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Getting Married in Poland: What U.S. Servicemembers need to know.

Your Guide from Engagement to Marriage

Ready to Settle Down?

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American Servicemembers have a long history of not only serving their nation across the globe but also finding love wherever they end up serving. Now imagine you are a Servicemember, accomplishing your mission in Poland, and you see “the one.” You’re in love! You’ve found the sock to your sandal; the filling to your paczki (a traditional pastry at your duty station). What do you do next? While there are a few steps you need to take before you say, “I do,” we will help set you down the right path.

🏛️ Step 1: Visit the Civil Registry Office

To start the process, you and your fiancé(e) must visit the local Polish Civil Registry Office. Together, you will:

- Set your wedding date.
- Sign a legal promise (called an "assurance") stating there are no legal reasons you cannot get married.

📄 Step 2: Gather Your Documents

You need to bring the following items to the Civil Registry Office.

- **IDs:** Passports or official ID cards for both of you.
- **Fees:** 84 PLN (Polish Zloty) for a wedding inside the office, or 1000 PLN if the ceremony is somewhere else.
- **Birth Certificates:** Originals or certified copies for both of you.
    - *Important:* US documents must have an **Apostille**. An Apostille is the confirmation of the authenticity of a public document and is only conferred by a designated/issuing authority of the country which issued the document.
    - For U.S. Servicemembers, while the process can vary from state to state, you can request an official certified copy of your birth certificate from your birth state's vital records office online, by mail, or in person. For state specific requirements, visit https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w/index.htm.
- **Divorce/Annulment Papers (if applicable):** If either of you were married before, you need to be able to present a certified copy of your divorce decree or annulment documents proving the dissolution of the marriage. These documents also need an Apostille and a Polish translation.

*Note: Any document not in Polish must have a **sworn Polish translation**, which may be obtained by visiting https://www.gov.pl/web/usa-en/making-translations and scheduling an appointment through the Polish e-konsulat system.*

⚖️ Step 3: Prove You Are Allowed to Marry

Polish law requires a marriage eligibility certificate or proof from your home country that you are legally allowed to get married.

- **For U.S. Servicemembers:** The U.S. government does not issue these certificates. Instead, you can get a special letter from the U.S. Embassy explaining how the U.S. does not provide such documentation. A Legal Assistance attorney can help you request this letter from the U.S. Embassy.
- **The Backup Plan (Court Exemption):** If the Registry Office will not accept the letter from the U.S. Embassy, or if your foreign partner cannot obtain a certificate from their own country, you must go to a Polish court to get an **exemption**.

How to get a Court Exemption

If you or your future spouse needs the court to exempt you from providing the marriage eligibility certificate, follow these steps:

- **Required Documentation:** You need a copy of your passport, certified birth certificate (with Apostille); if divorced, you will need a certified copy of your divorce decree or annulment documents (with Apostille); and proof that your home country will not issue the required marriage certificate (letter from the Embassy). Remember, everything needs a certified Polish translation.
- **The Process:** You must file a request for exemption with the court. The court will review your paperwork and schedule a hearing where both you and your fiancé(e) will have to answer a few questions.
- **The Result:** If the judge grants the exemption, the court will issue a final court order granting you an exemption which you will provide to the Civil Registry Office.

⏱️ Important Timelines

- **The Waiting Period:** The soonest you can get married is **one month** after you sign the initial "assurance" at the Civil Registry Office.
- **The Deadline:** Your "assurance" is valid for **6 months**. If you do not get married before 6 months elapses, your assurance will expire and you will need to start the process over.

Conclusion:

Getting married in Poland can be a complex process requiring multiple certified copies and certified translations of documents, and possible appearances in Polish court. There are alternatives, such as applying for a Fiancé(e) Visa through United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and getting married in the United States.

As the requirements for marriage in Poland may change, always remember to check the most up to date information available before moving forward on your road to happily ever after. You can keep up to date by checking https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia-en/get-married-in-a-civil-ceremony, a website maintained by the Polish Government and regularly updated. If you have any questions, contact the Legal Assistance Office at VCorps.OSJA-Legal-Assistance@army.mil. Whatever path you take with your loved one, wszytkiego najlepszgo (all the best) to you and your future spouse!

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