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# INTRODUCTION

This issue of the *European Studies Journal* features research articles by European Studies specialists at the Poznań University of Economics. The articles represent a cross-section of the many topics researched at our University.

Most of the articles focus on various differences separating Poland from the European Union and the adjustments required to overcome them. Some pertain to the necessary macro-economic restructuring such as attracting more foreign capital into the country. Others center around making the Polish legal system compatible with *aquis communautaire* and, ultimately, creating a consistent legal and economic environment for business. More specifically, the task requires appropriate regulation of the Polish banking sector reconciling short-term goals such as protection of domestic banks (guaranteed by derogations included in the Europe Agreement) with free competition in the best interest of the consumer.

Among the regulations awaiting gradual introduction in Poland in compliance with the obligations assumed under its association agreement (and to be assumed in the future under the membership agreement) are environmental protection norms which meet European Union standards.

One of the articles focuses on the significance and the effects of the European Investment Bank's finance on the development of intrastructure in EU member states.

Accession to the European Union will certainly have a lasting effect on the intensity, character and direction of urban growth. The experience of European cities in the internationally integrated territory has been presented in another article of the *Journal*.

Poland is currently undergoing a transition of enormous importance to its future position in Europe. The changes we are observing are a combination of internal restructuring and external adjustments. Some of the internal transformations are a consequence of international agreements signed by our country, including the Europe Agreement. We are now undergoing a stage of accelerated European initiation and catching up with the rest of the Continent.

In July 1996, the Polish government presented the European Commission with its response to an extensive questionnaire on a wide spectrum of economic, legal and social topics. This data will serve as the basis for the European Commission to issue an opinion on Poland's suitability as a prospective candidate for the Union. Meanwhile, the international conference in Maastricht (Maastricht II) is continuing its deliberations on what institutional adjustments are needed for the Union's ongoing efficacy – especially after its expansion eastward.

Poland has completed the first stage of integration by relying mainly on its own resources. Although significant, the Union's assistance was quite limited. Now that the ties formed in the period of association have become closer and the structural dialogue has grown more intense, Poland's access to some of the European Union's programs aimed at the realization of the European Agreement and the establishment of closer links has become more realistic. The White Paper of Cannes (June 1995) makes it possible to assess the legal adjustments needed for Poland to operate in the Internal Market. All of these tasks, however, are difficult, costly and time-consuming. Still, their implementation is essential for accession to full membership.

The Tempus program has created opportunities for observing the more "humanistic" approach to studying Europe adopted by Western universities. The curricula of these institutions contain more courses in philosophy, sociology, literature and European culture. The approach offers a wider perspective and opportunities for peaceful reflection.

Although much can be said for the Western approach, we ought to remember that in our case time is of the essence and that our economics universities must produce specialists competent in achieving goals dictated by the membership agreement resolutions and by the implementation of its provisions. Although this approach is instrumental, it seems well-justified by the realities of the present time.

The research conducted by scientists specialising in European Studies is to serve the realisation of this goal.

Poznań, October 1996 *Renata Stawarska*