



European
Commission

What do Poles think about the European Union

Conclusions from
debates in 2018



What do Poles think about the European Union? **Introduction**

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Printed in Poland



Marek Prawda
Head of the European
Commission
Representation
in Poland

Poland is one of four nations - along with Ireland, Bulgaria and Luxembourg – that are most in favour of the EU¹. However, at a closer look it turns out that we should understand such findings in our own way. When asked benefits of membership, most of us talk about EU funds, free movement of people – because one can work all over Europe. However, when we ask about values that could unite us and give us a direction, a clear dividing line appears.

Some conservatives in Poland indicate that a more integrated EU can stifle national identities, even threatening the sovereignty of Member States. Almost 100 billion euros of EU funds that have been invested in Poland over nearly two decades are seen more as historical justice rather than an opportunity taken. Migration is more of a threat, although at the same time Poland is a clear leader in

terms of the number of visas with work permits.

Liberals, supported by the left, tend to see this the other way round – all stages of the economic integration / convergence process should take into account the observance of the rule of law. Construction of a common market in the era of the fourth industrial revolution is the only chance for such a path of development that will help maintain the standard of living of Europeans at its current level. Migrants are an opportunity for an ageing continent, even if there are few good ideas right now regarding their future in European societies.

Europe has been wondering about its future since the crisis in 2008, which showed that the 'break' from geopolitics was over. In March 2017, EC President, Jean-Claude Juncker proposed a more structured form of reflection for EU countries, formulating five scenarios contained in the "White Book on the Future of Europe." Our publication provides an overview of the conclusions formulated in Poland, but in connection with what has been said in other EU countries. After all, ideas for Europe are also being developed in Berlin, Madrid, Budapest ...

However, we do not live in a bubble. **New threats emerge in an unprecedented scale.** "We need to be united and join our forces to protect our democracies against disinformation. We have seen attempts to interfere in elections and referenda, with evidence pointing to Russia as a primary source of these campaigns." These unprecedented words were spoken at the end of 2018 by Vice-President of the European Commission Andrus Ansip. **This is a clear sign that the heat of discussion and the dynamics of change in Europe do not fully reflect reliable knowledge and cool assessment of facts.** We know the consequences.

We have had many months of difficult negotiations with London regarding the conditions of the British divorce with the EU. There is no way around saying that Brexit is a disaster. For both parties. This contract is only aimed to reduce damage. Fortunately, Brexit was not contagious. Its advocates said the reasonable and pragmatic Britons had had the courage to do something that others had only thought about and would certainly do well out of it. But today you cannot see others willing to leave. However, more and more countries have begun to worry about the future and the survival of the EU.

We will certainly see the effects of this reflection during the election campaign to the European Parliament. Its new composition will show which ideas for Europe are the most convincing for voters. We may grumble about populists, but for several years they have been a permanent element of the political map of our Union. We must acknowledge that in most societies there is no agreement on increasing the role of the Community in all areas. We should rather accept that in different matters countries will move forward at different speed. And this should be possible. **In the EU reform, diversity should be an asset rather than a reason for decomposition.**

¹ Eurobarometer 90. The survey was conducted in the form of direct interviews between November 8 and 22, 2018. It was based on 32,600 interviewees with people from all EU Member States.

"The stabilizing role played by the European Union has helped transform most of Europe from a continent of wars into a continent of peace." ●

Nobel Committee,
Oslo, 12 October 2012.
Justification for granting
the Nobel Peace Prize
to the European Union.

**Over
15 billion
euros**

That was the GDP of the 28 European Union countries in 2017 (second in the world after the USA).

Źródło: International Monetary Fund

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Polish debate on the future of Europe 2018

The EU protects

EU and me

Invest in the EU

The EU provides

“The EU protects”.

Security and migration

According to the Eurobarometer, the European Union should, above all, ensure security to its citizens.

The main source of concern for Europeans is the inflow of immigrants. They mentioned this issue twice as often as the threat of terrorism¹. Fear turns out to be the greatest enemy of classical European values – we are ready to give up on them in exchange of a stronger sense of security. At the same time, in the world dominated by consumerism, cynicism has appeared and, for many, added value has become more important than actual values².

Security

Poles agree that threats to stability and world peace have increased over the last decade. In everyday discussions, Russia crops up as a source of trouble and the United States as the main source of security. Poland perceives the presence of US troops on the eastern flank of NATO as bolstering its security. A permanent US base is one of the main topics of negotiations

between Warsaw and Washington, and the public is in principle in agreement that we should spend 2 percent of GDP on defence, as is demanded by the American president.

The Polish government also participates in talks on how to intensify the European defence cooperation, but emphasises the need to ensure calibration with the activities of the North Atlantic Alliance. It does not believe in the effectiveness of a European „hard force“ without US involvement. Poland wants to increase the EU's collective defence capabilities, while increasing the involvement of allies within NATO. There is no dispute in Poland over PESCO as all parties believe it to be an improvement of the existing security architecture, not an alternative.

The vast majority of Poles also feel that Russia is dangerous for Europe and the West. This is not only about a possible territorial conflict, but also about hybrid threats and information wars that are going on. Russia is effectively exporting instability to the West and is aiming to drive wedges between the United States and Europe, wishing to turn a Giant into Lilliput³. The more America moves away from us, the closer Russia gets which is why Poland is anxiously watching the tensions between the US and the EU.

Poles believe that Russia should be stopped, rather than allowed to carry out projects that make Europe more dependent on it, such as Nord Stream 2. Therefore, we have consistently protested against this initiative, arguing that Europe is weakened and divided by it.

The political elite in the Kremlin is helped by the fact that Western countries publicly discuss their foreign policy, and the people responsible for it often change. Meanwhile, Russian security strategy, written in 2013, is secret and its creators still operate within the confines of the power apparatus⁴.

At the same time, Poles can be accused of anti-Russian propaganda. They support the Ukrainians in their war with Russia to preserve independence, but at the same time distance themselves from them in the context of disputes over history⁵. The opposition criticises the government over its conflict with Poland's neighbours, while the ruling camp attaches great importance to historical policy and regulation of the past, which fuels tensions. **At the same time, Poland remains a strong supporter of the further enlargement of the EU – not only to the Balkans, but also to the East⁶.**

Migration

In Polish public debate the topic of migration still arouses strong emotions and society



European Forum for New Ideas, Sopot, September 2018

„If we strengthen inter-government relations, we strengthen the big states. We should therefore strengthen the European Commission, because it protects the interests of all of us, especially the small and weaker countries. The future of European integration is reinforced by the Community.” ●

prof. Jan Barcz
Kozłowski University
[speech at a conference
in Kielce, May 2018]

remains divided. The opposition criticises the ruling party leaders for their anti-immigrant statements, increasing hostility towards strangers and torpedoing EU initiatives for a common migration policy. On the other hand, the government and its supporters stress the need to ensure internal security, which is the responsibility of the member states, while declaring assistance in illegal migrants' countries of origin. They emphasise that no country can be forced to adopt a policy that it considers to be wrong. In the face of external migration pressure, the EU must act together and for that reason the attitude of Hungary or Poland should not be used to deepen internal divisions⁷.

At the same time, in Poland there is no open anti-immigrant or anti-European party, and despite the hard "no" to the relocation of refugees proposed by the European Commission, the government has opened the country to economic immigration not only from Ukraine and Belarus, but also from Asian countries, which are culturally and religiously

different. In 2017, Poland issued the most permits for legal work of all EU countries.

Polish experts point out that during the migration crisis the role of the European Council increased, as it not only monitored the situation on an ongoing basis, but also proposed solutions, becoming an originator EU cooperation with countries of origin and transit of immigrants and – in fact – the initiator of legislative work in this area. At the same time, the perception of the migration problem in Europe has changed – there has been a shift from economic issues through the humanitarian crisis to security⁸.

Researchers also note that progressive multiculturalism, which is largely a consequence of migration within the EU, reinforces Euroscepticism. In 2017, the number of external immigrants in the EU amounted to almost 37 million with over 20 million internal immigrants. The extent of that mobility is well exemplified by Polish migrants: in 2001, there were about 62,000 of them working in the British Isles, compared to over one million at present.

Despite the fact that the free movement of people is one of the basic EU freedoms, one must watch out for numerical indicators,

because with the crossing of point between „us” and „them”, meaning an excessive increase share of migrants in the social fabric of some Member States, intensifies attitudes of rebellion, dislike and aggression against strangers. It is such a process that led to Brexit⁹.

- 1 Eurobarometer 90.
- 2 Herman van Rompuy talked about it during the European Forum of New Ideas, in Sopot, September 2018.
- 3 Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Ivanna Klymush-Tsintsadze at the European Forum for New Ideas in Sopot, September 2018.
- 4 Pavel Felgenhauer (Russian "Novaya Gazeta"), commentary from the Warsaw Security Forum, October 2018.
- 5 Research of the Institute of Public Affairs.
- 6 Jacek Czaputowicz, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, proposed at the Warsaw Security Forum to the countries of the Eastern Partnership (including Ukraine) on the prospects for EU membership for the Balkans.
- 7 Deputy Speaker of the Polish Parliament, Ryszard Terlecki, statement at the Forum in Krynica, September 2018.
- 8 Results of the research project "Security management in law and asylum and the return policy of the EU, led by dr Anna Kosinska from the Institute of European Studies of the Catholic University of Lublin, presented at a conference of political scientists in Lublin in September 2018.
- 9 Research results dr hab. Rafał Proszak from the University of Economics in Krakow, presented at a conference of political scientists in Lublin in September 2018, 6 July 2017.

“From the point of view of the transformation process, what is now happening in Poland is not a surprise. It is not so much chaos as a transitional stage between the old and the new order. This is similar across Europe.” ●

Prof. Zbigniew Czachór
Mickiewicz University
in Poznań [speech
at a conference
in Kielce, May 2018]

approximately
512 million

There are that many consumers in the EU 28 single market.

source: Eurostat 2017.

“EU and me”.

The future and values

The future and values
Public opinion polls in Poland consistently show very high support for European integration and Poland’s membership in the EU (over 80 percent)¹, which effectively marginalises any movements aimed at a possible Polesxit.

The issue, however, is more complicated when we go into the details. A deeper analysis shows that Poles accept the EU as regards economic achievements, but some do not identify with it in the ideological sphere. In addition, scepticism towards the EU increases with religiousness and frequency of church going².

Thus, it is values that divide Poles most in discussions about the future of Europe. Right-wing circles call for a return to roots, to “Christian roots,” to increasing and even “regaining” sovereignty within the EU. And left-liberal milieus want to strengthen an open, multidimensional and transnational Europe.

Democratisation

The tension between Warsaw and Brussels has led to the launch of Article 7 against Poland in the context of the dispute over the rule of law. This has made democracy an important part of the debate on Europe. The government and its supporters believe that they abide by democratic rules – the opposition loudly raises the problem of breaking the constitution and abusing power. Experts point out that compliance with law is crucial to maintaining trust, because without it all communities, including legal ones, end up falling apart, and all norms and standards developed over the years are based on trust³.

According to representatives of the Polish government, the main challenge for the EU’s cohesion today is not the division between the Eurozone and the others but about open and closed countries⁴. Poland is in the former group as it advocates the widening of European democracy by strengthening national parliaments elected by universal suffrage, and holding open dialogue rather than preaching to the converted. Representatives of the opposition argue that it is exactly the opposite – Poland is closing up and heading towards the rule of one group, which is in conflict with democracy. They see the „soft power” of the European Union as a chance to dilute these trends and

support the initiatives of the European Parliament and the European Commission towards achieving that effect, including by linking the distribution of the EU budget with the rule of law (supported by all MEPs from Civic Platform). This, in turn, evokes reactions in the government camp of national treason and selling out to the interests of other countries.

Polarisation in the region

Against the backdrop of such attitudes to democracy, the situation in the region is also a subject of debate. Polish political scientists note the increasing political polarisation of Central and Eastern Europe. It follows major changes in the political, economic and social system, which overlap with globalisation processes, the technological revolution and the development of new media. Citizens’ trust in the state is low, and increasing public policy attempts to legitimise activities that do not fit into current institutional and legal structures have led to lower respect for compromises at the expense of confrontational solutions. This may lead to the regression of the democratisation process in this part of Europe⁵.

In Poland, the deficiency of trust in state institutions goes in pair with the weakness of civil society⁶ and the sense of otherness that some Poles have with regard to their views (a reluctance towards liberalism, secularism and equal rights for minorities). Hence, the fondness for



The Congress of Polish International Experts, Warsaw, June 2018

“Democracy where people have to choose the way the elite wants does not suit us. If this approach prevails, the significance of the European Union will weaken.” ●

Jacek Czaputowicz
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
[statement at the European Economic Congress in Katowice, May 2018]

the “Europe of Orban” and distrust towards “The Europe of Macron.” The Western vision of liberal democracy competes today with other visions, especially with the concept of „non-liberal democracy.”

Independence

One of the most important values for Poles is independence, especially emphasised in 2018 during the celebration of the centenary of Poland regaining it after the partitions. In discussions, it was noted that in our region one has to constantly fight for it, even today as new threats appear and old ones return⁷. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe are aware that they cannot defend themselves alone, that they need solidarity from other partners. Polish politicians agree that preserving independence is the most important task of political elites. They see the European Union as the main “anchor” of civilisation Poland can either belong to the Western world or fall under the influence of Moscow⁸, but some think that we are too subordinate to the interests of its main players and that

we must fight for “better quality sovereignty.” Sovereignty lies at the heart of the controversy over European identity⁹.

Sovereignty

Polish political scientists note that modern countries are subject to enormous pressures for change, so their goal is to secure their own subjectivity and ability to develop¹⁰. Against this background, there is a growing tension between national and community tendencies, also in the context of responsibility for the crises afflicting the European Union. Representatives of the government admit that Poland has expanded its sovereignty by entering the EU¹¹, but the topic of decisions being “imposed” by Brussels and the strongest EU countries is often taken as an example of a lack of democracy¹². For opposition milieus, sovereignty is more perceived as a sense of self-determination rather than self-sufficiency, indicator of stateness and not a synonym for state’s existence without without any external influence¹³.

Identity

Poles believe that despite the divisions, the European Union remains a strong player and in many matters remains unified because it is increasingly difficult to compete individually

in the global world. In all 28 Member States, the majority of respondents feel they are EU citizens (on average 71 percent) and over two-thirds support the freedom of movement¹⁴. In Poland, however, **there is still some controversy over European identity. Right-wing circles see it as competition for national identity and opposition circles as a complement.**

- 1 Eurobarometer 90.
- 2 *Poles’ attitude to the European Union, democracy and the rule of law*, team research under the direction of prof. Radosław Markowski, SWSP University, December 2018.
- 3 Professor Jan Barcz, speech during the debate in Lublin, October 2018.
- 4 Jacek Czaputowicz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, statement at the European Economic Congress in Katowice, May 2018.
- 5 Speech by prof. Alicja Stępień-Kuczyńska from the University of Lodz at a conference of political scientists in Lublin, September 2018.
- 6 In the local government elections of 2018 in Poland, the turnout was 54 percent.
- 7 Aleksander Kwaśniewski at the presidents’ debate during the Warsaw Security Forum, October 2018.
- 8 Bronisław Komorowski at the presidents’ debate during the Warsaw Security Forum, October 2018
- 9 Jacek Czaputowicz statement at the presentation of his book “*Sovereignty*”, Warsaw, PISM
- 10 Roman Kuźniar from the University of Warsaw, speech at the conference of political scientists in Lublin, September 2018.
- 11 Minister Jacek Czaputowicz, statement at the presentation of his book, “*Sovereignty*”, Warsaw, PISM, 2018.
- 12 Piotr Wawrzyk, Poland’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, statement at a conference in Kielce, May 2018.
- 13 Professor Anna Wierzbowska from the University of Warsaw, statement at a conference of political scientists in Lublin, September 2018.
- 14 Eurobarometer 90.



European Forum for New Ideas, Sopot, September 2018

“Just look at the facts – Poles’ support for the EU is growing, it is the highest in the EU. We as a government are very effective in convincing people of European values. And this is rare in Europe.” ●

Jerzy Kwiecinski
Minister of Investment and Development, statement at Warsaw Security Forum, October 2018]

79 percent

Is the percentage of Poles that feel EU citizens.

source: Eurobarometer 90

European Union. Good to know



EU share of global GDP (%)

	2016	2017
USA	25	24.3
China	15	14.8
Japan	6.6	5.9
United Kingdom	3.5	3.8
India	3	2.8
Brazil	2.4	2.4
Canada	2	2.1
Mexico	1.4	1.5
EU 28 (PPP)	16.7	16.5

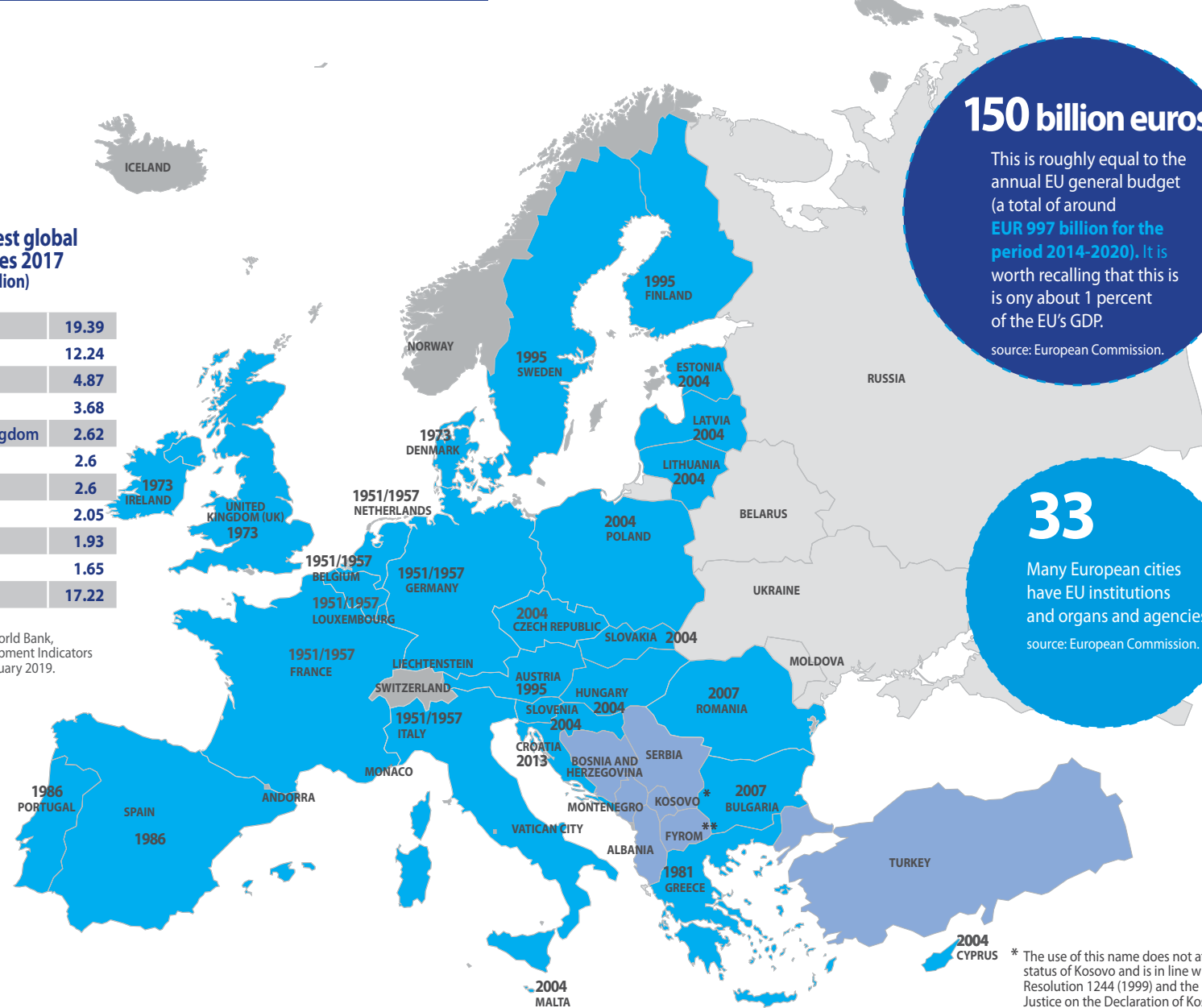
source: International Monetary Fund

The largest global economies 2017 (in USD trillion)

USA	19.39
China	12.24
Japan	4.87
Germany	3.68
United Kingdom	2.62
India	2.6
France	2.6
Brazil	2.05
Italy	1.93
Canada	1.65
EU 28	17.22

source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators database, January 2019.

- EU members.
- Candidates and potential candidates to the EU.
- Non-EU members.



150 billion euros
This is roughly equal to the annual EU general budget (a total of around **EUR 997 billion for the period 2014-2020**). It is worth recalling that this is only about 1 percent of the EU's GDP.
source: European Commission.

33
Many European cities have EU institutions and organs and agencies.
source: European Commission.

* The use of this name does not affect positions on the status of Kosovo and is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and the International Court of Justice on the Declaration of Kosovo independence.
** Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Map based on: https://european-union/about-eu/countries_pl

“Invest in the EU” Economy, market, trade

Poles invariably identify being in the EU in the first instance as an economic issue. They note the economic development of the country and appreciate the scale of funds allocated for investments in Poland¹.

Poles are also advocates of globalisation, seeing in it more benefits than threats. However, they differ in the approach to foreign capital and prescriptions for further economic growth. Although in the EU the number of supporters of the single currency in 2018 increased, in Poland it still remains at a low level of around 30 percent². Most still do not want the euro³, despite the fact that it has become the second currency in the world, effectively competing with the dollar in global transactions and making life easier for EU companies and consumers⁴. Civic Platform, Modern and Democratic Left Alliance are in favour while Law and Justice and other right wing parties are against.

Labour market

Since joining the EU in 2004, over 1 million citizens have left Poland, using EU freedom of movement, and only a small percentage are considering returning to the country. Shortages in the labour market have mostly been filled by Ukrainian citizens, but Polish companies are struggling to find adequate workforce. Employers in many debates stress how difficult

the labour market is for them today. Unemployment has fallen to just 3.5 percent, which is one of the lowest rates in the EU and the lowest in the history of the last 30 years in Poland – and is expected to decline more⁵. At the same time, the average salary (gross PLN 5,000) has increased, although it is still low compared to western EU countries. Poles are worried about price increases, especially food and energy, as well as low growth rates in the euro-zone and the economic slowdown in Germany.

Investments and foreign capital

In debates about Europe, government representatives declare their willingness to attract foreign capital, but in a balanced way. In their opinion, the Polish economy is too dependent on the European market (80 percent of turnover), and should diversify reaching out to third countries, especially the fast-growing Asian markets. They emphasise the importance of strengthening domestic companies, including start-ups. Poland is to be an innovative country, use the potential of Polish technological thought and attract European and global corporations. Foreign business and the Polish state should understand each other well, because it they form interconnected system⁶.

Opposition circles do not share the fears related to Poland's dependence on the European

market. In their opinion, EU funds and investment by foreign companies are the country's developmental levers and also help develop start-ups and innovations. International capital also helps Polish companies exist in global circulation and enter new markets. Poles, however, note that the European Union is still not very innovative: it has only 26 “unicorns” (companies with a value of more than USD 1 billion) versus 56 in China and as many as 120 in the US⁷. Against this background, the performance of the Polish economy and its continuous growth at a level of approx. 4 percent are very satisfactory.

Free trade

Public opinion in Poland agrees that by becoming part of the EU single market, Polish enterprises began to trade more intensively with Europe. Awareness of the effects of EU free trade agreements is less widespread. As the European Commission enumerates, they have brought Europeans more than 30 million new jobs, and companies have increased their turnover with non-European countries, such as Korea and Japan. The Polish consumer has benefited from lower prices and business from increased export opportunities⁸.

Poles tend to adopt a reluctant attitude to trade wars and in the rivalry between China and the US they do not want to be ricocheted between the two sides. Poland supports free trade and the conclusion of more FTAs fears growing protectionism within the EU and criticises the changes in the directive on posted workers. In the opinion of the government, a major challenge is to become less dependent on the



Economic Forum, Krynica, September 2018

“Polish schools and universities do not prepare young people enough to work in an international environment. Even if Poles pass tests, later they often get lost in job interviews.” ●

Dr Marzenna Guz-Vetter
European Commission
[statement
at the Congress of Polish
International Experts,
Warsaw, June 2018]

European market (almost 80 percent of trade turnover), hence the pursuit of greater diversification, searching for partners in Asia and Africa. Poland still counts on Chinese investments, but sees little progress in this matter. At the same time, much attention is paid to offsetting the unfavourable trade balance – currently our imports are 12 times bigger than exports⁹.

Experts recognise the need to „recalibrate“ globalisation¹⁰. It is necessary to think not about the dismantling of the global economic order, but about reforming the World Trade Organisation. China achieved a great success by entering the WTO, but it disturbed the balance, so it's time to modify the rules. Multilateralism may prove successful, but corrections are needed, especially in the context of people, regions and countries that are losing out in globalisation. The European Union is a supporter and beneficiary of multilateralism¹¹.

At the same time, the Polish government emphasises that the tendencies of some member states to close their markets strike at the EU's foundations – the four freedoms and competitiveness that underpin EU cohesion. As Minister Czaputowicz put it, the biggest threat to European democracy is “protectionist democracy.” The states that are proposing this model today should reform themselves rather than pull the whole Union down¹².

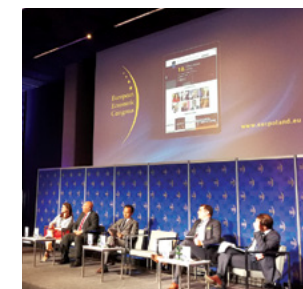
Budget and development funds

Poles agree that EU funds have played a key role in the country's development in the last two decades and do not question the numbers: 96 billion euros net after deducting the membership fee. However, they differ in interpreting the benefits of this fact. Supporters of opposition parties emphasise the scale of investment and compare it to the American Marshall Plan for Western Europe. Right-wing circles are more sceptical – they point to the benefits that European investors have earned from the opening up of the Polish market and the privatisation of assets, and at the same time they point out that a large part of EU money has returned through of contracts implemented by Western companies.

Poles are largely aware that the EU bull market has come to an end and that the amount of funds will be reduced. The opposition associates this with the dispute between Warsaw and Brussels about the rule of law. The government emphasises that the two issues are not linked and the proposed conditionality on the distribution of EU funds in the next financial perspective based on the rule of law will not lead to the reduction of those funds. Poles agree that the cohesion policy has enabled an increase in investments and acceleration of development, which is proof that the cohesion process in Europe is

indeed possible and has deepened links. However, this does not change the fact that three Polish regions are still among the 20 poorest in the EU¹³.

- 1 Poles' attitude to the European Union, democracy and the rule of law, SWSP University, December 2018.
- 2 Poles' attitude to the European Union, democracy and the rule of law, SWSP University, December 2018. More in: How to live with euro? Experiences of Central and Eastern European countries, Schuman Foundation, December 2018.
- 3 Eurobarometer 90 (36 percent for adopting the euro – 54 percent against).
- 4 Paweł Świeboda, Deputy Head of the European Political Strategy Centre, statement during a debate in Lublin, October 2018.
- 5 Eurostat data, 2018.
- 6 Deputy Prime Minister Beata Szydło, statement at the Economic Forum in Krynica, September 2018
- 7 Paweł Świeboda, statement at the European Forum for New Ideas, Sopot, September 2018, July
- 8 Commissioner Cecilia Malmström during the panel at the European Economic Congress in Katowice, May 2018.
- 9 Tadeusz Kościński, Deputy Minister of Entrepreneurship and Technology, statement at the European Economic Congress, Katowice, May 2018.
- 10 Paweł Świeboda, statement at the conference in Lublin, October 2018.
- 11 Paweł Świeboda, statement at the European Forum of New Ideas, Sopot, September 2018.
- 12 Speech at the European Economic Congress, Katowice, May 2018.
- 13 Jerzy Kwieciński, Minister of Investment and Development, statement at the Warsaw Security Forum, October 2018.



European Economic Congress, Katowice, 2018

“Can we protect free trade? This is one of the biggest challenges for Europe.” ●

Olaf Osica
Project director of “Foreign Markets” at PTWP SA [statement at the European Economic Congress in Katowice, May 2018]

approximately 30 million

The number of new jobs European Union free trade agreements have created for Europeans.

source: European Commission.

“The EU provides”. Agriculture and environmental protection

40 percent of Poles live in the rural areas but the share of agriculture in GDP is meagre – only 2.6 percent. However, food products are an important item in Polish exports (over 28 billion euros out of over 200 billion euros of goods in total in 2017) and agri-food companies sell to more than 70 countries around the world. Consumers appreciate the quality of domestic produce and prefer products with Polish names.

Polish agriculture has undergone tremendous changes in the last two decades. In the debates conducted in 2018, attention was paid to the need to protect this acquis, especially in the context of the new free trade agreements, including with Canada (CETA). A lot of attention was devoted to the future of the Common Agricultural Policy and the changes that take place in the world under the influence of the fourth industrial revolution. Poland was also the host of COP24, a climate conference. Delegations from 196 countries took part in it.

Common Agricultural Policy

In the Polish debate on the future of the rural areas, it was noted that **the Common Agricultural Policy required a thorough modernisation and simplification of rules and procedures**. Its goal should be, among other things, to increase the competitiveness of European agriculture and to sell agricultural products around the world. Other important issues include the development of rural areas and the strengthening of their socio-economic fabric, the retention of farmers in the profession as well as the development of precision and digital agriculture¹.

The discussions stressed that during the negotiations of the 2021-2027 financial perspective, an agreement should be sought over direct payments so that Polish farmers are not discriminated. It was noted that the reduction of funds for agriculture was approx. 28 percent. The EU budget may have a negative impact on the Polish rural areas which still needs funding².

Innovations

The topic of the effects of the fourth industrial revolution on rural areas has been discussed in Polish debates. By the middle of the century, our planet's population will reach 9 billion.

We will need 70 percent more food than we currently produce to feed it. This is a great challenge for the agri-food industry. **The development of technology enables the introduction of innovations that increase the efficiency of production and the creation of new forms of food, but it can also lead to compromises in terms of quality and to the development of new consumer habits.**

In the Polish debate on the future of the rural areas, changes in the lifestyle and work of farmers have been noted. Owing to the innovations developed, those changes relate more to farm and data management than field work³. Productivity also increases. Experts predict an increase in the number of mobile applications for the agricultural sector, increasing the importance of the Internet of Things, the development of precision agriculture and big data in agro-business. Farms, similar to cities, will become smart.

The discussions emphasised the need to prepare for a wider use of artificial intelligence and robotics. It was recommended that more focus should be placed on the study of key problems such as lack of food or too much water consumption in production⁴. The need for cooperation between research units and farmers in analysing Poland's development needs and potential as well as the need to jointly apply for



Economic Forum in
Krynica, September 2018

“The development of scientific research translates into for agricultural development. We need cooperation between research units and farmers, and to increase the number of grants that should be financed also from the Cohesion Fund.” ●

Jerzy Buzek
MEP, former Prime Minister
of the Republic of Poland
[statement at the conference
in Jasionka, March 2018]

grants was underlined. At the same time, the value of multigenerational knowledge and experience of farmers, which translate into food quality and its safety, was also noted⁵.

Representatives of the Polish government stressed that innovations in agriculture, development and filling the technological gap are among the government's priorities⁶. Digitalisation, which is increasingly a priority in the EU, should have a supranational and EU-wide dimension⁷. This mainly concerns the creation of a legal framework and standardisation necessary, among others, for the development of the 5G network. Due to the high level of education, developed broadband internet and 4G, as well as the inherent entrepreneurship of citizens, Poland fulfils all the conditions to successfully build a digital economy; however, it is not free from problems. Small and medium-sized enterprises still have too little access to new technologies, people do not want to raise their knowledge and skills and retrain, and high-class specialists often choose to work abroad⁸.

Environmental Protection

In December 2018, Poland played host to a climate summit for the third time. 30,000 people took part in COP24. **The most important goal of the conference, which was held under the slogan "Changing together," was to come up with a roadmap for the implementation of the objectives of the Paris Agreement of December 2015. It was developed and written down in the so-called Katowice Climate Package – for the first time ever, it obliges all countries to act towards stopping global warming and protecting the climate⁹.**

At the same time, however, the Polish government gave clear signals that the Polish energy policy diverges from the UN climate targets for decarbonisation. The very location of the summit in the capital of Silesia and some events accompanying the conference emphasized that Poland was a coal-based country. Polish President Andrzej Duda announced Poland's readiness to fight for "climate neutrality," i.e. compensating for greenhouse gas emissions through sequestration (absorption of carbon dioxide by forests and soils). He said that Poland did not intend to abandon coal due to its economic (energy sovereignty) and social (jobs in the mines) benefits.

This approach is criticised by the opposition, which aims at gradual decarbonisation by increasing the share of wind, solar and nuclear energy in the mix. In their opinion aiming at the energy sovereignty by using coal is wrong as Poland imports it also from Russia. They refer to experts who believe it is worth developing renewable energy, which – unlike coal – is available in unlimited amounts¹⁰.

- 1 This was mentioned during the debate in Jasionka by the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan, March 2018.
- 2 Jerzy Plewa, interview for Gazeta Wyborcza, 14 June 2018.
- 3 Adam Ławicki from White Hill Sp. z o.o.
- 4 Jerzy Plewa, statement at the conference in Jasionka, March 2018 2017.
- 5 Professor Ryszard Hołownicki from the Institute of Horticulture, statement at the conference in Jasionka, March 2018.
- 6 Ryszard Zarudzki, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, statement at the conference in Jasionka, March 2018.
- 7 Jerzy Kwieciński, Minister of Investment and Development, statement at the 590 Congress in Jasionka, November 2018.
- 8 Marcin Putra, managing partner at McKinsey, speech at the conference in Jasionka, March 2018.
- 9 A detailed account of COP24 was published by the Centre for International Relations, January 2019.
- 10 Professor Jerzy Buzek, chairman of the Program Council of the European Fund for the Development of Polish Villages, speech at the conference in Jasionka, March 2018.

"Before accession, we had a negative balance in trade [agricultural and food products] with the EU, exports amounted to approximately EUR 4.5 billion. Last year, exports reached 27 billion euros and the positive balance of 8.7 billion euros is higher than all exports before accession. This is a spectacular effect and there is no other country like this." ●

Jerzy Plewa
General Director in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture. [statement for Rzeczpospolita, 13 June 2018]

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This many countries were represented at COP24 in Katowice in December 2018.

source: Center for International Relations

Conclusions and recommendations

Poland has brought to the EU the belief that people can change history¹. Before 1989, Poles could only dream of living in a community of Western countries and benefiting from the West's achievements, because no one thought that the cold war would end. The dream came true when Poland entered NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. Now times are changing again and the future is uncertain. The Polish debate about the future of Europe is the result of deep polarisation of politics and society.

The most important divisions focus on the following questions:

● What kind of Poland?

The dilemma of the interwar period has returned: do we want Poland to be multinational, open and tolerant or closed and ethnically homogeneous? We are not only geographically but also mentally stuck between the West and the East, unable to decide which side our roots are on.

● Dependence or independence?

The notions of betrayal and sovereignty have become more significant again. The same events are assessed differently: almost 30 percent trade with Germany is for some proof of the excellent quality of Polish products and business efficiency, but for others it is a symbol

of submission and exploitation. The nomination of Donald Tusk as president of the European Council is considered by many as a great success and an example of the increased role of Poland in the EU, while others see it as a trade-off and "selling out" Poland to Germany."

● Which league?

Poland is strong enough not to accept the role of an extra, but still too weak to play in the European first division. The partnership approach raises suspicions of excessive servility towards the West in Poland, while the rhetoric of confrontation, which increases popularity on the domestic scene, creates tensions in relations with other EU countries and Poland's eastern neighbours.

The result of the elections to the European Parliament in May 2019 will play a significant role in determining the directions for further discussion in Poland. There will be different visions of the future of the European project.

Finding a way to "coexist" is the most important challenge not only for the new EU authorities, but also for Polish society.

¹ Marek Prawda, Head of the European Commission Representation in Poland, statement during a civil dialogue in Lublin, October 2018.

Events monitored in 2018

EVENT	DATE	PLACE	ORGANISER
European Agricultural Forum	23–24.03	Jesionka	European Fund for the Development of the Polish Village
X European Economic Congress	14–16.05	Katowice	PTWP
The Polish state in Europe	28–29.05	Kielce	Jan Kochanowski University, EC Representation in Poland and PTSE
Congress of Polish International Experts	8–9.06	Warsaw	Pulaski Foundation, Center for International Relations, network.pl Association
XXVIII Economic Forum	5–7.09	Krynica	Eastern Institute
The state in times of change – 4th National Congress of Political Scientists	18–20.09	Lublin	Polish Political Sciences Society
European Forum for New Ideas	26–28.09	Sopot	Lewiatan Confederation and Business Europe
Poland in the European Union - new challenges	23.10	Lublin	Institute of Political Sciences and International Affairs of the Catholic University of Lublin,
Warsaw Security Forum	24–25.10	Warsaw	Pulaski Foundation and partners
Congress 590	15–16.11	Jasionka	Slawomir Skrzypek Foundation



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