

Towards a more sustainable Europe: Poland's commitment to energy transition

Description

The idea of a more environmentally friendly Europe is gradually taking shape, notably through a series of regulations transforming production methods, energy consumption, environmental protection, and social conditions. Poland is making its contribution with several notable ambitions.

At the heart of this dynamic transition, the European Green Deal sets an ambitious target: to make the European Union a carbon-neutral continent by 2050. Each 27 Member State is moving forward at its own pace, with different capacities. Poland is at a turning point. Long dependent on fossil fuels, it is now seeking to turn to renewable energies. This shift, if successful, could bring about substantial benefits for the country and the continent. However, the challenge remains, not least in terms of timeframes. Poland's energy sector is complex, and the transition can only succeed if its specific characteristics are considered. If it manages to overcome these obstacles, Poland could become a key player in green energy in Europe.



Poland's energy paradox

Poland remains one of the countries most dependent on coal in Europe: around [85%](#) of its energy consumption is still based on fossil fuels. This mix is based on large coal reserves, natural gas and oil resources, and renewable energy potential (biomass, geothermal energy, limited hydroelectric power)⁽¹⁾. In 2022, the country alone was responsible for 11% of the European Union's greenhouse gas emissions. Despite efforts to reduce the use of coal, the Polish electricity sector remains the biggest emitter of CO₂ in the whole of the Union. The large-scale war in Ukraine has also highlighted the country's vulnerability to energy shocks while reinforcing Warsaw's desire to break its dependence on Russian gas – an objective that has now largely been achieved. In 2019, 60% of Poland's imported natural gas was sourced from Russia. This was part of its steady decrease from 77% in 2017⁽²⁾. Poland's energy diversification objectives have been largely successful, as from Q1 2023, Poland has not imported natural gas from Russia⁽³⁾.

But the facts are stubborn: Poland is still one of the most polluting countries in Europe. The government has launched several reforms, including the "PEP 2040" energy strategy (*Energy Policy of Poland 2040*, EPP2040) adopted in 2021, which aims to transform the country's energy system⁽⁴⁾ gradually. However, this ambitious document must be updated to meet the increasingly urgent transition challenges.

And yet Poland has many advantages: its Baltic coastline is ideal for offshore wind power, it gets plenty of sunshine, and its rural population can play an active role in the transition thanks to the "prosumer" model – citizens who produce and consume their renewable energy. This approach aims to build a carbon-neutral economy that is also more participatory. The European Union supports this transformation through policies such as the *Fit for 55* plan – a range of legislation aimed at reducing EU greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030, and the Just Transition Fund, which has allocated several billion euros to Poland to turn the page on coal equitably.

However, the energy transition remains a sensitive issue in the Polish political debate. While some political forces support European ambitions, others are worried about EU interference and are breaking specific decarbonization projects. The Law and Justice (PiS) are divided on the issue, and internal tensions slow decisions. The PiS party advocates

a more cautious approach towards EU policies, often raising concerns over the encroachment of sovereignty and the economic impact of the transition to renewable energy. On the contrary, the current leader of the administration, Donald Tusk, aims to align Poland with EU climate policies⁽⁵⁾.

In fact, despite its substantial resources, the support it receives from the EU, and the signals of climate urgency, Poland remains at a crossroads. The future of its energy transition depends as much on political choices as on the will of industry and the general public.

Investment and innovation; Poland focuses on the energy of the future

Poland has introduced several incentive programs to meet the energy transition challenges. The 'My Electricity' scheme (*Mój Prąd*), for example, encourages the installation of solar panels in homes by financing the purchase of photovoltaic systems. The 'Clean Air' (*Czyste Powietrze*) program aims to modernize building heating systems to reduce air pollution. The aim is to replace outdated installations with more efficient solutions that comply with environmental standards.

Poland is also investing in wind power, with a flagship project for an offshore wind farm in the Baltic Sea. This ambitious project is expected to generate up to 17.9 gigawatts. The first phase will have a capacity of 5.9 GW by 2030, and the second phase will have a further capacity of 12 GW after 2030⁽⁶⁾.

Global companies are supporting this transition. Amazon is involved in several renewable energy projects in Poland, including the Miłkowice solar farm and wind farms in Jastrowie and Okonek in the Wielkopolskie region. The country also invests in lithium-ion batteries to develop electric vehicles⁽⁷⁾.

Finally, Poland has partnered strategically with technology companies such as Google to develop artificial intelligence in the energy and cyber security sectors⁽⁸⁾.

Obstacles and challenges: Poland's energy transition at a crossroads

The energy transition's success in Poland will largely depend on the government's ability to act with determination and consistency. For now, political divisions are holding back the adoption of a clear, shared renewable energy strategy. Lobbyists and trade unions still stand against EU climate policies, arguing that the cost of transitioning away from coal could lead to the loss of jobs and a hike in energy prices. Moreover, although various projects exist, their scale remains insufficient in the face of the climate emergency.

As a result, many households continue to rely on fossil fuels, and switching to sustainable alternatives sometimes encounters cultural or economic resistance. In some regions, schemes such as *Mój Prąd* or *Czyste Powietrze* remain little known to the general public. In addition, interest groups opposed to a rapid transition are lobbying to slow the movement to preserve their economic benefits.

Poland is sometimes an exception on the European stage. A fringe of the government is challenging European Union directives in the name of national sovereignty. This stance could jeopardize the country's access to European funding, crucial to its energy transformation.

The two competing political parties at the current election, Civic Coalition-Koalicja Obywatelska (K.O) and Law and Justice- Prawo i Sprawiedliwość - (PiS), oppose EU climate policies. While K.O. is pro-European, PiS favors a more independent Poland and slower climate transition policies.

Still, it is pertinent to acknowledge that local governments are crucial for climate impact because the local governments in Poland are responsible for managing zoning, permitting, and regional infrastructure, including the approvals for wind and solar farms, implementation of Just Transition Fund projects, and public transport modernization.

Poland shows promise in its energy transition initiatives and diversifying from imported natural gas from Russia. However, the lack of a cohesive national stance on climate policies limits progress and challenges EU climate ambitions in its Green Deal. As Poland stands at this crossroads, the 2025 presidential election will cement its stance on Europe's

climate ambitions. The new leadership of Poland must strive to maintain a balance in achieving economic stability and embracing innovation and opportunities for the energy transition. This will determine if Poland emerges as a proactive leader in Eastern Europe's energy transition.

Notes:

- (1) [Energy sector of the world and Poland](#), World Energy Council, 2014.
- (2) [Since Q1 2023, Poland no longer imports gas from Russia](#), FakeHunter, Polish Press Agency, 2023.
- (3) [Poland cuts Russian gas imports by 3.5% in 2019 — energy company](#), TASS, 2020, May 29.
- (4) [Energy policy of Poland until 2040 \(EPP2040\)](#), Government of Poland.
- (5) Gromadzki, G., & Serafin, K., [From coal to consensus: Poland's energy transition and its European future](#). European Council on Foreign Relations, 2023.
- (6) [Poland's offshore wind support seen at 144 bln euros – PAP reports](#), Reuters, 2024, December 10.
- (7) [Amazon enables its first wind energy projects in Poland](#), Amazon, 2023, April 17.
- (8) Gromadzki, G., & Serafin, K., [Empowering Poland: The role of international partnerships](#). European Council on Foreign Relations, 2023.

Thumbnail: Offshore wind turbines from the Baltica 2 project that will feature 107 turbines of 14 MW each (royalty-free photo, Pixabay).

[Link to the French version of the article](#)

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