Jacek Tomkiewicz*

The Poznań Declaration: A Commentary

One of the outcomes of the Congress of Polish Economists, held in December 2025, was the document known as the "Poznań Declaration." It sets forth a series of recommendations for Polish economic policy intended to foster the country's socio-economic development.

In general, it is difficult to disagree with its fundamental arguments.

> Poland has indeed achieved spectacular economic success over the past 35 years, measured primarily by income growth. It is also an undeniable fact that such rapid economic growth was driven by significant gains in labor productivity—stemming from the catch-up effect, capital absorption, and the adoption of institutional frameworks from the West.

These growth engines are now running out of steam, and competitiveness based on relatively low labor costs has also reached its limit—a development that should be welcomed, as it signifies a substantial rise in wages for Polish workers. Furthermore, the proposals put forward at the Congress are hard to dispute; after all, any sensible economist recognizes a serious fiscal imbalance, an aging population, and the urgent need to invest in human capital and innovation.

However, there are several points worth considering when formulating a national development strategy.

Such growth allows for a gradual improvement in the quality of life and the maintenance of near-full employment, while preserving relative macroeconomic and environmental stability. On the other hand, it must be recognized that this rate of growth will not resolve the strained fiscal situation. In other words, we cannot simply grow our way out of debt without fundamental fiscal adjustment affecting both the revenue and expenditure sides of the public finance system.

> Poland is currently a country at a medium level of development. Consequently, the rate of economic growth itself should no longer be the primary objective. While achieving an annual GDP growth of 7–8 percent was crucial at the turn of the millennium—as it was necessary to recoup income lost during the post-transformation recession and absorb large cohorts of new entrants into the labor market—under current conditions, an optimal annual growth rate for national income is 3–4 percent.

We must also harbor no illusions about the possibility of achieving fundamental changes in demographic processes or climate trends in the short term. Demographic structure and dynamics are effectively set for the coming decades; thus, a declining number of children, a shrinking working-age population, and an aging society are objective realities that simply must be factored into public policy design—without the illusion that some miraculous set of tools could fundamentally alter these demographic processes. We therefore face a series of politically and socially difficult decisions, such as reducing the number of places in schools and kindergartens, while simultaneously raising the retirement age and expanding elderly care services. The situation is similar with regard to accelerating climate change.

> While prioritizing solutions that curb greenhouse gas emissions is essential, phenomena such as hydrological drought and extreme weather events are becoming the norm. Consequently, we must invest in a fundamental overhaul of our energy system and water management, as well as in adapting our cities to these new climatic conditions.

* Prof. Jacek Tomkiewicz—Kozminski University.

It is also crucial to remember that our role within the EU is changing. We can no longer cast ourselves merely as passive recipients of EU funds. Our economy currently ranks fifth or sixth in the Community—behind Germany, France, Italy, and Spain; while Poland's GDP at market exchange rates is lower than that of the Netherlands, our country comes ahead of it when measured at purchasing power parity. Consequently, we must assume greater responsibility for EU policy. The next budgetary period will also present a significant challenge, as we will likely become a net contributor to the EU budget. While this is naturally a cause for celebration—signifying the success of our economy—it poses challenges for domestic political discourse and implies a reduction in the net EU funding that has served as a vital source of financing for development in recent years.

> We also need to hold an in-depth debate on the future shape of the EU. How should we approach a potential enlargement of the Community to include new members? It is obvious that the EU's current operating principles—such as the requirement for unanimity in decision-making or the rule that every country has its own commissioner—are unsustainable in a significantly larger EU.

It is worth developing a clear position on this matter now, one that we can present at the European level.

In summary, the Poznań Declaration represents an important set of challenges and proposals that should guide public debate in Poland. It is to be hoped that its specific proposals will become the subject of in-depth interdisciplinary research, the findings of which will be taken into account in the implementation of socio-economic policy in our country.