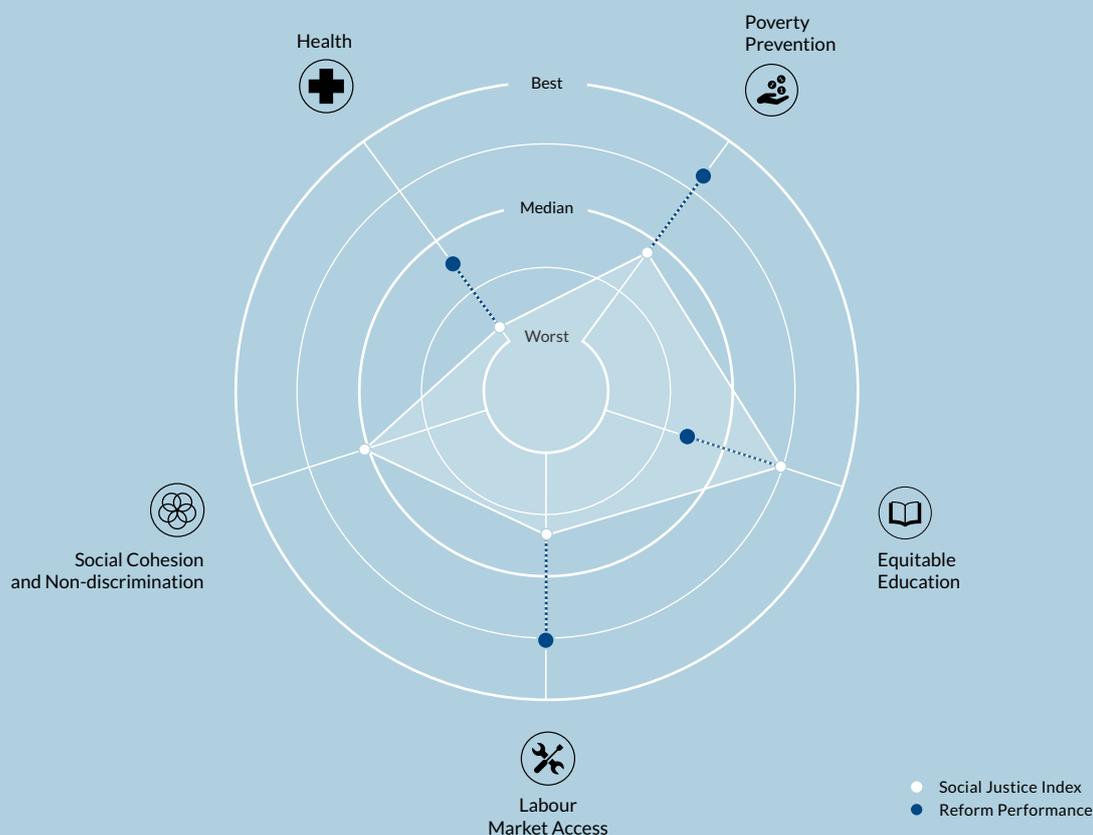


Findings by Country



Poland

How does the country rank in the EU?



Overall Findings

Need Poland's overall need for policy reform was assessed as being 2.13, or just below the EU median of 2.18, ranking the country 10th out of 23 countries. Looking at the different dimensions, the highest need is seen with regard to Labour Market Access (2.61, rank 18/19). This accords with the low score of 5.51 out of 10 in the 2015 Social Justice Index (SJI), which ranks the country 19th out of the 28 EU member states assessed. However, it has to be pointed out that Poland has continually improved its score over the years.

As stated in the 2015 SJI, providing accessibility to high-quality Health care services is Poland's most pressing challenge. The need for reform is high (2.43, rank 15/20), as the range and accessibility of health services is low and waiting times are relatively long.

One area in which Poland has achieved considerable success is the provision of Equitable Education. The need for reform is assessed as being comparatively low (1.68, rank 6/22). Poland also ranked among the top 10 in the 2015 SJI, with a score of 6.71 out of 10 (rank 8/28). As stated in the 2015 SJI, it has a low rate of early school leavers. Furthermore, reforms undertaken

Overall Reform Performance Ranking



Overview of Reform Barometer Scores



by the first Tusk government are reported to have had positive effects on the effectiveness and quality of education.

The experts also report that Poland has a comparatively low need for reform policies addressing Poverty Prevention (1.80, rank 7/27). However, this stands in contrast with a low score of 4.85 in the 2015 SJI, which ranks the country only 16th out of 28 countries.

Activity Poland is one of the most active countries, addressing 49 percent of its need for policy reforms (rank 7/23). This activity rate was sustained across all policy dimensions: Poverty Prevention (51%, rank 7/27), Equitable Education (45%, rank 5/22), Labour Market Access (53%, rank 9/19) and Health (47%, 15/20).

Quality The quality of Poland’s reforms is evaluated as a moderate 0.68 by the experts, ranking the country 11th out 20 European countries. The positive impact on the different policy dimensions is highest for Poverty Prevention (1.04, rank 6/24) and lowest with regard to the provision of Equitable Education (0.17, rank 15/21).

Dimension Findings



Poverty Prevention

Need The need to reduce poverty in Poland is assessed as being highest for children (2.68, rank 18/27). Addressing poverty among single parents is also rated a fairly high priority (1.95), though quite low when compared to other EU countries (rank 3/27). The third-most-at-risk subgroup in Poland is senior citizens (1.68). Though the need for reform concerning the foreign-born population (1.29) and refugees (1.58) is low, a few experts specifically pointed out that the integration of refugees in the labour market and in education is crucial to fighting poverty. And while energy credits have been introduced by the Polish government, one expert states: “Fuel poverty (energy poverty) is addressed with energy benefits, which reach only 7 percent of the target group. Thus, this particular issue should be targeted with a new instrument.”¹

Activity Half of the need for policy reform is being addressed in Poland (51%, rank 7/27). Looking at the most pressing issue, reducing child poverty, 88 percent of the need is being addressed. As one of the most prominent policies, the ‘Family 500+’ programme was introduced in April 2016. Under this subsidy programme, families will receive 500 PLN for their second child and subsequent children up to the age of 18, regardless of their income. Families with one child will also profit from these benefits if their monthly income is below 800 PLN, or if their child is disabled and their income is below 1,200 PLN. Regarding the second-most-pressing issue, preventing poverty among elderly people, the experts report that 75 percent of the need is being addressed. One policy instrument is pension indexation.

Quality The quality of the policies introduced was evaluated as being remarkably high (1.04, rank 6/24). Experts are even more optimistic about the impact on child poverty (1.38). However, a few experts state that a negative side effect of the ‘Family 500+’ programme could be that it discourages women from joining the jobs market by increasing family incomes. The experts are more sceptical about the expected influence on poverty among elderly people, with a few specifically stating that senior citizens will not profit from pension indexation.



Equitable Education

Need Poland succeeds fairly well in providing Equitable Education. The overall need for reform is assessed at 1.68, ranking the country 6th out of 22 EU member states. The lowest need is seen for the policy objectives of early school leavers (1.00), ranking it 2nd behind the Czech Republic, and the quality of teaching (1.25), ranking it 4th out of 22 countries. The highest need for reform is seen in ensuring equal opportunities within early (2.67) and pre-primary education (2.56). Many experts state that nurseries, kindergartens and preschool education are not always accessible for families living in rural areas. Thus, access to early education and pre-primary education is inadequate

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and needs reform. Similarly, the need for reforming the structural conditions regarding financial and human resources in early and pre-primary education are evaluated as being high (2.00 each). In an attempt to address the issue, the former Polish government lowered the school age from 7 to 6, and made preschool education mandatory for 5-year-olds. However, these reforms have been reversed by the current Law and Justice (PiS) government.

Activity The activity rate in this dimension is comparatively high overall (45%, rank 5). Regarding measures to ensure equal opportunities, the activity rate is very high (77%, rank 3/25). Less governmental activity is observed with respect to the less urgent objectives of early school leavers (25%) and quality of teaching (27%).

Quality The quality of reforms is assessed at merely 0.17, ranking Poland 15th out of 21 countries. Though the impact of policies on equal opportunities is evaluated more positively (0.67, rank 10/18), many experts criticise the above-mentioned reversal of policies. According to the experts, the likely consequences are increased inequalities in access to education for children from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds and children living in rural areas.

✳ Labour Market Access

Need The need for reforming Labour Market Access in Poland is the second highest among 19 EU countries (2.61). While a need for increasing employment (2.18, rank 10/22) is discerned, the more pressing challenges are improving precarious employment, namely, reducing temporary contracts on involuntary basis and decreasing in-work poverty and the number of low-wage earners (2.83 each, rank 16/16). To address these issues, one expert reported that a national minimum wage is being discussed in Poland but has not yet been introduced.

Activity The activity rate addressing Labour Market Access is comparatively high (53%, rank 9/19), with a focus on reducing temporary contracts on involuntary basis and decreasing in-work poverty (71%, rank 3/16). Furthermore, the experts assess that 47 percent of the need to reduce in-work poverty (rank 9/16) and 39 percent of that to increase employment (rank 18/22) is being addressed.

Quality The experts expect the policies introduced to have quite a positive impact on the dimension overall (0.83, rank 5/17) and on the reduction of temporary contracts on involuntary basis in particular (1.00, rank 4/12). While the impact on increased employment (0.55, rank 9/19) and lower in-work poverty is assessed positively, as well, one expert states that the impact is fairly limited, as minimum wages remain too low and access to employment contracts continues to be limited.

 Health

Need Health remains a pressing issue for Poland. In the 2015 SJI, the country only scored 4.11 out of 10, ranking it 26th out of 28 countries, ahead of only Latvia and Romania. Accordingly, the experts also assessed the need for reform to be high (2.43, rank 15/20). The need was also high across the eight policy objectives for this dimension, ranging from 2.13 (unmet needs for medical help: rank 14/17) to 2.73 (improvement of public health: rank 19/24). The second- and third-most-pressing issues are observed in the quality of health care and the efficiency of the health system. One expert says that the health care system in Poland performs poorly partly because of a lack of investment and partly because of the lack of political will to make health care a priority. Additionally, many seek health services outside Poland, namely, in Western European countries.² Just as stated in the 2015 SJI, many experts report that long waiting times are a pressing issue in Poland's health care system. While a policy with a focus on oncological care was introduced in early 2015, the experts still saw a need to introduce new policies addressing this issue more thoroughly at the time this survey took place.

Activity The activity rate for this dimension is comparatively low (47%, rank 15/20). However, it is significantly higher for the most pressing issue of improving public health: 100 percent of the need for reform here is being addressed by government action (rank 1/24). This is largely thanks to a 'Law on Public Health' introduced in September 2015, which sets regulations for the structure, main stakeholders and financing of the public health system in Poland. Furthermore, it proposes coordination mechanisms and defines the responsibilities of individual stakeholders more clearly.

Quality The experts evaluated the quality of the introduced reforms as being moderate. While the overall quality is assessed at 0.56, ranking the country 11th out of 19 countries, no improvement is expected with regard to the quality of health. A more positive outlook is shared with respect to the improvement of public health (0.88, rank 7/19). However, most experts commented that it was still too early to assess what impact the most recent reforms will have on the Polish health care system, though a few added that the 'Law on Public Health' provided a limited number of specific details. One expert states: "The law is very general, without any concrete [proposals]. The position of public health in the overall health system will not change and is more or less marginal. The dominant concern is medicine. One reason is that public health is dominated by medical doctors."³ However, another expert remains more optimistic, writing: "For the first time, the public health agenda has been put at the highest legislative level. This novel law sets a framework for sustainable public health development in Poland. It is to be hoped that implementation of the Law on Public Health will help the prioritization of public expenditures on health-related areas and enhance the position of public health among many competing targets for public investment. It's difficult to foretell whether implementation is going to be successful."⁴

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