

THE EU ENLARGEMENT POLICY IN THE POLISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE AFTER 2004

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Introduction¹

EU enlargement is a unique EU policy. On the one hand, it is a part of the EU's external relations and, as frequently argued, one of the most successful elements of the European foreign policy². This specifically holds true for the EU's enlargement eastwards in the last decade bringing peace, prosperity and stability to the historically turbulent region. On the other hand, the EU enlargement is transforming the EU itself widening its geographical scope as well as enforcing internal reform in order to enhance institutional capacity of the EU.

As the literature shows, the previous waves of EU enlargement have been widely debated in the EU member states, specifically the biggest of the waves - eastwards. The research literature covered selected countries and their attitudes toward enlargement³. The questions of what are the justifications given for the enlargement and what was the balance between rational and constructivist explanation, were broadly discussed⁴. Recently, a new wave of research on member states' positions toward enlargement has been presented, focusing on such phenomena as nationalization of discourse and the positions of member states on enlargement⁵.

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² Schimmelfennig F., Scholtz H., „EU Democracy Promotion in the European Neighborhood. Political Conditionality, Economic Development and Transnational Exchange“, in: *European Union Politics*, 9(2) 2008: 187-215, p. 188.

³ Hyde-Price, Adrian, *Germany and European Order: Enlarging NATO and the EU*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000; Sjursen, Helene (2012), 'A certain Sense of Europe? Defining the EU through enlargement', in: *European Societies*, 14(4): 502-521.

⁴ Sjursen, Helene (ed.) (2006), *Questioning Enlargement. Europe in search of identity*. New York, London: Routledge; Schimmelfennig, Frank (2003), *The EU, NATO and the Integration of Europe. Rules and Rhetoric*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵ Hillion, Christopher, 'The Creeping Nationalization of the EU Enlargement Policy'. SIEPS Report, 2010:6.

Moreover, the literature stresses differences between the mass and elite levels as regards to support for enlargement⁶. Neo-functionalists in the 1950s and 1960s emphasized the role of the elites in building the European polity, proposing the idea of 'permissive consensus' toward European integration⁷. Since the 1990s, scholars have been observing the emergence of a new phenomenon, for which the term 'constraining dissensus' was coined: the growing discrepancy between the elites and masses in assessing the process of European integration⁸. This discrepancy is especially visible in the analysis of attitudes toward enlargement⁹.

The main aim of the article is to discuss the opinions on enlargement in Poland after 2004. Polish public opinion and the elites expressed very high level of support for Polish membership in the EU and after 2004 a high level of positive evaluations of the membership. From the very first years in the block the opinions on enlargement expressed by Polish elites have varied depending on which countries were concerned as well as how they were defining the EU. In order to present attitudes toward enlargement the article goes as follows. Firstly will be discussed the general characteristics of the Polish political discourse on European integration. In the second part will be analyzed the opinions on further EU enlargement in the period 2004-2014 in two sets of data. The analysis of the programmes of the political parties will be presented as regards the position of Polish political parties regarding enlargement. This will be complemented with an analysis of the opinions on enlargement of Polish Members of the European Parliament (MEP) as expressed in 6th and 7th term in office of the European Parliament (EP).

The EU integration in Polish political discourse

Since the 1990's the prospect of EU accession and the ongoing negotiations and adaptations to EU laws and norms were constantly influencing the public debate in Poland, as well as the discourse of political parties. As a result of these debates the European matters needed implementation into party manifestos and political programmes. The European issue was used by political parties to construct their political identity. It was visible especially in the case of parties that had similar political programmes, in which case a particular stance on Europe could establish a characteristic label of a party¹⁰. Researching the official documents of political parties, we may assess what kinds of issues are important for the party and which are intentionally pushed aside. Political parties are likely to appropriate some issues

⁶ Góra Magdalena (2015), „Contesting EU enlargement. Views from the European Parliament after 2004“, in: *Playing Second Fiddle?*, Hans-Ake Persson, Bo Petersson, Cecilie Stokholm Banke (eds), Universus Academic Press.

⁷ cf. Hooghe, Liesbet, Gary Marks (2009), 'A Post-functionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus', in: *British Journal of Political Science* 39(1): 1-23.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Adam, Silke, (2007), 'Domestic Adaptations of Europe: A Comparative Study of The Debates on EU Enlargement and a Common Constitution in the German and French Quality Press', in: *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 19(4): 409-433.

¹⁰ Paczeński, Anna (2014) *Europeizacja polskich partii politycznych*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, pp.91

that are present in the public discourse, thanks to which each party can „occupy“ a part of the discourse and grant itself a label¹¹. The way in which political parties assess European integration and the future shape of the EU allows them to use labels, opting for more or less European integration. The Eurosceptic rhetoric is visible in political discourse and one of the contested areas is the future enlargement of the EU. Adversaries of the future enlargement often base their attitudes on cultural and identity issues, but also point out the enlargement fatigue of the EU. Anti-European arguments include the democratic deficit of the EU and issues of the distribution of funds among the member states, but also the matters of deeper integration and further enlargement of the EU¹².

Importantly, Polish society has always been rather pro-European; for evidence we may look to the outcomes of the accession referendum (77.45% Poles voted in favour of joining the EU), but also to the results of the public opinion survey where 89% of respondents declared support towards European Union¹³. Due to the public support towards the European Union, the anti-European arguments are supported only by the lesser part of society.

Also, Polish political discourse is somehow determined by the fact that Poland lacks a clear and visible right - left divide, most of the parties occupy the centre-right part of the political spectrum, and their positions are shaped accordingly. This may be the ground underlying the importance of the identity issue which has been debated since the enlargement - on the one hand, Poles declare themselves to be part of the European family, on the other however one still may observe the lack of feeling of belonging and a clear „us“ vs. „them“ divide. The way certain political parties perceive further integration (more or less cooperation) is also influencing the discourse on the future enlargement, including the more (and less) welcome candidate states, importance of the Eastern dimension, but also the „Europeanness“ and democratic nature of candidate and neighbourhood countries, costs of the process and security issues.

EU enlargement in Polish political parties programmes

Analysing the various party manifestos allows us to draw conclusions on the official party positions on European issues, as these documents are the universal channel of communication between political party and potential voters. Manifestos issued by the main Polish political parties have been examined, looking at the opinions on further EU enlargement.

First of all it needs to be stressed that the issue of further EU enlargement is not very visible in the official documents of Polish political parties, hence the problems

¹¹ Cześniak, Mikołaj (2011) 'Zawartość programów wyborczych polskich partii politycznych – zastosowanie metody MRG do ilościowej analizy treści', in: I. Słodkowska and M. Dołbakowska (ed.) *Wybory 2007. Partie i ich programy*, Warszawa, ISP PAN, pp.12.

¹² Styczyńska, Natasza (2015), 'Does Europe Matter at All? European Issues in the Discourse of Polish Political Parties', in: Rouet, G. (ed.) *European Citizenship and Integration 7 and 10 years after enlargement*, l'Harmattan (forthcoming).

¹³ CBOS (2014) 10 lat członkostwa Polski w Unii Europejskiej, Komunikat z badań nr 52/2014.

of further integration are not often debated. Although there are exceptions, such as the issue of European aspirations of Ukraine, which are discussed in the context of Polish foreign policy and the national interests including the postulate of Poland being more active in the Central and Eastern European region.

The anti-European arguments that could be observed during the 2003 accession referendum campaign have lost their validity and vanished with time. The rhetoric and arguments have likewise changed. The anti-European political parties accepted the accession but did not stop to criticize the very idea of the European Union or the way the EU is currently functioning, including the idea of deeper and wider integration. Although the main Eurosceptic arguments have disappeared together with the declining support for the Self-Defence (*Samoobrona*) and League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*) parties, the main anti-European arguments have returned with the appearance of the Congress of the New Right (*Kongres Nowej Prawicy*) in the 2014 EP campaign.

On the Polish political arena and in the Polish Parliament we may speak about four major party players: the ruling Civic Platform, coalition partner - the Polish Peasants' Party and opposition Law and Justice and Democratic Left Alliance parties.

Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) is a key player on the Polish political arena and, since 2007, the main opposition party. Founded in 2001, it emphasized the need to secure Polish national interests during the accession negotiations, but also stressed the Christian roots of Europe and the importance of including this reference in the future constitutional treaty¹⁴. The Party is critical of the current shape and functioning of the European Union whilst at the same time having a very pragmatic approach and understanding the EU as a source of economic profits. The Party is negative towards the possible EU influence on domestic affairs, but (especially since the Russian-Georgian conflict) is supporting common policy in areas such as defence, security and foreign affairs as well as European aspirations of the Eastern Partnership countries. Support towards European aspiration of Ukraine is visible in the programmes of the Law and Justice party. The Party declare that, after it will take power, the „eastern dimension“ of the Polish foreign policy should be strengthened, in order to reinforce the role of Poland as a proponent of stronger ties between Eastern Europe and the West¹⁵. It is noted that the Party is supportive of the possible EU enlargement towards Eastern Europe¹⁶, but the document does not refer to any other candidate or potential candidate states. According to the manifesto of the Law and Justice party, strengthening relations with Ukraine will allow Poland to become a more powerful player in the region¹⁷, and this is why, no matter how the international situation will changed, the prospect of the EU membership for

¹⁴ PiS (2003), Program wyborczy.

¹⁵ PiS (2005), Program wyborczy „V Rzeczpospolita - Sprawiedliwość dla Wszystkich”, pp.46-47.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp.53.

¹⁷ PiS (2011), Program „Polska Nowoczesna, Solidarna, Bezpieczna”, pp.24.

Ukraine will remain as a part of the Law and Justice political agenda¹⁸. Although limited scope of further integration is acceptable, no deeper integration is needed. „Law and Justice“ claims to support only these EU initiatives that are in the Polish national interest¹⁹. Deeper political integration is not one of them. According to the party programme, the European Union should be based on the European civilisation that has great Greek-Roman-Christian roots²⁰. Also during the term of President Lech Kaczyński (2005-2010), possible closer cooperation between EU and Eastern European countries was discussed, including the so-called ‘Jagiellonian policy’ that declared a need for Poland to play the role of a leader in the region and to establish a military and political coalition of post-communist East-Central European states that will allow them to prevent Russian domination in the region.

Even though foreign policy was not a significant topic in the programmes prepared for the presidential elections, during the 2015 campaign the Ukraine issue was mentioned by both President Komorowski and his contra-candidate Andrzej Duda from Law and Justice. The latter called for a „stronger Polish presence in international negotiations on Ukraine’s future and policy towards Russia, and indicated that he would consider providing military aid to Ukraine within the framework of the NATO alliance“²¹.

Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*) was established as an association in 2011 under the leadership of Andrzej Olechowski, Maciej Płażyński and Donald Tusk. Since 2007 it is the largest party in the Polish Parliament, serving also as a major coalition partner in Poland’s government. Its leader, Donald Tusk, who from 2007 to 2014 served as Prime Minister, was appointed President of the European Council. In the European Parliament, Civic Platform is a member of the European People’s Party (EPP) and the party stance on the future enlargement corresponds with the official position of EPP, which means that the party is in favour of deeper integration as well as future enlargements of the EU. Civic Platform documents mention rather the Eastern dimension of the EU’s future expansion than the European integration of the Western Balkan states or Turkey. In 2011, the Party’s programme declared a need for Poland to be a leader in the Eastern Partnership programmes, as well as a constant supporter towards the „European ambitions“ of Ukraine, Moldova and the South Caucasus countries (PO 2011:98). Since the Polish Parliament elections in 2011, the programme of the party has become more and more fuzzy, and Civic Platform has become a „catch all“ party, including a whole range of arguments but not devoting much time to the future enlargement of the EU.

The Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*), founded in 1991 as an alliance of centre-left parties is currently the third largest opposition party in the Polish Parliament. Many of the Democratic Left Alliance politicians were active

¹⁸ Ibidem, pp. 224.

¹⁹ PiS (2014) Program PiS 2014, pp.157.

²⁰ Ibidem, pp. 159.

²¹ Szczerbiak, A. (2015), What does Andrzej Duda’s victory mean for Europe?

politicians during the communist regime of the People's Republic of Poland, but the party declares itself to be social-democratic, and according to this belongs to the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. The party was a coalition partner in the years 2001-2005 when the negotiations with the European Union were concluded and the accession treaty was signed; this is why Democratic Left Alliance is considered the most pro-European political party in Poland, supporting the idea of more solidarity in the EU as well as deeper integration of the member states. The party is supporting further integration and is declaring that more efforts towards the Eastern Partnership countries are needed, because of their cultural proximity to the EU²². During the 2009 European Parliament elections the party was campaigning under the shared programme designed by the Party of European Socialists, they claimed that more integration is needed as well as good cooperation with the neighbouring countries.

The Polish Peasants' Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*) has undergone an interesting evolution; the party could be considered as Eurosceptic only during the time before accession when it was uncertain if the negotiated accession conditions would be good enough for the Polish farmers that the Party represents. Nowadays, still focused on the domestic issues and problems of the Polish farmers, the Party is a member of the European People's Party and follows the main directions of the EPP group. In 2014, the Party issued a document entitled „Polish Priorities of the European Policy of Polish Peasants' Party“ that did not include a single paragraph on the enlargement issues, but claimed that the European Union should remain based on Christian values²³.

There is one more political party in the Polish Parliament since 2011; Palikot Movement (*Ruch Palikota*) was established by the Polish businessman and politician Janusz Palikot in 2011 and gained 10.02% of votes in the parliamentary elections the same year. The Party has changed the name to Your Movement (*Twój Ruch*) and declares itself to be left-liberal and pro-European. In the programme prepared for the 2014 European parliamentary elections, the Party supported deeper European integration, leading to a federal European Union²⁴. Although the Party is dedicating parts of the programme to European issues, underlining the need to strengthen political and economic integration, future enlargement is not directly discussed, still we may assume that Your Movement is in favor of the possible widening of the EU.

Polish MEPs on the EU Enlargement 2004-2014

This part of the article is based on an analysis of the interventions of the Polish MEPs in selected parliamentary debates on enlargement in the EP 2004-2014, in 6th and 7th terms in office. The arguments on enlargement as expressed by the elites in the last decades can be divided into utility-based arguments and

²² SLD (2011) Program wyborczy SLD „Jutro bez obaw“, pp.80-81

²³ PSL (2014) Polskie priorytety europejskiej polityki PSL

²⁴ Twój Ruch (2014), Plan Zmian 2014-2020. Program Twojego Ruchu 2014

value-based arguments respectively referring to the logic of consequentiality and logic of appropriateness²⁵. Specifically, the discourse on recent EU enlargement eastwards to the EU Central and Eastern European countries was dominated by the value-based arguments referring to the belonging of these countries to Europe and its culture, a 'return home' as some called the process. On the contrary, the current debate on Turkey is mostly dominated by the utility-based arguments about the strategic or economic importance of Turkey for the EU²⁶. Also as previous studies on the debates on enlargement in the EP showed, apart from the political, economic and security arguments also those referring to culture, religion and identity are crucial in justifying the enlargement²⁷.

Analysis of Polish MEPs interventions on enlargement confirms the findings presented in the previous part of the article. The main interest - mostly strategically motivated - Polish MEPs express regards Ukrainian prospects for membership. It is especially important because Ukraine since 2004 is covered by the European Neighborhood Policy and its membership in the EU was then only a distant possibility. One of the Civic Platform's representatives noted on the occasion of opening negotiations with Turkey: „The opening of negotiations with Turkey ought to make it apparent to the European Union that Ukraine is an equally important and strategic partner for the EU. Ukraine should also receive a clear, rapid and credible prospect of cooperation with and accession to the European Union, and it should receive this as soon as possible. The Ukrainian people have demonstrated a remarkable degree of determination in their commitment to democratic values. They must and should now receive from us an answer commensurate with that determination“ (Sonik 2004). In general, Ukraine is presented as fitting in the European Union and whose membership - even if distant in time - is just and proper and also economically beneficial for Europe. Polish MEPs were specifically active in promoting achievements in advancing European standards in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution. Also they have been active in promoting the Eastern Partnership initiative which brought the membership perspectives for Ukraine, among others, back to the table.

Turkish membership on the other hand is much more controversial for Polish MEPs. Apart from typical arguments for and against Turkish membership that are of a political, economic and security nature and presented in the EP, Polish MEPs relatively often raise the issue of cultural and religious aspects that are decisive for justifying enlargement. One of the conservative MEPs claimed, „It is not a matter of whether Turkey does or does not already meet the EU's requirements. It is a matter of whether we want a Muslim Turkey in a Europe that was built on Christian values“ (Masiel 2004). Another claimed: „Although Turkey has had a presence on European territory for many centuries, it is not, in cultural terms, a European

²⁵ Sjursen 2012, op. cit.; Sjursen, Helene (2002), 'Why Expand?: The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in the EU's Enlargement Policy', in: *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(3): 491-513.

²⁶ Góra 2015, op. cit., Sjursen 2012 op.cit.

²⁷ Góra 2015, op. cit.

country. We should cooperate with Turkey to the best of our ability, but the implications of the accession of a Muslim country to a European club are hard to quantify“ (Chruszcz 2008). For many Polish representatives negative opinions on Turkish membership are derived from the specific vision of the EU founded on Christian values they promote. In such claims they present Turkey as not qualifying for enlargement mostly because such enlargement would change the EU itself. This is very consistent with the opinions on the EU expressed in the varied political programmes of the parties discussed above.

Conclusions

Polish political actors express a constant interest in EU enlargement. However, they promote mostly membership of countries such as Ukraine. This is motivated with the strategic interests in increasing Poland's security, but also with a historically based interest in this part of Europe. The arguments in favour of the European aspirations of Ukraine are value-based, evoke the Europeanization of the country. For some of the political parties, like Law and Justice, this is a matter of fairness but also a tool for Poland to play the role of leader in the region. Focus on ENP and enlargement toward the East has been presented as just, appropriate, and beneficial mainly because the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkan countries are considered to be always 'belonging to Europe'. The view on the future enlargement is also dominated by the view on the future of the European project in general, thus the Eurosceptic political parties are more likely to oppose future widening of the EU than their pro-European counterparts, who claim that we rather need deeper integration in order to be able to accept new member states.

The justifications against the enlargement are based on both economic and cultural arguments that refer to the issues of European identity. Turkey is often presented as not belonging to the European civilisation and perceived often as a threat for the Christian foundations of Europe and violating fundamental norms, human rights and religious freedom. The democratic nature of candidate and neighbourhood countries is also under debate, as well as costs of the process (both in terms of the costs of the previous enlargements and neighbourhood engagement and the future ones). Last but not least, the issue of security and, in particular, threats to the peaceful relations of Europe and the net security of the EU are raised.

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