

Unia Europejska w poszukiwaniu równowagi systemowej. Analiza z uwzględnieniem koncepcji *resilience*

Streszczenie

Artykuł podejmuje kwestię spojrzenia na system polityczny UE jako zbiór mechanizmów i rozwiązań instytucjonalno-prawnych poszukujących sposobu zaprowadzenia i utrzymania jego równowagi wewnętrznej. Problem ten jest ujęty zgodnie z założeniami koncepcji *resilience*, która stanowi w pracy fundamentalne założenie teoretyczne. *Resilience*, tłumaczona jako elastyczność, sprężystość, umiejętność adaptowania i „odbijania się od dna” oraz zdolność regeneracji sił jest odnoszona do UE jako perspektywa badawcza wskazująca tory rozmyślań na temat prawidłowości dynamiki rozwoju systemu UE w dłuższej perspektywie czasowej. Odwołanie się do takich ram implikowane jest w UE charakterem struktury integracyjnej i systemem politycznym, którego kreacja zapoczątkowana została w 1957 roku wraz z powołaniem Europejskiej Wspólnoty Gospodarczej.

Na podstawie przeprowadzonej analizy można stwierdzić, iż system polityczny UE odznacza się właściwościami charakterystycznymi dla odporności, co czyni go elastycznym w odpowiedziach na pojawiające się trudności i napięcia. Jednocześnie wprowadzane na tej podstawie rozwiązania i uruchamiane mechanizmy prowadzą do pogłębiania się różnicowań. Osiągnięcie równowagi systemowej staje się trudne.

Słowa kluczowe: *proces integracji europejskiej; system polityczny Unii Europejskiej; równowaga systemu; odporność; kryzys.*

Abstract

The article deals with the issue of EU political system seen as a set of institutional and legal mechanisms and solutions looking for a way to lead and maintain its internal balance. This problem is included in line with the assumptions of the resilience concept, which is a fundamental theoretical assumption at work. Resilience, or flexibility, the ability to adapt and “bounce off the bottom”, to recuperate, is referred to the EU as a prospect of a research perspective indicating the paths of thinking about the regularity of the development of the EU system in the long term. Recourse to such a framework is implied in the EU by the nature of the integration structure and the political system whose creation was initiated in 1957 with the establishment of the EEC.

Analysis carried out in the article leads to conclusion that the EU political system is characterised by resilience-specific properties, which makes it flexible in responding to emerging difficulties and tensions. At the same time, the solutions and mechanisms implemented on this basis lead to the deepening of differences. Achieving a system balance becomes difficult.

Key words: *process of European integration; political system of the European Union; systemic balance; resilience; crisis.*

Anna Wierzchowska

*Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Political Science and International Studies,
University of Warsaw*

The European Union in search of systemic balance. An analysis involving the concept of resilience

The European Union, as a systemic solution of a political and economic nature, exhibits characteristics of complex systems that, for effective duration, must adapt to changing external and internal conditions.

The high concentration of mechanisms with multi-track and multi-aspect properties makes it difficult to achieve a relatively stable balance in the integration process. Even if we take into account the naturally dynamic aspect of the phenomenon and thus the inability to identify permanent and inviolable priorities in various areas of integration, it remains a matter of difficulty in defining one, unchangeable and lasting goal and the tools necessary to achieve it. The integration in its history took into account different reasons and assumptions, starting from purely economic, through social (resulting from the development of the single market), to political ones related to building democracy in European mechanisms and institutions¹.

The need to adapt to the changing basic objectives, while reacting to current events and external factors, has shaped the integration process in a unique (although not always favourable) way of implementing its development path. The issue becomes all the more complex as the goals mentioned result both from the aspirations of the participants of the integration system and are forced by external events to adapt to situations that generate crises and tensions. At the same time, it is necessary to shape the relative balance of the entire system, thanks to which it can fulfil its functions and ensure its survival.

¹ The issue of changing priorities in the integration process is associated with the fundamental feature of the enterprise itself, which is the lack of a clearly defined end to the whole process.

Objective

The question of balance becomes a particular subject of interest when we notice problems with its behaviour or we observe a prolonged period of its loss². It starts with reflection on the conditions of functioning of a given system and its dependence on specific factors affecting the behaviour of the desired balance.

Also in the case of the EU, the mechanisms of exercising power and factors affecting the nature of these processes began to interest researchers particularly in breakthrough periods when there was a strengthening of process politics or there were undesirable events and tendencies that inhibited integration processes. Understanding how the EU is managed and how the adjustment processes are implemented in the integration space is a very important task for researchers, as well as for those who directly shape the rules of movement within the European political meanders. It is the dynamic view of power that gives a perspective that points to the past, settles in the present, and reaches into the future.

The European Union and the entire integration process, which constantly leads to transformations in the organisation established in 1992, are “doomed” to such methods and ways to achieve the assumed goals that will take into account the need to respond to unexpected and complex situations resulting from cooperation between diverse entities, connected with multidimensional bonds. Considering the above assumption, the concept of resilience, or flexibility, the ability to adapt and “bounce off”, the ability to regenerate forces seems to be a natural perspective indicating the paths of thinking about the regularity of the development of the EU system.

Methodological and research assumptions

The article is an attempt to show the EU as a systemic solution characterised by the aforementioned features. It is conceptualised and supposed to indicate a new possible direction of exploration, leaving space for more detailed and in-depth study of the problem.

The concept of resilience is treated as special research lens, which we apply to the phenomenon of the European system in the process of the explanation thereof. This al-

² The literature emphasises the relationship that exists between the way the ecological and social systems function in terms of striving to maintain balance and stability. Providing these properties and states is characteristic for different systems and it is a feature that links research on their specifics (Zebrowski 2013: p. 163)

lows to sharpen the regularities associated with the mechanisms of its functioning. On this assumption, one can search for explanations and interpretations with more detailed ranges and specifics. In this study, resilience is a general interpretation of the regularity that is involved in the EU political system. It builds a framework for the perception of integration processes in the long-term perspective, indicating the nature of their dynamics.

Understanding the mechanisms that guide the course of integration processes is important because of the reflection on the future of the EU. Since there is a probable (although not entirely predictable) path of transformation, it means that it is possible to choose and achieve the planned goal, in accordance with the desired development direction. In accordance with the approach used in the study, the fundamental correctness in the EU system consists in constant balancing between different tensions. It builds systemic immunity and ability to last. These properties, however, do not guarantee the certainty of the chosen direction and consistency in the activities undertaken. Perhaps the opposite is true. The necessity of a flexible reaction to unexpected situations causes that what seems to be the plasticity of behaviours may in fact be a necessary deviation from the planned and deemed desirable directions of development, their constant review. Is it beneficial for the integration process or is it a reflection of its weakness?

Resilience as a tool for studying systemic dynamics of development.

The dynamics of development in complex adaptive systems is perceived as an unpredictable and nonlinear process, with positive and negative feedbacks, which can lead to quick modifications in reaching a critical point or slower ones due to the occurrence of problems related to various interdependencies. It seems particularly important to pay attention to the processes of change that take place over a longer time horizon and shape the system's balance.

Political change is part of a wider social change. The way of leading the change, responding to new solutions may differ significantly. The change may be planned or proceed suddenly, without prior announcement. It can be a new response to important and difficult events or be a reinforcement of already running processes. Knowledge of the regularity of changes allows to draw warning forecasts, for example against crisis or pathological phenomena; it allows to perceive in the process of social and political life the dependence of human attitudes and behaviours on manners of management (Chodubski 2009: 97).

Resilience cannot be simply translated as a new theory of social change, or more strictly political one. In the most general and broad sense, this is a thought-based construction that refers to certain specific features of individual entities or entire systems that enable survival in the conditions of crises and difficulties. It is also called a discourse which allows to develop a debate devoted to the functioning of various structures with a diverse nature of connections from the point of view of their skills (systems) to deal with tensions and the degree of their flexibility. Resilience is based on the conscious recognition of the systemic nature of change, which requires a holistic – and not a reductionist way of thinking. A change in one aspect of the functioning of society may cause unexpected modifications in its other areas, while resistance to change can be deeply rooted and difficult to overcome. Changes cannot be easily controlled and planned, although planning and human intervention still have important roles to play.

Resilience means the ability to adapt to changing conditions or, using a more colloquial statement, it is the ability to “bounce off the bottom” in a crisis situation. A booklet of the British think tank Demos suggests that we think about the concept of resilience not only as the ability of society or the community to “bounce off”, but also as a process of learning and adapting (Joseph 2013: p. 39). Similarly, the World Resources Institute defines resilience as “the ability of the system to tolerate shocks or disruption and healing, and claims that it depends on the ability of people to “adapt” to changing conditions through learning, planning or reorganising (Joseph 2013: p. 39).

The interest in resilience arose from the growing conviction about the complexity and interdependence of the modern world, especially ecological and social systems. In order to understand these processes, a number of questions have been asked about management in complexity conditions. This view is widely used to manage difficult situations and is used in psychology. In the Polish discourse, the perspective of resilience is present almost exclusively in this discipline and is used to explain the situation of children raised in unfavourable conditions, e.g. in families with an alcohol problem, in extreme poverty, in a criminal environment³. There are no studies in the context of wider social systems. There has been some progress in this regard for some time in the world’s literature. The initial focus on the natural environment and narrower social issues began to give way to the broader perspective of the social sciences (Duita et al.

³ In Polish research, the subject is developed, among others in publications: Junik (2015), Borucka, Ostaszewski (2008), Mazur, Tabak (2008), Michel (2014).

2010). For confirmation, we can cite the look of Arjen Boin, Louise K. Comfort and Chris C. Demchak, for whom the term resilience (or immunity) evokes the image of governments that are capable of acting in a crisis situation, as well as human resources that can make the most effective use of the sources available to them in difficult circumstances (Boin et al. 2010). Thus, it can be seen that the way the concept is applied and its scope has been and are still being modified.

Figure 1: A multidisciplinary aspect of resilience



Source: Reghezza-Zitt et al. 2012.

In the above scheme, there is no clear indication of social or political systems. The psychological sciences, economics, organisational science and ecology are listed separately.

Through different research environments, resilience can be understood as a result, state, property or process (Reghezza-Zitt et al. 2012). However, determining whether or not resistance is the result, property or process, is a critical step towards its use. At this point, the exact definition of immunity and its use is far from unanimity. According to some researchers, resistance is both a process (Pelling 2003) and a state (or outcome) termed as resilient (Manyena 2006; McEntire et al. 2002). Resistance may refer to steps that lead to a disturbed or damaged state following a shock. Depending on the definition, the state of flexibility is a return to the state from before the crisis, to normality, stability, etc. This state is often conceived as reconstruction.

Conducting a developed discourse on the various possibilities of using resilience is not the purpose of the article. It is important, however, to select from among the applications mentioned the concept of the one (these), which will allow to refer the phenomenon to the system structure. Next, it is necessary to apply the selected use to the integration system.

According to many ontological theories, the world is subject to conditional control. They are characteristic of concepts exploring political practices and can be found in many other disciplines, including ecology, geography and psychology. Regardless of whether these philosophies are subject to descriptions consistent with the assumptions of the “new materialism” (Ferrando 2016: p. 11), “the theory of complexity” (Wilczyński 2011: p. 377–388), “network analysis” (Turner 2012) or “reverse approach” (Easton 1953), they have common ontological obligations. The idea of resistance fits all these visions of reality. It accepts a world that is more and more complex, but also jointly dependent (Joseph 2013: p. 39). Similarly, the concept of resilience fits into the search for assumptions for development for systems that require focusing on their particular complexity.

The work of Frauke de Weijer is one of the studies in which resilience is related to the sphere of social systems, including state structures. The concept of resilience is applied to the theory of complex adaptive systems that perceive social (or socioecological) systems as not deterministic, predictable and mechanistic, but in the context of organic and self-organising interrelated structures (de Weijer 2013: p. 7). The author attempts to refer resilience to the question of research on fragile states (see Popławski 2014). In the light of the search for the application of this concept in this approach, the author pointed to three elements of the study:

1. describing the purpose (within the meaning of the object), which concerns the transition from instability,
2. an indication of the reasons for the social system to enter into instability
3. the question of external support for increasing the resilience of the system (de Weijer 2013: p. 8).

From the point of view of the political system, resilience can be an approach that explains the systemic dynamics in the process of achieving balance. In the latter approach, resilience is seen as a tool for analysis of political system, especially when we view it from the perspective of decentralised, complex and multidimensional structures that naturally struggle with numerous tensions and are constantly subjected

to attempts to recover from crises. Internal resilience and the ability to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances of development shape the chances of survival of such systems. As Agnieszka Rothert points out, decentralised systems (such as certainly the EU political system) have the capacity to adapt and repair themselves and the institutional mechanisms that operate within them can lead to improvement of social results (Rothert 2017: p. 59). Multidimensionality and complexity force in some way the need to move away from traditional thinking about survival mechanisms. Simple rules based on rigid boundaries cannot be applied⁴. One should look for other, often experimental methods that, through flexible and innovative solutions, will allow to take into account the unique circumstances of governing.

Thinking in terms of resilience is characterised by certain distinct properties, regardless of the discipline to which we apply it. Above all, it perceives social systems as dynamically stable, and not static. Applying such thinking, we focus on changing and dynamics of change, taking into account that change is inherently unpredictable and non-linear (Wrasti, Michelsen 2017). They can be treated as an innovative look at how to manage crisis situations in various areas of social life.

The concept of resilience can be both a starting point in the study, which is thus conducted in accordance with its assumptions, and the result of an analysis developed in the direction of exploration of a selected political system. It is also a kind of test, assessing the presence in the system of components conducive to flexible response and the ability to overcome tensions and adapt (but not at the expense of losing its fundamental assumptions) to new conditions. As de Weijer emphasises, resilience-based thinking in relation to governance structures means thinking in terms of network models that constantly create new connections between a complex institutional reality, taking into account their formal and informal existence. What is more, the line of thinking consistent with resilience allows to perceive phenomena from the point of view of two opposite perspectives: bottom-up and top-down, state-building (and therefore nationalistic, particularist) and peace-building (de Weijer 2013: p. 14).

The category of resilience puts emphasis on creating conditions that favour better adaptation and innovation and strives to strengthen self-organisation and the emergence of adaptive behaviour, not designing closely-managed programs. It leaves more

⁴ Such may include, for example, the traditional approach to political system research referring to Easton's concept, including his feedback model in maintaining the balance of the system. Even if we try to apply them, one should be aware of the limitations of the model used in the discussed, diverse system conditions.

space for a careful manoeuvre in a system that is inherently difficult to measure and adopts a more iterative (repetitive) non-linear approach to change.

In general, social systems characterised by resilience have the following features:

- the presence of institutions and policies capable to deal with particular threats and manage sensitive areas;
- ability to draw many scenarios and being ready to deal with a series of anticipated and unforeseen changes in the environment;
- ability to predict shocks and maintain system functionality in the process of overcoming them;
- the need to compromise between efficiency and the increase of system resilience: if resilience is emphasised, it is inevitable to accept some loss of performance (de Weijer 2013).

Resilience, stressing the ability of the system to absorb disturbances and reorganise during change, also emphasises the features of such thinking, according to which it manages to retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and ability to respond to feedback during the transformation process.

However, nowadays the widespread use of the term “resilience” entails the risk of its over-interpretation and application in relation to the traditional thinking about change, based on a linear development path, often controlled by external factors. Then it is easy to lose the essence of this approach, which, according to A. Boin, L. K. Comfort and Ch. C. Demchak, is currently used in many very different discourses, ranging from sports, international reports, reports from places covered by natural disasters to the protection of critical infrastructure (Boin et al. 2010). It may seem that everything and everyone should be immune. Recognising this threat, one should make some definition clauses and mark the limits of applying this approach. According to the authors mentioned above, resilience is the ability of a social system (e.g. organisation, city, society) to actively adapt in conditions of perceived disturbances and to face them, so as to shorten the period of disruption.

According to the previous remarks, resilience can mean:

- the result of the actions undertaken in the system and the result of the processes taking place,
- a property that is built into the system’s mechanisms as a group of rapid response solutions to crises,
- the process of constantly building a reality based on flexible solutions.

Sorting out certain issues in the application of the concept does not eliminate a number of doubts and questions related to it. So what characterises the resilient system and how can we recognise it? And how to distinguish between “happy” systems that “succeeded” and those who avoided or overcome disruptions due to the ability to manage problems? And finally, how to recognise a system that, thanks to its resilient character, managed well in a shock situation, but otherwise collapsed? Can the answer be a certain cyclicity of occurring events, showing the tendency, and not the accidental appearance of features that result from the nature of the complexity of the structure? Or maybe it is rather about the ordinary ability to deal with current problems and difficulties?

These questions can be asked while searching for answers regarding the essence of resilience. The assumption in this study is that resilience is a kind of special lens that allow to perceive the functioning of the system from the point of view of its ability to renew its functional skills. Considering the observations made regarding this approach, it can be concluded that a system that has clear resilience characteristics develops by overcoming many tensions and crises, using instruments dedicated to flexible response and creating conditions for further durability. It differs from every other system that develops in a natural way of overcoming crises above all by the degree of complexity and the fact that resilience is not only the need to protect everyday life. It is a built-in mechanism that contributes to the progress of the development process.

For research on supranational integration space, resilience is a way of explaining the adaptive properties of the EU political system, which is characterised above all by a specific combination of purposeful and predictable operation with unpredictable changes, correcting the original assumptions. It is the interpretation of the mechanism of maintaining (or losing) the systemic balance.

At the same time, referring to resilience directs attention towards a positive or critical way of assessing the integration processes themselves and whether the presence of a strong component of resilience is conducive to maintaining the main objectives of integration or paradoxically a feature that is supposed to support the functionality of the system is a source of loss of its lifespan. In particular, a look at the last decade of EU development raises this kind of reflection. As a result of the accumulation of crises, policy makers in the EU have taken a number of steps that can be regarded in terms of flexible immune behaviours. However, did

they contribute to the actual stabilisation of the integration process? Or did the disintegration tendencies intensify?

Application of resilience in the study of the properties of the EU political system

So many assessments and comments have so far been addressed at the European Union and the way it operates, that each subsequent interpretation may seem to be only a reproduction of previously presented explanations.

However, it is impossible to stop at the analyses already carried out. Integrative reality and the perspectives of assessments are changing and should always take into account new facts and determinants of on-going processes. New interpretations may also result from a more in-depth, longer-term reflection on the ground that reflects a broader historical context. This allows to get to know the regularities that are difficult to read based only on current states and events.

Observation of the process of integration from a distance provides the basis for perceiving its dynamics in the concept of resilience. Recourse to such a framework is implied within the EU by the nature of the integration structure and the political system the creation of which was initiated in 1957 with the establishment of the EEC.

The importance of the conditions of the EU political system for shaping its balance

The European Union is, in the context of research on its political nature, a combination of statehood features and an intergovernmental organisation. This, in consequence, leads to the appearance of the system complexity effect, which entails a number of effects related to the functioning of individual system participants. At the same time, it creates special conditions for theoretical considerations⁵.

However, the EU cannot be understood in the framework of the separation of the two categories. Its essence is contained between the two phenomena, and what is

⁵ An interesting approach is presented by Nic Shuibhne, according to which the EU is a kind of dynamic polity, a symbiotic polity, which means that it bears the features of federal systems without being a federation. Finally, after the establishing of supranationalist citizenship, EU is a supranational polity (Shuibhne 2010).

a challenge for researchers is the most accurate description of this uniqueness, based on running and observed processes.

Moving between the categories of statehood and international organisation as two reference structures for the EU leads to the separation of two ways of theoretical analysis: intergovernmentalism and supranationalism.

The features of both approaches are synthetically presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Intergovernmentalism and supranationalism: differences

Supranationalism	Intergovernmentalism
Law: direct effectiveness and supremacy of European law over national law; autonomous legal system; partial independence from national law, through obtaining derivative and interpretative autonomy (Dyńia 2012: p. 285) ⁸ ;	Law: the law operates in its international approach, the ratification of legal acts is required
The manner of implementing policies: they are implemented according to identical rules, are subject to supranational decision-making procedures and supranational law, and are based on the functioning of supranational institutions. Supranational policies include, above all, regulatory policies (e.g. agriculture, trade, competition) and monetary policy (Ruszkowski 2010: p. 231-232), replacing national legal instruments by European regulations, in which we very often see the use of the regulation, which leads to strong unification.	The manner of implementing European policies: policies are implemented in a way that leaves considerable freedom to regulate their principles according to national assumptions. Recommendations will be the dominant legal tools; there is no attempt to harmonise; the regulatory limit consists in sovereignty; division into policies under high politics and low politics
Institutions: vertical arrangement of connections and replacement of the state factor by other non-state actors ⁹ . Supranational institutions are, in fact, intergovernmental, as they obtain a mandate to act on their part. The latter entrust them with competence and, while remaining in the role of the principal, expect from them (agents) the implementation of tasks.	Institutions: appreciation of the nation state; a system composed of representatives of states at various levels of representation

⁶ The author refers to the opinion of Aleksandra Kustera (2007: p. 14)

⁷ On the institutional system, see: Hix 2010; Hix, Hoyland 2011; Nugent 2012; Cini et al. 2013.

<p>Decision-making procedures: the procedure of creating secondary legislation means a wider application of the qualified majority rule - this principle supersedes the unanimity principle (i.e. the veto rights of any Member State) in an ever wider area of integration regulated by EU law¹⁰.</p>	<p>Decision-making procedures: unanimity or unanimity with constructive abstentions and consensus; diplomatic negotiations are characteristic.</p>
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Source: own work.

On the one hand, both paradigms allow to build different visions of the development of integration processes, as well as indicate the different roles of particular actors in this process. They also imply different assessments related to the need to build advanced institutional and legal structures as a foundation for functioning. In the realities of the integration process, they do not function in a pure and ideal way. As a result of permanent contacts that occur between both systems of solutions, it is sometimes difficult to clearly assess the nature of a given element. Moreover, in the integration process, we are constantly dealing with border crossing. Actors, traditionally attributed to one of the spheres, behave in an illegible manner. Observation of real integration processes shows that entities formally included in one of the spaces often take into account the preferences characteristic of the latter.

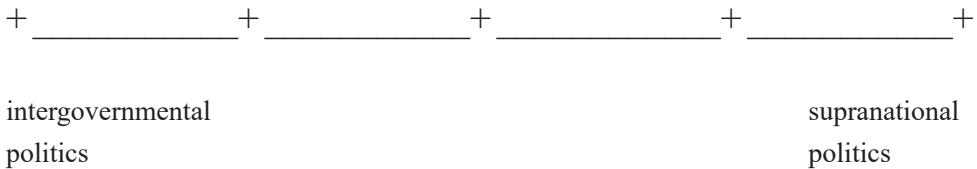
Capturing the subtle relationship between these phenomena, not the difference that divides them, leads to understanding the integration reality and, above all, the way the EU political system functions. As it is dependent on a continuous game between two tendencies that are contradictory or at least heterogeneous, maintaining an internal balance within it is a difficult task. This process is inseparable from making decisions that do not always leave consistent results. Flexibility of actions and the ability to reconcile contradictory tendencies are required. The multitude of levels at which decisions are made implies difficulties in achieving effective solutions, conditioning disputes and conflict situations. Such a structure, striving to reconcile the interests and objectives of many different entities, shows a high degree of unpredictability, which hinders successful implementation of the change. As A. Menon puts it: "European integration is characterised by a lack of stability. The Union is an attempt to reconcile conflicting interests between full national sovereignty on the one hand and the creation of a federal

⁸ The European Union has undergone significant changes in this area. Starting with a system based mainly on unanimity, it has evolved in the direction of majority decisions in a very large scope of issues (see: Trzaskowski 2005).

state on the other. It is a strange hybrid, composed of both quasi-state elements and features that bring to mind other international institutions. It helps states – the ultimate beneficiaries of political loyalty, but ultimately unable to take care of their citizens alone – to cope with the ever-expanding list of supranational problems of institutional policy they face” (Menon 2013: p. 244).

The coexistence of different levels of participation in the EU political system is both an enrichment of the process itself, which thus becomes a reflection of the diversity of European participative space. On the other hand, there is competition or, at least, difficult dialogue about interests that are often in conflict. The two basic categories of interests: national and European are here the most important areas of aspirations. National interests focused on sovereign issues, as well as the specificity of each state and its needs, are in almost constant tension with collective European aspirations. We are not talking about a clear contradiction, but we can certainly talk about moving on a continuum at the two poles of which there are intergovernmental and supranational policies.

Figure 2



Source: compiled on the basis of Stone, Sandholtz 1998: p. 8.

In this regard, it can be considered according to Mark Leonard that the EU creates a specific laboratory of various agents and structures cooperating with each other at various levels, in which governmental structures still have a significant place. In this way (again and again) a unique network of institutional connections is created, exposed to constant shocks, inconsistent stimuli directed from various parts of the system environment (Leonard 2000: p. 45–46). Institutional conflict is built into the system. Tensions occur on both the supranational – intergovernmental line and at the division

of power: The Council and the Commission are regularly in dispute over the division of executive power, the European Parliament is confronted with the Commission while national parliaments feel alienated from the Union and claim for the role of the European Parliament in the decision-making process (Leonard 2000: 42). One can get the impression that institutions entering into particular relationships with each other “forget” about the network, open and interdependent arrangement and often try to “win” something for themselves.

This is a reason for destabilising situations, and as a result, the system is exposed to frequent short disputes that may turn into crises. This requires taking adaptive and corrective steps. A series of events and their consequences is created, the aim of which is to regenerate the system and return to balance.

In order to implement this dynamics, the EU political system has developed a number of mechanisms and solutions that support its resilience and allow it to strengthen its ability to survive as well as maintain functional flexibility. These are both institutional and legal instruments.

Institutional / legal instrument	The way of interaction
Enhanced cooperation	<p>The provisions enabling the establishment of enhanced cooperation were introduced into primary EU law under the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997). In accordance with the current provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, regulations on enhanced cooperation are included both in the TEU (Article 20 TEU), as in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Articles 326–334 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – TFEU). The provisions contained in these articles provide for exceptions on judicial cooperation in criminal matters and police cooperation under the TL as part of the Union area of freedom, security and justice.</p> <p>The essence of the solution is to enable closer cooperation between countries that want to fulfil certain obligations more quickly, but only within the framework of non-exclusive competences of the Union. Acts adopted as part of enhanced cooperation shall be binding only on participating Member States. They are not considered as an <i>acquis</i>, which must be adopted by the candidate countries for accession to the Union (one of the last examples is the establishment of enhanced cooperation in the matter of appointing the European Public Prosecutor’s Office).</p>

<p>Flexibility clause</p>	<p>Flexibility clause – Art. 352 TFEU, i.e. the possibility of making decisions in the Union without a clear legal basis (when it is necessary to achieve EU objectives) has an additional control mechanism: national parliaments must be notified of the intended decision – objection of even one of them makes the decision impossible to be taken; besides, the Common Foreign and Security Policy was explicitly excluded from the operation of this clause – CFSP and the Union’s objectives (declaration 41) which could be taken into account (Space of Freedom, Security and Justice, establishment of the internal market and external actions) were precised; and finally – referring to “settled case-law” of the Court of Justice (ECJ) – Declaration no 42 explains that the flexibility clause “cannot serve as a basis for widening the scope of Union powers beyond the general framework created by the entire provisions of the Treaties” and be used to bypass the revision procedure of the Treaties. In the context of the resilience concept, it is an instrument that allows the implementation of solutions necessary from the point of view of the development of the integration process without the need to amend the treaties, which is often a tedious and long legislative process.</p>
<p>Simplified procedures for the revision of treaties</p>	<p>If the entities referred to in the ordinary change procedure bring to the Council a proposal to review all or part of the provisions of Part Three of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union regarding the Union’s internal policies and activities, then the European Council may adopt a decision amending all or part of the provisions of Part Three of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. This decision (after consultation with other institutions) also enters into force after ratification by all Member States. However, neither the convention nor the conference of representatives is convened. This procedure cannot, however, increase the competences conferred on the Union in the Treaties.</p> <p>The specific type of treaty revision is called passerelle procedures. They apply when the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union or Title V of the Treaty on Union provides that the Council acts unanimously in a given field or in a given case. At that time, the European Council (unanimously and with the consent of Parliament) may adopt a decision authorising the Council to act by a qualified majority in this field or in this case. However, it cannot do so when this field concerns military or defence matters.</p> <p>The passerelle procedure is an important exception to the need for Member States to conclude revision treaties to amend the EU treaties. All these solutions testify to the flexibility of adapting European law to the needs, but on the other hand they open a dangerous door of abuse by the EU (understood as a supranational level) of its competences in order to give itself new competences (the so-called <i>kompetenz-kompetenz</i>).</p>

<p>Preliminary ruling and case-law procedure of the Court of Justice</p>	<p>Obligations resulting from Art. 19 TEU are carried out by the Tribunal and the Court mainly as part of the preliminary ruling procedure, the aim of which is to ensure a uniform interpretation and equal effectiveness of Community law in all Member States. It allowed to create a number of the most important principles for the functioning of the whole system, such as: the principle of primacy of the EU law, the principle of autonomy, the principle of direct effect, institutional balance or conditions and premises for compensation of states. In adjudicating in this procedure (but also in others), the EU judicial dimension creates precedents, to which it refers later on in other matters (it does not have to do so). It makes the functioning of the legal system more flexible. However, bearing in mind the dynamic development of the European integration law and the extensive participation of national courts in solving Community problems, the benefits of the precedent system seem invaluable. On the other hand, the principles developed in this way are often not included directly in the treaty provisions, which raises doubts as to their validity (it is very well visible in relation to the priority principle of EU law) (Skrodzka 2015).</p>
<p>Opt-out rules</p>	<p>A number of exemptions applied to certain countries, allowing them not to participate in some of the solutions to which other countries were obliged. The most well-known are: adoption of the euro, membership in the Schengen area, implementation of commitments under defence policy; UK law to exclude itself from the Agreement on social policy. This category also include transitional periods applied to newly acceding countries (Kubin 2015). The possibility of being exempted from the obligation to fulfil certain obligations is seen as a way towards differentiation. On the other hand, acceptance of certain exceptions gives a chance for further development of the entire community. The problem that remains unresolved in this situation consists in the weakening of cohesion among the participants in the integration process.</p>
<p>Informal rules in decision-making processes</p>	<p>trialogues – organisation of informal trialogue meetings between representatives of the Parliament, the Council and the Commission during the 1st and 2nd reading of the ordinary legislative procedure. The aim is to quickly reach an agreement on the project (the so-called ad-referendum compromise), which is then formally adopted without changes at plenary meetings of the EP and the Council. They are not referred to in the Treaties and were for the first time institutionalised by the Joint Declaration on practical rules for the use of the codecision procedure of 1999 (replaced by the 2007 agreement). It enables overcoming deadlocks in the decision-making process.</p>

<p>Transitional periods in the implementation of certain obligations / derogations from the implementation of certain obligations</p>	<p>Moving from the voting system in the Council established by the Treaty of Nice for a system based on a double majority (number of countries and population) was provided with a transitional period from 1 November 2014 to 31 March 2017. In the case of a QMV (qualified majority) decision, each member of the Council / European Council may request that the decision be adopted in accordance with the Nice system. It could also be a reference to the Ioannina Compromise in the following form: 55% of one of the blocking minority tests. It is also possible to indicate the withdrawal from the procedure of reducing the composition of the European Commission, as envisaged in the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 17 TEU). It was assumed that during the transitional period, until 31 October 2014, the Commission would consist of one representative from each Member State. Later, the rotating system would become effective, according to which the Commission would be represented by 2/3 of the states in each term of office. However, in May 2013, the European Council unanimously decided to keep the number of Commissioners corresponding to the number of Member States (including the President and the Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy). The European Council should reconsider this decision, due to its impact on the functioning of the Commission, at the latest before the appointment of the next Commission, which will take over the powers on 1 November 2014, but this has not happened. The maintenance of the full composition of the Commission results from the expectations of all countries that do not want to lose their influence on the functioning of the EU, resulting from the competence of the European Commission. Therefore, corrections were made to previously taken decisions, showing at the same time that any such obligation in the future may also undergo similar modifications.</p>
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Table 2: Institutional and legal solutions supporting the resilience of the EU political system; own work.

These institutional and legal solutions are not incidentally applied procedures. They are present and used with varying frequency in the process of governance in the EU in situations where a flexible response is necessary resulting both from the need to prevent a crisis, as well as to strengthen positive incentives affecting the progress in the development of integration. They build the resilience of the EU political system by creating conditions conducive to the implementation of integration goals.

Their presence in the system indicates the readiness of participants to go beyond the pattern of action in circumstances that require it. At the same time, they leave effects not always desirable and expected.

Balance in the EU political system as an effect of resilience

The goal of every political system is to fulfil its functions, understood as activities contributing to the preservation of the entire system in a long-term period, i.e. aiming both to maintain the existing state and to further its development. Each of the classically distinguished functions of the political system: regulatory, mediational, adaptive and innovative is to ensure the system's stable duration based on internal balance. The assumption of searching for systemic balance results mainly from the systemic approach. Balance (homeostasis) can be defined as the ability of a system to restore a constantly lost balance by means of adaptive processes. The system constantly regains balance thanks to the conversion and feedback mechanism. Even if the systemic approach is not a fundamental view of the structure being studied, the need for balance will be strongly present in the system. It results from a strive for survival and fulfilling the goals for which it is necessary that the system as a whole (including its various elements) should be balanced.

To understand the mechanisms of functioning of the EU political system, including the way of building and maintaining balance, one cannot simply refer to classical theories of political systems. We are dealing with a non-state political system that differs from the traditional state in the occurrence of many different levels of power (national and European), as well as a complex system of dependencies and connections between them (Paczeńskiak 2014: p.128).

The dynamics of changes taking place in the EU political system take into account variables that form a particular pattern of the development path. There are many circumstances that lead to destabilisation and tension. To maintain the balance of such a system, it is necessary to demonstrate flexibility and readiness to adapt to changing development conditions (see Table 1).

Building balance in the EU political system may concern different levels and areas of the system itself. You can look for a balance between specific institutions, individual authorities, supranational and intergovernmental tendencies, large and small states, countries of the old Union and countries that joined after 2004,

countries of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and countries outside the euro area. The lines dividing the considered phenomena may follow different criteria, but what constitutes a common denominator for these different research areas is the impact of systemic complexity on their functioning. This means that in each of these cases, the establishment and maintenance of balance is the result of a difficult and often lengthy process, and so it is subjected to destabilising effects, which may take the form of crises (e.g. mechanisms developed and binding for EMU, which proved too weak to maintain its effectiveness in the long term). The crises have accompanied the building of the European structure at different times: “At each of the (...) stages there were many significant problems, which the further effectiveness of the integration depended on. In addition to permanent dilemmas, there were new significant problems characteristic for a given stage of integration. Some claim that the history of European integration can be analysed through the prism of its development from crisis to crisis.” (Stolarczyk 2012: p. 39). In the study of the crisis in the process of European integration, there appear diverse positions as to the intensity of this phenomenon, its extent, ways of influencing individual integration areas. The opposite tendency consists in pro-development and pro-modernisation activities that fulfil the goals and functions of the system. For the EU, the objectives are understood in two ways: both as the main development directions determining the narrower paths of integration in different areas, including the axiological layer that determines their identification, as well as specific tasks and steps taken to implement the first meaning. It can therefore be considered that we are dealing with long-range goals as well as those of a more current nature.

The EU is therefore in a permanent suspension, a kind of internal struggle that shapes the balance of the system. The question is what affects the fact that the system maintains its functionality in the long term (regardless of the assessment of the current situation). What allows it, despite the tensions and contradictions that are its immanent feature, to repeatedly rebuild weakened functionality? The answer can be based on argumentation from the resilience perspective, in particular those features that focus on the flexible and compromise behaviour of system participants. At various stages of the EU development, the need to establish compromises that lead to increasing the functional capacity of the system (fulfilling the objectives of integration) or leading to the increase of resistance (rebuilding functional mechanisms in post-crisis reality) appeared in a variable manner.

There are at least three different ways to link them:

1. Sustainable relation: natural co-existence of pro-development (modernisation) and crisis-generating elements. Resilience is above all a flexible way to reconcile these two trends.
2. Disrupted relationship: the elements of modernisation and crisis-related as a result of the deepening of contradictions begin to function in the opposition, which hinders the existence of the system. Resilience is in this case the ability to regenerate forces that are strained as a result of increasing tensions and variations.
3. Seriously disturbed relationship (loss of balance by the system): modernisation enters the stage of a crisis in which we do not observe clear and real modernisation actions, possible to be interpreted as the success of the integration process. Instead, there are accumulation of crisis phenomena that begin to mutually reinforce themselves. The European Union is entering a systemic crisis. Resilience begins to manifest itself, allows “to bounce off the bottom”.

In each of the presented cases, the system can return to balance by using its development potential based on the resilience. The first of the described cases shows resilience and its positive, strengthening effect. It does not play an emergency or rescue role. The second and third situations are a reflection of the conditions in which it is necessary to take anti-crisis or strictly corrective actions. It can be concluded that the resistance of the system shows its evolutionary and gradual face. Depending on the circumstances, it may be an almost invisible feature, remaining in a sleepy readiness. At other times it is a real and apparently used institutional and legal instrument that allows the functional features of the system to be maintained, even at the expense of its current high efficiency and effectiveness.

The dynamics of the development of the integration system is based on thinking in terms of resilience. What is the most important is the flexible response to unexpected events and the ability to adapt to new conditions that grow in changing circumstances. The interpenetrating elements of the crisis and modernisation aspirations, observed throughout the history of the development of integration processes, show that the integration system is imprinted with a special character of change based on the need to compromise between efficiency and the increase of the system's resilience. According to the concept of resilience, the EU has the ability to absorb tensions and distortions without losing its readiness to fulfil its functions. The latter may be modified or even temporarily suspended or dismissed in time, but they are not completely reduced.

Responsiveness, flexibility and the ability to respond to tensions are the part of the legal system, institutional structure and policies implemented in the EU. The incorporation into the different areas of the integration space of the functional elements of resilience opens the path that leads to showing mechanisms and regularities rather than the interpretation of specific integration phenomena occurring at a given time.

Resilience takes on such properties related to analysis as the ability to adapt, absorb difficulties, flexibility and the ability to return to balance after a period of destabilisation. Especially the last decade in the development of European integration clearly indicates the nature of the efforts made by the participants of the process.

The political system of the European Union is an example of management (governance) taking place in a situation of a strongly diversified cultural, social and political environment. Without the ability to respond flexibly to the tensions and crises resulting from such conditions, this system would be exposed not so much to the permanent occurrence or threat of a crisis (what is happening), but to a collapse.

An optimistic or pessimistic vision of integration processes? The effects of thinking in terms of resilience

Resilience gives the dynamics of changes characteristic features and makes us reflect on their long-lasting impact on the effectiveness of the development efforts undertaken.

In the context of the integration processes under consideration, success means progress in achieving the integration goals, as well as increasing satisfaction with the effects of the policies implemented (utilitarian legitimisation). It can be measured by the degree of coherence of the solutions achieved, the scope of implementation of obligations contained in the treaty provisions or even by reading statistics indicating data relating to the violation of European law. The latter element is strongly related to the observance of loyalty by the Member States.

A system with high saturation of immune properties may, contrary to the expected results, be subject to the diversification. In order to overcome the crisis, it may be necessary to adopt solutions that will preserve the essence of the system, but will violate its internal coherence. And although in the process of accompanying the systemic complexity resilience provides for the preservation of functional features of the system, which is its essential property, in reality it can be difficult (Folke 2006).

The historical view of integration processes shows that during most stages of development, the integration system was able to protect itself against the threat of a significant violation of internal cohesion that could affect the very idea of integration (Wierzchowska 2016). The situation has changed over the last decade. Many commentators and researchers watching the events taking place in the EU after 2005 noticed the special situation in which integrated Europe was found. As Federico Lampini stated: “This crisis [Eurozone crisis] took proportions that nobody can control. Too many fires must be extinguished in too many different places (Zielonka 2014: p. 19)”. Starting from the difficult situation after the rejection of the constitutional Treaty, through the problem of reaching a consensus around the Treaty of Lisbon, up to the financial crisis and the resulting crises of values, legitimacy, institutions, leadership, vision of integration, the EU has entered nowadays the systemic crisis. There have been major transformations in the integration process management system. They concern both policies and their internal content, as well as the very legal and institutional structure. In addition, we are also dealing with changes in the on-going path of economic development and modifications in the perception of the vision of the development of the European integration process.

In particular, the financial crisis has forced many changes to the existing functioning of the mechanisms of governance. To a large extent, they had the nature of “extinguishing fires” and were actions under pressure to search for solutions to problems that could not be ignored in any way, and postponing, as was often the case during the integration process, especially in the period between 1993 and 2005. The crisis has seriously undermined trust between Member States, the lack of which is a fundamental obstacle to the progress of the integration process. It also violated the principle of interinstitutional balance, which for the mechanisms of governance is equivalent to the tripartition of the authorities and without which it is difficult to effectively run EU governance processes. There is a phenomenon of power asymmetry, as the system reacted to further tensions and crises in a way that strongly undermined the unity of the integration process.

There has been a shift in the hitherto functioning mechanisms in the following areas of implementation of integration processes:

- strengthening of intergovernmental entities at the expense of Community’s institutions; the latter, such as the European Commission, retained more supervisory than real decision-making powers;

- strengthening of the importance of large states with strong political and economic potential, at the expense of smaller and weaker states;
- concentration of power within the countries belonging to the euro area; the euro group gained a lot of significance, that is, the group associating the finance ministers of the Eurozone countries; initially, this structure acted informally and the Treaty of Lisbon formally sanctioned its existence; group meetings have often replaced the peaks of the European Council in situations where a decision was needed to react to the financial crisis; this meant omitting countries outside the euro area in the decision-making process;
- use of non-standard solutions to achieve desired decisions (e.g. the circumstances of establishing the European Stability Mechanism - ESM);
- tendencies to use concessions in relation to selected states in respect of fulfilling treaty obligations (attitude towards the expectations of Great Britain regarding social policy at the European Council summit on 18–19 February 2016) (Wierzchowska 2016).

The events of the last decade as well as previous integration processes necessitated the introduction of many adjustments that materialised in successive regulations, the creation of new institutions and links between the subjects of integration. The system became more and more complex, which was also influenced by the strengthening tendencies of leaving unresolved problems as a “residue” to be decided by subsequent decision-makers. Understanding the needs of participants in the integration process and defining good solutions became more and more difficult and often the decisions were based on ambiguous premises.

Difficult experiences of the crisis time put a question mark on the chosen direction of European integration, which, although never fully agreed, set one important imperative: to preserve the integrity of the integration process as much as possible. Concessions that were made with respect to some countries initially did not pose a threat to the integration process. They were a manifestation of the system’s resistance, embedded in its structure. However when the concessions threaten the overall cohesion of the European system, we can talk about the threat of disintegration. Disintegration processes are inscribed in the behaviour of the participants of the integration process due to the fact that the logic of supranational structures includes the option of withdrawing the sovereign competences previously allocated to the common management. Making use of this option will always be disintegrating. At the same time, what leaves the results

disintegrating in its foundations contains the element of resilience, i.e. striving to maintain the system's functionality. This internal paradox is a reflection of the very nature of the integration process and at the same time justifies the inclusion of resilience as a feature that immanently belongs to it. Anti-supportive behaviour of some states (especially visible in the context of meeting the obligations under the policy on refugees) was at the same time an ultimatum on which they made their further participation in the EU dependent.

So, are we dealing with an optimistic or pessimistic vision of integration processes? Is it possible to recognise that the system's immunity has reached its limits based on the concept of resilience?

The system's resilience features are not a guarantee that it will continue to evolve in the planned direction. They provide a framework to prevent rapid and permanent loss of balance, but they do not guarantee the survival of the system. The fact that the functioning is based on the resilience and moves according to its assumptions can only support solving development dilemmas by indicating ways of implementing the path of progress. However, success is not guaranteed. Such an approach may explain the problem of the EU's situation after 2005. The development of resilience mechanisms is the basis for finding good solutions and the chance to find the answers that are right for a given situation. Thanks to embedding in the system mechanisms that fulfil the function of a kind of safety valve, the EU is prepared for the occurrence of crisis situations. Its resistance, however, is not programmed to be a barrier to all tensions and difficulties that arise in ever new circumstances and with variable intensity. Resilience itself also makes them grow, which does not allow to define it as an unambiguous instrument with positive impact. It has a kind of Janus face, which is manifested in the fact that it saves the process of integration from the oppression, of which it is the source itself. Increasing the flexibility of operation, it leads to the deepening of differences. A specific cycle of mutual interactions is created. Starting from the original assumptions of the system, we go to the stages in which it develops through constant differentiation (deepening, expanding) and the need to correct unforeseen situations that are the result of these processes. Mechanisms and solutions emerge and become permanent system elements which help to cope with crisis situations. The insight into the history of integration processes allows us to conclude that it proceeds in a way that reflects the constant, alternating (although irregular) appearance of modernisation activities (which can be treated as fulfilling the objectives of the treaties) and rescue actions necessary to

implement in connection with the existing crises. The system learns to function in such conditions, but at the same time it begins to assimilate them as inherent and natural. The system becomes resistant, but at the same time more susceptible to subsequent tensions. It is a paradox, therefore, that resilience leads to greater sensitisation, and this in turn to building subsequent resilience mechanisms.

Conclusions

Turning to the conclusions based on the observations and remarks made in the article, it should be emphasised that the concept of resilience is just one of many perspectives attempting to show the specificity of development and transformations taking place in the integration system. It allows to see some of its regularities, but does not explain all its properties.

The article was intended to point to a new opportunity for research reflection, the assumption of which is to look at the dynamics of the system development treated as a holistic set of institutional and legal solutions subject to impacts of a destabilising and improving nature at the same time.

The EU system seen from a resilience perspective has characteristics specific to this approach. The high degree of diversity and frequent incidents of a crisis nature are part of the conditions that accompany the development of analysis in terms of resilience and which make the system begin to shape such features as flexibility and readiness to adapt.

At the same time, resilience should not be, and in this study is not, perceived as the ability of the system to develop only in a positive, desirable direction. The ability of the system to assimilate undesirable events seems to be a desirable feature, but the effects of such an organisation in the functioning of the structure may lead to a weakening of the cohesion of the system as a whole.

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