



WILLKOMMEN IN POLEN  
WE INVITE YOU TO POLAND

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BIENVENIDOS EN POLONIA  
BIENVENUE EN POLOGNE



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ISBN 83-89546-16-7

Polska

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W E I N V I T E Y O U  
T O P O L A N D

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I N T R O D U C T I O N



## **POLAND IN THE COMMUNICATIONS HEART OF EUROPE**

**O**n May 1st Poland became a member state of the European Union (EU) and thanks to its location occupies a specific place within it. Poland's border on the river Bug became the EU's eastern border. In the wider geographical and geopolitical sense Poland occupies a central position. It is, furthermore, likely that after accession Poland will to a large extent perform the role of a transit state in Europe. Poles realise the threats associated with this state of affairs. On one hand, more foreign investment from EU countries is expected to be shifted to Poland, while on the other, forecasts indicate an increase in the number of immigrants to Poland. Accepting its responsible role connected with the regulation of people and goods across its borders, Poland is also open to visitors from all over the world.

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R I G H T S T O



Citizenship ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw

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S T A Y I N P O L A N D



**T**he hospitality for which Poles pride themselves is reflected in official regulations governing the rights of foreigners to stay in Poland. They allow every person to cross the border, regardless of skin colour, religious faith or social and political views.

The Polish authorities reserve the right to bar entry to anyone who has or has had problems with the law. No one, for example, who has been sentenced to a minimum three-year jail sentence or who has been sentenced outside of Poland for common crimes, will be able to enter the country legally. Anyone suspected of terrorism, illegal arms or ammunition trading, human trade or threatening the security of the state will not be able to take advantage of Polish hospitality. The authorities also reserve the right to refuse visas to children of other states who are without adult supervision or when a border control guard believes that the declared aims of visit differ from the actual aims. Foreigners wanting to legally visit Poland should make their way to a Polish diplomatic outpost in their own country, where they will be given full information on the rules



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governing their visit to Poland. The list of Polish consulates abroad is accessible on the Polish Foreign Ministry website in English: <http://www.mszy.gov.pl>

Foreigners can visit Poland on the following bases:

- With a current passport that expiry date exceeds at least three months after the date of entry into Poland;
- With a travel visa;
- With permission for temporary rights to remain;
- With permission for permanent rights to remain

Citizens of countries that have signed bilateral agreements with Poland partially lifting visa obligations are in the best situation. A current passport is all they need to enter the country, although their right to remain is limited, most often to 90 days. There are, however, in this group countries whose citizens have the right to stay in Poland for less than 90 days – for example, citizens of Singapore can stay only 30 days on this basis.

The list of 'visa-less' countries is long and may increase further, depending on the signing of further international agreements. They are: Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Hong Kong, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Macao, Malaysia, Mexico, Monaco, Nicaragua, Panama, Romania, San Marino, Singapore, South Korea, Uruguay, USA.

Note! In line with Poland's EU accession on May 1st 2004 all citizens of EU member states are as well as the European Economic Area able to enter Poland from their own states or from other member states on the basis of a passport or ID documents valid in their own countries.



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Refugee centre in Bialystok



Polish language classes for foreigners at the Warsaw University

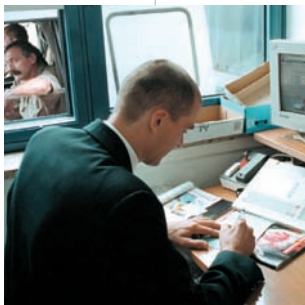
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Border crossing between Poland and Belarus in Koroszczyn

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V I S A S



**T**he period your visa is valid – according to Polish regulations – is the basic period for which you have the right to visit and stay in Poland. Foreigners can apply for visas in Polish diplomatic outposts abroad. They must be ready with their personal details, dates of arrival and departure to and from Poland as well as the purpose of their visit. The consulate will confirm acceptance of applications with the appropriate stamp in the passport. You must also pay a fee when applying for your passport. Regardless of the type of visa and period of its validity visa payments range from 10-80 euros. In the case of visa applications being refused by a consulate no payments made will be returned. In connection with Poland's EU accession, transit visas have been reintroduced for citizens of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. Thanks to a beneficial bilateral agreement, citizens of Ukraine will not have to pay a visa fee.

In your passport, assuming you have not been refused entry by the consulate, you will find one of the following types of visa:

AIRPORT,  
 TRANSIT,

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A border guard officer checking passports on train running between Warsaw and Moscow

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ENTRY WITH THE PURPOSE OF:

- a/ repatriation,
- b/ resettlement as a member of a repatriated person's closest family
- c/ obtaining permission to stay for a specified time or permission to settle permanently,

PURPOSE OF VISIT:

- a/ tourism,
- b/ visiting,
- c/ participation in sports events,
- d/ conducting economic activity,
- e/ conducting cultural activity or participating in international conferences,
- f/ undertaking special service activities or as a representative of a foreign state,
- g/ participation in matters related to seeking asylum
- h/ undertaking work,
- i/ science, training, educational – excluding paid work,
- j/ temporary immunity:

DIPLOMATIC,  
SPECIAL SERVICES,  
COURIER,

Entry visas are granted only:

- short-term – a maximum stay in Poland of 3 months in a 6-month period counting from the day of arrival
- long-term – to the year the visa deadline expires

The validity period of a long-term visa can be up to 5 years. Details of the rules of entry, stay and movement in the Republic of Poland are contained in the Law of June 13th 2003 on foreigners ( Dz. U. Nr 128, poz. 1175 ).

If, however, the purpose of the visit to Poland is to gain employment or conduct other paid work other procedures apply.



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## MEANS OF FINANCING YOUR VISIT

Simply having a visa in your passport does not absolutely guarantee that you will be able to enter the territory of Poland. A very important issue the border authorities will be interested in is how you intend to finance your stay in Poland.

At the request of the border authorities foreigners may have to show how they intend to finance their entry to, stay in and departure from Poland. This may be in Polish zlotys or other exchangeable currencies. Valid credit cards and travellers checks can also be used, as may a bank confirmation stamp, stamped at the latest a month before crossing the border, with the signature of an employee authorised to confirm that the visitor has appropriate funds in his or her bank, which also must have its branch in Poland.

The amount of financial means which a foreigner coming to Poland must have, and documents to confirm this and the purpose of his or her crossing the border are regulated by the Amendment of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Administration from September 29th 2003 (Dz. U. Nr 178, poz.1748).

For every day a foreigner is staying in Poland he or she will need to have at least 100 zlotys, and children under 16 years of age, 50 zlotys. The total money visitors need to have on them is 500 zlotys for adults and 300 zlotys for those under 16. If the period of stay does not exceed three days, the respective amounts are, 300 zlotys and 150 zlotys. Border authorities will check if the person crossing the border is able to cover the costs of using a car for use on Polish roads.

Border authorities will strictly require a foreigner to have confirmation that they have sufficient financial means if they are a part of a package tour, youth camp group, on a sportings event or visiting a medical centre or sanatorium for treatment. In such cases, they may be asked to show documents confirming their participation in such events,

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The best way to get cash is to withdraw it from an ATM



The last day in the old seat of the Stock Exchange



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together with confirmation of fees paid for a stay in Poland or a document confirming the foreigner's need for treatment. Such documents, the equivalent of financial means, must contain: the exact data about their issuer, the dates concerning tourist services, dates and places of stay, exact itinerary of the trip, name and surname of participant(s) and a confirmation that all costs have been paid to the relevant tourist services.

Additionally, participants of on package tours, youth camps, or members of sports professions or those entitled to sanatorium treatments must have the equivalent of 20 zlotys for each day of their stay, in total not less than 100 zlotys.

The document confirming support for a foreigner coming to Poland is an invitation, issued by a Polish citizen living in Poland or a foreigner staying in Poland legally for at least 5 years before issuing an invitation. The boarder authorities will only respect an original invitation written on a formal form and registered in the invitation registry run by a voivodship, according to the address of the person inviting. A voivodship will refuse the registration in the invitation registry if the inviting institution is not able to prove or will not obligate itself to cover all the costs of a foreigner's stay in Poland, including costs of possible treatment.

A foreigner can also be invited by a legal entity (e.g. an enterprise functioning as a joint-stock company) or an institution (e.g. a public or self-governing office, or a university).



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Border crossing between Poland and the Czech Republic  
in Cieszyn



Foreign students of the Krakow University of Technology

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Looking for accomodation...

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P E R M I S S I O N



#### PERMIT FOR RESIDENCE

A foreigner who wants to stay in Poland for a longer period of time should turn to a relevant voivodship in the district where he or she lives or to the place where he or she intends to reside in Poland to issue a residence permit for a specified time. If a foreigner is outside of Poland, he or she can apply for an application form to the relevant voivodship via a Polish consulate. A permit issued by a voivodship will be entered into a residence permit. The maximum validity period is two years, but can be renewed every subsequent two years.

A foreigner can obtain a permit to stay and reside only if he or she can prove that his or her stay in the territory of the Republic of Poland is justified. Regulations specify the circumstances entitling an application for a temporary stay permit.

They are:

- Obtaining the promise of an employment permit, awaiting paid employment or an employer's written certification of his intention to conduct such employment if the regulations do not require a permit;
- Running a business under Polish law. In this case, a foreigner has to present documents confirming his or her business activity on the territory of Poland, its subject

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International School in Warsaw



Residence permit

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and range, and in particular an extract from a Country Court Register, a notary confirmation of a partnership agreement, a statement from the Internal Revenue Office about confirming payment of arrears;

- Starting studies at a Polish university, provided that a foreigner has the means to support him or herself during studies. He or she has to present an original of a certificate on a formal form issued by the relevant university about enrolment or continuation of studies, stating the regulatory date of beginning of studies;
- Marriage with a Polish or foreign citizen having a permit to settling in Poland (a residence card).

A foreigner applying for a residence permit in Poland for a specified period of time is obliged to put forward the following documents to the authority issuing the permit: an application, indicating significant circumstances, justifying his or her stay in Poland, four photographs, confirmation of administration fee payment and documents confirming that they have sources of income and own means, together with a confirmation of sums (e.g. a statement from a bank account). Moreover, a voivodship (or a the consul accepting an application) can demand: an extract of a birth certificate, marriage certificate, or a certification of having no commitments in relation to the Internal Revenue Office in their country of origin and the confirmation of lack of criminal record in their country of origin.

#### **PERMIT FOR SETTLEMENT IN POLAND**

A foreigner who stays in Poland without breaks for at least five years on the basis of a visa or temporary residence permit can apply to the relevant voivodship for a settlement permit, popularly known as 'permanent residence cards.' A similar application can be presented by a foreigner living in Poland at least for three years, as

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The well known soccer player of Nigerian origin Emanuel Olisadebe has associated his personal life with Poland

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long as he or she came to Poland as a part of family emigration.

A foreigner has to fulfil all the remaining conditions – with no exceptions – as follows:

- Demonstrate the existence of permanent family or economic attachment with the country of stay;
- He or she has ensured residence and living conditions.

This means that he or she has to justify to an authority issuing the permits that his or her income and owned property will be sufficient to cover the costs of living and treatment of him or herself and family, supported by them and will not use means of social aid. An applicant has to demonstrate that he or she has a place to live in Poland and will present a legal title to this place (e.g. deed of property, membership of a housing development, rental agreement).

A settlement permit is valid indeterminately. Such a permit will also be granted to a child of a foreigner who has been born on the territory of Poland, if a foreigner has a valid settlement permit for a the territory of Poland.

A foreigner applying for permanent residence card is obliged to put forward an application for permission to settle in Poland, four photographs, a confirmation of his or her address, documents confirming an unbroken five- year period of living in Poland, documents confirming owned diplomas and professional qualifications and a CV. He or she must also document his or her income and the proof of financial means sufficient to cover costs of living.

## **JOINING FAMILIES**

If a foreigner living in Poland and having a permanent residence card or a temporary residence card for at least three years applies for a residence permit for his or her spouse (the marriage will have to be valid according to Polish law), or with an own or adopted



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under-age single child, it is very probable that he or she will obtain such a permit.

An applicant will be obliged to prove that he owns a place to live and material means to support his or her family, so that of social security support will not be necessary. A permit to live with a family is valid for 12 months from the date of the issue. If a family comes to Poland at the invitation of a holder of temporary residence card, then permission for stay is prolonged to the end of the card's validity. If an applicant is a holder of a permanent residence card, then permission for residence for his or her family is valid for two years.

Application for a temporary residence permit has to include: an extract of the marriage certificate, an extract of the birth certificate, a legally valid court decision about a child's adoption or custody and documents confirming income (e.g. work agreement) or own material means (e.g. a bank account statement) and also suitable housing conditions (e.g. flat rental agreement).

## LEGAL EMPLOYMENT

A foreigner intending to work in Poland has to first find an employer in Poland who will agree to apply for a work permit to a voivodship in the district where the company or institution he runs is located. A foreigner can obtain such an agreement if there are no counter-candidates among Polish citizens for the position he or she is applying for. Note! After 1st May 2004, a requirements to obtain a work permit does not concern:

- citizens of EU member states;
- members of families of EU members who have business or work in Poland.



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Foreigners legally employed in Poland are subject to the regulations under the Polish Labour Code



Holly Mass celebrated in the Wroclaw Cathedral on the world Migrant Day



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Other foreigners will be obliged to follow general regulations of working in Poland. The procedure for employing a foreigner in most cases consists of three stages. A person applying for a working visa or a Polish residence card has to present an employer's promise to give him or her work, which is issued by a voivodship relevant to the location of the employer's company.

The application for such a document is filed by the future employer to a voivodship. Employers employing foreigners are not required to have a promise of a work permit if on the day of submitting an application to the voivodship a foreigner has a valid working visa or a Polish temporary residence visa.

When the promise is issued to an employer, the voivodship will define the conditions for a foreigner to obtain a work permit. Only after these conditions have been established can a foreigner obtain the appropriate work permit.

Polish regulations also foresee the possibility of issuing a promise and permit regardless of the situation on a local labour market. This dramatically increases the chances of foreigners taking up work. From this:

- they are entitled to represent foreign companies with branches or representative offices in Poland;
- family members of employees of diplomatic posts or of employees working in Poland as a result of international agreements;
- private domestic workers of employees of diplomatic representatives in Poland or international organisations;
- doctors and dentists on professional internship required by law if they are graduates of Polish medical schools.

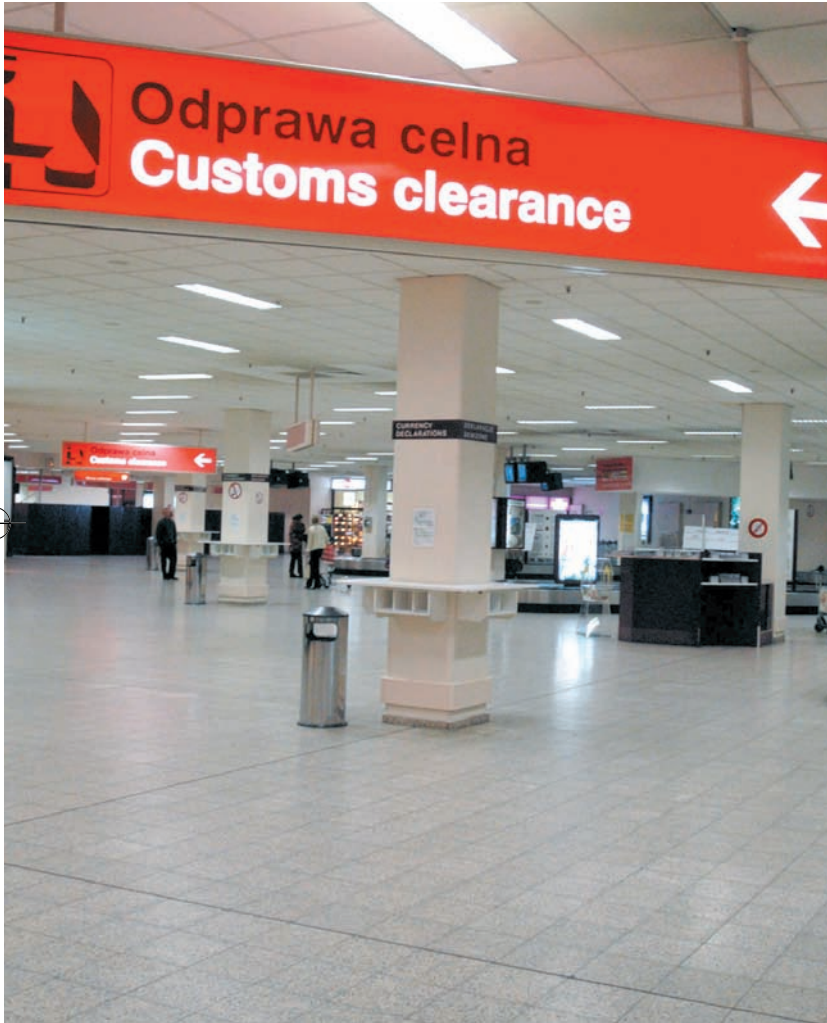
There is quite reasonably a large group of foreigners who can legally work in Poland without the necessity of having an official permit. Such ways are offered to foreigners who:

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- are accredited press, radio and TV correspondents, as well as photographers and filmmakers working on assignments for the foreign mass media;
- artists – actors, orchestra conductors, instrumentalists, singers, dancers and mime artists who will not exceed 30 days of work during a calendar year;
- stationary students studying in Polish universities and working during holidays not longer than three months a year;
- people giving occasional speeches, presentations of a particular scientific or artistic value;
- board members of legal entities who live permanently abroad, and perform their duties not longer than 30 days in a calendar year;
- clergy;
- foreign employees sent to Poland for a time not longer than three months in a calendar year to conduct training, assembly of fair expositions, maintenance or reception of machines and equipment ordered by their companies;
- soldiers and civil personnel of NATO structures in Poland.

Foreigners working legally in Poland can perform their duties within the conditions defined in permits or on any conditions if they do not need permits. As employees working in Poland they come under the Polish labour code. Like Polish citizens, they can also obtain incomes on the basis of civil-legal agreements defined by the civil code, e.g. assignments, one- off job agreements, or one- off agreements with the transfer of copyrights. In such a situation they do not have employees' rights, such as right to leave or holiday and eight-hour working day. In the case of assignments,

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they have the same rights to pensions and health security, like as any employee on a permanent work contract.

Foreigners who work illegally in Poland, without having a necessary work permit, will have to face the most severe consequences: they will be expelled from Poland. The execution of such a decision is immediate. If a foreigner does not leave a country voluntarily in the time specified by the authorities, he or she will be immediately expelled from Poland at his or her own cost (or the cost of the person who has invited the foreigner to Poland). A decision about on an immediate expulsion from the country will automatically make previously issued visas or temporary residence permits void. A person who receive a decision about expulsion will have his or her finger-prints taken and photograph taken, which will be placed in the national registers. A foreigner expelled from Poland will find it much harder to obtain a visa or residence card in Poland.

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I N S U R A N C E



### GREEN CARD

**W**hen crossing the Polish border a foreigner is required to buy an insurance policy of the civil responsibility popularly called the "Green Card.". Poland is a member of a wide-ranging international system of such cards. Such insurance can be bought in the traveller's own country, which comes out cheaper than buying it at the border.

Insurance policy The "Green Card" is a form of civil protection of a car owner or a person driving it should damage to a third party occur while driving the vehicle. The insurance guarantees that when the damage is done, the insurer, and not the person who caused the accident, will pay out the damages.

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The existing health insurance coverage extends to ambulances that may be called to transport the sick to the hospital



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## **SOCIAL INSURANCE**

Foreigners employed in Poland are bound by the law on social security system dated of 13th October 1998. The law adopted a principle of equal opportunity for all insured people regardless of origins. In practice, this means that the same conditions of obligatory social security apply to employed in Poland for a work contract. Regardless of the origin, everybody all employed on a work contract or a short-term contract in Poland is obliged to have social security insurance. It is important to underline that of all types of work contracts, social insurance does not apply to one-off job contracts ('umowa o dzieło').

The obligatory social security contributions consist of four elements: pension fund, retirement, sickness and accident premiums. A part of a the pension premium is accumulated on an employee's individual account, as the pension reform of 1999 requires. A part of a retirement premium is destined to secure an individual in the case of an accident – leading to partial or complete disability as resulting from it -- and the inability to work. By paying sickness premiums within the obligatory social security package the employee obtains 80 % of his salary when he falls ill. This is also the basis for paying maternity and child allowance to women. To prevent consequences of an accident or a chronic illness in a the workplace, an accident insurance contributions can also be paid.

According to legally binding Polish law, an employer is obliged to report all hired employees for social insurance, and also to pay all social insurance contributions from the first day of an employee's work agreement until the last day of his or her work.

On the basis of bilateral agreements between Poland and given countries, an insured person whose social insurance contributions have been paid in Poland will receive a pension from the Polish state. The amount of the pension will depend on the level of income and employment time in Poland.



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Note! After Poland's accession to the EU, the Polish pension and social security system are subject to the principles of co-ordination of social security systems of member states. This will mean in practice that the pay-out of social contributions will be determined by the country where an employee paid his or her contributions. Pensions and other contributions will be paid out according to the internal regulations of a country where an employee has worked the longest. It will not matter what his or her current country of residence is.

#### **HEALTH INSURANCE**

Health care in Poland is financed by a central state budget created to protect health, the National Health Fund (NFZ). A health premium, alongside with a social insurance premium, are obliged to be paid for on-going work,

i.e. if the payee has a permanent work contract or remains in a work relationship performing specific assignments. It also concerns foreigners employed in Poland. As in the case of the obligatory social insurance it is paid by the employer.

Those insured in the National Health Service have the right to medical care which ensures health protection, disease and contusions prevention, early detection of illnesses as well as preventing disability it.

Thus those foreigners employed in Poland have almost the entire range of medical services ensured, alongside with specialist hospital treatment, surgical operations and stays in sanatoria. Medical insurance also covers emergency medical care, which ensures transportation to hospital.

As well as foreigners who have to pay a medical health insurance and can use the services of the state health service because they are employed on work contracts or work on assignment, there is another category who can choose whether they want to enter the health service fund.

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Among those who have the right to access the fund, the law lists foreigners remaining in Poland on the basis of:

- stay visa to perform work,
- residence permits,
- temporary residence permits,
- refugee status granted in Poland,
- temporary protection on Polish territory.

Additionally, non-obligatory insurance can be paid by:

- undergraduate- and post-graduate students who study in Poland,
- graduates who are on obligatory itinerary in Poland,
- members of convents and alumni of theological seminaries, postulants, novice and juniors of convents and counterparts in Poland on the basis of visas, residence permits or temporary residence permits.

Health insurance also covers the members of families of the listed groups staying in Poland.

People who want to use public health service are obliged to present a medical insurance card. If they want to arrange a visit with a specialist they have to be directed by a general practitioner. In a state directly threatening life or for women in labour, medical care is provided without this requirement.

NB! It is important to pay attention whether a medical centre for specialist care has signed an agreement with a state health fund concerning this service.

After Poland's accession to the EU, all the citizens



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of member states in emergencies will have the right to free medical services on the same conditions as Polish citizens. Nevertheless, following the regulations of medical services co-ordination in the EU, every foreigner entering Poland should have an E-111 form which will guarantee them access to medical services.

Alongside public health care centres in Poland are private health centres. Especially in the bigger cities, there are medical doctors of almost all specialities as well as clinics where specialist surgeries and operations can be performed.

NB! When there is a need to use the services of state medical centres, those not having medical insurance can use them and will have to cover the costs themselves. That includes one-off visits at a specialist doctor and hospital care. It is important to know that fees for state medical care are also significantly lower than those in the private sector.

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Foreigners legally employed in Poland are entitled to nearly full scope of medical services



Hospital emergency room

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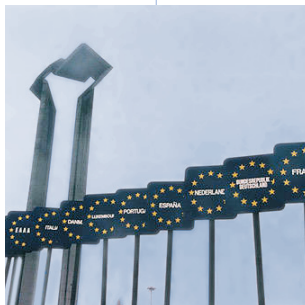
P O L A N D I N T H E



EU citizens travelling within the Schengen zone will not be checked for ID at border crossings

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S C H E N G E N   Z O N E



**F**rom the point of view of a citizen of a EU member state, the essence of European integration is to ensure the right to free movement, work, study and living in any chosen country of the EU. Those rights are determined in the EU treaties signed in Schengen. By joining the EU in 2004 Poland has adopted the Schengen Act. Once the border controls within the EU, are lifted, there are also certain duties which will become obligatory. One of them is enforcing the outer borders of the EU, another is tightening international co-operation in fighting various forms of violation of law.

From the point of view of a non-EU citizens intending to settle in Poland, our participation in the Schengen Zone will in fact mean that entering Poland's territory will also mean crossing the EU borders. A further journey into the continent can be continued without border controls only for Polish citizens. Foreigners from outside of the EU will have to go through passport and customs controls.

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**IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS:**

**112 – police (connected only from  
a mobile phone)**

**997 – police**

**998 – fire service**

**999 – emergency services**

**986 – city guards**

**+48 601 100 300 – Tatras Voluntary Rescue Service  
(Tatrzańskie Ochotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe)**

**OTHER NUMBERS**

**908 – international directory enquiries**

**913 – domestic directory enquiries**

**0800 422 322 – free infoline for Border Guard  
intervention**