



**AFTER THE ELECTION, NEARING THE ENDGAME:
THE POLISH EURO-DEBATE IN THE RUN UP TO
THE 2003 EU ACCESSION REFERENDUM**

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Abstract

Recent years have seen a significant fall in support for Polish EU membership and the emergence of a sizeable bloc of anti-EU public opinion. However, it would be wrong to interpret the September 2001 parliamentary election as representing a Eurosceptic backlash. Moreover, the new government has adopted a more flexible approach to the accession negotiations. This produced a mixed public reaction and the fact that the former communists have been forced into a coalition with an agrarian party will constrain the government's room for manoeuvre during the negotiating endgame. Nonetheless, overall levels of support for Polish EU membership appear to have consolidated at a relatively high level and it is extremely likely that most Poles will vote Yes in the 2003 accession referendum. The only real threat to a Yes vote appears to be if the accession referendum is turned into a plebiscite on the socio-economic transition as a whole. However, the greater concern for the pro-EU camp is that the referendum fails to achieve the turnout required by the Polish Constitution for it to be valid.

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The September 2001 Polish parliamentary election received considerable comment both domestically and internationally because of its perceived impact on the EU accession negotiations. On the one hand, the election led to the formation of a new government committed to adopting a more flexible negotiating strategy in order to accelerate the EU accession process. On the other hand, it also saw parties and groupings that had expressed hostility or even outright opposition to Polish EU membership win a significant share of the vote. At the time of writing (seven months after the election) Poland's EU accession negotiations are entering their final, decisive stage. In autumn 2002 they are scheduled to enter their 'endgame' when the most difficult and controversial issues (regional aid, agriculture and the budget) are due to be discussed. These negotiations must be completed successfully before the end of the year in order for Poland to be admitted in the next enlargement wave scheduled for 2004. In autumn 2003, therefore, Poles will have to vote in an EU accession referendum.

This paper examines the state of Polish public opinion and the Polish euro-debate more generally at this critical juncture for Polish-EU relations. It begins by examining and accounting for changing patterns of support for Polish EU membership over the last few years. Section two moves on to consider the significance of the September 2001 parliamentary election and examines critically the idea that it represented some kind of Eurosceptic backlash. Section three examines the impact of both the new government's negotiating strategy and the presence, for the first time, of a sizeable anti-EU bloc of parliamentary deputies on the Polish euro-debate. The final section considers how public attitudes towards EU membership are likely to evolve over the coming period in the run up to the referendum.

The paper argues that it would be wrong to interpret the election of parties and groupings critical of and even hostile to EU membership to the Polish parliament as representing some kind of Eurosceptic backlash. However, the new ex-communist led government's new, more flexible negotiating strategy also produced both a hostile political and mixed public reaction, while the anti-EU parties have, to some extent, been able to polarise the terms of the Polish euro-debate. Moreover, the fact that the former communists and their allies fell short of winning an overall parliamentary majority and have been forced to form a government with an agrarian party critical of the EU has constrained their room for manoeuvre somewhat. It will continue to do so during the negotiating endgame on issues such as agricultural subsidies where the EU is proposing to phase in payments to Polish farmers over a ten year period.

Nevertheless, the pro-EU camp has fairly solid grounds for remaining cautiously optimistic that it will win the accession referendum. The Polish public appears to have been unmoved by recent controversies and overall levels of support for Polish EU membership remain relatively high. Poles also have a fairly realistic attitude towards the costs and benefits that are likely to flow from EU membership and pro-EU voters are more likely to turn out than anti-EU ones. If the current government, pro-EU

opposition and Catholic Church hierarchy form a relatively united front on this issue and present the accession referendum primarily in historical terms as representing a major civilisation and geo-political choice, then it is highly likely that they will win the accession vote. The anti-EU camp's best hope is to frame the referendum debate in terms of a plebiscite on the socio-economic transition and portray EU membership as something that will only benefit the minority of transition winners. Nevertheless, even if the pro-EU camp secures a convincing Yes vote, there remains the (probably even greater) danger that the referendum will fail to achieve the 50% turnout required for it to be valid under the Polish Constitution.

Decline and stabilisation: changing patterns of support for Polish EU membership

Until a couple of years ago Polish EU membership was the subject of an overwhelming political elite consensus and enjoyed extremely high levels of public support. However, in the late 1990s, Poland saw a significant fall in support for EU membership.¹ As **Table 1** shows, the number of Poles supporting EU membership declined steadily from 77% in June 1994 (the year that Poland formally submitted its application) and a peak of 80% in May 1995 to only 55% in March 2002.² At the same time, a significant segment of anti-EU opinion began to emerge with the number of opponents increasing from only 6% in 1994 to 29% in 2002. However, it is striking that from mid-1999 onwards public support began to stabilise at around 55-60% in favour while the number of opponents has fluctuated between 22-30%. Precise figures vary between different polling organisations but the overall trend in terms of support for EU membership has clearly been one of steady decline and then subsequent stabilisation.

¹ For a full analysis of this see: A. Szczerbiak, 'Spadek i stabilizacja. Zmieniające się wzorce poparcia dla członkostwa Polski w Unii Europejskiej,' in E. Popławska, ed. *Konstytucja dla rozszerzającej się Europy*. Warsaw: Instytut Spraw Publicznych. 2000; and A. Szczerbiak, 'Polish Public Opinion: Explaining Declining Support for EU membership,' *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol 39 No 1. March 2001. pp107-124. For other interesting accounts of how EU membership has impacted upon Polish domestic politics see: G. Blazycyca and M. Kolkiewicz, 'Poland and the EU: Internal Disputes, Domestic Politics and Accession,' *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*. Vol 15 No 4. December 1999. pp131-143; L. Kolarska-Bobińska, ed. *Polska Eurodebata*. Warsaw: ISP. 1999; and F. Millard, 'Polish domestic politics and accession to the European Union,' in K. Henderson, ed. *Back to Europe: Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union*. London: UCL Press. 1999. pp203-219.

² The analysis in this paper rests heavily on data published by the two leading Polish polling organisations, the Centre for Research on Public Opinion (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej: CBOS) and the Institute for Research on Public Opinion (Ośrodek Badania Opinii Publicznej: OBOP), and the Institute of Public Affairs (Instytut Spraw Publicznych: ISP) research institute. All the usual limitations of relying on such data are, of course, applicable. These include the margin of error arising from (in some cases) relatively small samples and the inability to subject the data to more rigorous statistical analysis, together with the fact that information is not always available in the precise form required.

Table 1: Polish support for EU membership, 1994-2002

	June 94	May 95	May 96	March 97	April 97	Aug 97	May 98	Aug 98	Dec 98	May 99	Nov 99	Feb 00	May 00	Sept 00	Mar 01	May 01	June 01	July 01	Oct 01	Dec 01	Jan 02	Feb 02	Mar 02
Yes	77	72	80	72	72	72	66	63	64	55	59	55	59	55	59	55	54	53	56	60	57	54	55
No	6	9	7	12	11	12	19	19	19	26	26	26	25	26	25	28	29	25	24	22	22	25	29
Don't know	17	19	13	16	18	15	15	18	17	19	15	19	16	19	16	17	17	22	20	18	21	21	16

Source: CBOS. *Poparcie dla wejścia Polski do Unii Europejskiej i opinie o konwencji Europejskim*. Warsaw: CBOS. March 2002.

Perhaps even more significantly, beneath the surface of what remained relatively high levels of public support there were a number of potentially significant indicators suggesting that the prospect of EU membership provoked considerable anxieties even among the pro-EU majority. In particular, the decline in overall support was also reflected in increasing uncertainty about whether or not (and by how much) Poles would actually benefit from EU membership compared with current member states. As **Table 2** shows, having fallen from 41% in July 1993 to only 19% in June 1996, the number of Poles who believed that existing EU member states would derive the greatest benefit from Polish accession increased steadily to 59% in February 2002. At the same time 19% of Poles believed that accession would be equally beneficial to both Poland and the EU while only 7% cited their country as the main beneficiary.

Table 2: Benefits of European integration, 1993-2000

Who benefits most from Polish-EU relations?	July 93	March 94	May 95	May 96	Aug 97	Aug 98	May 99	Nov 99	May 00	Sept 00	Mar 01	Dec 01	Feb 02
EU countries	41	38	31	19	28	39	39	47	44	50	54	51	59
Poland	5	8	11	11	11	7	8	8	8	6	6	6	5
Both equally	27	26	33	46	35	30	30	27	29	26	25	25	19
Don't know	27	27	26	24	27	24	23	18	19	18	15	18	17

Source: CBOS. *Stosunek do integracji Polski z Unią Europejską po ogłoszeniu nowego stanowiska negocjacyjnego*. Warsaw: CBOS. January 2002; and CBOS. *Opinie o integracji Polski z Unią Europejską*. Warsaw: CBOS. March 2002.

Similarly, while most Poles continued to think that EU accession would bring their country more benefits than losses they were more uncertain when it came to whether they would benefit as individuals. For example, a March 2001 CBOS survey found that 56% of respondents said that EU membership would benefit Poland and only 16% said it would be disadvantageous (10% said it would make no difference and 18% did not know). On the other hand, only 32% felt that EU membership would benefit them *personally* while 50% said it would make no difference and 11% did not know (8% said that it would be disadvantageous).³ Similarly, a June 2001 OBOP/Polityka survey found that 31% of respondents felt that EU membership would bring Poland more gains than losses while 27% thought the losses would outweigh the gains (25% said that they would be equal and 17% did not know). However, only 21% felt that it would bring them more gains personally while 24% said that it would bring them greater losses and 23% said it would have no impact (18% said the effect would be neutral and 14% did not know).⁴

Increasing anxiety about the possible impact of EU accession was confirmed by data on the effects that Poles thought that it would have on specific sectors of the economy and living standards more generally. In February 2002, for example, 53% of Poles said it would have a negative effect on individual farms while only 26% said that it would be positive (the analogous figures for June 1994 were 24% and 40% respectively). Similarly, 35% of Poles said that EU membership would have a negative effect on the functioning of public sector enterprises compared with only 33% who felt it would be positive (37% and 32% in 1994). Even the number who believed that EU membership would have a positive effect on the private business sector fell from 67% in 1994 to 42% in 2002 while those who said it would have a negative effect increased from 6% to 29% over the same period. In terms of the impact on the economy more generally, the number who said that it would have a positive effect on their living standards fell from 57% in 1994 to 42% in 2002. The number who said that it would have a negative impact increased from 10% to 23%.⁵ Indeed, in an earlier analysis of changing Polish attitudes towards EU membership, I argued that the best way to characterise the state of public opinion was that Poles *consented* to the idea of EU accession but were not particularly *enthusiastic* about it.⁶

There are number of factors that account for these shifts in public support during the course of the accession negotiations that began in March 1998. Firstly, given the existence of an overwhelming pro-EU consensus among political elites, Polish opponents of EU membership may have been reluctant to identify themselves previously and earlier polling data may have artificially overstated the true levels of public support. Secondly, given there was also very little serious debate about the potential costs and benefits of EU accession, the previous very high levels of support may not have represented a conscious and considered declaration. Thirdly, given the difficult issues that needed to be tackled, the accession negotiations themselves

³ See: CBOS. *Przewydwane skutki integracji Polski z Unią Europejską*. Warsaw: CBOS. March 2001.

⁴ See: 'Bez entuzjazmu.' *Polityka*. 7 July 2001.

⁵ See: CBOS. *Opnie o integracji Polski z Unią Europejską*. Warsaw: CBOS. March 2002.

⁶ One Polish commentator has characterised this as a "shallow consensus" in favour of EU membership. See: E. Skotnicka-Illasiewicz, 'Poland on its Way Towards Membership of the EU and NATO: Hopes and Anxieties in a View of Public Opinion Polls.' *Yearbook of Polish European Studies*. Warsaw: Warsaw University Centre for European Studies. 1998. pp243-263.

inevitably focused to a large extent on the concessions that had to be made by the Polish side. This, in turn, raised the profile of the European issue in Polish politics in a very negative way, with Brussels viewed increasingly as a focus for conflict and hostility. In this sense, the more recent polling data are, it could be argued, simply a more accurate reflection of the true levels of support for Polish EU membership and, therefore, simply represented a kind of 'reality check.'

Fourthly, and perhaps most significantly, the period since the beginning of the accession negotiations saw a striking politicisation of the debate on Polish EU membership. Partly this was because a crack appeared in the previously overwhelming pro-EU elite consensus with the emergence of the first organised and potentially significant political forces to adopt an overtly anti-EU stance. However, a more significant development was probably the way that the debate on EU membership began to be conducted among those political forces that were ostensibly pro-EU. This was not so much about whether or not the country should join *per se* but about the terms on which (and the kind of EU that) it should join. As one commentator has noted, this led to a tendency to turn political debates about EU membership into 'ideological' confrontations between the right-wing Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność: AWS) led government and the ex-communist Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej: SLD) opposition.⁷ One of the most important aspects of this politicisation of the Polish Euro-debate was the division of the pro-EU camp into those who (allegedly) favoured a 'soft' negotiating stance and those who (allegedly) favoured a 'tough' one. The former, it was argued, were prepared to 'give in' to Brussels while the latter placed numerous conditions upon and posited reservations concerning support for EU membership.⁸ As one Polish commentator put it, the overall effect of this kind of rhetoric was to create the impression that Poland was negotiating with an enemy and that EU membership was a regrettable necessity rather than something to be sought positively.⁹

The September 2001 parliamentary election: a Eurosceptic backlash?

The September 2001 Polish parliamentary election saw parties and political groupings that were critical of, or openly hostile to, Polish EU membership win a significant share of the vote and substantial bloc of parliamentary deputies. Of the six parties and groupings that secured representation in the Sejm (the more powerful lower house of the Polish parliament) two of them, winning 18.07% of the vote and 91 seats, might be described as having adopted a hard Eurosceptic stance of *de facto* outright opposition to EU membership.¹⁰ This made some foreign commentators link the result

⁷ See: J. Kucharczyk, 'Porwanie Europy,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 4 March 1999.

⁸ For a good example of this see the kind of rhetoric employed by AWS candidate Marian Krzaklewski in the October 2000 presidential election campaign. See: A. Szczerbiak, *Europe as a Re-aligning Issue in Polish Politics? Evidence from the October 2000 Polish Presidential Election*. Sussex European Institute Working Paper No 48/Opposing Europe Research Network Working Paper No 3. Brighton: Sussex European Institute. June 2001. pp10-13.

⁹ See: J. Kucharczyk, *European Integration in Polish Political Debates 1997-1998*. Warsaw: ISP, February 1999; and 'Porwanie Europy.'

¹⁰ On the distinction between hard and soft Euroscepticism see: P. Taggart and A. Szczerbiak, *The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States*. Sussex European Institute Working Paper No. 51/Opposing Europe Research Network Working Paper No. 6. Brighton: Sussex European Institute. May 2002.

to changing Polish attitudes towards the EU and interpret it as part of a broader Eurosceptic backlash.¹¹ In other words, it was argued that the increase in public opposition to EU membership that had emerged over the last couple of years had finally found expression in the party system, as some commentators had previously predicted that it would.¹²

Table 3: September 2001 Polish parliamentary election results

	Votes (%)	Seats
Democratic Left Alliance-Labour Union (SLD-UP)	41.04	216
Civic Platform (PO)	12.68	65
Self-Defence (Samoobrona)	10.20	53
Law and Justice (PiS)	9.50	44
Polish Peasant Party (PSL)	8.98	42
League of Polish Families (LPR)	7.87	38

Source: Polish State Electoral Commission

The most openly and unambiguously anti-EU grouping was the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodziń: LPR), a coalition of various parties and organisations on the Catholic nationalist right that, as **Table 3** shows, won 7.87% of the vote and 38 seats. While accusing the EU of "conducting a policy of economic colonialism towards Poland," in its election programme the LPR focussed its attention primarily on the need to renegotiate Poland's EU association agreement. This, it was argued, had led to a \$10 billion trade deficit and created more than one million new jobs in EU countries at Poland's expense. With the connivance of previous Polish governments, who behaved "as if some of them were directed by the interests of foreign capital," the association agreement also meant that, "an important segment of our national assets has been given away while the remainder is (now) being taken over."¹³ During the election campaign, however, LPR leaders were much less ambiguous about their outright opposition to EU membership. LPR chairman Marek Kotlinowski, for example, argued that "for us the alternative to taking Poland into the EU is respecting the rights of sovereign states...We are for co-operation with everyone who wants to build social relations with Poland on a Christian basis."¹⁴ Similarly, LPR vice-chairman Roman Giertych argued that, "we did not fight for our independence for all those years only to now give away a portion of our sovereignty to some kind of supranational organisation."¹⁵ Ending all expenditure connected with preparing for EU membership would, he argued, save the country around 39 billion

¹¹ See, for example: J. Reed. 'Election result may deal blow to Poland's EU hope', *Financial Times*. 25 September 2001.

¹² See, for example: L. Kolarska-Bobinska. 'Co innego będzie dzielić Polaków', *Rzeczpospolita*, 26 November 1998; and K. Bachman, 'Historyczny kompromis inaczej', *Rzeczpospolita*. 9 June 2000. Cf: M. Grabowska, 'Przyszłość polskiej sceny politycznej – stabilność i zmiana', in Instytut Spraw Publicznych. *Przyszłość polskiej sceny politycznej*. Warsaw: ISP. March 1999. pp39-66.

¹³ All these quotes are taken from the LPR election programme.

¹⁴ Cited in: W. Załuska. 'To jest partia ojca Rzydzyka.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 25 September 2001.

¹⁵ Cited in: A. Goszczyński. 'Antyeuropa.' *Wprost*. 28 October 2001.

złoties.¹⁶ Another LPR leader Antoni Macierewicz argued that Poland should "begin negotiations as quickly as possible on the subject of the development of ties with NAFTA."¹⁷ The radical nationalist Solidarity trade union official Zygmunt Wrzodak, who stood as a parliamentary candidate on the LPR ticket, argued that "we have to return to a Christian Europe of Nations. Only God stands above the nation, not some kind of communo-liberal European Union."¹⁸

Perhaps the most consistently vocal opponent of Polish accession among LPR leaders was the veteran anti-EU campaigner Jan Łopuszański, whom one LPR leaflet described as "personifying opposition to the EU." Together with six other deputies, Łopuszański had left the AWS parliamentary fraction to set up the Polish Agreement party in April 1999, one of whose primary objectives was to oppose Polish EU membership and which went on to become one of the LPR founder members. Speaking at the LPR's July 2001 electoral convention, Łopuszański argued that, "the effect of our entry into the EU will be the Polish state's loss of sovereignty. The objective of our programme is the defence of the Polish state as a sovereign state, which cannot hand over its newly won independence to another 'international', this time with its headquarters in Brussels."¹⁹

Critical to the LPR's success was the backing of the Catholic nationalist broadcaster Radio Maryja whose charismatic director, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, used its airwaves to convey a strong anti-EU message. Radio Maryja had 2.7 million listeners and was closely aligned to the "Our Daily" (*Nasz Dziennik*) newspaper with 600,000 readers.²⁰ In a previous paper on this subject, I argued that the support of Radio Maryja was probably a necessary condition for the emergence of a significant anti-EU party in Poland. A good illustration of this was Łopuszański's earlier October 2000 presidential bid based on a campaign that was focussed heavily on opposing Polish EU membership. Łopuszański failed to secure Radio Maryja's backing and won a derisory 0.79% of the vote.²¹

The other hard Eurosceptic political grouping that secured parliamentary representation was the radical-populist Self-Defence (*Samoobrona*) party led by Andrzej Lepper. Self-Defence came to public prominence at the beginning of the 1990s as a radical farmers' union engaged in direct action to prevent the enforcement of debt foreclosures.²² As Lepper faded from public view in the mid-1990s he performed progressively worse in successive parliamentary and presidential elections. However, he re-emerged as a public figure at the head of a campaign of farmers' road blockades at the beginning of 1999 and his relatively high 3.05% of the vote in the October 2000 presidential election gave a hint that Self-Defence was capable of garnering a more a sizeable electorate. Indeed, although opinion polls did not detect any significant levels of support for Self-Defence (nor, indeed, the LPR) until the last fortnight of the campaign, as **Table 3** shows, it eventually emerged as the third largest

¹⁶ See: 'Zrezygnować z wydatków na integrację europejską' *Rzeczpospolita*. 30 August 2001.

¹⁷ Cited in: 'Przeciw Europie, liberałom i globalistom.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 24 September 2001.

¹⁸ Cited in: 'Antyeuropa.'

¹⁹ Cited in: 'Przeciw Europie, liberałom i globalistom.'

²⁰ See: "'Claudia" z "Przyjaciółką".' *Rzeczpospolita*. 11 December 1998.

²¹ See: *Europe as a Realignment Issue in Polish Politics?* p16.

²² See: A. Sabbat-Swidlicka. 'Poland Investigates Radical Farmers' Union.' *RFE/RL Research Report*. No 28. September 1992.

grouping in the new parliament with 10.2% of the vote and 53 seats.

Unlike the LPR, Self-Defence did not state explicitly that it was against Polish EU membership. Indeed, its election programme contained only one rather oblique, albeit very negative, reference to the EU. It argued that "they (the SLD, PSL, AWS, UW and their chums in the [Civic] Platform) are implementing the same programme of making Poland dependent on the West, selling our national assets together with the liquidation of jobs. They have all gone mad about Brussels. But the truth is brutal - no one will give us something for nothing. It is the European Union that is exporting more than 16 billion US dollars worth of goods to us annually. Our total imports add up to 48 billion US dollars. It is we who are supporting two and a half million jobs in the West, jobs that we lack here."²³ The Self-Defence website contained a short policy statement that set out its "position on joining the EU" in more detail. Here the grouping argued that, "at the present moment we have, as a result of the (European) Union, reduced our production levels by around 50%. Partnership with the Union requires us to define the limits of our productive capacity, and this particularly affects farming, steel production, coal mining, copper, light industry. We must fight for our production limits, because in the European Union everything is subject to limits, everyone has production quotas. In this situation, if we do not have these (quotas), and we reduce our production every year, then our opposition to integration with the European Union is unambiguous...Self-Defence is opposed to integration with the European Union in the current form that it exists today."²⁴ In other words, although it failed to spell out its position unambiguously, Self-Defence can be considered a *de facto* hard Eurosceptic, anti-EU party. While not opposing the idea of Polish EU membership in principle, Self-Defence made its support conditional upon securing an unachievable set of conditions (effectively exemption from the provisions of the Single Market).

Although they avoided opposing Polish EU membership in principle, two of the other four groupings elected to the Sejm, the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: PiS) and the Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe: PSL), also adopted a critical tone towards the EU in their election programmes and campaign rhetoric. For example, the leaders of both groupings failed to attend the signing ceremony of the "Pact for Europe," an attempt to develop an all-party consensus in support of EU membership during the election campaign.²⁵ In fact, both parties were primarily concerned with highlighting the need for the Polish government to maintain a 'tough' negotiating strategy. This kind of rhetoric did, however, contain an implicit message that the EU was attempting to exploit Poland and, therefore, often came close to shading into a kind of soft Euroscepticism.²⁶

²³ Extracts taken from Samoobrona election leaflet.

²⁴ See: 'Stanowisko w sprawie przystąpienia do Unii Europejskiej' at www.samoobrona.org.pl.

²⁵ PSL leader Jarosław Kalinowski had previously agreed to attend the ceremony while the PiS leadership had delegated their election organiser Ludwik Dorn to attend, but neither of them actually turned up. See: 'Pakt na rzecz integracji z Unią,' *Rzeczpospolita*. 23 August 2001; and 'Europa ich łączy,' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 23 August 2001.

²⁶ Soft Euroscepticism can be defined as where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or where there is a sense that 'national interest' is currently at odds with the EU's trajectory. See: *The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States*.

PiS was created as an attempt to construct a 'renewed right' from the remnants of the disintegrating AWS bloc and, as **Table 3** shows, emerged as the fourth largest grouping in the new parliament winning 9.5% of the vote and 44 seats in the Sejm. The original PiS party was formed in April 2001 to cash in on the popularity of Justice Minister Lech Kaczyński who was by far the most popular member of the AWS government (although not a member of any AWS affiliated political party). The PiS party was later to form an electoral alliance with the Right-wing Agreement (Porozumienie Prawicy: PP) grouping. The PP was, in turn, set up in April 2001 by defectors from two AWS affiliates: the Christian National Union (Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe: ZChN) and the Conservative People's Party (Stronnictwo Konserwatywno-Ludowe: SKL).²⁷ In the event, PiS adopted a broadly supportive if somewhat ambiguous position on Polish EU membership. The PiS election programme described EU membership as one of its two foreign policy priorities but went on to criticise a negotiating strategy based on attempting to secure a specific (early) target date for Polish accession. PiS argued that, "striving for an appropriate position for Poland in the Union, in other words one worthy of a large European country, cannot be pursued effectively, when the method and speed of the negotiations are determined by successive, apparently unrealistic, entry dates. The quality of our membership, and therefore a determined defence of our interests, is what is most important."²⁸ When asked directly (in an interview) if PiS was for or against Polish EU membership, Kaczyński said that he, "would vote for accession, but as a politician would accept a different decision by the nation. I would vote against if Poland was to be a second class member."²⁹ Moreover, the PP element of the PiS election alliance comprised the former leaders of the soft Eurosceptic ZChN who had been most critical of the EU. PP and former ZChN leader Marian Piłka, for example, argued that "Poland should oppose the bureaucratisation of the EU and prevent the liquidation of the nation-state formula."³⁰ Another ex-SKL PP leader, Kazimierz Ujazdowski argued that, "we want the EU to be a strong union of countries in solidarity with one another, and not a further tier in the careers of the ruling class, which is what the SLD, a party that regards the idea of European integration as a kind of new Comecon, wants."³¹

Another party that secured parliamentary representation and was highly critical of the EU was the agrarian PSL. As **Table 3** shows, the PSL won 8.98% of the vote and 42 seats and went on to become the former communists' junior partner in the new coalition government.³² The party's programme argued that, "(Poland's) relations with the EU should be based on strengthening (our) national interests as part of the process of integration, and not just passively joining a larger community. It is necessary to be aware that, in spite of the disproportion that exists in the levels of income among its member states, the EU is a 'rich man's club' and not inclined to give in to the demands of the poor candidate states from the East." The PSL also argued that the EU "must also take into account our expectations and aspirations." A pre-condition of this was

²⁷ In fact, the latter were prompted to leave their party by the SKL's decision to withdraw from AWS in March 2001 and form an electoral coalition with the liberal Civic Platform grouping.

²⁸ See: *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: Program*. Warsaw: PiS. August 2001. p27.

²⁹ See: 'Moja wiedza nie jest pełna.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 6 September 2001.

³⁰ Cited in: 'Po pierwsze Unia Europejska.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 5 June 2001.

³¹ Cited in: M.D. Zdort. 'Będziemy pierwsi.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 11 June 2001.

³² This result was, however, somewhat below its expectations particularly because it unexpectedly secured less support than Self-Defence, its direct rival for the rural-agrarian vote.

"the inclusion of Polish agriculture in the Common Agricultural Policy, from the moment when Poland joins the EU, (with Poland) entitled to the same direct payments and structural funds, on the basis of principles that have operated in the Union up until now."³³ In its election declaration, the PSL criticised the previous AWS led government for creating "a noticeable asymmetry in Poland's relations with European Union states to our disadvantage." This, the PSL argued, had been one of the main factors accounting for why "foreign firms (were) taking control of strategic segments of the Polish economy, the enormous deficit in trade and the emergence of a substantial lobby for foreign interests in Poland."³⁴ Arguing that the party were "euro-realists", PSL Vice-President Marek Sawicki said that they supported EU membership but only "on the basis of partnership"³⁵ and rejected an "unqualified opening up" to the EU.³⁶ In particular, the PSL supported the previous government's demand for an eighteen-year transition period before Polish land could be sold to foreigners.³⁷

The September 2001 election outcome clearly meant that the new Polish parliament would contain a much larger bloc of deputies that are either critics or outright opponents of EU membership. However, it would be far too simplistic to interpret the September 2001 election as representing some kind of 'Euro-sceptic backlash'. With opinion polls showing the emergence of an anti-EU segment of Polish public opinion of 25-30% of voters, one should not be too surprised that some openly anti-EU parties won seats in the Polish parliament. Moreover, even if one accepts that Self-Defence is a *de facto* hard Euro-sceptic party, the share of the vote won by openly anti-EU parties (18.07%) still understated the levels of public opposition to EU membership. Indeed, it is easy to forget that the two most successful groupings in this election were the two who were the most supportive of Polish EU membership. As **Table 3** shows, these were the electoral coalition of the SLD and small Labour Union (Unia Pracy: UP) party and the liberal Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska: PO), that won 41.04% and 12.68% of the vote and 216 and 65 seats respectively. Although critical voices would be much more evident in the new parliament there was still a strong consensus in favour of the principle of EU membership with the vast majority of parliamentarians broadly pro-EU.

Perhaps more significantly, although EU membership had a much higher profile than in any previous parliamentary election, it was striking how, by virtually any measure, it was, once again, not a particularly salient campaign issue. This was particularly noteworthy when one considers its significance as a foreign policy choice of such historical dimensions.

Firstly, most parties did not really give the issue much of a profile in their own election campaigns. A survey (conducted by the author) of the coverage of the six main parties and groupings on the main TV evening news during the last fortnight of

³³ See: Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe. *Czas na zmianę... Program społeczno-gospodarczy PSL*. Warsaw: PSL. April 2001. p35-37.

³⁴ Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe. *Blisko ludzkich spraw: Deklaracja wyborcza Polskiego Stronnictwa Ludowego*. Warsaw: PSL. p4.

³⁵ Cited in: 'Po pierwsze Unia Europejska.'

³⁶ Cited in: M. Lizut. 'Ludowcy w smokingach,' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 7 August 2001.

³⁷ *Ibid.* On another occasion Sawicki argued that the PSL supported transition periods until "Polish purchasing power was comparable to the possibilities of citizens in other EU states." See: 'Po pierwsza Unia Europejska.'

the campaign found that all the main parties and groupings gave this issue a fairly low profile. The SLD-UP coalition made EU issues its main campaign theme on three occasions, the PSL twice and the PO and LPR only once. Moreover, Self-Defence did not once 'lead' on the EU as the main focus for its TV campaign for that day. Indeed, as noted above, it only warranted one oblique reference in this grouping's election programme.

Secondly, whatever Polish parties may or not have said about Polish EU membership during the campaign, polling evidence suggested that it did not attract much interest or attention from the voters themselves and was certainly not a key factor in determining voting behaviour. For example, a July 2001 Social Research Workshop (Pracownia Badań Społecznych: PBS) survey found that only 4% of respondents cited EU membership as one of the issues that would have the greatest impact when determining which grouping they would support, coming in seventh (last) place.³⁸ Similarly, a July 2001 Pentor survey found that, when asked which election issues were important to them, only 7% chose EU membership, tenth out of the seventeen issues cited (voters were allowed to choose up to three).³⁹

Thirdly, as **Table 4** shows, polling evidence indicated that supporters of EU membership represented a majority among the voters of all the main parties and groupings represented in parliament except for the LPR (24% in favour and 52% against) but including Self-Defence (33% in favour and 29% against). This suggests that, although its stance on EU membership may not have put people off voting for it, misgivings about Polish accession were probably not the main reason why voters supported Self-Defence and was (at most) only one, relatively minor factor.⁴⁰

Table 4: Support for EU membership by party, October 2001

	PO	SLD	PiS	Samoobrona	PSL	LPR
Yes	66	60	44	33	32	24
No	9	15	14	25	25	52
Don't know	8	11	14	13	13	2
Won't vote	18	15	28	29	29	22

Source: B. Roguska and J. Kucharczyk. *Wybory 2001 a integracja Polski z Unią Europejską*. Warsaw: ISP. 2001. p13.

³⁸ See: 'Liderzy nieważni.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 20 July 2001.

³⁹ See: B. Mazur. 'Partia niespodzianek.' *Wprost*. 19 August 2001. Zagrodzka also claims that EU membership did not count as one of the three most important election issues among the supporters of any of the main parties. See: D. Zagrodzka. 'Teraz albo wcale.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 30 October 2001.

⁴⁰ See also: 'Nie wolno grać Unią: Z profesorem Leną Kolarską-Bobińską, dyrektorem Instytutu Spraw Publicznych, rozmawia Andrzej Stankiewicz.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 21 November 2001.

In other words, while hard Eurosceptic anti-EU parties did relatively well in this election it was almost certainly not primarily as a result of their policy on the EU.⁴¹ Only in the case of the LPR was it possible to credibly argue that opposition to Polish EU membership played any role in determining the grouping's level of electoral support. However, even in the LPR's case, electoral success was probably due more to the support of the 'religious right' electorate mobilised by Radio Maryja than its anti-EU stance as such.⁴²

The post-election scenario and the changing Polish Euro-debate

It was widely assumed that the election of a new strong and unambiguously pro-EU SLD-UP government would speed up the progress of the EU accession negotiations in which Poland was widely perceived to have fallen behind.⁴³ Being weak, unstable and containing a substantial soft Eurosceptic current clustered around the ZChN, the previous AWS-led government found it difficult to make any significant concessions to the EU in a number of key negotiating areas. It rigidly demanded an eighteen-year transition period on the sale of Polish land to foreigners refusing the EU's offer of seven years. It also rejected the EU's proposal of allowing member states to introduce transition periods of up to seven years before citizens from the candidate countries would be given unrestricted access to Western labour markets.⁴⁴ The SLD-UP coalition's election rhetoric certainly gave the pro-EU camp reason to hope that the government would adopt a more flexible approach to these issues and perhaps even subsequently on the most difficult negotiating areas: regional aid, agricultural subsidies and budget contributions. During the campaign, SLD leader and subsequent premier Leszek Miller argued that Polish membership of the EU "would be the final confirmation that we are the joint hosts of the continent,"⁴⁵ while the alternative was being "on the margins and thereby wiping out any chance to modernise our country."⁴⁶ Consequently, Miller argued that it was essential that the next government made a "rational compromise" on the sale of Polish land to foreigners and access to the Western labour markets.⁴⁷ Another SLD leader Józef Oleksy (who went on to become chairman of the parliamentary European affairs committee) argued that "we are aware that the Union is the stronger partner in these discussions, that is why a certain elasticity is essential, although certainly not at the cost of (sacrificing) Poland's most important interests."⁴⁸

Consequently, it came as little surprise when, in November 2001, the new SLD-UP led government announced a new negotiating strategy that involved making a number of concessions in order to speed up the accession negotiations. Initially, the

⁴¹ Indeed, most anti-EU voters actually voted for the SLD-UP coalition, the party that was perceived to have the most pro-EU policy! See: B. Roguska and J. Kucharczyk. *Wybory 2001 a integracja Polski z Unią Europejską*. Warsaw: ISP. 2001. pp14-17.

⁴² See: A. Szczerbiak. 'Poland's unexpected political earthquake: the September 2001 parliamentary election.' *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*. September 2002. forthcoming.

⁴³ See: 'Po pierwsze Unia Europejska'; and P. Apanowicz. 'Elastyczność, ale bez przesady.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 6 September 2001.

⁴⁴ This position was determined primarily in response to German and Austrian misgivings about large potential migratory flows from the East.

⁴⁵ Cited in: K. Montgomery. 'Im szybciej, tym lepiej.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 11 June 2001.

⁴⁶ Cited in: 'Sojusz za integracją z UE.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 11 June 2001.

⁴⁷ Cited in: 'Im szybciej, tym lepiej.'

⁴⁸ Cited in: 'Elastyczność, ale bez przesady.'

government announced that it would broadly accept the proposed transition periods on access to Western labour markets as non-negotiable (although it would seek to persuade individual member states not to take full advantage of them). More controversially, it also announced that it would reduce the proposed transition period on the sale of Polish land to foreigners from eighteen to twelve years with no restrictions on the purchase of land for investment purposes.⁴⁹ Even more controversially, a couple of days later the new SLD Foreign Minister Włodzimerz Cimoszewicz announced a series of further concessions when presenting the new Polish negotiating position in Brussels. These included: reducing the transition period on the sale of recreational land to seven years, a three year transition period on the sale of farm land to foreign leaseholders and no transition period for the sale of domestic dwellings.⁵⁰

However, the government's new negotiating strategy produced a somewhat mixed reaction from the Polish public. A December 2001 CBOS survey found that 82% of Poles continued to supported transition periods on the sale of Polish land to foreigners (a considerable hardening of attitudes on this issue compared with the previous year) with only 7% against (11% did not know). More positively for the government, 43% of respondents supported its proposal for a twelve year transition period for the sale of agricultural land (a further 12% said it was too long and 3% that it was unnecessary) while only 31% felt that this was too short (11% did not know). Similarly, 41% of Poles supported the government's proposed seven year transition period for the sale of recreational land (11% said it was too long and 4% that it was unnecessary) and only 32% felt that it was too short (12% did not know). However, 56% of Poles opposed the three year transition period on the sale of sale of farm land to foreign leaseholders (which the government was subsequently forced to modify, see below) while only 32% supported it (12% did not know). 71% opposed the policy of no transition periods on the sale of land for investment and only 21% supported it (8% did not know), while 81% opposed removing restrictions on the sale of domestic dwellings and only 13% supported it (6% did not know).⁵¹

Moreover, this mixed public reaction was exacerbated by the fact that the government unveiled its new negotiating strategy in a rather clumsy way. As noted above, it was announced in two stages, with some of the detailed concessions (particularly the very controversial one on the sale of farmland to foreign leaseholders) only announced by the Foreign Minister on his subsequent visit to Brussels. This provoked an extremely hostile political reaction not just from the hard Eurosceptics but also from the broadly pro-EU opposition parties, the PO and PiS, and even from SLD-UP's government coalition partner, the PSL.⁵² This, in turn, meant that the new government squandered

⁴⁹ See: P. Apanowicz, J. Bielecki and A. Stankiewicz. 'Będziemy inaczej rozmawiać z Unią.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 15 November 2001; and D. Pszczołkowska. 'Skokiem do Unii.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 15 November 2001.

⁵⁰ See: J. Bielecki. 'Ziemia szybciej na sprzedaż.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 20 November 2001; and J. Bielecki. 'Kolejne gesty wobec Brukseli.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 21 November 2001.

⁵¹ See: CBOS. *Stosunek do integracji Polski z Unią Europejską po ogłoszeniu nowego stanowiska negocjacyjnego*. Warsaw: CBOS. January 2002.

⁵² See, for example: 'Będziemy inaczej rozmawiać z Unią'; E. Olczyk, A. Stankiewicz and M. D. Zdort. 'Posłowie wyzwają ministrów.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 22 November 2001; A. Stankiewicz. 'Ziemia pod ochronę.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 23 November 2001; and A. Stankiewicz. 'Przyspieszenie na ostatniej prostej.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 30 November 2001.

one of its strongest assets: the bank of goodwill and trust that it enjoyed immediately after the election and which appeared to give it more room for manoeuvre in the accession negotiations than its deeply unpopular predecessor. For example, an October 2001 ISP survey found that, in spite of its 'tough' rhetoric, 49% of Poles felt that the previous AWS led government had given in to the EU's demands. Only 9% of Poles felt that it had stoutly defended Polish interests and 27% felt that it had skilfully combined the two. In contrast, 38% felt that the incoming government would be able to combine the two, 24% that it would be a tough defender of Polish interests and only 13% that it would make too many concessions.⁵³ However, a subsequent December 2001 CBOS survey found that 44% of Poles felt that the new SLD led government was making too many concessions while only 27% felt that it was proceeding correctly (5% thought it was too tough and 24% did not know).⁵⁴

Perhaps even more worryingly for the new government, other polling evidence suggested that the generally negative public reaction to its new negotiating strategy was underpinned by a more basic lack of understanding of the rationale on which the new approach was based. In particular, most Poles did not appear to accept the new government's argument that political and economic advantages would flow from early EU accession, particularly the opportunity to advance Polish interests within the EU's decision making structures, but that achieving this involved making some concessions. In other words, they did not appear to fully appreciate that the accession negotiations would require reciprocity in order to be swiftly completed and that Poland was very much the weaker negotiating partner.⁵⁵ For example, a February 2002 CBOS survey found that 57% of respondents felt that Poland should only join when it could benefit from all the possibilities associated with EU membership. Only 19% felt that Poland should join as quickly as possible even if this meant giving up some of the advantages with EU membership (13% said should Poland not join at all and 11% did not know). Even 61% of those who supported EU membership in principle rejected the idea of early accession if this involved making concessions.⁵⁶ Similarly, a June 2001 OBOP/Polityka survey found that 69% of respondents felt that Poland should not make any concessions in the accession negotiations, even if this meant delayed EU entry. Only 18% felt that Poland should make concessions in order to join the EU as quickly as possible (13% did not know).⁵⁷

A more specific example of this kind of thinking could be seen in the public's reaction to the European Commission's January 2002 proposals on agriculture, the other major development that has occurred since the election that was likely to have influenced Polish opinion towards the EU. The Commission proposed to phase in agricultural subsidies to Polish farmers (and other candidate states) over a ten-year period. They would begin by receiving only 25% of the proportion paid to farmers in member states, increasing to 35% in 2005, 35% in 2006 and then 100% in 2013.⁵⁸ Not

⁵³ See: *Wybory 2001 a integracja Polski z Unią Europejską*, p 28.

⁵⁴ See: *Stosunek do integracji Polski z Unią Europejską po ogłoszeniu nowego stanowiska negocjacyjnego*.

⁵⁵ See, for example: F. Gawryś. 'Do Unii bez ustępstw.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 2 July 2001; and 'Bez entuzjazmu.'

⁵⁶ See: *Opinie o integracji z Unią Europejską*.

⁵⁷ See: 'Bez entuzjazmu.'

⁵⁸ See: J. Bielecki. 'Większe ustępstwa za mniejsze pieniądze.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 31 January 2002. The Commission also proposed lower production quotas than the Polish government had requested.

surprisingly, this proposal met with a hostile reaction from the across the Polish political spectrum as well as from the general public. A February 2002 CBOS survey found that 59% of Poles felt that the Polish government should demand full subsidies from the moment of accession even if this led to the breakdown of the negotiations and Poland failing to join the EU (25% disagreed with this and 16% did not know).⁵⁹

This belief that Poland could secure EU membership on more favourable terms if it was prepared to countenance some delay was linked to a more fundamental and ongoing concern (evident in Polish attitudes towards the EU for some time) that Poland was 'not ready' for EU membership. This was, in turn, based on a broader decoupling of the economic modernisation and EU accession processes, rather than viewing them as complementary. For example, a February 2002 CBOS survey found that 52% of respondents felt that Poland was not ready to join the EU and should modernise its economy first compared with only 32% who felt that such economic modernisation was actually conditional upon swift EU entry (17% did not know).⁶⁰ Similarly, a May 2001 OBOP survey found that 75% of respondents felt that Poland should first carry out necessary reforms and only then join the EU. Only 15% felt that Poland should join the EU as quickly as possible (10% did not know). Even 67% of those who said they would vote Yes in an accession referendum felt that Poland needed to carry out reforms first.⁶¹

Another obstacle to the further acceleration of the accession negotiations was the fact that, as **Table 3** shows, the SLD-UP coalition fell 15 seats short of winning the 231 seats required for them to have an overall majority in the Sejm. The equally strongly pro-EU PO refused to join them in a coalition and, consequently, they were forced to form a government with the PSL, their erstwhile partner during the 1993-97 parliament. As noted above, the PSL adopted a very tough stance on the accession negotiations during the election campaign, particularly where the interests of its core rural-agrarian constituency were concerned. This gave the SLD less room for manoeuvre to compromise on certain negotiating issues than it would have enjoyed had it been able to govern on its own. Firstly, at the end of November PSL leader and Agriculture Minister Jarosław Kalinowski announced his intention to introduce a new law on the turnover of agricultural land that would introduce the right of primary purchase for neighbours and the state. The law also envisaged that permits be issued to farmers stipulating minimum qualifications, minimum residence requirements and a requirement that those purchasing the land cultivate it themselves.⁶² Secondly, due to pressure from the PSL, the government was forced to modify its original proposal that there should only be a three-year transition period on the sale of Polish land to

⁵⁹ See: CBOS. *Poparcie dla wejścia Polski do Unii Europejskiej i opinie o negocjacjach w sprawie rolnictwa*. Warsaw: CBOS. February 2002.

⁶⁰ See: *Opinie o integracji z Unią Europejską*.

⁶¹ See: OBOP. *Opinia społeczna o członkostwie Polski w Unii Europejskiej*. Warsaw: OBOP. June 2001. There are, however, some potential grounds for optimism for the pro-EU camp here because these figures also suggest that there is a substantial segment of the anti-EU camp who do not actually oppose Polish membership in principle but simply lack faith that Poland will join on advantageous terms. For example, a May 2001 CBOS survey found that 47% of those who were against EU membership also said Poland should only join if it could benefit from full membership. Consequently, achieving a satisfactory outcome to the accession negotiations could, potentially, significantly reduce the number of opponents of Polish accession. See: *Opinie o integracji z Unią Europejską*. June 2001.

⁶² See: 'Ziemia pod ochronę.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 23 November 2001. Such a law could, potentially, bring Poland into conflict with the Commission.

foreign leaseholders of farmland. In December 2001, the government announced that a seven-year transition period would apply for these farmers in the eight Western Polish provinces (it would continue to be three years in the eight Eastern provinces).⁶³ Then, after the Commission accepted this modified proposal the agreement on this 'chapter' nearly unravelled in February 2002. The PSL initially refused to accept the SLD's compromise proposal that the transition period for current foreign leaseholders of farmland begin in April 2002 and for the remainder from the date of Polish accession. (the Commission wanted it to begin for all foreigners from the moment that they began leasing the land, the PSL for all of them from the moment of Polish accession).⁶⁴

Similarly, the participation of the PSL in the government means that it will be much more difficult to agree to a compromise on the Commission's proposals on agriculture, given the importance of this issue to the party's core electoral constituency. A possible precursor of future disputes came when Kalinowski ignited a row with the head of the Polish Committee for European Integration Danuta Hubner following a February 2002 speech in Brussels when he threaten that Poland would suspend talks on the liberalisation of agricultural trade. He also said that Poland was considering maintaining customs duties on EU imports if the current member states did not agree to 100% direct payments for Polish farmers from the date of accession.⁶⁵

Moreover, while the election itself may not have represented a Eurosceptic backlash the presence of a sizeable anti-EU bloc meant that the new government faced a more openly critical parliament. It quickly emerged that debates on EU related issues would be much less consensual and that the government would face much tougher scrutiny of its EU policy. Enjoying, for the first time, a real public platform to put across its views, the anti-EU camp was able to set much of the tone for, and therefore polarise, many of the post-election parliamentary debates on EU issues. For example, in the first few months of the new parliament they: attacked the government's new negotiating strategy, (unsuccessfully) moved a motion of no confidence in Cimoszewicz for his failure to properly inform parliament of the new stance and proposed (again unsuccessfully) pre-emptive referendums on EU accession and the sale of Polish land to foreigners.⁶⁶

This put the two broadly pro-EU opposition groupings, the PO and PiS, in an awkward position. On the one hand, the logic of opposition forced them to attack the

⁶³ See: A. Stankiewicz. 'Na zachodzie siedem lat.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 19 December 2001; and D. Pszczółkowska and J. Pawlicki. 'W ziemię wbici.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 19 December 2001.

⁶⁴ See: K. Naszkowska. 'Integracja z PSL.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 27 February 2002. In the event, the PSL actually accepted the Commission's proposal with the caveat that the transition period would only start from the beginning of the leasehold for individual farmers and not companies. Kalinowski claimed that this, together with his law on the turnover of land, would be sufficient to prevent Polish land falling into the hands of foreign speculators. See: K. Naszkowska. 'Sukces Kalinowskiego, ferment w PSL.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 6 March 2002.

⁶⁵ See: J. Bielecki. 'Dopłaty albo cła.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 19 February 2002; and 'Jako lider PSL, a nie minister.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 26 February 2002.

⁶⁶ See: 'Przyspieszenie na ostatniej prostej.'; K. Niklewicz. 'Techniczny czy fatalny błąd.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 30 November 2001; 'Cimoszewicz zostaje.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 15-16 December 2001; D. Pszczółkowska. 'Cimoszewicz nieodwołany.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 15-16 December 2001; 'Referendum będzie, ale później.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 11 January 2002; 'Prereferendum.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 11 January 2002; and 'Jak Liga polskiej ziemi broniła.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 16-17 March 2002.

government on a broad policy front. With the EU negotiations being a prominent political issue it was (and will continue to be) very tempting for them to attack the new government when they perceived them to be on weak ground. For example, even the strongly pro-EU PO voted against the government when it presented its modified negotiating strategy to parliament on the grounds that it was making concessions with no guarantee that this would secure reciprocity from the EU in other areas.⁶⁷ In his reaction to the new strategy, PO leader Maciej Płażyński argued that, "it would be safer if, in exchange for agreeing to the EU's position when it comes to access to EU labour markets, we could have obtained advantages in other areas such as structural funds, regional policy or agriculture...The government's new position will certainly speed up the negotiations, but it is not just a case of being in the Union in 2004, but to be in it on the best possible conditions. As a Polish citizen I would prefer to be sure that our concessions are in exchange for their concessions. And I would also like to know what they are."⁶⁸ Similarly, although the grouping abstained in the LPR and Self-Defence sponsored vote of no confidence on Foreign Minister Cimoszewicz, it criticised the government's proposal for a three-year transition period on the sale of farmland to foreign leaseholders. It also said that it would move such a motion itself if it did not feel that his performance had improved within the next three months.⁶⁹ However, using the EU issue to attack the government in an opportunistic way breeds the cynicism that is the anti-EU camp's strongest potential ally given, as discussed below, that a low turnout could render an accession referendum invalid. In this sense, even a subsequent call on their supporters to vote 'Yes' to EU membership in the referendum may come too late if, by opportunistically attacking the government in the months leading up to it, they contribute to fostering resentment and hostility towards the EU accession process.⁷⁰

Towards the accession referendum: grounds for cautious optimism?

However, as **Table 1** shows, the Polish public appears to have been relatively unmoved by the recent high profile controversies surrounding the government's new negotiating strategy and the Commission's controversial proposals on limiting agricultural subsidies to Polish farmers. Public support for EU membership appears to remain stable at around 55-60% while the level of opposition remains stuck at around 25%. Moreover, there are number of reasons for the pro-EU camp to remain cautiously optimistic that it is very likely to win the autumn 2003 accession referendum.

Firstly, there is evidence that the Polish public has a fairly realistic, if somewhat schizophrenic, attitude towards the costs and benefits of EU accession. On the one hand, as the data on public attitudes towards the accession negotiations cited above shows, Poles appear to be very sensitive about the prospect of joining the EU on a 'second class' basis and without certain vital national interests being protected. This is something that the anti-EU camp will no doubt attempt to exploit in order to try and win over undecided Poles and detach the 'softer' elements from pro-EU camp. On the

⁶⁷ See: 'Przyspieszenie na ostatniej prostej.'

⁶⁸ Cited in: 'Będziemy inaczej rozmawiać z Unią.'

⁶⁹ See: 'Cimoszewicz zostaje.'

⁷⁰ See: 'Nie wolno grać Unią'; and C. Lewanowicz. 'Euroceptyczny język eurozwolenników.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 6 December 2001.

other hand, in spite of their unwillingness to make concessions in the accession negotiations, most Poles appear to have a realistic appreciation of the distance that still exists between Poland and most EU member states. They also appear to be aware that joining the EU will involve making certain sacrifices and have fairly modest expectations of the material benefits that are likely to accrue from it.⁷¹ For example, an October 2001 ISP survey found that 60% of Poles (including 50% of those who supported Polish EU membership) believed that the country would be a second class member when it joined the EU, while only 30% thought that it would join with full membership rights.⁷² A June 2000 ISP survey found that 81% of Poles acknowledged that the financial costs of EU accession would be substantial while only 10% thought that they would be minimal. 42% thought that Poland would have to bear the bulk of these costs, 40% that they would be spread equally and only 8% thought that they would be borne mainly by the EU.⁷³ Moreover, most Poles also appear to understand that the full benefits of EU accession are not likely to become apparent for some time. For example, a June 2000 ISP survey found that only 4% of Poles believed that their country would benefit from EU membership immediately, 51% after a few years and 30% after more than ten years.⁷⁴ The key point here is that, in spite of this realistic but rather negative perception of the costs and benefits of EU membership, most Poles remain broadly pro-EU as long as they continue to believe that the *overall* balance of political and economic costs and benefits will be advantageous.⁷⁵ For example, an ISP survey found that as many as 57% of those who intended to vote Yes in an accession referendum would do so in spite of the fact that they believed Poland would be joining the EU as a 'second class' member.⁷⁶

Some commentators have argued that one of the main factors accounting for the continuing support for Polish EU membership in spite of the rather pessimistic evaluation of the immediate benefits, could be that most Poles support accession for political rather than economic reasons. In other words, they see joining the EU as a civilisational choice that will help Poland 'catch up with the West.'⁷⁷ For example, a June 2000 ISP survey found that when discussing their 'hopes' associated with Polish EU membership, most respondents mentioned political rather than economic factors. While 59% of respondents felt that EU membership would mean aid for Polish agriculture (26% disagreed), only a minority (41%) thought that it would lead to

⁷¹ See: J. Kucharczyk. 'Club class Europe? The examination of socio-political conditions for a Eurosceptic backlash in Poland'. Paper prepared for the PSA Annual Conference. University of Manchester. 10-12 April 2001. p9; and L. Kolarska-Bobińska. 'Introduction: the Poles before the great change' in L. Kolarska-Bobińska, ed. *Before the great change: Polish public opinion and EU enlargement*. Warsaw: ISP. 2001. pp3-10.

⁷² *Wybory 2001 a integracja Polski z Unią Europejską*. pp26-27.

⁷³ See: M. Strzeszewski. 'Adaptation to the European Union: hopes, fears, and costs,' in *Before the great change*. pp89-126 (114-115).

⁷⁴ See: Ibid. p105 and L. Kolarska-Bobińska. 'Nie liczymy na pieniądze.' *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 12 July 2001. The figures in **Table 2** showing that most Poles believe that current EU member states will benefit most from Polish accession, together with the figures cited above on how individuals are uncertain about how much they will gain personally from the process, can also be interpreted as evidence of this 'realistic' approach.

⁷⁵ See: 'Club class Europe' p10.

⁷⁶ See: J. Kucharczyk. 'Poland the EU - Unequal partnership.' in *Before the great change*. pp67-88 (71). Indeed, on another occasion Kucharczyk has argued that Poles' pessimistic view of their prospects as EU members was more related to a negative assessment of the current state of Poland than hostility towards the EU as such. See: 'Club class Europe, p13.

⁷⁷ See: 'Nie liczymy na pieniądze.'

improved living standards for ordinary people (46% disagreed). However, most respondents felt that it would bring about an improvement in international security (70% to 18%), greater opportunities to live and work in other European countries (65% to 19%) and better law enforcement and observance of human rights (61% to 22%).⁷⁸ In a similar vein, a December 2001 CBOS survey found that 48% of respondents felt that joining the EU would "reduce the distance" between Poland and other EU members (21% said it would make no difference, 9% said it would increase it and 22% did not know).⁷⁹

However, as **Table 5** shows, a more recent February 2002 CBOS survey of the motives given by those supporting Polish EU membership found a somewhat more mixed picture. Large numbers of respondents cited the economic benefits flowing from Polish EU membership, although most of these tended to be couched in very general terms such as a reduction in the level of unemployment (26%), general benefits for the economy (19%) and an improvement in living standards (18%). On the other hand, 26% of Poles simply stated that Polish EU membership would mean a "change for the better." Other respondents pointed to the 'historical necessity' of membership: 12% felt that due to globalisation Poland could not afford to be isolated internationally, 10% felt that there was a lack of alternatives and 7% that EU membership provided better prospects for future generations. Similarly, a March 2001 CBOS survey found that 49% of Poles believed that the Polish economy would benefit from EU membership and only 33% felt that it would not (18% did not know). 45% felt that it would improve the competitiveness of Polish firms compared with 26% who felt that it would not (14% did not know).⁸⁰ In other words, it appears that economic benefits are certainly evident in underpinning support for Polish EU membership but that Poles view them in much more general terms rather than relating them to improvements in specific sectors or linking them to the precise terms of accession. For example, as **Table 5** shows, only 4% of respondents cited the benefits for farming and the countryside as a specific reason for supporting EU accession. Similarly, a March 2001 CBOS survey found that only 13% of Poles felt that Polish farmers would benefit most from EU membership while 50% felt that farmers in EU member states would derive the most benefit (24% felt that the benefits would be evenly spread and 14% did not know).⁸¹

⁷⁸ See: 'Adaptation to the European Union.' p108.

⁷⁹ See: *Stosunek do integracji Polski z Unią Europejską po ogłoszeniu nowego stanowiska negocjacyjnego.*

⁸⁰ See: CBOS. *Przewidywane skutki integracji Polski z Unią Europejską.* Warsaw: CBOS. March 2001.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Table 5: Motives for supporting Polish EU membership, January 2002

General benefits	26%
Benefits for specific areas	
Reduction in unemployment, job opportunities	26%
Benefits for the economy, economic development	19%
Improvements in living standards, quality of life	18%
Open borders	5%
Benefits for agriculture and the countryside	4%
Positive impact on domestic public affairs	3%
Common currency, the euro	2%
Integration as a historic necessity	
Globalisation, need to avoid international isolation	12%
General - necessity of, lack of alternatives	10%
Better perspectives for future generations	7%
Only hope for rescuing the country	4%
Don't know	2%

Source: CBOS. *Argumenty zwolenników i przeciwników integracji Polski z Unią Europejską*. Warsaw: CBOS: February 2002.

A second reason why the pro-EU camp are more likely to win an accession referendum is that evidence suggests that supporters of Polish membership are more likely to turn out to vote than opponents. For example, a March 2002 CBOS survey found that (as **Table 1** shows) the number of Poles supporting EU membership was 55% to 29% (16% did not know). However, of those who would turn out in a referendum 67% said that they would vote Yes and only 25% No (8% did not know).⁸² Similarly, an June 2000 ISP survey distinguished between 'potential' and 'referendal' supporters and opponents, that is: those who had a pro or anti EU orientation and those who said that they would actually turn out to vote to vote Yes or No in a referendum. The survey revealed that 59% of Poles had a broadly pro-EU orientation while 30% were broadly anti-EU. However, more than eight out of ten of the broadly pro-EU segment (49% of the total sample) were classified as more solid, 'referendal' supporters while only one third of the anti-EU bloc (10%) were 'referendal' opponents.⁸³

Thirdly, the fact that Polish elites are overwhelmingly pro-EU could have an enormous impact on the referendum outcome. Polish elites (particularly political ones) do not enjoy particularly high levels of public trust. However, as Kolarska-Bobińska has pointed out, if they speak out with one voice and come out solidly in favour of EU membership then most Poles will perceive that there is "something in

⁸² See: CBOS. *Poparcie dla integracji Polski z Unią Europejską i opinie o konwencji Europejskim*. CBOS: Warsaw. March 2002.

⁸³ See: X. Dolińska. 'Poland's Membership of the European Union: From Support to Rejection.' in *Before the Great Change*. pp11-52 (33).

this."⁸⁴ In particular, the fact that the influential Catholic Church hierarchy has become increasingly vocal in its support for EU membership has helped to counter the influence of Radio Maryja on the Catholic rank-and-file, and will continue to do so. Indeed, on his most recent visit to Poland in June 1999 the Pope used his address to the Polish parliament to spell out explicitly the Church's pro-EU stance and supporters of EU membership will, no doubt, be hoping that he does so again on his next visit scheduled for August 2002.⁸⁵ Moreover, there is some evidence, that the pro-EU camp is beginning to make some serious efforts to mobilise support among the Polish public. One example of this was the appointment of political communications specialist Sławomir Wiatr to co-ordinate the government's promotion of the case for and benefits of EU membership.⁸⁶ Indeed, if the pre-accession aid that Poland is currently receiving from the EU is invested wisely and properly promoted then it could also help to strengthen support for the pro-EU camp in the way that regional aid has in some current member states. At the same time, although, as noted above, the anti-EU camp now has a sizeable bloc of parliamentary deputies, it still lacks a sufficiently credible or authoritative political figure capable of standing at the head of and mobilising a majority for a No vote.

In particular, if the main Polish parties and groupings could agree to undertake a non-partisan Yes campaign then this would undoubtedly provide a significant boost for the pro-EU cause. The future attitude of the two main pro-EU opposition parties, the PO and PiS, will be particularly important here. It is certain that the PO will support Polish EU membership in an accession referendum. However, in many ways the more important factor is how the party conducts itself during the remainder of the accession negotiations. As became apparent during the parliamentary debate on the new government's change of negotiating strategy and the no confidence vote on Foreign Minister Cimoszewicz, the logic of being in opposition can force the PO to make critical statements which, however measured, can lead to increased public cynicism about EU membership. This is an even greater problem for PiS whose precise response will be more difficult to predict. On the one hand, as noted above, in spite of their misgivings about the potential terms of Polish membership, the party leadership appears to be broadly pro-EU and it is very likely that they will eventually come out in favour of a Yes vote. Indeed, as **Table 4** shows, PiS voters in the 2001 parliamentary election broadly reflected general public attitudes towards EU membership, with a clear majority in favour. On the other hand, it will be extremely difficult for an opposition party of the 'renewed right' appealing to former AWS voters (and containing a strong soft Eurosceptic current) to avoid attacking a government comprising former communists at every conceivable opportunity. This is likely to be particularly true if it senses that concessions in the EU negotiations are viewed as a potential sign of weakness. Indeed, it is likely that those PiS deputies who originated

⁸⁴ See: 'Nie liczymy na pieniądze.'

⁸⁵ Indeed, there has been some speculation that the new SLD government has reached a tacit arrangement with the Church hierarchy. The former communists will refrain from promoting certain aspects of their social agenda that the Church finds unacceptable (such as liberalisation of the abortion law) in return for the bishops' support in the run up to the accession referendum. See: M. Janicki. 'Czerwone i czarne.' *Polityka*. 16 February 2002; and E. Olczyk. 'Nie drażnić biskupów.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 15 February 2002.

⁸⁶ See: A. Stankiewicz. 'Kampania ruszy w maju.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 12 March 2002. Wiatr was previously head of the Polish section of the Gallup organisation and has worked as a media adviser to the SLD on various election campaigns.

from (the more ideological and traditionalist wing of) the ZChN will certainly not waste any opportunity to attack the government from a soft Eurosceptic perspective to ensure that they avoid being outflanked by the LPR and Self-Defence.⁸⁷ The danger for the pro-EU camp is that even if both the PO and PiS do eventually come out in favour of EU membership at the time of the accession referendum this may not be enough to dispel the notion that this is, basically, an 'SLD project.'

Fourthly, and perhaps most significantly, even if most Poles are not particularly enthusiastic about EU membership, the pro-EU camp's strongest card remains the Eurosceptics' lack of a credible or attractive alternative foreign policy. The most frequently cited alternatives to EU membership are an independent foreign policy and closer links with Russia (and Poland's Eastern neighbours) or the USA (specifically membership of NAFTA).⁸⁸ However, the first two options are clearly unattractive for obvious historical and geo-political reasons while, even in so far as closer economic and political links with the USA are seen as desirable, NAFTA membership is not widely perceived as a realistic alternative to the EU. For example, an June 2000 ISP survey found that when presented with a range of alternative foreign policy options support for EU membership fell from 54% to 43%, as one would have expected when respondents were presented with a variety of alternatives rather than a straight Yes or No choice. However, it was still a much more popular choice than neutrality (21%) and closer links with the USA (13%) or Russia (11%).⁸⁹

Finally, the fact that there has been a lively public debate on Polish EU membership, including the voicing of openly Eurosceptic views, and concomitant hardening of public attitudes may (ironically) also be good news for the pro-EU camp.⁹⁰ This means that polling data provide a more solid and accurate representation of the true state of Polish public opinion and, therefore, a more reliable indicator of what is likely to happen in the actual accession referendum. In this sense Poland compares favourably with other post-communist candidate states, such as Hungary, where much less attention and public scrutiny has focussed on this issue.⁹¹

However, in spite of this broadly optimistic scenario for the pro-EU camp it still faces two potentially serious obstacles. Perhaps, the greatest threat to securing a Yes vote is if the accession referendum becomes transformed into a broader plebiscite on the

⁸⁷ See: M. D. Zdort. 'Prawica tradycyjna czy nowoczesna.' *Rzeczpospolita*. 25 September 2001.

⁸⁸ See, for example: *Europe as a realigning issue in Polish politics?*

⁸⁹ See: 'Poland's Membership of the European Union.' p15. Similarly, an earlier December 1998 survey found that when presented with a range of possible Polish foreign policy options the number of supporters of EU membership fell from 64% to 55%. However, EU membership was still much more popular than isolationism (12%), forging an alliance with the USA (6%) or developing closer links with Poland's Eastern neighbours (5%) CBOS. *Na drodze do Unii Europejskiej*. Warsaw: CBOS. January 1999.

⁹⁰ For example, an October 2001 ISP survey found evidence of a crystallisation of public attitudes with a fall in number of Poles who did not know who would gain or lose as a result of Polish EU membership between June 2000 and October 2001. See: *Wybory 2001 a integracja Polski z Unią Europejską*. pp23-25.

⁹¹ See, for example, the description of the paucity of the Hungarian euro-debate by Agnes Batory in 'Current and Future Issues in European Integration: Public Opinion and EU Enlargement: Proceedings of a seminar in a series of meetings on current issues in European integration organised by the Centre of International Studies, Cambridge University and sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, held at Pembroke College, Cambridge'. 14 June 2001' at www.intstudies.cam.ac.uk/fco/fco-pubop.html.

socio-economic transition as a whole. EU membership could then be seen to benefit mainly an elite of already privileged transition winners: those narrow elite groups that people feel are the beneficiaries of this process. In other words, there is a danger that the Polish public, a majority of whom already feel that they have lost out from the transition, sees EU accession as an elite driven process from which it will gain little and simply lead to a further deterioration in their living standards. ISP polling data has shown that attitudes towards the socio-economic transition were the single most powerful variable explaining attitudes towards Polish EU membership. The highest levels of support for EU membership were to be found among those who supported the transition process in its broadest sense as well as specific policies such as privatisation and encouraging foreign investment. For example, an October 2001 ISP survey found that 70% of those who strongly agreed that post-communist Poland was a better place to live than pre-1989 Poland intended to vote Yes in an accession referendum compared with only 34% who strongly disagreed with this proposition.⁹² At the same time, most Poles perceived themselves to be 'transition losers' and this is a perception that has increased markedly in recent years. For example, the same October 2001 ISP survey found those who believed that post-communist Poland was a better place to live in than pre-1989 Poland fell from 55% in June 2000 to 44% in October 2001. Those who felt that it was not increased from 37% to 48% over the same period.

Not surprisingly, therefore, fear of the possible negative consequences of Polish EU membership were rooted primarily in socio-economic factors, particularly the impact on certain sectors of the economy such as agriculture and small and medium-sized businesses. For example, an June 2000 ISP survey found that 56% of Poles believed that EU accession would mean the collapse of many small and medium sized enterprises and increased unemployment (28% disagreed). Similarly, although, as noted above, a majority felt that EU accession would mean more money for Polish farmers, a substantial minority (40% to 44%) also felt that it would lead to a collapse of Polish agriculture when exposed to EU competition. Moreover, only 41% of Poles believed that their standard of living would increase when Poland joined the EU.⁹³ Similarly, as **Table 6** shows, a February 2002 CBOS survey also revealed that the potentially negative impact of EU membership on the Polish economy was the most frequently cited motive for opposing accession. Such concerns about the economic impact of EU membership, particularly the idea that Poland was not yet ready to compete with the more economically advanced current EU member states, were also likely to have underpinned the anxieties (noted above) of those who opposed what they saw as 'premature' accession on unfavourable terms.⁹⁴

⁹² See: *Wybory 2001 a integracja Polski z Unią Europejską*. p20. For more on this see: 'Poland's Membership of the European Union', pp26-28; and 'Nie liczymy na pieniądze.'

⁹³ See: 'Adaptation to the European Union.' p108.

⁹⁴ The positive side of this was, of course, that many opponents of EU membership were not necessarily anti-EU *per se* but simply concerned that Poland was not ready to join and, if they were convinced that it was ready, could be persuaded to join the Yes camp. See note 61.

Table 6: Motives for opposing Polish EU membership, January 2002

General disadvantages	18%
Impact of distance between Poland and EU countries	
Poland is unprepared, too weak to be an equal partner	20%
Loss of sovereignty, fear of becoming vassals	20%
General fear of second class membership	12%
Threats to specific areas	
Negative impact on agriculture	13%
Negative impact of the economy, industry, trade with the EU	13%
Negative impact on employment, opportunities to work abroad	6%
Negative impact on living standards	4%
Other factors	
Lack of information	10%
Disapproval of accession negotiations	6%
General lack of trust towards the EU	4%
General uncertainty, fear of the future	5%
Don't know	2%

Source: CBOS. *Argumenty zwolenników i przeciwników integracji Polski z Unią Europejską*. Warsaw: CBOS. February 2002.

As **Table 7** shows, this link between attitudes towards the socio-economic transition and EU accession was also reflected in the demographic profile of the pro- and anti-EU camps, particularly the correlation between attitudes towards Polish EU membership and age, place of residence, education, distribution of income, assessment of personal financial prospects and certain occupations. The highest levels of support for EU membership were evident among groups that one could consider to be transition winners or potential winners: younger and better-educated Poles who lived in larger towns or cities, had the highest incomes and were most optimistic about their own personal financial position. It was also particularly evident among certain occupational groups such as managers (75%), white collar workers (68%), businessmen (64%) and particularly students (74%). Opposition or ambivalence to EU membership, on the other hand, was particularly high among the transition losers: older, less well-educated Poles living in rural areas, lower income groups who were most pessimistic about their financial prospects, and, particularly, farmers. Indeed, those Poles who made their living from agriculture were the only occupational group where there was a majority opposed to EU membership (65% to 19%).⁹⁵ This pattern was reflected in a June 2000 ISP survey which found that when asked who would gain from EU accession the most frequently cited groups were: educated people (73% to 5%), the political elite (70% to 7%) and big business (59% to 17%). Smaller majorities thought that consumers (45% to 27%) and the unemployed (37% to 29%, with 20% unsure) would also benefit. The groups most frequently cited as accession

⁹⁵ Roguska and Kucharczyk found a similar pattern (See: *Wybory a integracja Polski z Unią Europejską*, pp11-12) as did Dolińska, although she argued that this correlation was much weaker than the one with subjective support for or opposition to socio-economic transformation (See: 'Poland's Membership of the European Union,' pp23-28).

losers were owners of small and medium sized businesses (45% to 22%), workers (40% to 23%) and farmers (48% to 29%).⁹⁶

Table 7: Socio-economic profile of supporters/opponents of Polish EU membership, March 2002

Age	Pro	Anti	Don't know
18-24	67	21	12
25-34	56	32	12
35-44	59	37	15
45-54	55	23	21
55-64	57	27	16
Over 65	48	30	23

Place of residence	Pro	Anti	Don't know
Villages	40	42	18
Less than 20,000 inhabitants	66	20	14
20-100,000	59	20	21
101-500,000	63	23	14
Over 501,000	68	19	13

Education	Pro	Anti	Don't know
Primary	46	32	22
Vocational	50	34	16
Middle	61	24	15
Higher	75	17	18

Occupation	Pro	Anti	Don't know
Managers	75	18	7
Intellectual workers	68	15	17
Intellectual-physical workers	49	30	21
Qualified workers	43	39	17
Unqualified workers	57	20	24
Farmers	19	65	16
Businessmen	64	20	16
Pensioners	37	43	21
Retirees	59	21	20
Students	74	18	8
Unemployed	57	30	13
Housewives	54	26	20

⁹⁶ See: 'Adaptation to the European Union.' p113. A majority (43% to 26%) also thought that swindlers would benefit from EU membership!

Weekly earnings	Pro	Anti	Don't know
Less than 299 z ³ oties	40	33	27
300-399	51	35	13
400-599	51	32	17
600-800	66	24	9
More than 800 z ³ oties	74	16	9

Assessment of own position	Pro	Anti	Don't know
Bad	45	37	18
Average	55	28	17
Good	77	11	12

Church attendance	Pro	Anti	Don't know
Several times a week	39	34	27
Weekly	53	30	18
Several times a month	60	29	11
Several times a year	64	23	13
Never	52	29	19

Source: CBOS. *Poparcie dla wejścia Polski do Unii Europejskiej i opinie o konwencji Europejskim*. Warsaw: CBOS. March 2002.

However, the key point here is that while attitudes towards EU membership overlapped with those towards the transition and (although to a somewhat lesser extent) those socio-economic groups that one could classify as actual or potential transition winners and losers, they did not do so completely. In other words, there was clearly a substantial group of Poles who were still pro-EU in spite of the fact that they were (or perceived themselves to be) transition losers. For example, as noted above, a June 2000 ISP survey showed (predictably) that 70% of those who felt that they were transition winners intend to vote for EU membership. However, it also revealed that a plurality of those who said that were transition losers (34%) also intended to vote Yes compared with only 20% who said that they would vote No. Similarly, as **Table 7** shows, even among most of those socio-economic groups that perceived themselves to be transition losers, there were majorities for EU membership in almost every case. This was, perhaps, because they identified Polish EU membership with economic advancement more generally or perhaps because they saw joining the EU as part of a broader 'civilisational choice' not necessarily linked to their specific socio-economic 'class interests'. Whatever the reason, the fact that the two issues, the perception of being a transition loser and opposition to EU membership, were (to some extent at least) de-coupled, accounts for this substantial segment of pro-EU transition losers. This, in turn, ensured that a majority of Poles continued to support EU membership.

The anti-EU camp's best hope (and the pro-EU camp's greatest fear) is, therefore, to link the two processes so that the EU accession referendum becomes a proxy for a referendum on the transition as a whole. It is, therefore, socio-economic arguments, the fear that Poland will not be able to cope successfully with accession and have to pay huge social costs, which are most likely to strike a chord with the Polish public and provide the most fertile recruiting ground for the Polish anti-EU camp. On the other hand, the strategy adopted by some Polish Eurosceptics (such as Łopuszański and Wrzodak) of stressing the threat to national sovereignty posed by EU membership is unlikely to make much headway with the majority of Poles nor provide any serious threat to the pro-EU camp. A June 2000 ISP report found that most Poles did not believe that the EU would lead to a loss of independence (only 13% compared to 77%) nor a weakening of Polish traditions and culture (only 31% compared to 60%).⁹⁷ Similarly, as **Table 6** shows, only 20% of those opposed to Polish EU membership cited 'ideological' factors rather than economic ones.⁹⁸ One explanation for this phenomenon is the unambiguously pro-EU stance adopted by the Pope and Catholic Church hierarchy (noted above) which makes it very difficult for Catholic nationalists, such as those clustered around Radio Maryja, to evoke the possible 'loss of national identity' as an argument against EU membership.⁹⁹

However, a much bigger threat to the pro-EU camp than a No vote is the danger of a low turnout in an accession referendum, particularly if the conduct of the Polish Euro-debate over the next eighteen months serves to breed apathy and resentment towards the whole European project. According to the Polish Constitution, a referendum is only valid if more than 50% of eligible voters participate in it.¹⁰⁰ On the face of it, opinion poll evidence suggests that securing a 50% turnout for an accession referendum should not be too onerous a task. A May 2001 OBOP suggested a 70% turnout,¹⁰¹ an October 2001 ISP poll 65%¹⁰² and a March 2002 CBOS survey 66%.¹⁰³ However, the experience of previous referendums and parliamentary elections suggests that the propensity to declare a willingness to vote systematically overstates the real likely turnout so that one must approach these figures with extreme caution.

⁹⁷ See: 'Adaptation to the European Union.' p108.

⁹⁸ Obviously, it is difficult to completely separate economic issues from those relating to national sovereignty. However, it is possible to distinguish between those anti-EU Poles who are primarily motivated by fears of loss of sovereignty (and who, implicitly, would oppose EU membership even if they accepted that the net economic effects were beneficial) and those who are mainly fearful of the economic consequences rather than any loss of sovereignty *per se*. Polish opponents of EU membership are, I would argue, principally located in the latter category.

⁹⁹ See: 'Club class Europe'. pp9-10. As **Table 7** shows, those attending Church services several times a week (the core of the 'religious right') were more likely to be anti-EU. However, apart from that relatively small group there was no clear link between religiosity and attitudes towards EU membership.

¹⁰⁰ In fact, according to Article 90 of the Polish Constitution, it is also possible to ratify an accession treaty by a two-thirds majority vote in both houses of parliament (sitting as the National Assembly). However, Poland's political leaders have committed themselves to a referendum, a commitment that it will be virtually impossible for them to retract. Theoretically, they could fall back on the parliamentary option if, for example, turnout fell just short of 50% but an overwhelming majority of those participating voted 'Yes'. However, such a decision would be open to challenge both on legal grounds and (perhaps more importantly) on the dubious political legitimacy that it would confer on a decision of such historic proportions. See: P.Winczorek. 'Głośniej nad tą urną.' *Polityka*. 8 December 2001.

¹⁰¹ See: *Opinia społeczna o członkostwie Polski w Unii Europejskiej*.

¹⁰² See: *Wybory 2001 a integracja z Unią Europejską*. pp5-6

¹⁰³ See: *Poparcie dla integracji Polski z Unią Europejską i opinie o Konwencji Europejskim*.

For example, polling evidence in the run up to the February 1996 referendum on mass privatisation indicated a turnout of 52% while the actual turnout was only 32.4%. Similarly, polls taken in the run up to the May 1997 referendum to ratify the Constitution itself (that, interestingly, did not require a 50% turnout) indicated that two thirds of Poles would vote while actual turnout was only 42.9%. Again, immediately prior to the September 2001 parliamentary election an OBOP survey predicted a 60% turnout while only 46% in fact voted. Indeed, three out of the four parliamentary elections held since the emergence of multi-party politics in 1989 have had turnout levels of below 50%.¹⁰⁴ In reality, a more accurate indicator of turnout is likely to be the number who say that they will *definitely* vote and in the case of both the OBOP and ISP polls cited above this was only 43%.¹⁰⁵ Only the March 2002 CBOS survey was somewhat more optimistic in this respect, with just over half (51%) of respondents saying that they would definitely participate in an accession referendum.

If, as the evidence above appears to indicate, the average Pole does not really understand what impact EU membership will have on their lives then this is sure to depress turnout. Similarly, the fact that it is rather general economic and abstract political motives that underpin support for EU membership could be a problem as these may have a less powerful mobilisational capacity than more specific economic factors. Moreover, there is also some evidence that propensity to turnout in an accession referendum is affected by attitudes towards the socio-economic transition. For example, an October 2001 ISP survey found only 19% of those who considered themselves transition winners said that they would definitely not participate in an accession referendum, while this figure increased to 35% among perceived losers.¹⁰⁶ Asking this question in a slightly different, and more future oriented, way 50% of those who said that Poland would be a worse place to live in five years time said that would they would definitely not vote in an accession referendum. This compared with only 14% non-voters among those who said that it would be a better place.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, any further negative shifts in attitudes towards the transition (and its future impact) are also likely to negatively affect the referendum turnout. At the same time, some commentators claim to have detected signs that, although still broadly supportive of EU membership, even transition winners are losing enthusiasm about Polish accession and will also be less likely to turn out and vote.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

Recent years have seen a significant fall in support for Polish EU membership and the emergence of a sizeable bloc of anti-EU public opinion. The September 2001 parliamentary election also saw parties and groupings critical of, or even hostile to, Polish EU membership win a significant share of the vote and secure substantial parliamentary representation. However, it would be wrong to interpret this as representing some kind of Eurosceptic backlash given that, by virtually any measure,

¹⁰⁴ Only presidential elections, where voters can identify more clearly with an individual candidate, have consistently secured turnouts above 50%.

¹⁰⁵ Even here the ISP figure may be an exaggeration as it was based on a poll taken just after an election when there is a tendency for such figures to increase.

¹⁰⁶ See: *Wybory 2001 a integracja z Unią Europejską*, p20.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p21.

¹⁰⁸ See: 'Nie liczymy na pieniądze'; and 'Teraz albo wcale.'

the EU was not a salient election campaign issue. Moreover, as predicted, the new SLD-led government actually adopted a new, more flexible attitude towards issues such as access to Western labour markets and sale of land to foreigners in order to accelerate the accession negotiations. This produced a mixed public reaction, primarily because most Poles did not really accept or understand the government's argument that delaying Polish EU accession would be a disaster and it was necessary to make certain concessions in order to facilitate early Polish entry. Moreover, the clumsy way in which the new negotiating strategy was announced also produced an extremely hostile political backlash even from within the government and the pro-EU opposition parties. Indeed, the SLD-UP coalition fell short of an overall majority in the election and was forced to form a government with the PSL, a party that will be extremely reluctant to agree to concessions that do not satisfy its core rural-agrarian constituency. This has constrained its room for manoeuvre and will continue to do so during the negotiating endgame. The anti-EU parties have also exploited their newly gained parliamentary platform and attempted (with some success) to shift the terms of and polarise the Polish euro-debate.

However, the public appears unmoved by the controversies surrounding the change of negotiating strategy and EU proposals for agricultural support, and overall levels of support for Polish EU membership remain at the relatively high levels at which they stabilised in the middle of 1999. Although it may suffer some further slippage, it is still extremely likely that a majority of Poles will vote Yes in the accession referendum. Poles have a fairly realistic attitude towards the costs and benefits that will flow from EU membership and pro-EU voters are more likely to turn out to vote than those who are against. All of this does not mean that Polish Euroenthusiasts should get too complacent or that the accession referendum will not be a hard fight. A lot will obviously depend on precisely how the negotiating endgame works itself out and precise 'deal' that the Polish government is able to secure. However, it is also critical how the Polish political elite conducts itself, particularly if the SLD led government and pro-EU opposition can form a relatively united front on the issue. The extent to which the Catholic Church hierarchy actively engages in mobilising the faithful or, at the very least, neutralising the impact of the influential anti-EU Radio Marja broadcaster will also be an important factor.

It is also critically important how the debate on the accession referendum is framed. The pro-EU camp's strongest argument remains the Eurosceptics' lack of an attractive or realistic alternative foreign policy. Their most promising strategy, therefore, would be to present the accession referendum primarily in historical terms as representing a major civilisation and geo-political choice, with the economic benefits forming a strong complementary second strand, focussing on pre-accession aid as precursor of more to come. On the other hand, the anti-EU camp's only real hope of victory is to present the accession referendum as a plebiscite on the socio-economic transition as a whole, portraying EU membership as something that will only benefit the minority who perceive themselves to be transition winners. The greatest danger for the pro-EU camp, therefore, is that a stereotype develops of the kind of person and socio-occupational groups that are likely to benefit from it with certain segments of the population clearly defined as, and perceiving themselves to be, winners and losers. However, if the anti-EU camp frames its arguments in ideological terms, focussing on the perceived threat to Polish sovereignty and culture, then it will almost certainly

lose. Nevertheless, even if the pro-EU camp secures a convincing Yes vote, then there is still a (probably even greater) danger that the referendum will fail to achieve the 50% turnout required by the Polish Constitution for it to be valid. This could happen if the conduct of the Polish euro-debate creates an image of EU membership as simply a regrettable necessity or if the average Pole comes to view EU membership as an elite-driven process that will not have any positive impact on their day-to-day lives.

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