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Pushing the Turbo Button: What Next for the Polish–Romanian Strategic Partnership?

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With the global economic downturn and its implications for the broader political and security architecture of the EU, the Polish – Romanian Strategic Partnership signed in 2009 is now ripe to take the positive relationship to a new level and to be further fleshed out. To this end, political coordination needs to be upgraded for promoting common interests, such as economic stability and solidarity within the Union, continued support to agriculture and cohesion policy as an important priority for EU funding, increasing the energy security of the region, engaging the neighbourhood, particularly Moldova and Ukraine, and maintaining the relevance of CSDP and of article 5 of the Washington Treaty high on the European agenda. The management of instability and protracted conflicts in their neighbourhood are also among their shared concerns. Translating these common priorities into concrete actions should aim at pushing the “turbo button” on the partnership, and help both countries achieve their goals.

The close comparison between Poland and Romania stems mainly from their size, both in terms of land and population, but also from similar collective experiences in recent history and their current potential to contribute to the stability and prosperity of their neighbourhood. These common features explain the mutual priorities and interests of the two countries in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond.

I. Common Priorities in the EU

As key players in Central and Eastern Europe, Poland and Romania have an interest in functional membership, supported by transparent consultation within the EU, in which they can contribute effectively to the decision making processes which affect them. As the two manage EU and NATO external borders, they bring a particular vision, aimed at maintaining the attractiveness of the European project in their neighbours' eyes, and address constructively the transition processes in their proximity. This task is particularly difficult, given the different approaches among Member States in balancing their national economic agendas against their political and security priorities.

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Polish–Romanian cooperation in the EU must aim to support and extend the attractiveness and credibility of the European project, through the obvious benefits the two countries are experiencing, and in spite of the transition difficulties they have encountered. With a view to that end, they should work together for access to the single market, free movement of people, the possibility of appointments to EU institutions and influence on the European decision-making process, increased civic participation, and public accountability of civil servants.

Among the **political and economic issues** at the top of the common agenda, both countries are interested in keeping the European Council as the main forum for decision-making in the Union, including decisions regarding economic and monetary issues. At European level, there is increasing consensus that the austerity policies so far adopted need to be complemented by growth-inducing initiatives. Romania has supported and efficiently implemented budgetary discipline as an objective, but further policy proposals aimed at stimulating growth are needed, in cooperation with Poland. At the same time, it is important that Romania coordinates with Poland in shaping the political debate on the future of the Eurozone, and that it turns its economic stability into political capital at EU level.

Defending Workers' Free Mobility in the EU

The full respect and implementation of the right of free circulation of people in the EU, as one of the four main pillars of European integration, is vital in order to ensure workers' mobility as an incentive for cross-border development and as a self-correcting tool for those European markets which lack sufficient labour forces. Romania and Poland should work together to ensure that this issue is not politicised by some older Member States, especially in the context of the run-up to next year's European Parliamentary elections. Concerted efforts, especially by Romanian and Polish MEPs and academic communities from the two nations, should aim to ensure that European rights are applied equally, considering the recent treatment applied to Romania's Schengen bid.

Coordinated approaches should target improving information in European media about the positive impact of the free mobility of workers' from Eastern Europe in the economies of destination countries, given the need for labour on the markets of older Member States that are faced with increasingly aging populations. Demographic conditions in many old Member States, and labour shortages in numerous professional categories across the EU, point to the role of labour mobility as one of the most solid engines for the growth and diversification of European economies.

There is also major role also for the Polish and Romanian civil societies and non-governmental organisations, in jointly promoting **respect for Copenhagen criteria**. Polls conducted ahead of the 2014 European Parliamentary elections do not bode well for European democracies, particularly for centre parties, as more Europeans tend to slide towards extremist groups. Particularly worrying is the continued rise of xenophobic and anti-European attitudes in many EU Member States, including older ones, which gives a sense of overall deterioration of democratisation processes across the Union.

Congruent Positions on the European Budget

Poland and Romania also share interests in the debate on the common EU budget, as both benefit to a large extent from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Cohesion Policy, which together constitute the bulk of EU spending. Actually, as the **negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014–2020** have proved, within the large but loose circle of the “Friends of Cohesion” group, Poland and Romania had particularly convergent positions, more than, for instance, among members of the Visegrad Group. They had common stances not only in general terms, such as seeking to maximise allocations in the Cohesion Policy and the CAP by maintaining the higher EU co-financing rate of 85% for both, but also agreed on smaller technical details. Additionally, they both opposed the older Member States' push for a shift of emphasis from support for agriculture towards research and development or the relocation of funds from the least developed regions towards more consolidated areas of the net contributor states. The Visegrad Plus format proved to be a good channel for communicating such streamlined messages on the EU platform, through for instance repeated meetings of ministers of agriculture. Coordination of positions in this setup should continue beyond the finalisation of negotiations on the EU budget.

Regarding **Cohesion policy**, apart from mutual backing in debates at European level, there is also much room for cooperation **at the phase of implementation**. Given that Poland excelled in the rate of fund absorption during the 2007–2013 budget period, while Romania faced significant challenges in this respect, the latter should concentrate on Polish best practices in the field. Also, just ahead of territorial and administrative reform, Romania could seek inspiration from the Polish case, in which successful regional reform was carried out gradually from the early 1990s. A first step towards transfer of experience was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Ministries of Regional Development in September, which should lead not only to more frequent ministerial level meetings, but also to intense expert level communication.

Cooperation in the Energy Sector

When it comes to energy policy, Poland and Romania—in common with other countries in the region—share the same concerns of security of supply, energy efficiency and the tensions between the severe environmental and market liberalisation expectations of the EU and national economic interests. Even without a common geographical border, such convergences serve as a solid foundation for cooperation. This can be on a bilateral level, just as on multi-lateral platforms—be that the EU or the V4 Plus format.

Since both Romania and Poland are among the countries paying the highest prices for Russian gas imports Europe-wide (in 2012 Poland paid an average price of \$525 and Romania \$440 per thousand cubic metres), their efforts should be joined to speed up the **integration of the regional market** and with this pave the way for a liberalised single European energy market. To this end, Romania has already joined the regional electric power market coupling, started by the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. Poland, too, cooperates with them, as the initiative is meant to be a first step towards developing the single European Internal Electricity Market. Efforts towards integration of the gas market are also being undertaken by the V4 (a “Road Map towards a Regional V4 Gas Market” was adopted by the Visegrad states in June), yet this process will require much more political determination than in the case of the electricity market, which is a more business-driven sector. In any case, Romania should not miss the chance to join this initiative too.

In respect to developing the physical **infrastructure** needed for regional market integration, considerable steps have been taken in the gas market in the framework of the North-South gas corridor project in which both countries are involved. Yet, mindful of the emerging trend of short-term pricing which will make it even more difficult to ensure investments for building pipelines characterised by longer amortisation periods, Romania and Poland should look for new long-term investment solutions. To this end, national energy companies should be encouraged to coordinate large infrastructural projects, as well as lobbying for more EU funding. In comparison with the gas sector, the interconnection of power grids is lagging behind. This would be much needed, for instance to help mitigate Romania’s excess power production from renewable sources, or Poland’s heavy reliance on coal-based power which is increasingly inconsistent with the EU climate regulations.

A further common interest relates to **shale gas development**, given that both countries possess shale gas reserves and are considering the possibilities and risks of its exploration and exploitation. As the European Commission seeks to elaborate regulations on shale gas, Romania and Poland should participate actively in the EU level debate and consult each other regularly, as well as other Member States facing the dilemmas of shale gas development. Common efforts should also be invested in drawing up scientific studies on the geological, technological, economic and regulatory aspects of shale gas development. Contrary to appearances, no spirit of competition should hinder Polish–Romanian cooperation in this field, given the geographical distance, lack of interconnectedness and the trends of growing gas demands in Europe.

The recently emerging practice of **consultations in the V4 Plus Romania and Bulgaria format** on various energy and climate issues has proved productive and should be improved further. Regular political, administrative and expert-level consultations should be held, to coordinate national energy policies and foster harmonisation of national market regulation. The V4 Plus would also serve as a useful platform for converging positions on various EU energy initiatives, such as the TEN-E regulation or the Connecting Europe Facility. Together, these countries can also assist the European Commission in fully investigating Gazprom’s antitrust probe, launched in December 2012, and invite it to participate in negotiating long-term gas contracts with Gazprom.

The establishment of **consultation mechanisms** at both institutional and company levels is also advisable in a bilateral setup. This could facilitate the transfer of Polish experience in shale gas development (Poland being at the most advanced stage Europe-wide), and in the construction of the LNG terminal at Świnoujście, in view of Romania's plans to build a similar terminal at Constanța. Innovative solutions, such as the new private, equity-style, state-run infrastructure investment fund set up by the Polish Treasury Ministry can also be inspirational for Romania. Debates on draft legislation on hydrocarbons should be analysed in Romania too, where updating the energy strategy and complementing it with a long-term view on non-conventional sources is of utmost urgency. In turn, Romania has know-how to offer in the electricity and oil sectors, as well as in gas production, given that its tradition in that sector spans more than a century.

2. Synergy on Ukraine and Moldova

Finding a Common Denominator in the Eastern Neighbourhood

Regarding the Eastern Neighbourhood, the strategic partnership helped to overcome Romania's initial hesitation about the Eastern Partnership (EaP), co-authored by Poland with Sweden. Regular official consultations lessened suspicions concerning each other's intentions in the immediate vicinity, and improved the level of trust between sides to some extent. There is **overwhelming consensus** that Poland and Romania share a strong long-term interest to be bordered by well-governed and prosperous neighbours who are fully integrated in the EU. In practical terms, convergence of interests in the neighbourhood has shaped the political discourse as well as helped coordinate efforts inside the EU in support of Ukraine's and Moldova's Association bid.

There are **multiple economic links, as well as political and security interests**, which bind the four countries. In the EU, Poland and Romania are among the most important trade partners of Ukraine and Moldova respectively. Economic exchanges are poised to deepen once Ukraine and Moldova sign Association Agreements (AA) with the EU, envisioning the establishment of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). Integration of Ukraine and Moldova into the European market will open new avenues for Polish and Romanian investments. In addition to enhanced commerce, Poland and Romania represent main entry points connecting Ukraine and Moldova with the EU's critical infrastructure, including highways, pipelines, railways and power grids. As limitrophe states, Poland and Romania strive to push the EU's frontier further to the east, extending the perimeter of security and prosperity. Naturally, their efforts focus on Ukraine and Moldova, states which enjoy the most advanced political and economic relations with EU and often act as trend-setters for other EaP states. Therefore, Bucharest and Warsaw share a common position on supporting Moldova and Ukraine's pro-European and pro-democratisation orientation. Poland and Romania also share a common interest in finding a sustainable resolution to the Transnistrian conflict, which would neutralise security risks for Ukraine and Moldova. Romania is increasingly aware of Ukraine's importance for Moldova's European future. However, this outlook has not been yet clearly articulated in bilateral relations with Ukraine. Polish–Romanian strategic partnership in the Eastern Neighbourhood could contribute to more functional and mutually beneficial Romanian–Ukrainian relations in the wider European context.

As Ukraine and Moldova are about to upgrade relations with the EU, implementation of the post-Vilnius agenda will require **more synergy than before** between Bucharest and Warsaw.

The immediate task of Poland and Romania is to get the green light for Ukraine to sign an AA, and for Moldova to initialise one, as well as to receive confirmation on completion of the second phase of the visa liberalisation plan. However, while building momentum for positive outcomes at the EaP Summit in Vilnius (28–29 November), Warsaw and Bucharest have to plan and work on an agenda which looks beyond 2013, to the next EaP Summit, in 2015, in Riga. Poland and Romania will have to act together on several levels, employing government, parliament, local authorities and civil society.

Poland and Romania could help **to smooth out the decision-making process within the EU, and to lay foundations for AA implementation.** If signed, the AA with Ukraine will have to be followed by parliamentary diplomacy in EU Member States. In addition to governmental efforts, parliamentary groups of friendship from Poland and Romania, with colleagues from other EU Member States, will have to launch an active campaign to convince parliaments to ratify the AA with Ukraine. If an AA is initialised with Moldova, Romania and Poland must keep the spotlight of the EU on the urgency of signing the accord before the EU Commission mandate expires (at the end of October 2014), and ahead of parliamentary elections in Moldova, to be held in late 2014. It is vital for Moldova that an AA obtains juridical force through a provisional clause before the elections, which might bring to power less EU-oriented political forces. If the EU confirms completion of Moldova's second stage of the visa liberalisation plan, Polish and Romanian European MPs will have to work together inside the main European political groups in order to get the approval of the EU Parliament on visa liberalisation, before the European Parliamentary elections scheduled for May 2014. In parallel, Poland and Romania could, alongside other, with like-minded Member States, to build support inside the EU Council of Interior Ministers for final approval of visa waiver. Visa liberalisation with Moldova will provide a necessary boost to pro-European forces ahead of elections, and will make Moldovan passports more attractive for the population living in Transnistria. The elimination of visas for Moldovans could indirectly speed up Ukraine's implementation of the visa-free action plan. Overall, **visa-free travel** with Ukraine and Moldova will upgrade the EU's soft power, weakened by the economic crisis.

As Ukraine and Moldova could soon sign AAs, Poland and Romania could share **expertise on setting up domestic inter-ministerial mechanisms** aimed at streamlining government actions towards implementation of association agenda. Finally, Romania and Poland cannot avoid horse trading concerning the next EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. Warsaw and Bucharest must work together to secure nominations from like-minded EU Member States, as the decisions of the outgoing commissioner were almost in line with the foreign policy of his country of origin.

Poland and Romania could help **make states stronger, secure and attractive.** Ukraine and Moldova are facing a wide range of risks in the autonomies in Crimea, and Gagauzia, and in particular in the separatist republic of Transnistria, all of which are regions in which Russia has several levers which may be pulled as spoilers. Poland and Romania, in synergy with the EU, and in some cases (given the cultural and historical roots of Turks, Crimean Tatars and Gagauz), with Turkey, must expand cultural ties and support development in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (ATU Gagauzia) and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (AR Crimea). The Polish government has already established sectoral cooperation with the Ministry of Culture of AR Crimea, and Polish NGOs have developed projects in partnership with the region's civil society. In turn, local authorities from Constanța County, home of the Turkish minority in Romania, could establish ties with AR Crimea, organising cultural events and youth exchanges. More cities or villages from Poland and Romania could follow the example of Wrocław's initiative in Gagauzia. There is room for cooperation between Romania and Poland in providing development aid to **Gagauzia**, to strengthen aid projects implemented by Turkey and the EU in the region. Romania's aid to Gagauzia, aimed at improving living conditions, will help to dispel negative perceptions. As a solution to **Transnistria** is not in sight, Poland and Romania must work via the EU to dissuade Russia from escalating the situation in the region and to keep the 5+2 talks on track. While organising events and debates, Poland and Romania should consider inviting participants from Transnistria. The conference held in Romania (Sibiu) in 2013 and attended by representatives from Transnistria should not be an exception, and regular dialogue facilitated by universities and think-tanks from Poland and Romania will be much welcomed.

Energy security is a critical issue for both Ukraine and Moldova. Ukraine is in the middle of implementing a gas sources diversification strategy. Poland already pumps gas in reverse mode from Germany to Ukraine. A similar option is under discussion with Romania. Although the volume of gas which can transit Romania to Ukraine are not significant at this stage, signing a gas transit agreement would be a trust-building measure between Kiev and Bucharest that could contribute to a further thaw in bilateral relations. Given Russia's obstruction of similar deal between Slovakia (which has the greatest transit capacities among neighbours) and Ukraine, Poland might consider expanding its gas transit network with Ukraine. As regards Romania, the tempo of building the gas pipeline Iași–Ungheni and interconnecting electricity networks must

speed up. Romania must prepare the second stage of the project—a compressor station—in order to be able use the gas interconnector with Moldova to its full capacity (1.5 bn c/m).

A DCFTA as part of an Association Agreement is the most powerful transformation tool the EaP provides. Poland and Romania must assist Ukraine and Moldova in the DCFTA implementation phase. Ultimately, economic de-monopolisation, enhanced transparency, and fair competition are in the interests of Polish and Romanian investors. Both states already implement projects to strengthen institutional capacity in Ukraine and Moldova. In the coming years, Poland could share with Ukraine and Moldova its experience in reforming the agricultural sector, helping to boost exports to the EU market. Romania could extend positive anti-corruption experience, transferring this not only to Moldova but also to Ukraine, when authorities in Kiev are ready to accept such assistance. **Islands of reform** in Ukraine and Moldova deserve special support. For instance, the Ministry of Education in Moldova pushed a law on the National Agency for Quality Assurance in High Education through parliament. A similar agency in Romania could be a valuable partner in setting up the institution in Moldova. The Interior Ministry in Moldova is implementing the most profound structural reform in decades. Poland and Romania could make this reform sustainable in the long term, by helping with expertise and technical assistance to create the Police College which will prepare the next generation of well-trained policemen.

Despite the geographical proximity of the four states, it sometimes takes too long to travel between them. There is more to be done in terms of **compressing distances and facilitating people-to-people contacts**. Since January 2013 there have been no direct flights between Bucharest and Kiev. Romania and Ukraine have to consider reviving **direct air communication** between capitals, and potentially expanding the list of cities connected by air transport (Cluj-Napoca, Suceava, Timișoara, Odessa, Lviv). Such a measure could help the development of tourism and business contacts between communities. Because of different track gauges and the lengthy bogie exchange at Ungheni, **rail travel** between Bucharest and Chișinău lasts between one and two hours longer than it could. Romania and Moldova should consider introducing automatic change of wheel track (SUW 2000), a solution successfully applied on the Kraków–Kiev rail line at Mostyska customs checkpoint.

There is only one pedestrian border crossing route between Poland and Ukraine, at Shehyni–Medyka, and none between Romania and Moldova, as the bilateral inter-state agreement envisions only rail and road crossings. Several **border crossings** between Romania and Ukraine have been closed since 2007 for technical reasons. While Poland should multiply pedestrian border crossings with Ukraine, Romania and Moldova must review their accord, in order to allow the pedestrian border crossings for locals and international travellers to be opened. In order to link communities living along the border, Romania and Ukraine should re-open previously closed border check points and inaugurate new ones, plans which have been on the back burner since 2011. Negotiations on a **small-scale traffic** treaty, which began in 2008, should be concluded swiftly. Similar accords are already in place between Ukraine and Slovakia, and Hungary and Poland, and deliver benefits to all involved. Among other things, the treaty will facilitate contacts between the Romanian minority residing in Ukraine (often along the frontier) and Romania. In turn, Ukraine has to show a constructive approach by approving the expansion of consular sections of Romania in Ukraine, aimed at the timely review of applications for small-scale traffic permits. Not least, Poland is considering further **simplification of the visa regime** with Ukraine after the Vilnius Summit. Romania could follow suit as part of a strategy to build good neighbourly relations with Ukraine.

3. Common Security and Defence Agenda. Deepening the Transatlantic Component

Romania and Poland understand, more than other European states, the need to have reliable and sincere regional partners, and, in the context of the economic downturn, the challenges of increasingly assuming the burdens of regional security. In a time when most Europeans cut down on their defence spending, the two nations chose to invest in modernised military equipment, and to contribute to NATO and CDSP activities. These developments echo the desire of the United States to have allies in Europe that are able to share the security burden effectively. Both Romanians and Poles consider that the U.S. presence in Europe enhances their national security, and that close cooperation with Turkey on regional security is of utmost importance, in the trilateral Polish–Romanian–Turkish formats. Though U.S. officials have constantly reiterated that the U.S. pivot towards Asia takes place with Europe's participation, it appears necessary for

the U.S. to sort out its budget cuts problem if it is to stay engaged as it has done so far. The sense of urgency raised by the recent U.S. budget deadlock, with implications for political and diplomatic engagement with the EU, makes Romanian–Polish cooperation in the field even more important. It is beneficial that Romania and Poland’s responses remain multi-lateral and take aboard like-minded partners in the region, such as Turkey, given the complexity of challenges faced, among which are protracted conflicts in their proximity and rising instability in Southern Europe and Central Asia.

In NATO, and in bilateral formats with Russia, strategic reflection, aimed at a pragmatic approach, is needed as regards the future path of relations. Bucharest and Warsaw place equal value on reciprocity and transparency in relations with Moscow, adopting a prudent, cooperative approach. Recently, political contacts between Romania and Russia have been upgraded, with the two sides showing increased interest in extending their fields of cooperation. Within NATO’s framework, Romania’s significant traditional expertise on the MENA region, and Poland’s positive transition experience, can contribute significantly to the development of the Mediterranean Dialogue and to the societal transformations the region is experiencing. In the EU’s Southern Neighbourhood, Romania and Poland could contribute towards alleviating the situation of Syrian refugees, and of neighbouring countries affected by these flows. Both Bucharest and Warsaw are perceived as impartial players on the Syrian situation, given their common decision not to provide either side with arms.

A common approach to all major international security issues played an important role in the decision to elevate bilateral contact to the level of strategic partnership in October 2009. Security issues have also been placed high on the agenda of the Romanian–Polish Strategic Dialogue, inaugurated in 2012. Signing of the Polish–Romanian agreement on bilateral defence cooperation in June 2013 confirmed that there exists further potential for collaboration between the armed forces and defence industries of these countries.

NATO, CSDP and Bilateral Security Relationships

Regarding the role of the United States, both countries attach great importance to the relationship with Washington and consider the active engagement of the United States in Europe as a factor strengthening their security. Romania and Poland continue to pursue strong bilateral contacts with Washington, including armed forces cooperation. Highest importance is attached to the deployment of the elements of the U.S. Missile Defence system in Romania (Deveselu) and in Poland (Redzikowo). Both countries work to implement the plans to build MD installations, in the 2015 framework for Romania and 2018 for Poland. Both Romania and Poland assumed that investing in the relationship with the U.S. requires them to support the United States during security-related crises, also by deploying troops to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Romania and Poland share similar positions regarding the recent developments in European security. Competing agendas among EU members and the spill-over effects of the European crisis upon national foreign policies risk deepening current differences over the achievement of comprehensive and constructive European external action. The overall **rethinking of the EU’s responses to the security challenges** calls for a review of the instrument best suited to tackle the whole spectrum of conventional and non-conventional challenges, the European Security Strategy (ESS). Here, Romania and Poland share deep interests, ranging from energy independence and migration management to territorial security. Both countries can present their visions on how the instruments and capabilities in this field should be defined and implemented, considering Romanian and Polish expertise in post-conflict reconstruction and preventive diplomacy, tested in NATO and CSDP operations alike.

Regarding NATO, both Romania and Poland consequently underline that the common defence clause embodied in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty remains the cornerstone of the Alliance. The need to set the right balance between defence and out-of-area operations was a common Polish and Romanian demand during work on the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept and the subsequent Deterrence and Defence Posture Review. Both countries support returning to more comprehensive defence planning and Article 5-related exercises. Importantly, Romania deployed troops to participate in the November 2013 *Steadfast Jazz* exercises in Poland and the Baltic states, which were designed to test the readiness of the NATO Response Force. Romania and Poland also share an interest in developing closer relations with the immediate neighbours of the Alliance. Understandably, Romania looks more towards the Balkans and the Black Sea

region, while Poland's focus is on the Baltic dimension, Ukraine and Georgia. To both countries, the open door policy of the Alliance remains a principle they constantly support.

Romania and Poland attach also importance to developing a closer relationship with Turkey, which is an important partner in several aspects. As a NATO country bordering unstable regions, it is interested in upholding the common defence function of the Alliance. It also has a stake in the stability of the Black Sea and Caucasus regions. As a strong proponent of developing indigenous defence capabilities, it is an attractive model for both Poland and Romania which are trying to revive their own defence industries.

On Russia, the historical experiences and geography forces both Romania and Poland to pay close attention to developments of the Russian security policy. Russia has been significantly upgrading its military potential, which, according to Warsaw and Bucharest should not be overlooked by NATO. At the same time, both countries have expressed an interest in building good relations with Russia in the security sphere, on the basis of reciprocity and equality. Poland seems to be more advanced than Romania in pursuing pragmatic cooperation with Russia, as well as in making attempts at resolving the difficult historical legacy issues.

Next Steps in Security Cooperation

Having established the foundations of the Strategic Partnership and the mechanisms for dialogue, the necessary next steps should include the implementation of specific cooperation projects and political initiatives on security issues which would serve as internationally recognised trademarks of the Partnership.

Both countries can use elements of their unique partnership with the United States to pursue cooperation in a trilateral format. Since Romania will be the first country to host the U.S. Missile Defence installation, it could involve Polish experts in the process of constructing the base. Conversely, Poland can invite the Romanian experts to study the Polish system of the utilisation of F-16 aircraft (Romania recently decided to acquire F-16s), and later also invite the Romanian Air Forces to joint training with the participation of the U.S. aviation detachment stationed in Poland.

Romanian and Polish decision makers should furthermore coordinate their efforts to loosen visa requirements for their citizens travelling to the United States, so as to boost economic and social exchanges.

In the NATO framework, one of the biggest challenges post-ISAF would be to sustain the level of interoperability and cooperation between the Allies. *Steadfast Jazz 2013* should not be a one-off event of this scale and complexity on the territories of Central Europe. Poland and Romania could start working on the next major multi-lateral exercises (or a series of exercises) with major involvement the Polish and Romanian forces, open to other NATO countries. In the meantime, Polish and Romanian armed forces should train more frequently together and exchange lessons learned from operations such as Afghanistan or maritime deployments.

Another challenge for NATO is to define the future course of the NATO–Russia relationship. The Alliance is currently working on proposals to Russia regarding transparency and arms control measures connected with non-strategic nuclear weapons and conventional armaments. On these measures, Poland and Romania may come to a similar position on the wisdom of “cautious engagement” with Russia. They could, possibly with Turkey and other like-minded countries from the region, prepare a common position on arms control issues with Russia for the internal consideration of the Alliance.

Finally, cooperation between the military industries should be encouraged, based on the information about the demand of the two armed forces. Poland is in the process of a significant upgrading of its military potential. Romania is also planning to reach the level of the 2% GDP for defence-related spending. The Polish plans for new defence equipment acquisition assume that roughly one-third of the defence budget (roughly \$43 billion) could be spent on new systems over the next decade. Some of the capabilities sought by Poland are the same as the Romanian military's requirements. The first step in selecting specific elements for joint efforts should be to map the present potential and offers of the Polish and Romanian defence industry and research facilities to identify potential fields of cooperation. In some areas, it may also be beneficial to involve the Turkish and V4 partners in the discussion.

Conclusions

Poland and Romania have, through concerted action, the potential to contribute to rendering the European project more flexible, to open it up towards the Eastern Neighbourhood, and to improve European security. The Strategic Partnership offers a particular setting to reinforce coordination between the two countries in forging common positions on the major political and economic debates at the European level. These include navigating the European post-crisis agenda from austerity towards support for growth and employment, consolidating the Economic and Monetary Union (and within this, accommodating the positions of non-Eurozone members such as Poland and Romania), maintenance of a European budget favourable for the net beneficiaries, and safeguarding the principle and practice of the free movement of labour. Given the commonalities in the energy security of the countries, they should utilise both bilateral and multi-lateral platforms to push forward the regional integration of the energy market and to claim a voice in the debate on the future of shale gas in Europe. In the case of most European issues, the V4 Plus format can serve as a useful channel for Poland in involving Romania in shaping a regional view and communicating common interests.

Going beyond the EU's internal design, the Polish-Romanian tandem should also aim at upgrading the EU's commitment towards the Eastern Neighbourhood, from a strictly institutional design into one with more political significance, difficult as this may be in the current context. Bilateral coordination of political support for Moldova and Ukraine's European association requires long-term strategic vision, but has clear mutual benefits. The increasingly coordinated approaches of Bucharest and Warsaw towards Moldova and Ukraine's pro-European path will have long-term benefits for these two, provided that the present political engagement in the two eastern partners continues, irrespective of developments at the Vilnius summit.

Finally, given the similar approach to the main security challenges for Europe and to the issue of the future of NATO and the EU's security dimension, the next step towards turning the Strategic Partnership premises into tangible results should see Poland and Romania coordinating and presenting common initiatives. The coming months could create opportunities for displaying such unified positions. At EU level, Romania and Poland should contribute to advancing the debate at the December 2013 European Defence Council meeting, on the factors which have so far hindered the Union's ability to define a geopolitical vision of its own, particularly in relation to its neighbourhood. Joint efforts should also aim to reach a common assessment of the CSDP in terms of capabilities, EDA's role and industry development, and striking a balance with engagement in NATO. At NATO, the 2014 Summit is to take place in the United Kingdom. Both Poland and Romania can contribute their joint assessment of the agenda for a post-ISAF Alliance, including renewed emphasis on exercises, a joint approach to acquiring key capabilities, and a realistic agenda with Russia.