

STUDIA
EUROPEJSKIE
STUDIES IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
Centrum Europejskie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego

Rok 23 • Numer 1 • 2019



Rzeczpospolita Polska
Ministerstwo
Spraw Zagranicznych

ISSN 1428-149X

Warszawa 2019

Recenzowany kwartalnik / The Peer-reviewed Quartely

“Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs”

wydawany przez / published by

Centrum Europejskie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego / Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw

Al. Niepodległości 22, 02-653 Warszawa

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Studio Poligraficzne Edytorka

www.edytorka.pl

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Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 2019

ISSN 1428-149X

Nakład 200 egzemplarzy

Printing House:

Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR

e-mail: sekretariat@aspra.pl

www.aspra.pl



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Zadanie publiczne współfinansowane przez Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych RP w konkursie „Forum Polsko-Czeskie na rzecz zbliżenia społeczeństw, pogłębionej współpracy i dobrego sąsiedztwa 2018” (Projekt numer BDG528/2018).

Publikacja wyraża jedynie poglądy autora/ów i nie może być utożsamiana z oficjalnym stanowiskiem Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych RP

The public task co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland in the competition “Polish-Czech Forum for the rapprochement of societies, in-depth cooperation and good neighborhood 2018” (Project no. BDG528/2018).

The publication only expresses the views of the author(s) and cannot be equated with the official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

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From the Editors

This issue of the “*Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs*” is published as part of the project entitled “Polish-Czech academic forum on European culture and identity: past, present, future”. The project is co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland within the framework of the competition “Polish-Czech Forum for the rapprochement of societies, deeper cooperation and good neighbourhood 2018”. Its aim is to provoke the Polish-Czech debate among academic communities, and students in particular, by starting a discussion on the formation of a European identity in the context of the proposal to create a multispeed Europe. At the same time this debate about the future is a reminder of the contribution of both nations to the development of European culture and identity, and is intended to refer to the tradition of exchange of ideas existing even before 1989. The goal is to seek model solutions for the EU, taking into account the traditions, culture and history of both nations. This discussion platform is also intended to bring about lasting changes in the academic environment, in particular Polish and Czech youth, by strengthening youth cooperation, providing a better understanding of history and a better view and understanding of the origins of Polish and Czech policies in the context of the formation of a European identity.

The project is implemented by the Centre for Europe of the University of Warsaw in cooperation with the Institute of State and Law of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Charles University in Prague, the Institute of International Relations in Prague and the University of Economics in Prague. On the Polish side, the activities are supported by the Institute of International Relations of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies of the University of Warsaw and Centre for International Relations, non-governmental think tank with headquarters in Warsaw.

The task is to start a Polish-Czech debate on European identity, primarily among the academics and people interested in European affairs in Poland and the Czech Republic. Within the framework of this project

two open academic conferences were organized with the participation of students. During these conferences the Polish and Czech positions on the impact of creating a multidirectional Europe and on the shaping of European identity were presented.

The aim of these debates was also to recall the contribution of both nations to the development of European culture and identity. The first seminar was organized in Warsaw (in October), the second in Prague (in December). Additionally in Prague there was an invitation-only round table on the current challenges facing the EU. Their results have been recorded in the form of this joint publication. The follow-up to the initiated debate is ensured by the creation of an open discussion platform in social media allowing for an open exchange of ideas between people interested in Polish-Czech cooperation (Facebook page: Współpraca polsko-czeska/Česko-polská spolupráce, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1873180519444641/>).

Today human and social capital is a fundamental factor determining the position and role of the state in the international arena. Investment in education and the development of social bonds and the creation of a conscious civil society are crucial in the process of building a strong position in the world. However, in Polish-Czech relations there is a significant disproportion in the scale of mutual interest in each other in Poland and the Czech Republic. This problem is particularly perceptible in the sphere of contacts at the academic level. Before 1989 the Czechs were very interested in Poland. For Czechs, Poland was a “window on the Western world”. A special form of exchange of ideas were meetings of Polish and Czech dissidents, which Polish public diplomacy has so far used to strengthen the image of Poland in the Czech Republic. Before 1989, academic cooperation with Polish institutions was also very popular in the Czech Republic. Academic contacts between Polish and Czech scientists were very lively as for Czech scientists they represented an intermediate contact with science in the West. This applied not only to the sciences, but also to the humanities and social sciences. In Czechoslovak academic circles, Polish science enjoyed high esteem. There are known cases when Czech scientists took up work in Polish scientific institutions due to the higher level of scientific work conducted there. After 1989, scientific cooperation declined, because as a consequence of lifting restrictions in contacts with the West, Czech science completely changed the direction of cooperation. As a result of the weakening of Polish-Czech contacts, Polish scientific circles ceased to have an impact on opinion-forming circles in the Czech Republic. Consequently, the Czech public opinion about Poland and Poles began to be influenced by other channels of social communication.

The project carried out by the Centre for Europe University of Warsaw, the outcome of which is this publication, attempts to reverse this process and restart scientific dialogue in the field of social sciences, in which the interests of the Czech Republic and Poland converge. Poland and the Czech Republic, being members of the European Union, speak out on the future of the European Union. One of the most important areas involves a debate on the future shape of the European Union. This is a subject that is of interest not only to academics in Poland and the Czech Republic, but to the general public as well, including, above all, young people. But the debate on this issue is being conducted separately in both countries. Hence the proposal, which is the essence of the project coordinated by the Centre for Europe University of Warsaw, to combine the Polish and Czech debate on the issues related to the priority of this year's competition announced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. Its scope includes the issue of the formation of European identity in Poland and the Czech Republic and how the project of a multi-speed Europe can influence this process.

At the same time, there is still very little knowledge in Poland and the Czech Republic about the contribution of both nations to the development of European culture and identity. Acquiring and promoting this knowledge seems to be crucial in the context of building a common position of V4 Group countries in the EU and an attempt to look for model solutions for the EU, taking into account the tradition, culture and history of both nations.

The circle of recipients of the activities includes both the persons professionally involved in European integration issues (scientists, students and persons dealing with European issues or Polish-Czech relations by virtue of their public function) and those who are interested in Czech-Polish relations or European issues for other reasons. For the first category of recipients, two conferences were held: the first in Warsaw in order to gain an initial insight into the discussed issues, the second in Prague in order to discuss the problem in more depth and to present the results of the discussion to Czech recipients (especially to university students). This joint publication is addressed to both target audiences in order to preserve the results of the discussion and disseminate them beyond the circle of direct participants of both meetings. The publication is accompanied by the creation of a discussion platform on a social networking site and its management and moderation. This form is particularly targeted at young people.

Herewith we would like to express our thanks to all those who contributed to the content of this publication, as well as to those who helped us in terms of organisation and funding – in particular the

Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the University of Warsaw as well as the Institute of State and Law of the Czech Academy of Sciences. We truly appreciate support demonstrated by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Prague. Our special thanks go to H.E. Ambassador Barbara Ćwioro and members of her staff and namely to the First Counsellor Ms. Magdalena Moryksiewicz and the Minister Counsellor Ms. Marzena Ewa Krajewska. Furthermore, we express our gratitude to the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Warsaw and its First Secretary Mr. Jaromír Vejrych in particular.

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