

POLAND



2nd May – Polish National Flag and Polish Diaspora Day

All public administration and most residential buildings are adorned by Polish flags on May 2, as the country observes its National Flag Day.

Polish National Flag Day was established in 2004 to draw the attention of Poles to the importance of the flag and national symbols for the nation.

The current Polish flag was adopted on February 9, 1990. Its colours have been white and red since 1831 when the country first proclaimed independence from Russia, yet it was not until August 1, 1919 that the white and red flag was first officially adopted by a fully independent Poland.

The white symbolises peace and the red colour is believed to symbolise the bloodshed in the country's fight for independence.

The Day of the Polish Diaspora and Poles living abroad also falls on May 2.



OPA Picture Gallery: www.opaoxford.org



3rd May – Constitution Day

The First Constitution in Europe



This year Poland and Lithuania, which are bound by the centuries-old ties, mark special occasion for both of our nations and states. It is our honour to share with you the achievement of our common legal and political history.

On 3 May 1791, parliamentarians of Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth adopted, during the deliberations of the Great Sejm, the Governance Act known as the Constitution of 3rd of May. This modern legislation of Enlightenment was the world's second, after the American one, and Europe's first written constitution.

It introduced a tripartite separation of powers and reformed the existing political system, ensuring more equal treatment of all nationalities within the Commonwealth. Constitution foresaw the establishment of constitutional monarchy and laid down framework for development of civic society.

Adopted on 20 October 1791 by the joint Sejm, the Mutual Pledge of Two Nations was an integral part of the Constitution of 3 May and an act of utmost importance to the Commonwealth's political system. Ensuring equal representation for the Polish and Lithuanian citizens in the common state bodies confirmed a strong union between the two nations.

The Constitution was abolished in 1792 due to intervention of foreign powers followed by the division, occupation and eradication of the Commonwealth. However, the fundamental legal acts of 1791 emboldened Polish and Lithuanian Nations to strive for freedom and independence. Poland and Lithuania reappeared on the world's map in 1918.

Also today, shared historic legacy and principles of freedom and democracy embedded in 3 May Constitution, inspire our strategic co-operation in bilateral and foreign policy domains.



11th November – National Independence Day



Józef Piłsudski

While other parts of the world celebrate 11 November as Remembrance Day, Armistice Day and Veterans Day, for Poles the end of the Great War is perhaps even more significant as it saw Poland finally regaining its independence, having been partitioned by Austria, Germany and Russia for the previous 123 years. After the defeat of various occupying forces Poles began to regain control over their country for the first time in more than a century, with famed military hero Józef Piłsudski appointed as Commander-in-Chief on 11 November, 1918. Piłsudski went on to form a new centralised government and went on to command Polish forces in the 1920 Battle of Warsaw, a key turning point in the rebirth of the country. Sadly enough, National Independence Day (Narodowe Święto Niepodległości) was constituted in 1937 and only celebrated twice before World War II.



2021 - The Year of Stanislaw Lem



Stanisław Lem (sta'niswaf lem) was a Polish science fiction, philosophical and satirical writer of Jewish descent. His books have been translated into 41 languages and have sold over 27 million copies. He is perhaps best known as the author of *Solaris*, which has twice been made into a feature film. In 1976, Theodore Sturgeon claimed that Lem was the most widely read science-fiction writer in the world.

His works explore philosophical themes; speculation on technology, the nature of intelligence, the impossibility of mutual communication and understanding, despair about human limitations and humankind's place in the universe. They are sometimes presented as fiction, but others are in the form of essays or philosophical books. Translations of his works are difficult and multiple translated versions of his works exist.

Lem became truly productive after 1956, when the de-Stalinization period led to the "Polish October", when Poland experienced an increase in freedom of speech. Between 1956 and 1968, Lem authored 17 books. His works were widely translated abroad (although mostly in the Eastern Bloc countries). In 1957 he published his first non-fiction, philosophical book, *Dialogi* (Dialogues), one of his two most famous philosophical texts along with *Summa Technologiae* (1964). The *Summa* is notable for being a unique analysis of prospective social, cybernetic, and biological advances. In this work, Lem discusses philosophical implications of technologies that were completely in the realm of science fiction then, but are gaining importance today—like, for instance, virtual reality and nanotechnology. Over the next few decades, he published many books, both science fiction and philosophical/futurological, although from the 1980s onwards he tended to concentrate on philosophical texts and essays.

He gained international fame for *The Cyberiad*, a series of humorous short stories from a mechanical universe ruled by robots, first published in English in 1974. His best-known novels include *Solaris* (1961), *His Master's Voice* (*Głos pana*, 1968), and the late *Fiasco* (*Fiasco*, 1987), expressing most strongly his major theme of the futility of mankind's attempts to comprehend the truly alien. *Solaris* was made into a film in 1972 by Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky and won a Special Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1972; in 2002, Steven Soderbergh directed a Hollywood remake starring George Clooney.



2021 - The International Chopin Piano Competition



The International Chopin Piano Competition is the most important music event in Poland and one of the most important music events in the world. Beside the huge role which it has played for over 90 years in popularization of Chopin's music, it discovers the greatest piano talents, providing young musicians with the most effective start of the international career. It is a source of the multicultural polarization that is visible in the various interpretations of music of the outstanding composer.

The idea for creating the Competition came from the teacher and pianist Jerzy Żurawlew. Working with young people, he observed their keenness for rivalry and for displaying their talents, so he considered that a pianistic tournament would be the best way of encouraging them to play Chopin. At that time, implementing such an idea was by no means straightforward, and for years the Warsaw Competition was the only event of its kind in the world.

The Jury of the 18th Fryderyk Chopin International Piano Competition will include eminent artists, distinguished experts and excellent educators. They will select those who will contribute to the shape of the musical world over the coming decades. For it is all about music: its value, beauty and what it brings to life for all of us. This is what it is worth fighting for – and cheering on.



The Chopin Competition confirms the timelessness of the music of the brilliant Polish composer, from the very beginning it is far more than just a music tournament of the highest level. Attracting a growing number of pianistic talents from all over the world (452 entries in 2015, more than 500 in 2020!), it draws the attention of not only the international music community and music lovers, but also those who have little contact with classical music on a daily basis. In Poland it is a kind of national holiday, a headline event; on a global scale it is one of the most important music events.

The 18th International Chopin Piano Competition, scheduled for 2–23 October 2020, was postponed to the same dates in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Links:

[The First News PL](#)

[Culture.pl – The First Constitution in Europe \(video\)](#)

[Jan Matejko – The constitution of 3rd May \(painting\)](#)

[3rd May 1791](#)

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[Fryderyk Chopin Monument \(image\)](#)

