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Poland's Road to Membership in the European Union from the Perspective of the 20th Anniversary of the Accession Treaty

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to show Poland's path to European Union membership from the perspective of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Accession Treaty. Joining the Community was preceded by many years of preparation and efforts. Poland had to meet many necessary requirements to finally join the ranks of the member states. The negotiations, which began on April 3, 1998, were concluded on April 16, 2003, with the signing of the Accession Treaty in Athens. In Poland, the decision was also decided by the public expressing its opinion in a referendum held on June 7–8, 2003. On July 23, 2003 the Accession Treaty was ratified, and on May 1, 2004, Poland became a member of the European Union. Poland's entry into the European Union made it possible to take a civilizational step. Poland benefited from its presence in the EU in many dimensions, primarily political, economic and social. The benefits of Poland's accession to the EU far outweigh the costs. This assessment is also confirmed by the opinions of citizens expressed in surveys. In June 2022, the number of supporters of Poland's EU membership reached a record 92%.

Key words: Poland, European Union, accession negotiations, benefits and costs of accession to the EU

Diplomatic relations between the communist Poland and the European Economic Community were established in September 1988, with the Polish diplomatic representation to the European Communities opened in July the following year. Poland's first representative at the rank of ambassador was Jan Kułakowski. Negotiations on bilateral cooperation resulted in the signing of the *Agreement between the People's Republic of Poland and the European Economic Community on Trade and Commercial and Economic Cooperation* in Warsaw on 19 September 1989. It liberalised mutual economic relations, covered trade in goods with preferential customs duties and lifted quantitative restrictions on the export of certain products. Moreover, the EEC promised to support the reform of the Polish economy through, among other things, investment protection, technical advice and scientific cooperation (Domagała, 2008, pp. 53–54).

Further development of relations between Poland and the European Communities was determined by changes that began in the former in 1989. This was a consequence of the systemic transformation, whose fundamentals were set by the "Round Table Agreements", signed after negotiations between 5 February and 6 April 1989. The talks involved several hundred representatives of various political and social forces from the then authorities, the opposition and those who tried to remain neutral towards political affairs. The introduction to the Agreements states: "In the sense of the dissimilarity and sometimes conflicting ideological positions, aspirations and interests and, at the same time, in mutual respect for each other's identity, the most effective means of repairing the Republic are sought. In the spirit of the Social Agreements of 1980, a dialogue is established on issues of common

interest for Poles. These include the sense of responsibility for the future of the country, its economy and culture, for society and for the state, for the future of Polish families and for the future of Poland” (*Porozumienia Okrągłego...*, 2008, p. 553). The further part of the “Agreements” defines the attitude of its signatories to European integration as follows: the “common aspiration of the participants to the ‘Round Table’ is to heal the national economy and connect it more closely with the world economy. [...] We consider the ideas and concepts put forward by serious Western European individuals as an expression of their aspiration to develop comprehensive cooperation of all countries on our continent, including between Poland and the EEC and the Scandinavian countries” (*Porozumienia Okrągłego...*, 2008, pp. 550–551). Among other things, the “Round Table” led to the election on 4 June 1989 and the appointment of the government headed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki. Already in his exposé delivered to the Sejm in September that year, the new Prime Minister saw the need to “*open Poland to Europe*” and “*bring back Poland to Europe*” as the foundation of his cabinet’s foreign policy. Consequently, unofficial talks on association with the European Communities began as early as October (Domagała, 2008, p. 54). Although it was still difficult to predict the outcome, EEC representatives also showed interest in the development as they desired to support the changes. The end of the Cold War in international relations was not only a source of satisfaction, but also concern for the future of a continent previously divided by the ‘Iron Curtain’.

Evidence of the Western European countries support for the transformation was the launch by the G7 states of the economic assistance programme designed for Central European countries (initially only for Poland and Hungary): *Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies* (PHARE). The European Commission was vested with the responsibility for the coordination of the programme. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, established in May 1990, also supported the transformation of post-socialist economies, including Poland. Its task was to promote economic development primarily by crediting projects implemented by private entrepreneurs (Nowak-Far, 2008).

Conditions to commence negotiations to associate Central European countries with the Communities were announced in April 1990. These included the consistent implementation of reforms aimed to develop democracy and market economy. Poland filed its application to start association negotiations on 25 May of the same year. The negotiations started on 22 December and lasted for a year (Domagała, 2008, p. 54). The negotiations resulted in the signing of the *Europe Agreement establishing an association between the Republic of Poland, on the one hand, and the European Communities and their Member States, on the other hand*, on 16 December 1991. The document, called the *Europe Agreement*, became effective as late as 1 February 1994 due to problems with its ratification in some Communities members. The reason was the growing influence of Member States who opposed to the extension of areas covered by the common policy and the accession of new states to the Communities. This was particularly vivid on the ratification of the *Maastricht Treaty*. Earlier, on 1 March 1992, the provisions of the Europe Agreement on trade rules came into force. This was made possible by their separation into an *Interim Agreement on trade and trade-related matters* concluded on 16 December 1992. Trade was already part of the EEC’s common policy and therefore it did not require ratification by Member States (Domagała, 2008, pp. 54–55).

The Europe Agreement replaced the 1989 Agreement between the People's Republic of Poland and the EEC and significantly broadened areas of cooperation and provided a basis for the development of mutual relations between Poland, the Communities, and Member States. Article 1 defines the aim of the Agreement as follows:

- to provide an appropriate framework for the political dialogue, allowing the development of close political relations between the parties;
- to promote the expansion of trade and the harmonious economic relations between the parties and so to foster the dynamic economic development and prosperity in Poland;
- to provide a basis for the Community's financial and technical assistance to Poland;
- to provide an appropriate framework for Poland's gradual integration into the Community. To this end, Poland shall work towards fulfilling the necessary conditions;
- to promote cooperation in cultural matters (*Układ Europejski ustanawiający...*, 1996, p. 314).

Moreover, the preamble states that *the final objective of Poland is to become a member of the Community and that this association, in the view of the Parties, will help to achieve this objective*. Although such a statement did not oblige the Community to enlarge and include Poland, the Agreement defined conditions to make it happen. The duration of the Agreement was indefinite with a transition period of ten years. This was necessary for Poland to implement the market economy.

Not only did the Association Agreement broaden the framework of Poland-Community cooperation, but also the parties decided to set up institutions responsible for solving bilateral issues or those arising in relation to the cooperation with organisations outside the Association. The Association Council consisted of members of the Polish Government as well as members of the Council and the Commission of the European Communities. Among other things, its task was to *examine any major issues arising within the framework of this Agreement and any other bilateral or international issues of mutual interest*. The Association Council was to be assisted in the performance of its duties by an Association Committee composed of lower-ranking representatives of the parties to the Europe Agreement. In order to increase democratic control over the association process, a Parliamentary Association Committee was also set up, consisting of Polish and European parliamentarians.

In accordance with the provisions of the Europe Agreement, the association included:

- a) policy dialogue that allows consultation and cooperation at different levels of government;
- b) trade cooperation to gradually abolish mutual import and export duties and other barriers to trade in goods. This was expected to lead to the completion of free movement of industrial goods and a free trade area between Poland and the Community within a ten-year transition period. However, in order to protect certain sectors of their economy, the parties to the Agreement envisaged a slower pace of opening their markets or excluding products listed in the attached protocols. This applied particularly to agricultural, textile and steel products;
- c) movement of workers, formation of companies and provision of services. The Agreement did not give rise to free movement of labour, but it prohibited discrimination against legally employed workers and granted family members of such workers the

- right to employment. It also made it easier for Community nationals to set up in Poland and for Polish nationals to operate on the single market;
- d) payments, movement of capital, competition and regulatory convergence. The Agreement laid the foundations for free movement of capital especially in the case of investment and establishing businesses, which benefited the Polish economy in particular. It also obliged Poland to adapt laws, including customs, corporate and banking laws, and competition rules to Community standards;
 - e) economic cooperation in 23 areas (e.g. industry, protection of investment, science and technology, agriculture and agri-food industry, energy, transport, and communications);
 - f) cultural cooperation;
 - g) financial cooperation and providing Poland with non-returnable financial assistance from PHARE and loans to accelerate market-oriented reforms.

The Community's commitment to *explore the possibility of* providing financial assistance to maintain the convertibility of the zloty and support the balance of payments was also important for the Polish economy and its position in the world. Although the removal of tariff and non-tariff restrictions to trade was asymmetrical, with the Community opening its market to Polish goods much faster rate than Poland opened its market to imports from the Community, Poland did not gain expected benefits. The primary reason for this was an underinvested and outdated industry, which produced few products that could compete on Western European markets. On the other hand, the export of goods that Poland produced for the market (including agricultural products, textiles and steel) was still subject to temporary Community restrictions. Another issue, which resulted from the *Interim Agreement*, was the necessity to increase customs duties in trade with countries outside the Communities or not associated with the organisation (Nowak-Far, 2008). This resulted in a drastic reduction in trade, especially with the former Comecon countries, where a significant part of the products of Polish industry had previously been exported. Another consequence of the policy was the collapse of many enterprises and the increase in unemployment. However, the analysis of the association process shows that the benefits of the process far outweigh its costs. If it had not been for rapprochement with the Communities, given the decomposition of political and economic ties that had existed until the end of the 1980s in Central and Eastern Europe, Poland would not have been able to quickly transform its economy and emerge from a deep crisis.

The Europe Agreement defined the legal and institutional basis for cooperation between Poland and the Communities until 30 April 2004. After applying for membership in the European Union, this Agreement effectively became a pre-accession treaty defining tasks whose fulfilment enabled to meet the conditions for membership (Nowak-Far, 2008).

In the initial period of Poland's effort to become an EU member, the enlargement procedure was vaguely regulated by Article O of *the Treaty on European Union* (Maas-tricht Treaty). It stated that "any European state may apply to become a Member of the Union. It shall address its application to the Council, which shall act unanimously after consulting the Commission and after receiving the assent of the European Parliament, which shall act by an absolute majority of its component members. The conditions of admission and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the Union is founded which such admission entails shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and

the applicant State” (*Traktat o Unii Europejskiej...*, 1996). The enlargement of the EU to include post-socialist countries was also a challenge for the EU institutions and its members. Never before had a country that was previously authoritarian with a centrally commanded economy based on central planning with dominant state ownership applied for accession. Therefore, the Copenhagen European Council determined the conditions for membership (so-called *Copenhagen criteria*) by recognising that: “membership of the EU requires that the applicant country has stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and protection of minorities, as well as a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU”. Furthermore, the Council stressed the importance of the candidate country’s ability to implement the Community body of law and to meet the requirements of political, economic and monetary union (*Wnioski Prezydencji...*, 1999, p. 33).

The Treaty of Amsterdam, which entered into force on 1 May 1999, modified the EU Treaty by renumbering and changing the content of many articles. The first sentence of Article 49 (formerly Article O) was changed: “Any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1) may apply to become a member of the Union”. By contrast, Article 6 (formerly F)(1) – after a revision of its content – stated that “The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States” (*Traktat o Unii Europejskiej (wersja skonsolidowana)*..., 1999, pp. 53–55). The novelty introduced by the EU in the Amsterdam Treaty was the emphasis on the importance of political conditions for membership. The values listed in Article 6 were the political foundations of European integration. As the Treaty of Nice, entering into force on 1 February 2003, did not change the articles referred to above, we can assume that the conditions of Poland’s accession to the EU were as follows:

- making the above-mentioned values a reality in Poland’s political life, mainly through systemic reforms;
- accepting the legal order of the European Communities and the European Union (*acquis communautaire*) by establishing new legal norms and amending existing ones; and
- preparing public administration to apply the Community law and interact with EU institutions.

Although Poland’s application for membership in the European Communities had already been announced (e.g. in the Europe Agreement), the process formally began on 29 March 1994, when the Polish Council of Ministers authorised the Prime Minister to apply. The application for EU membership, signed by Prime Minister Waldemar Pawlak, was forwarded to the EU Council in Athens during the Greek Presidency. A day before, the Sejm had unanimously approved the planned submission of the application, strengthening the government mandate to act.

In December of the following year, the Council instructed the European Commission to prepare an opinion (so-called *avis*) on Poland and other countries applying for EU membership. On 26 April 1996, the Commission submitted to the Polish government a questionnaire with questions on 23 areas of political, economic and social affairs that were relevant to the requirements set out in the Copenhagen criteria, and areas covered by the Union’s common policies. This had a significant impact on the pace of the accession process (Nowak-Far, 2008, pp. VII-14). The answer to the questions, submitted to

the European Commission on 26 July the same year, was a kind of self-assessment report prepared by the government and its agencies. Then, on 16 July 1997, the Commission submitted to the European Parliament: *Agenda 2000 – An Enlarged and Stronger EU*, in which it highlighted the need to reform its institutions, budget and procedures to prepare the Union for its enlargement. *Agenda 2000* was also accompanied by a *Commission Opinion on Poland's application for the EU membership*. According to the EC, Poland met the political criteria for membership. It also had stabilised its economy. The problem was mainly the uncompleted restructuring of industry and trade. However, the document noted that Poland would be able to adopt the *acquis communautaire* within a few years. At the same time, the EC recommended that accession negotiations should start. Such an opinion was a recognition for Poland's systemic transformation to date and, together with the reform of the EU budget announced in *Agenda 2000* (Domagała, 2008, pp. 69–71), it increased the support for the next enlargement among EU citizens.

Based on the favourable opinion of the Commission, on 4 December 1997, the European Parliament gave its assent to the opening of negotiations with candidate countries (*Uchwała Parlamentu Europejskiego...*, 1999, pp. 315–333). A similar declaration was adopted by the Luxembourg European Council on 12–13 December of the same year. The last decision opening the way for accession negotiations was taken by the Council on 26 January 1998. The Council decided to commence the new phase of relations between the EU, Poland and other applicant countries on 30 March. On that day, at a joint meeting of the General Affairs Council involving foreign ministers of the applicant countries, the process of enlargement of the Union was officially launched. On the following day, the first session of the bilateral Intergovernmental Accession Conference took place. During the conference, the parties made their opening statements. On behalf of the Polish government, it was delivered by Bronisław Geremek, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who pointed out that “Poland was entering the negotiations with the conviction that membership in the European Union was the most favourable choice from the point of view of national security, stability of the democratic order, consolidation of foundations for rapid sustainable economic development, and the building of a modern civil society. Poland fully shares the values underlying the European Union”. Furthermore, he stressed that Poland strived for a fast accession that would ensure Poland's participation in all areas of integration. He also declared readiness to assume full membership obligations and expressed hope for acquiring all rights of a member state (Kawecka-Wyrzykowska, 1999, p. 171).

The Intergovernmental Accession Conference set a forum for negotiation meetings between the EU – represented by the foreign ministers of the Member States – and the applicant countries. Part of the negotiations involved deputy heads of delegations, including ambassadors of the Member States and chief negotiators representing the applicant countries. The European Commission played an important role in the negotiation process as it mediated between the negotiating parties and organised their meetings.

Poland, like the other candidate states, voluntarily applied for EU membership and undertook to adopt the entire *acquis communautaire*. Thus, the negotiations could not discuss a permanent exemption from any Community standards (so-called permanent derogation) or a request for their amendment.¹ Consequently, the purpose of the negoti-

¹ Representatives of the Communities declared this position prior to the negotiations. See in more detail: <http://negocjacje.polskawue.gov.pl>.

ation meetings was primarily to define:

- transition periods (so-called temporary derogation), in which Poland was temporarily exempted from the obligation to apply European standards, or temporarily could not use some of them as the EU also requested transition periods. Thus, the accession could take place before full harmonisation of the law, mainly due to its high economic or social costs;
- contribution to the EU budget; and
- assistance under the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

In line with previous enlargement practice, the European body of law was divided into 31 thematic areas: 1) Free movement of goods; 2) Free movement of persons; 3) Freedom to provide services; 4) Free movement of capital; 5) Company law; 6) Competition policy; 7) Agriculture; 8) Fisheries; 9) Transport policy; 10) Taxation; 11) Economic and monetary union; 12) Statistics; 13) Social policy and employment; 14) Energy; 15) Industrial policy; 16) Small and medium-sized enterprises; 17) Science and research; 18) Education, training and youth; 19) Telecommunications and information technology; 20) Culture and Audiovisual Policy; 21) Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments; 22) Environment; 23) Consumer and Health Protection; 24) Justice and Home Affairs; 25) Customs Union; 26) External Relations; 27) Common Foreign and Security Policy; 28) Financial Control; 29) Finance and Budget; 30) EU Institutions; 31) Other (including rules on Poland's involvement in European Central Bank; European Investment Bank and European Development Fund). These indicated the areas that are subject to the common EU policy. The large number of them highlighted the role the organisation played for EU citizens.

In the twenty-nine areas mentioned above, the accession negotiations started with a review of the Polish law in areas subject of the common EU policy.² The exercise was to indicate possible inconsistencies or the lack of such regulations. Then, the Polish Negotiating Team prepared a position presented later to the Council of Ministers for approval. It specified the date and way of adjusting the Polish law to *acquis communautaire*. This sometimes requested a special solution and a transition period.

The EU responded to the negotiating position with the common position accepted by the Council based on the proposal of the European Commission. The communication of the Community position to the Polish negotiators marked the beginning of negotiations proper. In the course of negotiations, opinions were exchanged and positions were modified to remove discrepancies. Once positions were aligned, the parties applied a provisional closure of negotiations in a given area of the EU legal order. The provisional closure meant that negotiations could be opened before the negotiation of all 31 areas were successfully concluded.

Negotiations became more intensive in autumn of 2002. As a result, the final arrangements for Poland's accession to the EU were made on 12 December. The following day, the Copenhagen European Council, attended by the Heads of State or Government of Member States and applicant countries – endorsed the results and closed the negotiations³. All that remained was to draft the Accession Treaty. As the work had already

² The revision of the law did not cover area 30 EU institutions and 31 Other.

³ For more on the results of Poland's accession negotiations with the EU, see: Rada Ministrów, *Raport na temat rezultatów negocjacji o członkostwo Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Unii Europejskiej*, Warsaw 2002.

started and continued during the negotiations, a corresponding draft treaty was produced shortly on 19 February 2003. The European Commission expressed a favourable opinion on the “applications for accession to the European Union by the Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Malta, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovak Republic”. As required by Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, the European Parliament gave its assent to the enlargement of the organisation to include Poland and other states on 9 April and a similar decision was made by the Council of the EU on 14 April.

The Accession Treaty was signed in Athens on 16 April 2003. Based on the Treaty, 8 countries from Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, as well as Cyprus and Malta were to become members of the European Union as of 1 May 2004. With the signing of the Treaty, the existing applicant countries were given the status of ‘active observers’ with the right to participate but not yet vote during meetings of the Council and the European Parliament. The Treaty, together with its annexes and protocols, could become effective subject to its ratification by 15 Member States and 10 ‘active observers’, as required by their constitutional law. Of the ‘Fifteen’ Member States, the first to ratify the Treaty was Denmark (10 June 2003) and the latest Belgium (4 March 2004). In each case, the ratification was carried out by the head of state,⁴ with the approval of the parliament to the proposal submitted by the government. In 9 accession states, the Treaty had to be ratified through a referendum. This provided more democratic legitimacy of the decision to join the EU and transfer part of competences of a sovereign state to that organisation. Accession referenda were held between March and September 2003. In each case, an overwhelming majority of citizens were in favour of their country’s accession to the EU. The exception was Cyprus where the parliament voted unanimously in favour of the ratification (*Referenda akcesyjne w państwach...*; Musiał-Karg, 2008, pp. 284–294; Musiał-Karg, 2017) without resorting to a referendum.

In Poland, the decision to ratify the Treaty envisaging the transfer of certain competencies to an international organisation was made by the President with the consent referred to in Article 90 of the Polish Constitution. As early as 17 April 2003, a day after the Accession Treaty was signed, the Sejm almost unanimously adopted the referendum procedure. Since for many years both supporters and opponents of Poland’s integration with the EU had been advocating a nationwide vote, 417 MPs were in favour of a referendum, one was against and two abstained. In a subsequent resolution, the Sejm set the referendum on 7 and 8 June. The referendum question was as follows: “Do you give permission for the Republic of Poland to enter into the European Union?” (JoL 2003 No. 66 item 613).

The referendum campaign showed the divisions of the society based on the attitude to European integration. Political groupings had been assessing the integration process in their programmes since the beginning of the system transformation. As Poland moved closer to the EU, they put more and more attention to the issue. The Democratic Left Alliance and the Labour Union were consistently in favour of the accession. A similar position was taken by the Civic Platform established in 2001. The Polish

⁴ In the UK, ratification was done by the Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on behalf of the Queen. See more: *Ratyfikacja Traktatu o Przystąpieniu w państwach członkowskich*, <http://www.cie.gov.pl>.

People's Party (PSL) and the Law and Justice showed some hesitation on EU membership. Although PSL representatives were members of Leszek Miller's government, responsible for the accession negotiations in their final period, the PSL only sided with those in favour of integration in April and May 2003. Slightly earlier, in January, PiS joined this political camp. Opponents of integration included Liga Polskich Rodzin, Samoobrona RP and Unia Polityki Realnej. The position of the Catholic Church was also important. It was divided on the issue of Poland's integration into the EU and the Church did not take a clear position, but it called for the participation in the referendum and voting in line with one's conscience. This call was very important. However, according to Article 125(3) of the Polish Constitution, the referendum to be binding required at least half of eligible voters to participate. The opponents of the accession were supported by those connected with Radio Maryja and the "Nasz Dziennik" magazine, as well as several clergymen frequently present in the media (Pisasecki, 2005, pp. 44–77). The position of anti-EU circles and some secular political representatives softened after John Paul II addressed Poles gathered in Rome on 19 May 2003. The group included President Aleksander Kwaśniewski who had come there to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the pontificate. The Pope said: "I know that there are many who oppose integration. I appreciate their concern to preserve the cultural and religious identity of our Nation. I share their concerns about the economic balance of power. After years of the robber economy and the past system, Poland appears to be a country of great possibilities but also of little means. However, I must stress once again that Poland has always been an important part of Europe, and today it cannot exclude itself from the community. Although it experiences crises at various levels, the community is a single family of nations based on common Christian tradition. The entry into the structures of the European Union, on an equal footing with the other states, is for our people and brotherly Slav nations a historical justice. Moreover, it can constitute an enrichment of Europe" (*Od Unii Lubelskiej do Europejskiej...*). These words were a clear support for Poland's membership in the EU.

Arguments raised by supporters and opponents during the referendum campaign varied. Their list was well drawn up by the Public Opinion Research Centre based on a survey implemented a week before the referendum actually took place. Interestingly, hopes and fears among Poles regarding EU membership focused mainly on socio-economic issues (CBOS, 2003).

The referendum took place on 7 and 8 June 2003. The turnout was 58.85%, which allowed the result to be binding. More than 13 million citizens answered 'yes' to the referendum question (77.45% of valid votes) whereas 3,9 million said 'no' (22.55%). The result of the vote authorised the President of the Republic of Poland to ratify the Treaty, a basis for Poland's accession to the EU (PKW, 2003). It was important that the approval was given by an overwhelming majority at a turnout that was relatively high for Poland. President Aleksander Kwaśniewski ratified the Treaty on 23 July, which opened a way for Poland to join the EU on 1 May 2004.

Poland's EU membership created new opportunities for development and increased country's security. Without cooperation with the organisation and the status of its member, Poland would not have been able to overcome on its own the centuries-old backwardness and the technological gap separating it from highly developed countries. More-

over, it would also be difficult to solve a number of social issues. Once Poland became a member of the European Union, as shown by the experience of the Member States, there was a chance to quickly reduce differences in development and living standards that separated Poland from other European countries.

Poland's early EU membership was also justified by trends in international relations, generally referred to as globalisation. It manifested itself in the rapid acceleration of scientific and technological progress, abolition of barriers between states, growing role of transnational corporations, intensive competition, and the reduced self-sufficiency of states to resolve economic and social issues. This forced modern states, including the richest ones, to seek new platforms for international cooperation and to join the ongoing regional and global integration. If Poland had remained outside, it would have marginalised itself in the area of international cooperation.

Poland's accession to the EU was also a confirmation of the successful systemic transformation, rapid democratisation of social life, and the rebuilding of its market economy. Reforms initiated in 1989 helped to meet the EU membership criteria. The successful accession was possible due to the following:

- effort made by governments led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, Jan Olszewski, Hanna Suchocka, Waldemar Pawlak, Józef Oleksy, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Jerzy Buzek and Leszek Miller;
- activity of presidents: Lech Wałęsa and Aleksander Kwaśniewski. The latter, during his two terms of office, skilfully promoted the idea of Poland's integration with the EU;
- professionalism and commitment of government plenipotentiaries, ministers responsible for European affairs, negotiators, administrative staff, including the European Integration Committee, etc. This group included: Jan Kułakowski, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Jan Truszczyński, and Danuta Hübner;
- Polish MPs and Senators, particularly during the third and fourth term of office, who worked to adapt the Polish law to the *acquis communautaire*; and
- attitude of the Polish society which patiently bore the cost of system transformation and was in favour of European integration.

As a result of the EU accession, the Europeanisation of the Polish social life progressed. Europeanisation, as used in science to describe and analyse social life, was defined, among others, by S. Sulowski. In his opinion, the term means “the influence of the European integration on a nation-state, especially on its structures and their functions. The organisational logic and mechanisms of the European Union become part of the state system through the adaptation or creation of new institutions in the nation-state following the model of EU institutions” (Sulowski, 2006, p. 73). In other words, Europeanisation means to adapt the Polish economic and political system to the standards recognised in the European Union. In Poland, the process of Europeanisation began with a decision in 1989 once the country engaged into the integration process which was already advanced in Western Europe.

This resulted in an increased competitiveness of enterprises, conditions for inward foreign investment, expansion of infrastructure, and enhanced quality of life for the society. Funds from the EU budget also contributed to the development. During Poland's EU membership (from 1 May 2004 to the end of May 2023), the country paid EUR 79.6 billion to the budget as its membership fee. At the same time, Poland received EUR

238.5 billion from the EU (*Transfery finansowe Polska...*) for the implementation of the Cohesion Policy, Common Agricultural Policy, and other objectives. This helped to modernise the state and mitigate many social issues.

Undoubtedly, benefits of Poland's accession to the EU far outweigh its costs. This has also been confirmed by citizens in numerous surveys. Despite the currently difficult relations between the Polish government and the EU institutions and the anti-European attitude of some media, in June 2022 the number of supporters for Poland's EU membership reached a record high level of 92%. In contrast, the percentage of those in favour of leaving the organisation fell to 3% (CBOS, 2022). Although the society do not favour such prospects, the situation may change in the future, as shown by the experience of the UK.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization (Konceptualizacja): Tadeusz Wallas

Data curation (Zestawienie danych): Tadeusz Wallas

Formal analysis (Analiza formalna): Tadeusz Wallas

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Writing – review & editing (Piśmiennictwo – sprawdzenie i edytowanie): Tadeusz Wallas

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Droga Polski do członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej z perspektywy 20. rocznicy podpisania Traktatu Akcesyjnego

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest ukazanie drogi Polski do członkostwa Unii Europejskiej z perspektywy 20. rocznicy podpisania Traktatu Akcesyjnego. Wstąpienie do Wspólnoty poprzedziło wiele lat przygotowań i starań. Polska musiała spełnić wiele koniecznych warunków, aby ostatecznie wstąpić w szereg państw członkowskich. Rozpoczęte negocjacje 3 kwietnia 1998 roku zostały zakończone 16 kwietnia 2003 roku podpisaniem Traktatu Akcesyjnego w Atenach. W Polsce o podjęciu decyzji zadecydowało także społeczeństwo, wyrażając swoją opinię w referendum przeprowadzonym 7–8 czerwca 2003 roku. 23 lipca 2003 traktat akcesyjny został ratyfikowany, a 1 maja 2004 r. Polska stała się członkiem Unii Europejskiej. Wejście Polski do Unii Europejskiej pozwoliło na wykonanie cywilizacyjnego kroku. Polska skorzystała na obecności w UE w wielu wymiarach, przede wszystkim politycznym, gospodarczym i społecznym. Korzyści wynikające z przystąpienia Polski do UE zdecydowanie przewyższają koszty. Potwierdzeniem takiej oceny są również opinie obywateli wyrażone w badaniach sondażowych. W czerwcu 2022 r. liczba zwolenników członkostwa Polski w UE osiągnęła rekordowe 92%.

Słowa kluczowe: Polska, Unia Europejska, negocjacje akcesyjne, korzyści i koszty przystąpienia do UE