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## Democracy and Freedom in Turbulent Times. Poland's Membership of the European Union as the Final Process of Integration after 1989

**Abstract:** Every country has symbolic dates in its history. The necessary political, social, and economic transformation after 1989 required costly changes. The prospect, and then the realization of Poland's aspiration to become a member of the European Union has turned us from a former Soviet-influenced bloc country into a fully-fledged member of the European family. All thanks to May 1, 2004. Since then, this date has been the foundation, and a new chapter in Poland's recent history. Poland has confidently entered a new political, economic, and, above all, civilizational space. The aim of the article was to show the way to this important event which changed Poland's place in Europe forever.

**Key words:** political transition, European Union, democratisation, European integration

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### 1. Historical elections on June 4, 1989 marked the beginning of changes in Poland

**T**he road to Polish political transformation which culminated on June 4, 1989 is, against the background of events taking place in Europe and around the world, an unprecedented event. In retrospect, the key is the fact that we have lived to see the most important thing – a relatively stable position for Poland on the international stage. After 1989, and the collapse of the Polish People's Republic elite, there is no longer any trace of the structures, and influence of the Polish United Workers' Party, no foreign troops are stationed, and we are finally members of the two most important international organizations of the 20th and 21st centuries – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which we joined in 1999, and the European Union to which we have belonged since 2004. In a comprehensive interview for the Onet.pl portal, former leading oppositionist Adam Michnik states that we have lived to see a miracle. "There are many things I do not like, but I have no doubts that we have succeeded. [...] If someone had told me 30 years ago that I would live to see a democratic, independent, law-abiding Poland without censorship, with open borders, with complete freedom of speech, with respect for those who think differently, without political prisoners, and a Poland that is in the European Union, and NATO, I simply would not have believed it. I feel that I have lived to see a miracle. And that there are only two generations in the 20th century that have experienced such a miracle. It was Piłsudski's legionnaires, and us" (Krawczyk, 2015). As Rafał Kalukin (2016, p. 29) emphasizes, the political evaluation of one, or the other political scene is not important. In his judgement, "diversity is not a disadvantage, however, as long as the framework of the debate

is determined by respect for the democratic norms of the rule of law.” The point is to create a clear and transparent outline of the hierarchy of the Polish ideological division, so that these less important events do not become more important than the fundamental ones.

In the Polish political scene, there have been, and are a number of parties representing citizens’ views from the far left to the far right. Political scientists and researchers dealing with the issue of the party system in Poland go further stating that the case of the collapse of real socialism in Poland in 1989, and the changes that took place during that period played a very important role in the formation of civic awareness, as well as shaping inter-party connections thanks to which many political parties corresponding to the ideological preferences of our society were established.

At that time, the domestic political scene very often resembled a marketplace where the merchants, i.e., the politicians of given parties try to encourage consumers (citizens) to adopt their ideas for conducting state policy. By the end of the 1980s, the situation was quite simplified. In our country, everything was monopolized by the authorities—namely the Polish United Workers’ Party. All reform provisions, or measures aimed at the “welfare” of the individual came from one authority. After the great success of the “liberal revolution of 1989” (Smolar, 2010, p. 75), and the overthrow of socialism in Poland, society became lethargic. On the one hand, the time of great changes has come, for which people fought so hard, but on the other hand, everyone realized that the ground on which they would now be living was, to put it mildly, unstable. It was therefore necessary to carry out a number of reforms aimed at improving the basic functioning of the Polish State. Unfortunately, the desire for power was awakening in the citizens. In the early 1990s, there were as many parties in the Sejm as there were wise voices considered their right to be the best for Poland. When Poles were asked what democracy means to them, depending on the epoch, and the theoretical trend, they defined in different ways what they thought it is. The most common responses, according to the Polish General Election Survey, were values such as civil liberties, the right of citizens to participate in social and political life, equal rights for women and men, and a multi-party system.<sup>1</sup> The period 1989–2015 has been a continuous attempt to build, and solidify the democratic system in our country. The most important aspect of the systemic transformation was the liberal reconstruction of the 3 spheres: social, political, and economic. Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, these slogans are associated with the systemic changes of the 1980s and 1990s (Szawiel, 1993, p. 14).

It has been thirty-three years since Poland regained democracy. We have gone through a period of significant changes which, however, from the perspective of systemic transformation has not been completed in every area. An example of this may be the idea of a civil society. Jacek Kuron – leader of the opposition during Polish People’s Republic – used to say, “The political opposition in our country is made up of people of different ideological backgrounds, different worldviews, program ideas, etc. Together, they can only be characterized by pointing to a common opponent for us: the socio-political system prevailing in our country” (Modzelewski, 1982, p. 84). There were always differenc-

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<sup>1</sup> The survey conducted by PGSW before the parliamentary elections covered a sample of 2,000 people.

es, but there was a common enemy – the dictatorial regime which was both anti-freedom, anti-worker, and anti-democratic, and it necessarily brought together the resistance of different people. Poland's path of systemic transformation has not been an easy one, but it turned out to be exceptionally bloodless compared to other post-communist countries. Adam Michnik once asked whether it was more difficult to fight for freedom, or to build this freedom replied: "Of course, it was harder to fight, because there were many indications that we would never live to see freedom. The price for participating in this fight was repression, discrimination, imprisonment, often police batons, and so on. There is no comparison at all" (Krawczyk, 2015). The belief in the necessity, and willingness to change for the better which has been developing in Polish society for many years was slowly gaining momentum.

The elections on June 4, 1989 set in motion a sequence of events known to all. This is one of the greatest successes of Polish women and men, the Polish nation, and society. Carried out at the right time, as it turned out later, at the moment of dynamic changes in the external situation, it opened up space for the reconstruction of the state, economy, and society. The direction and extent of these changes, however, depended almost entirely on us. In addition, the elections, and the subsequent establishment of a non-communist government initiated the processes of dismantling the communist system in the Eastern Bloc countries, including the USSR. Naturally, without a significant weakening of the USSR (which was supposed to be saved, not destroyed, according to Gorbachev) Poland, among others, would hardly have been able to escape socialism. But it was the changes, primarily in Poland, that emboldened societies in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, strengthened the position of party reformers, and made the party "concrete" realize that the communist system was a corpse that no one was going to defend. "We voted for a free Poland. A lame one, not quite ours yet, but what we have achieved is, with all its mistakes, a great victory," said Olga Krzyzanowska during the celebration of the 26th anniversary of the first free elections.

Today, it is widely believed that in the elections of June 4, 1989 the Solidarity opposition fought to seize power, and the Communists just wanted to share this power. As Robert Krasowski points out, "The Communists set the rules in such a way that the opposition had no chance of taking power, while the opposition, going into the elections, not only did not fight for power, but considered as its strategic goal that it would not agree to take an ounce of power". What, then, made the authorities allow the elections on June 4, 1989? In 1988, it realized that it was at the end of its existence. In a few months, a couple of strong blows fell on it. Each of them hit extremely hard:

1. The economy had definitely collapsed, and it could only be saved by the introduction of radical reforms which, however, required the support of the society.
2. The spring wave of strikes showed that young people are radical, they do not want to fix communism, they want to destroy it.
3. Mikhail Gorbachev announced that the time of assistance from the USSR was over, and the local Communists had to maintain order without Kremlin support. For Wojciech Jaruzelski, and Czeslaw Kiszczak it was a signal that they would not be able to run society, or ensure its prosperity. This meant that they were losing their power to manipulate, and hold everything in firm hands. This is where the idea of the "Round

Table” was born with which Kiszczak addressed the opposition (Krasowski, 2012, p. 30).

Then, on June 4, no one even thought of taking power away from the Communists, freedom and democracy were not thought of. Everyone was constantly waiting for the election results hopefully that “Solidarity Movement” would blow away “the Reds”. In this vale of tears, spoiling the moods of the authorities was probably the greatest dream come true (Krasowski, 2012, p. 29). As Bronislaw Geremek mentioned, “but we never accepted their general idea of getting us into the orbit of power. After all, they did not want to offer us the legalization of ‘Solidarity Movement’ as a social movement, or a trade union. They wanted to give us participation in power on a silver platter, and they kept coming back to it.” They said, “Tell us how government positions you want, tell us how many you want to have in the Sejm, and we will share it.” The Communists wanted to rule together, they preferred to share Poland. “Solidarity” did not want this proposal because it was of the opinion that Poland should not be ridiculed, it should be for all citizens. “That was our goal” (Żakowski, 1990, p. 98).

## 2. European aspirations of Polish society after 1989

Poland’s difficult geopolitical position between two centers of political integration—European and Eurasian—has forced Poland to define the direction in which it would like to move after 1989. It could not have been a neutral state; it would have become too easy target for the powers that had not come to terms with the end of the world of influence that had prevailed so far. After years of marginalization, and peripheralization, Poland had to clearly choose the direction of change. The interest of Poles in European matters after 1989 made the issue of Poland’s integration into the European Union, and thus into the family of Western countries, a topic of public discourse (Eatwell et al., 1999, pp. 101–113).

The intensification of interest in the subject of Poland’s integration with the European Union was also evident in the 2003 referendum campaign, and the activities of the political elites preceding it at the time. The closer the vision of Poland’s membership in European structures seemed to get, the more often EU issues became the main axis of political dispute on the Polish party scene. A clear division into supporters, and opponents of Poland’s membership in the European Union began to take shape, to take its final form 2 years before the EU referendum (Piasecki, 2005, pp. 46–48). Political parties, as a reflection of citizens’ political thought, create images relating to the international structure, assess reality, and outline expectations, often rejecting deliberately unwanted visions of the international order. By creating their concepts and visions of transforming reality, they try to outline for us, in them, their paths, ways, and means of action (Paluch, 2004, p. 20).

Views on the integration of the EU and Poland, and the conditions under which it is to take place became the foundation of the activities of political parties, and groupings both on the fronts of presidential, and parliamentary campaigns, but, above all, they became the main area of debate, and dispute during the referendum campaign in 2003 which was to settle the question of Poland’s accession to the structures of the European

Union. In retrospect, we can see how political marketing activities were particularly visible in its course, and even the so-called “black PR” aimed at weakening Poles’ conviction about membership. Views on the international system, and Poland’s new role in the European world were based on the acceptance of a realist paradigm of international relations. Among clearly pro-European political parties, the activity of Civic Platform and Democratic Left Alliance was evident. According to a survey conducted by Centre for Public Opinion Research (June 7–8, 2003), among the electorate of the Civic Platform supporters of integration with the European Union accounted for more than 90% of respondents, while among the electorate of the Democratic Left Alliance it was more than 86%. Slightly less enthusiastic about Poland’s integration with the EU were politicians from the Law and Justice party and the Polish People’s Party which would seem to be a consequence of the perception of this issue by the electorates of both formations, taking into consideration the difficult period of Poland’s entry into the 21st century. In the case of Law and Justice party, about 55% of the party’s supporters was pro-European, while in the case of Polish People’s Party, it was about 54% (CBOS, 2002).

### 2.1. YES, that means we are in the European Union

Every country has symbolic dates in its history. In the history of Poland, such dates are exceptionally numerous, but in the history of the 20th and 21st centuries the following should undoubtedly be singled out: August 31, 1980, June 4, 1989, March 12, 1999, and May 1, 2004. The first, for obvious reasons, brings to mind the establishment of Solidarity Movement, and the beginning of the long march to the Europe of our dreams; while the last date heralds reaching the destination of this journey. Poland has confidently entered a new political, economic, and, above all, civilizational space. The great dream of several generations of Poles, dreaming of a better future, has come true.

Poland knew which way to go to get closer to Western Europe (Sachs, 2006, p. 125). Our country has been a member of the EU since May 1, 2004 by virtue of the Accession Treaty signed on April 16, 2003 in Athens. The European Union in the form that Poland found in 2004 was a community identical at the level of (legal) norms, a community supporting numerous educational programs to build a knowledge society. Poland’s accession to the European Union was the fulfilment of the aspirations, and expectations of many millions of Poles. Today, we can see that this decision has helped Poland to achieve a status that would have had to wait several more years without membership. From an economic perspective, our presence in the EU has opened up a huge opportunity to modernize Poland. Nowadays, there are numerous publications in the literature on the subject taking a closer look at this process. It is worth emphasizing, however, that thanks to this Poland has entered the mainstream of the key community policy, and, with the help of dedicated programs, has begun to even out social, and economic inequalities. In the European Union, it has been assumed that regional policy is an investment policy encompassing all European regions, and cities with the aim of increasing their economic growth, and improv-

ing the quality of life of their inhabitants (Sługocki, 2016, p. 47) Regional policy is the part of economic policy whose overriding objective is to stimulate permanent, and sustainable economic growth by public authorities to contribute to the stability of the country, faster increase in the standard of living, and the close link with EU regions, and Member States (Sługocki, 2013, pp. 9–10). Our entry into the EU was conditioned by a number of circumstances of an economic, socio-cultural, or political nature—in both external and internal dimensions. As can be seen in the table below, Poland's endeavors to become a member of the European family began on September 16, 1988, and culminated on May 1, 2004.

Table 1

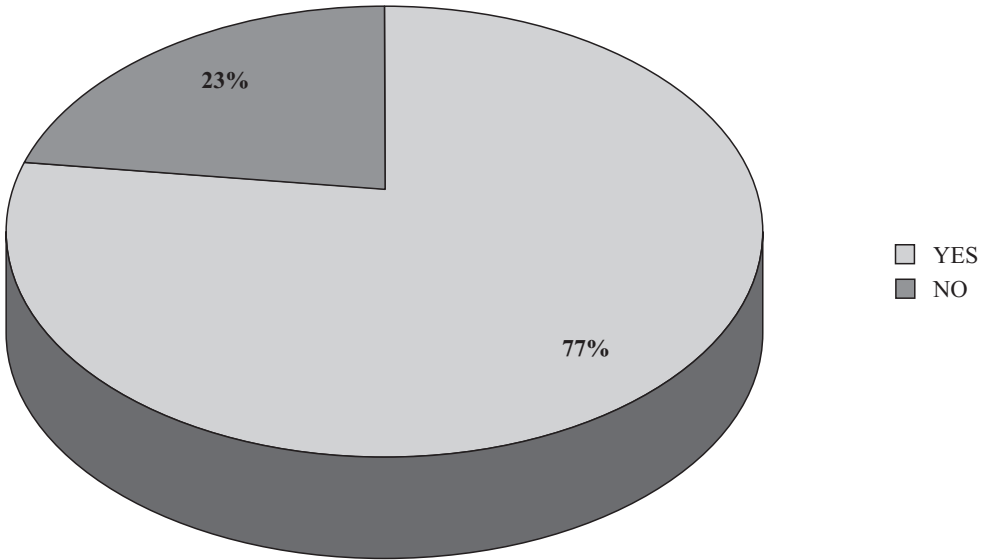
### Poland's road to membership in the European Union

Poland's road to membership in the European Union – selected dates	
September 16, 1988	Establishment of diplomatic relationships between Poland, and the European Community
April 8, 1994	The government of the Republic of Poland submitted a formal application for Polish membership of the European Union in Athens
December 9–10, 1994	The European Council confirmed in Essen the will to enlarge the European Union to include associated countries, and adopted an accession strategy
October 3, 1996	Pursuant to the resolution of the Council of Ministers of January 26, 1991 the Office of the Committee for European Integration was launched with the task of programming, and coordinating policy on matters relating to Poland's integration with the European Union
May 1997	The Sejm adopted the National Integration Strategy
May 23, 1998	The Government adopted National Program of Preparing for Membership in the European Union
March 31, 1998	Start of membership negotiations in Brussels on the compatibility of candidate countries' laws with European Union law
April 14, 2003	Adoption of the Accession Treaty unanimously by the Council of the European Union
April 16, 2003	Signing of the Treaty by the President of the Republic of Poland
June 7–8, 2003	Nationwide referendum in Poland on the Accession Treaty
May 1, 2004	Poland, along with nine other countries, has become a full member of the European Union

**Source:** Own elaboration based on Wojtaszczyk, 2021, pp. 174–175.

The key element was the nationwide referendum in June which closed the heated period of accession negotiations. The referendum of 2003 was not only the most important event from the perspective of the implementation of plans set out by politicians in Poland after 1989, but it also definitively closed the period of debates, and party disputes in Poland concerning the sense of Poland's accession to the European Union, and the detailed principles of its accession. Unfortunately, as we observe after time, a new level of clashing views between political parties has emerged. This time the dispute concerned the practical dimension of Polish membership, and the institutional future of the European Union. The political elites were quick to recognize that the place of the recent dispute over the need for Poland to join the EU could be successfully occupied by a new dispute over what Polish-EU relations should look like now and signaling Polish dilemmas regarding the future, and values of the Union.

**Chart 1. Results of the 2003 nationwide referendum on consent to the ratification of the Treaty concerning Poland's accession to the EU**



**Source:** Own elaboration based on the results of the referendum (PKW, 2003).

## 2.2. The European Union through the eyes of the citizen

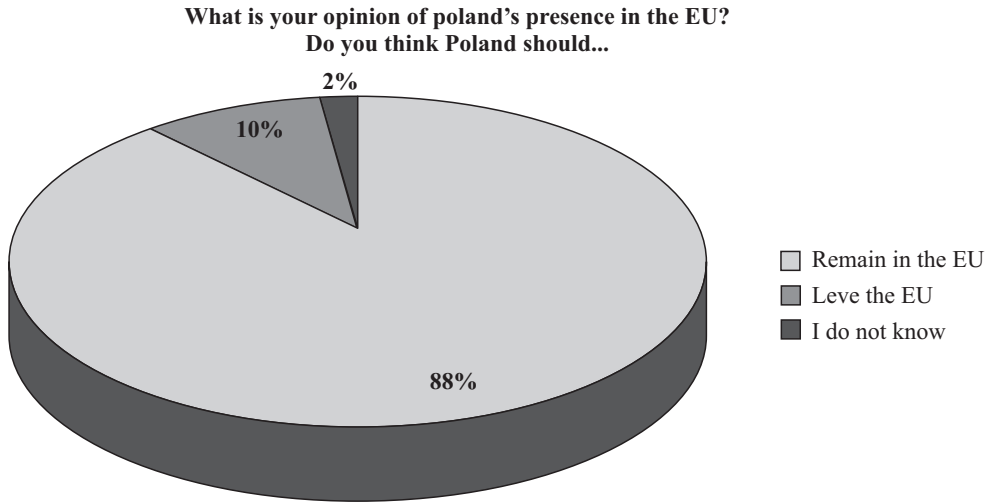
In terms of European policy practices, Poland is relatively young Member State. However, joining on May 1, 2004 we found ourselves in a completely new reality. The European world has forced the entire political class in Poland to change its thinking on foreign policy, and the resulting consequences for the functioning of the state as a member of the European Union. Our membership has involved many stages sometimes even contradictory, (depending on the ruling elites in Poland at the time), but it is indisputable that something unimaginable happened to us after 1989 (Chojan, 2021, p. 112). European values in Polish society have evolved with the prolonged period of EU membership. As Professor Joanna Konieczna-Salamatin's research indicated, European values and standards were a priority for Poles during the integration process. When asked if democracy is the best way to govern, 76% of respondents said yes (in 2008). In 2017, the question was repeated; the same answer was given by 84% of the respondents (Konieczny-Salamatin, 2022).

The vast majority of Poles continue to support Poland's membership of the European Union over the years, and a half of the citizens would like to see further integration with other countries. Surveys show a continuing trend of Europeanisation of Polish society. As can be seen below, on May 24, 2016 in a Millward Brown poll, for "Fakty" TVN and TVN24, 88% of respondents were in favor of Poland's presence in the EU, confirming Poles' high sense of belonging to the European family (see: Chart 2).

When the survey was repeated on September 17, 2018, the results were also overwhelmingly pro-European. 86% of those surveyed indicated that Poland's place was in



**Chart 2. The results of the survey on Poland’s membership in the European Union**



Source: Own elaboration based on (TVN24, 2016).

the European Union, and 11% of respondents declared leaving the community, compared to 10% in 2016 (2 years earlier).

Since 1957, the European Union has achieved many successes that have benefited the people of Europe, and in the whole wide world. The most important are peace on the continent, the world’s largest single market, support, and development aid for millions of people around the world. We owe more than half a century of peace, stability, and prosperity to the European Union. Today, it also plays an important role in diplomacy, and works to promote the same values – as well as democracy, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law – all over the world for which the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012.

The theory shows the strong structures of the EU, and full approval for the activities of this organization throughout the Community. However, the positive resonance of actions is not always perceived by citizens. Within the model of democracy in the European Union, 3 forms of practicing democratic governance should be classified:

1. Direct democracy – consultations and referendums, also present in Member States.
2. Indirect democracy – parliamentary or presidential system of government which is the case for Member States, but does not generally work in the EU.
3. Dual form of representative democracy to be characteristic of EU democracy alongside parliamentary representation (Wagner, 2019, p. 39).

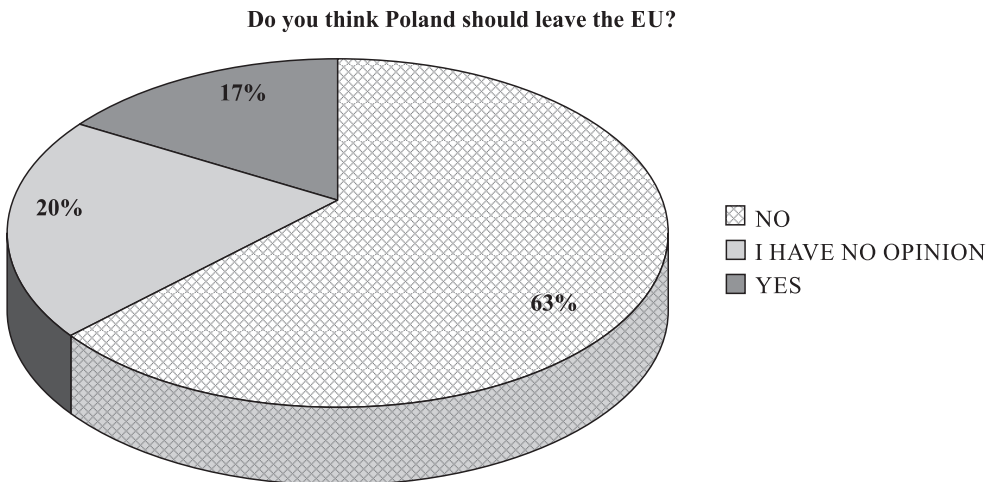
If one accepts that the legitimacy deficit is largely the result of a democratic deficit, this becomes clearer when one treats the European Union as a political community rather than as a mere international organization bringing together member states, and guaranteeing community and subjectivity. This is due, among other things, to its efforts to raise democratic standards in the Member States. Thus, Tomasz Kubin legitimately points out that, “the uniqueness of the EU lies also in the great importance of democracy within it” (Kubin, 2014, p. 57). Although the European Union sets as



a condition of membership the observance of the principle of democracy for new candidate states, questions have begun to arise as to whether it bases its functioning on democratic principles.

Poles are in their nature rather moderate supporters of the development of European integration. In 2009, for the first time Centre for Public Opinion Research asked our compatriots about the development of European integration. There were significantly more supporters of deepening integration than opponents. However, when analyzing subsequent years, it can be observed that the view that European unification has reached its maximum level began to dominate in society. Two factors probably contributed to this fact, i.e., the crisis in the eurozone, and the slowdown in Poland's economic growth. However, already in 2014 with the events related to Russian aggression in Ukraine, and the seizure of Crimea, the trend reversed—the idea of further deepening European integration became the most important topic again (CBOS, 2022). The high percentage of satisfaction with Poland's presence in the EU confirms the conviction that the decision taken on May 1, 2004 was the right one. Poland's exit from the structures of the European Union, if it were ever to happen, will not happen overnight. However, in the last three years, there has been an increase in the number of people who believe that a “polexit” is likely, or has just begun (RP, 2021). A poll in 2021, conducted for Rzeczpospolita, shows that for the first time ever, as many as 17% of respondents declared their intention to leave the European Union. To the question, “In your opinion should Poland leave the European Union?” it is noteworthy that more than 20% of the respondents answered, “I have no opinion” (see: Chart 3). However, this result should not come as a surprise to all those who have been following politics in Poland since 2015 – that is since Law and Justice party, and its coalition members took power in Poland. Since then, Warsaw–Brussels relations have deteriorated considerably, and cracks have begun to appear on the exemplary relationship with the EU.

**Chart 3. Results of the survey on leaving the structures of the European Union**



Source: Own elaboration based on (Mikulski, 2021).

### **3. Twenty-two years of Poland's membership of the European Union – what comes next?**

The balance sheet of membership to date indicates that enormous benefits have been achieved relative to the costs incurred (Fischer, 2017, pp. 214 and 250). When Poland joined the structures of the European Union on May 1, 2004, one of Poland's integration objectives was to have the greatest possible influence on policy-making inside and outside the European Union, to have a key vote in making the most important decisions from the point of view of regional and national security (Konarzewska, 2007, p. 21). Policy-making throughout the European Union is done through national governance which, depending on the program and vision of the party in power, has been pursued internationally. During the last 8 years of the Civic Platform, and the Polish People's Party coalition governments (2007–2015), relations with the European Union and its key players have been based on the principles of openness, closer cooperation, and support for key initiatives of importance to the EU as a whole. There was a clear reliance on close cooperation with Germany, or France. In contrast, the governments of the right-wing Law and Justice party and coalition partners (governments in 2005–2007 and 2015 – present) have gone in the opposite direction. They have presented for years a policy of traditional understanding of sovereignty, and integration processes, often excluding their core values, such as support for a common economic and monetary market, but without aspiring to introduce the European euro currency in Poland. Since 2016, there has been a clear push to increase the role and activity of the Intermarium concept, or cooperation within the Visegrad Group, and to cede the field of security policy entirely to the USA. It should also be noted that permanently since 2016 there has been a dangerous phenomenon of deliberately weakening the foundations of the EU in the eyes of public opinion manifested in the constant pursuit of negative rhetoric towards the EU, and the implicating of Poland into unprecedented disputes with the EU over the interpretation of EU law, or violations of the rule of law. There was also the EU stance of linking funds to observance of law and order in Member States which in Poland triggered waves of criticism of the European Union by those in power. In addition, it is pointed out that the media model in this day and age based on reporting mainly negative information and attitudes, such as scandals, corruption, and plea of lack of competence of the political elite in Europe fosters feelings of alienation, distrust, and cynicism. In this way, the media controlled by the rulers undermine faith in contemporary democracy, reinforcing the phenomenon of a crisis of democracy in both nation states and the European Union (Budge, Newton, 2011, p. 169). It is hard to imagine the contemporary world of politics without the media.

Almost always, politics and the communication process were interrelated, and this relationship appears to be permanent – it does not change, or lose its relevance in modern society (Mrozowski, 2006, p. 4–30). In 2021, destructive practices that weaken the unity (Hungary, Poland, Italy) of the European community are being practiced at various levels in many EU countries. Populisms and new nationalisms show more and more clearly how disruptive power based on the use of constructed, or acquired media is becoming real. The processes of politicization permeate the public space in parallel with the pro-

cesses of mediatization, and pop-culturalization; actively influence each other and are difficult to separate.

A unifying Europe faces many challenges. It is worth starting to think of the European Union in terms of a verb rather than a noun. This makes us sensitive to the importance of the language of the lived, experienced, built, and dismantled community. Patience is needed; Europe's success is in its resilience, and less in achieving short-term goals. There is no point in asking too much of the European Union if we do not expect much of ourselves, and give little of ourselves. We confuse lack of effort with rest. Lack of effort is enslavement being a contemporary version of modern fatalism, which, on the level of our animal-like behaviors, can explain aggression resulting from fear.

The struggle for freedom is usually a struggle to break habits that no longer suit the changed conditions. There is usually a battle against old habits in the name of timeless ideals. History teaches us, however, that new habits are born incomparably slower than old ones collapse—especially when a conservative society, and its governments artificially prolong their functioning. The fight for new forms of timeless ideals can turn into nihilism—the rejection of old forms of social life without the creation of new ones. We are then faced with a situation where one side will try to maintain the old customs by hook or by crook, while the other will try to live without any universally accepted principles. Both of these spell disaster.

Global threat caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic in 2019 has only confirmed the belief that the European Union is the best place for Poland, and all Member States. Referring to community trust, it should be assumed, following Piotr Sztompka, that, “it becomes a basic strategy for dealing with the uncertainty, and uncontrollability of the future” (Sztompka, 2007, p. 69).

The social and economic transformation that was necessary after 1989 required costly changes and the enormity of the fight. The prospect, and later realization of Poland's membership of the European Union made us a different country, a different society. It would seem that for the first time since 1989 we are in the right place at the right time.

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## Demokracja i wolność w burzliwych czasach. Członkostwo Polski w Unii Europejskiej jako finalny proces integracji po 1989 roku

### Streszczenie

Każde państwo ma w swojej historii daty mające znamiona symbolicznych. Konieczna po 1989 roku transformacja polityczna, społeczna i gospodarcza wymagała kosztownych przemian. Perspektywa, a później realizacja dążenia Polski do członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej sprawiła, że z kraju byłego bloku Sowieckich wpływów staliśmy się pełnoprawnym członkiem rodziny europejskiej. Wszystko za

sprawą 1 maja 2004 roku. Od tej pory data ta stanowi fundament i nowy rozdział w najnowszej historii Polski. Polska pewnym krokiem wkroczyła w nową przestrzeń polityczną, gospodarczą, a przede wszystkim cywilizacyjną. Celem artykułu było ukazanie drogi do tego ważnego wydarzenia, które na zawsze zmieniło miejsce Polski w Europie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** transformacja polityczna, Unia Europejska, demokratyzacja, integracja europejska

