

UK – POLAND



102 Years of Diplomatic relations

Diplomatic relations between Poland and the United Kingdom were established in 15th July 1919.

Political cooperation /Historical view

Anglo-Polish relations date back as far as the 11th century, when the first tentative contacts were made during the reigns of King Ethelred II the Unready and Bolesław I the Brave.

For many centuries commerce and trade remained the mainstay of relations between the two kingdoms. It was not until the 15th century that greater political considerations began to play an important role. Monarchs on both sides would send their envoys to each other, usually to deal with specific ad hoc matters rather than to maintain constant bilateral relations.

From the 17th century onwards there was an increase in continuous diplomatic contacts, especially from the English and then British side, with semi-permanent and permanent representatives being appointed, while envoys with the rank of ambassador would be sent in the event of special missions.

Despite the lack of a permanent resident envoy in London, diplomatic contacts were also maintained on the Polish side. In 1769, the first permanent diplomatic presence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – once the largest and one of the most populous and ethnically-diverse states in Europe – was set up in London. The beginnings of the mission coincided with partitions of Poland by three absolutist monarchies of Russia, Prussia and Austria, which lasted for 123 years. The close Polish-British relations maintained by the last King of the Commonwealth, Stanisław August Poniatowski, saw Britain react fast to the founding of Poland's Constitution of 3rd May 1791 – Europe's first and world's second democratic constitution – with the document being translated into



English almost immediately after proclamation, owing to the then ambassador of Poland to Britain, Franciszek Bukaty, while British newspapers broke the news on 20 May. The Polish constitutional act was also praised by British thinker and Whig politician Edmund Burke.

After the restoration of Poland's independence on 11 November 1918 Polish-British relations began to flourish. Britain acknowledged the restoration of Poland's independence on 26 February 1919. On that day, Sir Esme Howard, Civil Delegate on the International Commission to Poland, wrote to Józef Piłsudski, Chief of the Polish State: "His Britannic Majesty's Government acknowledged Poland's restoration to independence", adding, "this was the most honourable and agreeable message I had ever had to give in my life." On 15 July 1919, diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Poland were officially renewed, with Prince Eustachy Sapieha becoming the first official envoy of independent Poland in London, while Percy Wyndham became the UK's Minister Plenipotentiary in Poland.

During the war, London was the home of the legitimate Polish state representation, including the Polish Government-in-Exile. Though it suffered from a lack of recognition when the communist regime was imposed, it survived the aftermath of the war. Many Polish émigrés also remained in the country after the war.

On 22 December 1990, Poland's last President-in-Exile Ryszard Kaczorowski passed on the presidential insignia kept safe since the outbreak of the Second World War to the first post-war, democratically elected President of Poland, Lech Wałęsa. After 45 years of Soviet control, Poland, for the second time in 72 years, fully regained its independence and sovereignty, ushering in a new era for Polish-British relations.

Political cooperation after 1989

Poland and the United Kingdom remain important partners. The political changes in Europe after 1989 awarded new dynamism to our bilateral relations. They laid the foundations for a rekindling of the close cooperation which existed between our two countries during the Second World War. The visit of President Lech Wałęsa to London in 1991 was a symbolic reaffirmation of this change. The United Kingdom supported the changes in the Polish political system, and encouraged Poland's aspirations of becoming a member of NATO, which eventually became reality in March 1999. Poland also received strong British support in the build-up to her accession to the European Union. The British government's decision to open the UK's labour market to Polish citizens without any transitional periods, immediately after Poland joined the EU in May 2004, was particularly important for Poland, and Poles alike. This meant that a large contingent of Poles has begun to work and study in the UK, making them the largest group of foreign nationals in this country. Poland and the United Kingdom, as members of NATO and the EU (until Brexit), have a shared outlook on many issues on the European, economic and defence agenda. Bilateral political cooperation, which takes the form of meetings between heads of state and government, government ministers, and members of parliament, creates a positive climate which is conducive to working together on a range of issues. These include maintaining Poland's positive trade balance with the UK, intensive academic, research and development cooperation, as well as ensuring the appropriate treatment of Poles living in the UK, that



being of particular importance in the context of the negotiations relating to Brexit. Recently, a number of important visits took place. On 5 June 2019, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki took part in the Portsmouth commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy, prior to which he met with the then UK Prime Minister Theresa May. On 18 March 2019, Poland's Minister of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation Marek Gróbarczyk met with UK Transport Secretary Chris Grayling in London, while on 15 February 2019 Polish Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education Piotr Dardziński met Chris Skidmore, UK Minister of Science, Research, and Innovation. On 20 December 2018, the third intergovernmental consultations took place, with the participation of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, ministers of foreign affairs, the interior and administration, defence, and entrepreneurship and technology as well as a deputy minister responsible for finance. During their talks with their British counterparts, the most topical issues on the bilateral, economic, security and international, including European, agenda were discussed. This intensive dialogue is complemented by regular, frequent meetings between our two countries' foreign ministers, ministers for Europe, and ministers and deputy ministers across a range of government departments. Worth pointing out at this juncture is a unique formula in bilateral contacts, i.e. the quadrilateral consultations between the foreign and defence ministers of both Poland and the United Kingdom, the so-called Quadriga, which last took place in Warsaw in June 2018. Furthermore, the introduction of an even more unique formula of intergovernmental consultations must be emphasised. Cooperation between parliaments, particularly the active work of the British-Polish and Polish-British parliamentary groups, various committees and the annual civic society Polish-British Belvedere Forum constitutes another important facet of the bilateral relations. Naturally, one of the most important topics of the talks in a foreseeable future will be the negotiations on Great Britain leaving the EU, including the acquired rights of Polish citizens (and other EU nationals). Setting down the British expectations towards its future relationship with the EU is of crucial importance as well. For Poland, it is vital that access to the single market should still require the continued realisation of the four freedoms, i.e. the freedom of movement of goods, capital, services and people. Despite the UK's decision expressed in the referendum on 23 June 2016, consultations on the running of the European Union remain a very important part of our mutual cooperation. We have much in common where this effort is concerned: support for the effectiveness of the EU-led activity, focus on practical projects, completion of the single market, including the digital agenda, support for EU enlargement and increasing the EU involvement in the immediate neighbourhood (including in the Eastern Partnership countries), tackling the consequences of the financial and economic crisis in the eurozone, and all of the EU, an effective energy policy, including its external dimension, relations with key partners, especially the US, China, India, and Brazil, the EU's role in stabilisation and peacekeeping operations in conflict zones. At the same time, we do not run away from discussions on issues on which our views may differ, including the size of the EU budget and its structure, especially the structural funds, the speed of reducing the Co2 emissions, the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the development of the European External Action Service, advancing cooperation as part of the Common Security and Defence Policy, and the importance accorded to the principle of the free movement of people. Equally significant is our collaboration within the NATO framework, despite differences in our countries' political and defence potential (the UK's nuclear capability and a permanent seat on the UN Security Council). This cooperation is informed by an affinity of views on military issues, regional, European and global security, on countering the present-day threats to security, anti-terrorism measures and the modernisation of the armed forces. There exists a long-standing tradition



of Polish-British military exercises on land, at sea, and in the air. Moreover, our defence industries are cooperating as well. This cooperation hails back to the proud tradition of the Polish-British brotherhood-in-arms during the Second World War. In the context of international security, one should also point to the convergence of the Polish and British views with regards to the OSCE.

Links:

[X, Y & Z: The Real Story of How Enigma Was Broken by Dermot Turing](#)

[First to Fight: The Polish War 1939 by Roger Moorhouse](#)

[Royal Air Force Museum](#)

[Anglo-Polish relations in the past](#)

[British Council](#)

[Office for National Statistics](#)

Economic cooperation

Poland and United Kingdom maintain close economic and trade relations. United Kingdom is the third most important trade partner for Poland, with the trade turnover growing systematically since the 1990s. Polish economy was reclassified to a developed market status by the London Stock Exchange FTSE Russell indices in September 2018. Polish and British political and economic partnership has historical roots. British economic model and experiences gained during the privatisation period were the points of reference for Poland while undergoing free market transformations in the 1990s. Throughout the years, Poland received great support from the British government. United Kingdom offered its help in the reduction of Polish foreign debt and advocated for Poland in the process of joining the European Union. The accession to the EU in 2004 opened a path for a closer cooperation between the two countries. Poland and United Kingdom share a common vision for the economic agenda – both countries have a similar perspective on the competitive internal EU market, regulations of labour market, European digital market and the global trade policies. With the increasing number of Polish citizens migrating to the United Kingdom, Britain was among the first few countries that opened its labour market to Polish citizens. After the global financial crisis of 2007-09, both Poland and Britain supported the efforts of strengthening the European economy. Trade exchange is an important part of the UK-Polish cooperation. Close relations between the countries encouraged British companies to invest in Poland already in the early 1990s. An example of that is Tesco, which came to Poland in 1996, and currently it has an annual turnover of about 2 billion pounds, with 5 million customers visiting every week around 400 stores across the country. Furthermore, United Kingdom became the second biggest foreign export market for Polish goods and services. Currently, there are about 60,000 businesses established by Poles and operating in the UK (e.g. Black red White, Kulczyk Investments SA, Inglot). Poland is also an important receiver of British foreign direct investments. The value of British FDIs in Poland is more than 10 billion euros, which makes Britain the 6th largest investor in Poland. Major British companies that have come to Poland include Imperial Tobacco Group PLC, GlaxoSmithKline, AVIVA and Shell Overseas Holding. It is worth noting that British exports to Poland doubled since 2006 and Polish export to Britain tripled. Poland and Britain cooperate in a number of areas, inter alia, innovation, digital economy, new technologies in finance, support of the service sector, scientific exchange between Polish and



British universities, especially in the area of research and development, and the exchange of experiences in the support of small and medium entrepreneurs. Also, there is a strong cooperation in the area of energy, especially in terms of energy security, development of nuclear energy and unconventional hydrocarbons. There are many growing opportunities for British and Polish companies in renewable energy, including offshore wind.

Links:

[Poland - The Official Gateway](#)

[Ministry of Economy](#)

[National Bank of Poland](#)

[Central Statistical Office](#)

[Warsaw Stock Exchange](#)

[Foreign Investment and Trade Office in London](#)

Cultural cooperation

An important institution responsible for promoting Polish-British collaboration is the Polish Cultural Institute in London. It promotes Polish Culture and supports such projects as the ‘Kinoteka’ Film Festival organised yearly and the ‘Shakespeare in Poland’ at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London on the occasion of the 150th of the birthday of Stanisław Wyspiański and a Gala Piano Concert on the 100th anniversary of Poland regaining independence in 2018. PCI supports many concerts, promotes Polish literature as well as history and modern art. There are also events planned for 2020 and 2021, including the exhibition of the image of "Astronomer Copernicus, conversation with God" by Jan Matejko at the National Museum next year, and the exhibition "Painters of the Young Poland", which will take place in 2021 .

Links: [Polish Cultural Institute in London](#)



303 Squadron RAF

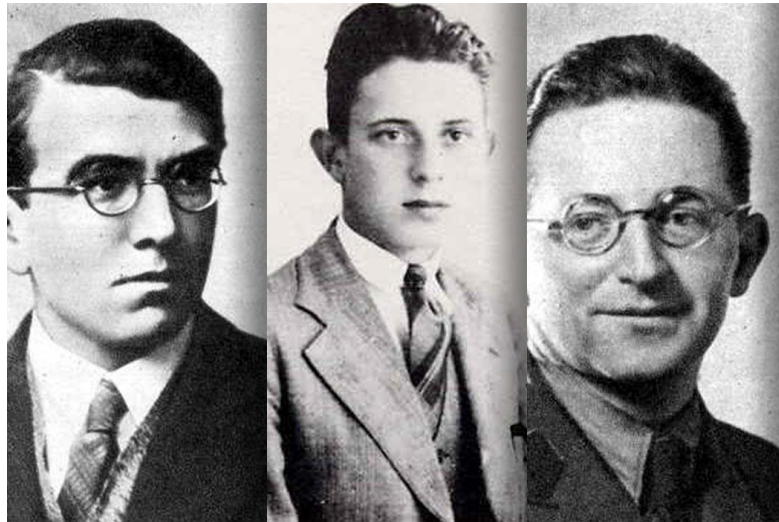


The spirit of camaraderie formed between Poland and Britain was evident before and during the Second World War. On 31 March 1939, in response to Nazi Germany's defiance of the Munich Agreement and occupation of Czechoslovakia, the United Kingdom pledged the support of itself and France to assure Polish independence. When some of the Polish Armed Forces arrived in the UK from their occupied homeland after the outbreak of the war, Poles and Brits found themselves fighting together in the Battle of Britain, which turned the tide of the war. The Polish 303 Squadron, serving under British command, became the most effective unit in the battle, and almost 20,000 Polish airmen and airwomen served in 16 Polish Air Force squadrons in Britain. Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, who led Fighter Command, wrote: "Had it not been for the magnificent material contributed by the Polish squadrons and their unsurpassed gallantry, I hesitate to say that the outcome of the Battle would have been the same."

Links: <https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/online-exhibitions/the-polish-air-force-in-world-war-2/303-squadron/>



Three Polish mathematicians worked together on braking the Enigma code



Henryk Zygalski (left), Jerzy Różycki, and Marian Rejewski
via Wikimedia Commons

On May 9, 1941, a boarding party from the *HMS Bulldog* retrieved an intact Enigma code machine from a captured German submarine. It was a lucky break, and would help the famous Ultra code-breakers

at Bletchley Park. The story of those code-breakers, among them the brilliant and tragic [Alan Turing](#), has been told a number of times, including in the movies *Enigma* (2001) and *The Imitation Game* (2014).

Movies, of course, tend to simplify history. At Bletchley Park, for instance, fully [two-thirds of the staff were women](#). Another thing usually elided or forgotten is that the British had an Enigma machine in their possession *before* the war even started. Just months before Poland was overrun by Nazi and Soviet armies in September 1939, the Polish Cipher Bureau provided their reverse-engineered Enigmas, called “doubles” in the code-breaking business, to the British and French.

Richard A. Woytak tells the tale of [Poland’s code-breaking success](#). Stuck between Germany and the Soviet Union, both of which coveted Polish territory, the Poles monitored their neighbors’ communications throughout the 1930s.

Jerzy Rozycki, Henryk Zygalski, and Marian Rejewski,

especially trained as mathematicians for the task, were the men who broke the German code in 1932. After Poland was swallowed whole, they continued their work in France and then—minus Rozycki,



who went down with a ship in the Mediterranean in 1942—in Britain (but not at Bletchley Park itself, evidently because of misplaced security concerns).

Chris Christensen adds more details from a mathematical perspective, including [how substitution ciphers like Enigma work](#) and how the Polish trio cracked this cipher by finding patterns in the code. The Polish Enigma doubles could only go so far, however, because the Germans kept changing their versions of Enigma. Or at least most of them did: the varying quality of German operators and sometimes untimely changing of security keys also helped in cracking Enigma. Code-breaking is a kind of duel, Christensen says, and as new Enigma versions were introduced, the Polish gift became outdated. Still, it was one of the major components of the success of the top-secret Ultra project.

The Allies were reading some Enigma messages—different branches of the Nazi war machine used different Enigmas—by 1940. There's a paradox in this kind of intelligence, though: those sending coded messages may realize they've been cracked if they see that all their plans are being preempted, and so change their coding system to something even harder to crack. Intelligence, after all, is only one part of warfare; the Axis would be defeated by sheer industrial might, human bodies, and luck, not just mathematicians. But the mathematicians definitely helped.

Link: <https://daily.jstor.org/polish-codebreakers/>



Around 1 million Poles live and work in the UK

Analysis of the population of the UK by country of birth and nationality

Non-UK population remains stable following previous year-on-year increases

In the year ending June 2019, the non-UK born population was 9.4 million and non-British population was 6.2 million, which were both similar to the previous year.

In the year ending June 2019, the number of people with an EU8 nationality was 1.4 million and was mainly accounted for by those holding Polish nationality. This was similar to levels seen in 2015, following peak levels in 2016 and 2017.

When looking at year-on-year change, caution should be taken when comparing with international migration flows data. Our recent work on [understanding different migration data sources](#) shows our latest understanding on the coherence of these data sources and the steps we are taking to adjust our survey estimates.

Despite the recent decrease, Polish has continued to be the most common non-British nationality in the UK since 2007. However, India is now the most common non-UK country of birth, the first time since 2015 that Poland has not been the most common. The countries of birth and nationalities making up the top five remain the same as for 2018.

Country of birth:

1. India
2. Poland
3. Pakistan
4. Romania
5. Republic of Ireland

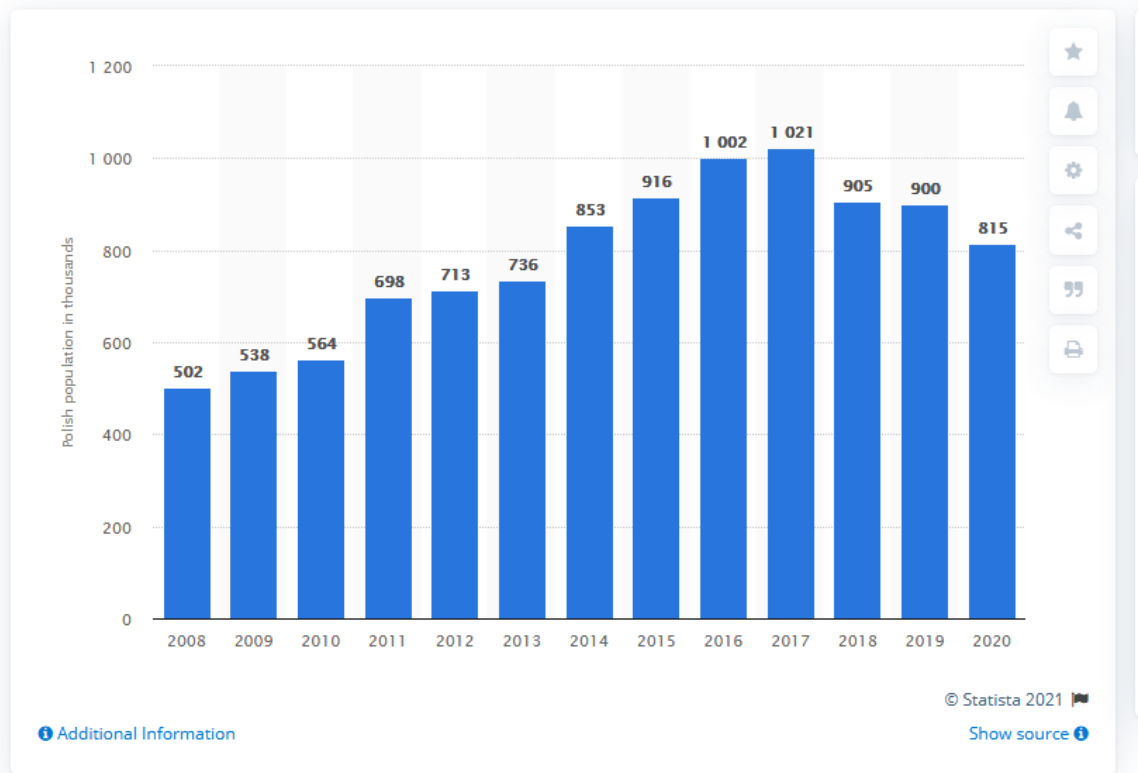
Nationality:

1. Poland
2. Romania
3. India
4. Republic of Ireland
5. Italy



Estimated number of Polish nationals resident in the United K 2008 to June 2020

(in 1,000s)



Links:

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1061639/polish-population-in-united-kingdom/>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/ukpopulationbycountryofbirthandnationality/july2018tojune2019>



Polish is the 2nd spoken language in the UK

In the 2011 Census, 92.3 per cent of people (49.8 million) aged three and over in England and Wales reported English as their main language (English or Welsh in Wales).

The remaining 7.7 per cent of the population (4.2 million) had a main language other than English.

Polish was the most common language after English¹ with 546,000 people (1.0 per cent of the population) reporting it as their main language.

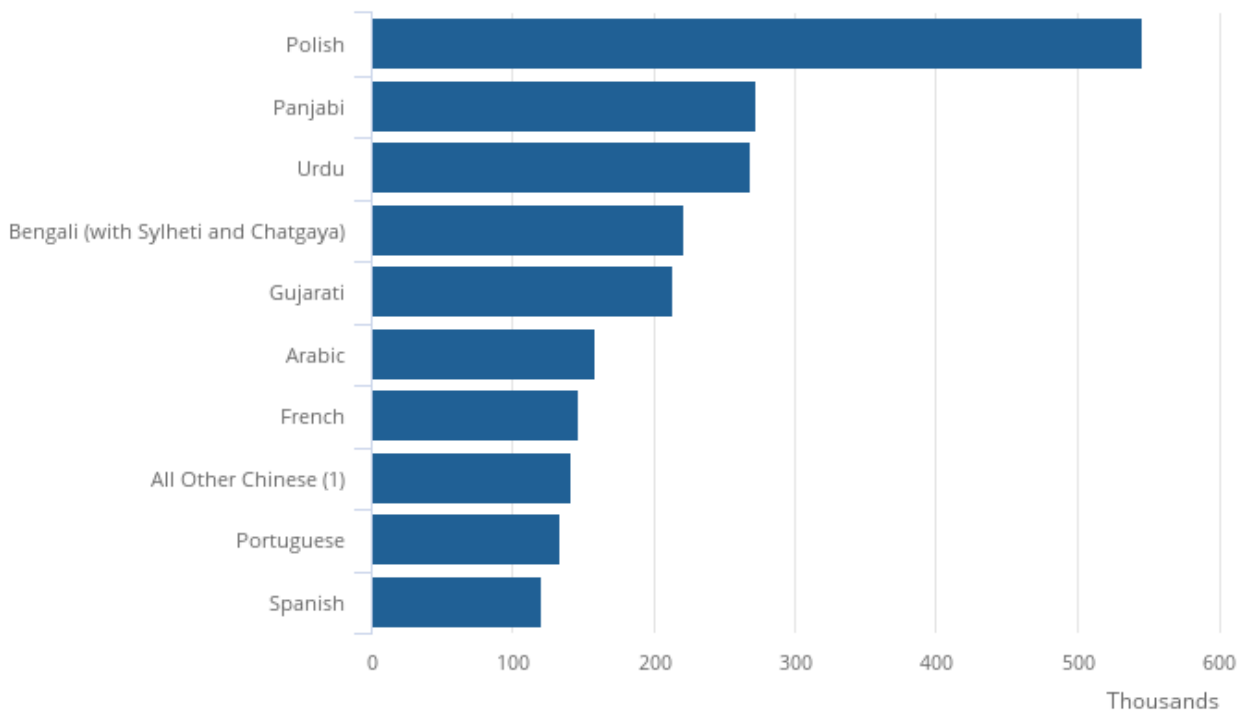


Figure 1: Top ten main 'Other' languages in England and Wales, 2011

Link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/language/articles/languageinenglandandwales/2013-03-04#toc>

