

# **Ukraine and V4 countries: promoting better understanding**



## **Webinar 3 Ukraine-Poland relations**

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# **Poland-Ukraine relations**

## ***Background and history***

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# Background

- Over different historical periods , Poles and Ukrainians went through joint fighting against external threats, situational alliances, and wars between each other.
- Problems were typical for neighboring countries in Europe, however for Poland and Ukraine the situation has been complicated further due to closeness to big powers
- Recent history provided a new chance for constructing trustful and mutually beneficial bilateral relations

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# Background

- Focus of bilateral relations in the 1990-ies has mostly been on economy, trade, and history. The countries managed to reach considerable degree of reconciliation, driven by the formula “remember the past, but think about the future”.
- Ukraine was concerned about reforms and state building, while Poland set agenda for joining NATO and the EU.
- Important image of Poland as the ‘advocate of Ukraine’ in the EU starting from 2005

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# Background

- After the events of Euromaidan 2013-14, the relations between Poland and Ukraine regained some optimism.
- However optimism has been significantly undermined by further dramatic events with Crimea and Donbas
- A strategic partnership required modification of the agenda



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# **Poland-Ukraine relations**

## ***Current agenda***

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# Current agenda

- Both Ukraine and Poland perceive Russian revisionism as a considerable threat.
- Thus, security issues play the most important role in bilateral agenda.
- Along with advocating for the EU's deeper involvement into Eastern Europe's security concerns, Poland remains one of the key providers of military assistance to Ukraine, taking part in joint exercises and trainings (e.g. Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian brigade )

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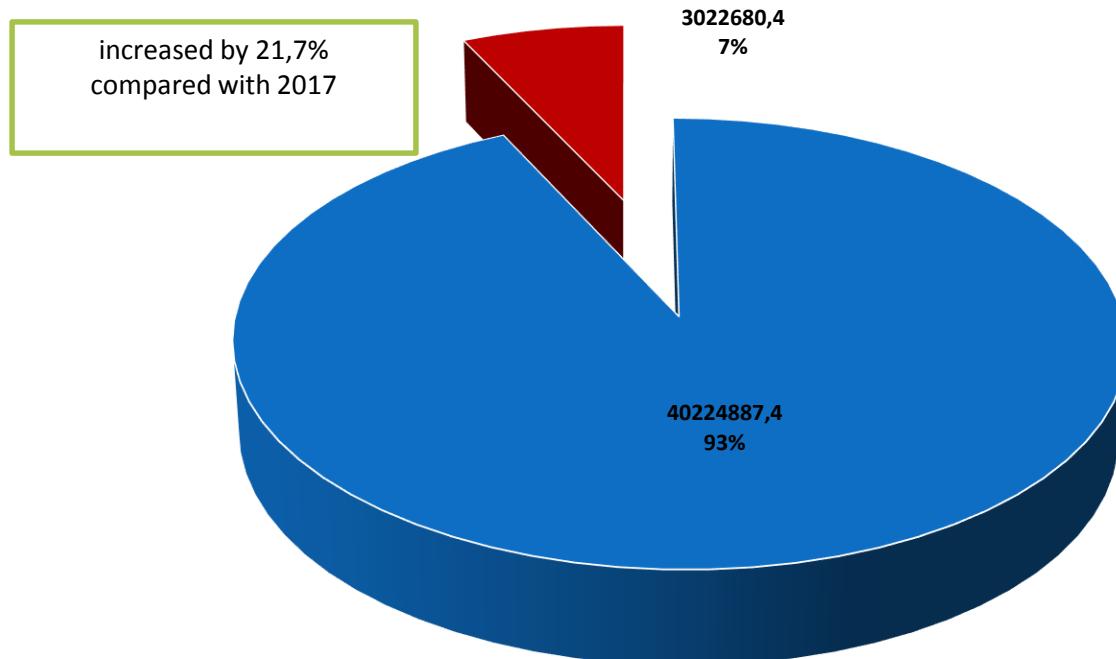
# Current agenda

- Poland is Ukraine's second biggest trading partner, while Ukraine ranks 14th in the list of major trading partners of Poland.
- There is a huge potential for mutual trade, and this can be a basis of a deepened interdependence.
- Issue of Ukrainian migrants in Poland – approx. 2 mln Ukrainians working in Poland and over \$3 bln of Ukrainians' remittances
- Energy security: diversification of natural gas supplies, securing transit of Russian gas through Ukraine's territory, opening of European markets for LNG from the US seem to be in both countries' interests.



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## Ukraine: Export of goods in 2018 (without December), thousand \$



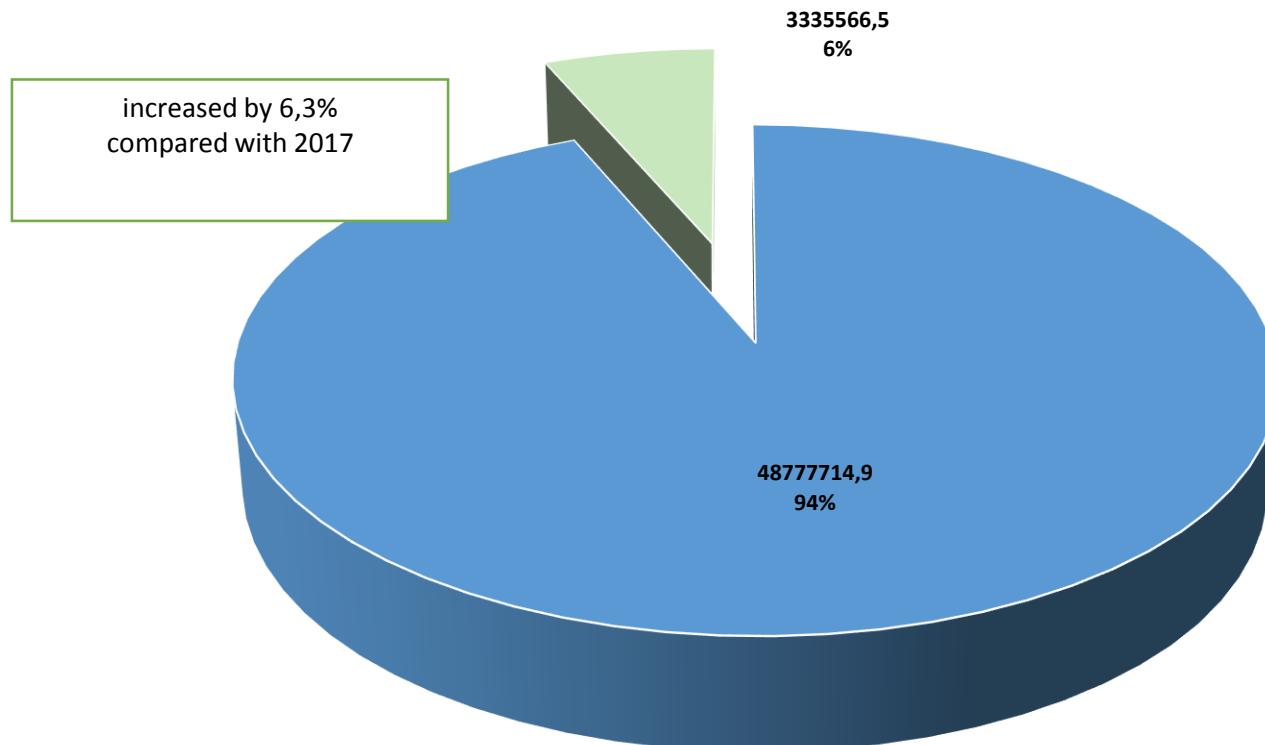
■ Other countries ■ Poland

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## Ukraine: Import of goods in 2018 (without December), thousand \$



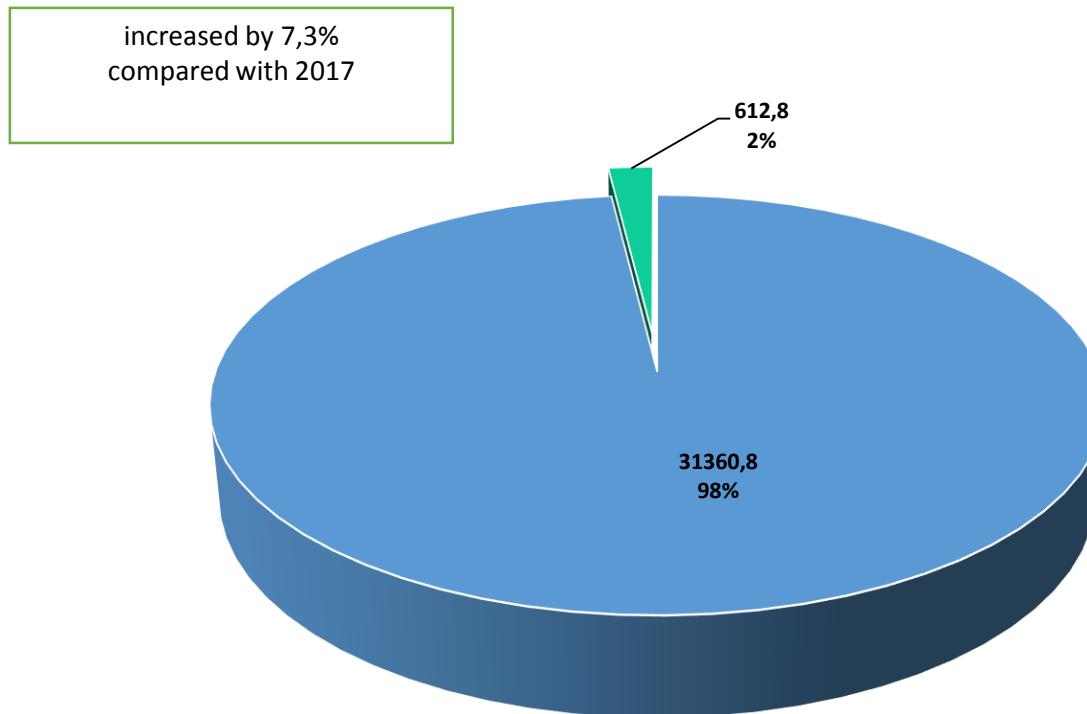
■ Other countries ■ Poland

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## Accumulated investments in Ukraine, million \$



■ Other countries ■ Poland

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**“There are 2 mln of Ukrainians working in Poland  
and 40 000 of Ukrainian students studying in Polish  
universities”**



## Чому обрали Польщу для еміграції?



## Середній термін перебування в Польщі



## В яких сферах Ви працювали/працюєте у Польщі?



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# Poland-Ukraine relations

## *Historical points of pain*



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# Historical points of pain

- History will most likely remain the main issue of concern in bilateral relations in mid-term perspective
- Appeals to history are not just short-term and related to specific political parties or leaders. It is a part of broad and deep process with a high level of interdependence.
- In April, 2015 the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the so-called “decommunization laws”, which envisage responsibility of those who deny heroic nature of fighters for Ukraine.

# Historical points of pain

- In 2016, the Polish Parliament unanimously adopted the resolution which qualifies Volhynia killings as genocide of the Poles.
- In 2017, Ukraine banned Poland's exhumation works on its territory in response to deconstruction of a monument to UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) in Hruszowice, Poland.
- In 2018 the Polish Parliament adopted amendments to the Bill on the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, enabling criminal responsibility for denial of "crimes of Ukrainian nationalists" in 1925-1950.



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# **Poland-Ukraine relations**

***Outlook for future development***

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# Points of reference for the future

- Political dimension of historical clashes is going to remain or even get stronger in bilateral relations.
- Focusing on more pragmatic issues and making concessions over history whenever possible can be a good starting point.
- Poland and Ukraine should realistically assess interests of each other, and Ukrainians must understand the differences in perceiving challenges.
- Ukraine should seek for pragmatic partnership rather than ideologically driven friendship.



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# Points of reference for the future

- Security in focus
- Ukraine may help Poland increase the importance of Eastern neighborhood in EU's common policies, while Poland may further support Ukraine on its way to EU and NATO membership.
- Regional security initiatives may also become platforms for bilateral cooperation.
- Joint efforts in energy security enhancement

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# Points of reference for the future

- Poland and Ukraine have enough potential combined to impact regional political developments and put forward a new security agenda.
- Effective containment of the Russian threat, more attention from the EU and NATO to Eastern Europe, more infrastructural capabilities, and less mistrust or historical speculations could bring about a more secure neighborhood.



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# Points of reference for the future

- Issues connected to national identities, including conflicts over history, are not likely to disappear.
- Paying attention to improving democratic institutions
- More democracy would mean less internal conflicts, more power-sharing, and better protection for minorities – benefits, which any state of the region would welcome.



**Thank you for your attention!**