Source: OECD, 2022b.

However, basing Polish allocations on the EU institutions does not mean they play a key role in the entirety of the European Union’s resources allocated annually to development cooperation. Considering the period 2004–2021, Poland is the 10<sup>th</sup> donor of the EU development budget, the pillars of which are German, French, British (until 2020) and Italian contributions. Regarding the total nominal amounts, the state is the largest donor among the countries that joined the EU since 2004, and its contributions also exceed several countries of the “old EU” (Chart 3).

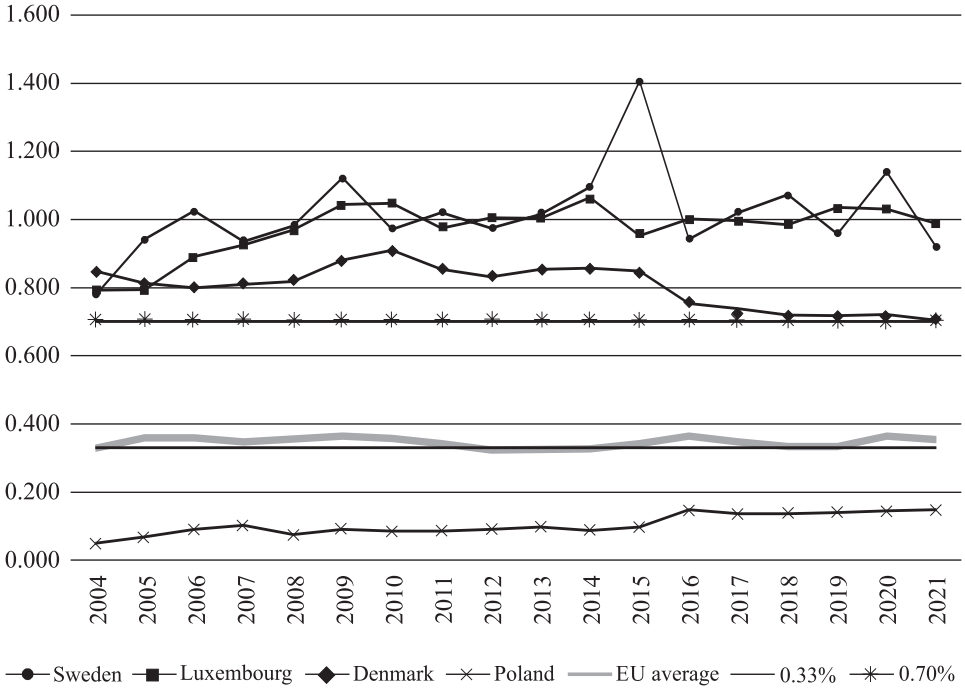
Chart 3. Total ODA contributions to the EU institutions of the EU Member States, 2004–2021 (USD million)



Source: OECD, 2022b.

A much more reliable indicator of donor generosity is, however, the level of expenditure on ODA in relation to the Gross National Income (GNI). In this context, Poland ranks among the least generous EU donors. Considering the average for 2004–2021, it is in fourth place from the end, with a result of 0.103% GNI/ODA. This shows the distance between the state and the most generous EU countries (Sweden – average 1.017% GNI/ODA, Luxembourg – 0.971% and Denmark – 0.803%) and the distance to fulfilling international obligations that Poland has undertaken in this field. The first *European Consensus* included a provision that the countries that joined the EU in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should achieve the ODA expenditure level of 0.33% by 2015. Due to its non-fulfilment, this deadline was extended by the revised *Consensus* until 2030. Analysing the data on Poland (Chart 4), this aim seems complicated to achieve also to that date.

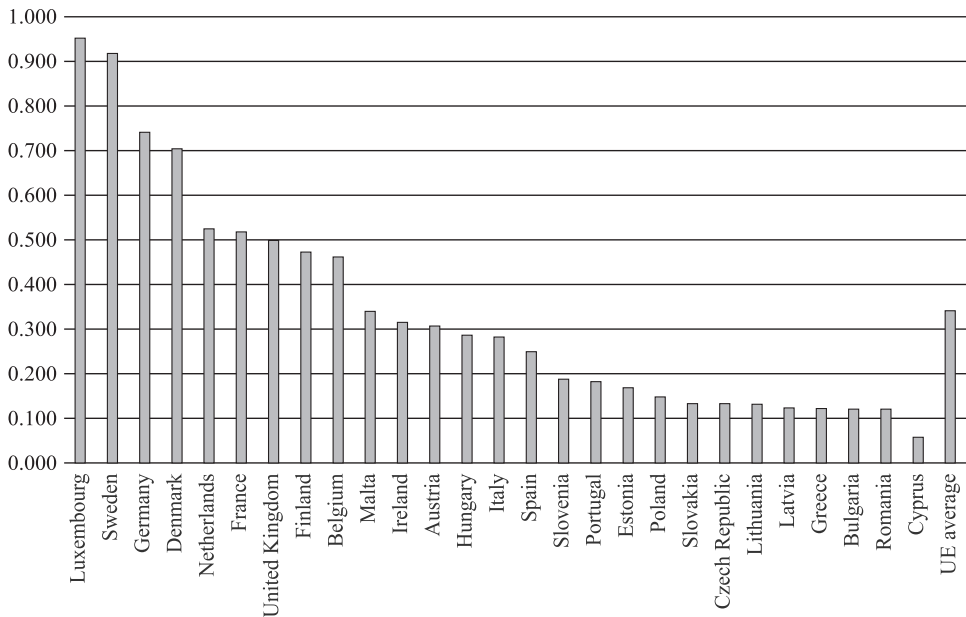
**Chart 4. The most generous EU Member State ODA donors and Poland, 2004–2021 (% GNI/ODA)**



Source: OECD, 2022c.

Compared to the other EU Member States, Poland appears to be not very generous, showing limited commitment to supporting developing countries and being far from meeting its financial obligations. This is also confirmed by the latest available data (from 2021). Poland – being the sixth biggest economy in the European Union – was 9<sup>th</sup> from the end in terms of the share of ODA in GNI, before several countries that also joined the EU since 2004 and Greece, but far behind the most generous countries as well as from Malta, Hungary, Slovenia and Estonia (Chart 5).

**Chart 5. ODA expenditures of the EU Member States, 2021 (% GNI/ODA)**



**Source:** OECD, 2022c.

It is also worth briefly describing Poland's position in the European Development Fund. In the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the EDF (2000–2007), Poland had the observer status, but it actively participated in the implementation of the Fund's 10<sup>th</sup> (2007–2013) and 11<sup>th</sup> (2014–2020) editions (although the first contributions to the Fund's budget were made in 2011). The key contribution to the EDF resulted from the agreements concluded by the Member States of the European Union and considered the level of economic development of individual parties.

The budget of the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Fund amounted to over EUR 22.68 billion and was made up of contributions from 27 EU Member States. Most of the funds (EUR 21.96 billion) were allocated to activities in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. The most significant contributions to the budget were committed by Germany (20.50% – EUR 4.65 billion), France (19.55% – EUR 4.43 billion), the United Kingdom (14.82% – EUR 3.36 billion) and Italy (12.86% – EUR 2.92 billion). The Polish contribution was set at EUR 294.86 million and accounted for 1.3% of the total resources of the instrument (*Internal Agreement*, 2006, art. 1). In the next edition, the Fund, to which 28 Member States made contributions, already had over EUR 30.5 billion at its disposal, the majority of which (EUR 29.08 billion) was allocated again to support the ACP states. The pillars of the Fund's budget were contributions again from Germany (20.58% – EUR 6.28 billion), France (17.82% – EUR 5.43 billion), the United Kingdom (14.68% – EUR 4.48 billion) and Italy (12.53% – EUR 3.82 billion). Poland paid to this budget more than twice as much as before – EUR 612.36 million – but it constituted only 2.01% of the total resources available to the Fund (*Internal Agreement*, 2013, art. 1).



A sort of “technical” implication of EDF’s budget structure was also the distribution of votes in the Fund Committee, operating at the European Commission and composed of representatives of the governments of the Member States chaired by a representative of the EC. According to the contribution key, the highest number of votes in both editions of EDF was held by Germany (205 and 206 votes respectively), France (196 and 178 votes), the United Kingdom (148 and 147 votes) and Italy (129 and 125 votes). Poland had firstly 13 votes, and then 20 (*Internal Agreement*, 2006, art. 8; *Internal Agreement*, 2013, art. 8). The strength of the (few) Polish votes can be illustrated by the fact that – following the agreement’s provisions – in the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Fund, the Committee made decisions by a qualified majority of 720 votes (out of a total of 1004), with the support of at least 13 Member States. A blocking minority was agreed at the level of 280 votes. In the subsequent edition, a qualified majority of 720 votes was maintained (out of a total of 1000 votes), but 14 Member States had to support the initiative. The blocking minority was reduced to 279 votes (*Internal Agreement*, 2006, art. 8; *Internal Agreement*, 2013, art. 8). Because of the low number of votes that Poland had at its disposal, it must be stated that it could not be the core of the coalitions supporting or blocking the issues raised by the Committee. It could only modestly support these coalitions. Therefore, it is justified to state that the influence of Poland on the operation of the EDF was marginal, which made it impossible to promote the state’s interests.

### Conclusions

As has been shown, the key administrator of Polish aid resources is the European Union. However, attempts to implement Poland’s long-term interests in this forum led mainly to the inclusion in several programming documents of the possibility of using the transformational experiences of its Member States by the EU. On the other hand, the crusade to create the Eastern vector of the European Neighbourhood Policy and then the European Endowment for Democracy, co-responsible for financing aid in this direction, ended successfully. Nevertheless, in the entire EU ODA, the Eastern direction is much less critical than the Southern. The organisation’s attention is focused on the ACP and Southern neighbourhood countries, in line with the genesis of the EU’s development policy (Bagiński, 2009, p. 42–45; Hout, 2010, p. 4–5) and with little compliance with Polish interests (Carbone, 2011, p. 161). Warsaw failed to convince Brussels of the primacy of democratisation support and the transfer of transition experiences over the demands of the global development agenda, especially poverty eradication (United Nations, 2015), which remain the priority of the EU’s development assistance. At the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Polish decision-makers also managed to use the instruments created by the European Union in response to the refugee and migration crisis in the current political game. Its axis became the narrative of “help on the spot” and the elimination of the root causes of migration, which was to mask the lack of solidarity towards the EU members affected by this crisis on a much larger scale. Generally, however, Poland’s political contribution to the EU development policy is small – both politically and financially. Although the state is the

10<sup>th</sup> donor of the EU development budget, Poland is burdened with the image of a less generous donor who does not meet international financial obligations in this field.

Therefore, it must be stated that Poland has limited influence on most of the funds it expends as part of development aid. Paradoxically, however, this is not a disadvantageous situation. In this respect, Poland does not stand out from the rest of the Central and Eastern European countries (OECD, 2022b). Nevertheless, more importantly, Poland compensates for its limited possibilities of delivering bilateral aid, small total financial resources allocated to ODA and weak expert, administrative and logistic base. In such circumstances, multilateral aid is an easier way of spending ODA, limited mainly to contributing to international entities' budgets. It is an attractive way for new donors to join the international development cooperation system.

Finally, with little effort, Poland – as a passive donor, can increase its own ODA's visibility and demonstrate its commitment to achieving the goals of the global development agenda. Above all, it can benefit from the status of the world's most important ODA donor, which concerns the European Union and its Member States.

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### Summary

Accession to the European Union (EU) significantly impacted the structure and volume of Poland's Official Development Assistance (ODA). Since 2004, most of the Polish aid has been distributed through multilateral channels (annually 73% on average), with the dominant position among them of the EU (annually 90% of multilateral ODA and at the same time 66% of total ODA). The EU remains the main administrator of Polish aid resources. Therefore, the main aim of this article is to define the contribution (both in political and financial terms) that Poland makes to the European Union's development policy. It is no less important to verify the state's activity level in shaping this policy, which is related to promoting foreign policy interests (long-term and short-term) in the EU forum.

**Key words:** Development cooperation, Official Development Assistance, ODA, multilateral ODA, EU external actions, EU development policy, Poland



**Polska w polityce rozwojowej UE:  
aktywny uczestnik czy pasywny donator?**

**Streszczenie**

Przystąpienie do Unii Europejskiej (UE) znacznie wpłynęło na strukturę i wielkość polskiej Oficjalnej Pomocy Rozwojowej (ODA). Od 2004 roku większość pomocy przekazywana jest przez Polskę kanałami wielostronnymi (średniorocznie 73%), z dominującą wśród nich pozycją UE (rocznie 90% wielostronnej i jednocześnie 66% całości ODA). Głównym dysponentem polskich funduszy pomocowych pozostaje więc UE. Głównym celem niniejszego artykułu jest określenie wkładu (zarówno politycznego, jak i finansowego) Polski w politykę rozwojową Unii Europejskiej. Nie mniej istotna jest weryfikacja poziomu aktywności państwa w zakresie kształtowania tej polityki, co wiąże się z promowaniem własnych interesów (długo- i krótkoterminowych) na forum UE.

**Słowa kluczowe:** współpraca rozwojowa, Oficjalna Pomoc Rozwojowa, ODA, ODA multilateralna, działania zewnętrzne UE, polityka rozwojowa UE, Polska

