

EUROBAROMETER 71

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

POLAND

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This report summarises the key findings from the most recent edition of Eurobarometer. Fieldwork for the Polish Eurobarometer was conducted from 12 June to 8 July 2009 on a representative sample of 1,000 citizens aged 15+. Eurobarometer is conducted regularly for the European Commission in order to explore Europeans' opinions on the situation in different countries and in the European Union as a whole.

1. Public opinion in Poland: Context

- Most Poles (76%) are satisfied with their lives.

The majority of Poles (76%) feel satisfied with their lives. Only 4% of the country's inhabitants are extremely pessimistic about their own lives and 17% are fairly dissatisfied. Since the spring of 2007, about three-quarters of Poles have been invariably satisfied with their lives.

As in previous years, the level of satisfaction with one's life has not changed in Poland versus the EU average (77%). Scandinavian countries have the most satisfied citizens: Denmark (98%), Finland (96%) and Sweden (96%), followed by the Netherlands (96%) and Luxembourg (96%).

Nations which are least satisfied with their lives are Bulgarians (40%), Greeks (44%), Hungarians (44%) and Romanians (47%).

- More than a half of Poles (52%) perceive their job situation as good.

Most Poles (52%) are satisfied with their own work status, 9% perceive their work situation as very good and 43% perceive it as fairly good. Meanwhile, nearly one third of Poles (29%) negatively view their chances on the job market: 20% think their chances are fairly bad and 9% think they are very bad.

Poles' satisfaction with their own work situation is no different from the EU average (52%). However, Poland is still behind Scandinavian countries where three-quarters of citizens view their situation on the labour market in a positive light: 75% in both Denmark and Finland, and 74% in Sweden.

- Four out of ten respondents (40%) claim that their household is in a bad financial situation.

Most Poles (57%) perceive their financial situation as good: 6% think it is very good and 51% believe it is fairly good. However, a considerable share of Polish citizens are not satisfied with their household budget: 30% view it as fairly bad and 10% think it is very bad.

The share of households which view their financial situation as good is 8 points lower in Poland than the EU-27 average (65%). Again, northern Europe leads the ranking (Denmark – 89%, Finland – 89%, Sweden – 88%) and so do the Benelux countries (Luxembourg – 89% and the Netherlands – 88%).

- As six months earlier, Poles are more optimistic about the way things are going in the EU than in their own country, and satisfaction in this respect has fallen significantly since last year (from 55% to 39%).

Opinions expressed by Poles about the way things are going in their country are distributed close to two extremes: similar shares of citizens are satisfied (39%), and dissatisfied (38%) with the situation in Poland. Nearly one-fifth of the public (17%) are of the opinion that things are going neither in a good nor in a bad direction.

52% of Poles believe that things in the EU are going in the right direction and this is the lowest percentage recorded in the last three years. The belief that things are going in the wrong direction is shared by 17% of Poles, which is more than in the previous years. The same share of respondents (17%) claims that things in the EU are going neither in the right nor in the wrong direction.

In comparison with the European average (27%), Poles are more likely to believe that things in their country are going in the right direction (39%), and less likely to claim that things are going in the wrong direction (32% versus the European average of 50%). Countries with a much more optimistic view on this aspect include Luxembourg (54%), Sweden (45%), Finland and Denmark

(44% each), whereas the highest numbers of pessimistic views about home country situations were observed in Latvia (78%), Hungary (75%), Lithuania and Greece (73% each).

Poles are the second most positive nation when it comes to the direction of developments in the EU. The percentage of Poles who think things are going in the right direction (52%) is decidedly higher than the EU average (34%). Other countries where citizens are very positive about developments in the EU include: Bulgaria (56%), Romania (47%) and Estonia (51%). Pessimistic views prevail among the French (51%), Greeks (49%) and UK citizens (48%).

- Most Poles believe that the labour market situation and the economic situation in Poland will not change in the next twelve months.

Poles' predictions as to the economic situation in their country within the next twelve months are fairly pessimistic. Nearly one in three respondents (31%) thinks that the next year will be worse than the previous one and two in five (40%) believe that the situation will not change. Only one in five respondents (19%) has an optimistic outlook towards the future and says that the coming months will be better than the previous ones.

Opinions as to the labour market situation in the coming twelve months follow a similar pattern. Also, in this case, the majority of those polled (41%) claim that the situation will not change. The share of pessimists is even higher: 35% of the respondents have a gloomy view of the future of the labour market in Poland and even fewer (16%) expect an improvement.

In comparison with the European average Poland has fewer 'economic optimists' (19% versus 25% for the EU) and also those who are critical about their country's economic future (31% versus 34% for the EU). On the other hand, the share of citizens who believe that things in their country will not change in the coming year is higher than the EU average (40% vs 36% respectively). The most optimistic views about the near future of their countries were expressed by Swedes (48%), Danes (35%) and UK citizens (35%), whereas the greatest pessimists are to be found in Latvia (55%), Hungary (53%) and the Netherlands (52%).

Poland leads the EU-27 with respect to the opinion that the situation on their country's labour market will not change in the coming 12 months. It is closely followed by Greece (39%) and the Czech Republic (37%), with the EU average for this category at 32%. Poles are much less likely to express either positive views (16% vs 20% for the EU) or negative ones (35% vs 44% for the EU). An improvement on the home country's labour market is expected more often in Sweden (33%), Spain (29%), Malta (29%) and the UK (28%). Deterioration in the labour market is predicted in the Netherlands (68%), Slovakia, Hungary and Ireland (56% each) and Latvia (55%).

- Trust in the judicial system, government, parliament and political parties in the country remains low.

Trust in the country's institutions is very low in Poland: more than a half of the respondents (54%) do not trust the judiciary and only slightly over one-third is willing to trust it. The strongest distrust was recorded in the case of political parties (81%) and the parliament, the latter not trusted by three-quarters of Poles. The government is distrusted by as many as 71% of respondents and only one in five Poles has trust in it.

In comparison with the EU average, Poles are among the most distrustful nations when it comes to national public bodies.

- Poles believe that unemployment is the most important issue faced by Poland.

Nearly a half of Poles (45%) mention unemployment as one of the most important issues faced by their country at present. One in three respondents mentions rising prices (33%) and the same percentage sees the health care system as a problem (32%). More than a quarter of respondents (27%) claim that the economic situation is among the major problems faced by Poland at present. Pensions and crime are mentioned as challenges by one in ten respondents (11%).

The Polish hierarchy of problems largely overlaps with the results obtained for the European Union as a whole. The majority of EU citizens, much like Poles, are afraid of unemployment (49%). The economic situation is also often mentioned as a problem (42%), whereas the same problem is mentioned by one in four Poles. Europeans are much less likely to cite inflation (21% vs 33% for Poland). On the one hand, in comparison with Poles, citizens of the EU are more afraid of crime

(16%), but, on the other hand, they are less likely to think that the healthcare system may be a problem (14% for the EU, 32% for Poland).

2. Poland in the European Union

- In comparison with the last two years, support for Poland's EU membership has dropped, but still remains higher than the EU average.

Six out of ten Poles (60%) think, that Poland's EU membership is a good thing. The percentage of respondents, who claim, that the country's EU accession has been a bad thing (7%), has remained low and unchanged since accession. On the other hand, there has been a growing indifference towards the EU among respondents: 29% claim that Poland's membership is neither a good nor a bad thing.

In comparison with the EU average (53%), Poles show more enthusiasm for their country's EU membership, but are still quite far behind those, who are satisfied with their country's membership: citizens of Luxembourg (79%), the Netherlands (72%) or Spain (71%). The greatest shares of opponents to Community membership can be found in the United Kingdom (32%), Hungary (23%) and Latvia (23%).

- Nearly three-quarters of Poles believe that their country has benefited from EU membership.

Most Poles (74%) believe that their country has benefited from its EU membership and only 14% of respondents oppose this view.

As in previous years, in comparison with other Member States, Poland is among the top countries which think they have benefited from their access to the European structures. The percentage of Poles who think that their country has benefited from EU membership (74%) is much higher than the EU average (56%). On average, the percentage of people who have a negative attitude towards being in the EU is more than twice as high as in Poland (31% for the EU and 14% for Poland). Countries which are more positive than Poland about appreciating the benefits resulting from EU membership include Slovakia (80%), Ireland (79%), Estonia (78%) and Denmark (77%). On the other hand, particular criticism of EU membership is observed in Latvia (55%), Hungary (52%) and the United Kingdom (50%).

- One-tenth of Poles believe that the European level of government has the strongest impact on their living conditions.

Nearly a half of Poles (47%) claim that their living conditions are most strongly influenced by the national government whereas one-third (34%) thinks it is the local government. One in ten respondents (11%) cites the European level as having the greatest impact on their living conditions.

In terms of the perceived impact on living conditions Poland does not deviate much from the EU average: the European level is mentioned, on average, by 13% of Europeans (and 11% of Poles), the national level is chosen by 46% (vs 47% of Poles), and the local level by 34% (the same as in Poland).

The greatest impact of the European level of government is mentioned most frequently in Greece (21%), Portugal (20%), the Czech Republic and Slovakia (19% each), and least frequently in Sweden (5%), Latvia (6%) and Bulgaria (6%). The national level is mentioned as most influential most commonly in Malta (70%), Latvia (64%), Lithuania, Luxembourg and the Netherlands (63% each).

Regional authorities are thought to be the most important factor in Finland (45%), Sweden, UK, Italy and Czech Republic (40% each).

- Most Poles believe that local authorities are not sufficiently taken into account when deciding about policies of the European Union.

One-fifth of those polled (22%) think that the regional voice is sufficiently taken into account in the EU whereas more than a half of the respondents (59%) hold the opposite view.

Poles perceive the force of local authorities on the EU level in very much the same light as the rest of EU citizens: 21% of Europeans claim the regional authorities are taken into consideration in the EU but 63% hold the opposite view.

Countries which believe that local authorities have considerable strength at the EU level include Cyprus (45%), Hungary (34%) and Italy (31%) whereas opposing views are held by Greeks (82%), Latvians (78%), Slovenians (77%) and the French (75%).

- Poles feel more strongly that they have an impact on Polish matters than on EU matters. In comparison with last year, there has been a considerable increase in the percentage of people who think their voice is heard in the European Union.

Four out of ten Poles (43%) believe that their voice counts in the European Union and this is the highest score in four years. At the same time, almost a half of the respondents disagree with this opinion (48%).

In comparison with the previous edition of the survey, there has been a 6-point increase in the percentage of Poles who feel their voice counts in their country. At present, a half of those polled (50%) think that their voice counts when it comes to the developments in Poland and just slightly fewer (44%) express the opposite view.

The percentage of Poles who think their voice counts in the European Union is higher than the Community average (43% in Poland vs 38% in the EU). Moreover, Polish citizens are less likely to express the opposite view than Europeans in general (48% in Poland versus 53% in the EU). The strongest sense of having a voice in EU matters is observed in Denmark (65%), Sweden (58%) and the Netherlands (56%). Countries which feel more strongly than Poland that their voice is not heard in the EU include Latvia (78%), Czech Republic, Greece and the UK (72% each).

The percentage of Poles who feel that their voice is heard in their own country is close to the EU average (51%). Poland is far behind countries which have the strongest belief in their impact on the country's affairs i.e. Denmark (93%), Sweden (90%), the Netherlands (80%) and Finland (72%). A particularly high percentage of people feel helpless when it comes to political matters in Latvia (80%), Lithuania (75%), Greece (72%) and the Czech Republic (65%).

- About two-thirds of Poles consistently believe that the voice of Poland is heard in the European Union.

The percentage of Poles who claim their country's voice is heard in the Community has been relatively stable for five years (ranging from 62% to 68%). At present, 64% of respondents believe that Poland has the power to make its voice heard in the EU. The opposite view is held by 27%, i.e. nearly a quarter of Poles.

The percentage of Poles who believe that their country's voice has an impact on the EU is lower than the average for the six founding countries (69%), but, on the other hand, by three points higher than the total EU average (61%). This is still much less than in countries which believe in their strong place in the EU, such as Sweden (83%), France (81%), Denmark (79%) and Germany (78%). On the other hand, helplessness of their own countries is most often reported by Greece (62%), Latvia (61%) and Czech Republic (50%).

- In comparison with last year, there has been a decline in the percentage of Poles who think their country's interests are well taken into account in the EU.

Four out of ten Poles (39%) claim that Poland's interests are well taken into account in the EU. The same share of respondents (39%) expresses the opposite view. Nearly a half of respondents (22%) have no opinion on this matter. In comparison with the previous year, the percentage of those who think Poland's interests are well taken into account in the Community has dropped by five points.

In comparison with the EU average (44%) Poles are less likely to believe that their interests are sufficiently considered in the EU. The percentage of those who believe their country's interests are well taken into account in the EU is highest in Sweden (61%), Denmark (56%), Slovakia (56%) and Germany (55%), and lowest in Latvia (75%), Greece (67%), Finland (64%) and Slovenia (60%).

3. Europeans and the European Union

- More than a half of Poles report a positive image of the European Union.

Most Poles (52%) have a positive image of the European Union whereas one in ten respondents expresses the opposite opinion (10%). A neutral image has been reported by over one-third of Poles (36%).

In comparison with the EU average (45%), Poles have a more positive image of the EU. Fewer Poles are negative in their thinking about the EU (10% vs 16% for the EU). The percentage of those who think that the EU conjures up a neutral image is the same in Poland as in the rest of the European Union (36% in both cases).

- Invariably, in the eyes of Polish citizens the European Union stands, above all, for the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU.

As in previous years, the majority of Poles (now: 57%, in 2008: 63%) feels that the European Union means the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU. The second most important symbol of the Community is its currency (27%). Respondents also mention the importance of the stronger say in the world (24%) and democracy (21%). Nearly one-fifth of the respondents (18%) see peace as an important aspect of the EU and more or less one in ten respondents mentions bureaucracy (14%), economic prosperity (12%), mentioned by 19% of Poles last year, cultural diversity (12%), as well as waste of money (8%) and unemployment (8%). Poles are least likely to associate the EU with a loss of cultural identity (7%), social protection (6%), more crime (5%) and insufficient control at external borders (3%).

Much like Poles, citizens of the European Union associate the EU mostly with the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU (42%). In comparison with Poles, other Europeans are more likely to associate the EU with the euro (33%), as well as peace (25%), democracy (22%) and economic prosperity (16%). Europeans in general are also more likely to mention social protection (10%), cultural diversity (19%), unemployment (13%), bureaucracy (19%) and waste of money (20%). Only one in ten Europeans pays attention to the loss of cultural identity (10%), increased crime (11%) and insufficient control of external borders (12%).

- Poles are more likely than other Europeans to claim they know how the EU works.

The vast majority of Poles (59%) agree they understand how the EU works. And nearly one-third of those polled (31%) admits they are unfamiliar with EU procedures.

Poles are more likely than other Europeans to claim they know how the EU works: this is 15 points higher than the European average (44%) and than the founding countries (43%). Understanding of how the EU works is also similarly high in Cyprus (58%), Estonia (57%) and Slovenia (56%). On the other hand, citizens are more likely to admit their poorer understanding of EU mechanisms in the UK (57%), France and Italy (56% each) and the Czech Republic (55%).

- Trust in the European Union has been declining in Poland for two years.

A half of Poles (52%) claim that they trust the European Union whereas nearly one in three respondents (31%) holds the opposite view. 17% have a problem with specifying their level of trust in the EU.

Poland has seen a considerable decline in trust in the EU in comparison with two years earlier (68% in 2007). At present, the percentage of the respondents who say they trust the European Union is the same as four years ago when Poland was a new member state.

Nevertheless, the level of trust reported by Poles is higher than the EU average (47%). The highest percentages of those who trust the European Union were recorded in Estonia (68%), Romania (65%), Slovakia (65%) and Bulgaria (63%), whereas the most sceptical countries include the United Kingdom (59%), Cyprus (53%), Austria (49%) and France (47%).

- The European Parliament is the best-known European institution for Poles while the European Central Bank is least known.

Nearly nine out of ten Poles (89%) have heard about the European Parliament (EP) and only 10% had never heard of this name. A considerable majority of those polled are also familiar with the

European Commission (84%) whereas 15% have never heard of it. Of the three European institutions mentioned in the survey, Poles are least familiar with the European Central Bank: 62% have previously heard about it but one-third of respondents (35%) are not aware of its existence.

Considering the awareness and lack of awareness of the European Parliament, Poles are not very different from the EU average (89% and 10% respectively). This institution is best known in Sweden, Finland, Slovenia, Luxembourg and Denmark (97% each), and least known in the United Kingdom (18%), Cyprus (18%), Italy (15%) and Spain (12%).

The European Commission has a much higher awareness in Poland than in Europe on average (78%). However, citizens of Finland (95%), Luxembourg (91%) and Slovenia (89%) are more familiar with this body than Poles are. The highest percentages of the respondents who have not heard about the European Commission are found in the United Kingdom (30%), Czech Republic, Spain and Italy (24% each).

The European Central Bank is known, on average, to 75% of Europeans while Poles have a much lower awareness of it. Poland is among the countries where the European Central Bank is least known. The ECB is even less known in the United Kingdom (44%) and Hungary (36%). On the other hand, the largest percentages of citizens who have heard about the ECB are to be found in Finland (96%), Ireland (92%), Luxembourg (91%) and Slovenia (90%).

- Trust in the European Parliament and the European Central Bank has dropped over the last six months whereas the percentage of people who trust the European Union has increased.

A half of Poles trust the European Parliament (EP) (50%) and the European Commission (EC) (49%), whereas a quarter of respondents do not put their trust in those institutions. The European Central Bank (ECB) enjoys much lower trust (38%) and, much as is the case with other European institutions, a quarter of Poles do not trust it (24%).

Poles are much more likely to trust the European Parliament and the European Commission than the average European citizen (48% and 44% respectively). On the other hand, Poles are less likely to trust the European Central Bank (38% in Poland vs 44% in the EU). On average, around one-third of EU citizens do not trust European institutions (36% for the EP, 34% – EC, 33% – ECB).

The countries which are most reluctant to trust European institutions are the United Kingdom (EP – 58%, EC – 49%, ECB – 43%), Cyprus (EP – 46%, EC – 45%, ECB – 40%) and Greece (EP – 44%, EC – 45%, ECB – 40%).

- Two components of the European identity mentioned most frequently by Poles include common culture and democratic values.

In Poland, the following are at the top of the hierarchy of elements that contribute to the European identity: common culture (27%) and democratic values (27%). Further on, the following elements are mentioned: common history (26%), geography (22%) and entrepreneurship (18%). The elements which are least often mentioned as part of European identity include a common religious heritage and high level of social protection (14% each). Only 2% of respondents claim that European identity does not exist.

An average European usually mentions democratic values (41%) as a distinctive feature of Europe whereas common religious heritage is mentioned least often (8%). The non-existence of a European identity is mentioned, on average, by 5% of EU citizens. Also, the EU average is higher than the Polish score for such European identity markers as geography (25%), a high level of social protection (24%) and, most notably, democratic values (41%).

- For most Poles, a sense of being European, the fact of being born in Europe and sharing European cultural traditions are the main factors for being European.

Most Poles believe that the key criteria for being a European include the fact that one feels European (50%), that one was born in Europe (36%) and shares traditions of the Old Continent (26%). One in five respondents thinks that being a European means exercising citizen's rights, such as voting in the European elections (22%), and being raised in a European country (21%). One in eight respondents (13%) believes that it is sufficient to know one European language in

addition to one's own native language to feel fully European. Being a Christian (10%) and having at least one parent who is European (9%) are sufficient criteria for one in ten Poles.

In comparison with the EU average, Poles are more likely to claim that feeling European is an important feature for someone who lives in Europe (41% for the EU as a whole). Poles are also more likely to claim that being Christian is a token of being the citizen of the Old Continent (7% for the EU). The remaining elements are mentioned by Europeans more often than by Polish respondents, yet the order in the hierarchy is very close. Apart from feeling European (41%), the second most important characteristic chosen by EU citizens is the fact of being born in the Old Continent (39%). The third most important criterion mentioned by Community citizens is shared European values (31%).

- Nearly all the respondents from Poland feel Polish and three-quarters consider themselves Europeans.

Nearly all of the respondents, regardless of their socio-demographic group, feel Polish (98%) and part of their own region (95%). Such high awareness of local affinity is not matched with global affinity: three-quarters of respondents consider themselves Europeans (76%), and just under two-thirds consider themselves to be citizens of the world (64%).

Much like in Poland, the inhabitants of the European Union think of themselves mostly in terms of their nationality (94%) and local community (91%). In terms of lack of belonging to their own national community, some countries are above the EU average: Luxembourg (18%), Latvia (14%), Cyprus (10%), United Kingdom (9%) and Belgium (9%). Citizens who do not identify themselves with their region are more likely to be found in the Netherlands (15%), Cyprus (13%), UK (13%), France (12%) and Luxembourg (12%).

4. The European Union and the challenges of globalisation and crisis

- More than a half of Poles are fairly satisfied with the way the European Union works in each of the spheres mentioned.

The activities undertaken by the EU are viewed by more than a half of the respondents as fairly satisfactory (from 53% to 60%, depending on the part of the continent). Poles are most satisfied with activities to promote democracy and peace in the world (22% of opinions are strongly positive), protection of the environment (22%), support for agriculture (21%), equal treatment of women and men (20%), fight against terrorism (20%) and cooperation in the field of research and innovation (19%), as well as food safety (18%). On the other hand, respondents are most likely to be dissatisfied with the fight against unemployment (29% of views are strongly negative), protection of social rights (26%), efforts to ensure economic growth (21%) and energy supply (19%).

In most EU countries, citizens are fairly satisfied with the Community's actions (from 50% to 60%). In comparison with the EU average, Poles are more likely to be strongly satisfied with the activities of the EU bodies. An average EU citizen is least satisfied with the Community's activities in the field of fighting unemployment (38%), ensuring economic growth (27%), protecting social rights (25%) and supporting agriculture (25%). Europeans are most satisfied with activities to promote democracy and peace in the world (19%) and with cooperation in research and innovation (16%).

- One in four Poles believes that fighting unemployment and protection of social rights should be addressed to a lesser extent at the EU level.

The vast majority of Poles would like more decision making at the EU level for matters such as fight against terrorism (85%), actions for democracy and peace in the world (83%), cooperation in research and innovation (81%) as well as the fight against organised crime and ensuring energy supply (81% each).

The views expressed by Poles do not deviate significantly from those expressed by the average European. In the Community as a whole, very much like in Poland, people believe that more decision-making on matters such as the fight against terrorism (81%) and activities for the promotion of peace and democracy (81%) should be done at the European level. Also, on average,

European citizens think that the collaboration in research and innovation and fight against organised crime (78%) should be addressed mostly at the European level.

According to surveyed Europeans, there should be less decision-making at European level in matters such as fighting unemployment (31%), protecting social rights (27%) and supporting agriculture (26%).

- A half of Poles agree that the European Union helps to protect European citizens against negative effects of globalisation.

A half of Poles (51%) agree with the statement that the European Union helps to protect European citizens against the negative effects of globalisation. The opposite view is expressed by one in four respondents (25%).

In comparison with the EU average (47%), Poland has more citizens who agree with this statement and fewer who disagree with it (EU average: 36%). An even higher percentage of respondents agree with this opinion in Denmark (65%), Malta (64%) and Finland (59%). On the other hand, in countries such as Greece (66%), France (51%), Austria, Latvia and Slovenia (47% each), there is a particularly high percentage of persons who agree that the EU protects European citizens against the negative effects of globalisation.

- The largest percentage of Poles are of the opinion that it is the European Union that is in a position to take the most effective measures against the effects of globalisation.

30% of Poles believe that the European Union is the body which can most effectively help in fighting the economic crisis. The strength of the USA and the International Monetary Fund is mentioned by more or less one in eight respondents (respectively: 14% and 12%). Only one in ten respondents would rely on the Polish government and G-20 countries in this respect (10% each).

- Most Poles are of the opinion that EU support for small and medium enterprises and for unemployed and the poorest citizens is necessary to overcome the effects of the economic crisis.

Respondents' answers point to three most important directions of activities on which the European Union should focus to help people overcome the effects of the global economic crisis. Poles most frequently mention the need to support small and medium enterprises (34%), unemployed citizens (25%) and the poorest people (24%).

In terms of the choice of activities to be undertaken in order to help to overcome the crisis, Poland does not deviate much from the EU average. EU citizens, much as Poles, put support for SMEs as the top priority (37%), followed by support for the unemployed (27%). One in five Europeans (20%) mentions support for the poorest people whereas a quarter of EU citizens pay particular attention to investment in education, training and research (26%) as a way to fight the economic crisis.

5. Further European integration

- In comparison with the previous six months, the support for European Monetary Union has gone up by 3 per cent in Poland.

The European Monetary Union and its common currency, the euro, enjoy the support of nearly a half of Poles (47%), whereas four in ten respondents oppose it (41%). In comparison with the autumn survey, support for the EMU has slightly increased (by 3 points).

Overall, the majority of EU respondents tends to favour the common currency (61%), whereas one in three respondents opposes it (33%). Support for the EMU is stronger in Slovakia (89%), Ireland (86%), Luxembourg (86%) and Slovenia (86%). The greatest shares of EMU opponents can be found in the UK (66%), Czech Republic (45%), Denmark and Sweden (44% each).

- Although not as strongly as in previous years, Poles continue to support the further enlargement of the EU and express the most positive attitude towards further enlargement of all the EU member states.

As in autumn 2008, 69% of respondents continue to support further EU enlargement in the coming years and only 17% of Poles express the opposite view.

Poland has the most positive attitude towards enlargement of all the EU member states, its score being 26 points higher than the EU average (43%). Other countries with strong support for enlargement include Romania (67%), Slovakia (66%), Slovenia (63%) and Hungary (61%) whereas the greatest reluctance was observed in Luxembourg and Austria (67% each), Germany (66%) and France (63%).

- The percentages of opponents and supporters of a varied pace of integration have become more similar in Poland.

The idea of building Europe at a faster pace in a selected group of countries has nearly as many Polish supporters (39%) as it has opponents (43%).

The percentage of opponents and supporters in Poland is very close to the European average (39% for, 42% against). This idea is most likely to find support in Estonia (69%), Denmark (53%) and the Netherlands (50%). On the other hand, the highest shares of opponents live in Greece (57%), Finland (55%), France (52%) and the UK (50%).

- Economic and social matters are considered by Poles to be the most important social issues that the EU should address in the coming years.

Poles are of the opinion that, in future, the EU should focus primarily on economic matters (40%) as well as social matters (28%), on energy issues (26%) and on maintaining solidarity with poorer countries (20%). Poles think that it will also be necessary to focus on the internal market (19%), fighting crime (16%), expanding transport and energy infrastructure (14%) and the European foreign policy (14%) and the environment (13%).

The EU citizens as a whole, much like Poles, attach the greatest importance to economic matters (33%) and social issues (26%). The hierarchy of issues which are significant for Poles deviates, however, from the list of topics which are crucial for Europeans as a whole. EU citizens attach much more importance to migration (25% for the EU, only 8% in Poland), fighting crime (23% for the EU and 16% in Poland), matters concerning the environment (21% for the EU and 13% in Poland) and fighting climate change (16% in the EU and 9% in Poland).

Summary

The findings from this edition of Eurobarometer show that Poles are satisfied with their lives but, at the same time, four in ten respondents claim that their household is in a bad financial situation and nearly one-third of Poles negatively view their chances on the labour market.

Eurobarometer reveals that unemployment represents the greatest challenge for Poland now, as seen by its citizens, whereas rising prices and health care problems are seen as less acute than last year.

Support for Poland's membership of the European Union has dropped in comparison with the last two years but it remains higher than the average for other EU countries. More than a half of Poles report positive connotations with the European Union but the level of trust in the EU in Poland has been shrinking for two years now. Poles invariably associate the European Union with the freedom to travel, study and work in any country of the Community.

A half of Poles agree with the statement that the European Union helps to protect European citizens against the negative effects of globalisation and the majority are fairly satisfied with the way the European Union works in various areas, from promoting democracy and peace in the world to fighting unemployment.