

# EUROBAROMETER 72

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## AUTUMN 2009

COUNTRY REPORT

SUMMARY

POLAND

This study was commissioned and co-ordinated by the European Commission's Directorate General for Communication.

This Report has been prepared for the Representation of the European Commission in Poland.

This document does not represent the position of the European Commission. Interpretations and opinions presented in this Report are exclusively those of its authors.



This Report summarises the key findings from the most recent edition of Eurobarometer. Fieldwork for the Polish Eurobarometer was conducted from 30 October to 15 November 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**

### **- Three-quarters of Poles claim they are satisfied with their lives.**

Most Poles (75%) are satisfied with their lives and, within that number, 12% are very satisfied whereas 63% are somewhat satisfied with their lives. A quarter of Poles (24%) feel dissatisfied with their lives. 6% are not at all satisfied and 18% claim they are not very satisfied with the life they lead.

The percentage of Poles who are satisfied with their lives has remained virtually unchanged for two years (ranging between 77% and 75%).

The level of satisfaction with life in Poland (75%) does not differ much from the European average (78%).

Scandinavian countries and the Benelux have the most satisfied citizens: Denmark (98%), Sweden (96%), Finland (95%), Luxembourg (96%) and the Netherlands (95%).

Countries where over a half of citizens are dissatisfied with their lives include Bulgaria (61%), Hungary (58%) and Romania (52%).

### **- Poles are less optimistic about the way things are going in Poland than in the EU.**

In the most recent survey, only slightly over one third of the respondents (36%) turned out to be satisfied with the way things are going in Poland, whereas four out of ten Poles (42%) are pessimistic about it. The percentage of those who believe that things in Poland are going neither in the right nor in the wrong direction has remained unchanged for a few years now (17%).

In comparison with the European average, Poles are more optimistic about the way things are going in their country (EU average: 30% and Poland's average: 36%), yet they are far behind countries such as Luxembourg (57% of satisfied citizens), Sweden (53%) and Finland (46%). Radically negative opinions about the way things are going in their home country were reported by Latvians (79% of dissatisfied citizens), Lithuanians (77%) and Hungarians (75%).

As six months ago, one in two Poles (52%) believes that things in the European Union are going in the right direction. The opposite opinion is expressed by 17% of those surveyed, whereas 18% think that things in the EU are going neither in the right nor in the wrong direction.

In comparison with the EU average (40%), Poles are more optimistic (52%) about things in the European Union. In this respect, Poland is the third most optimistic country in the EU. Strong optimism was also recorded in Bulgaria (65%), Estonia (57%) and Romania (52%).

### **- One in three Poles (34%) thinks that the situation in the Polish economy is good.**

One in three Poles (34%) thinks that the condition of the country's economy is good but only 1% considers it very good. The opposite opinion is expressed by nearly two in three respondents (62%), with a half of Poles (50%) perceiving the situation in the Polish economy as rather bad and only 12% as very bad.

While negative opinions prevail, Poles are nevertheless more optimistic about the state of their national economy than EU citizens as a whole. On average, 23% of Europeans think the economy in their country is in a good situation whereas three-quarters (75%) assess it as bad.

The highest degree of satisfaction with the country's economy is observed in Luxembourg (77%), Denmark (58%) and the Netherlands (54%). Extreme pessimism on the matter was expressed by Latvians and Hungarians (97% of dissatisfied citizens in each), as well as Lithuanians and the Irish (95% each).

### **- Three out of four respondents (77%) view the employment situation in Poland negatively and one-fifth (21%) claims that the situation is very bad.**

As for the current employment situation in Poland, the vast majority of Poles (77%) express negative opinions about it, and one in five (21%) claims that the situation is very bad. A mere 17% express positive opinions about the employment situation in Poland. However, also in this case Poles are more optimistic than the majority of Europeans where 85% are not satisfied with the employment situation in their respective countries and only an eighth of the respondents (13%) are positive about the employment situation in their home countries.

Countries whose citizens are most optimistic about the employment situation include Luxembourg (51%), the Netherlands (52%), Denmark (40%) and Austria (36%).

The most critical opinions about the employment situations were heard from Latvians (98%), the Irish (97%), Hungarians (96%), the Portuguese and Lithuanians (95% each).

**- Seven out of ten Poles (69%) believe that the situation of their country's economy is worse than the EU average. This is the lowest result in more than three years. Most Poles (80%) are also pessimistic about the employment situation in Poland and nearly a half of Polish citizens (45%) agree that children who live in Poland would have a better life if they emigrated to another country.**

The majority of the respondents (69%) think that the economy in Poland is in a less favourable condition than in the EU on average. This is the lowest result in comparison with the previous years. One in five Poles (21%) claims that the situation of the country's economy is better than that of the remaining EU member states. Also, the percentage of mentions for this answer option is now highest in the last three years.

Poland performs worse than the average for the EU. One third of the citizens in Europe (33%) claim that the economic situation in their respective countries is better than the average situation in the EU and only one in six (59%) expresses the opposite opinion.

Countries which think that their economy is in a better situation than the average for the EU include, primarily, Luxembourg (94%), Denmark (88%), the Netherlands and Austria (80% each), as well as Sweden (79%). Quite a different view about their countries' economies is expressed by citizens of Latvia (98% perceive the situation as worse), Hungary (96%), Lithuania and Bulgaria (95% each) and Greece (94%).

The employment situation in Poland is perceived as less favourable than that in the EU by four in five respondents (80%). This percentage has hardly changed for more than three years (ranging from 84% to 78%). Merely one in ten Poles (11%) holds the opposite view, perceiving the employment situation in Poland as better than the EU average.

As in the case of the economic situation, Poland is thought to lag behind the EU average. Approximately a quarter of EU27 citizens (26%) thinks that the employment situation in their home country is better than in Europe as a whole whereas two out of three respondents express the opposite view (66%).

In comparison with other markets, the greatest degree of optimism about their own employment situation was expressed by citizens of Luxembourg (87%), Denmark (84%), the Netherlands (78%) and Austria (76%). In contrast, highly critical voices about the employment situation in their home country versus the Community average came primarily from Latvia (97% of 'less good'), Lithuania and Hungary (96% each) and Greece (94%).

Nearly one in two Poles (45%) thinks that children who live in Poland would have a better life if they emigrated to another country. Over one third of the respondents (37%) disagree with this statement and one in ten (11%) opts for 'it depends'.

Responses given in Europe as a whole show quite a different picture. The majority of EU citizens (53%) disagree that children would have a better life in another country and only one in five tends to agree with this statement (22%) or says that 'it depends' (19%).

**- Most Poles believe that the employment situation in Poland (41%) and the country's economic situation (44%) will not change in the coming twelve months.**

Poles express moderate optimism about the economic situation in their country in the next twelve months. More than a fifth of the respondents (23%) believe the situation will improve and slightly more (27%) express the opposite opinion. By far the highest percentage of the respondents (44%) claim that the situation of Poland's economy will not change.

Respondents' expectations regarding the future of the Polish labour market look similar. Four in ten Poles (41%) believe that nothing will change in this sphere in the next twelve months. On the other hand, one third of those polled (33%) expects the employment situation to get worse. Only 18% of respondents think that the employment situation will become better in the coming year.

The percentage of Poles who have an optimistic outlook on their country's economy is lower than the EU average (Poland: 23%, EU: 28%). However, Poland has also fewer 'economic pessimists' (Poland: 27%, EU: 31%), and a higher share of people who claim that the economy will remain unchanged in the next twelve months (Poland: 44%, EU: 37%).

As six months ago, Poland is ahead of the EU27 when it comes to the belief that nothing will change in the country's employment situation. It is followed by Italy (38%), Latvia (37%), as well as Austria and Portugal (36% each), with the EU average at 34% in this category of responses. On the other hand, Poles are far less likely to perceive the future of the employment market either positively (18% in Poland vs. 22% for the EU) or negatively (33% vs. 40%). Positive expectations concerning the future of the domestic labour market are most commonly expressed by citizens of Sweden (47%), Denmark (36%) and the United Kingdom (33%). On the other hand, a deterioration is expected by respondents from Latvia (63%), Ireland (60%), Hungary (58%) and Cyprus (57%).

#### **- The degree of trust in the judicial system, government, parliament and political parties has dropped since the spring of 2009.**

The judicial system enjoys the highest trust of all public institutions (31%), yet three out of five respondents do not trust it (60%). On the other hand, political parties are distrusted by nearly nine out of ten Poles (88%), and merely one in twenty (7%) claims to have trust in them. The national parliament and the central government do not inspire much trust, either. The former is distrusted by eight in ten Poles (81%), whereas it inspires trust in only a tenth of the respondents. As for the government, three out of four Poles remain sceptical (76%), and 16% of the citizens trust the country's government.

Poles are among EU's most distrustful nations when it comes to the country's public institutions. In terms of confidence in the judiciary, Poles are far behind countries such as Denmark (80%), Finland (74%) or Austria (67%), where the degree of trust is much above the EU average (43%). As regards the domestic legal system, the most distrustful countries are: Slovenia (79%), Lithuania (78%) and Bulgaria (74%).

Domestic political parties enjoy the highest degree of trust in Denmark (50%), Luxembourg (41%) and the Netherlands (37%), which is impressive in comparison with the EU's average standing as low as at 16%. Apart from Poland, political parties generate the greatest distrust in countries such as Latvia (95%), Lithuania (90%) and Slovenia (88%).

National governments are most trusted in Luxembourg (68%), Denmark (57%) and Sweden (55%), with the EU average being 29%. The degree of distrust is higher than the average among the citizens of Latvia (88%), Lithuania (80%), Ireland (79%) as well as Hungary and the United Kingdom (78% each).

The national parliament is most trusted by Danes (74%), Swedes (63%) and residents of Luxembourg (59%), with the European average being 30%. Distrust towards the national parliament is harboured primarily by Latvians (92%), Lithuanians (88%) and Czechs (82%).

#### **- Poles believe that unemployment and the healthcare system are the two most important problems faced by Poland.**

Nearly a half of Poles (48%) think that unemployment is the most serious issue facing Poland. The second position in the hierarchy of problems is taken by the healthcare system: one in three respondents (34%) includes it in the two most important issues. A quarter of the respondents are worried about rising prices (27%) and the economic situation (25%). Subsequent positions are taken by pensions (15%) and crime (10%). Poles were least likely to include the following among the two most important issues: taxation (7%), housing, educational system and energy (4% each) and foreign affairs (3%), immigration (2%), the environment and terrorism (1% each).

The hierarchy of problems which are most important for Europeans as a whole is similar to that observed in Poland. In both cases, unemployment is mentioned most frequently (48% in Poland, 51% in the EU).

## 2. Poland in the European Union

### - Poles are more likely than Europeans in general to believe that their country's EU membership is a good thing.

Three out of five respondents (61%) think that Poland's EU membership is a good thing. The opposite view was expressed by 8%, whereas over a quarter of Poles (28%) are indifferent towards the fact. The percentage of supporters, opponents and those who take a neutral stance on Poland's membership has not changed significantly over the last six months.

In comparison with the Community average (53%), Poles are quite enthusiastic about their country's membership of the European Union. However, many more membership supporters live in Luxembourg and the Netherlands (74% each), Ireland (72%) and Slovakia (68%). The highest percentage of eurosceptics is observed in the UK (30%), Latvia (24%), as well as Hungary and Cyprus (22% each). Neutrality vis-à-vis their countries' EU membership was declared most commonly by Latvians (51%), Czechs (46%), Hungarians (42%) and Austrians (38%).

### - Nearly three-quarters of Poles think that their country has, on balance, benefited from being a member of the European Union.

Nearly three-quarters of the respondents (74%) believe that Poland has benefited from its membership in the EU. The opposite opinion is expressed by 16% of those polled. Opinions on the matter have remained virtually unchanged in Poland for a year (difference of 1 percentage point). In comparison with the results of studies conducted 10 years ago, the percentage of respondents who see some advantages in Poland's membership has gone up by half (from 52% to 74%), and the share of opponents has shrunk by 10 points.

As in previous years, Poland is among the countries with the highest percentages of residents believing that their countries have benefited from EU membership. Poland comes fifth in this ranking, closely following Ireland (81%), Slovakia (80%), Estonia (79%) and Denmark (75%), and positively distinguishing itself from the European average (57%). Dissatisfaction with membership is demonstrated mostly by Latvians (55%), Hungarians (52%), the British (49%), as well as Austrians and Cypriots (44%).

### - A quarter of Poles (27%) claim that the purchasing power of their households has improved over the last five years.

Over the last five years, the situation of a quarter of Polish households (27%) has improved in terms of their purchasing power. More than one third of the respondents (35%) claim that the purchasing power of their households is now worse. The same percentage of respondents (35%) believes that nothing has changed in this respect in their households.

An increase in purchasing power is most frequently reported by citizens of Scandinavian countries: Sweden (52%), Denmark (41%) and Finland (35%). No change in purchasing power during the most recent period has been reported mostly in Luxembourg (48%), Austria (47%), Spain (44%) and the Czech Republic (43%). On the other hand, complaints about decreasing purchasing power were mostly heard from Greece (71%), Hungary (70%), Cyprus and Malta (65% each), as well as Latvia (62%) and Lithuania (60%).

### - Nearly a half of Poles (45%) think that Poland's interests are well taken into account in the European Union whereas four in ten (39%) hold the opposite view.

When asked how their country's interests are taken into account in the EU, Poles answer in very much the same fashion as EU citizens on average. As six months ago, 39% of Poles agree that Poland's interests are well taken into account in the EU. The average for the EU member states (39%) is exactly the same as the score for Poland. Also, the share of the respondents who hold the opposite view is similar in Poland and in the EU as a whole (respectively: 45% and 47%).

The largest share of the respondents agreeing that their country's interests are well taken into account in the EU is found in Luxembourg (65%), Slovakia (63%), Sweden (58%) and Denmark (57%). The highest percentages of those who disagree with this statement for their respective countries are observed in Latvia (77%), Finland (66%) and Greece (65%).



**- Poles believe that the majority of important decisions should be made jointly within the European Union.**

Most Poles think that decisions concerning the educational system (63%), taxation (59%), social welfare and pensions (54% each) should be made by the Polish government. As for healthcare, unemployment, agriculture and fisheries, as well as inflation, respondents' opinions were split nearly in half (a difference of a few points in favour of 'jointly within the EU'). As for decisions in other spheres of life, most Poles believe that they should be adopted jointly within the EU. Those include fighting terrorism (83% of 'jointly within the EU'), scientific and technological research (74%), immigration (66%), fighting crime (65%), energy (65%), protecting the environment (64%), support for regions facing economic difficulties (63%), transports (63%), defence and foreign affairs (60%), the economy (56%), consumer protection (55%), as well as competition (54%).

On average, the EU citizens in general, like the Poles, think that national governments should be the ones to decide about pensions (69% – a difference of +15 points versus Poland), taxation (65% – a difference of + six points), social welfare (64% – a difference of + ten points), healthcare (62% – a difference of + eleven points), and the educational system (60% – a difference of - three points).

**- A half of Poles (51%) disagree that Poland would be better protected in the face of the current economic and financial crisis, if it had adopted the euro.**

Nearly a third of Poles (31%) think that the introduction of the euro could have protected our country better against the consequences of the crisis. Every second respondent disagrees with this statement (51%), and one in five (18%) has no firm opinion on the matter.

In comparison with the average results for those EU member states which are not part of the euro zone, Poles are equally sceptical as to the effectiveness of the single currency (the mean score for the non-members of the euro zone is 51%, the same as in Poland).

Among the non-members of the euro zone, the aforementioned statement is most likely to find supporters in Hungary (61%), Romania (50%) and Latvia (44%) whereas disagreement prevails in Denmark and Sweden (64% each), the UK (61%) and the Czech Republic (57%).

### **3. Europeans and the European Union**

**- For four years now, more than a half of Poles have invariably reported a positive image of the European Union.**

Every second respondent (53%) says that the European Union conjures up a very positive image for himself/herself, whereas one in ten (9%) reports a negative sentiment towards the EU. The image of the European Union remains neutral for more than one third of Poles (35%).

Poles report a positive image of the EU more often than EU citizens as a whole (48%). Also, the percentage of citizens with a negative attitude towards the EU is lower in Poland (9% vs. 15% in the EU). The share of those who have neutral feelings towards the Community is the same in Poland as in the EU member states as a whole (35%).

The most positive attitudes towards the Community have been observed in Luxembourg (66%), Bulgaria and Romania (63% each), as well as Ireland and Italy (58% each). A neutral stance towards the EU is most commonly found in Latvia (55%), Estonia (48%), Lithuania and Finland (45% each). On the other hand, countries with negative attitudes towards the EU include: the UK (32%), the Czech Republic, Hungary and Sweden (20% each), as well as Finland and France (19% each).

**- As one year ago, Poles think that the European Union stands for the freedom to travel, work and study anywhere in the EU.**

For more than a half of Poles (currently: 54%, in autumn of 2008: 56%) the European Union means the freedom to travel, work and study anywhere in the EU. The second most important meaning of the Community is its single currency, the euro (27%). Respondents also cited a stronger say in the world (26%), as well as peace and democracy (21% each). Poles also link the European Union

with bureaucracy (18%), economic prosperity (16%), as well as cultural diversity (14%). One in eleven respondents associates the European Union with a waste of money, the same percentage mention unemployment (9% in each case). The elements, which were least strongly linked with the European Union by Polish respondents, include: social protection (7%), loss of one's cultural identity (6%), more crime (4%) and not enough control at external borders (3%).

Europeans, like Poles, most commonly associate the EU with the freedom to travel, work and study anywhere in the EU (46%). One in four European citizens (25%) appreciates the stronger say in the world for member states. More often than Poles, EU citizens associate the European Union with the euro (37%). Other important aspects for Europeans include peace (28%), democracy (26%) and economic prosperity (18%). On average, EU citizens are more likely than Poles to associate the Community with cultural diversity (22%), a waste of money (21%), bureaucracy (20%), unemployment, more crime and not enough control at the external borders (14% each), as well as social protection and loss of cultural identity (11% in each case).

**- The percentage of Poles who claim to know how the European Union works has hardly changed for the last four years.**

Most Poles (58%) think that they understand how the European Union works. One third of respondents hold the opposite view (32%). During the past four years, the percentage of people who say they understand how the EU works has hardly changed (a slight decline to 53% was recorded in autumn of 2008, whereas the respective percentages in the remaining measurements ranged from 57% to 59%).

More often than average Europeans (44%), Poles claim to understand how the EU works but the highest percentages of people with this kind of knowledge are to be found in Luxembourg (63%), Cyprus (62%) and Slovenia (60%). Lack of understanding is reported mostly in the UK (60%), France and Malta (58% each), the Czech Republic (55%), as well as in Denmark and Spain (54% each).

**- The level of trust in the European Union has gone back to the figure recorded five years ago when Poland was a new member state.**

As six months ago, a half of Poles (52%) claim that they trust the European Union. Three in ten respondents, however (29%), do not trust it. One in five of those polled (19%) has no opinion on the matter. For the last two years, since the spring of 2007, there has been a decline in the percentage of those who have trust in the European Union yet this figure has stabilised at 52% during the past six years.

The level of trust in the EU in Poland is four points higher than the average trust in the EU among the citizens of the member states (48%). The highest share of those who trust the EU can be found in Slovakia (71%), Bulgaria and Estonia (69% each), Romania (67%), Portugal and Luxembourg (62% each). On the other hand, low trust in the EU was most commonly reported in the UK (62%), France (48%), Sweden (46%), as well as Austria and Slovenia (45% each).

**- For the last five years, Poles have invariably declared the highest awareness of the European Parliament and the lowest awareness of the European Central Bank.**

Most Poles (89%) have heard about the European Parliament (EP), and only one in ten (10%) has never heard of this institution. A large proportion of the respondents (84%) are also aware of the European Commission (EC), and only 15% have never heard of it. Seven out of ten Poles (71%) are aware of the Council of the European Union (CoEU), but more than a quarter (28%) are not aware of it. Out all of the European institutions, the European Central Bank (ECB) enjoys the lowest awareness among Poles with 63% having heard of it and 35% not being aware of it.

As six months ago, Poles do not differ much from the EU average in terms of awareness and lack of awareness of the European Parliament (respectively: 89% and 10%). The EP is best known to Danes, Swedes, Finns and the Irish (97% in each case), and least known to residents of the UK (18%), Spain (13%) and Italy (12%).

Awareness of the European Commission is more common in Poland than in the EU on average (79%). While relatively many Poles have heard of the EC, other member states have a higher awareness of this institution: Finland (97%), Luxembourg (92%), Slovenia (91%) and Belgium



(90%). On the other hand, lack of awareness of this institution is declared most commonly in the UK (29%), Italy (22%), Germany and Spain (21% each).

The Council of the European Union is much better known in Poland than in the EU as a whole (66%). However, the CoEU enjoys a higher awareness among the citizens of Cyprus and Slovenia (88% each) and Finland (83%). On the other hand, the lowest levels of awareness were recorded in the UK (53%), Sweden and Denmark (42% each) and Germany (33%).

The European Central Bank has a poorer awareness in Poland (63%) than in the EU as a whole (76%). Poles (35%) have one of the highest non-awareness scores for the ECB in Europe, following the United Kingdom (44%) but ahead of Hungary (30%) and Estonia (24%). Countries, which have the highest awareness of the ECB, include Finland (96%), Ireland (92%) and Slovenia (91%).

**- For the last two years the degree of trust in the European Central Bank and the Council of the European Union has been declining whereas the trust in the European Parliament and the European Commission has oscillated around 50% during the last year.**

More or less a half of Poles tend to trust the European Parliament (51%) and the European Commission (48%). One third of the respondents (33%) tend to trust the European Central Bank and two in five respondents put their trust in the Council of the European Union (40%); at the same time, one in four respondents tends not to trust the aforementioned institutions (respectively: 25% for the EP, 24% for the EC, 24% for the CoEU and 25% for the ECB).

It is important to note that each institution has a fairly high percentage of 'DK' responses with people not being able to say whether they tend to trust or distrust it (respectively: 24% for the EP, 28% for the EC, 36% for the CoEU and 42% for the ECB).

Poles are more likely to trust the European Parliament and the European Commission than the average for the EU population (50% and 46% respectively). On the other hand, the Council of the European Union and the European Central Bank are less likely to be trusted in Poland than in the EU as a whole (respectively: 41% and 44%). As six months ago, around a third of EU citizens tend not to trust European institutions (33% for the EP, 32% for the EC, 31% for the CoEU and 33% for the ECB).

**- Opinions about democracy in Poland are distributed at two extremes: a half of Poles (50%) are not satisfied with the way democracy works in their country and nearly the same percentage holds the opposite view (44%).**

Every second Pole is dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Poland (50%) but nearly the same number of respondents (44%) expresses the opposite view. In contrast, Poles are much more positive about the way democracy works in the European Union: three out of five are satisfied with it (60%), and one in five (21%) is not satisfied.

On average, Europeans are more satisfied than Poles with democracy in their respective countries (53%). Among EU countries, the highest satisfaction levels with democracy were recorded in Denmark (91%), Luxembourg (90%), Sweden (81%) and Austria (76%). On the other hand, the greatest shares of respondents who complain about the way democracy works in their countries can be found in Lithuania (79%), Romania (79%), Bulgaria (77%), Latvia and Hungary (76% each).

**- Both Poles and Europeans as a whole chose the same top three values: human rights, respect for human life and peace.**

When asked to select three most important values, Poles focused on human rights (45%), respect for human life (42%) and peace (38%). On average, Europeans tended to choose the same values as the most important ones, as follows: respect for human life (44%), peace (42%) and human rights (40%).

As for values which best represent the European Union, Poles did not differ from the EU average. The values which best represent the EU are: democracy (Poland: 35%, EU: 39%), human rights (Poland: 30%, EU: 37%) and peace (Poland: 29%, EU: 36%).

#### 4. European Union versus the financial and economic crisis

##### **- Poles are more likely than Europeans to believe that the impact of the crisis on jobs has already reached its peak.**

Nearly a half of Poles (44%) are of the opinion that the impact of the crisis on jobs has already reached its peak and only slightly fewer (42%) claim that the worst is still to come. On average, EU respondents in general are more sceptical about the impact of the crisis on the job market; on average, more than a half of EU citizens (54%) think a new wave of the crisis will hit whereas slightly over a third (38%) believe that the worst is already over.

The largest percentages of those who think that the impact of the crisis on the job market has already reached its peak can be found in Sweden (71%), Denmark (53%) and the Netherlands (51%). On the other hand, the highest percentages of citizens who think that the worst is yet to come were recorded in Lithuania (77%), Cyprus (76%), Latvia (74%), Romania (66%) and Ireland (65%).

##### **- An increasing number of Poles believe that the European Union is best able to take effective action against the effects of the crisis.**

One in three respondents (34%) chooses the European Union as the body which would be best able to tackle the effects of the crisis. Lower down in the ranking, Poles would rely on their national government (13%). One in ten respondents believes that the USA and the International Monetary Fund could be effective in fighting the impact of the crisis (9% each). A mere 7% of the respondents claim that the G20 is the body which could tackle the results of the crisis most effectively.

During the last six months, Poles have become more trusting in the powers of the EU (an increase of 4 points) and the national government (up by 3 points) to take effective action to mitigate the effects of the financial and economic crisis. The most dramatic decline was observed in the percentages of the respondents who believe in the effectiveness of the USA (down by 5 points).

Europeans as a whole tend to believe that the EU itself is best placed to counteract the impact of the crisis (22%), and, further on, they mention national governments (19%) and G20 (18%). Respondents are least likely to point to the United States of America (12%) and the International Monetary Fund (11%) in this context.

##### **- Nearly every second Polish citizen (46%) thinks that globalisation increases social inequalities and exactly a half of those surveyed (50%) claim that the EU helps to protect EU citizens against the negative effects of globalisation.**

Nearly a half of the respondents (46%) think that globalisation means greater social inequalities while nearly three out of ten respondents disagree with this statement (28%). On the other hand, Europeans in general are much more likely (60%) than Poles to claim that globalisation increases social inequalities.

As six months ago (a change by 1 point), every second Pole (50%) thinks that the EU is the body which protects Europeans against the negative impacts of globalisation. The opposite view is expressed by a quarter of those polled (24%). In this respect, Poles are more enthusiastic about the European Union than Europeans as a whole (46%) who are less likely than Poles to perceive the EU as effective in fighting with the rapid spread of the crisis due to globalisation.

##### **- Two-thirds of Poles (67%) think that the EU has sufficient power and tools to defend its economic interests in the global economy.**

The majority of Polish respondents (67%) believe that the European Union has sufficient power and tools to defend its economic interests. The opposite view is held by nearly one in eight respondents (15%). In comparison with Europeans in general (61%), Poles are more likely to believe in the powers of the EU, whereas a quarter of EU27 respondents (25%) think that the Community has not got sufficient power to defend its interests in the global economy.

**- One in three Poles (32%) claims that the euro has mitigated the negative effects of the crisis.**

The majority of the respondents in Poland and in the EU as a whole (45% in each case) agree that the single European currency has not mitigated the effects of the crisis. The positive impact of the euro is acknowledged by one in three Poles (32%) and four out of ten Europeans (41%).

Slovaks (68%), Finns (60%) and Greeks (58%) are most strongly convinced that the euro has played a positive role in alleviating the negative impact of the economic crisis. The opposite view is most commonly recorded in the Czech Republic (56%), Denmark and Sweden (55% each) and in the United Kingdom (53%).

**- As six months ago, Poles claim that the European Union should prioritise support for small and medium enterprises, for the poorest and the unemployed.**

As in the previous edition of the survey, answers provided by the respondents indicate top three directions which the European Union should prioritise to help people overcome the effects of the financial and economic crisis. Respondents tend to opt for support for SMEs (33%), the poorest (30%, up by 6 points since the spring of 2009) and the unemployed (27%). The next important area is support for pensioners (17%), guaranteed provision of healthcare services (16%), investments in education (14%), as well as support for the industry and investments in infrastructures (11% each) plus investments in energy and the environment (10%).

On average, EU respondents, very much like Polish respondents, put their emphasis on supporting small and medium enterprises (37%). However, Europeans assign second position to investments in education, training and research (28%), whereas such actions are considered a priority only by one in eight Poles (14%).

**- Poles believe that further co-ordination of the economic and financial policy at the EU level would be the most effective tool in combating the current crisis.**

Most Poles (over 60%) believe that all of the ways to fight the current economic crisis would be effective. The largest number of the respondents (69%) choose further co-ordination of economic and financial policy among EU member states as a way to combat the crisis. Likewise, Europeans as a whole have no firm opinions about the ways to overcome the crisis. They believe that all of the methods listed in the survey would be similarly effective, with a somewhat greater emphasis on co-ordination of economic policy between the member states (73%).

**- In the opinion of Polish respondents, priority steps which are essential for boosting growth in a sustainable way include: encouraging people to create their own enterprises, rationalising public services and supporting agriculture.**

In order to boost growth in a sustainable way, it is essential to encourage people to create their own enterprises and to improve public services (31% for each of the two), as well as to support agriculture (29%). Poles believe that improved access to high-speed Internet, facilitated integration of legal immigrants and controlled migratory flows to respond to the needs of the European economy are least important to achieve that aim (5% each).

On the other hand, an average European points out the importance of the following factors for sustainable stimulation of growth: stimulating research and innovation in the European industry (EU: 31%; Poland: 17%), supporting environmentally friendly production of goods and services (EU: 30%, Poland: 18%), supporting agriculture (27%) and encouraging people to create their own enterprises (25%).

## **5. Further European integration**

**- Poles are among the strongest opponents of the European Monetary Union among all Europeans.**

The European Monetary Union and a single European currency, the euro, enjoy the support of nearly a half of the citizens (46%), which was also the case six months ago. However, the group of opponents is not much smaller (42%), which puts Poland on the third position on the list of the EU

member states opposing the idea of a single currency, behind the UK (65%), Sweden and Denmark (44% each).

The majority of EU27 respondents support the idea of a single currency (60%), and only one in three respondents (33%) speaks against it (a similar score was recorded six months ago). The European Monetary Union enjoys the strongest support in Slovakia (88%), Ireland and Slovenia (86% each), the Netherlands and Finland (81% each) and Luxembourg (80%).

**- The majority of Poles are in favour of further enlargement and are more positive about the process than any other EU nation.**

Seven out of ten Polish respondents (70%) support the further enlargement of the European Union by incorporating other countries in the coming years. Only one in six respondents is against enlargement (16%). In comparison with last year, the percentage supporters of enlargement has hardly changed and Poland continues to be more positive about enlargement than any other EU member states.

**- The percentages of Polish supporters and opponents of a differentiated pace of European integration are getting increasingly comparable.**

As six months ago, the idea of building Europe faster for some countries has almost the same percentage of supporters (39%) and opponents (43%) in Poland. Responses to this question given by Poles are close to those given by Europeans in general: on average, 40% of the respondents in the EU support the idea and 43% are against it.

Those who support the varied pace of integration can be found in Estonia (68%), the Netherlands (54%), Hungary and Slovakia (53% each) and Denmark (51%). Opponents are more likely to be found in Finland (55%), France (54%), the United Kingdom (51%) and Greece (49%).

**- Poles believe that economic affairs and social issues remain among the most important issues to be tackled by the European Union in the coming years.**

Polish respondents believe that European institutions should emphasise economic affairs (39%) and social issues (28%) in the coming years. Other areas which should be considered by the EU include: solidarity with poorer regions (23%), energy issues and fight against crime (20% each). Poles were least likely to choose areas such as cultural policy (4%), immigration issues (5%), scientific research, and education policy and defence policy (9% each).

European citizens, much like Poles, put greatest emphasis on economic affairs (33%) and social issues (26%). Similar priorities were mentioned six months ago. According to EU27 respondents, the list of most important areas to be emphasised by the European institutions should also include immigration issues (24% in the EU, only 5% in Poland), the fight against crime (24%), environmental issues (21% in the EU and 10% in Poland) and energy issues (19%).

**- Economic recovery should become a priority for the European Union for the years to come. This opinion is shared by Poles and Europeans as a whole.**

According to the Poles surveyed, two priority areas to be prioritised by the European Union in the coming years concern the economy: economic recovery (60%) and boosting growth in a sustainable way (43%). Three out of ten respondents (30%) think that it is essential to help to create stability in the world. One in four Poles attaches importance to the fight against climate change (25%), and one in five would like to see progress in the area of citizens' rights (21%).

**- Poles believe that in order to advance on the rights of citizens, it is important to facilitate the mobility of young people within the European Union and to enhance dialogue between EU citizens and EU institutions.**

Polish respondents believe that, in order to advance on the rights of citizens, it is essential to facilitate the mobility of young people within the European Union (34%) and to enhance dialogue between the EU citizens and EU institutions (31%). Other issues seem to have lesser importance for achieving this aim, e.g. building the Community's capacity to prevent and to react to natural disasters (27%), responding to the challenges created by the ageing of the population (24%) and reinforcing the protection of the EU's borders (13%).

For an average European, enhancing the dialogue between the EU citizens and its institutions should be a priority (EU: 37%, a 6-point difference versus Poland) in efforts to advance on rights of citizens. Less important spheres include: facilitating the mobility of young people within the EU (34%), responding to the challenges created by the ageing of the population (EU: 31%, a 7-point difference versus Poland), developing the EU's capacity to prevent and to react to natural disasters (26%) and reinforcing the EU's borders (EU: 25%, a 12-point difference in comparison with Poland).

**- Polish respondents believe that in order to help create stability in the world, promotion of the development of poor countries and promotion and protection of human rights are essential.**

Poles are of the opinion that stability in the world cannot be achieved without support for poor countries (34%) and without promotion and protection of human rights (33%). Other important efforts include the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (27%), participation in conflict resolution (26%), developments of the EU's relations with countries such as Russia and Ukraine (20%), as well as with the Mediterranean countries (6%).

The resulting hierarchy of importance for Europeans as a whole is different than that presented by Poles. Europeans attach the greatest importance to the promotion and protection of human rights (40%), participation in conflict resolution (36%), as well as support for poor countries and work against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (33% each). On the other hand, Europeans attach least importance to development of relations with Eastern countries (14%) and Mediterranean countries (8%).

**- Three quarters of Poles (74%) are optimistic about the future of the European Union.**

The majority of those polled (74%) are positive about the future of the European Union while one in six respondents holds a pessimistic view (16%). During the last two years, the level of optimism about the future of the EU has fluctuated only slightly among Poles (from 73% to 82%) and has remained high throughout that period.

The highest shares of euro-optimists can be found in Denmark and the Netherlands (79% in each country), Luxembourg (78%), Estonia (76%), Spain and Slovakia (75% each). On the other hand, a sceptical view of the future is strong in Latvia (45%), Hungary (42%), the UK (40%) and France (36%).

## **Summary**

The findings from this edition of the Eurobarometer survey convey a picture of Poles who are satisfied with their lives, even though one in seven Polish citizens thinks that the country's economic situation is worse than that of the EU and that the employment situation in Poland (41%), as well as the country's economic situation (44%), are unlikely to change in the coming twelve months. Moreover, unemployment continues to be the major problem faced by Poland, as seen by its citizens.

For four years now, over a half of Poles have invariably reported a positive image of the European Union. In most cases, Poles see the EU as synonymous with the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU. The survey has also shown that Poles (60%) are more likely than Europeans in general (54%) to be satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU. When asked about the three most important values, Poles and Europeans as a whole choose human rights, respect for human life and peace.

In comparison with Europeans as a whole, Poles are more likely to believe that the impact of the crisis on jobs has already reached its peak. Moreover, an increasing percentage of Poles believe that the European Union is best placed to take effective action against the impact of the crisis and it will need to prioritise support for SMEs, the unemployed and the poor in that process.

Polish respondents are of the opinion that a stronger co-ordination of economic and financial policies among all EU member states would be the best measure in tackling the crisis. However,



the majority of respondents, both in Poland and in Europe as a whole (45% in each case), claim that a single European currency would not have mitigated the negative effects of the crisis.

The Eurobarometer has shown that most Poles support the further enlargement of the European Union and are more positive about this idea than any other EU country.

As six months ago, economic affairs and social issues are considered by Poles to be the key foci for the European Union in the coming years, and economic recovery should become a priority in the near future.