

RESEARCH

REPORTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

AGNIESZKA ŁADA, GABRIELE SCHÖLER

POLISH-GERMAN BAROMETER 2016

POLES AND GERMANS ABOUT EACH OTHER 25 YEARS AFTER SIGNING THE TREATY ON GOOD NEIGHBOURSHIP AND FRIENDLY COOPERATION

Summary

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Warsaw 2016

Polish-German Barometer 2016 was a joint project of the Institute of Public Affairs, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Bertelsmann Stiftung.

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The aim of the project “The German-Polish Barometer” is a regular examination and presentation of Polish and German opinions concerning the German-Polish relations as well as the challenges which have to be faced by the two states.



Information about the survey

In Poland, the survey was conducted by GfK Polonia between 8–13 April 2016 on a sample of 1000 Poles aged 15 or older, and was commissioned by the Institute of Public Affairs and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Poland.

In Germany, the survey was conducted by TNS EMNID between 1–9 April 2016 on a sample of 1070 Germans aged 14 or older, and was commissioned by Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Institute of Public Affairs.



TNS Emnid

Translation: Anna Dzięgiel

Proof reading: Elena Rozbicka

Full results in Polish: www.isp.org.pl/barometr2016/pl

Full results in German: www.isp.org.pl/barometr2016/de

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Opinions about the situation in Poland and Germany

Poles have long held a very positive view about the situation in their neighbouring country. They have particularly high opinions about Germany's development of the economy (75%), work organisation (71%) and investment profitability (67%). **Negative statements rarely** find support among Poles.

Germans primarily agree with the statement that there is corruption in Poland (52%). Further down the list, support is given to opinions about **Poland's attractiveness for tourism** (47%) and about its well developing economy (36%).

The last three years have seen **a decline in Poles' belief in Germany's good work organisation** (from 80% to 71%) and in the **good development of the German economy** (from 83% to 75%). At the same time, the percentage of respondents who note **corruption** in Germany **has increased** (from 15% to 24%), as has the percentage of those who note **bureaucracy** (from 16% to 25%).

Positive opinions among Germans about the situation in Poland have never been prevalent. This has resulted from the fact that many respondents selected in-between responses or were not able to answer a question asked. However, compared to the 2013 results, we now see an increase in negative responses and a decline in positive ones, although the percentage of people giving in-between answers remains high (it varies from 30% to 40%).

In particular, German opinions regarding the following issues in Poland **have become more negative: freedom of the media to criticise the government** (from 29% to 12%), **respecting civil liberties** (from 29% to 17%), **respecting the rights of national and ethnic minorities** (from 24% to 16%) and the **functioning of parliamentary democracy** (from 39% to 26%).

Attitudes towards the neighbouring society

The percentage of Poles who declare that they like Germans continues to grow. In 2016, more than half of Poles expressed fondness of their neighbours (53%, in 2013 – 47%).

In Germany, the percentage of people declaring they like their neighbouring nation was half as high (28%). Over the last three years, the percentage of Germans expressing dislike for Poles has increased significantly and has reached the highest level recorded since the surveys began in 2000 (2016 – 36%, 2013 – 22%).

How we perceive a typical Pole and a typical German

Poles **most frequently** attribute the following characteristics to Germans: **disciplined** (65%), **well-organised** (66%), **enterprising** (65%), **modern** (64%) and **effective** (62%). They more rarely saw Germans as religious (18%), modest (24%), kind (34%) or sociable (40%).

Germans find Poles to be primarily **religious** (76%), **sociable** (84%) and **kind** (63%). They are most doubtful about Polish honesty (21%) and discipline (26%).

Over the years, Poles have held very positive opinions about the characteristics of a typical German. Today, this image is still good, however, the percentage of positive opinions has notably decreased, in some cases (well-organised, disciplined, well-educated, kind) even by 10 or 12 percentage points.

For years, Germans have attributed to Poles the characteristics of being religious (76%) or sociable (84%). Recently, more than half of the Germans surveyed are also of the conviction that Poles are kind (63%) and enterprising (50%). **Over the last three years, the percentage of German respondents attributing positive traits to Poles has slightly decreased.** The biggest decline can be seen for the characteristic of “tolerant” (from 42% to 33%), which may be related to the Polish reluctance to take in refugees, who are perceived as different, and to other Polish doubts regarding people who are different than the rest of Polish society.

Mutual acceptance

Poles accept Germans in all social roles and the level of this acceptance is high. Poles do not mind Germans both in the more neutral roles, such as the role of a neighbour (77%) or a resident (79%), and in the potentially more emotional and personal roles, such as a friend (74%) or a son- or daughter-in-law (73%), as well as in roles involving dependence, such as that of a boss (73%) or a member of a city council (70%).

The level of the acceptance of Poles by Germans varies, but it is significantly higher than the lack of such acceptance. The level of acceptance in roles involving closer personal contacts is evidently lower (friend – 56%, son-/daughter-in-law – 44%) than in the case of neutral roles (resident – 74%; neighbour – 77%) and lower than on the Polish side.

Poles' acceptance of Germans in various social roles is high, and a clear growth has been observed since 2000. It has slightly declined, however, over the last three years. The greatest decline can be seen for the roles of colleague (2013 - 84%; 2016 - 76%), subordinate (2013 – 82%; 2016 – 76%), friend (2013 – 80%; 2016 – 74%) and neighbour (2013 – 83%; 2016 – 77%).

Germans' acceptance of Poles generally has also been growing since 2000, however, there have been differences in the dynamics of the change process. Germans are particularly willing to accept Poles in the more neutral roles, such as that of a colleague (79%), a resident (74%) or a neighbour (77%). Their attitude towards Poles in various roles has not changed between 2013 and 2016. As regards roles involving greater closeness or dependence, such as a son- or daughter-in-law or a boss, the acceptance is evidently lower and has declined somewhat since 2013.

Assessment of the condition of mutual relations

More than two-thirds of **Poles have a positive view of Polish-German relations** (67%). **Germans**, on the other hand, are strongly **divided** in their opinions – almost half of them think that the condition of these relations is good (43%), while a similar percentage believe that the current condition is poor (45%).

For years, Poles have seen the condition of Polish-German relations in a positive light. The percentage of the respondents who hold a positive

opinion of these relations in 2016 has not changed compared to 2015 (66%). However, the percentage of Poles who think the condition of these relations is poor has grown (2015 – 12%; 2016 -19%), while the percentage of those who do not have an opinion has decreased.

The current opinions held by Germans on the condition of Polish-German relations are not only significantly worse than they were in 2013, but they have reached their lowest levels since 2000, when the polling began.

Problems seen in the countries' mutual relations

Poles and Germans have similar perceptions of the most important problems in Polish-German relations; the hierarchy of those challenges is very similar. There are significant differences in their responses to only three out of eleven issues.

Both societies believe that **the biggest current problem** in their mutual relations is the differing approaches of Poland and Germany to solving **the refugee crisis**. However, while a significant majority of German respondents are convinced that the problem is serious – 82%, in Poland this percentage is 63%. Similarly, Poles less often than Germans consider the growing anti-EU attitude of the Polish government to be a problem (56% compared to 79%).

Both Poles and Germans see differences in policy towards Russia as an important problem (Poles – 65%; Germans – 62%), or the construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline (Poles – 63%; Germans – 62%). They are also in agreement as to the perception of history-related issues as problematic – the percentages of the responses given are very similar.

Preferred partners

For years Poles have considered Germany their most important partner, that is, a country with which Poland should cooperate closely. Second place is traditionally held by the United States, and third by the United Kingdom. The countries of the Intermarium (from the Baltic to the Black Sea) region, with which the current Polish government wants to enhance cooperation, do not factor near the top of the list, at most, they are mentioned by one in ten respondents.

In Germany, it is traditionally France that tops the list of the most desirable partners. Close behind it are the Netherlands and the United States.

Defending own interests or seeking compromise?

Poles and Germans agree that when building relations with their neighbour their country should focus on cooperation and seeking compromise rather than on firm defence of their own interests. In both countries the majority of respondents hold this opinion (Poles – 58%; Germans – 53%).

However, the percentage of Poles who support seeking compromise and cooperation **has been steadily decreasing** (2000 – 72%; 2013 – 60%), and the group of those who believe that the country's own interests should be firmly defended has been growing.

In Germany, the **view that seeking compromise and cooperation are necessary** has also become less popular (2013 – 59%), while the number of respondents in the group preferring defence of the country's own interests in their relations with Poland has increased.

Polish government as a reliable partner in the European Union

The current European media reports are very critical of the present Polish government. This raises a question how this government is viewed by the citizens of the European Union. Most Germans do not perceive the current Polish government as a reliable partner in the European Union (56%). This percentage is twice as high as the group of respondents in Poland (27%) who share this opinion.

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