

INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

# POLAND – UKRAINE POLES – UKRAINIANS

LOOK ACROSS THE BORDER

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## INTRODUCTION

An image of a country is related to the perceptions of its relations with one's home country, its standard of living and economic development as well as its perceived cultural proximity.<sup>1</sup> Currently the most popular definition of an image has been proposed by Philip Kotler: it is the sum of knowledge and emotions that a group of people associates with a given object: a state, a product, a company or a service provided by a company.<sup>2</sup> Thus, an image is never an objective description of a state, but a complex subjective perception based on factual information as well as sentiments, memories and associations.

Poles and Ukrainians, two neighbouring nations, have a long and rich history and close political and economic relations. Thus, we may expect that their mutual perceptions should be multi-faceted and complex. A study of mutual perceptions of Poland and Ukraine at the present moment is particularly interesting for several reasons. First of all, the last two decades have seen an intensification of contacts between Poles and Ukrainians after a break so long that only few people still remember from their own experience what these relations used to be like. The memories of this rather complicated neighbourhood have been preserved mainly thanks to family recollections, literature and history textbooks. A study of the perception of Poles by Ukrainians and of Ukrainians by Poles may show to what extent the contemporary mutual image is formed on the basis of the present day events and to what extent – by history.

The second reason to analyse the mutual image of Poles and Ukrainians is Poland's support for the European aspirations of Ukraine almost from the beginning of the systemic transformation. So, a study of mutual images allows us to see not only the perception of the Polish elites' activities by Ukrainians but also by the Polish society.

Last but not least, this study was conducted several months before the Eastern Partnership summit, where Ukrainian president Yanukovich decided to withdraw from signing the association agreement with the EU. In the wake of his decision mass-protests started in the whole country, giving birth to a new pro-European social movement in Ukraine. The present study gives some insights into the Ukrainian society's attitudes towards the EU and Russia and their preferences with regard to the directions of integration immediately preceding these events.

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<sup>1</sup> R.K. Herrmann, "Image Theory and Strategic Interaction in International Relations", in: *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, eds. R. Jervis, D. Sears, L. Huddy, Oxford University Press, New York 2003, p. 285–314.

<sup>2</sup> P. Kotler, *Marketing. Analiza, planowanie, wdrażanie i kontrola*, Gebethner i Ska, Warszawa 1994; cited after O. Gorbaniuk, D. Radman, "Struktura wizerunku kraju i jej pomiar", *Studia Socjologiczne* 4(203), p. 76.

The present report presents the results of an opinion poll conducted in summer 2013 in Poland and Ukraine on representative samples among adult inhabitants of both countries<sup>3</sup>. The results of this study are also compared to the results of earlier opinion polls conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs in 2000 and 2010.

Bearing in mind that the perception of a country may be very different from the perception of its inhabitants, we clearly differentiate between these two issues in the report. Indeed, we may like a people but be very critical of a country, e.g. because of its current politics, just as well as we might admire a state for its economic power and high standard of living, yet be not particularly keen on its inhabitants. For this reason, first we discuss how Poles and Ukrainians see each other and then we present the perceptions of their respective homelands. In the last part of the report we discuss how Ukrainians see the places Ukraine and Poland on the geo-political map of Europe.

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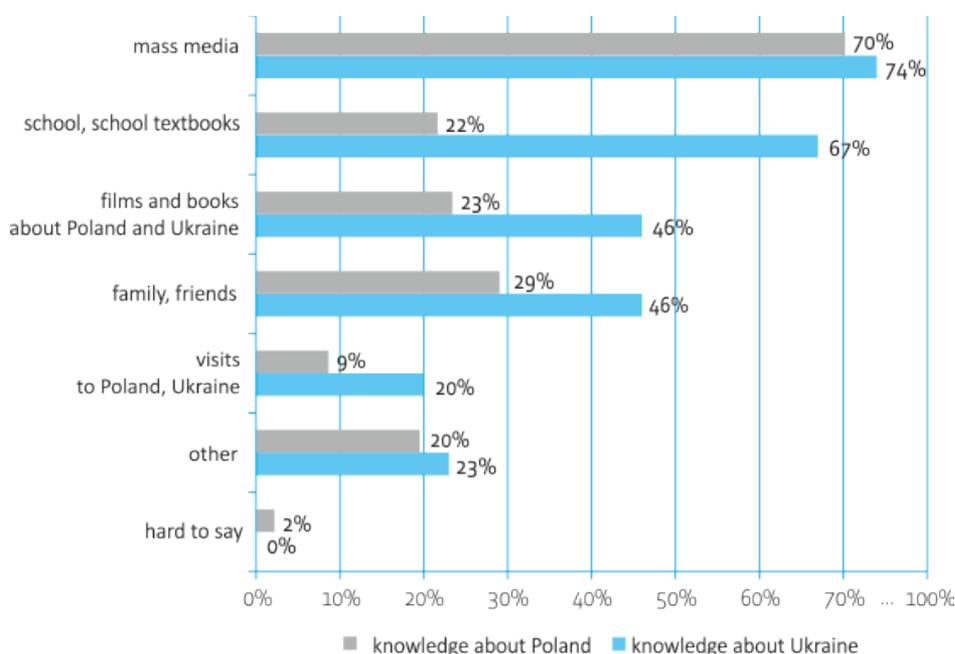
<sup>3</sup> In both countries the survey was conducted by GfK through telephone interviews on a sample of 1000 adult respondents in each country. Additional 300 interviews were conducted in Western Ukraine in order to better analyse the attitudes of the inhabitants of this region.

## CONTACTS AND SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

At first let us look at the sources of information on the basis of which Poles and Ukrainians form their mutual perceptions. Knowledge, alongside emotions, forms a sort of a fundamental building block of an image of a country or a nation. There are many sources of knowledge about the neighbouring country and they all can be grouped into two types: direct and indirect sources<sup>4</sup>. The first type includes visits to the neighbouring country and personal contacts: family contacts, friendships or business relations. The second type includes the media, books and films, educational institutions or even conversations with acquaintances.

Poles gain information about Ukraine from more diversified sources of knowledge than Ukrainians about Poland, even though mass media remain the most popular source of information for both peoples. One of the most important sources of knowledge about Ukraine for Poles are school textbooks (predominantly history books). It should not be surprising thus that history is an important element of the image of Ukraine in the eyes of Poles. On the contrary, for Ukrainians, the significance of school books as a source of knowledge about Poland as well as history as an element of the image of Poland is considerably smaller. For a large number of Ukrainians the media are the only source of information about the neighbouring country.

Graph 1. Sources of knowledge about the neighbouring country



<sup>4</sup> S.U. Yang, H. Shin, J.H. Lee, B. Wrigley, "Country Reputation in Multidimensions: Predictors, Effects, and Communication Channels", *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 2008, 20 (4), p. 421–440.

The variety of available sources of knowledge about one's neighbours increases considerably, when one speaks the language of their country. In 2013 41% of Ukrainians claimed that they speak or understand Polish. The Polish language proficiency of the majority of these people is very rudimentary – they understand simple texts or conversations. Yet, every tenth inhabitant of Ukraine claim to be able to communicate in typical situations (e.g. to buy a ticket or ask for directions). A similar share of Ukrainian people claim to be able to take part in a regular conversation. These are rather impressive results, taking into account that Polish is not one of the international languages – one can speak it to communicate only with Poles.

Predictably, there are considerable regional differences here. The inhabitants of western Ukraine most often claim to be able to understand and speak Polish. They also have contacts with Poles and visit Poland more often than inhabitants of other parts of Ukraine as well as have access to the Polish mass media.

Visits to Poland or Ukraine as well as personal contacts with their inhabitants are important sources of information in the sense that they considerably shape the attitudes of Poles and Ukrainians towards different aspects of the image of the neighbouring country. Contacts between Poles and Ukrainians have intensified. Yet, the vast majority of both Poles and Ukrainians do not have any direct experience of the neighbouring country.

About 20% of Poles and 16% of Ukrainians have visited the neighbouring country at least once after 1991. Poles who visited Ukraine usually went there only once, whereas Ukrainians tended to come back several times. In comparison to the results of the IPA research in 2010, the percentage of Ukrainians who visited Poland has increased by 6 percentage points<sup>5</sup> and has reached the level of 2000<sup>6</sup>, when there was still visa-free regime between Poland and Ukraine.

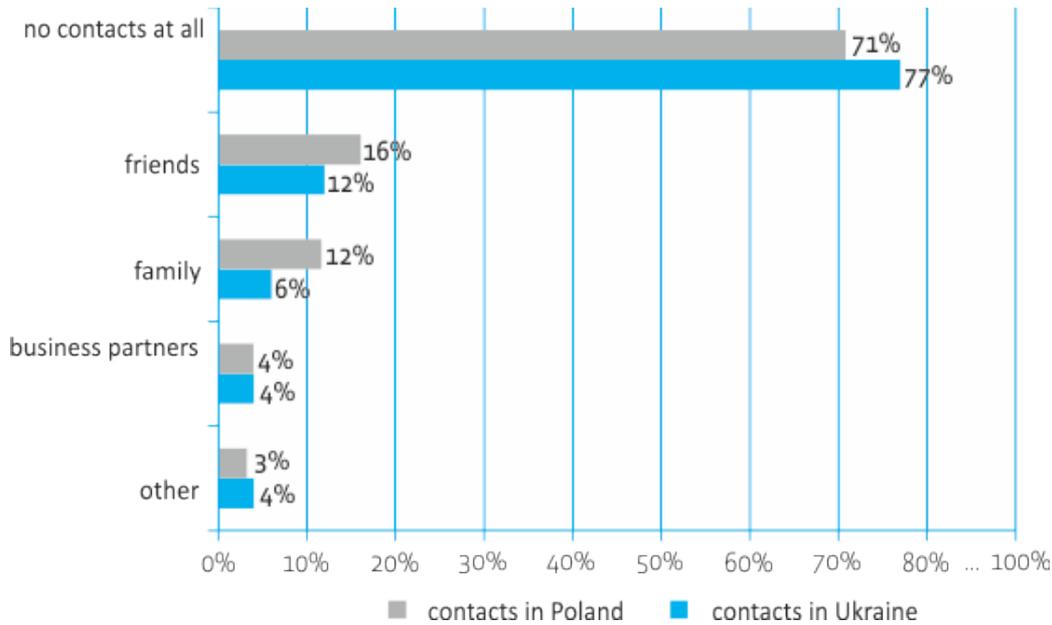
Personal contacts with the neighbours from across the Polish-Ukrainian border are maintained by 23% of Poles and 29% of Ukrainians. Poles and Ukrainians who have personal contacts in the neighbouring country, most frequently have friends and close acquaintances: 16% of Ukrainians have acquaintances in Poland and 12% of Poles have acquaintances in Ukraine.

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<sup>5</sup> J. Konieczna-Salamatin, *Coraz dalsi sąsiedzi? Wizerunek Polski i Polaków na Ukrainie*, ISP, Warszawa, 2011.

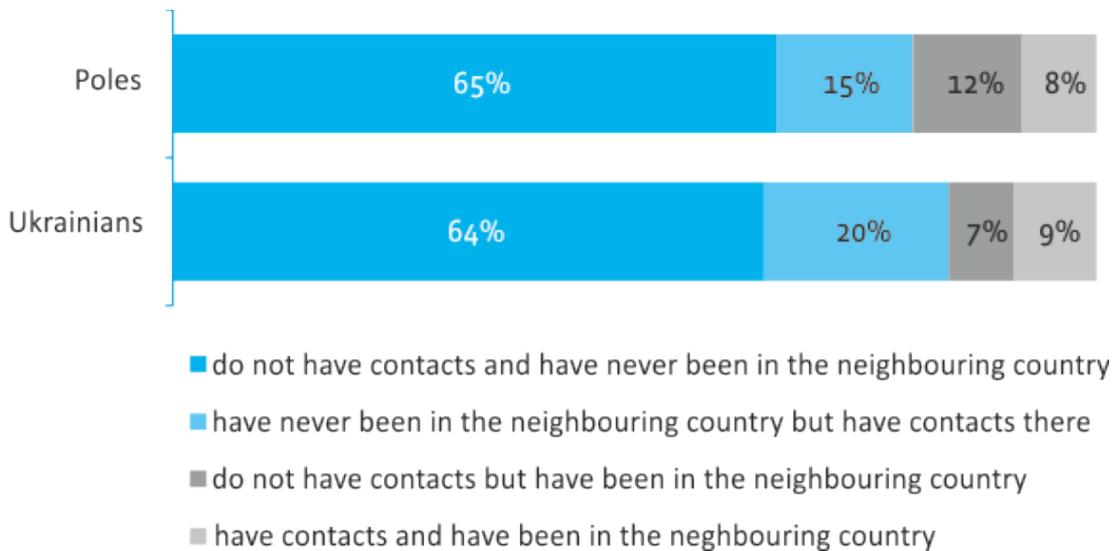
<sup>6</sup> J. Konieczna, *Polska–Ukraina. Wzajemny wizerunek*, ISP, Warszawa, 2001.

Graph 2. Personal Contacts between Poles and Ukrainians



A comparison of poll results with regard to both sources of information shows that similar percentages of people in both countries have first-hand knowledge about their neighbours (about 35%). But the structure of these sources is different: Ukrainians more often have relations with people and Poles visit more often the neighbouring country.

Graph 3. Direct sources of Information about Poland and Ukraine



The poll results show that both Ukrainians and Poles visit the neighbouring country mainly for tourist purposes. Yet, in case of Ukrainians, economic migration is almost equally significant.<sup>7</sup> There are considerable regional differences with regard to Ukrainians' visits to Poland. Inhabitants of western Ukraine travel to Poland most frequently, and inhabitants of eastern Ukraine – least frequently. This situation to a large extent results from the proximity of the western region of Ukraine to the Polish border. Yet, one should also remember this is not just about the proximity in kilometres. Inhabitants of western Ukraine benefit from various simplified procedures for crossing the border, introduced by the Polish authorities. This includes the small border traffic system (which applies to the inhabitants of the region in the immediate proximity of the border) as well as the possibility to receive “shopping visas” (which applies to the inhabitants of all regions bordering with Poland). Besides, inhabitants of western Ukraine are more interested in visiting Poland also due to cultural links with the neighbour and Europe that are much stronger in this region than in the rest of the country.

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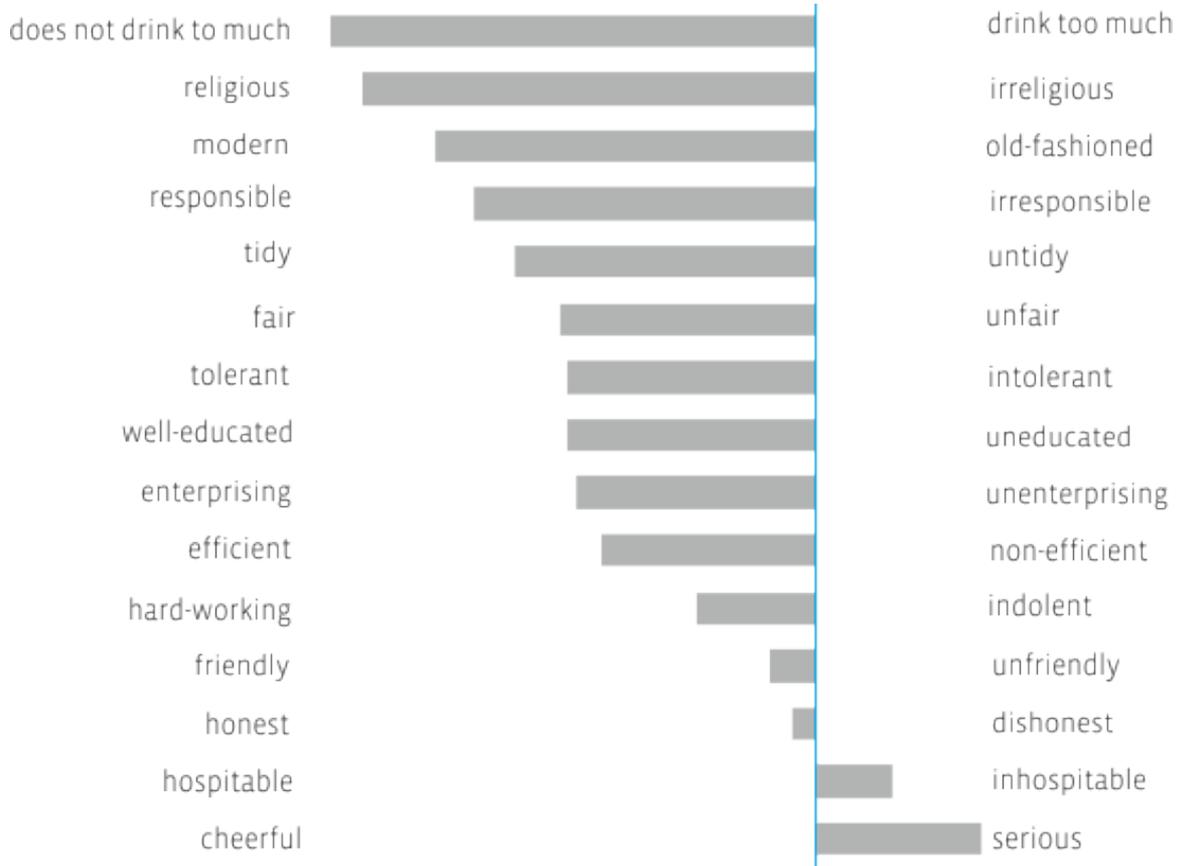
<sup>7</sup> The results of the opinion poll do not reflect the group that visits Poland most often that is those who come to Poland for several hours for shopping. They make about 80% of all visitors, but they come mainly from western Ukraine border regions and the poll covers the whole population of Ukraine.

## MUTUAL PERCEPTION OF POLES AND UKRAINIANS

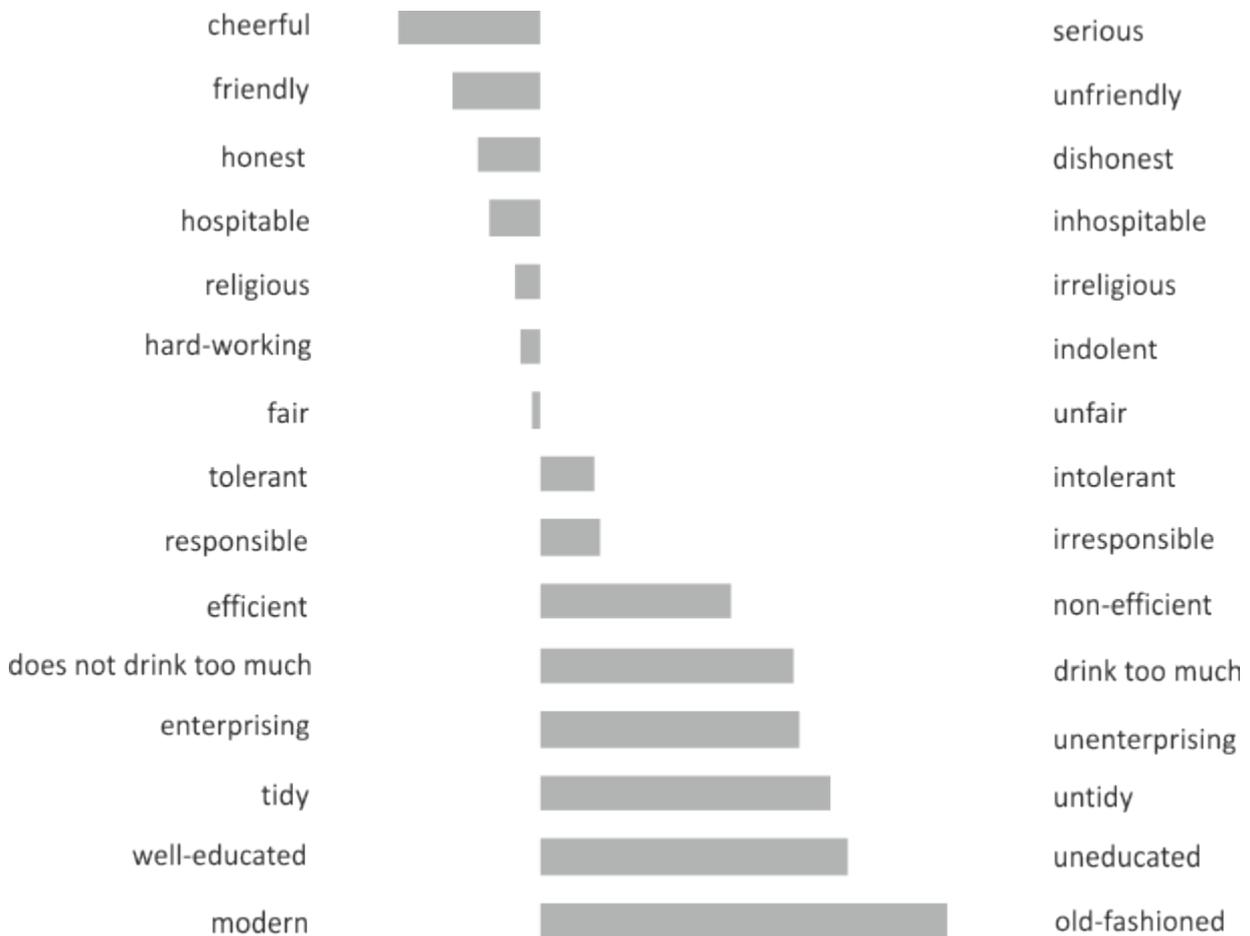
The present study reveals positive changes in the relations between the two neighbouring nations that have taken place rather recently. The current picture is very different from the one even thirteen years ago, when the last study of mutual perception was conducted by the IPA. Even though the stereotypes of the Polish and Ukrainian national characters still point to the perceived unequal status of the two nations, the social distance between Poles and Ukrainians has decreased considerably. Representatives of both nations tend to focus on similarities rather than differences between themselves with regard to values and attitudes and eagerly accept one another in different social roles, including such as family members or bosses.

The biggest differences in the mutual perception of Poles and Ukrainians are reflected in their evaluations of “typical representatives” of the neighbouring nation. The respondents were asked to describe a typical Pole and a typical Ukrainian according to fifteen pairs of contrasting characteristics referring to one’s character and skills (see Graphs 4 and 5). The results shown on Graphs 4 and 5 present the image of Ukrainians as “simple people” from the olden days, who are not very well suited for the contemporary world, but are charming thanks to their openness, hospitality and positive attitude towards life. A Ukrainian in comparison to a Pole is more cheerful and sociable, kind, honest, hospitable and enjoys alcohol. The image of Poles in the eyes of Ukrainians is advantageous to their own perception of themselves in almost all aspects. Poles according to Ukrainians are successful people, who deal with civilizational challenges much better than Ukrainians and besides are also more religious. Only in two cases Ukrainians thought of themselves better than of Poles: hospitality and sociability. What is interesting, both in case of Poles and Ukrainians the stereotype and self-stereotype are very similar.

Graph 4. Comparison of Poles and Ukrainians in the eyes of Ukrainians



Graph 5. Comparison of Poles and Ukrainians in the eyes of Poles



Social psychologists studying national stereotypes point two fundamental dimensions of social judgement: competence and morality (or warmth)<sup>8</sup>. Judgements along these two dimensions compensate one another, which means that when we believe that a given national group is superior to us in terms of “competence”, we also tend to believe that our own group scores better in terms of “warmth” or “morality”. Mutual perception of Poles and Ukrainians conform to this model. One can easily notice that such features as kindness, honesty, hospitality, sociability – that belong to the warmth

<sup>8</sup> B. Wojciszke, “Multiple meaning of behaviour: Constructing actions in terms of competence and morality”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1994, vol. 67, p. 222–232; A. Jasińska-Kania, *Uwagi w sprawie projektu „Postrzeganie Polski”*, in: *Obraz Polski i Polaków w Europie*, L. Kolarska-Bobińska (ed.), ISP, Warszawa, 2003. p. 22–34; N. Kervyn et.al., “Competence and warmth in context: The compensatory nature of stereotypic views of national groups”, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 2008, vol. 38 (7), p. 1175–1183; E.C. Pinel et. al., “We’re warmer (they’re more competent): I-sharing and African-Americans’ perceptions of the ingroup and outgroup”, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 2008, vol. 38, p. 1184–1192

category – are ascribed more often to Ukrainians by both Poles and Ukrainians themselves. Whereas Poles are seen as more competent than Ukrainians: more modern, responsible, and enterprising. Comparison with the 2000 research results shows the persistence of a mutual social stereotype. Thirteen years ago Poles were also seen as more “competent” and Ukrainians as more “warm” or “moral”. Such perceptions are typical for a situation when there are considerable disproportions in the standards of living between two countries. These results can be compared to the mutual perception between Poles and Austrians and Germans<sup>9</sup>, where Poles were seen as less “competent”, but more “moral” or “warm”.

About half of the respondents in either country believe that Poles and Ukrainians are similar to one another in terms of lifestyles, attitudes and values. Poles also see similarities in terms of professional ethics and attitudes towards work, whereas Ukrainians tend to see more differences here.

The Ukrainians who visited Poland tend to see fewer differences between the two nations. In Poland young people more often believe that Poles and Ukrainians are similar, whereas in Ukraine older people do so more often.

More and more often Ukrainians come to Poland for work, which is widely accepted in Poland. Only one in eleven Poles believes that the presence of Ukrainian workers in Poland brings more losses than benefits. The less distance Poles feel towards Ukrainians, the more likely they are to believe that the presence of Ukrainian workers is beneficial for Poland.

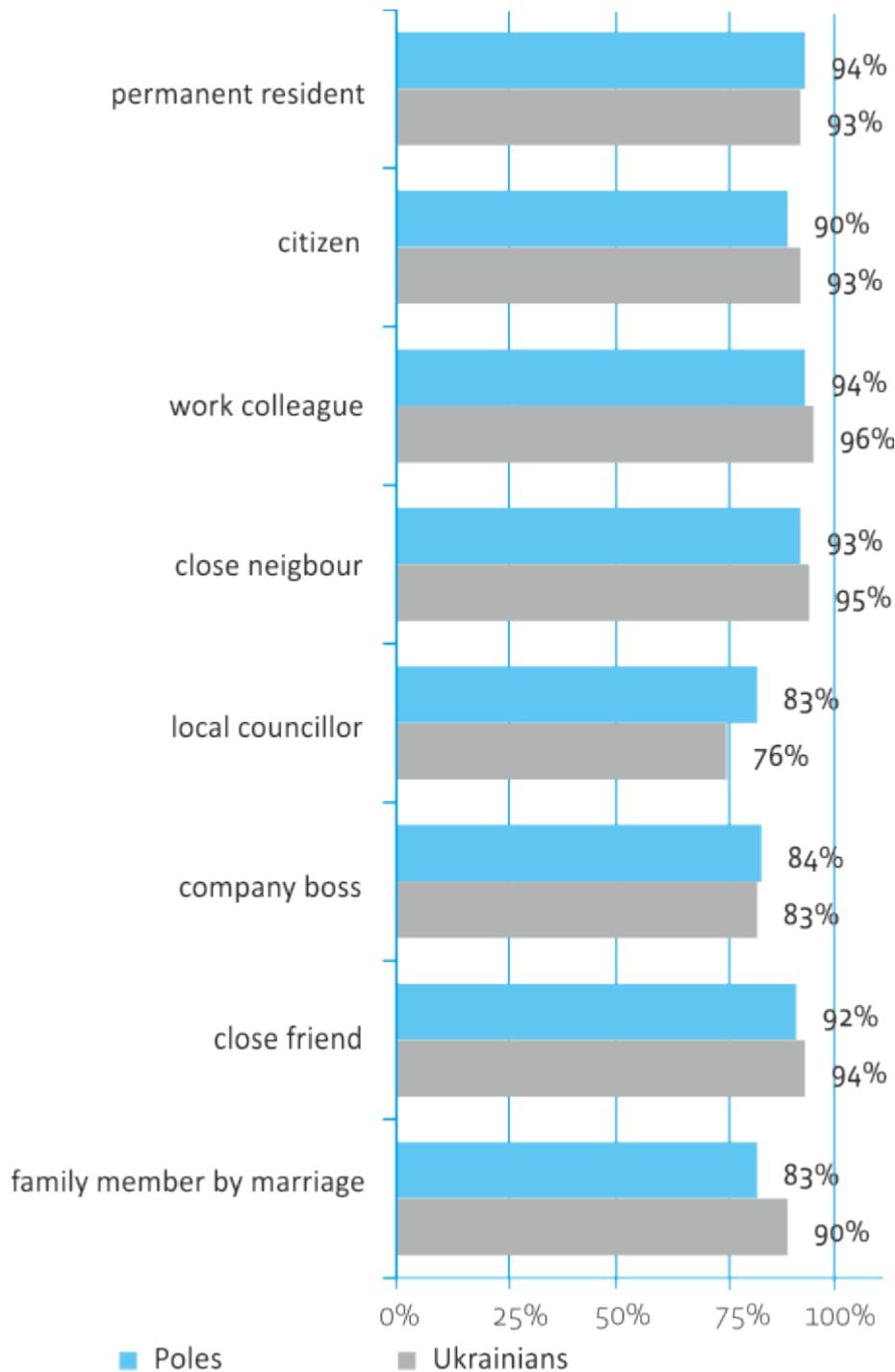
Both Poles and Ukrainians feel very little distance towards each other. In case of free associations with the neighbouring country and its inhabitants, the dominant group of associations in both cases is that of closeness, similarity, neighbourhood, friendship (see Table 1 below). As the research shows, representatives of the neighbouring country are well perceived in all social roles, including the role of a family member or boss.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> L. Kolarska-Bobińska, *Odmienność oswojona. Obraz Polski w krajach Unii Europejskiej*, in: *Obraz Polski i Polaków w Europie*, IPA, Warsaw, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> The Bogardus scale has become a classical approach to measuring social distance between different social groups. E.S. Bogardus, “A Social Distance Scale”, *Sociology and Social Research*, 1933, vol. 17, p. 265–271.

Graph 6. Mutual acceptance of Poles and Ukrainians in various social roles\*



\*The graph presents the percentage of positive answers.

The social distance between Poles and Ukrainians has considerably decreased within the past dozen of years or so. Acceptance for representatives of the neighbouring country has more or less doubled in

almost all cases in comparison to the results of the 2000 research, when the vast majority of the populations on both sides of the border accepted their neighbours only as tourists.

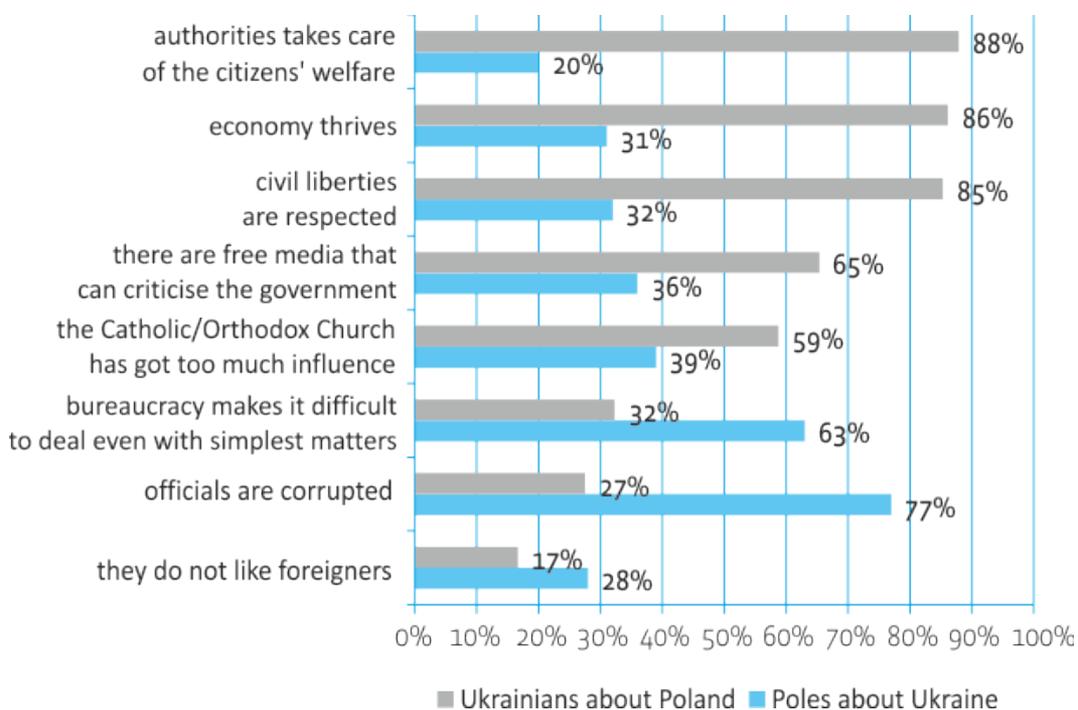
The reasons for these changes include the normalisation of relations between Poland and Ukraine, some approximation of living standards in the two countries and intensification of contacts between their citizens. Ukraine has also stopped being a somewhat exotic and unfamiliar country for Poles thanks to the Orange revolution.

## MUTUAL IMAGES OF POLAND AND UKRAINE

While there is little social distance between Ukrainians and Poles, and both nations readily accept their neighbours in different social roles, Poles have a much more critical view of the Ukrainian state in terms of governance and economic situation. Whereas Ukrainians admire Poland and wish the Ukrainian state was more similar to it.

About four times more Ukrainians believe that the Polish government takes good care of its citizens in comparison to Poles who have the same opinion about the Ukrainian government. Poland's image is also much more positive in terms of such issues as economy, civil liberties, freedom of speech or the levels of bureaucracy and corruption (see Graph 7). The only case, when Ukrainians have a worse opinion of Poland than Poles about Ukraine is the influence of church on public life. What is noteworthy, Poles who visited Ukraine are more critical of the state of affairs in this country, than those who have never been there. This can be explained by several factors. First of all, they are better informed thanks to a direct experience of the neighbouring country. Ukrainians themselves tend to be very critical about their country. Moreover, direct, personal relationship with Ukraine makes them care more about the country and thus be more critical about the current situation there.

Graph 7. Opinions about certain aspects of public life in Poland and Ukraine\*



\*The graph presents the percentages of positive answers.

The results of the analysis of free associations with Poland and Poles among Ukrainians and Ukraine and Ukrainians among Poles confirm this dichotomy in the perceptions of the two countries by the neighbours. Poland is strongly associated with the West, Europe, high standards of living, good governance, and civilisation. Whereas Ukraine is seen as a country of the East, closer to Russia, a country of poverty, low standards of political life, and poor governance (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Associations of Poles and Ukrainians with the neighbouring country and its inhabitants

	<b>Associations of Ukrainians with Poland and Poles</b>	<b>Association of Poles with Ukraine and Ukrainians</b>
<b>Closeness, neighbourhood, sympathy</b>	<b>41%</b> “Slavs just as we are”; “neighbours”; “positive emotions”; “friendship, togetherness”; “closest brothers”; “friendly attitude”; “I’ve wanted to visit it for a long time, to see how people live there”; “my grandfather is buried there, both of them”; “brotherly nation”; “family, close ones”; “roots”; “similar world outlook”	<b>26%</b> “neighbours”; “Slavs”; “fellow countrymen”; “family”; “many Poles live there”; “I would like to go there”; “nice people similar to Poles”; “people like us”; “I like those people”; “friends, partners”; “exceptionally hospitable”; “reconciliation”
<b>Distance, difference, antipathy</b>	<b>4%</b> “not good, I don’t like Poles, they are cunning and insincere, not easy people”; “aggressor”; “I am not fond of Poles, they are too conceited”; “I am not unfriendly towards them, but they are different than Ukrainians, another people”	<b>10%</b> “they do not have my sympathy”; “not very good associations”; “they don’t like Poles”; “different from Poles”; “not good things; ‘ <i>a Ukrainian</i> ’ is a swear word”; “hatred”; “harm”

<b>Country and its inhabitants</b> (language, national character, appearance, flag, currency, national cuisine, cities, landscapes)	<b>23%</b> “bread”; “ <i>Królewskie</i> beer”; “cheese, sausage”; “Warszawa”; “Vistula”; “blond people”; “beautiful girls”; “people like anywhere else”; “zealous, hardworking”; “Poland’s emblem, a hen on a red background”	<b>16%</b> “people like others, nothing in particular”; “blue and yellow colours”; “beautiful women”; “fertile soil”; “a regular country”; “Kyiv”; “beer”; “the Dnipro river”; “strange accent”
<b>East vs. West</b> <b>PL</b> (UE, higher standard of life, good government, welfare, the West) <b>UA</b> (the East, Russia, low standard of life, corruption)	<b>14%</b> “good president”; “the EU flag”; “high level of life”; “good salaries”; “high level of development”, “modern people”, “developed country”; “freedom”; “Poles live well and Ukrainians have got stuck”	<b>11%</b> “closeness, influence of Russia”; “poverty”; “lower standard of life”; “democracy has problems”; “corruption”; “wealth and poverty”; “the Soviet Union”; “Lukashenka”; “communist realities”; “they are far behind, but want to enter the EU”; “Yanukovych has imprisoned Tymoshenko”
<b>Culture, art, sports</b>	<b>4%</b> “Polish dance Krakowiak”; “ <i>Four Tank-men and a Dog film</i> ”; “Anna German”; “Barbara Brylska” “Wiśniewski”; “Chopin”; “ <i>Pan Wołodyjowski</i> ”; “ <i>The Deluge</i> ”, “Adam Mickiewicz”; “ <i>Taras Bulba</i> ”; “Sapkowski”, “Euro 2012”; “members of football clubs”	<b>6%</b> “folklore bands”; “ <i>Hej, sokoły</i> song”; “ <i>With Fire and Sword</i> ”; “historical sights” “Shevchenko”; “Cossack songs”; “folklore”; “Euro 2012”

History and politics	<b>9%</b> „Katyń”; „Smoleńsk”; „Poland conquered Ukraine”; „they attacked Volhynia”; „the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”; „Bohdan Kmelnytsky”; „Polish nobility”; „the tragedy, the death of the Polish president”; „I live in a city where count Potocki lived, where there were many Polish landlords”; „the partition of Poland in 1939, the beginning of the WWII”	<b>26%</b> (44% out of which were associations with the Volhynia tragedy, which makes 11% of all associations) „murderers of the UPA <sup>11</sup> ”; „Volhynia, murders”; „war”; „cruel massacre”; „failed Orange Revolution”; „former greatness of the Polish state”; „eastern regions of the former Polish Commonwealth”; „Cossacks”; „Bohdan Khmelnytsky”; „famine in Ukraine”
Border, trade, tourism, migrant workers	<b>4%</b> „the borders should be opened”; „recreation”; „tourism”; „seasonal work”; „Poland feeds me”; „associations with the 1990s, when we used to go there to sell or exchange goods”; „Schengen visa”; „cheap cars”	<b>4%</b> „trade, bazaar”; „people who come here for work”; „cheap labour force”; „cleaning ladies”; „cheap alcohol”; „border”; „positive association in terms of tourism”

Another difference with regard to Poles’ and Ukrainians’ associations with the neighbouring country was the significance attributed to history. A considerable share of all associations of Poles with Ukraine was related to historical events, especially those of the Second World War and conflicts between Poles and Ukrainians of that period. History played a far less significant role in case of Ukrainians’ associations with Poland.

Moreover, Poles more often associated Ukraine and Ukrainians with difference, separateness, distance than Ukrainians do Poland and Poles (see Table 1), which can be related to the high share of associations of historical

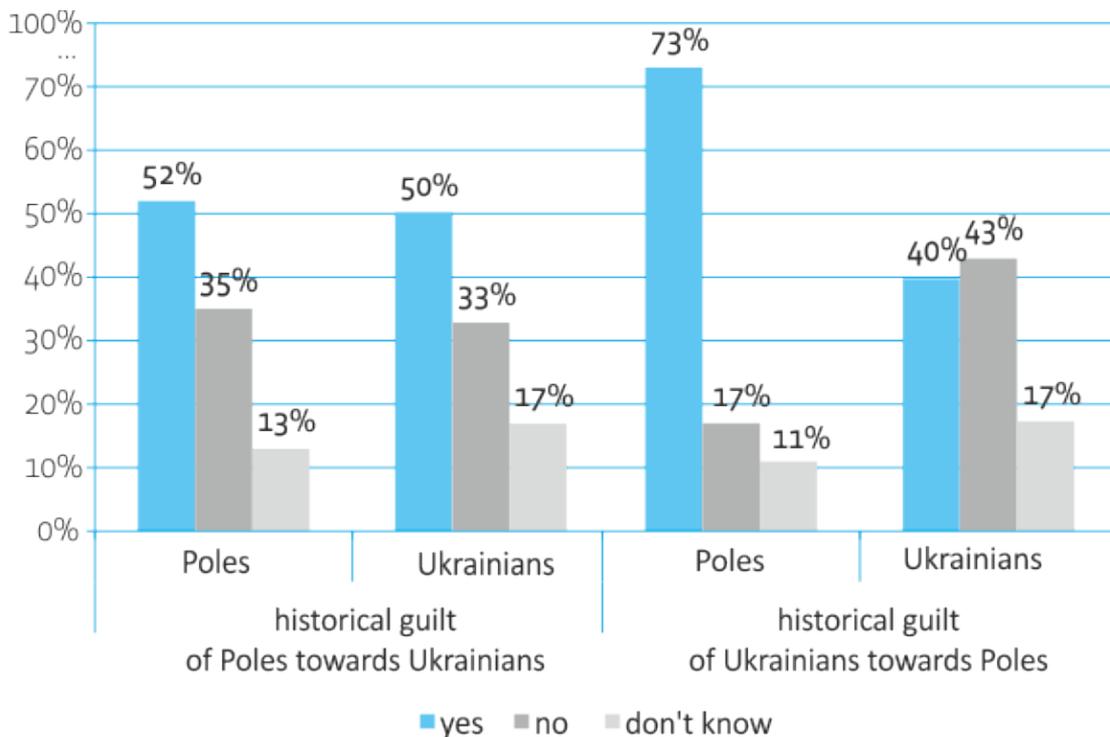
<sup>11</sup> UPA – the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

conflicts. Yet, as it has been mentioned already, positive associations of closeness and similarity dominate in case of both countries.

Very few associations with contemporary culture of the neighbouring country – especially in contrast to the relatively high number of association with older books, films, actors and authors – point to an insufficient cultural exchange between the two countries, especially with regard to popular culture.

The analysis of free associations indicates that Poles pay much more attention to shared history than Ukrainians. Polish-Ukrainian history, and especially conflicts during and after the WWII, including the Volhynia massacre are an important element of the image of Ukraine and Ukrainians in the eyes of Poles.

**Graph 8. Opinions of Poles and Ukrainians on mutual historical guilt**



Poles and Ukrainians were also asked whether there were events in the Polish-Ukrainian history for which Poles should ask Ukrainians for forgiveness or Ukrainians should ask Poles for forgiveness. The perception of the balance of historical wrongs by Poles and Ukrainians are like a mirror reflection: Poles more often assign guilt to Ukrainians, whereas Ukrainians are more likely to assign guilt to Poles. Yet, more than half of the Polish population admits that Poles also bear some blame, and 40% of Ukrainians are ready to admit that the blame lies also on the part of their fellow citizens.

The answers to this question also demonstrate that Poles appear to be more often aware about the tragic history and mutual wrongdoings in the Polish-Ukrainian history than Ukrainians.

There may be several reasons why Poles pay more attention to mutual historical guilt. First of all, this opinion poll was conducted on the seventieth anniversary of the Volhynia massacre just after the Polish parliament had been debating the text of the resolution to commemorate this tragic event, which debate was widely reported by the Polish media. Besides, as many historians point out, historical awareness in the Ukrainian society is rather low. Finally, Ukrainians currently have a very positive perception of Poland and Poles. Massacres and other tragic historical events just do not suit this image, which also translates into the historical memory.

Ukrainians have a positive perception not only of the Polish state, but also of the Polish products. The information that a given product was manufactured in Poland would encourage more than half of Ukrainians to buy it. The majority of Poles do not know Ukrainian products well enough. Information about the Ukrainian origin of a given product is irrelevant (neither encourages nor discourages Poles from buying it) for the majority of Poles (72%). Predictably enough, Polish products are more popular among the inhabitants of western Ukraine, who have more direct experience with Polish goods than their fellow citizens from the east.

## UKRAINE-POLAND-EUROPE

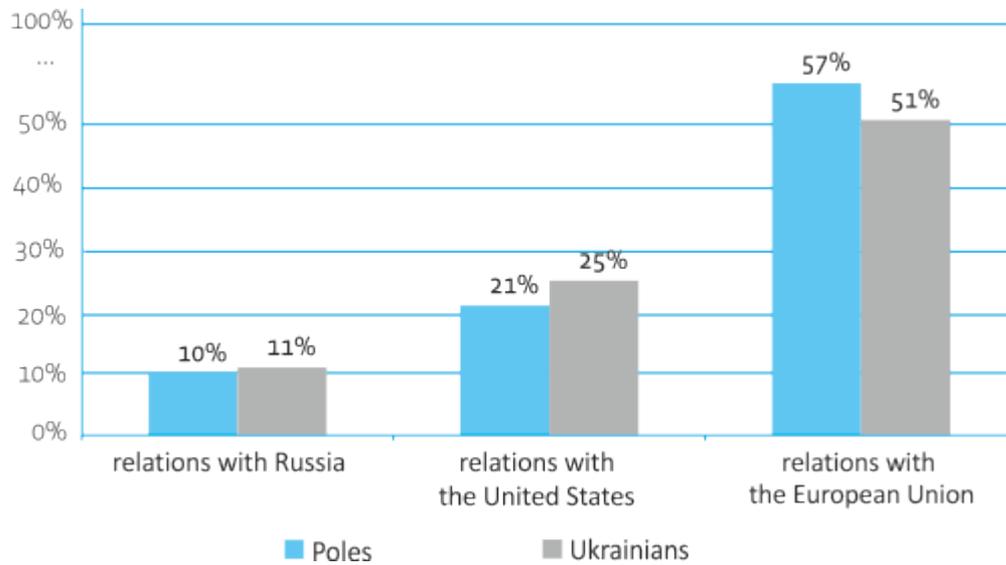
Polish-Ukrainian political relations are somewhat asymmetrical. Poland gained its independence slightly earlier and managed to successfully introduce the necessary systemic reforms and clearly opted for the western direction of political integration, including its membership in the EU and NATO. In Ukraine the introduction of reforms has taken much longer and the process has not been finished yet. It has also been more difficult for Ukraine to choose a single direction of political integration, as the recent events including Ukraine's withdrawal from signing the Association Agreement with the EU demonstrate. For this reason, in the recent decades Poland has played the role of an advocate of Ukraine in the EU.

The dominant opinion among Poles and Ukrainians about the relations between their two countries is positive (65% and 85% respectively). However, similarly to the asymmetry in the perception of the Polish and Ukrainian states by Ukrainians and Poles respectively, Poles are also more critical of the Polish-Ukrainian relations than Ukrainians. The opinion that Polish-Ukrainian relations are "rather bad" was three times more popular among Poles than Ukrainians. Once again, Poles who visited Ukraine were more critical of the relations between their homeland and its eastern neighbour.

Another difference between Poles' and Ukrainians' opinions pertains to the significance attached to these relations. Poles tend to believe that these relations are important but not of priority for Poland. Whereas Ukrainians are convinced that relations with Poland are of priority for Ukraine. This opinion was most popular in western Ukraine. The perceived significance of Polish-Ukrainian relations has increased considerably in the past several years. In 2010 only 22% of Ukrainians believed that these relations are very important, in comparison to 50% in 2013. This increase can be explained by Poland's active support for the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU as well as the recent increase of popularity of the western direction of integration in Ukraine. Apart from the perceived attractiveness of the EU, Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine, aiming to stop Ukraine from signing the association agreement with the UE, has also played a role here.

Interestingly enough, Ukrainians and Poles agree as regards the role of Poland in building Ukraine's relations with big players of the international political arena. They see Poland as very helpful in shaping good relations between Ukraine and the EU, but being of less significance in relation to Ukraine's cooperation with the USA and Russia.

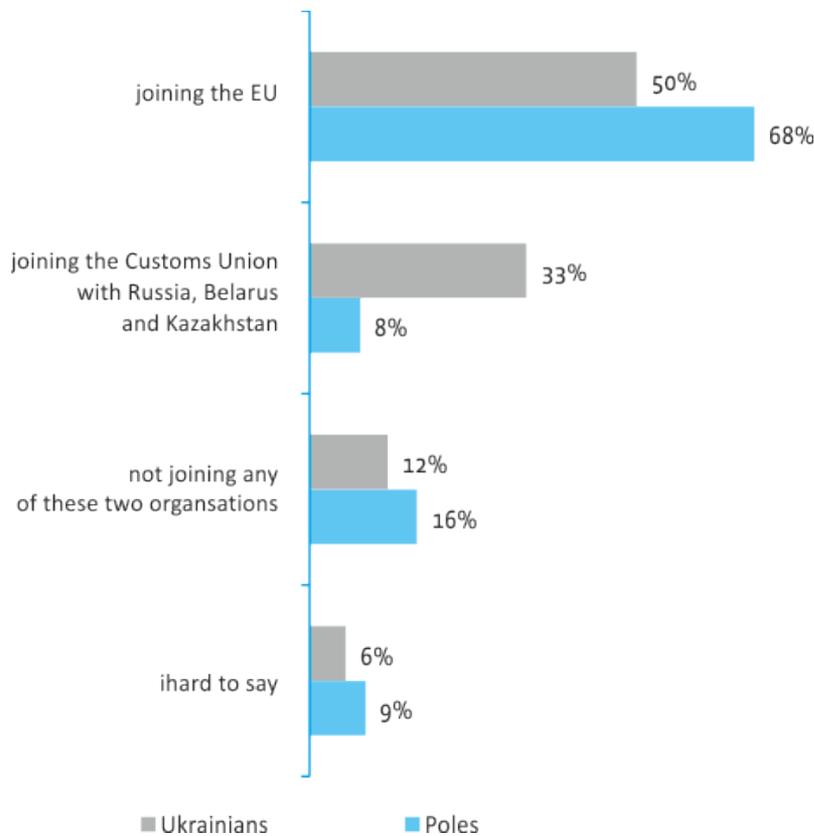
Graph 9. Opinions about the Role of Poland in Building Close Relations between Ukraine and the EU, USA and Russia\*



\*The graph presents the percentages of positive answers.

For many years Ukrainians have remained undecided on whether their country should integrate with the European Union or rather with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. This study has shown a certain recent change: the support for the EU integration has become more wide-spread among Ukrainians. Half of the Ukrainian population would like their country to join the EU, whereas only one in three Ukrainians prefers the integration with the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. In a similar vein, Poles, when asked about the recommended direction of integration for Ukraine, much more often choose the EU (68%) over the Customs Union (8%).

Graph 10. Support for different directions of political and economic integration of Ukraine\*



\*The Graph shows the share of positive answers.

Yet, the research results demonstrate that a considerable part of the society believes that Ukraine should develop close relations with both Russia and the EU and both directions of integration are in the interest of Ukraine (42%). This opinion is especially popular with the youngest generation.

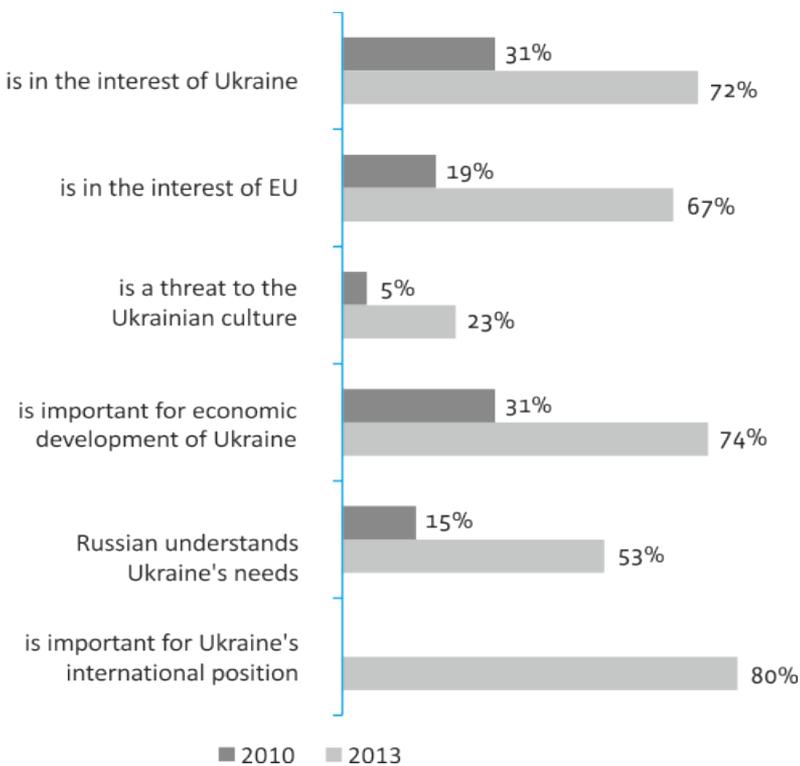
There has been a noticeable increase in the number of people who believe that integration with the EU as well as with Russia is important for Ukraine's economic development in comparison with 2010. Today approximately the same share of the Ukrainian society believes that Ukrainian economy needs close cooperation with Russia (72%) and the EU (74%). However, in terms of Ukraine's position on the international political arena, Ukrainians are more often convinced that integration with the EU is more beneficial for their home country. Also, slightly more people think that integration with the EU is good for Ukraine than integration with Russia.

Graph 11. Opinions on the integration with Russia\*



\*The Graph shows the share of positive answers.

Graph 12. Opinions on the integration with the European Union\*



\*The Graph shows the share of positive answers.

It appears that Ukrainians' ambivalence towards their country's geopolitical choices is related to the contradictory assessments of the results of the Soviet Union's demise and the systemic transformation that followed it. On the one hand, the fall of the Soviet Union brought independence to Ukraine, on the other the effects of the transformation have been far from satisfactory for many Ukrainians. As a result, only one in four Ukrainians believes that the collapse of the USSR brought more benefits than losses to Ukraine and 38% believe that it brought more losses than benefits.

Ukraine is also geographically divided with regard to the pro-European or pro-Russian orientations. The east and the south of the country clearly gravitate towards Russia, whereas the west and the centre – towards the European Union. Orientation towards the EU is positively correlated with the lack of distance towards Poles: the smaller the distance towards Poles, the smaller the distance towards the EU. An important factor in shaping Ukrainians' views on geopolitical choices of their country is their mobility. Ukrainians who have been abroad tend to favour the European course of integration and feel more distance towards Russia. Also the youngest generation tends to favour the EU.

## SUMMARY

The comparisons of the results of the 2013 study with earlier opinion polls conducted in Ukraine and Poland demonstrates that the Polish-Ukrainian relations remain dynamic. After a period of very limited contacts between the two countries, Polish and Ukrainian societies are still discovering one another and their mutual images are constantly being shaped. We have noted a number of positive trends with regard to mutual perception between the two countries and its inhabitants.

The social distance between Poles and Ukrainians has considerably decreased in the past dozen years and contacts have intensified. Poles and Ukrainians believe that they are similar with regard to values and attitudes and readily accept their neighbours in different social roles, including that of a family member or a boss.

Ukrainians admire the effects of the systemic reforms in Poland and Poles support Ukrainians' pro-European aspirations. Although a noticeable part of the Ukrainian society is still undecided on whether European or Russian direction of political integration is better for Ukraine, today more Ukrainians support Ukraine's joining the EU than some sort of economic and political union with Russia.