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LEADERSHIP IN THE EU IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POLISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

INTRODUCTION

In last few years, the term "crisis" has been commonly used in the EU's context by Europeanists and journalists.[1] The term is applied to describe the level of European integration which is conditioned by the impact of the global economic crisis with which EU Member States struggle directly, and on efficient and quick rescue decisions taken by EU institutions and addressed to all 27 Member States. It is apparent that "no other term that has captured the collective imagination of Europeans recently is so loaded with meaning as the word 'crisis' is: the crisis of democracy, the state, trust, leadership, integration, and finally – the euro."[2]

To speak about *crisis*, one needs to presuppose or adopt a model of a system that under various crisis-related developments does not function as it should. There may be changes within the system but it does not cease to exist. Centrifugal forces and external impacts, elements of the system and its environment make it adapt to the changing reality establishing new homeostatic relations or mechanisms.[3]

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[1] E.g. W. Weidenfeld, *Deutschland muß Führungsrolle in Europa einnehmen*, lecture given at Mediengipfel am Arlberg, 3.12.2011; J.Kaube, *Europa in der Krise. Hinter verschlossenen Türen*, "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" 18.06. J. 2011; A. Davidson, J. Goldstein, C. Kenney, *Europe's Financial Crisis, in Plain English*, "The New York Times" 4.12.2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/04/magazine/adam-davidson-european-finance.html?pagewan-ted=all, 8.12.2011; W. Szczęsny, *Aspekty teoretyczne współczesnego kryzysu finansowego*, "Studia i Materiały. Miscellanea Oeconomicae" no. 1/2009; J. Barcz, *Reforma ustrojowa Unii Europejskiej a kryzys finansowy*, J. Osiński (ed.), *Unia Europejska wobec kryzysu ekonomicznego. Zrozumieć kryzys*, Warsaw 2009, p. 11ff.; J. M. Fiszer, *Globalny kryzys finansowy i jego społeczno-polityczne konsekwencje dla Polski*, "Przegląd Politologiczny" No. 3/2009.

[2] A. Wolff-Powęska, *Czytaj Kanta Europo*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 11-12.02.2012, p. 36.

[3] In this context, not only the theory of self-referential systems of N. Luhmann is interesting. Luhmann offers important insights into communication between the system and its environment and vice versa. As Luhmann observes, a new approach to systemic analysis should not take into account the communication within a single system only, but also in the system of that system's environment. N. Luhmann (2007), *Systemy społeczne*, Cracow. An analysis of system balance in the system of the European Union can also be found in Z. Chachór (2002), *Zmiany i rozwój w systemie Unii Europejskiej po*

Crisis of political and/or institutional leadership in the European Union has been debated since the 1990s, i.e. once the Maastricht Treaty entered into force. The Treaty consolidated the achievements of the integration processes and identified new areas and objectives of further European integration. The latter resulted in the Treaty amendments specifying the EU integration goals at the turn of the 21st c. more precisely. Among numerous crisis-inducing factors, those attributed to the internal EU systems themselves have been debated, e.g. tensions between EU institutions, amendments of the Treaties and issues in a way external to the system at a specific time such further enlargement of the EU, changes in global political and economic environment, etc.

To give an example, every treaty-related reform was "in the context" of a 'political crisis'. The 'political crisis' issue frequently appeared when efforts to ratify a new treaty failed. It was prophesied that the European project would end shortly and scenarios of great divides among Member States have been described, both those that would make the ratification procedure more flexible or lead to a fragmentation of the EU. One might have an impression that the history of European integration is one of overcoming ever emerging new crises like those of political nature (e.g. the empty chair crisis) or the eurosclerosis crisis, or an economic crisis. Such experiences clearly show that periods of political or economic recession eventually enhanced cooperation between EU Member States. Doubts that come to one's mind while analysing the effects of the current economic crisis on the advancement of European integration lead to a number of questions about the EU's condition in the nearest future. Many factors are involved, like the scale of the effects of the recent economic crisis that exacerbated the existing political and structural issues within the European Union contributing to a political justification of the need to introduce further reforms of the EU and to increase its efficacy.

Owing to the European Union's crisis, various group interests and leadership ambitions of particular states have been articulated.[4] A need for political leadership capable of programming activities in a strategic perspective appears vital not only in the context of threats to the stable/sustainable and dynamic development of the European project.

The discussion on political and institutional leadership has its three dimensions to say the least. The first dimension focuses on supranational European integration theories and points to European institutions and non-governmental European actors that influence the EU integration policy on multiple governance levels. In this very environment, the European integration appears to be a dynamic and multi-directional process that involves not only Member States but also non-governmental actors that are often its main driving force and not rarely possible candidates to a take over a leading role in the EU. That is exactly what is expected of non-governmental ac-

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Traktacie z Maastricht, Wrocław; and S. Hix, B. Hayland (2011), *The Political system of the European Union*, London.

[4] *Cf.* J. Barcz, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-20

tors in the European integration. These include EU institutions, mainly the European Commission which is expected to take the leading role in defining and consistently implementing ideas essential to the EU interest.[5]

The second dimension covers analyses of all or some Member States' influence on the course of events in the European Union. Advocates of such an approach draw attention to the fact that the main institutional actor in European integration is a Member State. Without its will and action, as well as its defined interests, the EU cannot undertake effective actions. Therefore, it ought to be expected that Member States and their coalitions will perform leadership functions capable of imposing their will on other integration actors usually with their approval and support.

The third dimension of research focuses on the transformation of internal and external European policies into a common inter-sphere of Member States. This common sphere appears to be the best political organisational formula to speak on behalf of Europe.[6] As a result of the integration "round table" politics, European politics and political representation can be operational provided that one person or institution may speak on behalf of many. When such a person or institution is lacking in the European Union, one can speak of a political leadership crisis. Holding leadership positions involves programming the directions of integration policies and activities needed in a strategic perspective as well as skilful and effective acting on behalf of the whole EU. Leaders should have the mandate to act granted by the Member States or an electoral mandate.

History of European integration clearly shows that there were periods when particular politicians, including prime ministers or presidents of Member States, or heads of institutions, e.g. of the European Commission, were discerned as leaders. One may say that, depending on a political and economic climate in the EU, what is being articulated is a need for institutional (usually the European Commission) and/or individual (Member State) European leadership. It is worth underlining that the two scenarios do not rule each other out, as it is possible for a prime minister, a head of state or a president/chairperson of an institution to become the political leader who thanks to his/her charisma will strengthen the leadership authority resulting from Treaties. However, in a broader perspective, the answer to the question who is capable of defining and executing European interests, will have a profound impact on the character of the European Union, as well as on the evaluation of the integration dynamics and its supranational and/or intergovernmental characteristic.

To sum up this part of considerations, it should be underlined that the desire to identify a person or institution that would speak on behalf of Europe and bear the responsibility for Europe was articulated by many parties and reflected in the contents of latest amendments to the Treaties. Among others, provisions on President of the European Council were introduced and the political responsibility of President

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[5] See J. Peterson (2008), *Obecna pozycja Komisji Europejskiej w unijnym systemie decyzyjnym*, "Przegląd Natoliński. Nowa Europa" no. 1(6)2008, Warsaw.

[6] *Cf.* L. van Middelaar (2011), *Przejście do Europy. Historia pewnego początku*, Warsaw, pp. 29--55.

of the European Commission was strengthened.[7] As a side note, it could added that from an institutional perspective, it would be interesting to combine the two functions.[8] Further institutional changes in the EU along these lines are postulated by e.g. Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Angela Merkel and Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski.

FACTORS DETERMINING THE EU POLITICAL LEADERSHIP CRISIS

One could list myriads of factors of various relevance that trigger debates on the EU crisis. Some opinions are unjustified as they do not take into account the dynamic character of the EU, and it is not that all changes and modifications must induce a crisis understood as a long-term inability to act and thus stagnation, including the inability to define and implement the needed corrective measures and/or to coordinate EU policies.

The current economic crisis, whose effects influenced mainly the Eurozone members, has revealed the weakness of the EU decision-making system and reminded about mistakes made earlier while laying the Eurozone foundations and about deliberately ignored consequences of violating the Maastricht convergence criteria. The crisis deepens problems related to EU political reforms. These issues often indicate the EU's helplessness in the face of substantial structural challenges in the era of globalisation.[9] In a long-term, it seems obvious that the functioning of the common European currency without political coordination in the Eurozone is impossible. Attempts to harmonise the regulatory role of Eurozone states and Euro Plus states at a supranational management level have been strongly criticised by other states and their citizens. It becomes evident that there is a lack of adequate mechanisms supporting supranational economic management which, in the nearest future, will mean that attempts to make the EU economy competitive will be fruitless. Consequently, this situation may deepen differences in the development level between the countries of central and southern Europe. In a short-term perspective, the achievement of ambitious objectives of the recently adopted "Europe 2020" strategy might be at risk. A potential model of combating the crisis where further development of only those Member States which make highest contributions to the EU budget will be sustained, will be at the cost of the states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007.[10] Not only in this context is the lack of effective supranational European leadership palpable.

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[7] *Cf.* A. Łazowski, A. Łabędzka, (2010), *Wprowadzenie do Traktatu z Lizbony*, Warsaw; J. Barcz, *Wprowadzenie – droga do Traktatu z Lizbony*, in: J. Barcz (ed.) (2008), *Traktat z Lizbony. Główne reformy ustrojowe Unii Europejskiej*, Warsaw.

[8] *Cf.* M. J. Tomaszyk (2012), *Unia Europejska w dwa lata od wejścia w życie Traktatu z Lizbony*, „Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej" no. 5/2012, Poznań; J. Barcz (2011), *Traktat z Lizbony. Wybrane aspekty prawne działań implementacyjnych*, Warsaw; *The Treaty of Lisbon. Implementating the Institutional Innovations, Joint Study*, Brussels 2007.

[9] *Cf.* J. Barcz, *Traktat z Lizbony. Główne*..., p. 14.

[10] *Cf.* M. J. Tomaszyk, *Unia Europejska – Chiny – partnerzy na czas kryzysu?*, in: J. Fiszer (ed.) (2012), *Unia Europejska a Chiny. Dziś i w przyszłości*, Warsaw (in print). See J. Szczadlik-Talar (2011),

There are also other factors whose influence on the present condition of the EU and its capability to undertake effective action cannot be ignored. One should mention e.g.:

a) the amendment of the Treaties that constitute the cornerstone of the EU and thus changes in the EU's institutional conditionalities, especially in the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the coordination level of cooperation between the Council of the European Union and the European Council. This change overlapped with the delayed entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which made it necessary to adopt interim rules, e.g. on drafting the EU annual budget. It also delayed the appointment of the new European Commission causing unnecessary commotion in the area of the EU's external representation, which became evident in the first half of 2010 when the USA, after asking the famous question "What is Europe's phone number?", called off the EU-USA summit.
b) the impact of the global economic crisis on the EU and its Member States, especially in the area of drafting scenarios to combat crisis effects in the entire EU and in its Member States. This is connected with the prospective EU's participation and position in creating a new post-crisis global order. In this respect, alternative solutions are debated e.g. the options to strengthen the alliance of Western states against the dominance of the People's Republic of China or to establish new partner relations with China.
c) possible changes in the principles of exercising leadership (Presidency) in the Council of the European Union, especially in the area of its cooperation with the European Council and its permanent President. This is an important aspect of institutional changes that formally limits the influence of the state holding the Presidency on current EU policies.
d) an increase in eurosceptic attitudes in some Member States frequently heading toward new conservative nationalism.
e) in the case of inefficiency of state authorities in combating the crisis, the governments of Member States may shift their hopes to the European level. However, much more frequently we observe instances of the so-called sclerotic syndrome of new Member States that "forget" about their accession to the EU and on their own seek partners that could stimulate their economic growth, e.g. by selling their bonds.

Chiny: powrót do gry, "Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny" no. 2(60). *Wieloletni Plan Finansowy*. Analysis of 5.10.2011, CEP, Berlin – Warsaw 2011; *Finanzrahmen und EU-Budget ab 2014*, EurActiv Deutschland; *Investing where it matters. An EU Budget for Long Term Growth*, CEP, Brussels 2012; K. Popławski, (2011) *Niemcy wobec wieloletnich ram finansowych UE na lata 2014-2020*, Warsaw; M. Sapała (2011), *Polityka spójności w Wieloletnich Ramach Finansowych Unii Europejskiej 2014--2020. Zmiana i kontynuacja, Polityka spójności i sąsiedztwa Unii Europejskiej*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej" p. 4.

When analysing the above conditions, one ought to take into consideration the impact that the Lisbon Treaty has had on the European political representation introducing the Permanent President of the European Council.[11] Before the first permanent President was appointed, the most frequently asked questions were: "Is one person capable of performing the role of a decision-making centre for 27 Member States?", "In what way will personal traits of that person influence formal and informal conditions within that institution?", "How will the President shape relations with Member States, other institutions, mainly with the Council of the European Union and its rotating presidency?".[12] Some experts have been of the opinion that the changing of the EU presidency model to the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union would weaken the influence of Member States on the EU agenda and lessen the prestige and coordination capacity of EU policies. One ought to admit that under the Treaty of Nice, majority of European politicians willingly basked in the prestige of the Presidency, which was a result of other terms and conditions of the Treaty but also of a desire to "be seen" in the milieu of politicians of global and European format.[13] Such behaviours were often capitalised in the national politics of the state whose head of government or president during and after a successful Presidency could count on increased popularity and support among electors for his or her political activities.

Apart from the mentioned terms and conditions of Treaties, a leading role of a Member State in the EU might be, and often is, due to its economic, political or coalition-forming potential in the Council, as well as its membership length, the volume of payments to the community budget and the characteristic traits of the leader of a Member State. In this context, the German-French integration duo[14] is often mentioned as a coalition of big internal market players[15] as well as the role and importance of Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean Claude Juncker, who presides over the Eurogroup.

Another factor conditioning the recognition of a person or institution as a political leader is social trust. Social trust is based on the belief that the person in

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[11] A. K. Cianciara (2011), *Jakie przywództwo? Rada Europejska po wejściu w życie Traktatu z Lizbony*, in: W. Konarski, A. Durska, S. Bachrynowski (ed.) (2011), *Kryzys przywództwa we współczesnej polityce*, Warsaw, pp. 102-105.

[12] See J. Pawłowski, *System instytucjonalny Unii Europejskiej w debacie Konwentu Europejskiego*, "Studia Europejskie" no. 3/2003.

[13] *Cf.* A. Jaskulski, *Struktura i funkcje prezydencji w Radzie Unii Europejskiej*, in: Z. Czachór, M. Tomaszyk (ed.) (2009), *Przewodnictwo państwa w Radzie Unii Europejskiej – doświadczenia partnerów, propozycje dla Polski*, Poznań.

[14] *Cf.* M. J. Tomaszyk, *Wybrane zagadnienia udziału Niemiec w pracach nad Traktatem ustanawiającym Konstytucję dla Europy i Traktatem lizbońskim*, "Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna" no. 1/36/2012; M. Götz, T. Budnikowski (2012), *Europa w kryzysie. Kryzys w Europie*, Biuletyn Instytutu Zachodniego, no. 77/2012, Poznań; B. Koszel, *Rola zjednoczonych Niemiec w procesie integracji europejskiej*, in: *Polityka zagraniczna zjednoczonych Niemiec*, Poznań 2011, p. 27 ff.

[15] E.g. Germany, France, Italy and the UK.

power is destined to govern people, an organisation or institution. A leader is able to persuade others to act voluntarily as he or she wishes.[16] In his newest book titled *Świat do przeróbki*, Witold M. Orłowski analyses the outreach and causes of the recent economic crisis and offers some scenarios for a new international order. At the same time, he points to the decreasing effectiveness of traditional economic, fiscal and monetary policies.[17] Orłowski underlines the need to more precisely define responsibilities of old and new decision-making institutions and postulates the need for new non-standard global solutions that should help overcome the standstill in trade liberalisation and the rising tide of new protectionism.[18] In the perspective of a few years of an unfavourable economic situation, high risk and uncertainty in the area of economic policy, and increased market speculation, shifting capital from one market to another to avoid losses, an agreement between the USA, the EU, Japan and China might be an opportunity for new global crisis management.[19] However, such an agreement requires precisely defined responsibilities and mutual trust, as well as a new quality of political leadership.

Assuming that the current crisis is mainly a crisis of trust that investors have had in markets, citizens in the state and the state in international organisations, one can conclude that the European Union can recover from the crisis only after it has a trustworthy leader. Most certainly it might be an institution leader, however, the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, as well as the far-reaching results of the crisis and the costs of overcoming it show that leaders should be sought after among the heads of state and government of Member States, especially those belonging to the Euro-zone.[20]

Such a need seemed to have been recognised by Donald Tusk during the Polish Presidency. Tusk, in his speeches opening and closing the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, considered that issue while discussing the causes of the crisis. Prime Minister Tusk explicitly pointed to the lack of trust and reluctance of some Member States toward community solutions to the crisis. His opinion corresponded to recent outcomes of sociological research which pointed to a leadership

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[16] *Cf.* M. Grzelczyk, E. Maślak, *Przywództwo polityczne podczas prezydencji w Radzie Unii Europejskiej. Angela Merkel i Nicolas Sarkozy – analiza porównawcza*, in: Z. Czachór, M. Tomaszyk (ed.), *Przewodnictwo państwa...*

[17] *Cf.* W. Orłowski, (2011) *Świat do przeróbki*, Warsaw, p. 43. As a result, the social state model practised in Europe is now in recession and it seems necessary to cut national spending in those areas. In the literature of the field, the postulate of replacing the welfare state model with the workforce state model was discussed way before the European crisis.

[18] *Ibid*., p. 50.

[19] *Ibid*., p. 50-54.

[20] This situation might change now that F. Hollande won the French presidential elections. The new President of France plans to divide the costs of the crisis between the banking sector and citizens, differently than his opponent. Hollande's victory destabilises the previous Sarkozy-Merkel alliance and obliges the German Chancellor to seek a compromise and find a new partner that would justify spending cuts. As a result, the more differences between Member States, the quicker the European Commission can regain its position.

crisis among European politicians and to the constantly lowering trust of EU citizens in EU institutions. Citizens' trust in the EU has been decreasing since 2009. In 2009, 48% of respondents declared their trust in the European Union while in 2011 that percentage decreased to 34%. The research also pointed to an increase in the negative perception of the European Union and indifference toward the EU as well as a parallel decrease of trust in particular EU institutions.[21] In such a climate in Europe, it is difficult to build a leader's image and thus the issue is a new collective leadership. Consequently the question is: Does the Presidency, the leader of the Member State holding the Presidency, have formal powers to perform the role of an actual leader in EU politics? That question is relevant not only in the context of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Analyses of Presidencies prior to 2009 clearly demonstrate that almost all leaders of EU Member States that held the Presidency of the European Council or the Council of the European Union capitalised on their European activities at their respective national arenas. Can, in the time of crisis, one articulate expectations about the Polish Presidency – the Presidency held after the Lisbon Treaty and of a state that is not a Eurozone member, that would be similar to expectations about the performance of the Federal Republic of Germany and its Chancellor Angela Merkel in the times of the enlivened post-constitutional debate in the EU?[22]

Most certainly, holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union was a political test, a test in European maturity for each incumbent head of state and government. The EU expected of the Polish Presidency that it would send out a strong pro-integration message quenching the thirst for European political leadership.[23] Even the most optimistic enthusiast of the Polish Presidency, however, could not fail to notice that the crisis resulted in widening the scope of intergovernmental work, i.e. an approach not regulated by the Treaties, on developing a model for European integration governance that materialises through the European Council and its President.[24] The greatest beneficiary of these changes has been the permanent President of the European Council, who – mainly under the Treaties and thanks to the willingness of Germany and France – raises to be the President of the European Union capable of articulating the interests of EU Member States.[25] These new inter-

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[21] Eurobarometer 76, *Public opinion in the EU*, December 2011.

[22] These questions have been answered in *Polish Presidency final report. The Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union*, report adopted by the Council of Ministers on 17 April 2012.

[23] These expectations also correspond to the opinions of Poles and the catalogue of issues that Poland was to tackle in the second half of 2011. More information can be found in *Przed polską Prezydencją w Radzie UE, Komunikat badań BS_68_2011*, Public Opinion Research Centre, Warsaw, June 2011.

[24] *Cf.* a detailed discussion of this issue that leads to similar conclusions: *Raport końcowy...* See also: B. Nowak (2012), *Ostatnia prezydencja dużych oczekiwań. Refleksje po rezydencji Polski w RUE*, "Raporty i Analizy", CSM 2_2012, Warsaw.

[25] H. Van Rompuy's style of cooperating with the Council of the EU and the EC also plays an important role here. It can be observed that the bottom-up approach is being replaced with the bot-

dependencies weaken the leading power of the Member State that presides over the Council of the European Union.

THE POLISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS

One of political consequences of the economic crisis is the strengthening of the position and role of Member States in the EU institutional logic. Once again, the role of the European leader has been assumed by the German-French duo[26] that holds the European Commission hostage to their ideas, i.e. amending Treaties, establishing a European economic government and so on.[27] Moreover, the institution of the state, as a result of the economic crisis, has been strengthened from within. Radical advocates of the post-Westphalian international order who have prophesised advanced erosion of the institution of the state must admit that in the context of the crisis, it is the state that is the only point of reference for the emerging post-crisis order. From the perspective of supranational and international features of the European Union, one might expect that the intergovernmental cooperation in crisis management, not necessarily in the group of 27 Member States, would be tightened. However, this process will rather take place on new platforms for coordinating European management or at the European Council's meetings, whilst the influence of

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tom-down method, which the Council uses to exercise its rights resulting from Treaties. The Council provides general guidelines for actions in the area of its competence. It is worth underlining that in the new system of the Presidential trios, the important function of coordinating relations between the state that holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Council has been handed over to the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union. This is not without impact on the technical dimension of preparations, and – even more importantly – on the opportunities to implement priorities. The presiding state must cater for the limiting of the autonomy of the Secretariat, which is serving another Presidency and might not always find it reasonable to provide informal assistance aimed at maximising the possibilities of achieving the goals of the current leader.

[26] *Cf.* S. Heffer, *Rise of the Fourth Reich, how Germany is using the financial crisis to conquer Europe?*; Dailymail of 17.08.2011, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2026840/European-debt-summit-Germany-using-financial-crisis-conquer-Europe.htmlixzz1bevFHbK9, of 10.09.2011; F. Roth, *Who can be trusted after financial crisis*, CEPS Working Document, no. 302/ November 2009. In times of crisis, it quickly becomes apparent who is the true leader and who imposes solutions on others. In the second half of 2011 the duo of Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy became active. For Germany, which is also a net contributor to the European Union, this crisis is also an internal crisis that has influenced financial capabilities of each and every German citizen. As a result, German citizens expected that Merkel would be active in EU institutions. Angela Merkel already presided over the Council of the European Union during the 2007 crisis. She had to face the challenge of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and the further institutional dimension of the European Union. It was undoubtedly a success that Merkel shaped the Treaty reform and its progress which resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon during the Portuguese Presidency. As a politician, Angela Merkel attained the position of a strong partner and suited the role of "the driving force of the European Union" perfectly. This is not only thanks to her individual predispositions for being a leader but also the efficient creation of her image in the media.

[27] M. J. Tomaszyk, *Wybrane zagadnienia...*

the presiding state on the course of European matters – if it is not a full member of multi-tier, multi-speed Europe – will be notably limited.

An example of the grouping of state interests is the French-German tandem which continues to play the role of European leaders.[28] German Chancellor Angela Merkel and President of the Fifth Republic of France Nicolas Sarkozy undertake joint initiatives e.g. appointment of an economic government, veto on issuing Eurobonds, agreement on new sources of income to the EU budget, new agreement on changing the Lisbon Treaty or expenditure cuts prior to the drafting of the annual and multiannual budget by EU institutions. These actions are perceived by other Member States as veiling Germany's power and France's weakness as France's economy happens to be judged highly volatile.[29] It should be remembered that it is not without reason that Germany and France may feel particularly responsible for the European project. Many researchers give their cooperation after World War II as the example of reconciliation through peaceful, supranational cooperation. In many crisis situations resulting from political changes, situations in international relations or market instability, leaders of those states proposed strategic changes to the EU in response to EU internal and external threats or signs of instability. It suffices to recall the political climate in the times of founding the European Union or during the drafting of the EU enlargement strategy and the work on constitutionalisation of the EU.

The above situations and conditions, however, do not thwart aspirations of smaller Member States and their leaders to lead the EU if only while holding the EU Presidency. Despite the terms and conditions of the Treaties that force Presidencies to concentrate on efficient execution of its organisational and management tasks to advance legislative work, the aspirations of particular states cannot be subjected to the Treaties' provisions. It was the case of Poland which while holding its first Presidency, wanted to prove to its partners that it was a politically mature and predictable European player in the arena of EU internal policies and to be the main facilitator and constructor of EU relations with Eastern Europe. Those who adopted a sceptical approach to the Polish leadership of the EU Council argued that it was a Presidency that led decision-making processes well, that is their management and organisation, but not a Presidency that effectively created new policy areas. According to them, representatives of the Polish government and experts, with Prime Minister Donald Tusk at their helm, often did not go beyond a narrative level that is they did not speak about facts. Facts appeared to be the domain of the two largest EU players, i.e. Germany and France. Others, however, acknowledged and appreciated that, against all odds, the Polish government worked jointly with France and

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[28] *Cf.* W. Glomb, *The Franco-German Tandem Confronts the Euro Crisis*, Fandapol, Paris, February 2011, p. 33ff. The tandem was dubbed "Merkozy" by journalists.

[29] Suffice to say that as France lost the highest rating in the "Merkozy" duo, the position of Germany grows stronger. Merkel's veto against the disbursement of financial aid to states that fail to implement packages saving their public finances now stands a chance of being more definite. This duo is referred to as the "anti-crisis fiancée". In the context of the internal political situation in France, the unfavourable rating and the possible loss of Sarkozy's influence on the essentials of German anti-crisis initiatives had a negative impact on the popularity of the President, who lost the elections held on 6 May 2012.

Germany (the Weimar Triangle) to deepen European integration. This is the context of the on-going debate on the model of closer cooperation, often presented as the model for multi-speed Europe. In respect to the anti-crisis scenario for the European Union, the Polish Presidency was definitely for a deeper EU integration and not the EU's fragmentation. Deepening the integration within the EU is greatly important for European solidarity which should guide the design of a new cohesion policy. Moreover, presiding the Council of the European Union may be both the crowning of a politician's achievements and the beginning of a career in European intellectual circles. The latter ambition was attributed to Donald Tusk by the Polish parliamentary opposition.

In the situation of a general economic and institutional crisis in the EU, changed principles of inter-institutional cooperation and of the role of the Presidency of the EU Council, as well as expectations of Member States and their citizens toward EU institutions, not to mention relevant geopolitical developments[30], it is worth analysing how German and Polish mass media commented on the European involvement of Poland and its Prime Minister in the second half of 2012. Did Poland's Prime Minister and the Polish Presidency appease, if only to a minimum extent, the EU's need for a considerate leader in the EU's post-crisis order?

At the inauguration of the Polish Presidency, Prime Minister Tusk said: "[…] we will contribute a great deal of Polish enthusiasm, Polish energy and Polish optimism, something which has allowed us to come through the crisis fairly safely, because we really do believe in Europe and we want, together with you and by carrying out these practical tasks, to enable us to open a fresh chapter of investment in Europe, and to help us all to believe in Europe again.".[31] Tusk underlined the meaning of values, and mainly the meaning of faith in united Europe. The reference to solidarity was an important element of his speech. The Prime Minister emphasised that in times of crisis, it is solidarity that constitutes the basis for overcoming economic problems of the European Union. The term "crisis" was the most often used word in the speech of Donald Tusk. The Prime Minister used it 26 times. The words "solidarity" (8), "experience" (8) and "values" (7) were the response. It follows that these four keywords describe the Polish Presidency and are basic for the assessment of the implementation of Polish priorities.

In the Presidency programme, its three chief priorities were presented: European Integration as a Source of Growth; Secure Europe – Food, Energy, Defence; Europe Benefiting from Openness.[32] The first comments after Tusk's speech to the European

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[30] Cf. *Government report*..., p. 11.

[31] Speech of Donald Tusk before the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 6 July 2011 opening the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20110706&secondRef=ITEM-002&format=XML&language=EN. Accessed 10.01.2012.

[32] Programme of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 1 July 2011-31 December 2011, http://pl2011.eu/sites/default/files/users/shared/o–prezydencja/program–polskiej–prezydencji–w–radzie–ue.pdf. Accessed 15.02.2011.

Parliament were positive. José Manuel Barroso expressed the European Commission's full support for Polish priorities. Martin Schulz, German MEP at the time and now President of the European Parliament, made an important comment: "In Donald Tusk we have a President who says Europe is part of the solution, not the problem".[33] Guy Verhofstadt[34] underlined that the Polish Presidency came at the crucial time in the on-going crisis, and agreed with the Polish Prime Minister that to overcome the crisis, the EU needed more European integration. Verhofstadt referred to Tusk's education saying that as a historian, the Polish PM knew very well that the continent without the EU was a land of dispute, war and genocide.[35]

Expectations about the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union were high. Poland was dubbed the "green island" or the "model state" to underline that it was the country only slightly affected by the economic crisis.[36] It is worth recalling that the Czech Presidency was remembered mainly for the Czech internal political crisis and the euroscepticism of Vaclav Klaus, whilst Poland's predecessor, Hungary, was associated mainly with its Media Act and changes to the Hungarian political system which many deemed limiting to Hungarian citizens' civil rights.[37] It was expected of Poland to co-create the image of a Member State that serves as a positive (back)ground against the struggle with the crisis in the European Union, where the Eurozone players are the main players. Poland was perceived as a stable partner that was to create favourable conditions for the implementation of the interests of the most powerful EU Member States. One might agree that Poland fulfilled those expectations.

"We leave Europe in good hands" – said German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier upon the handing over of the Presidency to Poland. The only concerns mentioned referred to the uncertainty about the struggle for the single EU currency, as Poland is not a Eurozone member, and its citizens are sceptical about the euro.[38]

The opening of the Presidency by the Polish Prime Minister was welcomed by German weeklies. Poland was presented as a stabile country headed by a politician who does not seek conflict and is a 'synonym' of tranquillity on the political arena. German journalists underlined that Tusk was the response to the current situation in the European Union as the EU needed concrete solutions and not political conflicts.

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[33] Plenary session in Strasbourg on 4-7 July 2011, in: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/pl/headlines/content/20110627FCS22686/10/html/Donald-Tusk-w-PE-Potrzebujemy-wi%C4%99cej-Europy. Accessed 10.01.2012.

[34] Guy Verhofstadt – Prime Minister of Belgium in the years 1999-2008, currently Member of the European Parliament, since 2009 leader of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] More on this issue: *Przed polską Prezydencją w Radzie UE...*

[37] This does not alter the fact Brussels experts praise both Presidencies for their involvement, efficient EU Council administration and fast solving of conflict-inducing issues, e.g. the Czech Republic for stifling the conflict concerning the climate and energy package and Hungary for the prelude to the discussion on the Multiannual Financial Framework.

[38] U. Krökel, *Europas Musterland übernimmt die Führung*, "Die Zeit Online" 30.06.2011.

It was also underlined that, for the first time since 1989, the Polish government had a chance to be re-elected, which bode the Polish Presidency well.[39] Poland appeared to be a "green island" not only economically but also politically. While Prime Minister Donald Tusk benefited from the positive reaction to the launch of the Polish Presidency, right across the border, Angela Merkel had to face a serious crisis of trust not only among the society but also in her own camp. She was criticised for her approach to Greece and her failure to provide explanations concerning the crisis. Attention was drawn to the Merkel-Sarkozy duo who together were to fight for a new shape of the EU again.[40]

Writing about EU politics, German weeklies devoted most space to the position of Germany in the modern European Union drawing attention mainly to economic issues and debating the future of the European Union in terms of ideas and values. Much was written about the crisis of trust in the EU as a warrant of security and stability, as well as the lack of trust toward politicians, which together spurred discussions on the legitimacy of power in the European Union.[41] It was underlined that decisions taken in Berlin and Brussels would be presented as a rescue plan and that mainly Germany would delineate the direction of the reforms.[42] During the Polish Presidency, German media judged Poland to be a very good and trustworthy partner. Radosław Sikorski demonstrated his political strength and courage in his speech given in Berlin. His words were greeted with less enthusiasm in Poland than in Germany. That might have been an effect of the lack of a vast political debate on the strength of the Polish voice in the European Union and on the implementation of Polish priorities. In Poland, the speech of Radosław Sikorski was criticised by the opposition[43], *inter alia*, because his courageous, yet not new, proposals on European integration had not been consulted with various parties in Poland. Although good results of the Polish economy were underlined, it was emphasised that Poland's voice wears thinner in discussions on the Eurozone crisis. As a result, two clubs were created, i.e. Eurozone members and Member States waiting to join in. Dividing euro debates into the above groups met with comments and concerns regarding the EU's unity. Questions on establishing an exclusive EU club for some Member States were raised.[44] The European Union was called "a Europe in Europe", and the

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[39] C. Tatje, *Wir betreten Neuland*, "Die Zeit" no. 29, 14.07.2011.

[40] M. Naß, *List der Vernunft*, "Die Zeit" no. 35, 25.08.2011, M. Brost, T. Hildebrandt, *Merkels Wille*, "Die Zeit" no. 36, 01.09.2011.

[41] A. Wilkens, *Europäer bewegt euch!*, "Die Zeit" no. 40, 29.09.2011; "Die Zeit Online" 06.10.2011; U. Greiner, *Europa vergißst seine Wurzeln*, "Die Zeit" no. 40, 29.09.2011.

[42] M. Brost, T. Hildebrandt, *Alle Macht den Deutschen?*, "Die Zeit" no. 44, 27.10.2011.

[43] Also A. Smolar points to the lack of consultation of the theses presented in R. Sikorski's speech. Smolar notes that in Poland there is generally little reflection on strategic interests of Poland in the EU and the role that the EU wants to play in the region thanks to Poland's EU membership. *Cf.* Aleksander Smolar's interview with Cezary Michalski, *Piosenka o końcu świata*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 22.04.2012, pp. 12-14.

[44] P. Buras, *Nicht über uns ohne uns*, "Die Zeit" no. 50, 08.12.2011. The comment that Angela Merkel wanted to save mainly German competitiveness was also voiced. According to the German

solution to the crisis was sought in Germany. However, one should not forget that in March 2011 Poland, when preparing for her Presidency, put forward a realistic plan of inclusion of the non-Eurozone members aspiring to the adoption of the single currency, i.e. "Eurozone – plus". That proposal should be interpreted as an element of the anti-crisis scenario of joint efforts to combat the crisis.

In Germany, Poland kept being mentioned mainly in the context of her good economic performance. Poland was named a new "miracle country".[45] The weekly "Stern" noted the launch of the Polish Presidency, the victorious for Civic Platform elections and the caring attitude of the Polish Prime Minister to saving Europe. Tusk was often described as "a friend of Europe". It was also emphasised that relations between Poland and Germany during Donald Tusk's first term were exemplary.[46] German-Polish relations were also commented upon when Donald Tusk kissed Angela Merkel's hand, clearly surprising the German Chancellor. In Poland, this gesture expresses appreciation and respect whereas in Germany such a conduct toward women is very rare. It was admitted that that event was of little interest to the world but it was worth considering in the context of the event formality, place and context.[47]

The Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU attracted great interest of electronic media. Research demonstrated that a large part of the information on the Presidency kept changing with particular events, that is the interest in the Presidency of the Council of the EU increased or decreased depending on the nature of its events. In Poland the Wirtualna Polska and Onet.pl web portals were the primary source of information. Gazeta.pl was second. During the Presidency, Donald Tusk was the politician that attracted most interest (52%), followed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski and President of the Republic of Poland Bronisław Komorowski. Analysts are of the opinion that the Polish Presidency ended with a media success, despite the fact that not all set goals were achieved. The image of the Polish Presi-

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Chancellor, there is only one rule: "The state that pays decides". It was often underlined that Angela Merkel wants to model the European Union after Germany. *Cf.* D. Kurbjuweit, R. Neukirch, Ch. Reiermann, S. Christoph, *Europa der zwei Europas*, "Der Spiegel" no. 44/2011, 31.10.2011, F. Ehlers, J.A. Heyer; R. Neukirch, J. Puhl; M. Rohr, H. Zuber, *Unheimlich deutsch*, "Der Spiegel" no. 49/2011, 05.12.2011.

[45] *Trotz Krise, Rating-Riese stellt Polen bessere Note im Aussicht*, "Spiegel Online" 15.12.2011, http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/0,1518,803861,00.html. Accessed 10.01.2012.

[46] *Europafreund gewinnt die Wahl*, Stern.de, 10.10.2011, http://www.stern.de/politik/aus- land/polen-europafreund-tusk-gewinnt-die-wahl-1736879.html. Accessed 15.02.2012; *Polens Ministerpräsident Tusk stellt neues Kabinett vor*, Stern.de, 17.11.2011, http://www.stern.de/news2/aktu- ell/polens-ministerpraesident-tusk-stellt-neues-kabinett-vor-1752301.html. Accessed 15.02.2012, *Tusk sieht Finanzkrise ein Mittelpunkt von Polens EU-Ratsvorsitz*, Stern.de, 30.06.2011, http://www. stern.de/news2/aktuell/tusk-sieht-finanzkrise-im-mittelpunkt-von-polens-eu-ratsvorsitz-1701019.html. Accessed 15.02.2012.

[47] H. Unterstöger, *Feuchte Geste des Respekts*, "Süddeutsche Zeitung" 27.10.2011, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/leben/handkuss-fuer-frau-merkel-feuchte-geste-des-respekts-1.1175231. Accessed 15.02.2012. In Poland, some politicians interpreted this gesture as an expression of submission and a tribute of the Polish Prime Minister to the German Chancellor.

dency that emerged in the electronic media was that of an ambitious and efficiently managed undertaking.

Assessments of the Polish Presidency were mostly positive and concerned its course. It needs to be mentioned that the interest of foreign media in the Polish Presidency was relatively low, though the Presidency was described as compromise-seeking and judged better than the Czech and Hungarian Presidencies.[48]

Political marketing strategies used during the Polish Presidency were successful at the European level but did not contribute much to a positive assessment of the Presidency at the national level. Prime Minister Donald Tusk was more visible at the European level as the politician presiding over the Council of the European Union than he was in Poland.[49] One might have an impression that the message was directed mainly at politicians active at the European level. In Poland, the coming electoral campaign met with more interest than the Presidency, and the European Union was more concerned with the economic crisis. It follows that the marketing strategies used were more conducive to a political campaign than the implementation of Polish priorities in the European Union.

The above interdependencies were reflected in Polish opinion polls on the assessment of the Presidency's activities. In the opinion of 45% of respondents, Poland was not active enough during the Presidency, while 53% believe that Poland failed to achieve much during her six-month leadership of the EU. When it comes to the evaluation of the achievements of the Polish Presidency, opinions of respondents were divided. Differences can be attributed to respondents' different education level, political preferences and degree of interest in politics. Majority of respondents (63%) agree that the Polish Presidency succeeded in improving Poland's image in Europe and globally. Opinions about Poland's influence on EU policies vary. 43% of respondents think that Poland has an influence on the implementation of EU policies but 40% does not think so. Supporters of all political parties notice a positive influence of the Presidency on Poland's image. Nevertheless, all electorates are convinced that Poland did not contribute to combating the Eurozone financial crisis. The respondents seemed to firmly believe that the largest Member States have the greatest influence on EU policies (75% of respondents is of that opinion). Since Poland joined the European Union, the percentage of persons who believe that Poland is somewhere in the middle of the EU hierarchy has been growing. In January 2012, 68% of respondents declared such a belief, which is an increase by 21% in

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[48] *Polska prezydencja w UE*, Analysis of the Centre for Political Analysis of the University of Warsaw, http://oapuw.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=348%3Arelacja-z-seminarium-oap-uw-pt-qpolska-prezydencja-w-ueq&catid=152%3Akomentarze-artykuy&Itemid=5&lang=pl. Accessed 29.02.2012.

[49] The opposition accused the Prime Minister of using his active involvement at the EU level to carry out his electoral campaign and, at the same time, strengthen his political party before the parliamentary elections in the second half of 2011. Also the campaign spot with Commissioner for Financial Programming and the Budget Janusz Lewandowski gathered unfavourable reviews.

comparison to 2004.[50] The Polish society appears to be aware of Poland's role in the European Union and is capable of performing its realistic assessment. The situation was similar in France and Germany during the German Presidency and before the French Presidency, when the issue of the strength of a Member State's voice in the EU was raised. At the time, 79% of German citizens believed that they had a say in the European Union, while in France the percentage amounted to as much as 86% and was the highest in the European Union.[51]

In his summary of the Polish Presidency presented to the European Parliament on 14 December 2011, Prime Minister Donald Tusk underlined the involvement and determination of many people. Despite his satisfaction with the work done, he did not feel that Europe was more united than before. The Prime Minister, like in his opening speech, frequently used the word "crisis" (36 times). He indicated that the crisis was not over and that its roots have been not only in the banking sector but also in the lack of trust in the European Union, the idea of integration and a waning feeling of belonging to a community. The word "community" was used 14 times in that speech. The Prime Minister pointed to the need for leadership in the European Union (this phrase was used 6 times). Tusk boldly summed his speech up by saying that Europe was at the crossroads and that the only solution was to work together with involvement and toward further integration.[52] His words met with a strong support of the leader of the German Social Democratic Party, Martin Schulz, who stated that the Polish Presidency was one of the best Presidencies of recent years. Jose Manuel Barroso thanked the Polish Prime Minister for Poland's leadership and involvement in European affairs.[53]

CONCLUSIONS

1. Certainly, the economic crisis affects the way the process of European integration is to be managed in the coming years. It is to be expected that intergovernmental mechanisms of anti-crisis coordination of EU policies will be strengthened and that the guidelines will be laid down by a group of Member States led by France and Germany, and delivered by the European Council whose President grows to become one of the leaders of the European post-crisis order.

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[50] Assessment of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, CBOS-BS/11/2012, http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2012/K–011–12.PDF. Accessed 28.02.2012.

[51] Eurobarometer 68 Public Opinion in the European Union, Autumn 2007, National Report Germany, Executive Summary, http://ec.europa.eu/public–opinion/archives/eb/eb68/eb68–de–exec.pdf. Accessed 28.02.2012. National Report-France, Executive Summary, http://ec.euro- pa.eu/public–opinion/archives/eb/eb68/eb–68–fr–exec.pdf. Accessed 28.02.2012.

[52] Speech of Donald Tusk to the European Parliament of 14 December 2011, http://www.premier.gov.pl/premier/przemowienia/przemowienie–w–pe–podsumowujac,8584/. Accessed 16.02.2012.

[53] Prime Minister's conclusions of the Polish Presidency presented to the European Parliament on 14 December 2012, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/pl/headlines/content/20111214STO34102/html/Tusk-UE-na-rozdro%C5%BCu-albo-podejmiemy-walk%C4%99-albo-b%C4%99dziemy-p%C5%82aka%C4%87. Accessed 16.02.2012.

2. The function and role of the Presidency of the EU Council is changing. Thanks to the Presidency's effective organisation and management of proceedings, its constructive dialogue with the permanent President of the European Council and good cooperation within the trio, the Presidency stands the chance of implementing its priorities.
3. As a result of the economic crisis, the position of the European Council and its permanent President has been strengthened. This institution rises to be the main script writer of the post-crisis European order, as it serves as a catalyst of the European Commission's ideas as well as of various ideas of Member States, mainly the French-German duo.
4. There is a need to coordinate cooperation among Member States which are not part of the Eurozone. In this case, the Polish Euro Plus project should be considered a good solution with Poland as the group leader since Poland's leadership already succeeded in establishing a coalition of "friends of cohesion" comprising thirteen Member States.
5. In its political narrative (delivered by the Polish Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs), the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union attempted at playing the role of a European leader. However, due to the change in the formula of the Presidency and the shift of decision making capacity in matters related to the financial crisis to the Eurogroup, the voice of a Member State that is not part of the Eurozone is less heard in EU-27.
6. The duo of Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy overshadowed the image of the Polish Prime Minister, which is clearly indicative of Poland's place in the European Union. Poland is perceived as a trustworthy partner that supports Germany in the struggle against the crisis, but still plays second fiddle. That situation results not only from Poland's relatively short membership in the EU but also – at present – from her not having adopted the euro and thus having a limited say on the single currency issues. The Polish Presidency was received as well-organised, involved and European.
7. Donald Tusk, as Prime Minister of the state that held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time, underlined the value of community and solidarity, which should be the response to the economic crisis and first of all to the decreasing trust in the European Union. Although Poland signed the fiscal pact, which was not really in line with a community approach, Donald Tusk was remembered as a reliable partner in the struggle against the crisis, a partner who seeks integration-friendly solutions and undertakes efforts to avoid further disintegration. Poland proved that she is a predictable player on the European arena though her voice is less heard than those of France or Germany. Finally, the Polish Presidency was positively assessed by the European Parliament, and Prime Minister Donald Tusk won the respect of most important European politicians, which might be relevant to his future political career.

ABSTRACT

The need of leadership in the European Union becomes especially conspicuous in situations of crisis. So far the Member States managed to weather many such crises unscathed and afterwards adopted a new treaty or reached a gentlemen's agreement to clarify any controversial regulations of the treaty in force. However, the consequences of the global economic crisis for the EU and its particular Member States seem to have a deep effect on the nature of the EU and the character of cooperation between its Member States. In a natural way therefore there emerges the need for an anti-crisis leadership, especially a collective one. The authors of the article strive to answer the following questions: How does the crisis affect the functioning of EU institutions?; How can the Presidency of the EU Council act as the principal coordinator of the EU's anti-crisis measures?; and finally: How did Poland during its Presidency of the EU Council influence the scenarios of overcoming the crisis within the EU?; What was the role of the Polish Prime Minister in this context?