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05.05.2024, 19:11

08.09.2015

President in Krynica: EU should be a union of sovereign countries

The euro zone crisis, migration and the conflict in Ukraine are Europe's main problems today, President Andrzej Duda said during the 25th Economic Forum in Krynica (south Poland) on Tuesday.

President Duda added that falling birthrates, also in Poland, were "a bad omen" for Europe's future.

"Europe is strong as the European Union," President Duda said but stressed that at the same time "it is helpless in the face of some problems, as for instance, demography".



"Falling birthrates rates in the EU countries, in western Europe, in Poland (...) are a very bad omen for the future. And today this is also a challenge for Poland and the entire EU," the Polish president said, stressing that this negative trend had to be reversed.

According to President Duda, the euro zone crisis, growing migration and the war in Ukraine, recently marginalised from the point of view of Poland and Central Europe, were Europe's main problems.

President Duda admitted that the Minsk agreement brought some positive results but failed to end the Ukraine conflict. "Taking into account both the future and the necessity to avoid dangerous precedents, this conflict should end with lasting peace and not as a frozen conflict. And this requires a return to the former status quo," he stressed.

"The EU should be a union of sovereign national states", the Polish president said, adding that the principle "nothing about us without us" was for him the most important *modus operandi* in Europe.

"I believe the EU has a great development potential, also thanks to its enlargement to include new countries. But I also believe that we should return to the roots - the EU should be a union of sovereign national countries," President Duda went on.

He stressed that the EU should be "a union based on partner-like relations in which we respect each other, recognise mutual interests and try to act in agreement regarding all matters concerning Europe and particular countries, as well as in neighbourly relations".

According to Duda, unity, security and freedom were of utmost importance for the EU's future.

The Polish president added that recently one could doubt Europe's unity. "If we take into account that there is an agreement on the construction of Nord Stream II which completely neglects Poland's interests, one should seriously ask about this unity," he stressed.

Speaking about security, President Duda stressed that the consolidation of EU-NATO cooperation was extremely important. He added that the EU should build unity through sustainable development.

According to President Duda, decisions on Poland's access to the euro zone should be made in a referendum. "The limitations of a member country's sovereignty for the benefit of the EU should be decided by its citizens," he stressed.

"We can approve the limitation of sovereignty but we should take such decisions consciously, being fully informed what this will mean for us," the president went on.

"I believe that there should be a referendum after an honest debate as we have too few serious public debates on important political and European matters," Duda said.

He also stressed he would not accept "the dictate of the strong" and "a Europe where economic and population factors would be the reason for the arbitrary imposition of solutions on other countries without taking their national interests into account".

Speaking about migrants, President Duda said he did not accept an obligatory quota system and stressed that their admission should depend on a given country's capacity.

According to Duda, much is being said in Europe about dealing with the migrant influx but too little about how to liquidate its causes, which in his opinion are terrorism, wars and economic conditions. The president appealed for firm steps against organised human trafficking.

Source: president.pl; PAP

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