

„Poland and the EU's Eastern Enlargement: An Explanatory Analysis of the Public Opinion"

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Résumé. -La Pologne et l'élargissement de l'UE à l'est: une analyse explicative de l'opinion publique

L'ouvrage fournit une analyse de l'opinion publique des pays de l'VE sur le futur statut de membre de la Pologne. L'opinion publique et l'intérêt des masses sont centrales pour les études sur l'intégration européenne. La structure macro-géographique de l'UE et les périphéries élargies des pays associés est examinée afin d'en dériver les suppositions explicatives de base.

La différenciation dans l'appui accordé à la Pologne pour devenir membre de l'UE est expliquée avec l'aide des opinions variables structurelles et publiques. L'analyse statistique montre l'importance de l'orientation de la valeur post-matérialiste des populations EU dans l'appui accordé à l'élargissement avec la Pologne.

Le public dans les pays riches et larges et dans la partie Allemagne de l'EU a la tendance d'accorder un faible appui à la Pologne, indiquant ainsi qu'un sens puissant d'une européenne élargie doit encore émerger.

The European Union is planning to enlarge to the South and the East and new countries should be in a position to join the Union in a few years' time. We have 13 applicant countries that take part in the accession process now. All of them should finish the negotiation process at the beginning of next year, however there are a lot of complications connected with agricultural questions, right to buy farm, levels of financial support and for Poland and Lithuania transit passages to Kaliningrad region as well. Since time we, in Poland start our negotiations process many things change at the European countries as well. Firstly in European Union have changed attitudes to enlargement and the criteria that applicant countries should meet. The same process has been noticed in Poland as well.

The most important attitudes to enlargement in European Union countries are now (2002):

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building the position and importance of European Union - 66%
question of decision making process with more members - 65%
changing the cultural position of new EU after enlargement - 61%
changing the working system of EU institution - 56% ;
enlargement can stabilised securities at the EU territory - 55%

It means that the majority of EU citizens feel that the Union will be more important in the world if it includes more countries. The citizen regard that consists of more countries can culturally enrich EU. What is very interesting to compare to process of enlargement of NATO, 55% of EU citizens believe that a larger Union will guarantee more securities at the region. However half of Europeans are sure that the enlargement will cost their own country more money than it is said, as it has happened after reunification East and West Germany. Particularly inclined to feel this way is people of German speaking and influences countries: Denmark (67%), the Netherlands (66%), Germany (64%) and Austria (62%). It is significant that about 40% of Europeans afraid about growing level of unemployment after enlargement. This concern is most widespread Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden, all of them over 50%.

From the point of view of citizens of EU, the basic criteria that applicant countries should meet are:

respect Human Rights and principles of democracy - 95%
protect the environment - 93%
fight organised crime and drug trafficking - 93%
ability to pay its share of the EU budget - 83%
accept common decision - 80%
joining should not be costly for existing members - 79%
close to EU members level of economic development - 73%
prepared to put the interest of the EU above its own - 68%

It does mean that more than 9 in 10 people feel that countries wishing to join the EU should respect Human Rights and the principles of democracy, fight organised crime and drug trafficking and protect the environment if they wish to join the European Union. However from Polish perspective in European Union more important are economical conditions, especially the same level of financial support in agriculture and regional development.

During last time has changed the level of support for enlargement. It has increase 6% since autumn 2000 (44%) to spring 2002 (50%). The same time level people who have been against decrease about 5%, since 35%.

Tab.1. Support for enlargement (%)

	AUT. 2000	SPR. 2001	AUT. 2001	SPR. 2001
FOR	44	43	51	50
AGAINST	35	35	30	30
DK	21	23	19	20

Source: Eurobarometer, spring 2002, no. 57, p. 6.

The proportions of the population -who are in favour of the principle of enlargement has passed 50% in eleven members countries, but the exceptions are Austria, Germany, France and United Kingdom.

Starting since 1997 the support for enlargement for Poland are nearly on the same level 46%-47%, similarly as the level of people voting against Poland on 33%-34%. For example during the same time support for Cyprus increase 6%, for Norway 5%, and for Estonia, Slovakia and Lithuania 4%. Negative opinion about enlargement is ali the time on the same level, changing only 1-2% in different countries.

Tab. 2. Changes of level of support for enlargement of the European Union (%)

Question: For each of the following countries, would you be in favour of or against it becoming part of the European Union?

Countries	In favour					Not in favour				
	Spring 1997	Spring 1998	Spring 1999	Spring 2000	Autum 2001	Spring 1997	Spring 1998	Spring 1999	Spring 2000	Autum 2001
Switzerland	72	.	70	69	75	12	.	13	14	13
Norway	69	.	70	70	74	13	.	12	13	13
Malta	49	.	50	50	51	26	.	26	26	28
Hungary	49	53	46	46	50	28	24	31	31	30
Poland	46	49	43	44	47	33	29	35	34	34
Cyprus	40	46	42	44	46	34	29	33	32	33
Czech Rep.	43	48	40	41	45	33	28	35	35	34
Estonia	36	41	36	36	40	37	32	38	38	38
Slovakia	36	43	35	37	40	38	32	39	38	38
Latvia	36	41	35	36	39	37	32	38	38	38
Lithuania	35	41	35	35	39	37	33	39	38	38
Bulgaria	37	42	35	36	38	37	33	40	39	40
Slovenia	34	.	32	34	37	39	.	42	40	40
Romania	35	.	33	34	36	42	.	43	42	43
Turkey	32	.	29	30	34	45	.	47	47	46

Source: Eurobarometer 47-56.

However more interesting than absolute data is relative index net, which shows difference between voting for enlargement and against enlargement in European Union. Based on this index we can divide all 15 countries for 5 group with different level of support. At the first group are Switzerland and Norway, which have the highest level of support for enlargement, over 60%. The second group consists of Malta and Hungary, who have 23% and 20%, at third group are Cyprus, Poland and Czech Republic with more than 10%. Countries at the next group have support between 1%-2%, and at the last group are countries with negative value, starting from -2% (Bulgaria) to -12% (Turkey).

Tab. 3. Changes of index of net support for enlargement of the European Union (%) Index as difference between favour and not favour

Countries	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	1997-2001
Switzerland	+50	-	+57	+55	+62	+12
Norway	+56	-	+58	+57	+61	+5
Malta	+23	-	+24	+24	+23	0
Hungary	+21	+29	+15	+15	+20	-1
Cyprus	+6	+17	+9	+12	+13	+7
Poland	+13	+20	+8	+10	+13	0
Czech Rep.	+10	+20	+5	+6	+11	+1
Estonia	-1	+9	-2	-2	+2	+3
Slovakia	-2	+11	-4	-1	+2	+4
Latvia	-1	+9	-3	-2	+1	+2
Lithuania	-2	+8	-4	-3	+1	+3
Bulgaria	0	+9	-5	-3	-2	-2
Slovenia	-5	+4	-10	-6	-3	+2
Romania	-7	+2	-10	-8	-7	0
Turkey	-13	-	-18	-17	-12	+1

Source: *Eurobarometer 47-56*.

Since last five years the biggest progress in European opinion make Switzerland, Cyprus and Norway. Over than +2% get Slovakia, Estonia and Lithuania. The public opinion about enlargement rest of that 15 countries do not change and all the time has fluctuated between -2% and +2%.

This situation looks different from point of view countries applying for European Union membership. On average nearly 6 person in 10 (59%) in the Applicant Countries feel that European Union membership would be "a good thing" for their country.

The lowest level of support is Latvia and Estonia with 33% people who think membership is good thing, and the highest level of support characterise Romania with 80% and Bulgaria with 74% people who think

the same. Between this countries are Poland and Cyprus with support for 51%. Over 30% citizen of Malta think that the enlargement is a bad thing, the same think 17% citizens of Latvia, 13%-14% citizens of Hungary and Estonia and 11% citizens of Poland, Lithuania and Slovenia. Only 2%-3% citizens of Romania and Bulgaria deal with this bad opinion about enlargement.

Tab. 4. Support tor EU Membership in Applicant Countries May, 2001 (%)

Country	A good thing	Neither good or bad	A bad thing
Malta	39	25	31
Latvia	33	39	17
Turkey	59	18	14
Estonia	33	38	14
Cyprus	51	31	13
EU 15	48	29	13
Poland	51	27	11
Lithuania	41	35	11
Slovenia	41	42	11
AC 13	59	22	10
Czech Rep.	46	31	9
Hungary	60	23	7
Slovakia	58	28	5
Bulgaria	74	14	3
Romania	80	11	2

Source: Applicant countries Eurobarometer 2001, 2001, p. 5.

At the beginning of 2000 there were about 56% support for the enlargement European Union in Poland, and at October 2001 we have notice decrease of this support to level 54%. One year later, the October 2002 we have only 50% support for enlargement in Poland.

Tab. 5. Opinion about voting during the referendum about enlargement EU (%)

Applying countries	Vote "YES"	Vote "NO"	No answer	No vote
Romania	85	3	6	7
Bulgaria	80	4	9	6
Hungary	70	10	7	3
Turkey	68	20	8	4
Slovakia	66	11	9	15
Cyprus	62	25	11	2
Slovenia	56	22	13	9
Czech	54	18	13	15
Poland	54	26	9	11
Lithuania	50	20	15	15
Latvia	46	32	12	9
Malta	40	36	14	11
Estonia	38	27	14	21

Source: Applicant countries Eurobarometer 2001, 2001, p. 6.

However when we compare this low level of support with the level of voting people who declare they will vote we can find that about 79% people from applying countries would like to vote "yes" for enlargement. Over this level are Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia, all of them over 85% support for enlargement. Less than 70% support for enlargement are Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Malta.

Tab. 6. Voting for membership in applying countries on October 2001

Country	Would vote for	Would vote against
Malta	53	47
Estonia	59	41
Latvia	59	41
Poland	67	33
Lithuania	71	29
Cyprus	72	28
Slovenia	72	28
Czech Rep.	75	25
Turkey	77	23
AC 13	79	21
Slovakia	86	14
Hungary	87	13
Bulgaria	95	5
Romania	93	3

Two of third (65%) of the respondents of voting age in the Applicant Countries declare that they would support their country's membership to the European Union if a referendum were to be held on this issue. Further analyses show that at the time of the survey (October 2001) the majority of eligible respondents in all 13 countries would have voted in favour of joining the European Union (79%). The only country without a large majority in favour of accession is Malta, where only 53% of eligible respondents indicate that they would have voted in favour of European Union membership.

From Polish point of view since last five years change argumentation for enlargement. At the beginning of the process of access (1997), euro-enthusiasts argue that the main question is financial support for developing regions and agriculture. On the other hand euro-pessimists prove that after joining European Union we can lose some part of our independence, culture and identity. After 2000 they change their position. Euro-enthusiasts prove that the main reason to join European Union are ideological, common culture, united Europe, common value, transborder co-operation, and the euro-pessimist argue against enlargement from financial reason. It is supposed that first two or even more years Poland will pay more to common budget that get back from UE.

Last report of European Commission from October 2002 shows that Poland has been nearly ready to join European Union during one - two years. For this moment we have similar level of economy factors with more of the 13 applicant countries. Our DGP is about 23% of European Union one and only 2,5% inflation (2001). We have closed 26 from 29 part of negotiation process. We should discuss only three of them, policy of competitions, agriculture, and financial support. However from our point of view there are very important, especially last two of them. Probably we have not enough time to force through our opinion about level of financial support for our agriculture and developing region. That can make some problems during referendum, because of high level of workers in Polish agriculture. On the other hand probably there is no alternative for Poland, than join European Union.