

THE POLES ON POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS AND GERMANY'S ROLE IN EUROPE

Main conclusions

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Summary of the report:

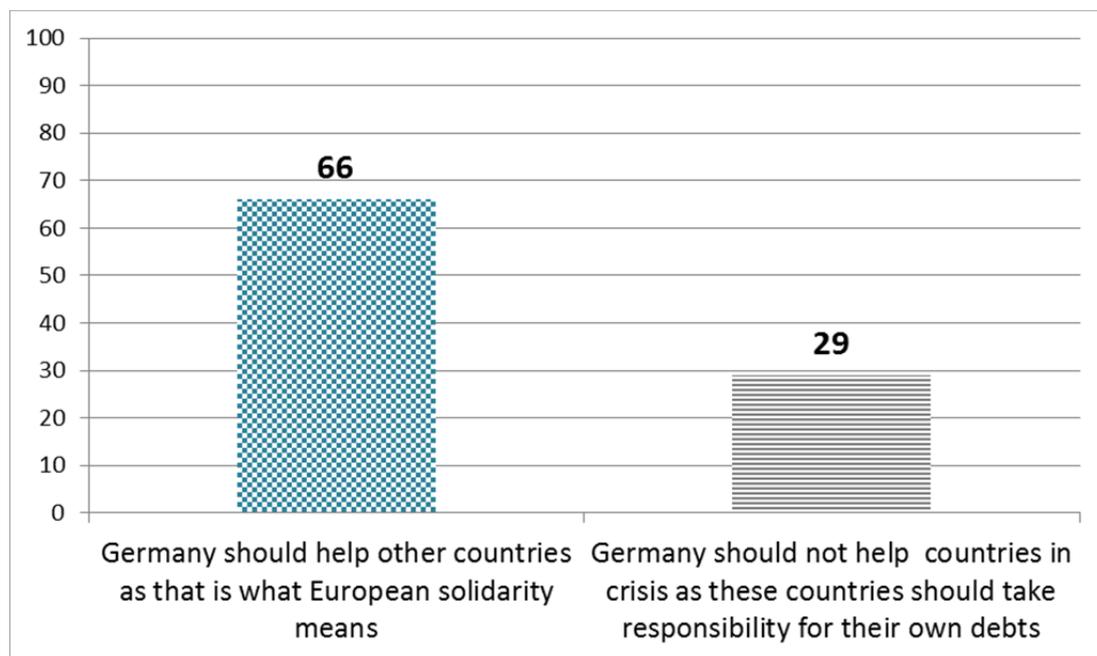
Agnieszka Łada: *Barometr Polska-Niemcy 2012. Polacy o roli Niemiec w Europie i stosunkach polsko-niemieckich* Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2012

Generally the Poles assess Germany's position and activities in the European Union as well as the Polish-German relations positively – shows the Polish public opinion poll conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Poland.

Main conclusions from the research:

- The majority of Poles thinks that Germany should help other countries in a gesture of European solidarity (66%). A little bit more than one fourth of Poles represents the opinion that Germany should not support the countries in crisis as these countries should take responsibility for their own debts.

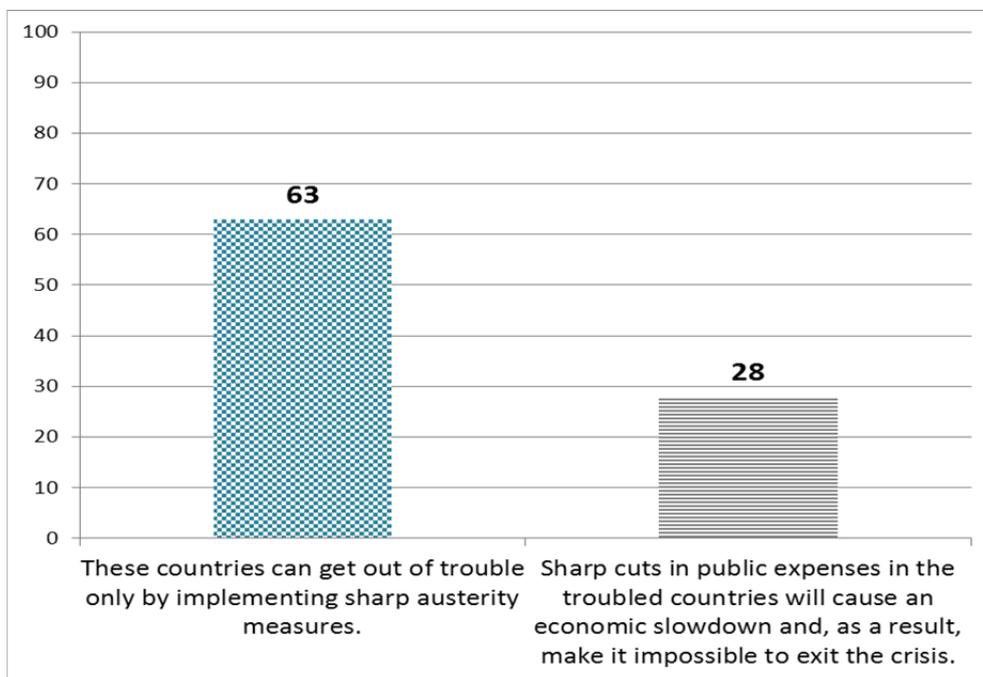
Picture 1. "Should Germany help countries in financial trouble?" (in %)



Source: *Institute of Public Affairs 2012*

- The Poles in their majority support the position of the German government that the countries in financial troubles should implement austerity measures (63%). A little bit more than one fourth of those asked thinks that the sharp cuts in public expenses in the troubled countries will cause an economic slowdown and, as a result, make it impossible to exit the crisis (28%).

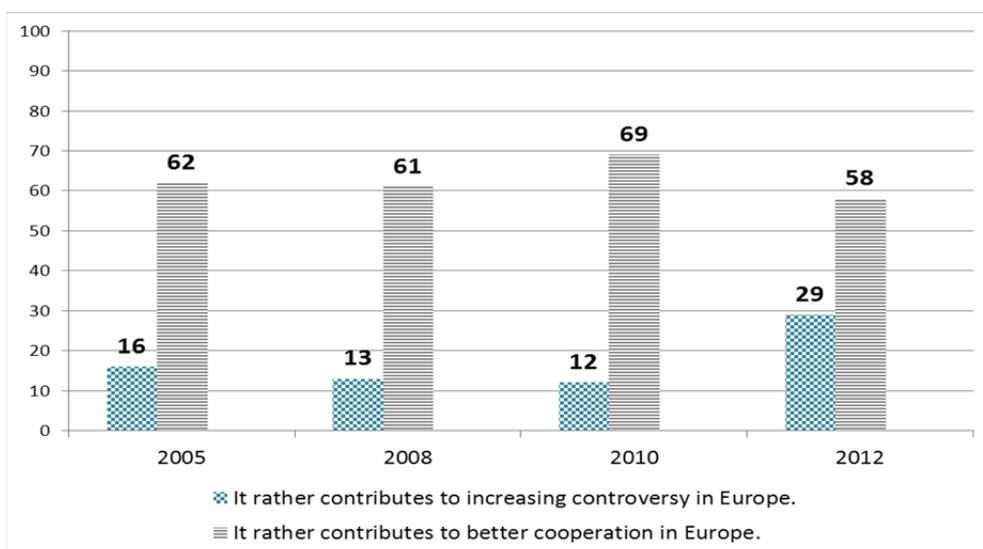
Picture 2. Opinion on Germany's proposals of activities that troubled countries should implement in the fight with crisis (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- The majority of Poles continues sharing the opinion that Germany contributes to a better cooperation in Europe. Currently, however, a bit more than the half of the respondents (58%) think so, while in the year 2010 this opinion was shared by more than two third of those who were asked (69%). The present result is the lowest since 2005 when the question was asked for the first time.

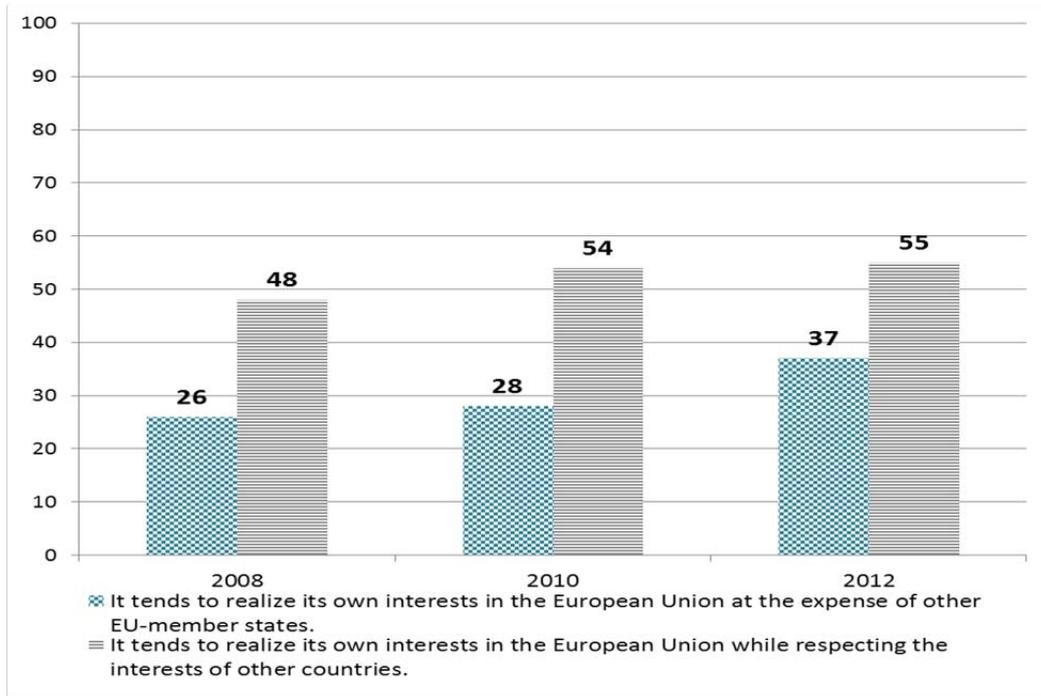
Picture 3. "Does Germany contribute to better cooperation or rather increase controversy in Europe?" (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- In the last three years the number of Poles who think that Germany tends to realize its own interests in the European Union while respecting the interests of other countries remains at the same level (55%). At the same time the percentage of respondents who claim Berlin does so at the expense of other EU-member states has increased (from 28% to 37%).

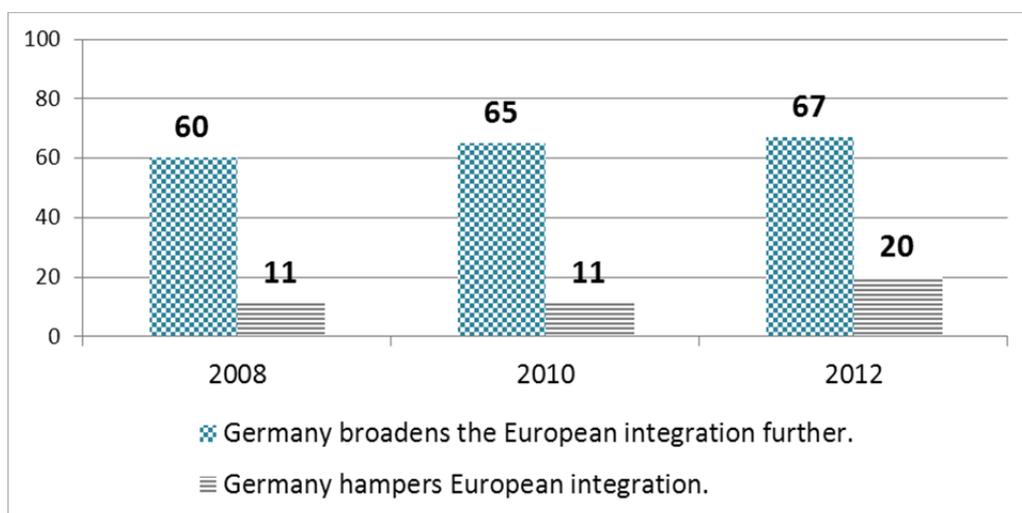
Picture 4. "How does Germany realise its interests in the European Union?" (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- According to two thirds of Poles, similarly to 2010, Germany's activities bring European integration further (67%). Simultaneously the group claiming that Germany hampers European integration has grown around 9% (to 20%).

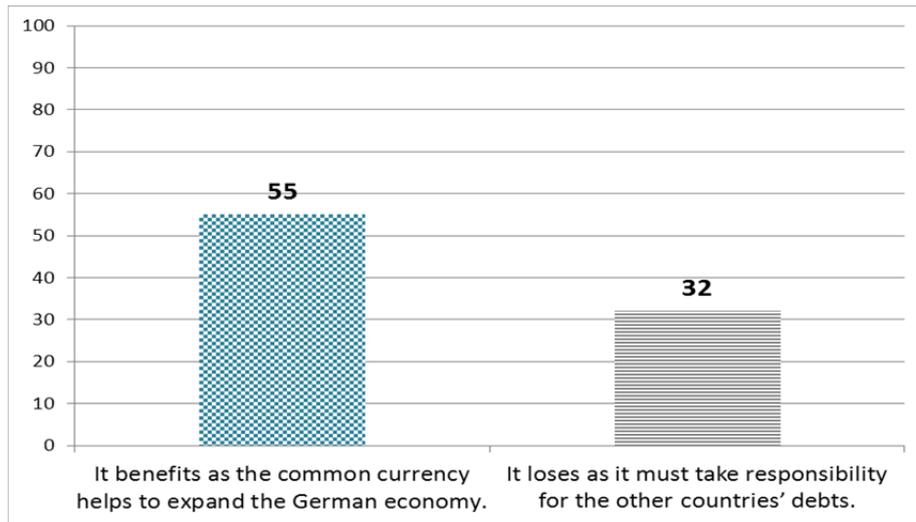
Picture 5. "Do Germany's activities broaden European integration?" (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- The number of Poles who cannot give a clear answer on questions concerning German European politics has decreased during the last three years. The reason could be the major media coverage on the European crisis and activities being implemented by Berlin.
- The majority of Poles think, Germany profits thanks to the common European currency (55%). The opinion that Germany loses because of this, as it must take the responsibility for the other countries' debts, is represented by one third of respondents (32%).

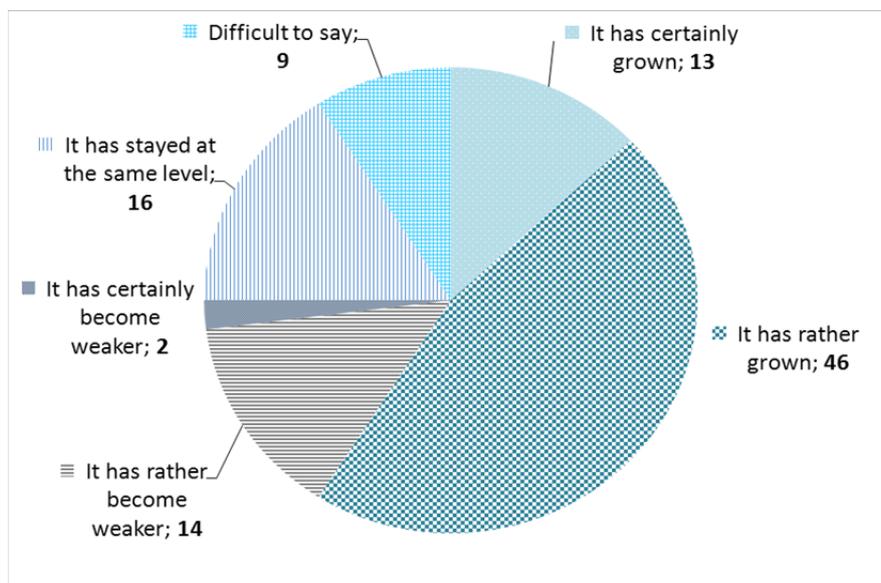
Picture 6. "Does Germany rather benefit or rather suffer from existence of the common European currency?" (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- According to more than half of the respondents (59%) the German position in Europe has grown since the beginning of the crisis. 16% of those asked think it has become weaker. The same number believes it has stayed at the same level.

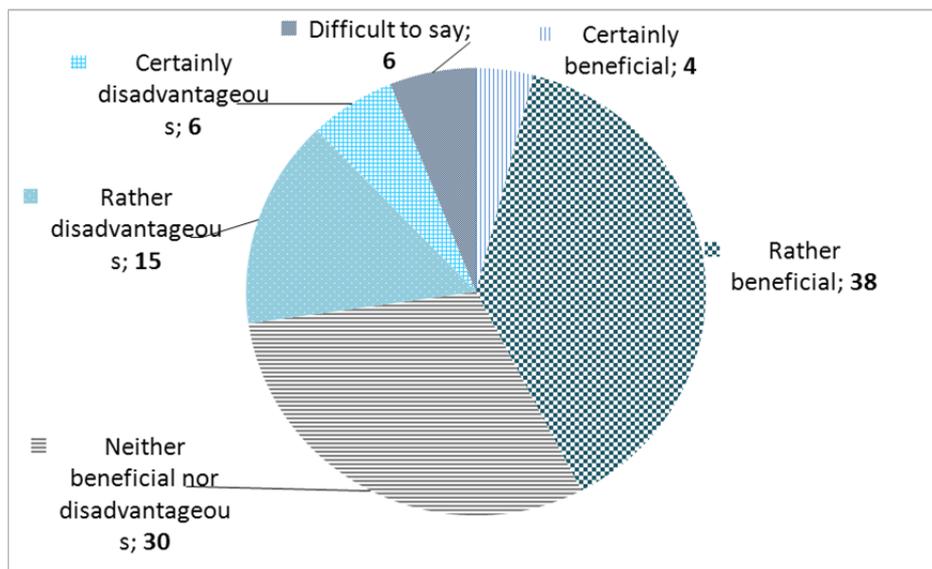
Picture 7. "Has Germany's position in Europe grown since the beginning of the crisis?" (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- Nearly half of Polish respondents (42%) thinks that the increase of German importance in Europe will be very or rather beneficial for Poland. Only one fifth of the respondents has a different opinion (21%). Nearly one third of Poles does not see the strengthened German position as having any influence for Poland (30%).

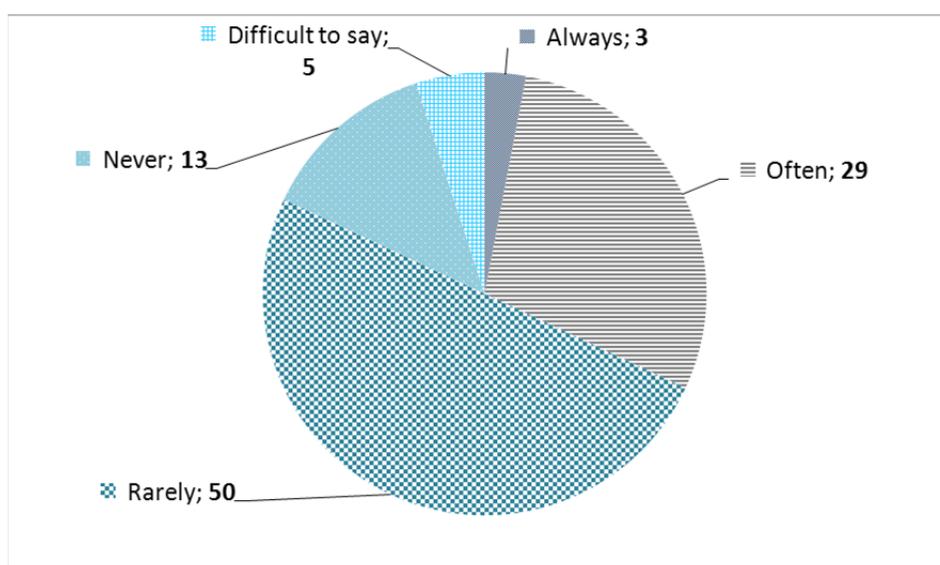
Picture 8. "If as a result of the financial crisis Germany's importance in the EU increased, would it be beneficial or disadvantageous for Poland?" (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- The Poles do not agree whether there is a Polish-German partnership in the European Union. Half of them think Germany rarely treats Poland as an equal partner.

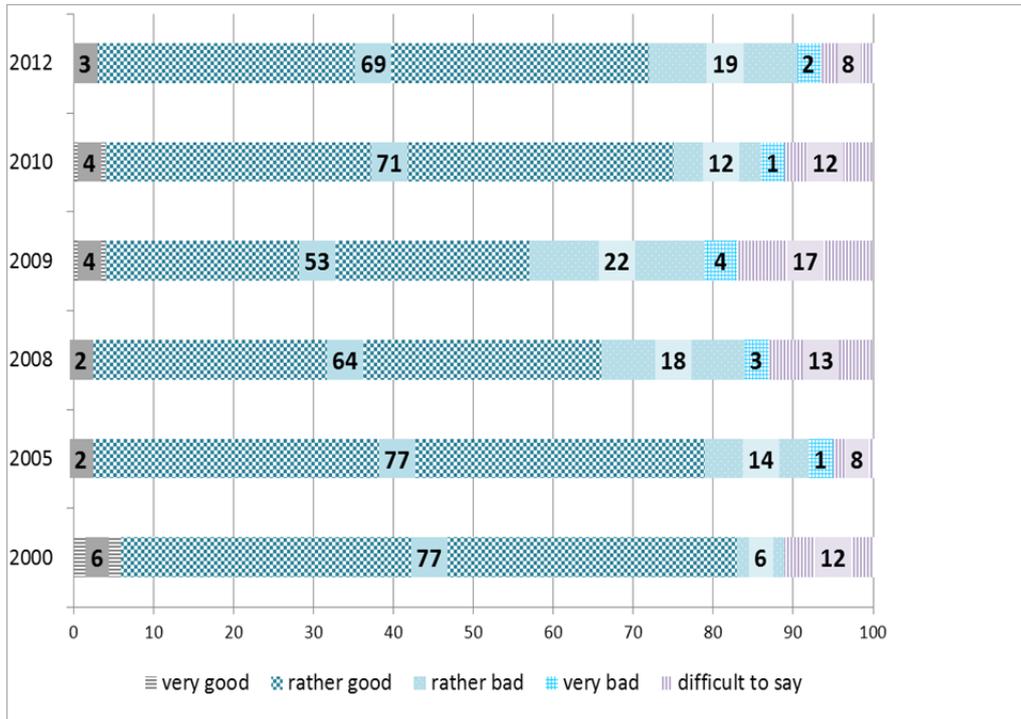
Picture 9. "Does Germany treat Poland as an equal partner in the European Union?" (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- Nearly three fourths of Poles has a good or very good opinion on Polish-German relations (72%). These opinions have not changed in recent years (75% in 2010).

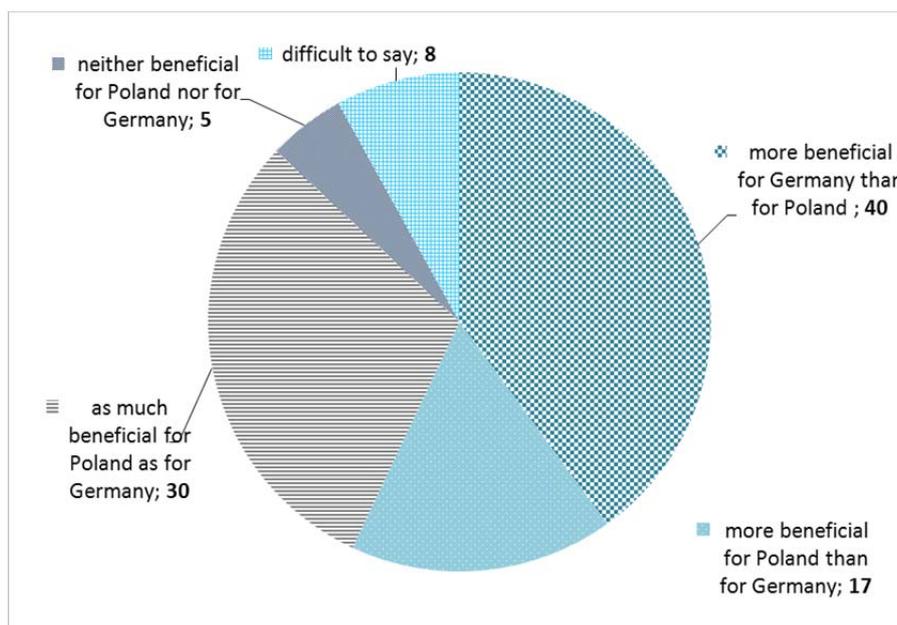
Picture 10. Opinions on Polish-German relations in the years 2000 - 2012 (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- The largest group of respondents shares the opinion that in the recent years Polish-German relations have been more beneficial for Germany than for Poland (40%). 17% of Poles see more advantages for the Polish side while nearly one third for both countries (30%). Only 5% of those asked think neither of the two countries profited from the relations.

Picture 13. "Have Polish-German relations in recent years been ..." (in %)



Source: Institute of Public Affairs 2012

- Opinions on the German role in the European Union differ depending on the political preferences of those asked. The split in the whole population is very similar to the different opinions of the political parties about the researched issues.

Poles have been assessing Polish-German relations and the German European policy positively for many years. Also at a time when the criticism towards Berlin in EU-countries in financial troubles is growing and their citizens are protesting against German proposals, the Polish people support these solutions. The reasons for this are: Poland's not being a Eurozone member and its relatively good economic situation. Many of the German decisions do not affect Poland directly.

However, Berlin's activities indirectly do influence Poland's future and its role in the European Union. Fears about German dominance in Europe and its results have been part of the public debate for years. The above described research results show that Poles do not perceive any danger in the German policy neither for the EU nor for Poland. At the same time they think Germany both profits from the European integration with the common European currency as well as from the Polish-German relations.

The research results show that the Polish and German way of thinking have a lot in common. This auger well for Polish-German cooperation – both at the bilateral as well as at the European level. Such cooperation is very needed today for both countries, but it is also full of challenges when it comes to the EU-reform process and some bilateral projects. The potential of these similarities in the way of thinking should be, however, well used.

The positive results do not mean that Polish society judges Germany's activities without any critical approach. There is still a group of people who perceive them negatively. This group has recently grown, while at the same time the number of people who do not have an opinion on German politics has decreased. The polarization of opinions could be a result of the growing media coverage of the European crisis and the German role in this context. Images of the protests in troubled countries and commentaries making fun or attacking Angela Merkel could have had a negative influence on the Polish opinions. Still, public opinion is much more positive towards Germany than some of the media. Polish society seems not to be over influenced by the too emotional commentaries.

The IPA survey was conducted by the GFK Polonia on a representative sample of 1000 Poles aged 15+ between 6 to 10 September 2012.

A more detailed presentation and analysis of the results of the research (in Polish and German) is available at www.isp.org.pl.

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The publication is part of the common project of the Institute of Public Affairs and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Poland "[Polish-German Barometer](#)" that regularly researches Polish perception of Germany and its policy.