

From 1 July to 31 December 2011, Poland chaired the Council of the European Union for the first time.

In his speech given to the European Parliament on 14 December 2011, José Manuel Durão Barroso stated that the **Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, under difficult circumstances, had delivered very important achievements and worked with great professionalism and enthusiasm:

[...] we can say that Poland has lived up to this reputation and the Polish Presidency up to our expectations. The Polish Presidency has held up the spirit of partnership between the European institutions and the Member States. Poland has constantly pushed for more Europe to address efficiently a crisis that has not only a financial and economic dimension but also above all a political one [...]. As I said, these were considerable achievements under difficult circumstances. But this crisis is not behind us and we have a lot of work ahead. As we move forward, I would like that all Member States will show the same level of commitment to Europe as Poland has shown. [It] will be a tough act to follow. [...] thank [...] [you] for your leadership, for your strong European commitment, for your political courage. I think this was a great example for all the member states that are committed to a stronger European Union. (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-11-887_en.htm)

Donald Tusk in his speech given to the European Parliament on the same day, presented the following review of the Polish Presidency:

Despite the fact that we were making our debut in the role of the Presidency, and perhaps precisely because of this, ours has been a Presidency of people determined to carry out their European assignment as well as we can. [...] we have taken up the tasks – mindful of our limitations [...] I have heard many warm words in the last few days about our commitment and the effectiveness of our work. [...] I do think the Poles have earned this praise, and they have done so precisely because it was with a belief in the reason for having a united Europe that they took on the challenges which fell to the Polish Presidency. [...] we cannot hide the fact that today, somewhere beneath the surface, there is in fact now a debate going on not about the future of the euro, but about the future of the Union. [...] we need greater determination to protect the foundations of Europe, and not constant discussion of revision of these foundations.

[...] we need a very profound and serious debate [...] because another Europe, a new Europe, is emerging as we watch. Let us do everything for it to become a united Europe, not a divided Europe. (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20111214+ITEM-005+DOC+XML+V0//EN>)

After the publication of No. 3/2011 of our journal, we put forward a proposal to evaluate the extent to which the Polish Presidency fulfilled its goals and Europe's expectations, and assess the Presidency's achievements and shortcomings. We would like to thank all those who accepted our invitation to participate in this discussion.

Some of the texts submitted are included in the first part of this issue. Their authors draw attention to problems that result from obligatory tasks of the presiding state and those born with Poland's own initiatives, and attempt to identify to their various effects, without necessarily evaluating them.

However, the course of any Presidency – its priorities, adopted scenarios, their implementation and results, cannot be assessed separately from the condition of the entire EU and global trends. Therefore the other articles included also point to many EU trouble spots and conclusions drawn often overlap with the motto of the Polish Presidency: “More Europe in Europe.”

Western Review 2013, No. 1, is the English edition of the Polish academic quarterly *Przegląd Zachodni* 2012, No. 2. The quarterly has been published by the Institute for Western Affairs since 1945.

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