



## OUTCAN Guide | Life in Szczecin, Poland

### LOCATION

**Country:** Poland

**Town:** Szczecin

**Base:** NATO Multinational Corps North East (MNC-NE)

**Other info to Consider:**

- Foreigners must register their stay in Poland within 48 hours of arrival if the stay is to exceed 14 days.
- To stay longer than 90 days, Canadians must apply either for a Polish visa in Canada before arriving in Poland or for a temporary residence permit while in Poland and must have a valid reason for extending their stay, such as education or employment.
- Security within the MNC-NE facility is very high. Members must undergo ID checks by an MP at the gate and once inside should display their pass at all times.
- Family (non-dependants) can visit and stay 90 days **without visa** (Schengen Area).

### POPULATION

**Size:** Urban area: over 404,000

**Ethnicity:** over 97% Polish

### LANGUAGE(S)

**Official language:** Polish

**Prevalence of French or English speaking:** Very limited. Some establishments will have an English-speaking employee; however English is not spoken freely and commonly. Limited to no French. German is also prevalent: in the older generations.

### COST OF LIVING

**Exchange rate to consider:** Polish Zloty (PLN). 1 CDN=2,96 PLN (February of 2024)

### QUALITY OF LIFE

**Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:**

- The climate of Szczecin is moderately continental, characterized by cold damp winters, with temperatures often below freezing (0 °C or 32 °F), and mild or pleasantly warm summers. Sometimes, cold waves from Siberia can occur.

**Laws and Culture:**

- Penalties for possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect lengthy jail sentences.
- It is illegal to consume alcohol in public places. If you are found intoxicated in a public area, you may be detained and could be taken to a sobering-up centre, where you may need to spend the night. You will be responsible for paying the cost of the stay.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.02 percent. Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines and jail sentences.
- If local authorities consider you a citizen of Poland, they may refuse you access to Canadian consular services.

- Riding a bike under the influence of alcohol is illegal and subject to detention and fines.

#### **Safety and Security:**

- You must carry an international driving permit. It must be obtained prior to arrival in Poland. There are several agencies where you can obtain an international driver's licence.
- Foreigners may be required to pay traffic violation fines on the spot.
- Confrontations, which at times become violent, may occur between opposing fans at soccer matches. Exercise caution if attending a soccer match or if staying in the vicinity of sporting venues.

#### **Level of isolation:**

- There are 5 Canadian family posted to this location, it is considered remote, level of isolation is high.
- May feel very isolated due to the language barrier.

### **HOUSING**

- Good selection of single-family dwellings (small & large) as well as condos and townhomes.
- Help with finding suitable accommodation is available through MNC-NE.
- It is recommended that you ask your sponsor, during your HHT for a list of all the points of contact at CFSU(E) in Geilenkirchen so you can call if you encounter any support issues as you transition to your rental property.
- It is imperative that members do not secure any type of housing without obtaining prior approval from CFSU(E) Housing Officer.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

**Are there employment opportunities for spouses?** No, due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment on the economy is **not** a realistic option.

- Employment is extremely limited. Families should plan to be a single-income family for the duration of the posting. [CFMWS](#) | [MFS](#) | [OUTCAN Europe](#) | [CFMWS](#)

**Op Tempo:** The op tempo will vary greatly depending on position. TD is possible.

### **HEALTH CARE**

**Access:** Satisfactory medical care is available in Szczecin.

- Highly accessible via private clinic (almost no wait times), public access very similar to Canada, including wait times.
- English services are available, French is very limited.
- At the hospitals, English is very limited. It is recommended to bring a translator and use a mobile phone translator.
- Private medical clinics do have English speaking doctors, though it must be specified when making the appointment.
- Pharmacies, also known as Apteka's provide adequate medicines and are easy to navigate, but do not expect any English to be spoken. Be prepared to bring a translator device.
- The Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP. [PSHCP Member Portal \(pshcp-msh.ca\)](#)

#### **Special needs:**

- Depending on language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed.

- It may be a wait before finding an appropriate match and at times may not be possible based on availability of English/French speaking providers or resources.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and / or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

**Consideration for pregnancy / birth:** Health care for pregnancy and birth is available on the economy, private care.

**Dental:** Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay up front, and you can then claim your expenses.

## SCHOOLING

- Schooling is typically the Szczecin International School (IB) for grades K-12. You can also request that your children attend Szczecin Academy International Learning (SAIL).
- There are no French language schools indicated for this mission.
- For an approved list of schools, please contact Children's Education Management at: [CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca](mailto:CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca)
- [Children's Education Management - Canada.ca](http://Children's Education Management - Canada.ca)
- [Gestion de l'éducation des enfants - Canada.ca](http://Gestion de l'éducation des enfants - Canada.ca)

### Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- The curriculum varies depending on choice of school.
- None of them offers Canadian history or geography at the elementary level.

### Resources for special need children:

- Access to Special needs services is depending on the choice of school, language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, it may be very limited.
- Consult with CEM and school prior to any commitments.

## CHILDCARE

### Things to Consider:

- Local childcare is available, no guarantee that staff will be English or French speaking.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Things to Consider: Airports:

- Szczecin-Gloeniew (SZZ) provides limited and seasonal national, and international routes.
- Berlin Brandenburg Airport (BER) is your closest international airport.
- You should carry an international driving permit along with your Canadian driver's license.
- Penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs are severe.

### Public Transport:

- Very accessible public transportation throughout the city.

## RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

### Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?

- No physical centre. Families in Szczecin are supported by the Remote Team: [MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com)

### Psychosocial / Mental Health Resources:

- Not at post, MFS(E) SW for dependants only, CAF SW/Mental Health Team for member and family are located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. Padre located at SHAPE, Belgium.

**Communications (e.g. Quality of Internet connection):** Very good service & very reasonable prices.

## ACTIVITIES

### Access to sports or other leisure activities:

- Large selection of sports & activity clubs, both local and international orgs. A very outdoor community.

### Availability of playgrounds:

- Yes, many – though they are not at the same safety standard to Canadian playgrounds.

## RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

**Are common law relationships recognized?** Yes, but not supported.

**Are same sex couples recognized?** Yes, but not legally supported. Same sex relationships are legal but same sex marriage or civil unions are not recognized.

### Medications that are illegal in the country:

- Use without a prescription, narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances is illegal. Cannabis is illegal.
- CBD is legal in Poland if it is derived from hemp with less than 0.2% THC level. Companies growing, selling or processing hemp need appropriate permits from the authorities. Consumers need to be properly informed about the CBD content in the products, as well as about their use.
- THC products are illegal.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- **European Commission Country Reports (2023)**  
[https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports\\_en](https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports_en)
- **Canadian Travel Advisories**  
<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/poland>
- **CIA World Factbooks (One Pagers from US)**  
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/poland/>
- **Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)**  
<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/poland>

## For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below

- MFS(E) Social Worker: [MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com)
- CAF Social Worker: [GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca](mailto:GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca)
- MFS(E) Team: [MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com](mailto:MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com)
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, [MFS.Europe@cfmws.com](mailto:MFS.Europe@cfmws.com)