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CASE STUDY

EUPopLink Country report - Poland

[version 1; peer review: 1 approved with reservations, 1 not approved]

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Abstract

Euroscepticism and populism are phenomena that have strongly engaged researchers in recent decades. Based on the example of Polish political parties, it can be argued that these two attributes often co-occur. Moreover, it appears that, in the case of Polish parties, the more pronounced a party's populism, the stronger its Euroscepticism. Such a conclusion aligns well with the assumptions of the project within which this text was prepared (COST Action CA23102 "Linking euroscepticism and populism: causes and consequences" (EUPopLink)). The relationship between populism and Euroscepticism in the strategies of Polish political parties can be considered specific due to the role of the Catholic Church in the narratives of populist-Eurosceptic actors, who perceive the European Union as a threat to the Catholic identity of Polish society.

Keywords

populism, euroscepticism, Poland

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This article is included in the Linking Euroscepticism and Populism (EUPopLink) collection.

Open Peer Review

Approval Status ? ✗

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1. **Mariusz Kowalski**, Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization, Warsaw, Poland
2. **Piotr Żuk**, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Any reports and responses or comments on the article can be found at the end of the article.

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1. Introduction

The process of Western European integration became an important point of reference for Central and Eastern European countries in the course of their democratic transformation. This observation applies to both the opinions expressed by political elites and those of society. Democratisation itself was described in 1989 by the first non-communist prime minister in Central and Eastern Europe Tadeusz Mazowiecki as a 'return to Europe'. Although its essence was understood in different ways, this process was unequivocally viewed as positive – integration with European communities/the European Union was widely believed to ensure economic prosperity. Only the post-communist parties - Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD) and the Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL) - were somewhat sceptical at the beginning of the transformation; however, due to their isolation at the parliamentary level, their position at the time had no political significance. It is also worth noting that European issues were of marginal importance in political discourse in the early 1990s, and that post-communist parties soon revised their positions in this regard (Sula, 2005).

The opinions of Polish political parties on the European Union varied as work on Poland's accession to the EU progressed. As a result, after the 2001 parliamentary elections, the representation of Eurosceptics in the Sejm was relatively large and diverse, including the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin - LPR), PSL, Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość - PiS) and Self-Defence (Samoobrona - S). However, the majority in the parliament was gained by pro-European parties (Civic Platform - Platforma Obywatelska; PO and SLD). The electoral success of these parties cannot be attributed to their pro-European stance; European issues played a secondary role in the election campaign at that time.

The data in the Figure 1 show that the majority of Polish society consistently supported Poland's membership in the European Union. The growing role of Eurosceptic parties on the eve of Poland's accession to the European Union was accompanied by a decline in pro-European attitudes among the public. Yet, as it turned out, all the myths built on pre-accession fears disappeared in 2004 and the following years, when it became clear that the balance sheet of Poland's membership in the EU was unequivocally positive.

This strongly pro-European stance of Polish society posed a challenge to the radical right-wing parties that were in power between 2015 and 2023. Public pressure, combined with the European Union's unyielding stance on respect for the rule of law in Poland, led the governing majority to abandon some of the mechanisms aimed at politicising the judiciary (Sitnicka, 2022; Woźnicki, 2021).

The present country report was prepared as part of the EUPopLink COST Action (Andreadis & Vasilopoulou, 2026) following the EUPopLink Theoretical Framework and guidelines (Lorimer et al., 2026).

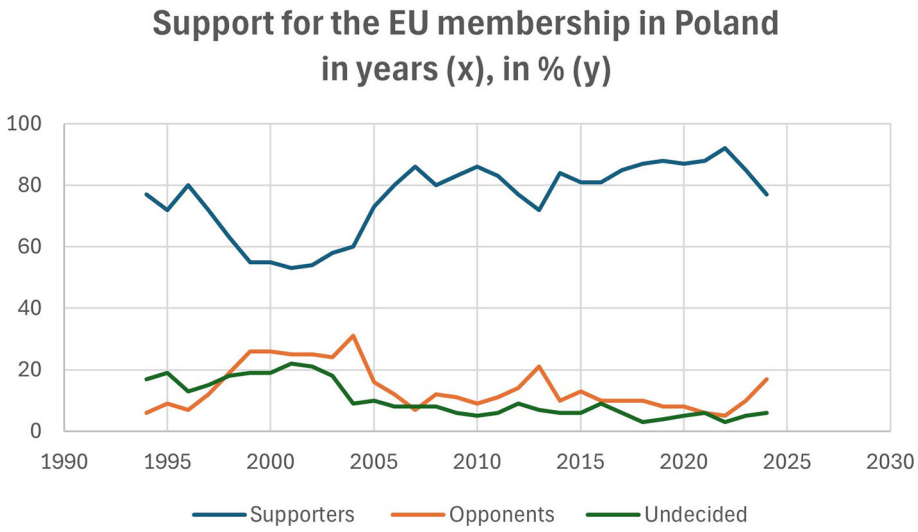

Figure 1. 'Support for EU membership in Poland', illustrates the level of public support (%, Y-axis) over time (1994–2024, X-axis).

2. Populist political actors

In this section, I will characterise individual populist parties in chronological order, beginning with those that were once relevant but have since become marginalised. I will then present the populist political parties active in 2025, both within and outside the parliamentary arena.

The first populist party in Poland to emerge after the fall of the communist regime was **Party X**. It was founded by Stanisław Tymiński. Another populist party, **Samoobrona** (founded in 1992; originally a trade union of the same name) achieved significantly greater success. The populism of this party was manifested in emphasising the dichotomy between the elites who had been in power until then and the ordinary people represented by this party (Stanley & Cześnik, 2019). It is worth adding that the party was an advocate of the rural areas and its inhabitants (not only farmers but also all those who could have been recognised as losers of political transformation).

The League of Polish Families (founded in 2001) could also be considered populist. The populism of this group was built around the conflict between Polish Catholics who opposed the vision of a secular Europe promoted by the European Union (Zuba, 2017).

Another populist political actor was **the Kukiz'15** group (formally operating as an association), founded by rock star Paweł Kukiz following his electoral success in the 2015 presidential race. The primary goal of the leader of Kukiz'15 was to combat the so-called 'partyocracy', which, according to him, consisted of political parties dominating decision-making processes without being subject to control by voters (lack of accountability). Kukiz'15 won 9% of the seats in 2015. In the 2019 parliamentary elections, Kukiz'15 candidates were elected to the Sejm from the PSL lists. In the following years, the group established cooperation with PiS, and its role was marginalised (Stanley & Cześnik, 2019).

Of the parties described above, only S and LPR were members of a governing coalition — they formed a government with PiS between 2006 and 2007. However, after the 2007 elections, they lost their parliamentary representation and political significance.

Currently, populist parties represented in the national parliament include right-wing groups (PiS and Solidarna Polska) and radical right-wing parties (Confederation Liberty and Independence - Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość, Confederation of the Polish Crown - Konfederacja Korony Polskiej). Certain elements of populist rhetoric are also used by the left-wing party Razem in its criticism of large corporations and state policy, which for years has been more favourable to representatives of private business than to ordinary people (for example, in housing policy).

The party that is gaining increasing support among voters in polls is **the Confederation Liberty and Independence**. This party was established in 2019 and was entered into the register of political parties under the name Confederation Liberty and Independence. Its founders were politicians previously associated with several other political groups – KORWiN (since 29 November 2022, New Hope), the National Movement and Grzegorz Braun's Pobudka (since 2020, the Confederation of the Polish Crown). Grzegorz Braun was expelled from the party on 17 January 2025, the day after he announced his candidacy in the presidential election, in which most of the Confederation's leaders decided to support Sławomir Mentzen (Sula et al., 2025).

This party can be described as populist radical right-wing. It combines anti-immigrant rhetoric with support for an extremely liberal state.

On the international stage, the party cooperates for instance with the AFD in the European Parliament as part of the Europe of Sovereign Nations group. Two activists from this party have joined the Patriots for Europe group in the European Parliament.

Confederation Liberty and Independence is a federation of parties, among which **the Confederation of the Polish Crown** has been enjoying growing support in public opinion polls. This latter party was established in 2019 and officially registered in 2020 (*Konfederacja Korony Polskiej*, n.d.).

Grzegorz Braun's activity is not only verbal (promoting anti-Semitic, anti-Ukrainian, pro-Russian slogans, spreading conspiracy theories and denying the existence of gas chambers in the Auschwitz concentration camp), but is also manifested in actions such as burning the EU flag or physically obstructing a gynecologist who performed a legal abortion (Piedziuk & Szacki, 2025). Due to the charges brought against him, the Prosecutor General submitted a request to the European Parliament to lift Braun's immunity. The European Parliament decided to lift his immunity on 13 November

2025 (Bromber, 2025). In the European Parliament, Grzegorz Braun - his party's sole representative - is not affiliated with any political group.

PiS is the most relevant populist party in Poland. It was founded in 2001 by politicians who had been involved in party politics since the very beginning of the country's democratic transition—initially within the Centre Agreement (Porozumienie Centrum), and later as part of the Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność) (Sula, 2011, p. 54).

From the very beginning of its existence, PiS had a conservative character. Initially, the party emphasised the need for decommunisation, but above all, the fight against corruption (Millard, 2009, p. 191; Stanley & Cześnik, 2019, p. 72).

Before the 2005 parliamentary elections, the party began promoting the need to build a Fourth Republic, which would be free from corruption and all the problems and pathologies on which the Third Republic, established after 1989, was built. In the PiS narrative, the negotiated transition guaranteed power to the post-communist elites (Millard, 2009, pp. 14, 127). In the European Parliament, PiS is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group (with Brothers of Italy among others).

For years, PiS has closely cooperated with another right-wing and populist group, **Sovereign Poland** (Suwerenna Polska – SP), which operated under the name Solidarna Polska until 2023. The latter was founded by secessionists from PiS caused by internal conflict. However, programmatic proximity overcame the temporary hostility, enabling PiS and SP to cooperate closely once again.

3. Positions on 'Europe' and the populism-euroscepticism nexus

As I suggested above, the Euroscepticism of Polish parliamentary groups was varied. Before Poland joined the EU the core of Euroscepticism could be summarised along two main dimensions. The first (economic) emphasised the need to take a critical view of the European integration process, as it could threaten Poland's economic interests. In this case, it was not a matter of denying a specific feature of the EU, but of the need to guarantee the primacy of Poland's interests, which may even be difficult to consider Euroscepticism, as the criticism was not directed at the structure of the EU or any of its sectoral policies. This perception of the problem of European integration was characteristic of PiS, PSL and Samoobrona. These parties raised issues of cultural threats to a much lesser extent, with PiS doing so most frequently among them). This perspective was almost monopolised by the LPR. Politicians from this group were opposed to Poland's membership in the EU, believing that it could force the secularisation of Polish society.

It can be assumed that, of the parties mentioned, the LPR was the most radical towards the EU, but also the most consistent in its views – both before and after Poland's accession to the EU, the LPR was opposed to membership. The LPR's activities were inconsistent with its proclaimed slogans – despite its opposition to the EU, it competed in the European elections, and then the deputies representing it participated in the work of the European Parliament (Sula, 2005).

It seems that the rivalry between PSL and Samoobrona, which are primarily seeking the support of the rural electorate, can be considered a specific feature of Polish Euroscepticism. The emergence of Samoobrona and its success in taking over the rural electorate from the PSL can be explained by Samoobrona's skilful use of anti-European rhetoric. The PSL, wanting to secure its support among rural residents, also had to saturate its political appeal with anti-European themes. This was at a time when the PSL, as a member of the government coalition since 2001, was jointly responsible for the final stage of work on Poland's accession to the European Union (Sula, 2021, p. 775).

After 2004, the division between pro-European left- and centre-wing parties and right-wing parties that are sceptical (to varying degrees) about European integration has remained virtually unchanged. Enthusiastic about the European Union are PO, PSL and the Left (Lewica). In the Eurosceptic camp are PiS, SP, Confederation Liberty and Independence, and the Confederation of the Polish Crown.

Among all the Eurosceptic parties, PiS is currently the least radical (*soft Euroscepticism*). The party criticises the European Union on a general level, claiming that the current scope and depth of European integration pose a threat to the sovereignty of nation-states. This narrative was particularly prominent during the conflict between the PiS-led government and the European Commission.

This conflict appeared in 2015 at the beginning of the PiS government as a result of the party's actions aimed at limiting the independence of the Constitutional Tribunal and the Prosecutor General's Office. In response to this attack on the rule of law, the European Commission initiated the Article 7 procedure, which could result in the suspension of Poland's

voting rights in the Council of the European Union (Csehi & Zgut, 2021, p. 61; Pankowska, 2018). The procedure was finally terminated in May 2024 after the Polish Minister of Justice presented the Action Plan for restoring the rule of law.

During the conflict with the European institutions some differences in the approach of SP and PiS emerged; the former party was against any concessions with the EU institutions regarding the judiciary reforms implemented in Poland.

In general, the Euroscepticism in Poland is represented by the parties that completely reject European integration (the Confederation of the Polish Crown) and those that criticise the EU's ambitions to include too many sectoral policies within the Community framework (PiS and SP). For the latter, the ideal would be a Europe of homelands – an organisation with relatively limited competences. Confederation Liberty and Independence's Euroscepticism can be called the hard one. According to the party's activists, Poland should leave the European Union, although they believe this process should take place in the future rather than immediately. Grzegorz Braun, leader of the Confederation of the Polish Crown, holds a different view. He believes that Poland should leave the European Union (which he refers to as the "eurokolkhoz") as soon as possible. As mentioned earlier, he demonstrates his hostility toward the EU through actions such as burning its flag.

The narrative on the European Union presented by all Eurosceptic parties in Poland has a clear populist character, boiling down to the construction of a dichotomous picture of reality – on one side there is the European Union, and on the other there are the Polish Eurosceptic elites who want to defend Polish identity and economic interests.

It is worth noting that Polish Eurosceptic parties have been able to find reasons to criticise the European Union in almost every context. To illustrate this opinion, one can mention, for example, Brexit, which was commented on by Eurosceptics as proof that the European Union required profound reforms. The pandemic and the response to this global crisis were also reasons for Eurosceptics to criticise the EU. PiS politicians argued that nation states were able to organise vaccines much more quickly, which in their opinion was proof that the European Union was not functioning effectively in yet another area. Also, with regard to relations with the US, Polish Eurosceptic parties expressed their satisfaction with Donald Trump's re-election as president. They claimed that the US-Polish relations are more important than the collaboration within the European Union, and that the ties with the US could be strengthened under Trump's leadership. However, the strangest thing about the narrative of all Polish Eurosceptics, including PiS, in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine is their repeated assertion that the greatest threat to Polish sovereignty and identity comes from Western European countries (primarily Germany) and the European Union.

4. Responses to euroscepticism and consequences

The Euroscepticism of the Polish populist parties forming the governing coalition in 2015–2023 made European issues more salient than ever in political discourse. The blocking of European funds prompted Polish Eurosceptic parties to criticise the EU not only for allegedly undermining Poland's sovereignty but also for worsening the country's economic situation. Given the high level of public support for Poland's EU membership, pro-European parties were able to adopt a confrontational strategy towards Eurosceptics. Referring to B. Meguid's proposal (Meguid, 2008, p. 348), this strategy can be considered adversarial, though with some reservation: regarding the migration pact, the stance of the pro-European PO was rather accommodative, as the party's opposition to the relocation of migrants resembled that of PiS.

The situation of the opposition at that time was exceptional, as it could count on significant mobilisation from non-governmental organisations and a large part of society protesting against the ruling party's violations of the law and breaches of democratic standards.

Polish NGOs sought to raise awareness of rule-of-law issues both domestically - through public protests and reports - and internationally, as demonstrations in Poland received wide coverage in global media. They also contributed directly to the European Commission's Rule of Law Reports by submitting analyses and documentation (Citizens Network Watchdog Poland et al., 2022).

The most prominent and publicly visible organisation was the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (Komitet Obrony Demokracji, KOD). However, several other organisations were also highly active, including Citizens of the Republic of Poland (Obywatele RP), Democracy Action (Akcja Demokracja), and the Polish Women's Strike (Strajk Kobiet), as well as lawyers' organisations e.g. Free Courts (Wolne Sądy).

5. Short conclusion

Previous research on the relationship between Euroscepticism and populism in Poland (Styczyńska & Meijer, 2024) has shown that the more frequently parties use populist rhetoric, the more likely they are to express negative attitudes towards

the European Union. This relationship seems to be a common feature of all European populist parties. In the Polish case, European issues have been weaponised, emphasising a dichotomy between the European elites and the Polish 'pure' people.

In the narrative of populist Eurosceptics (PiS and SP), Poland is portrayed as the defender of Christian Europe and traditional family values, while the European Union is depicted as secularised and detached from its cultural identity. The Euroscepticism of PiS and SP can be recognised as soft, whereas that of the Confederation of the Polish Crown is hard, as the latter openly advocates for Poland's withdrawal from the EU.

In comparison with Eurosceptic parties in Western Europe, one genuinely peculiar feature of Polish Eurosceptics is their emphasis on ties to the Catholic Church (with the partial exception of the Confederation; its politicians, however, are likewise close to Catholic teaching in axiological terms, particularly in their opposition to abortion). In the context of rhetoric stressing the need to defend traditional Polish values against a secularised Europe, this alliance with the Catholic Church appears logical.

Ethics and consent

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

Data availability

Data are available under the terms of the Creative Commons Zero "No ights reserved" data waiver (CC0 1.0 Public domain dedication).

All data are available at https://doi.org/10.34616/JSU3HY

Sula, P. (2026). *Support for the EU membership in Poland (on the basis of CBOS)* (Version V1) [dataset]. Uniwersytet Wrocławski. https://doi.org/doi:10.34616/JSU3HY

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✗ **Piotr Żuk**
University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Thank you for sending me the report for review.
From a formal perspective, I have no objections to the report. However, in terms of its substantive content, it presents a predominantly descriptive and relatively conventional account of Polish populism and Euroscepticism. It lacks a more in-depth critical reflection on the internal diversity of populist parties, their social foundations, and the influence of populist narratives and political demands on mainstream politics.

1. Definition and conceptualisation of populism

While the historical overview and outline of populist parties are generally accurate, the report lacks a clear definition of populism. Although I realise that this is not a conventional academic article, some conceptual clarification and a more systematic approach to the key terms would nevertheless be advisable.

2. Analysis of contemporary right-wing populist parties

Regarding contemporary right-wing populist parties (PiS, Confederation Liberty and Independence, and the Confederation of the Polish Crown), I would suggest strengthening the description and analysis to explain more precisely how populism manifests itself in these three parties.
What do they have in common? On which issues do they differ? Do they appeal to a similar social base with their political messages and demands?
It would also be useful to identify the main dimensions and manifestations of their populist political activity. After all, this is not simply about a general rejection of EU policies, but rather about specific issues, such as migration and migration policy, energy transition and EU climate policy, attitudes towards LGBT communities, secularisation, and the role of religion in society.
I would recommend briefly outlining the positions of these three parties on these key issues, which are central to their opposition to the primacy of EU policies.

3. The influence of populist rhetoric on mainstream politics

The report also lacks a more critical reflection on the transfer of populist rhetoric into mainstream political parties and the adoption of certain far-right positions by the political mainstream. Examples include increasingly similar approaches to migration policy, nationalist rhetoric regarding border protection, and the Tusk government's efforts to block or delay the

implementation of certain EU climate policies.
A more detailed discussion of both the differences and similarities between the policies of the Civic Coalition (KO) and those of the right-wing populist bloc could significantly strengthen the report.
In this context, it would also be important to distinguish more clearly between populism and Euroscepticism, as these are not synonymous phenomena. Criticism of specific European Union policies does not necessarily constitute populism. What matters is how political actors construct the conflict between "ordinary people" and political elites, and how they invoke the supposedly unified will of the people.
Similarly, the convergence of positions between KO and right-wing populist parties on issues such as migration or climate policy does not automatically imply the adoption of populist rhetoric. Nevertheless, it would be valuable to examine the extent to which mainstream political parties adopt not only specific policy demands originating from the radical right, but also its characteristic ways of framing political problems and mobilising voters.
Furthermore, I would recommend updating the descriptions of individual political parties to reflect recent developments, including the merger of Sovereign Poland with PiS in 2024 and the split between Confederation Liberty and Independence and Grzegorz Braun's political movement in 2025. This would help avoid factual inaccuracies and strengthen the analytical quality of the report.

4. Historical inspirations and the socio-historical context of contemporary right-wing populism

I would also suggest including a brief socio-historical analysis highlighting the historical inspirations and reference points that shape contemporary right-wing populist narratives in Poland. Such an approach would help explain how historical symbols, collective memories and nationalist traditions are selectively mobilised and reinterpreted in contemporary political discourse. It would also provide a broader perspective on the ideological and cultural foundations of Polish right-wing populism.
In this context, I recommend consulting the following article:
Refer (1)

Finally, when emphasising the links between the Catholic Church and the nationalist-populist right, I would suggest including a reference to the following article on this topic: Refer (2)

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Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?

No

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?

No

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?

Not applicable

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?
Partly

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?
Partly

Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?
Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: right-wing populism, social movements, energy transitions, environmental politics

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to state that I do not consider it to be of an acceptable scientific standard, for reasons outlined above.

Reviewer Report 20 October 2026

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This peer-reviewed article addresses the topics of Euroscepticism and populism. It presents an analysis of the activities of populist and Eurosceptic parties ('soft' and 'hard') in Poland, from the beginning of the country's political transition (1989) to the present day. The author identifies the populist and Eurosceptic parties and briefly discusses their ideological foundations, policy platforms and the nature of their activities. This analysis enables him to discern a close link between populism and Euroscepticism within Polish political parties. A distinctive feature of the phenomena under discussion is said to be the ideological connection between Polish populist Eurosceptic parties and the Catholic Church; in the context of these parties' rhetoric, which emphasises the need to defend traditional Polish values against a secularised Europe, this is, in the author's view, a logical consequence. According to the author, "the strangest thing about the narrative of all Polish Eurosceptics, including PiS, in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine is their repeated assertion that the greatest threat to Polish sovereignty and identity comes from Western European countries (primarily Germany) and the European Union".
The author identifies the Confederation of Freedom and Independence and the Confederation of the Polish Crown as the current populist parties representing 'hard' Euroscepticism. The author

identifies Law and Justice (PiS) and Sovereign Poland (SP) as the current populist parties representing 'soft' Euroscepticism. He also classifies the left-wing Razem (Together) Party as a current populist party, and in the past he also included the PSL (Polish People's Party) in this category. He identifies the League of Polish Families (LPR) and Samoobrona (Self-Defence) as historical populist Eurosceptic parties. He identifies Party X and Kukiz'15 as historical populist parties.

Broadly speaking, the analysis presented by the author is consistent with the general trends observed on the Polish political scene and described by researchers. In detail, however, there are many oversimplifications and a lack of sufficient nuance in the assessment of individual political parties. This concerns, above all, a failure to recognise the problem of populism affecting the majority of political parties active on the Polish political scene, and a failure to strongly emphasise the differences between right-wing parties in the context of European integration and perceived external threats. When assessing the peer-reviewed paper and responding to the template of questions addressed to the reviewer, the following should be noted:

1. Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?

The description of the evolution of the Polish political scene failed to mention all the populist parties. It was limited solely to right-wing parties, omitting centrist and left-wing parties. An exception, albeit with reservations, was made for the Razem Party and the PSL. The author does, admittedly, list Samoobrona as a populist party, but fails to note that it was classified as left-wing. Meanwhile, analyses carried out after 2010 clearly indicate that populism has become a permanent feature of Polish political parties' manifestos. Artur Wołek had already drawn attention to this in a 2012 article, pointing out that populism had also become a tool in the hands of mainstream parties (Wołek, 2012). This phenomenon is confirmed by subsequent political science analyses (e.g. Nieć et al., 2021 or Borowiec, 2024), including Jakub Krupa's recent doctoral thesis (2025). Between 2001 and 2023, Poland's two leading political parties, PiS and PO/KO, did not differ in terms of the intensity of their populism. The only difference between them lay in the years during which populist tendencies were at their peak. The same applied to most of the other parties (Krupa, 2025).

The ideological rift, in fact, concerns the Polish elites, namely the conservative and liberal camps. For this reason, both the conservative (PiS) and liberal (PO/KO) mainstream parties employ anti-elite rhetoric and demagoguery, but directed at different sections of the 'people' and aimed against different types of elites. However, these two parties are not the most extreme in their populist or ideological stances. More extreme positions on the political scene are adopted by Konfederacja on the right and Nowa Lewica (New Left) on the left, and in an even more extreme form by Konfederacja Korony Polskiej on the right and Razem Party on the left.

This last observation must also lead to a reassessment of the place the author has reserved for PiS in his analysis. Admittedly, he qualifies this by stating that PiS is a party of merely 'soft' Euroscepticism (which some refer to as 'Eurorealism'). Nevertheless, given the party's ideological stance, the author's assertion that „the strangest thing about the narrative of all Polish Eurosceptics, including PiS, in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine is their repeated assertion that the greatest threat to Polish sovereignty and identity comes from Western European countries (primarily Germany) and the European Union". It is also difficult to agree with the author's assertion, expressed in the sentence that "this strongly pro-European stance of Polish society posed a challenge to the radical right-wing parties that were in power between 2015 and 2023", all the more so as elsewhere the author himself distinguishes between and applies a different classification, writing that „currently, populist parties represented in the national parliament include right-wing groups (PiS and Solidarna Polska) and radical right-wing parties (Confederation Liberty and Independence - Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość, Confederation

of the Polish Crown - Konfederacja Korony Polskiej)", thus clearly distinguishing the right-wing PiS and Solidarna Polska from the far-right parties.
For some time now, researchers have been categorising the ideological stances of parties and individuals into Euro-enthusiasts, soft Eurosceptics (Euro-realists) and hard Eurosceptics. To put it simply – though there are various shades of these stances – Euro-enthusiasts are in favour of deeper integration within the EU and a strong central EU authority; soft Eurosceptics (Euro-realists) advocate looser ties between member states within the Union; whilst Eurosceptics reject the very idea of the European Union in any form. Within this division, PiS clearly falls into the category of soft Eurosceptics (as the author himself notes), and has done so from the very beginning of its existence. In this context, it is difficult to agree with the assertion concerning PiS – presented in the context of the Ukraine–Russia war – that, like hardline Eurosceptic parties, it is said to believe that the greatest threat to Polish sovereignty and identity comes from the countries of Western Europe and the European Union. Regardless of PiS's critical stance towards the socio-cultural processes taking place in Europe and certain institutional arrangements implemented within the EU, it has always emphasised that the greatest dangers to Poland come from neo-imperial Russia. This is, in fact, one of the reasons why PiS supported Poland's membership of the EU and NATO, despite various reservations about developments within the EU and its member states. Furthermore, when, prior to 2014, the EU sought to strengthen economic cooperation with Russia (including becoming dependent on its raw materials and supporting its technological modernisation, including in the military sphere), it was PiS that warned against treating Russia as a reliable partner. Owing to this stance, it has for some time been described as a party of anti-Russian populism (e.g. Rodgers, 2025). It was the PiS government and the PiS-affiliated president who, in February 2022, took decisive action to support Ukraine in its fight against Russia and welcomed millions of Ukrainians to Poland, establishing the organisational and legal framework for their stay in the country (Koziełło, 2025). In this context, the claim that, from the PiS's perspective, 'the greatest threat to Polish sovereignty and identity comes from the countries of Western Europe and the European Union' is unfounded. The PiS manifesto of 2019 states: 'Poland's membership of the European Union is a historic opportunity for our nation to accelerate its development' (Koziełło, 2025). By criticising developments within the Union (and in Poland), PiS acts as a participant in its internal political life. In this role, it seeks solely to achieve its ideological objectives regarding the institutional structure of the Union and the philosophical foundations underpinning that institution. Citing this stance in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war has no substantive justification, nor does the simultaneous suggestion, in the context of that war, that, according to PiS, it is Western Europe and the EU that pose a greater threat to Poland. It seems that this stance warrants a more nuanced assessment of PiS's position on the Polish political scene, both in terms of its perception of external threats and the definition of its ideological stance on the right. The author's somewhat blurred portrayal of reality leads to the general conclusion that a distinguishing feature of Polish Eurosceptics is their particular emphasis on ties with the Catholic Church. Although he himself qualifies this by noting that a partial exception should be recognised in the form of the Confederation (though here too there is a further caveat that 'its politicians, however, are likewise close to Catholic teaching in axiological terms, particularly in their opposition to abortion). On this basis, however, it is difficult to understand whether this refers to the cooperation of individual parties with the Catholic Church, or merely to ideological inspiration drawn from Catholicism and the teachings of the Church. In this context, one must not forget that there are at least three currents within the Polish Catholic Church, both on general issues and those concerning European integration: the progressive (pro-European), the moderate (softly Eurosceptic) – which is also the largest – and the radical (hard Eurosceptic) (see Leszczyńska, 2017), a distinction which, however, has not been made. It is therefore unclear with which strand

of Polish Catholicism the Polish right-wing maintains close ties – whether they align with all of them, or perhaps there is some variation here, which is of great significance for the issues under discussion. Once again, as in the case of the differences between PiS and the two 'Confederations' on ideological issues, European integration and threats from outside the EU, the identification and distinction between these stances is somewhat blurred, which hinders a better understanding of the reality.

2. Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?
With reference to the comments set out above, it is worth emphasising once again that the article fails to precisely define the position of certain parties on the Polish political scene. There are far more parties employing populist techniques than those mentioned by the author, and they are not situated solely on the right of the political spectrum, but also on the left and in the centre. Analyses carried out over the last quarter of a century indicate that populism has become a defining feature of Polish political debate and party propaganda, regardless of a party's ideological roots (see, for example, Wołek 2012 or Krupa 2025). Perhaps this is the result of historical circumstances and the youth of Polish democracy, which distinguishes Poland from Western democracies? If the author wished to emphasise the link between populism and Eurosceptic tendencies, he should therefore point out that this applies only to right-wing populist parties. In this case, the rise of populism is indeed strongly linked to the rise of Euroscepticism. Right-wing parties (e.g. PiS) are less populist and represent 'soft' Euroscepticism, whilst radical right-wing parties (both Confederations) are more populist and represent 'hard' Euroscepticism. It is also worth noting that on 25 October 2025, the PO became the Civic Coalition (KO), so this should be reflected in the terminology used in the article.

3. If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?
A statistical analysis, presented in a very simple and clear format, is shown in Fig. 1. It is accurate and properly explained, enabling a better understanding of the issues discussed in the article.

4. Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?
Yes.

5. Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?
In view of the above observations, it is difficult to answer this question entirely in the affirmative. The literature on the subject and the research findings described therein show that populism in Poland is not confined solely to right-wing parties, a point which was not taken into account in the article. It would also be advisable to provide a more nuanced analysis of the differences in the attitudes of right-wing parties, including in the context of the Russia–Ukraine war and external threats. The same applies to the role of the Catholic Church and its varied relationships with ideologically diverse right-wing parties.

6. Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?
The article-report presented here is very concise, providing a general account of the phenomena of populism and Euroscepticism in Poland. It is therefore difficult to speak of any great detail here. However, one can point to a few rather imprecise generalisations, as noted above. Nevertheless, even such a general analysis, once the suggested corrections have been made, may be useful for the purposes mentioned in this question.

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Is the background of the case's history and progression described in sufficient detail?
Partly

Is the work clearly and accurately presented and does it cite the current literature?
Partly

If applicable, is the statistical analysis and its interpretation appropriate?
Yes

Are all the source data underlying the results available to ensure full reproducibility?
Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the results?
Partly

Is the case presented with sufficient detail to be useful for teaching or other practitioners?
Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Political Geography, Electoral Geography,

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.