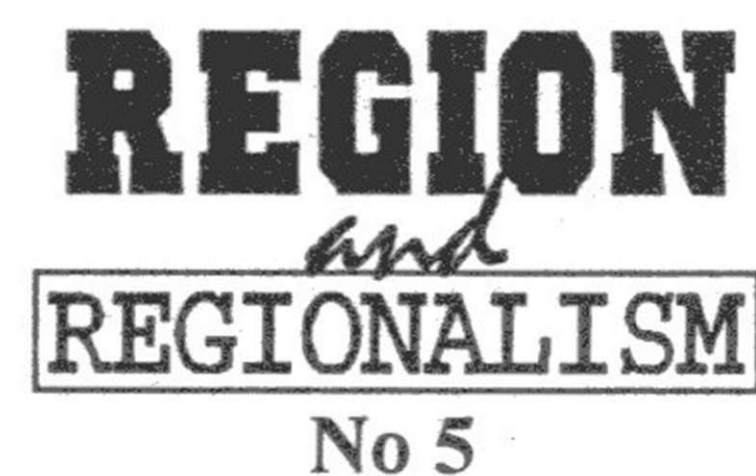


Jan WENDT
University of Gdańsk, POLAND



THE ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION OF POLAND AND THE PROSPECTS OF THE TRANSBORDER CO-OPERATION

The transborder co-operation, which has existed in the Western Europe since the 1950s, developed in Poland after the year 1990. After ten years, some euroregions came into existence nearly on the all length of the Polish borders. The transborder co-operation is just being planned or developed in the regions. Generally, the co-operation with different regions lying on the other side of the country's border is established in the reason of some local societies. But in the last ten years, since the first euroregion was created, some clear trends of its development can be indicated. After introducing the new administrative system in 1999, the communal and provincial competencies have changed, new territorial structures - the districts were introduced and the number of provinces was reduced. Considering the territorial administration changes and the institutionalisation of the transborder co-operation, the country's administrative division will influence the development of economic, ecological and transport connections now existing or in potential euroregions. Therefore, it is important to know in what rate the new administrative structure has adopted the area and its economical potential of the provinces to the co-operation and competitions with similar regions bordering with Poland. Estimation of the today's transborder co-operation and the influences of administrative division on the possibilities of Polish development are also very important.

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It seems that though adjusting law and economy is independent of administrative divisions, yet the development of direct co-operation with our neighbours, co-operation in the border zones and euroregions, are dependent to a great extent on a new territorial demarcation of land. All the more that apart from the formal demands conditioning our joining of European Union, regional co-operation and that across the border help to build up mutual trust and friendly relations. In case of Poland, however, there are fears concerning expansion of foreign capital and, what is emphasized by the media, loss of sovereignty. Regionalization of the land according to the pattern of European Union countries, like for instance Germany, in the eyes of not only nationalistic politicians seems to be introduction to the partitioning of Poland. Therefore already during the first parliamentary discussions, the issue of number and size of new territorial divisions analogous to those of our neighbouring countries appeared.

According to the first bill of municipal reform, provinces in Poland were to acquire the right to independent foreign policy in the scope of common investment in environmental protection, development of economy, student exchange, utilisation of the waste and prevention of cataclysms. Although, the campaign of some members of the parliament led to the change in these competencies given to the local authorities, the aspect of international co-operation should play the key role in the future demarcation of land, as the new administrative structure of the country is being built for the coming decades - not only for the period proceeding our entering the EU. On account of potential necessity of regional co-operation across the borders after Poland becomes a EU member, it has been postulated to introduce fewer than 12 new provinces so that they be able to function as partners and compete with neighbouring regions in the united Europe.

The idea of regional and crossborder co-operation appeared in the Western Europe in the 1960s, followed by the notion of 'Europe of regions' and increasingly decentralizing processes giving growth to autonomy of particular regions in western countries. The classic example is the development of political parties and separatist groups aiming at getting or increasing the autonomy of some regions in Belgium, Spain, Italy or Great Britain. In the case of Poland, some politicians deciding about creating a great number of provinces maintained that the existence of one big Silesia or Wielkopolska could result in the growth of local authority at the expense of the central power. And whereas cultural regional differentiation of Poland can be viewed as its virtue, setting limits to the central reigning elite by any form of big regions, expanding autonomy would lead to decentralization of the government's power.

Changes that took place in Poland after 1989 disintegrated the structures of power functioning before and brought about new decision-making centres. Range and territorial extent of administrative and municipal authorities have undergone crucial changes, too. As spatial demarcation of land always influences social and economic relations along with communication network in the given region, the distribution of economical powers has changed as well. Thanks to the investments, new economic centres are developing and these already existing are being transformed. Local authorities make a lot of economic decisions. The structure of Roman-Catholic Church, which has always possessed informal yet significant political and economical power, evolved as well. From the point of view of electoral geography, it is worth examining the changes in the extent and influence of territorial structures of political parties which are reflected in electoral preferences and political attitudes.

The problem of a new territorial demarcation always accompanies periods of governmental shifts. In the new political, social and economical landscape of Poland after 1989, the old decision-making centres disappear and the new ones are coming into existence. As mentioned before, administrative divisions affect social and economic relations together with the transportation structures. Therefore it seems appropriate to examine the influence of these administrative demarcations on how the local and provincial governments are shaped. In Poland, in the years 1945-1996 quantitative and structural changes in territorial demarcation of land occurred a few times. For political and economical reasons new administrative and economical centres were formed. There were efforts to decentralize government with the effect just opposite to what was planned. It is interesting to compare new divisions of Poland with these in neighbouring

countries, in particular the Czech Republic and Germany, which together with Poland create 8 of 13 euroregions existing on the borderline of Poland, such as 'Nysa' that consists of these 3 countries and 'Pomerania' where Swedish districts join German and Polish ones. After Poland was admitted to the NATO its entrance to the European Union and establishing partnership with our eastern neighbours are the most important goals of Polish foreign policy.

In the Western Europe regional autonomization was accompanied by establishing euroregions which, contrary to pre-existing fears, play crucial role in the integration of particular European countries. The increase in the importance of local groups and autonomous regions caused institutionalized regional co-operation in Europe both between regions and in cross-border co-operation. Already in 1971 the European Association of Transborder Regions was founded, which 10 years later ratified the Borderland Regions Charter concerning economic and cultural co-operation. In 1985 the Council of European Regions - later known as the Gathering of European Regions - was established. Acting under the auspices of European Council, the Permanent Conference of Local and Regional Governments of Europe and the Regions Committee is present in the EU body. The last two admit as their members also representatives of smaller administrative divisions, which is of importance to commune councils and their unions along the southern and western border of Poland.

After Poland and its neighbours gained sovereignty, the idea of euroregions found its advocates also in the Central Europe. On the transborder territories of Poland 13 euroregions were created (Tab. 1).

Table. 1. Euroregions on Polish borders in new administrative division

Euroregions	Established	Polish partners	Provinces which take part in euroregion
Nysa	21.12.1991	Czech Rep., Germany	Dolnośląskie, Lubuskie
Karpaty	14.02.1993	Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary	Małopolskie, Podkarpackie
Sprewa-Nysa-Bóbr	21.09.1993	Germany	Lubuskie, Wielkopolskie
Pro Europa	21.12.1993	Germany	Lubuskie, Wielkopolskie, Zachodniopomorskie
Viadrina			
Tatry	26.08.1994	Slovakia	Małopolskie
Bug	29.09.1995	Belarus, Ukraine,	Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Świętokrzyskie
Pomerania	15.12.1995	Sweden, Germany,	Zachodniopomorskie
Glacensis	15.12.1996	Czech Rep.	Dolnośląskie
Niemen	06.06.1997	Belarus, Lithuania,	Podlaskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie
Pradziad	02.07.1997	Czech Rep.	Opolskie
Bałtyk	22.02.1998	Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, Sweden	Pomorskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Zachodniopomorskie
Śląsk Cieszyński	22.04.1998	Czech Rep.	Śląskie
Silesia	20.09.1998	Czech Rep.	Opolskie, Śląskie

Source: *Atlas geograficzny Polski* (2000)

The Lubuskie and Pomorskie (West Pomerania) voivodships participate in 3 euroregions - what is the proof of high activity of their former governments. On the border with Germany there are 4 euroregions, with the Czech Republic - 5, with Slovakia - only 2. On the borders with Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and Lithuania they are only 4, but they are larger than those on the western and southern border of Poland.

Founded in 1991, the Euroregion Nysa was the first euroregion in the southwestern Poland. It was formed by towns, districts and communes of the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland. The following years saw establishment of another 12 euroregions. In this process we can distinguish 2 phases. In the years 1993-1995, six new euroregions were created, including three with German participation. Next years: 1996-1998 meant formation of another six euroregions - 4 of them on the border with the Czech Republic. This scheme of appearance of euroregions is to some extent determined by the degree of autonomy and centralization of the power in our neighbouring countries.

On the border of Poland with Germany and the Czech Republic there are 8 euroregions, whereas on its border with 5 other neighbours there are only 5 euroregions (Fig. 1). Therefore it is rational to compare administrative reforms carried out in these two countries with closer look at changes in the degree of centralization of power and the adjustment of new administrative divisions to co-operation and competition in view of prospective admittance of the Czech Republic and Poland to the European Union.

There are significant differences in size and the administrative structure of the divisions constituting particular euroregions and their genesis. On the western and southern borders of Poland euroregions are established on the basis of bilateral agreements between neighbouring districts, clearly aiming at improving communications, tourist infrastructure, and co-operation in the field of ecology. So they are local initiatives confirmed by international agreements in the phase of well-developed co-operation at the local level. On the contrary, in Poland's eastern borderland euroregions were established by the means of strong, governmental and administrative domination (euroregions: Karpaty/ Bug, Niemen and Bałtyk). The difference in the territorial structure of administrative divisions which are eager to participate in the eastern euroregions is visible.

The provinces are usually the smallest divisions and at the same time the lowest reference of decision making and the execution of the tasks. If we take borderland territories in Western Europe as the ideal pattern of euroregion formation, then the eastern transborder regions seem to negate the very idea of euroregion. It is characteristic that stereotypes and phobias concerning political and economic domination of the stronger partner in euroregion co-operation are typical for politicians, but not for inhabitants of the region.

Euroregions present almost at the whole length of Polish borders, including territories on both sides, allow the development of co-operation in the most important for local societies spheres. Solving ecological, economical, social and transport problems together helps to create local links, allows to get to know each other, and change negative stereotypes and phobias resulting from both the lack of previous contacts and the propaganda in the former Soviet Union, East Germany and Polish Peoples Republic. In the long run, the phenomenon of euroregions, apart from bringing local benefits, can be one of the ways to the united Europe in the next century. In comparison to governmental regional structures euroregions seem to be most effective in creating new European

order, affecting also basic administrative structures and allowing direct contacts between inhabitants of transborder territories.

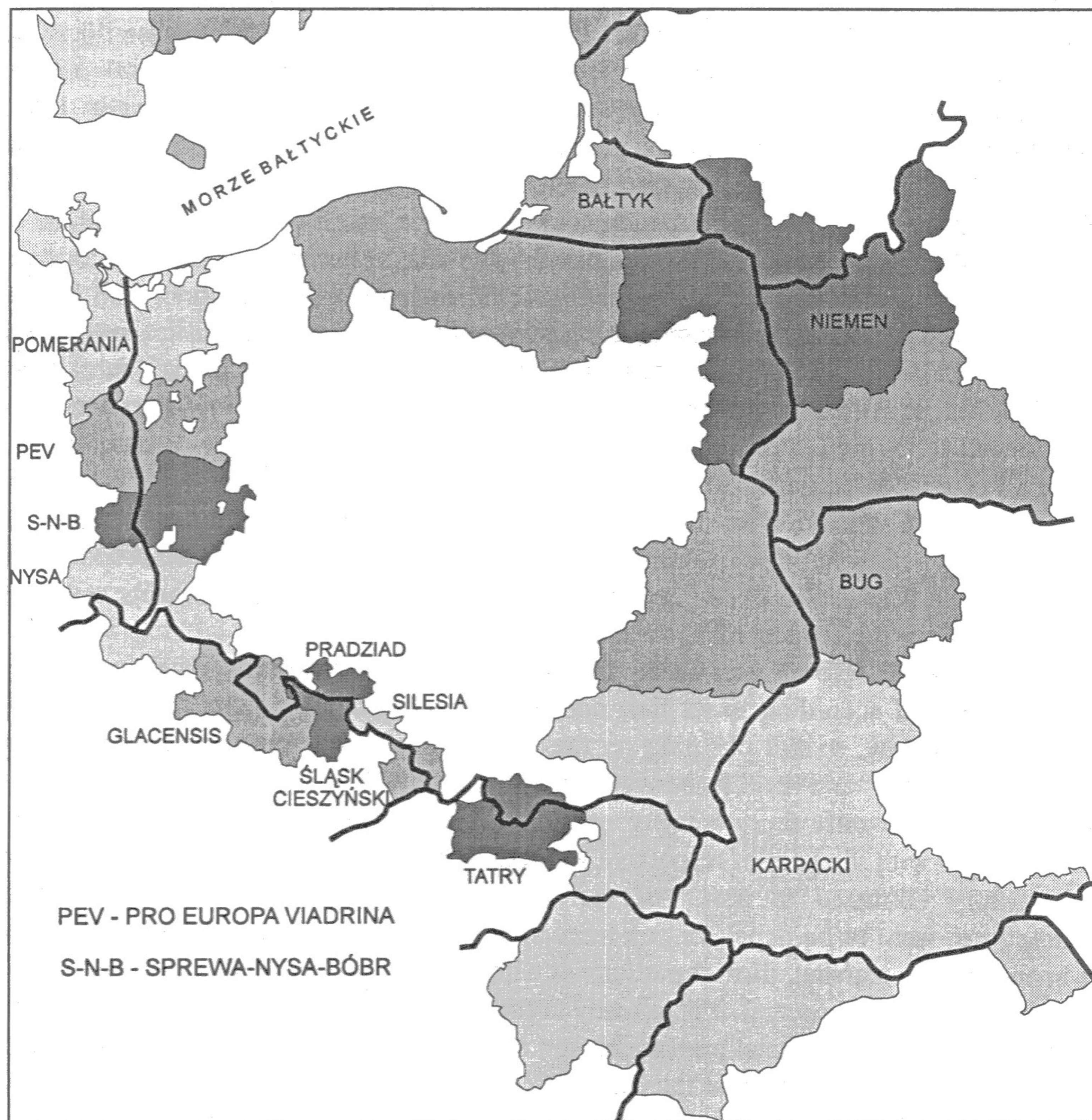


Fig. 1. Euroregions on Polish borders in the new administrative division
Source: Kozanecka (2000).

For obvious reasons the process of extending the NATO, which included in the first place the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland decided about political future and security of Central Europe region; similarly, starting the direct talks about entering the EU will determine the progress in economic transformation of the region - yet in the future it will be the local initiative and co-operation which will give shape to the relation not only within transborder zone but also between the countries. In this aspect changes of territorial structure in Poland and the Czech Republic, introduced in the last 2 years, create new conditions to the development of crossborder co-operation between the engaged sides.

After the crisis of socialistic system in Poland, a new government, chosen in democratic elections, quickly decided to carry out administrative reform of the country. However, changeable political courses of the following cabinets, and the blockage of the reform by the PSL (the Polish Peasant's Party) in the period of its rule, caused that the reform was possible only when the coalition of the AWS (the Electoral Action 'Solidarity') and the UW (the Liberty Union) took over the stir of the power in 1997. Introduced by the government of the prime minister Jerzy Buzek and prepared by the minister Michał Kulesza, the concept proposed division of the land into 12 large, self-governing provinces, 300 districts, each consisting of at least 5 communes. Introduction of municipal reform was necessary as more fundamental reforms were planned. In case of success, the reforms carried out by the government and positively welcomed by the citizens, would guarantee maintaining the power of the government coalition in the next elections. The main goal of this reform was to give the rule to the citizens, in concert with the concept of passing on duties, responsibilities, finances and the right to decisions from the higher to the lowest level of authority, i.e. communes. The new demarcation of land into provinces was accompanied by the change from two- to three-level system of territorial administration. The intermediate level between new provinces were to be districts. This structure of power more accurately than the previous one corresponds to the model of decentralized country and allows initiation of local contacts and co-operation on the lower level than it was before.

Administrative reform was to be followed by the total reforms of the authority performance and according to its first concepts: economic policy, the army, finances, foreign policy, law, spatial planning on the country scale and some issues concerning culture, education and health services would stay within the competence of the governments. The only representative of the state on the level of province was to be voivode, who with the help of respective services would put into practice state policy on the territory entrusted to him. All the other questions, according to the reform assumptions, were to be dependent on municipal authorities: provincial parliament with its board and the marshal, district parliament with the starost (foreman) and the mayor of the commune with its council. Yet, already at the beginning of the debate on the planned competences of the provincial parliament, some political elites expressed their conviction that the power so far reaching in the hands of citizens will deprive the government of the real control over the provincial authorities and the influence on the financial decisions. Realisation of this reform scenario would additionally mean abolition and decrease in the number of the departments of all ministries. At the same time influence and the range of competence of ministerial officials would be limited, and by their politically conditioned advance, the power of the party comprising the coalition would be somehow hampered. So already at the moment of the announcement of municipal reform concepts and new demarcation of land linked with it, the conflict between party interests and the welfare of citizens, contributed to the favour of the different model.

The moment of the conception of the reform was burdened with the sin of 'partiocracy' which can be described as a reluctance to giving the power into the hands of citizens, especially when the power means possibility of acquiring finances, granting posts in the state and municipal institutions and offices. Because of the above arguments, loss of political maturity and responsibility, and the arrogance of Polish elites towards

the citizens, the territorial and municipal reforms were carried out by the cabinet of **J. Buzek** in the outrageous way. In the initial version, in concert with the opinion of economists, spatial planners and geographers, the new division introduced 12 provinces in place of previous 10 economic macroregions. Although ministerial team of experts favoured the division into 10 regions, nevertheless, for the sake of successful transborder policy with eastern neighbours of Poland, it was agreed that 2 more provinces with the authorities in Białystok and Rzeszów be created. All the more that along our northern and eastern borders with ex-Soviet countries, regional co-operations is mainly the initiative of the state or provincial authorities.

From the economic point of view, **Z. Gilowska**, expert on municipal issues, believes that the ideal regional division would be introducing 8 big provinces. The number of 12 provinces is just the result of compromise and demarcation of Poland according to geographical, cultural and metropolitan net of divisions. New municipal system parallel to the competence of voivod designated by the government, established also the legislative body - provincial parliament and the executive body - provincial board of trustees with its marshal. The governmental project presented by minister **M. Kulesza** provided for formation of the following provinces: Dolny Śląsk (Lower Silesia), Małopolska, Małopolska Wschodnia (East Małopolska), Mazovia, Vistula Pomerania, Pomorze Zachodnie (West Pomerania), Śląsk (Silesia), Warmia and Mazury, Wielkopolska, the Białystok Province, the Lublin Province and the Łódź Province. The above division is comparable to other countries similar to Poland as the number of inhabitants and the area are concerned (Tab. 2).

T a b l e 2. Division of Poland (12&16) and some selected European countries into regions

Country	Area in thousand km ²	Population in thousand	Number of regions	Area of region in thousand km ²	Population in thousand
Ukraine	603.7	50,300	25	24.1	2,012
Germany	357.0	82,020	16	22.3	5,126
Poland (12)	312.7	38,666	12	26.1	3,222
Spain	505.0	39,371	17	29.7	2,316
United Kingdom	244.1	59,126	11	22.2	5,375
Poland (16)	312.7	38,666	16	19.5	2,416
France	551.5	58,850	21	26.4	2,802
Italy	301.3	57,650	29	10.4	1,988

Source: *Statistical Yearbook..* (1999), p. 604-605.

In accordance with the aims of administrative reform, the range of tasks and duties of voivod as well as municipal authorities have changed considerably. New provinces should be, according to the reform's intention, as strong as possible. In Polish situation only big provinces (excluding Silesia) fulfil this condition. As **E. Wysocka** warns small provinces will not be the partners for big and economically strong regions in Western Europe, to which Poland aspire. These Polish provinces will not be able to compete with them even when Poland joins the European Union. According to **E. Wysocka**, in the case of Poland, keeping in mind the level of its economical development, it is necessary to

introduce 8 big provinces instead of 12. The government with the minister M. Kulesza and the assembly dealing with administrative reform issues share this view. Obviously, the reform should primarily protect interests of the state and its people - not interests of political lobbies or elites losing their offices or even local societies, which can unite in supradistricts alliances. As the result of the above presumptions, the government presented the bill of the demarcation of land into 12 provinces (voivodships).

However, after the first presentation of the project, contradictory declarations of the prime minister, the vice-minister responsible for the execution of the reform, and heads of the most powerful clubs in the parliament appeared. The decision about increasing the number of provinces was made after the representatives of one of the clubs made announcements inconsistent with postulates of the government designated by themselves.

After the president vetoed the division proposed by the government, the 16 provinces project turned out to be politically compromising solution. The provinces proposed were as follows: Pomerania, West Pomerania, Warmia-Mazuria, Lubuskie, Kujawy-Pomerania, Mazovia, Podlaskie, Lower Silesia, Wielkopolska, the Łódź Province, the Lublin Province, Podkarpackie (Carpathian), Świętokrzyskie, Małopolska, Silesia, the Opole Province.

Among the provinces designated on January 1, 1999, pre-existing disproportions resulted immediately in many conflicts. Częstochowa addressed the European Council with an official complaint, and in Koszalin, a lot of manifestations, protests and pickets were organised to retain the old province. In fact, up to now, it is not clear what criteria, apart from the need of gaining political consensus, determined creation of more provinces, 16 not 17, and why the Świętokrzyskie Province was established while Central Pomerania with Koszalin as capital was not. Included in the project, the 17th province of Central Pomerania would be larger than, formed as the effect of political bargaining, the Opole province and economically comparable to the already planned Podlaskie province and would consist of 14 districts similarly to many other provinces, like Świętokrzyskie, Lubuskie and the Opole Province (Fig. 2).

After the reform was implemented which introduced new 3 level administrative division, not only the territorial structure of the state changed but also the profile of the responsibilities attributed to the new municipal bodies. After long discussions in the parliament, following rather political than economic rationale, it passed a bill dividing the country into 16 provinces (województwo), 373 districts (powiat) including 65 'urban districts' (powiat grodzki) established in cities, and 2489 communes. It must be stressed once more that the number of provinces meant political compromise not justified by the economic situation (Tab. 3).

Although all mean values describing provinces such as their area and population are as all statistical data burdened with inaccuracy, but if compared, appears very uneven administrative division of the land, which refers to both provinces and districts. As to the area of provinces there are sharp disproportions between provinces Mazowieckie (Mazovia) and Wielkopolskie as opposed to Opolskie, Świętokrzyskie, Śląskie and Lubuskie. The same applies to the number of population, which is the highest in provinces: Mazowieckie, and Śląskie, whereas in other (Lubuskie, Opolskie, Podlaskie, Świętokrzyskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie) is 40% to 60% lower. Number of inhabitants and economic potential enables the province Śląskie to face its economical tasks but 3 others (Opolskie, Świętokrzyskie and Lubuskie) will be forced to deal with serious

economical problems or what is more probable rely on central authorities assistance and informal political connections thanks to which such economically weak provinces appeared. This informality of political connections is more stressed by the fact that thanks to the reform the authority was split between the voivod (wojewoda) and provincial government. This structure, however, does not prevent double services submitted to the voivod and provincial parliament. Lack of differentiation of competences attributed to these two authorities, that is those related to state and to province, can lead to diminishing responsibility for failures. This arrangement can be the first step to reshaping municipal authority into quasi-political power and to forming political and municipal relations referred to as territorialization of the power.



Fig. 2. New administrative division of Poland into 16 provinces (January 1, 1999).

Source: *Atlas geograficzny Polski* (2000).

Statistical data prove that 3 provinces out of these added to the 12 originally established are below 75% of the average area and population. These are: Lubuskie, the Opole Province, Świętokrzyskie and one of the first established, Podlaskie.

T a b l e 3. Area and population of new regions in Poland as for the beginning of 2000

Provinces (województwo)	Area (km ²)	Population (thousand)	Number of districts
Poland:	312,685	38,653	373
Dolnośląskie	19,946	2,977	30
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	17,970	2,101	23
Lubelskie	25,115	2,235	24
Lubuskie	13,985	1,024	13
Łódzkie	18,223	2,653	23
Małopolskie	15,141	3,223	22
Mazowieckie	35,715	5,070	42
Opolskie	9,412	1,088	12
Podkarpackie	17,890	2,126	24
Podlaskie	20,180	1,223	17
Pomorskie	18,293	2,192	19
Śląskie	12,309	4,865	36
Świętokrzyskie	11,672	1,323	14
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	24,202	1,465	19
Wielkopolskie	29,942	3,355	35
Zachodniopomorskie	23,032	1,733	20

Source: *Informacja...* (2000).

From the economical point of view - considering the tasks which are to be financed from their own resources - another three provinces, apart from the already mentioned, should be liquidated and annexed to neighbouring provinces, thus creating really economically strong regions. It applies to the provinces: Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Podkarpackie. Eventually Poland, instead of being divided into 16 provinces of so varied economical potential, would consist of 9 economically powerful regions centred around the biggest towns: Szczecin, Gdańsk, Poznań, Łódź, Warsaw, Wrocław, Katowice, Cracow and Lublin (their regions' names would derive from the province capitals). Such solution seems reasonable bearing in mind the 1999 confrontation of regional economic potential of the countries - candidates to the European Union. It turned out that among 10 economically weakest regions, there were 5 Polish provinces: Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Podlaskie, Podkarpackie, Świętokrzyskie and Lubelskie.

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