

## **ZPP's commentary: The future of Europe according to Macron**

- **French President Emmanuel Macron presented at the Sorbonne his vision for changing the priorities of the European Union by strengthening its global competitiveness in key and emerging economic areas, strengthening the protection of the EU's external borders and building an EU military force.**
- **The French President accurately defines the problem that the EU is currently facing, namely the growing disparity in economic potential between Europe and other economic powers.**
- **The French policy for the coming years is relevant from the perspective of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which is to commence in the first half of 2025.**

Ahead of the upcoming Elections for the European Parliament that will take place in June, French President Emmanuel Macron, presented at the Sorbonne on 25 April his vision for strengthening the European Union under French leadership by strengthening cooperation between member states, particularly in such areas as defence and monetary and investment policies.

It was not a coincidence that Macron's speech focused on international affairs, avoiding the issues of France's numerous internal policy problems, which was reminiscent of the rhetoric of strengthening Europe and France's role that he adopted in 2017 presidential campaign.

According to Macron, the European Union needs to strengthen its technological, energy and industrial independence as well as equip its external borders with better protection. The means to achieve these goals is to double the EU budget. The French President referred to the need to bridge the gap between the EU and China and the US in terms of competitiveness, proposing the creation of a capital markets union as a platform for new investors in the European economy. Other proposals included a change in the policy of the European Central Bank, which, in addition to its inflation target, should also focus on economic growth and climate protection.

In his speech, Macron returned to his vision of building a European defence system, while emphasising the important role of NATO and France's nuclear capability as a guarantor of security in the region. According to Macron, security in Europe will not be a priority in US foreign policy in the coming years. Therefore, in order to be able to respond to the growing threats from the east, he proposed the creation of a European Military Academy to train future military and civilian cadres and, in the future, a rapid reaction force that would be a de facto EU army.

It is definitely worth keeping a close eye on the comments made by the leader of one of the strongest countries in the European Union. A constructive note in the speech was the

acknowledgement of the gap between the EU from the rest of the global powers, and the commitment to bridge it. Without a proper diagnosis we will not find appropriate solutions, so the fact that the leader of one of the leading powers in the EU recognises the crisis that the EU is facing – both in economic and political terms – is encouraging. On the other hand, the solutions proposed by President Macron did not address the need to restore the competitiveness of the European economy or to reduce the administrative and fiscal burden on companies in the EU. Far from it, the proposal to double the EU budget rather involves further levies to boost the EU's own resources. The recurring topic of the need to develop European ‘sovereignty’ in various areas seems like a platitude. As far as the self-sufficiency of the EU in the sectors mentioned is concerned, nowhere (neither in the speech in question nor anywhere else) is it indicated exactly what such sovereignty would mean and how Europe should pursue it. If this is understood as creating an environment conducive to the growth and development of its own entities with global potential – it is difficult to disagree with this recommendation. In practice, however, it often boils down to driving players from other continents out of the European market.

President Macron's speech, in terms of diagnosis, partly coincides with the conclusions that led to the launch of the Focus on Europe project. Just 15 years ago, the EU and US economies were of comparable size; today, EU GDP is half that of the US. This is not the result of dynamic growth in the USA, but of a slowdown in the EU economies. For years, the ZPP has highlighted the problem of over-regulation of many sectors and, even worse, the practice of gold-plating by Member States, whereby the original intentions of EU directives are extended when being transposed into the national laws. Poland, taking advantage of its EU presidency starting in Q1 2025, has an excellent opportunity to slow down this trend, which is particularly in the interests of the economies still developing within the Union. This could be a step on the path to rebuilding European power – and President Macron's speech quite clearly resounded with evocations of this goal.