



# Weekly Briefing

**Poland external relations briefing:  
Polish support for Ukraine, despite growing tensions in relations  
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# **Polish support for Ukraine, despite growing tensions in relations**

## **Summary**

*Agricultural protests are sweeping through Europe, including Poland. Farmers are mainly protesting the EU's Green Deal policy, which generates rising production costs. In Poland, in addition to the demand to limit the Green Deal, farmers are demanding a halt to imports of Ukrainian food, which is destabilizing the Polish market. Farmers' protests across Poland, with which the Polish government stands in solidarity, have affected the deterioration of Polish-Ukrainian relations. However, the situation has not changed Poland's strategic foreign policy priorities, which is to support Ukraine in its war with Russia. The first capital that Prime Minister Donald Tusk visited was Kiev. Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, in turn, visited Washington, where he sought continued American support for Ukraine. The approach to the war in Ukraine also divided members of the Visegrad Group, during a meeting held in Prague.*

## **Introduction**

In late January, Prime Minister Donald Tusk traveled to Kiev, which was the first capital visited by the head of the Polish government after taking office. The Polish prime minister's first foreign visit was to Brussels in December. "It is in Ukraine that the world front between good and evil is taking place," Donald Tusk stressed during the visit . He added that he had reached an agreement with Ukrainian President Vlodymyr Zelenski on Poland's role, which will seek to help in all aspects of Ukraine's EU accession process."<sup>i</sup>

## **Tusk: supporting Ukraine in Polish interest**

"I repeat this everywhere I go in the world and this is not a slogan (...). The fate of the free world is being played out here in Ukraine. This is the defense of Ukraine, its independence, its territorial integrity against Russian aggressors," the Polish prime minister said in Kiev. Tusk noted that this is also the "hottest front" and "the most tragic part of the confrontation between good and evil." The head of the Polish government at a conference with Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelenski emphasized that Ukraine bears on its shoulders the security issues of the entire European continent and pays a great price in blood for the values that are the foundation of the free world. The Polish prime minister noted that the attack on Ukraine is a black and white situation. "Here there is no place for "hamletism". Here no one has the right - who has eyes, who has ears, who has a heart, who has decency - no one in the world has the right to pretend not to see that here in Ukraine good is fighting evil," - Tusk said.

Tusk conveyed that one of the topics of conversation during President Zelenski was Polish-Ukrainian relations. "President Zelenski knows very well that there are different emotions in Poland, there are political conflicts, this is democracy, there were elections recently, very emotional like this," he said. As he added, on one issue no one in Poland has any doubts. "It is necessary to support Ukraine with all available means in its fight against Russia, because the security of the Polish people and the Polish state is also at stake in this fight," he said. - he explained. "Today I declared this to the President, that Poland will continue to do everything in our power to increase Ukraine's chances of victory in this war, we do this from moral motives, but also keeping in mind our own interest, the most fundamental one, the security of the Polish state and the Polish nation." - Tusk stressed. He declared that he would lobby the EU for Ukraine's admission to the EU, "so that the entire EU takes Ukrainian ambitions very seriously."

The Polish prime minister also said that the talks also covered cooperation in rebuilding Ukraine and joint investment in arms and ammunition production. He added that they also obtained mutual understanding on the situation on the border." It is very important to me that the president and ministers have decided today to confirm the best possible will so that we can jointly solve the problems concerning, among other things, grain and the blockade of transporters on our border." - The prime minister said. He stressed that they will first of all seek practical solutions in "friendly talks and perhaps international institutions will not be needed for this."

Prime Minister Tusk said that Poland will be ready to produce and support Ukraine with equipment and equipment. - We will seek financing together and will not avoid commercial principles when it comes to Polish supplies to Ukraine, the head of the Polish government announced. He also informed that Poland has joined the G7 declaration in support of Ukraine. In July 2023, G7 countries in a joint declaration pledged to provide long-term military support to Ukraine.

## **Zelenski urges Polish authorities to meet at border**

In the face of intensifying protests by Polish farmers at the border and cases of spilling Ukrainian grain, Volodymyr Zelensky asked Prime Minister Donald Tusk on social media for a meeting at the border of both countries. It was supposed to take place before the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Zelensky also asked President Andrzej Duda to support this dialogue<sup>ii</sup>. The Ukrainian president published a post in Polish in which he referred to the dumping of Ukrainian grain by Polish farmers. "Ukraine wants to resolve the situation on the border jointly and fairly - completely pragmatically. I would like to address the Polish public and express Ukrainian gratitude to anyone who distinguishes political manipulation from fundamental issues of national security. I would like to address the Polish government - Mr. Prime Minister Tusk and ministers," - he conveyed. As he stressed, the blockade of the Polish-Ukrainian border exacerbates threats to the supply of weapons to soldiers at the front. He also called for the participation in the meeting of a representative of the European Commission "for the sake of common interests and to stop political manipulation." However, the meeting did not take place. The Polish government stated that at this stage, when the problems in Polish-Ukrainian trade relations are not resolved and intergovernmental talks on the issue are ongoing, it is unwarranted.

Poland currently has an embargo on four Ukrainian products - wheat, rapeseed, corn and sunflower. Only transit of these products through Poland is possible. However, the protesting farmers point out that despite the embargo, these products continue to flow into Poland and destabilize the Polish market, lowering prices and product quality. They are demanding an increase in the number of products covered by the embargo and an increase in its effectiveness. In January, the European Commission extended an agreement on duty-free trade with Ukraine, but with the possibility of introducing certain restrictions on imports after agreement with the Commission, and at the interstate level. Polish authorities are not fully satisfied with these solutions, and Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-EU talks on the issue are ongoing.

## **The Polish agriculture minister in Brussels critical of Green Deal**

In the context of the Polish farmers' protest and planned changes to the Green Deal policy, Polish Agriculture Minister Czeslaw Siekierski visited Brussels. Speaking about the demands of the protesting Polish farmers, he said that the European Commission had imposed excessive, unreasonable, costly Green Deal requirements. He added that the Green Deal was supposed to serve the environment, combat climate change, and in fact led to the bankruptcy of many

farms.<sup>iii</sup> - This doesn't mean that we shouldn't act to defend the climate, it just needs to be done in a different way. (...) The EC needs to verify its plans," Siekierski said.

According to the head of Poland's agriculture ministry, another reason for the ongoing protests by farmers across the EU was the opening to imports from outside the EU. Siekierski noted that the influx of agricultural crops from Ukraine has made production unprofitable not only in Poland, but farmers in other EU countries are also beginning to feel this. - It is necessary to bring about certain regulations in the area of trade between Ukraine and the European Union, including Poland in particular. Poles, Poland, villagers, farmers - we all helped Ukraine, Ukrainians, and we want to continue to do so. But it is necessary to distinguish humanitarian aid, military aid from matters related to economic, economic conditions, from trade exchange, which must take place on a rational, normal basis, in accordance with the principles of the market, economics – postulated Siekierski, stressing that farmers should be supported financially, as they have incurred the costs of the Green Deal and the opening to imports from outside the EU through no fault of their own.

At the same time, he drew attention to another nagging problem - large grain stocks in the European Union. - At the end of June, grain stocks in Europe will be around 28 million tons. Of which in Poland 9 million tons. We produce about 35-36 million tons of grain, so we will have 25 percent of the grain in stock. This grain must be liquidated in some way, so that there are free warehouses, free granaries. The question: how? The EU should take steps to support the sale of European, and partly Ukrainian, grain, Siekierski said. This support could, according to the minister, take the form of transport subsidies or buying up stocks and transferring them in the form of humanitarian aid to needy regions of the world.

Since the beginning of the February, there have been numerous protests by farmers across Poland, who have been blocking roads, expressways, highways, and border crossings with Ukraine, among others. The farmers oppose the influx of Ukrainian goods, as well as European policies related to the so-called Green Deal.

### **The Head of Polish diplomacy in Washington**

Polish diplomacy chief Radoslaw Sikorski visited the United States, where he sought continued American support for Ukraine in its war with Russia. He spoke at the United Nations Security Council, among other venues, and met with American politicians, including diplomacy chief Anthony Blinken and Joe Biden's security advisor Jake Sullivan. He also spoke at the Atlantic Council think tank.

Much commentary was generated by the speech at the UN Security Council, a sharp reaction to the statement of Russian Ambassador to the UN Vasily Nebenzia <sup>iv</sup> The Polish minister devoted his speech to refuting the "astonishing" - as he said - made by the Russian ambassador. - He calls Ukraine a client of the West. In fact, Kiev is fighting to be independent (...) He calls them Nazis. Well, their president is a Jew, their defense minister a Muslim and they have no political prisoners. He says Ukraine is wallowing in corruption. Well, Alexei Navalny has documented how clean and full of integrity his country is. He blames the war and neo-colonialism on the US. In fact, it was Russia that tried to exterminate Ukraine in the 19th century, then the Bolsheviks did it, and now we have a third attempt," Sikorski pointed out to the Russian. He added that contrary to Russian accusations of "Russophobia," fear of Russia is not irrational. The head of the Polish Foreign Ministry also reminded the Russian ambassador how the Soviet Union joined forces with Nazi Germany to attack Poland in 1939. Sikorski also asked whether the Russian army's failed attempt to seize Warsaw in August 1920 was a 'topographical excursion'?"

The main topic of Minister Sikorski's speech at the Atlantic Council was also the war in Ukraine. There he warned against isolationism and appeasement of the Russian president. - I realize that appeasement may seem like an easier path. But it is in fact a dead end. I fear that if America does not come together with Europe to enable a Ukrainian victory, our community of democratic states will begin to split," he said.<sup>v</sup> Sikorski also added that "allies will begin to look around for other ways to ensure their security, and some of them will reach for weapons of last resort." He warned that if the Russian Federation is not stopped in Ukraine, it will move closer to the borders of NATO countries. The head of the Polish Foreign Ministry, however, said that Putin will decide to take such steps "only if he thinks he can get away with it," and that the US and Europe can help. - Whether we want it or not, Putin's decision to start the biggest war in Europe since the end of World War II has already changed the course of history. It is up to us to decide whether we will shape it ourselves, or let others - in Moscow, Tehran or Beijing - shape it," Sikorski stressed.

We will never forget the atrocities committed in Bucza, Mariupol or Kramatorsk," he said in turn at the US General Assembly. - We must restore a world based on the principles of the sovereignty of nations, inviolability of borders and respect for personal freedom, Sikorski argued. The debate was convened on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Russian invasion.<sup>vi</sup> During the speech, he said that despite its membership in the Security Council, Russia "has repeatedly violated the UN charter in an attempt to crush a sovereign state and destroy its cultural identity." - This shocked the world. We will never forget the atrocities

committed in Bucza, Mariupol or Kramatorsk. Russia decided to block grain shipments and use food as a weapon. Despite the fact that the number of people suffering from starvation is growing at a truly alarming rate," Sikorski said. - Today, on the eve of the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it shows no desire to change course. On the contrary, the aggression resonates around the world, causing economic turmoil that negatively affects us all," said the head of Polish diplomacy.

Sikorski appealed for continued support for Ukraine. - We have pledged to support the victim. We must live up to that commitment. We must restore a world based on the principles of the sovereignty of nations, the inviolability of borders and respect for personal freedom. We must hold the perpetrators and those who aid them accountable," he said. - Only our decisiveness can stop the neo-imperialist illusions that can be born in any part of the world. We must stay the course until Putin realizes that the days of European imperialism are gone for good," he added.

The impasse in Congress over the aid package for Ukraine has already damaged US credibility, and if it continues, allies will begin to have doubts about the United States, Sikorski stressed in an interview with MSNBC television. He also compared the current moment in international politics to that before World War II, and warned that Vladimir Putin may want to attack Poland in the future.<sup>vii</sup>

The continuation of U.S. support for Ukraine was also requested by the U.S. Senate, which voted against a bill combining funds to support Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan with immigration reform, on Portal X by Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk . "Ronald Reagan, who helped millions of us regain our freedom and independence, must be turning over in his grave today. Shame on you," the Polish prime minister wrote, addressing Republican senators from the US.<sup>viii</sup>

### **Dispute over Trump's statement**

A statement by Donald Trump, the likely Republican candidate for the U.S. presidency, who said he would "encourage" Russia to "do whatever it pleases" with NATO countries that "don't pay," i.e. spend less than 2 percent of GDP on defense, has sparked a polemic in Poland between President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Donald Tusk. Donald Tusk addressed these words on Platform X. He wrote: "President Duda: President Trump keeps his word. President Trump: I will encourage Russia to attack NATO countries. Maybe this is the right

topic for the Cabinet Council, Mr. President?" - wrote the Polish Prime Minister, referring to the Cabinet Council organized by the President with the participation of the government.<sup>ix</sup>

President Andrzej Duda reacted to the post." The Poland-US alliance must be strong, regardless of who is currently in power in Poland and the US. I have always acted this way and will continue to act in this spirit, respecting all our partners in the US." - he declared at X. He added that "insulting half of the American political scene serves neither our economic interests nor Poland's security." The president thus referred to an earlier post by Tusk, who wrote after the US Senate rejected a bill to help Ukraine, among others, that Republican senators should be ashamed of themselves. Duda also expressed his belief that "thanks to the wise and far-sighted policies of the last eight years, we spend 4 percent of GDP on defense." "Thanks to this, Poland is and will be safe!" - he concluded.

### **Visegrad Group Meeting**

The Visegrad Group, the leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, also met in Prague in February. The topics of discussion were energy security, the EU's strategic agenda and the prevention of illegal migration, but also Ukraine. The meeting showed the division of the group's countries into the Czech Republic and Poland, which see the need for further active support for Ukraine, and on the other hand Hungary and Slovakia emphasizing the need to start peace talks.

- The Visegrad Group has an extremely solid foundation. Somewhere at the birth of this group was a common resistance against the Soviet empire and the presence of Russian troops in our countries," Prime Minister Donald Tusk recalled after the summit. Today, the test of our cooperation is our actions in the European Union, because we do not need to assure ourselves of friendship. We need to establish our common interests under more difficult conditions,"<sup>x</sup> said the head of the Polish government. As he pointed out, after the summit it is possible to "build joint work to help Ukraine." Prime Minister Viktor Orban, speaking about Ukraine, noted that "the situation is dangerous," and added that peace talks are the only way to end the war.



## Conclusion

The first months of the new Donald Tusk government in international politics have been marked by tensions in relations with Ukraine related to agriculture. Despite this cooling of relations, Poland remains active in its efforts to support Ukraine in its war with Russia, seeing this as its fundamental strategic interest.

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- i \_\_\_\_\_ The Economic portal Bankier.pl <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Tusk-w-Kijowie-Polska-pomoze-Ukrainie-w-przystapieniu-do-Unii-Europejskiej-8682736.html>
  - ii \_\_\_\_\_ Economic Portal BusinessInsider.com.pl <https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/apel-zelenskiego-do-donalda-tuska-chce-sie-spotkac-na-granicy/56wkg4b>
  - iii \_\_\_\_\_ The portal of TVN24 TV <https://tvn24.pl/biznes/ze-swiata/strajk-rolnikow-minister-rolnictwa-czeslaw-siekierski-bruksela-narzucila-nieracjonalne-wymogi-st7792830>
  - iv \_\_\_\_\_ The portal of TVN24 TV <https://tvn24.pl/swiat/radoslaw-sikorski-punktuje-rosje-szef-msz-stal-sie-sensacja-przemowienie-w-radzie-bezpieczenstwa-onz-chwalone-st7791534>
  - v \_\_\_\_\_ The Information portal Interia.pl [https://wydarzenia.interia.pl/zagranica/news-wyznanie-sikorskiego-o-synu-w-armii-usa-bede-zalowal-ze-to-p,nld,7356926#utm\\_source=paste&utm\\_medium=paste&utm\\_campaign=chrome](https://wydarzenia.interia.pl/zagranica/news-wyznanie-sikorskiego-o-synu-w-armii-usa-bede-zalowal-ze-to-p,nld,7356926#utm_source=paste&utm_medium=paste&utm_campaign=chrome)
  - vi \_\_\_\_\_ The portal of TVN24 TV <https://tvn24.pl/swiat/radoslaw-sikorski-w-usa-przemawial-na-zgromadzeniu-ogolnym-onz-st7788720>
  - vii \_\_\_\_\_ The Economic portal Bankier.pl <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Sikorski-Impas-w-sprawie-pakietu-dla-Ukrainy-mocno-zaszkodzil-wiarygodnosci-USA-8699799.html>
  - viii \_\_\_\_\_ The Economic portal Money.pl <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/tusk-uderza-w-republikanow-reagan-przewraca-sie-w-grobie-6993436404275744a.html>
  - ix \_\_\_\_\_ The Portal of the weekly magazine "Do Rzeczy" <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/548781/burza-po-slowach-trump-duda-zareagowal-na-wpis-tuska.html>
  - x \_\_\_\_\_ Information portal Wirtualna Polska <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/tusk-o-grupie-wyszehradzkiej-wspolny-opor-przeciwko-sowieckiemu-imperium-7000224121059840a?index=0&abtest=adtech%7CPU-335%7CA%3Badtech%7CPRGM-732%7CA%3Badtech%7CPU-321%7CA%3Badtech%7CPRGM-660%7CA%3Badtech%7CPRGM-740%7CC%3Badtech%7CPRG-3468%7CB>