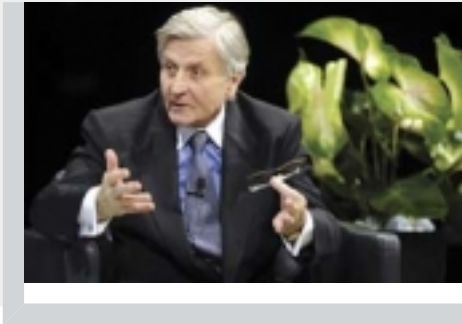


“Poland’s economy stands out compared to its neighbours”

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“The euro zone economy should start recovering in 2010 after a difficult 2009,” European Central Bank President Jean-Claude Trichet said in an interview for TVN 24. Trichet also said Poland should not speed up its euro adoption path. The ECB President made it clear, however, that he believed the Polish economy was faring better than its neighbours.

Q: Faced by the current crisis, would you say that Poland is faring better than other countries of the region?

A: That’s precisely what I wanted to say. I think it is still too early to speak about the region as a group of countries that are in a similar situation. We must not forget about important differences between Central and East European countries. You have to look at each country through its own fundamentals. Poland has proved to be a dynamic country. It turns out to be more flexible than others. Poland’s economy stands out compared to its neighbours.

Q: What would your advice to ordinary European citizens be? Keep money in the bank, or take risks and spend money?

A: I would say that our fellow citizens in Europe must realize that we are experiencing a period which is difficult and the year 2009 is obviously difficult for all economies in the world without any exception. But it is also true that we have all good reasons to consider that the recovery will take place in the course of 2010. There is a very broad consensus of forecasters and economists that consider that. The present times are difficult but euro zone citizens can be reasonably confident in the future because there are a lot of good reasons to believe we will be better off next year. The prices of oil and other goods have already fallen, which should contribute to the improvement of the situation. Let us

not forget about the growing potential of the emerging economies. I have in mind Poland, but also emerging economies in the whole world. We are witnessing fast-paced scientific and technological progress in new technologies, especially in IT, which shows no signs of slowing down.

Q: What about Poland's hopes of joining the euro zone? The original idea was to join ERM2 this year. Do you think it is still realistic?

A: We have to wait and see. The European Central Bank's stance on Poland joining the ERM remains unchanged. The position of the ECB is that it is a very, very serious decision to enter ERM-2 that needs to be fully prepared. The point is not just to avoid the difficulties that could arise during the process. It is a decision about a common feature, without the possibility of going back. You cannot leave the euro zone. I am not addressing these words just to Poland. The European Central Bank has always stressed that it is guided by certain principles, certain criteria. They are clearly defined in the Maastricht Treaty. We are bound by them. It is also in Poland's interests. Let us not try to change existing criteria, because only they guarantee convergence. It is in the interest of the country concerned and of the entire euro zone to make sure that a given country is ready to accept the new currency and that convergence has been possible to achieve.

Q: Hungary, more than Poland, is calling for changes in this respect. Some economists say that it would be beneficial to accelerate the process. But you seem to be opposed to that?

A: It would not be good to accelerate the path. Joining the euro zone is a serious decision that causes lasting effects. It is proof that a given country is determined to tie its future to that of all the countries of the euro zone. The zone is not a closed club for the elite. It was originally made up of eleven countries. Now there are sixteen. The decision to join is taken once and for all. There is no going back. We are convinced that the Treaty defines the procedure in a correct way. (Courtesy of TVN24)