



# Weekly Briefing

**Poland external relations briefing:  
Discussion on EU reform;  
transport workers protest at Ukraine border  
Konrad Rajca**

## **Discussion on EU reform; transport workers protest at Ukraine border**

### **Summary**

*The subject of proposed changes to the European Union treaties aimed at deepening the federal nature of the Union is causing controversy in Poland. The plans have long been heavily criticized by the outgoing United Right government. However, enthusiasm for the planned reform of the Union is also not shown by most of the opposition groups that will soon take power in Poland. The subject of the planned reform of the Union has provoked heated discussions in the Polish parliament.*

*A protest by Polish transporters and farmers at border crossings with Ukraine has been ongoing in Poland since early November. The protesters are blocking Ukrainian trucks from entering Poland, except for humanitarian aid and military equipment. They oppose unrestricted access of Ukrainian transport companies to the Polish and EU markets, which hits the Polish transport industry, which has about 40 percent of the EU market in this sector. According to the protesters, Ukrainian carriers do not meet EU standards and are thus more competitive. The farmers, in turn, are also demanding subsidies for the purchase of corn, the maintenance of the agricultural tax at this year's level and the continuation of so-called liquidity loans. These demands are related to the inflow of Ukrainian agricultural products to Poland.*

### **Introduction**

The European Parliament in late November voted in favor of a document recommending changes to the EU treaties, aiming to deepen European integration toward federalization. Polish MEPs were divided on the issue. Representatives of Law and Justice and the Civic Coalition (with the exception of one deputy), the Polish People's Party (PSL) and Szymon Holownia's Poland 2050 Movement voted against the EU proposal. Only representatives of the Left supported it. There were 291 MEPs in favor of the document, 274 against, and 44 abstained. The atmosphere was thus heated by arithmetic, because without the vote of support from 8 Polish MEPs from the Left and 1 from the Civic Coalition, the document would not have received the approval of the European Parliament.

## **Donald Tusk against EU plans**

The Civic Coalition (KO) leader Donald Tusk, who is likely to take over as prime minister in mid-December, clearly distanced himself from the draft changes to the EU treaties before the European Parliament vote. He recalled, among other things, Brexit. He warned against "wading into a very naive integration enthusiasm."<sup>i</sup> - We remember Brexit. One of the reasons why Britain left the European Union was precisely this naive, sometimes unbearable Euro-enthusiasm, which turned into projects that changed the nature of the EU," he said at a press conference.

He announced that all Polish MEPs from the European People's Party would vote against the report of the European Parliament committee aimed at deepening the federal nature of the Union. This is not, he explained, so that we are against progressive European integration, but it is about some of the comments and proposals, as well as the pace, Tusk said. In his opinion, Europe "needs to be repaired in many places, but the stupidest way will be to take this very naive integration enthusiasm." He added that "if he becomes prime minister, he will be very firm here." I don't want it to sound immodest, but I have the impression that they will reckon with Poland's voice and my voice on this issue in the European Council as well," Tusk said. In his view, the ideas and projects that have been prepared by the European Parliament do not correspond to "the spirit of the times and the real needs of the EU." He said that at this point, however, the discussion of whether the Union will become a superstate is "a bit of political fiddling." Poland's real dilemma today - as demonstrated, for example, by the issues of money, funds and the National Reconstruction Plan (NRP) - is whether it will position itself with its back to the EU or sideways. Will it become, as it was for a while, a first-rate player again," he assessed.<sup>ii</sup>

## **Jarosław Kaczyński on loss of sovereignty**

In turn, the leader of the outgoing ruling camp of the United Right, Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński said on Polish Independence Day, November 11, that "if the changes to the EU treaties come into force, Poland will no longer be an independent, sovereign country and will not be a state at all." He also announced a conference of patriotic circles and a "great social action".<sup>iii</sup>

– Our opponents have denied that there will be no changes to the European treaties. Well, the opposite is true. (...) The creators of this project cite the enlargement of the Union," he said, stressing that the need for changes is explained by the possibility of efficient management of the Community. According to the Law and Justice chairman, this is a lie and such changes are not necessary for this.

The politician listed those changes that will be felt most after deepening integration for countries such as Poland. - The full abolition of the right of veto, that foundation in which EU states, although surrendering many powers to the EU, remained sovereign states. This is a fundamental change, as it relates to the status of states, to the status of EU members," he said. As he stressed, this will lead to a privileged position for Germany and France. Jaroslaw Kaczynski explained that it could be that the EU will want to interfere in foreign affairs, defense issues and matters of security of EU borders. - From our perspective, Germany will want to interfere in these issues, and this means external rule in Poland, he added. The Law and Justice chairman also spoke about the "economic terror" that Brussels wants to introduce. - This is all aimed at the domination of influential countries over the other EU members, he pointed out, adding, "Domination in Europe will fall to Germany and France. Due to our geographical location, Poland will be under German influence - this is supposed to happen after the changes in the EU."

He expressed the view that the goal of the opposition to take power in Poland will be to subordinate Poland to Germany. - This is what the government headed by Tusk was installed here for. This is the plan they want to implement here. (...) This is what this is all about. That's why Mrs. von der Leyen said to Tusk: you will come back here as prime minister," he said.

### **In parliament about the reform of the Union**

During a discussion in the Sejm, Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski said Polish MPs should appeal to all MEPs to oppose changes to European Union treaties.<sup>iv</sup> The Law and Justice Party (PiS) proposed the adoption of a special resolution to "halt amendments to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union that are dangerous to the Republic of Poland." However, it was not adopted without gaining majority approval.

- What will happen in less than 24 hours is an extremely important matter. A package of 267 amendments will be voted on, which in a radical way - these are not my words, but a quote from the European Parliament's website - change the EU from an organization of sovereign states cooperating with each other, but separate from each other, into a creature that will be centrally managed," Pawel Jablonski said.

During the discussion of the resolution, Konrad Berkowicz (Confederation) said that the proposal to adopt a joint resolution is good in itself, but "it is ridiculous that it is submitted by someone from the Law and Justice party, which has been in power for eight years and has pursued, in addition to waving sabers, a policy of total submission to the EU." Maciej Konieczny (Left), in turn, objected to "identifying Poland's interest as contradictory to European integration." - Europe needs to reform, it needs to be efficient on the international arena (...), for this a reflection and a very reasonable reform of the EU is required, he added.

The EU Affairs Minister Szymon Szykowski vel Sęk (Law and Justice) stressed that the changes under consideration in the EP concern fundamental issues of Polish sovereignty. He said that among the many proposals, there is the transfer of member state competencies to the level of EU competence. These are such areas as environmental protection, climate policy, biodiversity," Szykowski vel Sęk mentioned. In turn, Paweł Zalewski (Poland 2050) said that PiS has made - against Poland's interests - its enemy out of the European Union. He pointed out that Poland can strengthen its sovereignty precisely thanks to the Union. He assessed that the resolution proposed by PiS should be considered in the EU affairs committee, not in plenary, and called the action of the proposers a "huckster."

### **The protest of farmers and transporters on the border with Ukraine**

Since the beginning of November, Polish carriers have been blocking Polish-Ukrainian border crossings in Dorohusk, Hrebenne, Medyka and Korczowa<sup>v</sup>. They are demanding, among other things, the introduction of commercial permits for Ukrainian companies to transport goods, with the exception of humanitarian aid and supplies for the Ukrainian military, the suspension of licenses for companies that were established after the outbreak of war in Ukraine and their inspection. There is also a demand for the elimination of the so-called electronic queue on the Ukrainian side, which slows down the entry of Polish trucks into

Poland. The carriers' protest at the Medyka border crossing was joined by farmers from the "Deceived Village" initiative. The farmers are demanding, among other things, subsidies for the purchase of corn, the maintenance of the agricultural tax at this year's level, and the continuation of liquidity loans. These demands are related to the inflow of Ukrainian agricultural products to Poland.

We support the Ukrainian side on the issue of the war, we want them to be successful," said Piotr Krzyzankiewicz, vice president of regional Association of Road Carriers in Szczecin, who participated in the protest in Dorohusk. At the same time, he cautioned that our neighbors "cannot do this at the expense of Polish carriers." As he added, Ukrainian carriers currently dominate the Polish market.

### **The Ukrainian politicians criticize Poland**

The temperature of the Polish-Ukrainian dispute remains high due to, among other things, statements by Ukrainian politicians. Lviv mayor Andriy Sadovy, in a series of posts on the X portal, accused protesters of blocking the delivery of humanitarian aid to Ukraine. He also said that the ongoing protest was leveling Poland's previous support for Ukraine. "Our Polish friends should be brought back to reality," - Andrij Sadowy wrote on X portal. "All your gigantic contribution to Ukraine's victory in this war is being nullified by a marginal group that is blocking the delivery of humanitarian goods to a country that is already defending its independence and the security of Europe for the second year." - He added in another post. "Does Poland have the courage, political will and civic tools to end this shameful blockade of Ukraine?" - Sadowy asked in conclusion.<sup>vi</sup>

Allegations of protesters blocking the passage of humanitarian aid transports were also made by Ukrainian Deputy Infrastructure Minister Serhiy Derkacz during his visit to Dorohusk. In addition, he accused the Poles of not allowing fuel tankers heading to Ukraine to cross the border out of line.

The Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenski himself also spoke on the situation on the Polish-Ukrainian border. - I think we need to have a very balanced policy. To have a plan of action. And we have such a plan. The prime minister, as well as Deputy Prime Minister Stefanishina, is working with the participation of the foreign ministry, the interior ministry and

the infrastructure ministry. I'm sure we can do it," Zelenski told reporters after the "Grain from Ukraine" conference held in Kiev. I think we need to give our neighbors some time. Things are warming up," the Ukrainian president concluded, as quoted by the Ukrainska Pravda portal.<sup>vii</sup>

### **The Polish government supports Polish transporters**

Statements by Ukrainian politicians about the protest by Polish transporters are criticized in Poland and considered manipulative, with protest organizers and some politicians stressing that they are letting trucks with military equipment and humanitarian aid through. The Polish authorities point out that the situation regarding the influx of Ukrainian transport companies at the Polish border is a result of the European Union's agreement with Ukraine. They stress that they seek to resolve the dispute and stop the situation through talks with the parties involved.

Under a road freight transport agreement between the EU and Ukraine concluded in June 2022 and extended in March 2023, permits for Ukrainian carriers to drive on EU roads were abolished. Protesting carriers from Poland are demanding the reinstatement of the old regulations.

Protesting farmers and transporters were visited by Infrastructure Minister Alvin Gajadhur and Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Anna Gembicka. The Agriculture Minister promised farmers a subsidy of about 232 euros per hectare of corn, an increase in the pool of liquidity loans by about 581 million euros.<sup>viii</sup> She noted that the difficult situation on the border is caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine and "irresponsible EU policy, failure to see the problems of Poland, the border countries." She noted that during the meeting with the protesters, there were talks about fighting in the EU forum for the solutions demanded by farmers and transporters, as well as domestic, ad hoc solutions that the ministry can introduce.

At a joint press conference with Infrastructure Minister Alvin Gajadhur, Chairman of the Committee for the Defense of Carriers and Transport Employers Waldemar Jaszczur said that the transporters' demand for the return of licenses for Ukrainian trucking companies will not change.

- These cars enter Poland and perform cabotage transport, which they are not allowed to do, because the liberalization agreement clearly defines the rules on which the Ukrainian side can benefit. It's completely different, these cars are emptying our market, taking our cargoes, performing transports within our country and in Poland-EU-Poland relations," said Waldemar Jaszczur. Infrastructure Minister Alvin Gajadhur said that vehicle inspections at border crossings with Ukraine will be increased. The head of the ministry noted that his department and the road transport inspectorate want to support the Polish transport industry, so additional measures will be taken on our eastern border.<sup>ix</sup> The topic of the Union-Ukraine agreement, concerning, among other things, transport services, is to be dealt with by the EU Council on Transport, which will be held on December.

The transport workers' protest is also actively supported by politicians from the Confederation party. Deputy Speaker of the Sejm Krzysztof Bosak, the group's leader, visited the protesters. - Ukrainian propaganda has started to be rolled out for a few days, and Ukrainian media have shot footage that Putin is somehow inspiring or sponsoring this. This is the kind of moral blackmail that really no longer works," the politician said on Polsat News television.<sup>x</sup> The deputy speaker of the Sejm expressed his belief that Polish services "in general, as in agriculture, as in transportation, have completely removed their responsibility to control what Ukrainian carriers do in Poland." He added that Mateusz Morawiecki's government supported the conclusion of the EU-Ukraine agreement. He called for it to take action on the issue of Polish transporters in consultation with Kiev, Brussels and EU partners.

The Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce also issued a position on the blockade of the border by Polish carriers. It called for an end to the protest and the activity of the Polish government. It assessed that the blockade is hitting Poland's economic cooperation with Ukraine and entrepreneurs from both countries. "Several member companies have informed us that the blockades have already caused them losses exceeding some 23 million euros. Because of the blockade, road freight costs have increased by up to 300 percent, while the cost of downtime is as high as 300 euros per day. This blockade acts like a liberum veto - while serving a part, it hits the vast majority of entrepreneurs!" - reads the Chamber's statement.<sup>xi</sup>



## **President Andrzej Duda at G7 meeting on Ukraine**

In October, President Andrzej Duda participated in a telephone conference of G7 countries, which was held at the initiative of US President Joe Biden<sup>xiii</sup>. It was also attended by the President of the European Commission, the head of the European Council, the Secretary General of NATO and the President of Romania. The main topic was security issues and the situation in Ukraine. Among other things, they also talked about future reconstruction plans for the country. - President Biden stressed our extremely responsible and reasonable behavior in the face of the provocations we face from the Belarusian side. He mentioned very clearly the crossing of the border by Belarusian helicopters, stressing that we have behaved very responsibly, also as a member state of the North Atlantic Alliance. He thanked the allies for their consultations on the issue and stressed that we can be sure of 100 percent support from NATO, both Headquarters and member states, in case of any provocations, the Polish President reported. He also recalled that Polish-American relations are at such a high level as they have never been in history. He stressed that one of the priorities of the Polish presidency in the European Union in 2025 will be precisely to increase Euro-Atlantic ties.

## **Conclusion**

Planned changes to the European Union treaties aimed at deeper integration and federalization of the EU will spark heated debate in Poland. The topic has long been raised by the surrendering Law and Justice (PiS) party, which believes that the planned changes to the Union will mean Poland's loss of sovereignty and the dictates of France and Germany. The majority of Poland's opposition, which is likely to take power from mid-December, is also taking a distanced but softer approach to treaty changes than PiS. Despite slogans of a "return to Europe," which brought the opposition parties an electoral result that gave them the opportunity to take power in Poland, the leader of the Civic Coalition and future Prime Minister Donald Tusk criticizes the planned reform of the Union. This is largely due to the mood of Polish society, which is mostly positive towards the EU, but opposes the increased power of EU institutions, e.g. on migration. It is also decidedly skeptical, for example, about the adoption of the euro common currency.

The protest of Polish transporters and farmers at the border with Ukraine is an expression of the negative effects of the European Union's agreement with Ukraine on preferences for carriers from that country on the European market. Polish companies, which are giants in the transport industry in the Union, are losing out on the unlimited admission of Ukrainian

companies that do not meet EU standards to the EU market. The Polish-Ukrainian dispute comes at a time of internal tension in Poland related to the formation of a new government and a dispute between the outgoing government and the new opposition government, which is likely to be formed in December. Resolving the dispute requires arrangements between Warsaw, Kiev and Brussels.

- 
- i \_\_\_\_\_ The Economic portal Money.pl <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/parlament-europejski-za-zmiana-unijnych-traktatow-tusk-wczoraj-przestrzegal-6965917931694880a.html>
- ii \_\_\_\_\_ The Euroactiv.pl Portal <https://www.euractiv.pl/section/polityka-wewnetrzna-ue/news/po-tez-przeciwko-zmianom-w-unijnych-traktatach/>
- iii \_\_\_\_\_ The information portal i.pl <https://i.pl/kaczynski-ostrzega-polska-nie-bedzie-juz-krajem-niepodleglym-i-suwerennym-w-ogole-nie-bedzie-panstwem/ar/c1-18063365>
- iv \_\_\_\_\_ The Polish Radio Portal <https://polskieradio24.pl/5/1222/artykul/3284791,sejm-nie-zajal-sie-uchwala-dot-zmian-w-traktatach-ue-jablonski-to-radykalnie-zmieni-unie>
- v \_\_\_\_\_ Portal Radia RMF FM [https://www.rmfm24.pl/polityka/news-protest-przewoznikow-obejmie-kolejne-przejscia-decyzja-w-naj,nld,7173003#crp\\_state=1](https://www.rmfm24.pl/polityka/news-protest-przewoznikow-obejmie-kolejne-przejscia-decyzja-w-naj,nld,7173003#crp_state=1)
- vi \_\_\_\_\_ Ibidem
- vii \_\_\_\_\_ Ibidem
- viii \_\_\_\_\_ The RMF FM radio portal [https://www.rmfm24.pl/regiony/rzeszow/news-minister-rolnictwa-spotkala-sie-z-protestujacymi-na-przejsci,nld,7178845#crp\\_state=1](https://www.rmfm24.pl/regiony/rzeszow/news-minister-rolnictwa-spotkala-sie-z-protestujacymi-na-przejsci,nld,7178845#crp_state=1)
- ix \_\_\_\_\_ The Polish Radio Portal <https://polskieradio24.pl/42/259/artykul/3290531,minister%C2%A0gajadhur-kontrola-na-przejsciach-granicznych-z-ukraina-zostana-zwiekszone>
- x \_\_\_\_\_ The Portal of the Rzeczpospolita daily newspaper <https://www.rp.pl/polityka/art39469891-protest-na-granicy-krzysztof-bosak-mer-lwowa-klamie>
- xi \_\_\_\_\_ The RMF FM radio portal [https://www.rmfm24.pl/polityka/news-protest-przewoznikow-obejmie-kolejne-przejscia-decyzja-w-naj,nld,7173003#crp\\_state=1](https://www.rmfm24.pl/polityka/news-protest-przewoznikow-obejmie-kolejne-przejscia-decyzja-w-naj,nld,7173003#crp_state=1)
- xii \_\_\_\_\_ Official website of Polish President <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wydarzenia/prezydent-rp-wzial-udzial-w-naradzie-przywocow-g7-nato-i-ue-,75686>