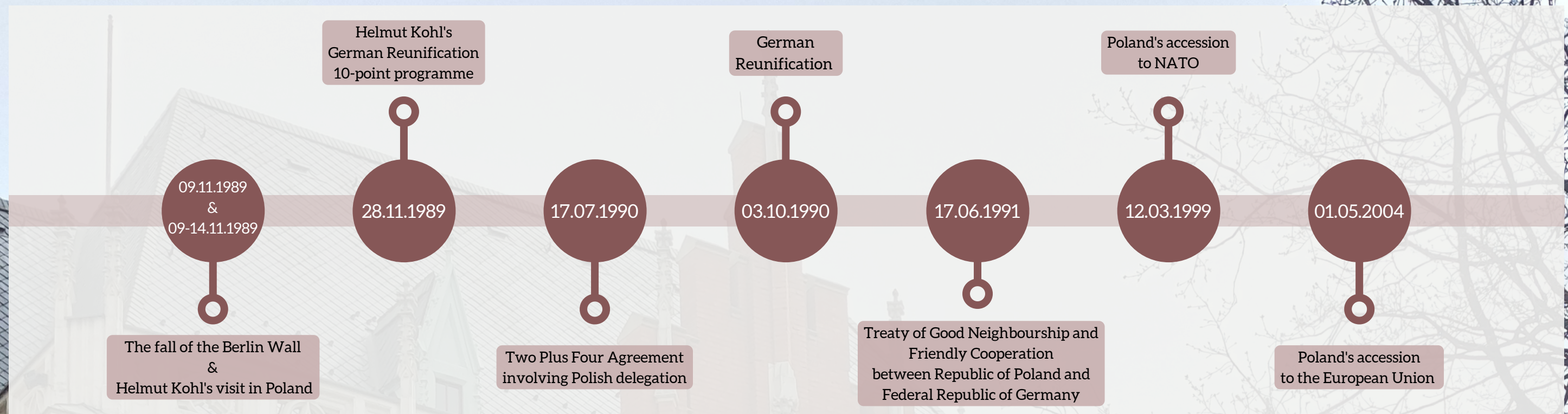


# German Unity from 1990 to 2021

## Perspective from the Jagiellonian University

This poster was made by Hubert Mariusz Ostapowicz in cooperation with other European Studies at Jagiellonian University students: Zuzanna Mrugacz, Natalia Łapaj, Natalia Patas and Filip Prusak. It is a part of the rEUnify - A Comparative Study of National Perceptions regarding German reunification.



### Polish-German relations in the last 30 years

Polish-German relations are very diversified on many levels and marked by a complicated past as well as by common goals. Poland and Germany simultaneously were going through a very difficult time soon after 1989. The collapse of the eastern military bloc, the political transformation in the former communist countries and the German reunification meant great instability in the region.

To stabilize and secure their safety both Germany and Poland had to cooperate and overcome many obstacles. The first and probably most important problem was Polish concern about the safety of its western border after German reunification. Contemporary FRG chancellor Helmut Kohl didn't want to warrant the inviolability of this border, because of his electorate's view on this matter. Ultimately this problem was solved at the 17th July session of the Two Plus Four Conference, where both German states agreed to recognize the existing border.

Next year, on 17th June 1991 Poland and the unified German state signed the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation. This event marked the start of a Polish-German Community of Interest, which lasted until 1999 or even 2004. In this period Germany was considered an advocate of Poland's Accession to the NATO and European Union. This accession was in the interest of both countries since it meant stabilizing the region both economically and militarily.

After 2004 relations between the Polish and German governments changed slightly worse, especially because of the controversial historical policy conducted by the nationalists from both countries. At the same time as a result of intensified contact between the Polish and Germans, each other opinions about themselves became increasingly better.

### Polish-German economic and scientific cooperation

With the signing of the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation deep economic, cultural and educational cooperation began between both countries.

Germany is our most important trading partner. The share of our western neighbours in exports is 28.7%. According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland, trade between our countries in 2020 amounted to EUR 127.7 billion. To Germany, we are the fifth largest trading partner and our cooperation is constantly growing. Thanks to the open market, interest in the Three Seas Initiative and economic stability, many companies are expanding their activities in the Polish market, contributing to economic growth. Most Polish exports to Germany are consumer goods, food, components and metal products. Being aware of the great benefits of cooperation, there are institutions in both countries whose aim is to introduce the culture and customs of our countries.

For example, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation focuses its efforts on promoting European unity and spreading the idea of the rule of law and supporting gifted youth. All this, of course, is in the spirit of Christian democracy.

A significant step forward for the Europeanization of our country was the establishment of a DAAD representative office in Warsaw in 1998. This organization supports inter-university cooperation and brings the Polish academic society closer to the Scientific Community. The most important Polish cultural institution in Germany is the Polish Institute in Berlin. It supports initiatives to spread our culture among our neighbours and promotes our common rich history through teaching and learning.

### 30th-anniversary celebration

There is not even a trace of the celebrations marking the 30th anniversary of German reunification in Poland. The third of October 2020 was remembered as just another day of the pandemic.

However, the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall was already more commemorated. On 19th November 2019, a Polish delegation headed by President Andrzej Duda took part in the official celebration of the 30th anniversary in Berlin. In addition, many other smaller ceremonies were organised in Poland to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall.

An event that was much more commemorated by the Poles was the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation between Poland and Germany. In June 2021, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty, a meeting took place between Andrzej Duda, President of Poland and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of Germany at the Presidential Palace. Additionally, many NGOs and Internet portals prepared special events dedicated to the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty. For example, Deutsche Welle and Wirtualna Polska prepared a series of interviews as part of the joint series "DIALOG. Rozmowy polsko-niemieckie" (DIALOGUE. Polish-German talks) with people for whom Polish-German relations are bread and butter.

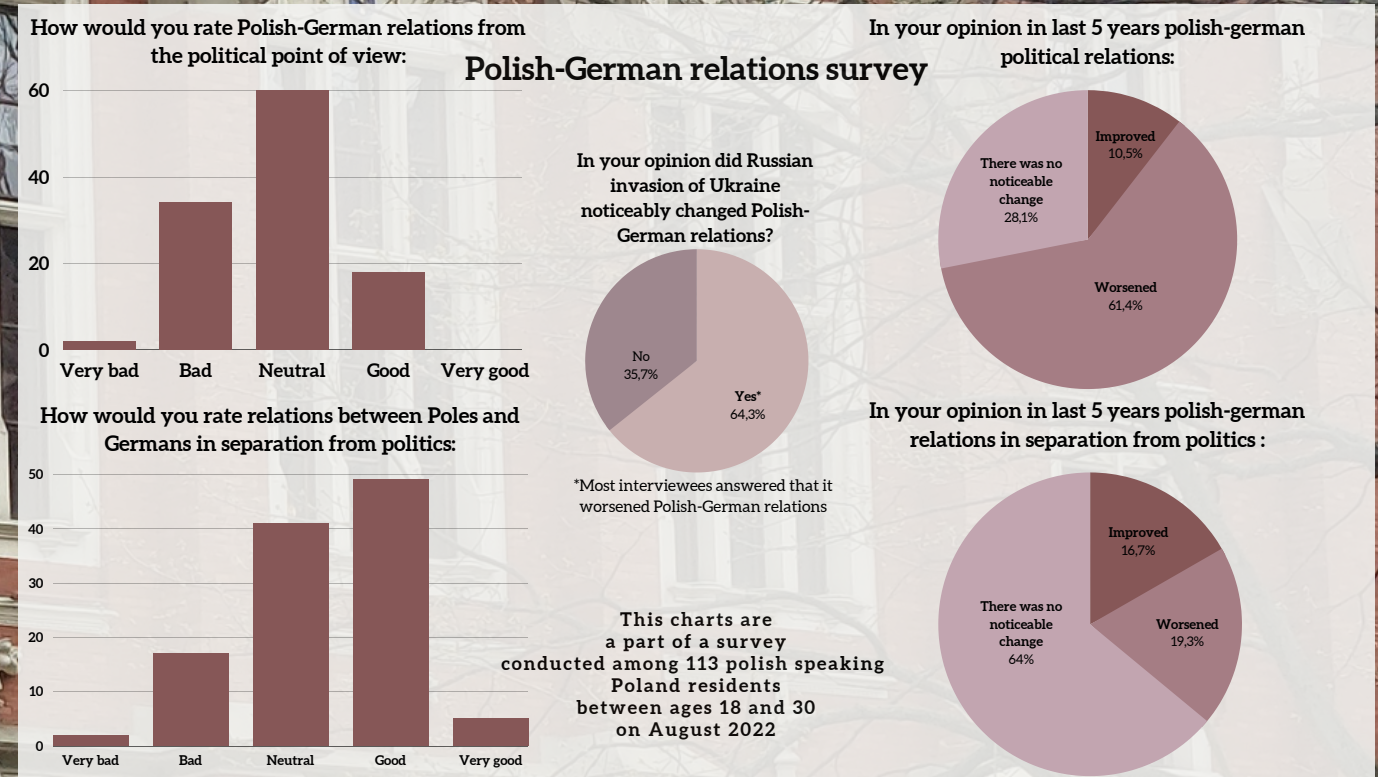
### Cooperation of Polish-German youth

The Polish-German Youth Cooperation (PNWM or DPJW) is an organization that works most widely in the field of cooperation between Polish and German youth. It co-finances and substantively supports projects, and subsidizes youth meetings, from theatre workshops, through inter-school environmental projects, to field hockey matches.

For the organizers of these meetings - teachers, educators and animators - PNWM (DPJW) conducts training, conferences and seminars and publishes.

Polish-German meetings are an opportunity for young people to get involved, participate and co-decide. They give them self-confidence and support their personal development. Partnership relationships and action supported by practical knowledge are of particular importance for them. That is why they are present in all regions of Poland and Germany, establish contacts and initiate cross-border partnerships. PNWM (DPJW) cares about the good neighbourhood. The neighbourhood shapes ties between people from Poland and Germany and contributes to peaceful coexistence in Europe.

The organization builds the foundations of good-neighbourly relations between Poles and Germans. Youth exchange is a permanent program element in the work of schools, non-governmental organizations and local communities in both countries. In her daily work, she draws from the creative achievements of both countries and adapts its offer to the changing needs and expectations of young people.



### Current relations between Polish-German people

German unification was a turning point in Polish-German relations. People started to leave hateful thoughts toward each other behind. However, despite optimistic predictions in the early 90s people had still in their minds what happened between both nations.

Nowadays Polish attitude differs notably depending on age. We conducted a survey among young students, which shows that the majority of people describe Polish-German relationships in the last 30 years as average, current as average or good, and for the future predict that these relations will stay the same or they will be improved. That's a very optimistic view, especially considering that the older generation in Poland is emotionally very attached to history and they often consider Germany as a threat.

Most German politicians consider the Polish nation as an ally or partner even if some of the most important Polish politicians don't speak well about Germany. Mostly it's the younger generation that shows that we should care for our relations with the German people and it's in our best interest to stay on good terms especially when there is a threat from the outside.

### Acknowledgements

Thank you to professor Kinga Gajda for guidance and professor Witold Stankowski for access to his private library.

