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**The development of European studies in Poland after 1989 – from
specialisation to institutionalisation**

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The development of European studies in Poland after 1989 – from specialisation to institutionalisation

The European studies in Poland constitute a relatively new quality in the programmes of university curriculum. Their presence is well-marked at the beginning of the 90. At that time in the larger Polish university centres, first institutes and chairs specialising in teaching and researching on the European studies were established. Despite the lack of the official program curricula, the first European studies concentrated mostly on problems of the European integration.

The lack of elaborated structures and programmes of the European studies in the earlier period was caused by the political situation in Poland, dominated (similarly as it was the case in the majority of states of the Central and Eastern Europe) by the Soviet Union. The Soviet domination in Central and Eastern Europe and the Polish communist government which was imposed and controlled by the Soviets, was closely connected with an official [institutional] censorship of every aspect of the public life, especially in the scientific and artistic sphere. The government, depended on the Moscow political elites was authoritarian in character and ideological factors shaped the education of the Polish people, which were to be brought up in the spirit of an acceptance and even worship for the communist regime and its main exponent, which in this part of the world was the Soviet Union.

Maintaining, from the early post-war years the division of Europe as well as the Cold-War situation caused that behind the Iron Curtain it was not only impossible to travel freely, but the information was only allowed while after having been earlier subjected to the communist censorship. In these circumstances, it is not surprised that the picture of the West in general, and the European integration in particular was created by the communist propaganda, which by definition was to convince the public about the superiority of the Soviet Union and the communist regime over a decadent the and degenerated capitalistic world, in which a class oppression and an uncertainty as to the future of the working class reigned.

The establishment of the European Communities and the progress of the process of integration were perceived by the leaders of the so-called socialist states as symptoms of the tightening of an alliance in the western block of states - the enemies of the Soviet Union and

its so-called “social democratic” satellite states. The economic integration of the Western Europe – according to Kreml – aimed at the preparation of another intervention against the Soviet Union and the deprivation [it] of the sphere of influence, gained by virtue of Yalta agreement.

Briefly speaking, the knowledge about the West European integration was forbidden to such an extent that one could speak or write about the world behind the Iron Curtain either in negative terms or not at all. Therefore, because of the mentioned reasons, one could neither carry research nor give lectures on the West European integration. Some indispensable information, provided with “proper” ideological commentary was tolerated where it was impossible to avoid it, while giving lectures on international law as well as international economic relations.

An access to not censored information was very limited, and the main source of such information was provided by foreign mass media. Foreign newspapers and periodicals reached in scarce quantities very few readers. In those times there was not a cable/satellite television and one can say without exaggeration that thanks to the programmes broadcasted in the Polish language by the Radio Free Europe as well as the Voice of America, which was systematically disturbed, the Polish society would know nothing about the world behind the Iron Curtain and the life in the Western Europe as well as the integration processes in the states of Free Market (the term commonly used for the states belonging to the European Communities). If one were to believe Radio Moscow or Radio Warsaw, both NATO and the Common Market are merely dependencies of the expansionist forces of world Capitalism, and hence of ‘American imperialism’.

Academics specialising in (with the consent of the government) researching on “the contemporary problems of capitalism” as well as small group of representatives of international disciplines had access to foreign press and publications, but they could not use this information to disseminate it among students. For the narrow group of Poland’s economic management, the mentioned experts, prepared and issued elaborates from which one could learn more about the European economic integration. The political issues were usually ignored and a scientific interest in the European integration was treated with suspicion and this could turn out to be very risky for an academic career. More desirable and better seen was a research on such topics like the Polish – Soviet friendship, which helped tremendously in an academic career (an example: a still active in an academic environment professor emeritus

whose long-lasting research on the Polish – Soviet friendship made him a pro-rector of the International University of the United Nations (sic!).

The fall of communism in the Central and Eastern Europe, the implosion of the Soviet Union as well as the unification of Germany led to the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a new, unprecedented geo-political situation in Europe. Poland, entering a period of long-lasting socio-political transformation dating from the first free general elections in June 1989, did an effort, just from the very beginning, to rebuild its former relationships with Europe as a cultural and socio-economic area. The government, which emerged after the first free elections, already in December 1990 started to negotiate on the terms of Poland's association with the European Communities. A year later, on 16 December 1991 European Arrangement establishing an association between the European Communities and the member states on the one hand and the Polish Republic on the other was signed. The European Agreement came into force on 1 February 1994. Shortly, in April 1994 Poland filled an application for membership in the European Union. The negotiations were finally closed during the summit of the European Union in Copenhagen (13-14 December 2002). On 16 April 2003 the accession treaty was signed in Athens with the 10 new member states of the European Union. This Treaty entered into force on 1 May 2004. It is worth underlining that in the process of pre-accession negotiations one of the first subjects (September 1998) was education.¹ Provisions concerning this policy domain were included by the Maastricht Treaty, signed on 7 February 1992 in articles 126 and 127.²

In art.126 (3) of the Treaty establishing the European Community (Maastricht version), a provision was added on a mutual co-operation between the member states of the European Union and the third countries as well as international organisations dealing with questions of education. However, in the light of the Treaty provisions, it is difficult to talk about the common educational policy of the European Union, since the educational systems of each member state were shaped while relying on national traditions and experiences of each and

¹ The European Arrangement foresaw (art.76 (1)) the co-operation, which will "endeavour to raise the level of general education and professional qualifications in Poland, taking into consideration the priorities of Poland". Art.76 (2) listing the fields of co-operation states "promoting teaching in the field of European studies within the appropriate institutions".

²They relate to the support by the European Communities, the member states' activities concerning an organisation of educational systems while taking into account cultural and linguistic diversities. According to the Treaty provisions (Maastricht version), the activities of the European Union are following: the development of the European dimension of education, dissemination of languages of the member states, encouraging mobility of students and teachers, academic recognition of diplomas and periods of studies, promoting co-operation between educational establishments, encouraging the development of long-life education.

every member state.³ Therefore, the European Union recognises the member states' right to shape educational systems as well as the content of teaching, however, this does not mean that the European Union resigns from imposing on these different educational systems a common European dimension such as common programmes and projects, aiming at raising the quality of teaching, recognition of diplomas, exchange of information etc. Special attention is given to the co-operation between universities and academics.⁴

Socio-economic and political transformation as well as a perspective of closer relations with the states of the European Free Market led to the situation that European questions could become a subject of the Polish university curriculum both state/public and private. At that time European studies were carried out under different forms such as: bachelor, postgraduate, European specialisation and specialisation at the graduate level, given at the unitary - 5 year studies and supplementary forms of studies in frame of such university disciplines like: international relations, political science, economy, finances and banking, management and marketing, law and administration, sociology, cultural studies, history, pedagogy, etc.⁵

As it was just mentioned, a strong interest in the European issues (teaching and research) at the universities could be observed in Poland after the year 1989. Over 10 years of tightening the relations with the European Union resulted in the domination of the European issues at different university faculties, university disciplines as well as workshops. The raise of the said interest was also correlated with the Poland's accession to the European Union, resulting in a greater interest in the studies on Europe and the European integration. Similarly, as was the case earlier in the Western Europe, the European studies began to develop in two directions. The first, an interdisciplinary in character, was to provide a general knowledge on the

³ See: K. Lenaerts, *Education in European Community Law after Maastricht*, „Common Market law Review”, vol. 7, 1994.

⁴ European academic circles decided to transform their universities in order to refer to the kind of mobility, which prevailed in the Medieval Europe. The Bologna Declaration, signed in 1999 by representatives of Ministries of education from 29 European states makes a reference to such a tradition. The document indicates such activities that will lead to the compatibility of educational systems in Europe. The idea was to make possible studying in different European states and obtaining a diploma, which would be recognised in the other states to the agreement. Poland did not notify negotiation problems in an area “education, vocational training and youth” thus accepting community regulations. The aims of educational policy of the European Union is in fact realised in the frame of the reform of the educational system. The European questions are introduced to programmes of teaching on all levels of education. The education on the European integration is realised in Poland on level of elementary schools. The issues concerning the European Union entered school programmes many years ago and are thought under the label “European education”.

⁵ In order to support pre-accession activities, by virtue of an order No. 4 of the Minister of National Education of 14 May 1996, the European Educational Council was established. Its aim was to initiate and support activities in the frame of the Ministry of National Education (then departments formed as a result of division of the said Ministry) related to dissemination of knowledge about Europe, the European Union and the processes of the European integration in the frame of the higher as well as a life-long education. The Council consists of representatives of academic and educational circles as well as representatives of self- governments.

European law and economy, history, philosophy, sociology, literature and art as well as foreign languages.⁶ The second, concentrating to a greater extent on the European integration issues dealt with questions relating to law and administration as well as European economy, giving a lesser importance to humanistic and social sciences as supplementary.⁷ This was similar to an idea of an international European university, which aim was to educate European elites, which was set up in Brugge in 1949 as the College of Europe. The documents on the history of the European Movement, which are stored in the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence make possible to say that it was the materialisation – however in a modified form - of professor Stefan Glaser's project, who as an expert entrusted by the European Economic League prepared in the year 1948 a project of the first international European university.

An interest in the European studies in Poland was rising with the tightening of the relationships with the European Union. The needs, which emerged due to the planned Poland's accession to the European Union, constituted a great challenge for institutions and organizations responsible for the national education, a demand for experts dealing with European issues, especially lawyers and the experts in financial matters. These were not the only professions, which had to face a new European dimension. By the year 2004, the Polish universities neither have a university discipline called "europeistyka" (studies on the European integration) nor the European studies, despite proposals that were submitted to the Higher Education Council (the state organ responsible for programming and the elaboration the standards of academic curriculum). Therefore, the European issues came into university programmes via other university disciplines such as: international relations and political science. In practice, each university carried out the European studies due to its own standards, adopting its educational offer to an existing structure and an academic staff. Around the year 2004, one could observe the shaping of a system of teaching and training on the European integration, comprising bachelor, master, postgraduate studies, specialised courses and seminars. A great role in the development of the European studies played a network of the

⁶ The very idea of launching the European studies was born in the time of the establishment of the first institutions of the integrating Europe at the beginning of 50. The European institutions needed a qualified administrative staff and management. To meet this demand, the postgraduate studies were launched mainly as law studies. See: Z. Rudnicki, *Contribution of European Movement to idea of European unity in the field of culture and education in early post-war years*, EUI, Research Laboratory, European Centre Natolin, Warsaw 2007

⁷ See: Z. Rudnicki, *Studia europejskie w UE przed rozszerzeniem 2004 roku*, [w:] K.A. Wojtaszczyk (red.), *Studia europejskie w Polsce. Minima programowe a programy kierunku*, Wydawnictwa Naukowe i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2004, p. 43-57.

scientific-educational centres, having at their disposal European Documentation Centres. The most merited are the oldest centres of the European studies and the studies on the European integration set up at the beginning of 90. at the university of Gdańsk, Warszawa, Kraków and Łódź (situated in the European Institute).⁸

The first European studies in Poland were carried out by economic universities and concentrated on economic, legal and political issues of the European Communities. In its formula, they resembled "studies on the European integration". An exception was a programme of the specialisation "European studies" offered in framed of international relations at the Academy of Economics in Kraków, which linked the knowledge on the European integration together with the studies on "European languages and civilisation". The European studies were carried out in a formula, similar to "area studies". The European Centre at the University of Warszawa offered studies that linked together the programme of a linguistic college with courses devoted to different aspects of the European integration. However, at the Jagellonian University in Krakow an accent was put on interdisciplinary and holistic approach to the European issues.

A comparative analysis of the first European studies programmes in Poland allows us to state that they were characterised by pluralism both as to programmes and represented disciplines, which could be seen in different placement of these studies in an organizational structure of each university as well as an offered degree and a profile. The European studies were offered at the first (undergraduate/bachelor) and the second degree (graduate/master) as well as in the form of postgraduate and doctoral studies. The time of studying differed, depending on the character, which took 5-6 semesters in case of professional or graduate studies and 1-2 semesters in case of postgraduate studies.

As it was just mentioned, greatly contributed to the development of the European studies at the Polish universities educational and research programmes of the European Community

⁸ To give the Polish universities, both state/public as well as private, the European dimension, contributed such initiatives as: an introduction of the European Credit Transfer System in the frame of programme Socrates-Erasmus, which was realised at the beginning in 145 universities of EFTA states. Now, it constitutes one of the elements of a common, open, European educational and training space in which students and teachers can move freely. ECTS system is based on three elements: information (about programmes of teaching and students' achievements), contracts (between partner institutions and students) and the use of ECTS credits (reflecting student's effort to fulfil programme requirements). The next initiative was a project "Supplement to diploma" (realization of obligations of article IX. 3 Lisbon Convention of April 1997), which is now realized at the Polish universities as an element of Bologna system.

such as: *Tempus*,⁹ replaced at the end of 90. by *Socrates – Erasmus* programme,¹⁰ and particularly helpful in developing teaching on the European integration *Action Jean the Monnet*, in the frame of which the university teachers from Poland benefited since 1993 from grants on the preparation of lectures and teaching in the form of *modules, permanent courses* and *Jean Monnet Chairs*.¹¹ In the first years of the participation of the Polish universities in *Action Jean Monnet* funds were granted on doctoral dissertations and research projects on the European integration. The European education at the Polish universities was shaped under an influence of patterns of teaching, elaborated in the Western European states.

Another important contribution to the development of the European studies in Poland was European studies *curricula* worked out at the Polish centres, which were based on above mentioned patterns. One of first attempts in order to elaborate such a standard programme of studies was undertaken in first half of the 90. together by the *Inter-Faculty Center of European Studies at the Jagiellonian University* in Kraków and the European University Institute in Florence. The project on the *European Studies Curriculum Development for Central and Eastern Europe* was carried out by the group of academics and directed by Prof. Zdzisław Mach. This project constituted later a basis for the specialised programme of “European studies” as supplementary (second degree/master) studies in frame of cultural studies.

Thanks to association arrangements with the European Communities, Poland could set up cooperation with the institutions of higher education in the European Union such as: College of Europe in Brugge, the European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht, the European University Institute in Florence as well as with other institutions of the member states, specialising in teaching on the European integration. An establishment of a filial of the College of Europe in 1994 in Natolin next to Warszawa, was recognition of the Polish aspirations and endeavours to educate a group of experts in the field of European integration. The education of the Polish students in the College of Europe, like in the European University Institute in Florence (where doctoral studies are offered) was financed at the beginning from

⁹ W. Studencki, *TEMPUS In Poland: an Informal Review*, [w:] R.Kucha (ed.), *European Integration through Education. Traditions, The Present and the Future*, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, Lublin 2004, p. 641-654

¹⁰ B. Skibińska, *SOCRATES – ERASMUS Programmes In Poland*, [w:] R.Kucha (ed.), *European Integration through Education. Traditions, The Present and the Future*, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, Lublin 2004, p. 623-640

¹¹ At present, this programme comprises additionally such forms as: Jean Monnet Chairs Ad Personam and Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence.

the European Community's financial assistance and from the year 2001 is financed by the Polish government.

The next stage in the development of the European education was an introduction on the list of autonomous university disciplines, the specialisation called "europeistyka" (studies on the European integration.). "Europeistyka" as a university discipline at the Polish universities was in fact introduced in the last academic year, however the discussions lasted many years.¹²

Advocates of a new European discipline at the university level were of an opinion that offering the European specialisation in the frame of other traditional autonomous disciplines was unsatisfactory due to an interdisciplinary character of European questions, which went beyond legal, political, internationalist as well as economic aspects. They also underlined the impossibility of controlling a quality of teaching at the level of specialisation. On the other hand, adversaries represented an opinion that one should wait with the launching of "europeistyka" (studies on the European integration) until a proper level, in the form of [the scientific] schools and research methods as well as experienced and high qualified group of professionals, specialising in the European integration was achieved.

The first discussion took place on 8 and 9 June 2002 during a conference on *European studies and European information*, organized by the Chair of European Studies at the Academy of Economics in Kraków. The basis for a discussion constituted presentations of specialists from different Polish academic and research centres, experienced in the teaching of European issues. An important event, summing up the discussion on the shaping of a university discipline called "europeistyka" took place in the spring 2004, a seminar on *Minimums and programmes of European studies specialisation in Poland* organised by Department of the European Institutions of the Institute of Political Sciences at the University of Warszawa. The issue of program minimums is closely related to the setting up of standards, binding for students of the new autonomous discipline "europeistyka", which since the academic year 2004/2005 was to be carried out at the Polish universities.

The present educational standards for students of the university discipline "europeistyka" approved by the Ministry of National Education after obtaining a positive opinion of the Higher Education Council foresee two degrees, namely: bachelor/undergraduate and master/graduate. The first degree graduates receive a diploma, equivalent to *Bachelor of Arts* and the second degree graduates a diploma of completion of the graduate/master studies, an equivalent of *Master of Arts*.

¹² The decision to include it on the list of autonomous university disciplines was taken in the year 2003.

According to the official standards of education for the university discipline “europeistyka”, the programme of studies at the first degree foresees a group of elementary and main courses. The first group consists of courses such as: *society and cultures of Europe* (90 hours), *economy* (90 hours), *political science* (90 hours) as well as *European law* (90 hours). The second group consists of following subjects: *social history of Europe*, *political systems of European states*, *economic integration in Europe*, *institutions and decision-making processes in the European Union*, *community policies*, as well as *Europe in international relations* (in total 240 hours). The recommended program minimum comprises physical exercise (60 hours), foreign languages (120 hours) and computer technologies (30 hours).

The programme “europeistyka” at the second degree foresees in a group of elementary courses *European civilization* (60 hours) and in a group of main courses such courses as: *problems of cultural identity in Europe*, *democracy in Europe*, *foreign policy and security in the European Union*, *administration, justice and home affairs*, *public finances in the European Union*, as well as *Polish foreign policy* (in total 240 hours).

From the above presentation, one can see clearly that the programme links the elements of studies on the European integration with studies of a cultural and an interdisciplinary character. Taking into account the fact that this kind of studies has entered the university curriculum recently, it is too early for a judgement on functioning of “europeistyka” as a university discipline. One can only say that this kind of studies, as a *novum* on the Polish educational market, gained a considerable interest from students.

The picture of the European studies in Poland after a 5 year experience of Poland’s membership in the European Union allows us to draw some interesting conclusions. An important phenomenon is a creation of “europeistyka” as a university discipline. Does this development mean the end of the European studies in a former, pluralistic formula, typical for the period before the year 2004? Studying the data from the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, one can state that there are only few universities offering “europeistyka”. One wonders why after 5 years, since it became a university discipline, “europeistyka” is offered only at 18 state/public universities (12 universities – among them 2 economic, 4 engineering, 1 military and 1 higher professional school) as well as 22 private universities. The key to understanding of such a phenomenon lies in the fact that the creation of a university discipline “europeistyka” must take into account binding educational standards, which limit the possibilities of its quantitative development. One can perceive it as a positive development because the standards impose a higher quality of education, on the other hand, there is a fear

whether they are realistic because they make difficult to fulfil the program requirements, while at the same time filling the criteria, authorising universities to carry out university disciplines. The barrier constitutes the necessity to fulfil academic staff requirements because of two main reasons. Firstly, it is rather difficult to define the qualifications of academic teachers of a university discipline “europeistyka” in the situation when “europeistyka” does not offer degrees of a traditional scientific discipline. Secondly, having in mind standards minimum for a university discipline “europeistyka”, it is difficult to find academics representing at the same time different disciplines. One can presume that they should be lawyers, economists, sociologists, historians, political scientists as well as academics representing cultural studies. While searching for an original formula for standards minimum, binding for a university discipline “europeistyka”, a risky step was done, namely the creation of a hybrid programme, comprising elements characteristic for studies on the European integration with elements of the European studies *culture the and civilisation*. In effect, one has to reconcile two different approaches and contents. In addition, the necessity of limiting oneself to the time limit (hours required), and limited possibilities of going beyond program minimums makes that they are neither sound studies on the European integration nor satisfactory studies on the European civilization and culture. One could state that if it were not for the attractiveness of “europeistyka”, it would have even greater difficulties to be chosen by students.

On the other hand, one cannot state that the European studies in its original form were replaced or even suppressed by “europeistyka”. They are still carried out, not being limited by strait-jacket of standards minimum. They are offered - as was the case before - in the form of specialisations in the frame of other university disciplines. What’s more, they are offered in the frame of new autonomous discipline as an attractive label. An interesting fact is that they co-exist sometimes even against the logic of “europeistyka”. This results in confusion, because students have difficulty in identifying the European studies, which under one roof once function as European or “europeistyka” other times as studies on the European integration.

The difficulties at the beginning of a new autonomous discipline of studies called “europeistyka” confirm the fact that in the most cases these studies are offered as the first degree studies. Only few university centres announced for the incoming academic year the recruitment on the second degree of “europeistyka” (graduate/master degree). The reason for such a state of affairs is the lack of highly qualified specialists that could, according to the

binding Polish standards of education, give its name to the recently approved university discipline.