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## “Paradigms in European studies”

### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to determine, which of the independent scientific disciplines dealing with issues related to the European Union offers the research approach most apt for constructing theories of European integration and whether the basic theoretical paradigms of this discipline are sufficient to construct them. In order to achieve this, the following four perspectives of scientific disciplines have been analysed: political sciences, law, economics and sociology. The results of these considerations indicate that political sciences has the greatest influence on shaping the theories of European integration. Next, in order to the decide, whether the basic theoretical paradigms of political sciences are sufficient to construct theories of European integration, such theories as federalism, functionalism and intergovernmental approach have been analysed. To conclude, it can be said that in the case of federalism and intergovernmental approach – they are, and in the case of functionalism they are not

**Keywords:** European studies; paradigms; scientific disciplines; scientific theories.

According to the definition contained in the Polish Language Dictionary, European studies can mean “*the field of knowledge covering all issues related to the European Union*”<sup>1</sup>, as well as a “*faculty at university including studies in this field*”<sup>2</sup>. However, according to the current Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education regarding knowledge, science and art, as well as scientific and artistic disciplines<sup>3</sup>, European studies are not included in the three-level division (covering areas, fields and disciplines) of sciences existing in Poland. It means that European studies can function as a field of study, but it is not an independent scientific discipline. Such situation raises questions of a methodological nature, which all researchers dealing with European integration must ask. Do they have to use the methods developed by representatives of other scientific disciplines and, more importantly, do they must create new theories basing on the paradigms that they have developed?

The purpose of this paper is to try to answer the two fundamental questions for all Europeanists. The first of these is: **which of the independent scientific disciplines dealing with issues related to the European Union offers the research approach most apt for researchers in the process of European integration, allowing to create theories of European integration?** The second question, which should be asked next, is **whether the basic theoretical paradigms of this discipline are sufficient to construct theories of European integration?**

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<sup>1</sup> Drabik (2011): 198–199.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> Rozporządzeniem Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 8 sierpnia 2011 roku w sprawie obszarów wiedzy, dziedzin nauki i sztuki oraz dyscyplin naukowych i artystycznych (Dz. U. 2011 Nr 179, poz. 1065).

The beginnings of European integration are based on the need to strengthen economic cooperation between individual members of the Communities, which makes it understandable that it has been the subject of research by numerous economists. Considering, however, that theories and models of integration concern not only the economic but also its political dimension, it seems reasonable to say that also political science can offer Europeanists adequate methods to conduct research. Legal acts regulating the functioning of the European Communities and the European Union have become the subject of lawyers' deliberations, and since European integration has begun to have an increasing impact on societies, sociologists have also been interested in it. However, due to the nature of this process, for the purposes of this paper, the first of thesis (which is at the same time an attempt to answer the first research question) is formulated as follows: **it is political science as an independent scientific discipline that offers the most accurate research approach for the Europeanists, allowing create theories of European integration.** The second thesis specifies the first one and constitutes an attempt to answer the second of the research questions, by being formulated as follows: **the basic theoretical paradigms in political science, of which international relations are a part, constitute a sufficient basis for constructing theories of European integration.**

In order to prove or to refute these thesis, this paper contains content on the conceptualization of the basic concepts mentioned above, analysis of methods offered by independent scientific disciplines, which are also interested in issues related to the process of European integration and also a discussion about basic assumptions of traditional theories of European integration, with reference to the conclusions

contained in the previous parts of the paper. At the end there is also a summary together with the conclusions.

## **1. Conceptualization of basic concepts**

In order to answer the research questions raised in this paper and to prove the truth or falseness of the theses, it is necessary to define the basic concepts relevant to the subject, such as scientific discipline, paradigm and scientific theory. For the purposes of this paper, it seemed appropriate to use not only the above mentioned official three-level division adopted by Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, but also to use definitions proposed by philosophers of science.

### **1.1. Area of knowledge, branch of science and scientific discipline**

According to the above mentioned Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education regarding knowledge, science and art, as well as scientific and artistic disciplines, the current three-tier division in the area of knowledge in social sciences looks as follows:

Table 1. The tabular specification for area of knowledge, branches of science and scientific disciplines within the area of knowledge, which is social science.

AREA OF KNOWLEDGE	BRANCHES OF SCIENCE	SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINES
Social sciences	Social sciences	1) Security sciences 2) Defence sciences 3) Media sciences 4) Political sciences 5) Public policy sciences 6) Cognition and social communication sciences 7) Pedagogy 8) Psychology 9) Sociology
	Economic sciences	1) Economics 2) Finances 3) Management studies 4) Commodity sciences
	Legal sciences	1) Administration studies 2) Law 3) Canon law

**Source:** Own elaboration on the basis of Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education regarding knowledge, science and art, as well as scientific and artistic disciplines.

Branches of science can be distinguished from scientific disciplines by specifying their level of detail by means of:

- subject differences (research problems, research objects),
- methodological differences (research methods, developed theories),

- language differences (properties of the scientific language)<sup>4</sup>.

In addition to assessing the level of detail, it is equally important to maintain consistency between the three aspects listed above. It is necessary that a given branch of science or a scientific discipline could form a coherent whole.

Stanisław Pabis and Małgorzata Jaros formulated following definitions on the basis of the assumptions made above:

Branch of science – “*a coherent knowledge system containing common laws, theories and methods of its disciplines, used to create scientific knowledge of the field*”<sup>5</sup>.

Scientific discipline – “*a detailed knowledge system (...) used to solve specific scientific problems and increasing the knowledge of the branch to which it belongs*”<sup>6</sup>.

In this context, the scientific specialty, such as European studies, appears as singled out due to the thematic narrowing. At the same time it is worth noticing that, considering the above, it can be part of one or several scientific disciplines.

## 1.2. Paradigm and scientific theory

The concept of paradigm is used today in the scientific world in the sense proposed by the philosopher Thomas Khun in his work entitled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, published in 1962. According to it, the primary function of a paradigm is to determine what should be studied, how to formulate research questions and how to interpret their results.

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<sup>4</sup> S. Pabis, M. Jaros (2009): 22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

The typical components of a paradigm include:

- clearly formulated laws and theoretical assumptions,
- typical ways of applying basic rights in a variety of theoretical situations,
- scientific instruments and technical ways of relating the paradigm’s laws to the real conditions,
- general, metaphysical principles guiding work within the paradigm.<sup>7</sup>.

Important in the further considerations contained in this paper is to point out that the paradigm is not given once and for all. As Thomas Kuhn stressed: *“Failure of existing rules is the prelude to a search for new ones”*<sup>8</sup>. He added also, that *“Once it has achieved the status of paradigm, a scientific theory is declared invalid only if an alternate candidate is available to take its place”*<sup>9</sup>. Such statements make it legitimate to ask about the current “sufficiency” of paradigms, which are used by representatives of such sciences as political sciences, economics, law or sociology, in relation to the science of broadly understood European integration.

Scientific theory is a slightly narrower concept, than a paradigm, because it aims to explain the reasons, describe the course and predict the effects of a given phenomenon. Kuhn pointed out that a good scientific theory should:

- be precise (in the sense that the consequences resulting from it should remain in the scope of its validity in accordance with known experimental results),

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<sup>7</sup> Chalmers (1997): 123-124.

<sup>8</sup> Kuhn (1970): 68.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem: 77.

- be consistent both internally and with other commonly accepted theories,
- be useful in a wide range (in particular, its consequences should go beyond individual cases, individual rights or sub-themes to which the explanation was originally established),
- be simple (Kuhn emphasizes that a good scientific theory should introduce order to phenomena that would be unconnected and incomprehensible without it),
- bring new discoveries<sup>10</sup>.

Having recognised the five features of a good scientific theory – preciseness, consistency, generality, simplicity and fruitfulness, and earlier also features and the role of paradigms in science, in the further part of this paper consideration will be given to whether or not theoretical paradigms borrowed from the closest to European studies scientific disciplines are sufficient in terms of the construction of scientific theories.

## 2. Perspectives of scientific disciplines in which areas of interest are issues related to the European Union

In this chapter, the perspectives of four scientific disciplines, in which the subject of European integration and related aspects are of interest, will be discussed. They include political sciences, economics, law and sociology. The analysis of issues in this chapter is aimed at trying to answer the first of the research questions presented in this paper, which reads as follows: which of the independent scientific disciplines dealing with issues related to the European Union offers the research

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<sup>10</sup> Kuhn (1973).

approach most apt for researchers in the process of European integration, allowing to create theories of European integration?

## 2.1. Political sciences

Regardless of the many years of disputes regarding the identity of political sciences and the role of international relations within them<sup>11</sup>, political scientists commonly recognize that relations between states describe the so-called the paradigm of international relations. It is based on the conviction that the state is the most important actor shaping the international reality. Sometimes this paradigm is supplemented also by the theory of games and international negotiations<sup>12</sup>.

The consequence of the above assumption is recognition of the role of the European Communities and the European Union as subordinate to the Member States that constitute them, and the assuming *a priori* that they are the main driving force (or brake) of European integration. Nevertheless, based on this approach, many integration theories have arisen, which have their supporters up to this day. A somewhat modified version of the paradigm of international relations is an approach in which not states literally, but the so-called states' interests and the bargaining power of their defenders count in the “EU game” the most.

Described above “state-centric approach” was repeatedly negated, mainly by the functionalists who spoke about the so-called *spill-over* - the effect of the spill of integration over time over all areas. Nevertheless, the research approach offered to Europeanists by political scientists seems to be

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<sup>11</sup> Żukowski (2006); Klementewicz (2010).

<sup>12</sup> Gagattek (2012): 159.

accurate - on its basis, many theories of European integration were created, which successfully meet the five requirements of good scientific theory, characterized by Kuhn. What is more, many researchers say that European studies should become strictly a part of political science, because of these theoretical inspirations<sup>13</sup>.

## 2.2. Law

Due to the fact that the European Union has been perceived as an international organization for a long time, it has been the subject of studies of specialists in international law. Lawyers were primarily interested in the nature of its legal order and institutions as well as the decision-making process. They devoted not less attention to the Common Market, in particular to the freedom of movement and a competition law.

The research approach of lawyers interested in the above-mentioned aspects of European integration was typical of the representatives of their field – it was based on the exegesis of legal acts and commenting on the case law of the European Court of Justice<sup>14</sup>.

In the context of the possibility of developing new theories thanks to the research approach offered by lawyers, the unsolved issue is whether lawyers should develop new theories or rather apply a general analysis of European law. Most of the representatives of this discipline opt for the second of these solutions<sup>15</sup>, which obviously do not give as much opportunities as the first. However, the reason for taking such position is quite understandable - European law has a hybrid

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<sup>13</sup> Wierzchowska (2010): 22–26.

<sup>14</sup> Arnall (2010): 168–188.

<sup>15</sup> Walker (2005): 581.

nature and its interpretation is based on the different legal systems of the member states of the Union (they are their “starting points”). This kind of approach is obviously limiting for creating new theories.

### 2.3. Economics

Speaking about the European Union, it is impossible not to mention the genesis of its creation, which is closely related to economic motivations. The founding fathers wanted to avoid another great war in Europe by linking key European industries. To achieve this goal, they felt that it is necessary to liberalize trade<sup>16</sup>. In this way, the strictly political goal was to be achieved thanks to the tools and methods offered by economists.

The attempt to create a free trade zone was nothing new for representatives of economic sciences. During the first years of the existence of the Communities, it provided economists only with research materials and did not inspire them to create new theories. This situation changed, however, with the deepening of European integration and the emergence of its later stages, unprecedented so far - especially on the occasion of the emergence of plans to create a European Single Market and the Economic and Monetary Union. Various economists have tried to analyse the Eurozone in the context of the optimal currency area<sup>17</sup>, or to unravel why so many countries decided to abandon their monetary policy (and thus an important component of their sovereignty) in favor of the euro currency - it was inconceivable especially in the eyes of supporters traditional realistic theories.

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<sup>16</sup> Curzon (1974).

<sup>17</sup> Bukowski (2007).

The contribution of many economists was very valuable, especially in the practical aspect of the construction of the Economic and Monetary Union, but economics as a scientific discipline did not provide its own specific theories of European integration. Usually it derived from achievements of the political sciences, which is a kind of paradox, because they were based on premises of an economic nature, such as previously mentioned desire to defend the so-called state national interests.

#### 2.4. Sociology

For a long time, European integration could not be counted among the interests of sociologists. Only when it ceased to be a process controlled and understood by political elites only, representatives of this discipline joined the debate on its essence. Virginie Guiraudon and Adrian Favella explain the lack of original interest in European integration by sociologists not being able to accept European Communities and later the European Union's significant influence on the social attitudes of many people.

Sociologists joined the discussion, critically emphasizing the previous achievements in the field of European studies. They were reluctant to address the approach developed by political scientists and lawyers considering the process of European integration - in their opinion, it was too formal, based only on the analysis of the institutions, and therefore too narrow, as it was founded only on the theory of rational choice<sup>18</sup>. Thus, the existing analyses of European integration completely neglected its intangible aspects (cultural models,

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<sup>18</sup> Jenson, Merand (2010): 76-79.

cognitive scripts, etc.), which, after all, also had to influence this process<sup>19</sup>.

Sociologists have definitely broadened current research agenda and deepened many aspects of knowledge about European integration. In a sense, they may even seem to have challenged political scientists, lawyers and economists, wanting all previous “dogmas” to be rejected and to look at the this process once again. Nevertheless, the representatives of this scientific discipline most often use the politicalological perspective and base their research on its approach. This is not without a reason - at least until the 1970s, political science was closely related to sociology, both in the construction of theories and research methods. The best example will be the systemic method, developed thanks to the influence of functionalism on sociology and transactionism on political science<sup>20</sup>.

Having examined the content contained in the second subchapter, one can easily conclude that among the four scientific disciplines of political science, law, economics and sociology, the first one has the greatest influence on shaping the theories of European integration. This is mainly because the other sciences derive from it and construct their research agenda based on solutions developed by political scientists. Therefore, the answer to the first of the research questions raised in this paper, which is: which of the independent scientific disciplines dealing with issues related to the European Union offers the research approach most apt for researchers in the process of European integration, allowing to create theories of European integration? is: political sciences.

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<sup>19</sup> Fligstein (2008): 9.

<sup>20</sup> Buzan (2003).

### 3. Theoretical paradigms of political sciences in theories of European integration

In the last subsection of this paper theories of European integration, to which researchers refer most often, will be analysed. They include such theories as federalism, functionalism and intergovernmental approach. Reflections on them will be carried out in the context of the basic paradigm used by political scientists to describe phenomena occurring between states, i.e. to the paradigm of international relations, assuming a state-centric approach. It has already been briefly discussed in the second subsection of this paper.

In order to fully illustrate the current state of knowledge and methods used by political scientists, two aspects of above mentioned paradigm should be mentioned. The first is realism – it assumes that countries on the international arena strive foremost to defend their national interests, often at the expense of other states<sup>21</sup>. The second one is liberalism, also called idealism - it assumes that international relations are inherently peaceful, and common interests do not divide states, but combine them, making them willing to compromise and self-limit in the name of achieving mutual benefit<sup>22</sup>.

The analysis of both the aforementioned theoretical approaches in relation to the basic models of European integration is an attempt to answer the second of the research questions raised in this paper, which is: **whether the basic theoretical paradigms of political sciences are sufficient to construct theories of European integration?**

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<sup>21</sup> Jackson, Sorensen (2006): 69-108.

<sup>22</sup> Borkowski (2007): 45.

### 3.1. Federalism

The origins of federalism date back to the 18th and 19th centuries, when they became popular mainly in Germany and the United States. This idea was born on the basis of the need to find a balance between the need for unity and security, as well as autonomy of individuals. In the simplest terms, it is a form of organization of the unit enriched by co-management.

Federalism is the first of theories of European integration. For the first time it was mentioned by Spinelli, in the 1940s. He was predicting that by opposing the atrocities of war, European societies will put pressure on the governments of individual European states and initiate the common constitutional process. This theory was not strictly reflected in reality, but similar model, developed by Monnet in the 1950s, was close to it. It assumed gradual building of a federalist Europe, sector by sector. Thanks to the gradual transfer of competences across countries to the transnational level, the integration process was supposed to continue to deepen.

In the current discourse on the future of the European Union, advocates of federalism speak of it as a skilful combination of regional and national interests, which in a complex structure, is designed to guarantee stability and maintain a political balance in Europe. This approach appears as a concept that not only guarantees Europeans' security but also protects their cultural identity. In the era of universal crisis, covering many aspects of integration (from political to economic), supporters of such an approach remain few, but the fact is that this is the only interpretation explaining the beginnings of the European Communities, approved by the researchers interested in European studies.

### 3.2. Functionalism

In opposition to the federalist concept in the 1940s, Mitrany developed a functional theory. It is based on a liberal vision of reality and thus refers to the idealistic trend of the paradigm of international relations. One of the basic concepts for functionalists is the social needs around which a new model of integration would function. The main assumption of the functionalists is the establishment of supranational institutions that would fulfill the functions reserved so far only for national states. Mitrany postulated that first of all, that activities within each branch of the economy should be managed separately from their nature. He believed that economic issues are of a universal character, as opposed to political ones, which will always be related to the desire to exercise power<sup>23</sup>.

As Popowicz notes, functionalism is one of the first theories questioning the position of the state as the basis of international order. In a situation of deepening integration, they would lose their usefulness - when their representatives would focus on competition for power, numerous specialized agencies would focus on ensuring social order and prosperity, acting on a functional basis.

Without going into the details of Mitrany's theory, one can safely say that to a large extent it explains European integration processes, at the same time denying the basic assumptions of the international relations paradigm, even in its liberal version.

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<sup>23</sup> Popowicz (2004): 11-12.

### 3.3. Intergovernmental approach

In the 1960s, the so-called an intergovernmental approach based on state-centered assumptions gained popularity. It was born on the basis of criticism of functionalism. Hoffman, - the creator of the concept, pointed strong role of states in the integration process as primarily initiators and coordinators of this process, what underlines their priority role. He argued that the interests of individual member states will always be different and thus contradict each other, because each of them reacts differently to changes in the external environment<sup>24</sup>.

Hoffman's theory, later refined by Haas and Lindberg, was met with both favor and criticism, especially from the scientific community, which accused it of being non-scientific<sup>25</sup>. There is no doubt, however, that it fits into the basic assumptions of the international relations paradigm and has many supporters to this day, especially among, obviously, the representatives of the governments of national member states of the European Union.

Summing up, in the third subsection of this paper, three traditional theories of European integration were discussed: federalism, functionalism and intergovernmental approach. On their grounds, a dozen or so other popular and probably dozens of less known theories have been created.

The intergovernmental approach clearly fits into the realistic, while federalism into the idealistic trend of the international relations paradigm. Both refer to the state as a basic actor in international relations, though in a different context.

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<sup>24</sup> Borkowski (2007): 114.

<sup>25</sup> Jackson, Sorensen (2006): 256.

On the other hand, the assumptions of functionalism clearly contradict the basic rules of both the first and the second approach – as it ascribes to the national states a secondary meaning. Therefore, trying to answer the second of the research questions posed in this paper, which is: **whether the basic theoretical paradigms of political sciences are sufficient to construct theories of European integration?**, it can be said that in the case of federalism and intergovernmental approach – they do, and in the case of functionalism they do not.

### Summary and conclusions

As European studies are not an independent scientific discipline, but rather an interdisciplinary thematic specialty, all researchers interested in the process of European integration are forced to use methodological solutions developed by representatives of such sciences as political sciences, economics, law or sociology. Therefore, the fundamental are two questions: **which of the independent scientific disciplines dealing with issues related to the European Union offers the research approach most apt for researchers in the process of European integration, allowing to create theories of European integration?** and **whether the basic theoretical paradigms of this discipline are sufficient to construct theories of European integration?**

In the introduction of this paper, two thesis were proposed. The first of them was formulated as follows: **it is political science as an independent scientific discipline that offers the most accurate research approach for the Europeanists, allowing create theories of European integration.** Thanks to analysis carried out in the second chapter, this thesis was proved, because it turned out that both lawyers and economists, as well as the representative

of sociological sciences, considering the process of European integration, derive from achievements of political scientists in this field.

The second thesis proposed in this paper was formulated as follows: **the basic theoretical paradigms in political science, of which international relations are a part, constitute a sufficient basis for constructing theories of European integration.** Thanks to analysis carried out in the third chapter, this thesis was partially confirmed. Federalism successfully fits into the liberal trend international relations paradigm, serving political scientists in explaining phenomena occurring on the international arena, while the intergovernmental approach fits into its realistic branch. Both approaches assume that the basic actor on the international stage are national states. The third of the discussed theories - functionalism, completely contradicts this. Functionalists stand in the position that the state plays a completely secondary role in the process. This means that the paradigm of international relations is not applicable here - neither in its realistic nor liberal strand. Therefore the second thesis has been confirmed only partially.

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