Main conclusions

- The debate whether the united Europe should be a federation or a Europe of nations is mostly of a historical significance because, within the European Union, there is already a division into states fully cooperating with each other and the less integrated ones. These states form integration rings.
- Thanks to the change in the pace of the integration process and the Union’s natural breakdown into rings, Poland may join the EU without having to wait to satisfy all the criteria required to become a member of its core nucleus. Without the Union’s breakdown into rings and the diversification of the pace of integration, Poland’s accession to the EU, just like the accession of other Central Eastern European countries, would probably become entirely impossible due to major economic differences.
- During previous enlargement waves of the European Union, the responsibility for the negotiations was, in fact, vested in the European Commission. After the collapse of the bipolar division of Europe, and in the absence of the need to consolidate the security of the EU against former threats posed by the communist bloc, there has been a natural trend to shift the centre of gravity of the negotiations from the European Commission to the Council of the European Union and individual member states. The change is very disadvantageous for the candidate countries. Internal conflicts will be slowing down the negotiation process, or will lead to far-reaching compromises disadvantageous for the candidate countries. It is very likely that, during the negotiations, a global way of thinking about the future of Europe and a long-term concept of its development, will be replaced by particular and often contradictory interests of the member states.
- There are three possible scenarios reflecting the prospective course of developments. According to the first scenario, the enlargement to include Central Eastern European countries will be preceded by the inter-government conference held in order to reform the Union’s
institutions. That scenario is particularly disadvantageous for the candidate countries because the new EU architecture would be negotiated and established without their involvement. On the other hand, a positive impact of the Union’s reform being undertaken already now, would be elimination of the problem that during the first enlargement wave, the Union would admit only five new members, which would imply the need to shift one of the six countries currently holding accession talks to the next round of negotiations.

- According to the second scenario, Poland would join the EU even before the inter-government conference meant to reform the Union’s institutional system. This would imply that one of the countries currently negotiating their membership of the EU would be eliminated. In that case, the size of Poland and its population should be regarded as an advantage. Being a large country, Poland would undermine the current overly large representation of small and medium sized countries in the Union.

- According to the third scenario, Poland would not join the EU after the current accession negotiations. The costs inflicted by Poland being transferred to the group of countries waiting for the next enlargement wave would be very high. A decision to exclude Poland from the first enlargement wave would destabilise the situation of the entire continent in a longer run. By remaining outside the Union, Poland would move back to the buffer zone. By being left on its own, the country would find itself in a European grey zone which would be difficult to define. Western capital would flow out of the country, and would be replaced by the capital of eastern and western criminal organisations. The Odra River would become a trafficking route for illegal immigrants, drugs, and money laundering. Once left on its own, Poland would become a base for various kinds of criminal organisations. As a consequence, the Union would have to exclude the country from the Schengen Agreement, tighten controls on its external borders, and restore visas. Thus, the Union would fall into a self-propelling syndrome of a stronghold under siege both in the south and in the east.
European integration rings

Discussions about Poland’s integration with the EU often ignore the fact that the united Europe based on the foundations laid out by the Treaty of Rome is becoming history. At the time of Poland’s accession, the European Union will be an entirely different organisation from what it is now. Its institutional structure will probably be different, and so will be the decision making procedures and the rate of growth. The depth of the political, economic and social changes in the EU will impact on the process of negotiations with Poland. Already now, the Union sometimes begins to appear like a moving target. The experience of other countries from which Poland is drawing during the negotiations is mainly of a historical character. Those countries were joining Europe in which the most contentious issue concerned the political system, i.e., whether the united Europe should be a federation or a Europe of nations. The member states were divided over the issue for fifty years. It had a great impact on the decisions made by the Union and on the Union’s entire institutional and legal system. However, the issue so vital to the countries participating in the West European integration process, is of a secondary importance to Poland whose involvement in the dispute is of a purely intellectual character. As of yet, there are no signs indicating that at the time of its accession to the EU, Poland would have a realistic possibility to join the Union’s core nucleus, i.e., the group of countries actually supporting a federate character of mutual relations.

The history of real integration within Western Europe started on the day when the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community was signed. The positive experience of that Community encouraged further integration efforts. At the same time, the Communities were enlarged to include new countries. In 1973, Britain, Ireland and Denmark joined the Community, eight years later Greece, Spain and Portugal in 1986, and Austria, Sweden and Finland in 1995. For nearly fifty years the advancement of integration in Western Europe was based on the strong foundation laid by the Berlin Wall. The vast majority of ideas concerning the future of the integration process and the directions of its development ended at the foot of the Wall. Those ideas were buried by the same hammers that tore down the Wall. European integration had to change its so-far direction. It took time for European politicians to realise that.¹

¹ In 1991, Poland had to put a lot of effort to force through in the preamble to the Europe Agreement a unilateral declaration that its goal was the membership of the Communities. However, for example, Greece had no problems with such declaration. The association agreement between the Communities and Greece included a promise of full membership.
In 1991-1992 a broad discussion was going on in Brussels about the
deepening of the Community. It basically denied the possibility of
simultaneous enlargement and deepening, which were regarded as
conflicting processes. The crisis related to the ratification of the Maastricht
Treaty, the economic recession, and the public’s growing disappointment
with the idea of deepening integration provoked a kind of a leap forward.
Even before the ratification process of the Treaty was concluded,
enlargement negotiations began with Austria and the Scandinavian
countries. The deepening gave way to the enlargement. The enlargement
was meant to demonstrate to the people of the member states the
invariably strong attractiveness of the Union. The institutional reform of
the Union was postponed until the next inter-government conference, i.e.,
until 1996. As we already know, the Amsterdam Treaty turned out to be a
failure in that sense, and under Art. 2, Section IV of the Amsterdam
Treaty, a thorough institution reform of the Union is to take place before
the admission of the twenty-first state into the Communities.

The Maastricht Treaty revealed a serious diversification of interests
among the member states. Despite the ideas which guided the main
authors of the concept, the Treaty stimulated the opponents of deeper
integration to join forces. The Treaty will go down in history not so
much in connection with the establishment of the European Union, but
most of all, because its conclusion ended the building of a united
Europe on the basis of consensus among all the member states. For the
first time a varied pace of integration was allowed for individual member
states. Also for the first time, a legal provision was made for derogation
enabling a member state or a group of member states not to participate in
an initiative undertaken by the Union.

In the legal sense, the Maastricht Treaty created a mechanism
to exclude particular member states from co-operation in specific
areas within the Union. On these basis, the Council of the European
Union decided about allowing particular member states to join the
monetary union. The member states were automatically divided into those
which fully co-operated with each other, and the weaker integrated ones. It
is now possible to identify two rings of integration. The core nucleus of the
Union emerged, thereby forming the first ring. It is comprised of the eleven
member states participating in the monetary union, i.e.: France, Germany,
Austria, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Finland, and the Benelux countries.
The second ring includes the member states which did not join the
monetary union. These are: Britain, Denmark, Sweden, and Greece.
Poland, together with other countries aspiring to the EU membership, will form the third integration ring.

The core nucleus of the Union is, in fact, comprised of the countries which chose the federate character of integration. The states forming the outer rings rather cherish the idea of a Europe of nations, i.e., a confederate character of the European Union.

The emergence of European integration rings and the diversification of the pace of the process pursued by particular states market a new political trend. That trend was considered highly controversial both by the candidate countries and for the Union. It may seem to offer numerous advantages. A varied pace of integration for particular countries enables their faster or slower accession to the groups of countries comprised in particular rings without a risk of undermining the Union’s integration achievements to date. The formal acceptance of the varied integration pace mollifies and to a large extent eliminates the risk of slowing down the integration processes within the core nucleus of the Union. On the other hand, the very existence of that open and non-confined nucleus becomes a challenge and a stimulus encouraging integration processes in the countries wishing to join it. **Thanks to the diversification of the pace of integration, and the breakdown of the Union into integration rings, Poland can achieve the EU membership without a need to satisfy all the conditions that would enable the country to join the Union’s core nucleus. Otherwise, the achievement of the EU membership by Poland as well as other Central Eastern European countries would probably be entirely impossible due to considerable economic differences. The membership in the Union will enable those countries to take advantage of financial assistance provided by the EU, thereby making it possible for them to make up those differences much faster.**

From the point of view of the candidate countries, the strategy of diversified integration pace is a tempting arrangement, especially in the short run. However, one may have doubts when looking at it from the long-term perspective. The strategy compels the member states to go back to their roots, to the idea of solidarity and the prevalence of the common goal. The countries placed in the outer rings must enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities in terms of joining the core nucleus and eliminating differences. Only this way can Europe integrate into a homogenous entity. The direction must be clearly determined. It is necessary to define new goals. The so-far goals for which the Communities were established, have already been achieved. Germany has been reconciled with its neighbours,

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2 Cf. Popowicz K., *Strategiczne cele mandatu negocjacyjnego Polski z UE* [Strategic Goals of the Polish Mandate for Negotiations with the EU], the Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 1998.
the economy has been rebuilt, and the expansion of the Soviet Union has been stopped. The new goals of integration seeking to build Europe’s economic power, consolidate democracy, and, in a broader sense, build a civic European state, have not been clearly defined yet. The French-German axis which has constituted the driving force of integration process to date is no longer effective. The long-term political ties between countries, which have existed to date, are increasingly often replaced by temporary alliances aimed at achieving specific goals. “(...) Despair has emerged that may ruin further integration of Europe. That despair has taken various forms in particular countries, but it has provoked fear and a lack of determination among the political circles in most countries at a time that calls for imagination and courage. The sense of family ties among the heads of state and government has been disappearing, and certain issues increasingly fall hostage on behalf of obtaining progress in other matters important to the national interests [retranslated].”

None of the EU summits to date has come up with a coherent concept of a united Europe at a level of the continent. **One may get the impression that the Union has lost its sense of direction. It is hesitating which path it should follow. The ongoing processes result from the sequence of events rather than a conscious strategy.** The establishment of rings with varied levels of integration within the Union is potentially dangerous. The Union has now found itself at a cross-roads. No concept has been worked out concerning its future. Thus, it is not certain under what conditions the EU rings will be functioning in the future, and after all, the rings have a large destructive potential. The approval of a varied pace of integration among the member states implies consent to a kind of internal disintegration. That disintegration does not have to prove dangerous in a Europe that upholds solidarity, in which a free movement of member states from the outer rings to the core nucleus is not blocked. However, there is no guarantee that Europe will remain to be that way. Despite all the conditions, the existence of the closer co-operation mechanism (coopération plus étroite) will enable a unification of individual states into groups of interest. The approval of a varied pace of integration among the member states implies consent to a kind of internal disintegration. That disintegration does not have to prove dangerous in a Europe that upholds solidarity, in which a free movement of member states from the outer rings to the core nucleus is not blocked. However, there is no guarantee that Europe will remain to be that way. Despite all the conditions, the existence of the closer co-operation mechanism (coopération plus étroite) will enable a unification of individual states into groups of interest. There may be situations when a group of countries will seek to prevent the participation of other countries in

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3 Fries F., *Spór o Europę* [Dispute Over Europe], PWN, Warsaw 1998.

4 Under the Amsterdam Treaty, the establishment of the closer co-operation mechanism should be aimed to enable a more efficient implementation of the Union’s tasks, while fully respecting the treaties and the uniform institutional framework of the Communities. Such co-operation is to constitute the final resort and a decision to apply the mechanism requires a majority of the member states to participate in a given initiative. The costs related to that co-operation, with the exception of administrative costs, are to be covered by the participating states. At the same time, that co-operation must not undermine the competence, powers, duties, or interests of other member states that are not involved in a given initiative which must be open to all member states.
particular activity. A pursuit of particular interests of individual EU rings at the level of the Council of the European Union may block the aspirations of countries from the outer rings. As it is known, the decision to exclude Greece from the monetary union was made under the authority of the Council. By the power of Art. 109k of the European Communities Treaty, Greece became a member state with a derogation, and was unable to do anything about that. The reasons underlying its exclusion from the monetary union were of a purely economic character. However, the point is that the future of the Union is unknown, and there is no guarantee that decisions to exclude a state or a group of states from particular activity will be made exclusively on substantial grounds, and not with the aim of defending the interests of another group of states. Let us imagine the following hypothetical situation: around the year 2015, France, Germany and the Benelux countries seek to take advantage of the coopération plus étroite mechanism in order to establish the foundations of the common defence policy (a unanimous decision would no longer be required regarding that matter). Ukraine, being a member state, declares its willingness to participate in the initiative, but it is involved in a strong conflict with Russia, similarly to the conflict between Greece and Turkey. On the other hand, Russia is under a dictatorship regime. The conflict is growing increasingly acute. Is there anyone in Europe now who could swear that, in such a hypothetical situation, the Council would not look for an excuse to exclude Ukraine from the common defence policy of the inner circle of countries?5

A division of the Union into various integration rings poses a threat to its coherence, and as a consequence, may lead to its disintegration. In the context of its historical experience, Poland is more aware of that threat compared to other countries. The Polish-Lithuanian union state kept a clearly federate character for four centuries. Historians claim that one of the main reasons underlying its decline in the early 17th century was a firm resistance by the Polish and Lithuanian elites against granting Ukraine an equal status with that enjoyed by Poland and Lithuania. The rejection of the proposal to transform the union of two nations into a union of three nations and repression against Ukrainians led to a series of Ukrainian national insurgencies. The insurgencies were bloody civil wars which not only withered the state, but also started internal anarchy that lasted one and a half century, weakened the sense of state interests and raison d’état,

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5 It is also necessary to take into account irrational factors, limited trust, or hidden animosities felt towards some of the new member states which, for example, may be considered not to belong to the Western civilisation. (Huntington warns, for instance, that in the case of countries such as Rumania or Bulgaria, their integration with Europe may be very difficult.) Such prejudice may influence the decisions made by the Council as well.
thereby deteriorating the Polish foreign policy. The final consequence was the collapse of the union state at the end of the 18th century. Bearing that in mind, one must realise that we are not establishing the European Union for several years or for several dozen years. When building it, we hope that it will last centuries. The current consent to the creation of European integration rings may in the future supply grounds for conflicts between the Union’s members: between the better and the worse, the equal and more equal ones. As history shows, that may crack the Union from inside, and even lead to its disintegration and ultimate collapse. The union of Poland and Lithuania lasted four centuries. It was the most successful attempt at the establishment of a federate structure on the European continent until the creation of the European Economic Community. At the same time, the extent of internal integration of the Polish-Lithuanian Union was even stronger compared to the European Union today. Nevertheless, the Polish-Lithuanian state collapsed. The European Union should remember about that when making the risky decision concerning rings with a varied degree and strength of integration among the member states. On the other hand, if Poland, as a member of the European Union, wants to promote its own vision of Europe, it should lead to a broader debate among European intellectuals, philosophers, historians and politicians about the history of the former Polish-Lithuanian Union. After all, none of the modern West European states has four centuries long historical experience of existing in a broad federate structure.
The fifth enlargement of the European Union

The Communities have been enlarged four times to date. The fifth enlargement is to comprise East European countries. Until now, the enlargement waves of the Communities were of an internal character because they concerned western countries. The process was guided by a clear political goal stemming from the bipolar division of Europe and the world. The deepening of integration at the same time enhanced the security of the member states, thereby reinforcing the dichotomy in the development of Europe. The character of the European Union’s enlargement to include Central Eastern European countries is of an entirely different character. It has become possible as a result of the collapse of the earlier political division of Europe.

In the case of earlier enlargement waves the gravity of the negotiations in fact lied with the European Commission. However, the fall of the dichotomy dividing Europe, and the lack of a need to consolidate the Union’s security against the threats earlier posed by the communist bloc have naturally shifted the weight of the negotiations from the European Commission to the EU Council and particular member states.

That change of proportion between the involvement of the Union as a whole and particular member states in the negotiations is highly disadvantageous for the candidate countries. Internal conflicts will be either slowing down the negotiation process, they will lead to far reaching compromises disadvantageous for the candidate countries. It is very likely that the global way of thinking about the future of Europe and a long-term concept of its development will be replaced during the negotiations by individual and often conflicting interests of the member states.

During the current negotiations, it will be the Council, and not the Commission, that will become the main arena for the conflicts of interests which are bound to emerge because the enlargement of the European Union to include Central Eastern European countries will disturb the current unique balance among the member states. The position of the northern countries will be reinforced, while the geographical centre of the Union will be simultaneously shifted further into the interior of the continent. Germany, being a country directly adjacent to the region, will be the greatest beneficiary of the process. Germany, but also Austria and the Scandinavian countries, will be the first ones to feel the economic and political advantages brought about by the accession of new members. In this context, it would be difficult to argue with analysts who project that, during the next decade, Berlin will become the actual capital of Europe. It is very likely that the southern countries, including France, will make some
kind of claims or demand compensation for the enlargement. The cost of that compensation certainly will not be paid by the northern countries, but it will be finally incurred by the new members. The character of the costs involved will be both political, e.g., a smaller number of votes on the Council, and economic, e.g., a smaller share of the structural funds.

The Union’s economic development and the enhancement of its competitiveness in the international market largely depend on the enlargement. However, that does not translate directly into a possible consensus among the member states concerning acceleration or facilitation of the negotiations. On the contrary, the countries which are to join the Union now have a much more difficult way to the accession compared to their predecessors. None of the countries joining the Union in the past was faced with predefined terms of accession. Thanks to earlier signed association agreements, the countries aspiring to the EU membership became involved in the EU free trade zone. The opening of Central Eastern European markets to EU companies took place without major financial assistance provided by the Union. Given the existing disparity of economic potential, the asymmetry provided for in the association agreements was unable to serve as a barrier preventing the occurrence of serious trade deficits. “The countries which joined the Union earlier did not abolish barriers in trade until the achievement of the membership, and sometimes even after having negotiated longer transition periods. Thus, they achieved the membership in exchange for concessions in trade policy, and in addition, they derived benefits from that. Such a compromise is out of the question in the context of the accession of new members from our region. On the contrary, liberalisation of trade is taking place in a situation when it is not connected with the membership status, and specifically, it is a precondition of accession, but not an issue in negotiations that would increase the bargaining power of the candidate countries.”6

The EU membership of Central Eastern European countries will be a result of a compromise among the EU member states. It is difficult to predict how far the compromise will go. On the other hand, one may quite easily determine the areas which the compromise will concern.

The first scenario

The first option is based on the assumption that the fifth enlargement will be preceded by the inter-government conference held to reform the Union’s institutions. That option is very disadvantageous for us, and for only one main reason. The new architecture of the Union

would be negotiated and established without our participation. Even if the Union keeps the appearances of holding consultations with the candidate countries concerning the directions of proposed reforms, they will still have no influence on the final shape of the reforms. Decisions concerning us will be made without us. Unfortunately, we know such situations well form history. We have absolutely no influence regarding the decision to hold the conference. On the other hand, the positive result of the institution reform being carried out already now will be a removal of the problem that only five countries can join the Union during the first enlargement wave, which otherwise, would imply the need to shift one of the six countries currently holding accession talks to the next round of negotiations.

The most important matters to be settled include a change of the current system of voting in the Council, reducing the number of commissioners, maintaining the efficiency of the Commission, and increasing the role of the European Parliament. This study is not intended to present a review of all the proposed and already discussed reforms of the Union. From the point of view of our analysis, for Poland, the most important institutional reform of the Union may turn out to be the new division of votes on the Council. Among numerous proposals put forward concerning the reform, the most disadvantageous for the candidate countries would be a system addressed to them exclusively, which would peg the number of votes both to the population of a new member and to its economic potential, thereby taking into account the great economic development disparity compared to the current EU member states.

If the current system of voting were maintained, Poland would have eight votes on the Council of the European Council, similar to Spain. With that number of votes, it could effectively block or promote particular policies. Eight votes would make smaller member states, albeit rich and full of merit in building Europe, apply for Polish support. Those countries may have well justified fears that their position in the EU would be undermined. One cannot rule out that during the future institution reform, the small but rich countries will force through a system in which the number of votes granted to new members would be in proportion to their economic potential.

For obvious reasons, such a proposal would be the most disadvantageous for Poland, and not for small countries such as Slovenia or Estonia. Thus, completely in spite of its own will, Poland would become a factor stimulating the institution reform of the Union, and
encouraging consensus among the member states concerning proposed institution reforms. 

A decision to peg the number of votes to the economic potential of a new member state would mean giving up the rules of democracy. It would be a decision establishing second class membership. The idea of second class membership has recently become a fashionable one. Due to its large appeal to the public, it is most often used to provoke reluctance towards integration and to encourage people to distance themselves from the process. However, the use of the term seldom finds sound justification. Thus, the placement of a country in the second or third integration ring by no means implies second class membership as long as the character integration rings remains open. On the other hand, if the number of votes on the Council were pegged to the economic potential of a member state, that would make the second class membership come true.

The second scenario

Under the second scenario Poland joins the Union as part of the first enlargement wave, before the inter-government conference to be held to reform the system of the Union’s institutions. According to this option, one of the countries currently holding accession talks is dropped off to the next enlargement wave. (One should not forget that, under the Amsterdam Treaty, the admission of five countries does not require a reform of the Union’s institutions). Poland is granted eight votes on the Council. The size of the country and its population are an advantage in that sense. Being a large country, Poland weakens the overly large voting representation of small and medium member states in the Union. Consequently, according to the new arrangement, the country is included in the formula of three that ensures a permanent involvement of a large state during the presidency rotations. During the future reform of the Union’s institutions, whose goals would include settling the issue of overly large representation of small and medium sized countries, Poland’s natural allies would be the five large member states. With such support, Poland becomes one of the major member states, and makes an active and effective contribution by influencing the Union’s future structures.

Poland would be the most powerful among the Central Eastern European countries in the Union. Thus, together with other countries in the region, it could also generate the regional economic interests (as it is done,

Furthermore, such a system would increase the overly large voting representation of small countries. For example, Poland would have only three votes on the Council. The system seems quite unlikely for the time being, but one should not forget that when the membership criteria were being determined for the candidate countries (the Copenhagen Summit), proposals were put forward to add the requirement for the countries to fulfil specific economic conditions.
for example, by the southern countries with the support of France). All the Central Eastern European countries would be to a lesser or greater extent interested in Poland’s support. When summing up the votes, the potential power of the region would be significant. That voting power would ensure a realistic possibility to force through particular concepts and solutions. Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that Poland would not be able to take full advantage of those eight votes before it would join the core nucleus of the Union. Together with other countries comprised in the third ring, it would not participate in the Council votes concerning issues subject to transition periods, as well as issues related to the monetary union.

As it is known, at the moment Poland does not satisfy the economic requirements that would enable it to join the Union’s so called core nucleus. A large part of politicians from Poland’s current government coalition have spoken in favour of the idea of Europe of nations, and oppose ties of a federate character. That aspect, being as important as the economic issues, would prevent Poland from joining the core nucleus of the Union. This is an objective fact. By joining the third integration ring of the Union, Poland will not be able to participate in the Union’s initiatives of a federate character. Countries comprised in the first ring will be able to undertake such activities. **It is a kind of a paradox that among Polish politicians, mainly those from parties which support a Europe of nations demand tough negotiations with the EU.** On the other hand, tough negotiations mean struggling to place Poland as close as possible to the Union’s core nucleus. But seeking to maintain the greatest independence of the Union’s Eurocrats, one should promote talks aiming at long transition periods, i.e., very conciliatory negotiations from the point of view of the Union. Such negotiations would guarantee the placement of Poland far from the EU federate nucleus. Polish politicians who support a Europe of nations while calling for tough negotiations in fact make essentially contradicting demands that cannot be reconciled.  

By the way, it is difficult to resist making a comment on transition periods. They should not be demonised. Some transition periods will be imposed upon Poland for purely political and social reasons. For example, a transition period concerning environmental protection standards is of a strictly economic character because the implementation of the relevant requirements implies considerable spending that Poland cannot afford right now. However,  

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8 However, in the case of the so called conciliatory negotiations, one may wonder about the point of holding the talks at all, about the point of conducting negotiations that would only introduce Poland into the European economic area. Poland’s participation in the economic area was agreed on December 16, 1991, when Deputy Prime Minister Leszek Balcerowicz signed the Association Agreement on behalf of the Polish government.
pressures for a transition period concerning a free movement of Polish labour are of a purely political character. German and Austrian politicians who have been demanding such a period are perfectly aware that there is absolutely no threat of a dramatic inflow of Polish labour. Thus, the formulation of that demand with regard to Poland is a way to increase and reassure their electorate. Polish negotiators should differentiate between these two categories of transition periods. They should focus predominantly on those which are required by economic factors. That by no means suggests that transition periods into which Poland is forced for political and social reasons are of a lesser importance. They are of a similar emotional significance to the public on both sides. In the understanding of the average Frenchman and the average German, an automatic threat would arise to their jobs if Poles were granted full right to work in EU countries. On the other hand, if the average Pole is denied that right, that would restrict the prerogatives which he would be enjoying as a holder of the EU passport, making him feel worse compared to the average Frenchman and German. The simplest solution to that problem would be to hold a large-scale positive information campaign to demonstrate the absence of threats. However, it is not possible to organise such a campaign for the time being. Regarding the EU side, no one is interested in such a campaign. On the contrary, EU politicians claim that they cannot imagine the opening of the Common labour market to the citizens of new member states.

The fact that, at the moment, Poland does not qualify to join the Union’s core nucleus naturally does not mean that the country should not struggle to be granted eight votes on the Council. The allocation of those votes to Poland is the most vital issue for the negotiations. Other matters such as agriculture, fishing, or a free movement of labour, albeit extremely important, have a secondary importance in the context of that essential subject. Without being granted a number of votes on the EU Council, that would be proportional to Poland’s population and territory, the country would be pushed off to a margin for many years.

**The third scenario**

According to the third scenario, Poland would not join the Union as part of the first enlargement wave. Press reports about the country have not been positive recently. Articles dealing with the future enlargement present Poland as an overly conceited and at times even arrogant partner during the accession talks. A number of articles have been published in the

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western press warning Poland against being too self-assured. Below, we present two most frequently repeated accusations against the country. According to their authors, these factors may justify the shifting of Poland to the next enlargement wave, to the waiting line which includes Bulgaria, Rumania, Slovakia, Lithuania and Latvia.

**The first accusation: Due to its size, Poland will be faced with the most difficult negotiations. The talks may take long, and no one will be waiting for Poland.**

Accession talks were started with six countries. One of them has to be dropped off until the second round unless there is a reform of the Union’s institutions. At the moment, it is difficult to project when and whether at all the next enlargement wave will be launched at all. Poland’s accession to NATO has been certain due to geopolitical factors. The accession to the Union will be largely determined by economic factors and the overall balance of costs, and not by a wish to enhance security. Poland is the largest among the six countries invited to start the accession talks. The total population of Cyprus, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Estonia combined amounts to 25 million. That corresponds to barely two-thirds of the Polish population. When comparing the scale of negotiation issues in the case of Poland and the extent of required adjustment and reforms of the Polish economy, one may see that only the combined negotiation issues of the remaining five countries could be used to make comparisons.

**The second accusation: Poland appears to be an unpredictable partner of the Common Europe because it fails to state its future contribution to the Community.**

None of the Polish governments has made a declaration that could be treated as the Polish message to the peoples of Europe. Following the model of the member states which declare the priorities of their presidency, Poland should put forward a similar list. It is high time to state what Poland will be seeking to achieve as a member state. These priorities should be put to a broad debate both in Poland and in the EU. The lack of any activities in that direction increases Europe’s fear of Poland as an unpredictable partner. Contrary to other candidate countries, Poland is a large country. The fear of undermining the position of the current member states may eliminate Poland from the first enlargement wave. According to the latest opinion polls, the number of Poland’s supporters in the EU is on the decline. Furthermore, after the first enlargement wave, Poland should not count on support from the Czech Republic or Hungary. These
countries will be competing for the leading position in the region, and Poland may only threaten their efforts.

One may wonder if the possibility to exclude Poland from the first enlargement wave is a real one. Naturally one can imagine such a situation, but the costs inflicted by the country’s absence in the Union would be very high both for Poland and for the EU. In the long term, if Poland were kept out of the Union, that would destabilise the entire continent, thereby also weakening the position of the EU.

Poland outside the Union would return to a buffer zone. By being left on its own, the country would find itself in a grey European zone which would be difficult to define. The place vacated due to an outflow of western capital would be filled in by the capital of eastern and western criminal organisations. The Odra River which would constitute the borderline between the East and the West would soon start to remind Rio Grande as the route for trafficking illegal immigrants, drugs, arms, and money laundering. Once left on its own, Poland would become a base for various kinds of criminal organisations.  

Poland would not have sufficient forces or resources to fight them. Such fast negative developments would be encouraged by the permanent destabilisation of the situation in Russia, long years of collapse of an empire with all its consequences. As a result, the Union would have to withdraw Poland from the Schengen agreements, tighten EU border controls and restore visas. Thus, the Union would fall into a self-propelling syndrome of a stronghold under siege both in the south and in the east.

One can ponder on the above scenario in a greater detail, but let us leave it to the political fiction writers. It would be better if that projection disastrous both for Poland and for Europe remained nothing more but fiction. However, that fiction should be a reminder that sometimes even the most fantastic scenarios come true in a way unexpected to all.

Conclusions

Fast accession of the six candidate countries to the EU will stimulate further development of the continent. For Poland, prospects for a soon membership of the EU are the key to stability. Therefore, ex-premier Jan Krzysztof Bielecki made a very important point when he appealed to the Polish government to make an official unilateral commitment, backed by a parliamentary resolution and in co-operation with the president, to declare Poland’s readiness for accession to the EU. Thus, Poland would

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demonstrate that the entire country is united is united in the pursuit of that vital goal. After all, if the current deep crisis in Russia, and in the future, in the entire CIS leads to the emergence of a clear division line, Poland must find itself on the western side of Europe.\textsuperscript{11}

It is possible to achieve that goal. Poland’s advantage is the support extended by all its political forces for the integration idea. Another advantage, which is often underestimated, are the people who prepared the country for the negotiations. Among them, one may find Jan Kułakowski, Bronisław Geremek, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Danuta Hübner, or Jacek Saryusz Wolski. Naturally, it is not possible to mention all of them, and it is not our goal to take note of all the people involved in Poland’s integration process on a day-to-day basis. Nonetheless, the people constitute a great potential which one should bear in mind not to carry on the impression of total incompetence and inability, which is often spread by the press. Such opinions have been more frequent following the recent changes in the leadership of the European Integration Committee.