

Press Conference of Prime Minister Donald Tusk and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

Gdańsk

February 7, 2025 (Friday)

Transcript

- I warmly welcome everyone. Madam President, dear Ursula, welcome to the Solidarity Center, in my city. We have deliberately chosen this place because we are all aware of how important solidarity is in today's European context—solidarity among nations, among people who stand together and also need our help. I am thinking primarily of Ukraine, which is defending itself against Russian aggression.
- Today's meeting with the President of the Commission and the entire College, including all Commissioners and members of our Polish government, was dedicated to the work of our presidency. But this work is not just about procedures, technical issues, and regulations. This work is deeply embedded in a very specific historical context. I have no doubt, and I believe we all share this awareness, that we are living in times that are radically and rapidly changing the course of history.
- The European Union must rise to the occasion in the face of these changing circumstances. We discussed how to make the European Union—and this will also be the focus of the Polish presidency and the Commission's work—how to ensure that the EU and its member states remain secure. As you know, security is the priority of the Polish presidency. But not because someone just thought it up.
- When we announced that security would be our priority, everyone without exception—Madam President, European institutions, and also the leaders of European countries—supported this priority. There is no doubt that this is one of those entirely new circumstances.
- I just told President von der Leyen that I still remember when, years ago, as Prime Minister, I led Poland's first presidency in the Council. Back then, no one would have even imagined that Europe's security could become a problem requiring special treatment.
- This shows how much circumstances have changed and how important it is today to incorporate flexibility, readiness for change, and willingness to shift course when necessary, into our daily work.
- We discussed the most difficult topics. The context of these discussions, as you know, included a demonstration outside the European Solidarity Center. I also mentioned this—whenever I see how deeply people across Europe feel about our decisions, I realize that Europe, the European idea, the European Union, stopped being an abstraction long ago.
- Our decisions directly impact the interests and daily lives of millions of people. That is why, when something sparks genuine political emotions—sometimes hope, sometimes concern—it is because of this great need.
- People in Europe, people in Poland, want to know that the European Union exists to ensure their security. Security is not—and I will return to this word—an abstraction. It does not matter whether someone is a farmer, a worker, an intellectual, or a student—because security has become a value desired by all, regardless of where they live in Europe. That is why it is so important that we align our actions with this priority and are not afraid to say: away with routine, away with unnecessary and excessive regulations, away with anything that limits our energy and entrepreneurship, and that could put people and Europe as a whole in a weaker position compared to the surrounding world.
- Europe must be the strongest. Europe must be the most competitive. And people in Europe must feel the safest in the world. Here in Poland, we feel quite safe—it is a good place. I am convinced that, for many reasons, it is the best place on Earth. But I want everyone in Europe to feel as safe as Poles do today in Warsaw or Gdańsk.
- We discussed issues that are the subject of very heated debates—issues that brought demonstrators to Gdańsk today. The future of the Green Deal, the future of the Migration

Pact, the accession process for Ukraine—these are topics that, unexpectedly, are now part of even family discussions because they have real consequences.

- Our good decisions will have good consequences for people. Mistakes, if we were to make them, would be felt in every Polish and European home.
- I told the President, both as the rotating presidency and as the Prime Minister of Poland, that for us, security has a very practical dimension, especially when it comes to protecting our eastern border. Since Poland's eastern border is also the European Union's eastern border, I want to thank you for the clear declaration that we will treat—this has already begun, but today we received confirmation—that the obligations arising from protecting this border are shared, not just Polish, but European.
- Thanks to your help, we have already secured some funding. We will remember about that. Significant resources will go toward infrastructure on the eastern border. But I also appreciate the assurance that the European Commission and the President personally will remember that Europe must invest much more and more boldly in securing its eastern border on land, including the so-called Eastern Shield infrastructure.
- Today, we did not discuss... I will be honest here, and you know my position. From my point of view—although I know it is a challenge for the Commission—the specific mechanisms we choose for financing security projects are not as important as ensuring they are funded. This discussion will continue in Europe for some time. But whatever we decide, one thing is clear: we must secure funding for defense needs, including the protection of the EU's land border with Russia and Belarus.
- The same applies to the security of the Baltic Sea. And not just the Baltic—North Sea states are also beginning to talk to us about this. We need to protect against the so-called shadow fleet, a fleet of mysterious ships that have recently begun violating or damaging our underwater infrastructure. So, the Baltic Sea—not just NATO's assistance, which we already have—but also concrete decisions regarding the protection of territorial waters of coastal states, particularly where Russia is highly active.
- The Migration Pact—this was not the subject of today's College discussion—but I once again confirmed, and I appreciate the understanding. I know that European governments and institutions made decisions about the Migration Pact some time ago. However, today's circumstances are such that Poland, hosting nearly 2 million Ukrainian refugees, is in a unique situation. I recently told Poles unequivocally, and I repeated it today to the President: Poland will not implement the Migration Pact in a way that would introduce additional quotas of immigrants in Poland.
- We are ready to cooperate with everyone on protecting Europe from illegal migration. However, Poland will not take on any additional burdens. We have already taken on more than anyone could have imagined just a few years ago.
- Regarding the Green Deal and other climate protection actions, our goals remain unchanged. Our planet needs protection. No one disputes that climate change is also a direct cause of disasters. Poland recently experienced such a disaster—a massive flood. However, we all understand that our climate and environmental protection efforts cannot harm families' interests or impose additional burdens that are unacceptable, incomprehensible, or risky for European competitiveness. This also applies to energy prices.
- I will appeal for this at every European Council meeting. I am convinced that I will not be alone in this effort, and after our discussion, I know I can count on the President's understanding. This may sound like a cliché, but it requires concrete decisions.
- No decision can be made in Europe that could lead to another rise in energy prices. We must all, without exception, focus on making decisions that will directly reduce energy costs.
- If we do not lower energy prices, our aspirations to compete with China or the United States will be an illusion. There is no point in pretending otherwise. We discussed this at length and will explore various financial, investment, and regulatory ways to prevent price increases—because our task, as I said, is to lower energy prices.

- We will undoubtedly have disagreements. We will be persistent on issues such as security and competitiveness because we want concrete actions. In Gdańsk, we value specifics—words must translate into action. If we speak about security and competitiveness, we must find smart ways to manage resources and regulations to turn our dreams into reality.
- Gdańsk is a unique place. Here, even the most unlikely political dreams have come true. We truly believe that Europe can be improved and changed for the better, not for abstract ideas, but for the safe and prosperous lives of all Europeans. That is what we discussed today. Once again, thank you.