



**Why do Poles love the EU and what do they love about it?: Polish attitudes towards European integration during the first three years of EU membership**

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## Abstract

*Parties that were extremely critical of, or even hostile to, the EU, have obtained high votes in recent Polish elections and the country developed an image as the EU's 'new awkward partner'. However, Polish support for EU membership remained extremely high and increased to record levels in the three years since accession, as Poles were extremely positive about the effects of accession on most aspects of their lives. The key to understanding this was the fact that Poles did not actually expect a swift transformation of their country as a result of EU accession and had fairly low (arguably, realistic) expectations of what, and how soon, benefits were likely to accrue. Most Poles felt that the EU had broadly delivered in those areas where people hoped or expected it would, especially access to Western labour markets and the opportunity to work abroad, and in other areas, notably agriculture, were pleasantly surprised by the positive effects of accession. Poles had fairly complex, and often contradictory, sets of attitudes towards the EU's future trajectory, and a lot depended on the particular sphere or policy area under consideration or how the question was framed. Low salience of the European issue in Polish elections partly explains why Eurosceptic parties performed so well in spite of these high levels of Polish Euro-enthusiasm. However, most Poles also had a very 'realistic' perception of how the EU functioned based on a deep suspicion of the motives of the large member states and supported political leaders committed to a taking a 'tough' stance in 'defending Poland's national interests' within the EU.*

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Poland's relations with the EU have been the subject of much critical media comment in the three-and-a-half years since its accession. This began in 2003, even before Poland joined the EU, when its critical approach to the EU's constitutional treaty already prompted some commentators to dub Poland the EU's 'new awkward partner'<sup>1</sup> and became an increasing concern when a new, apparently Eurosceptic, government came to office in October 2005. The autumn 2005 Polish presidential and parliamentary elections saw the victory of the right-wing Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: PiS) party with 27% of the votes and the party's presidential candidate Lech Kaczyński in a second round run off. If not necessarily outright Eurosceptic, in its election programme the Law and Justice party had been extremely critical of proposals to 'deepen' European integration and weaken the role of nation-states. It pledged to oppose any EU constitutional treaty that departed from the Nice voting arrangements and did not reflect Christian values explicitly, while its MEPs were members of the 'sovereignist' Union for a Europe of Nations' grouping in the European Parliament (EP). The agrarian Self-Defence (Samoobrona) party, led by the controversial radical-populist Andrzej Lepper, which had been bitterly critical of the terms of Polish EU accession and threatened withdrawal if these could not be renegotiated successfully, finished third securing 11.4% of the votes. The League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodziń: LPR), a clerical-nationalist party that had spearheaded the campaign against Polish accession during the 2003 referendum based on an axiological critique of the EU, also won 8% of the votes. Although the party did not advocate Polish withdrawal explicitly in 2005, its campaign materials continued to attack the EU as a threat to Polish sovereignty and for promoting what it saw as anti-Christian values. The League also opposed any EU constitutional treaty on principle and its MEPs joined the radical Eurosceptic 'Independence and Democracy' grouping when they were elected to the EP in 2004.<sup>2</sup> In other words, over 45% of the votes in the 2005 parliamentary election were cast for broadly anti-EU or EU-critical parties. This followed on from the earlier June 2004 EP election in Poland that also saw a relatively high vote for Eurosceptic and EU-critical parties and candidates which, together with extremely low turnout of only 21%,<sup>3</sup> led some commentators to consider whether Poland was experiencing a 'Eurosceptic backlash'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See: Heather Grabbe, 'Poland: the EU's new awkward partner,' *Centre for European Reform Bulletin*, No. 34, February-March 2004, at [http://www.cer.org.uk/articles/34\\_grabbe.html](http://www.cer.org.uk/articles/34_grabbe.html) (Accessed on 10.10.07).

<sup>2</sup> Although the party's EP caucus ended up splitting, with most of its MEPs actually leaving the party, while those who remained members left the Independence and Democracy grouping and became non-affiliated. See: Jarosław Cwiek-Karpowicz, Piotr Kaźmierkiewicz and Magdalena Pucyk, *The Polish Members of the European Parliament: Their Activities and Impact on the Polish Political Scene*, Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs, 2007, p42.

<sup>3</sup> This was the second lowest turnout among the twenty-five member states and easily the lowest in any Polish national election or referendum held since 1989. See: Aleks Szczerbiak, 'Poland' in Juliet Lodge

Polish-EU relations emerged as major source of concern subsequently given the new Law and Justice party-led government's coolness towards adopting the euro and critical approach to the EU constitutional treaty. Previous Polish governments were keen to enter the eurozone as quickly as possible, as part of a broader aspiration not to be excluded from any 'inner core' of EU countries that may have developed to push for swifter integration in specific areas. However, while not ruling out future adoption of the euro in principle, the new government made it clear that it did not see this as a priority, especially if this meant having to introduce fiscal reforms likely to have negative, short-term social consequences. At the same time, in one of his first declarations as President-elect, Lech Kaczyński pledged to make Polish accession to the euro-zone subject to approval by a referendum. Given that the Law and Justice party's critique of the previous government's European policy was based in large part on its agreeing to a compromise that would have replaced the EU voting provisions agreed at the 2001 Nice summit (that were felt to be extremely favourable to Poland) with a double majority system based on the number of countries and their population size (that favoured larger countries such as France and Germany), not surprisingly the new government also opposed attempts to revive the EU constitutional treaty, initially at least. Although the party softened its rhetoric somewhat, the new government and President used the 'reflection period' that followed the 2005 French and Dutch No votes in ratification referendums to stall debate on this issue. More broadly, the Law and Justice party's leaders were often extremely critical of previous Polish governments for adopting what they argued was an over-conciliatory approach to Polish-EU relations, particularly in their dealings with Germany. All of this met with anxious reactions in a number of European capitals and sections of the West European media with a widespread perception emerging that Poland was taking a 'Euro-sceptic turn'.

Concerns about the new government's European policy were re-inforced by the fact that it was dependent for its parliamentary support upon on radical parties such as Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families that, as noted above, were even more hostile to the EU. Indeed, in May 2006, these two parties actually joined the government as junior coalition partners provoking further anxiety among Poland's European partners that this would strengthen the government's Euro-sceptic tendencies. Moreover, the presence of these two parties in government prompted the resignation of foreign minister Stefan Meller, a non-party career diplomat who was brought in to assuage anxious foreign reactions to the formation of the Law and Justice party-led government. Indeed, the extent to which the election of a Law and Justice-led government and Lech Kaczyński as President heralded a significant re-orientation in Poland's foreign policy finally became clear when Mr Meller was replaced by the President's close ally Anna Fotyga. According to the Law and Justice party, Mrs Fotyga's appointment symbolised the 're-claiming' of the ministry from the post-1989 foreign policy establishment that they believed has been insufficiently robust in promoting Poland's interests internationally.

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(ed.), *The 2004 Elections to the European Parliament*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp201-9 (206).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: Helmut P. Gaisbauer, 'Euro-Scepticism Revisited: Poland After EU Accession,' *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol 8 No 1, April 2007, pp55-72.

The government's tough 'national interests first' stance was exemplified by its veto, in November 2006, of the negotiating mandate for a new EU-Russia bi-lateral partnership agreement in response to a Russian ban on Polish meat and other food products at the end of 2005, which Poland had always argued was politically inspired. It also emerged very clearly in the run up to the June 2007 summit at which the German EU Presidency hoped to revive the constitutional treaty. Initially, the Law and Justice-led government responded by abandoning its support for the Nice voting provisions and argued instead that the number of votes in the Council of Ministers should be based on the square root of a country's population. When other EU leaders failed to back this proposal at the summit, it was dropped quickly and the Polish delegation sought instead to delay the introduction of the new double majority system. For a while the Polish delegation even threatened to veto the negotiating mandate for what was now called the 'reform treaty' only relenting when the summit agreed to an extension of the Nice voting system until at least 2014, with an option to use it further until 2017 and, apparently, strengthened the mechanisms by which a minority of countries could block unfavourable decisions. The Law and Justice-led government claimed that its tough negotiating tactics – the most controversial of which was prime minister (and Lech's twin brother) Jarosław Kaczyński's argument in the run up to the summit that a population-based voting system was unfair because six million Poles had been killed by Germany during the Second World War - were effective in helping to secure a favourable deal for Poland. It accused its critics, especially those from the post-1989 foreign policy establishment, of being more interested in drawing praise from foreign governments and Brussels, than defending national interests effectively in the international arena. However, the government's critics argued that these kind of tactics threatened to isolate in Poland in European affairs by making it an unpredictable negotiating partner unable to forge stable long-term alliances, and were symptomatic of the government's broader failure to develop a coherent, long-term strategy in its approach to EU relations.

In the event, the Law and Justice party lost the September 2007 parliamentary election, held two years ahead of schedule, to the liberal-conservative Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska: PO) while the two radical Eurosceptic parties – Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families – fell well short of the 5% threshold required for parliamentary representation securing only 1.5% and 1.3% of the votes respectively. As a member of the Christian Democratic European People's Party (EPP) and enjoying close international links with the German Christian Democrats, Civic Platform was a more pro-EU party with a stronger commitment to European integration. However, the Law and Justice party actually increased its share of the vote to 32.1%, absorbing much of its erstwhile coalition partners' electorate in the process, so that the vote for Eurosceptic parties in 2007 was still a substantial one. Moreover, much of Civic Platform's critique of the Law and Justice party's European policy was about its inconsistency and ineffectiveness and differences between the two parties were often as much about tone and style as they were about substance. As we shall see, it was Civic Platform that, back in autumn 2003, made the running in attacking proposals to scrap the Nice voting provisions in the draft constitutional treaty, as part of its political broader strategy to broaden its electoral appeal by developing a more 'national-patriotic' discourse. Indeed, although the party had a somewhat different tone and style it was unlikely to abandon the tough 'national interests first' rhetoric that was the hallmark of the outgoing government's approach. For example, although the party criticised the tone of the Jarosław Kaczyński's

rhetoric in the run up to the 2007 Brussels summit, its strongest criticisms were directed at the fact that the Polish delegation had abandoned the 'square root' formula so easily.

This paper examines how Polish public attitudes towards the EU have evolved in the three years since EU accession in May 2004 against this backdrop of increasingly prickly Polish-EU relations, an apparently increasingly Eurosceptic political elite and strong electoral support for parties that were critical of, or hostile to, the EU. Section one begins by examining what has actually happened to levels of support for EU membership in Poland in the three years since accession. It goes on to consider how they think that EU accession has impacted on particular sectors of the economy, spheres of public life or socio-demographic groups and what particular aspects of EU membership they feel particularly positively and negatively about. It then moves on to analyse why there has been no 'Eurosceptic backlash' in Poland, indeed why there have been enduring and increasingly high levels of support for EU membership in Poland in the three years after accession. In section two, the paper goes on to consider Polish attitudes towards the EU's future trajectory and proposals for further European integration in terms of both 'deepening' and 'widening'. In particular, it examines Polish attitudes towards the most important recent initiative to move the European integration process forward: the EU constitutional treaty and its successor the reform treaty. Finally, in section three, the paper considers how one explains the fact that, although public support for the EU in Poland has increased to record levels since accession and widespread perception that membership has brought significant benefits, Poles still voted in such large numbers for Eurosceptic or EU-critical parties in the 2004 EP election, 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections, and, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent, 2007 parliamentary election.

The paper argues that the key to understanding the extremely high levels of Polish support for the EU in the three years since accession was the fact that Poles did not actually expect a swift transformation of their country as a result of EU accession and had fairly low (arguably, realistic) expectations of what, and how soon, benefits were likely to accrue. Most Poles felt that the EU had broadly delivered in those areas where people hoped or expected it would, especially access to Western labour markets and the opportunity to work abroad, and in other areas, notably agriculture, were pleasantly surprised by the positive effects of accession. Poles had fairly complex, and often contradictory, sets of attitudes towards the EU's future trajectory, and a lot depended on the particular sphere or policy area under consideration or how the question was framed. Low salience of the European issue in Polish elections partly explains why Eurosceptic parties performed so well in spite of these high levels of Polish Euro-enthusiasm. However, most Poles also had a very 'realistic' perception of how the EU functioned based on a deep suspicion of the motives of the large member states and supported political leaders committed to a taking a 'tough' stance in 'defending Poland's national interests' within the EU.

## **1. Polish attitudes towards EU membership, 2004-7**

So what has actually happened to levels of support for EU membership in Poland in the three years since accession? In fact, in spite of having apparently Eurosceptic political elites and voting for Eurosceptic parties in the 2005 elections, Poles were actually very enthusiastic about EU membership and appeared to be positive about

most of the effects of accession. As **Table 1** shows, CBOS survey data reveals that Polish support for EU membership has remained extremely high and, if anything, increased in the three years since accession so that by July 2007 it had reached a record level of 89%, with only 5% against.

**Table 1: Polish attitudes towards European integration, 2003-2007**

|                | 2003 |    |     |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | 2004 |     |
|----------------|------|----|-----|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|------|-----|
|                | I    | II | III | IV | V    | VI | IX   | X  | XI   | XII | I    | II  |
| <b>For</b>     | 63   | 60 | 58  | 59 | 66   | 67 | 67   | 69 | 63   | 63  | 61   | 60  |
| <b>Against</b> | 21   | 25 | 24  | 24 | 18   | 18 | 20   | 23 | 30   | 29  | 30   | 31  |
| <b>D/K</b>     | 16   | 15 | 18  | 17 | 16   | 15 | 13   | 8  | 7    | 9   | 9    | 9   |
|                | 2004 |    |     |    |      |    |      |    |      |     | 2005 |     |
|                | III  | IV | V   | VI | VIII | IX | X    | XI | XII  | II  | III  | IV  |
| <b>For</b>     | 62   | 64 | 71  | 69 | 70   | 69 | 72   | 77 | 76   | 77  | 74   | 77  |
| <b>Against</b> | 29   | 29 | 20  | 22 | 21   | 69 | 72   | 77 | 76   | 14  | 17   | 15  |
| <b>D/K</b>     | 9    | 7  | 9   | 9  | 9    | 10 | 8    | 7  | 8    | 9   | 9    | 8   |
|                | 2005 |    |     |    | 2006 |    |      |    | 2007 |     |      |     |
|                | V    | VI | VII | IX | I    | IV | VIII | X  | I    | IV  | V    | VII |
| <b>For</b>     | 76   | 74 | 78  | 73 | 80   | 80 | 83   | 88 | 87   | 86  | 89   | 89  |
| <b>Against</b> | 14   | 15 | 14  | 16 | 12   | 11 | 10   | 6  | 7    | 7   | 5    | 5   |
| <b>D/K</b>     | 10   | 11 | 8   | 10 | 8    | 9  | 7    | 6  | 6    | 8   | 6    | 6   |

Source: CBOS, *Pierwsze oceny skutków członkostwa Polski w Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, September 2004; and CBOS, *Sprzymierzeńcy Polski w Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, July 2004.

Similarly, a September 2007 TNS OBOP survey found that the number of respondents who felt that Poland's membership of the EU was a good thing had increased from 51% in May 2004 to 74% in April 2007 while the number who felt it was a bad thing had fallen from 15% to only 4%.<sup>5</sup> As **Table 2** shows, a spring 2007 Eurobarometer survey also found that Poles appeared to be more satisfied with the EU than citizens in other member states. 67% felt that their country's membership of the EU was a good thing, higher than the EU average of 57% and a substantial increase on the 42% of respondents who agreed with this proposition in the Eurobarometer survey conducted prior to accession in spring 2004.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See: TNS OBOP, *Opinia o członkostwo u Unii Europejskiej w pierwszej połowie września 2007r.* TNS OBOP: Warsaw, September 2007 (September 2007 data), p3. For 2004 data see: TNS OBOP, *Opinia o członkostwo u Unii Europejskiej w pierwszych dniach maja 2004r.* TNS OBOP: Warsaw, May 2004 (May 2004 data). The number who felt that it was neither good nor bad and the number of 'don't knows' remained roughly the same at 17% and 5% respectively.

<sup>6</sup> See: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 67: Public Opinion in the European Union. Executive Summary: Poland*, Brussels: European Commission, June 2007 (April-May 2007 data), p5.

**Table 2: Responses to the question ‘Is your country’s membership of the EU a good thing?’, April-May 2007**

(% replying Yes)

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Ireland           | 78        |
| Netherland        | 77        |
| Luxembourg        | 74        |
| Spain             | 73        |
| Belgium           | 70        |
| <b>Poland</b>     | <b>67</b> |
| Romania           | 67        |
| Denmark           | 66        |
| Estonia           | 66        |
| Germany           | 65        |
| Slovakia          | 64        |
| Lithuania         | 63        |
| Slovenia          | 58        |
| <i>EU average</i> | <i>57</i> |
| Bulgaria          | 55        |
| Greece            | 55        |
| Portugal          | 55        |
| France            | 52        |
| Italy             | 51        |
| Malta             | 51        |
| Sweden            | 50        |
| Czech Republic    | 46        |
| Cyprus            | 44        |
| Finland           | 42        |
| UK                | 39        |
| Hungary           | 37        |
| Latvia            | 37        |
| Austria           | 36        |

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 67; Public Opinion in the European Union. First Results*, Brussels: European Commission, June 2007 (April-May 2007 data), p16

At the same time, as **Table 3** shows, a March-April 2007 CBOS survey found an increase in those who felt that EU accession had brought (or would bring) Poland more gains than losses from 39% in February 2004 to 64% and a fall in those who

believed the opposite from 38% to 15%. The same survey also found that those who felt that EU accession brought (or would bring) greater benefits to Poland than to 'old' member states had increased from 22% in 2004 to 30%, while those who felt that the latter had benefited (or would benefit) most fell from 50% to only 28%; so that, for the first time, a narrow majority of Poles believed that their country was the main beneficiary.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, a September 2007 TNS OBOP survey found a huge increase in those who felt that EU accession had brought Poland more gains than losses in the three years since accession from only 27% in May 2004 to 65% in 2007, and fall in those who thought either that it had made no difference (from 45% to only 21%) or brought about more losses than gains (from 16% to only 8%).<sup>8</sup> Similarly, a spring 2007 Eurobarometer survey found that 78% of respondents felt that Poland had benefited from EU membership, a huge increase on the 50% who, in the spring 2004 survey conducted immediately prior to accession, felt that it would benefit and significantly above than the EU average of 59%.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 3: Response to 'Will/Has Polish EU accession bring/brought more gains or losses?'** (%)

|            | Poland        |                   | Personally    |                   |
|------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
|            | February 2004 | March/ April 2007 | February 2004 | March/ April 2007 |
| Gains      | 39            | 64                | 29            | 40                |
| Losses     | 38            | 15                | 34            | 11                |
| Same       | 15            | 14                | 23            | 34                |
| Don't know | 8             | 7                 | 15            | 21                |

Source: CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*, CBOS: Warsaw April 2007 (March-April 2007 data), p3

So what aspects of EU membership did Poles feel particularly positively and negatively about? And how did they think that EU accession had impacted on particular sectors of the economy, spheres of public life or socio-demographic groups? As **Table 4** shows, a March-April 2007 CBOS survey found that an overwhelming majority of Poles (72%) felt that the impact on the Polish economy as a whole had been positive (this was up from 40% who expected it be positive in February 2004) compared with only 8% who felt it had been negative (down from 34%). Similarly, 64% of respondents felt that there had been a positive impact on private business (up from 37% in February 2004) compared with only 7% who felt it had been negative (down from 30%). 48% felt that the impact on state-owned enterprises was positive (up from 28%), compared to only 14% who felt it was negative (down from 33%). There was also a substantial increase in the number of

<sup>7</sup> See: CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*, CBOS: Warsaw April 2007 (March-April 2007 data), p3. 24% of respondents said that they benefited equally and 18% did not know.

<sup>8</sup> See: TNS OBOP, *Opinia o członkostwo u Unii Europejskiej w pierwszej połowie września 2007r*, p4. For 2004 data see: TNS OBOP, *Opinia o członkostwo u Unii Europejskiej w pierwszych dniach maja 2004r*, p6. The number of 'don't knows' fell from 12% to 6%.

<sup>9</sup> See: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 67*, p5.

those who believe that joining the EU had had a positive impact on Poles' material conditions from 28% who felt that this would be the case in February 2004 (and only 16% who felt that this had happened in May 2005) to 49% in 2007, and a fall in those who felt that the impact was negative from 39% to only 13%.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 4: Opinions on the impact of Polish EU membership on particular areas/sectors? (%), March-April 2007**

|                                     | Positive | Negative | No impact | Don't know |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Economy                             | 72       | 8        | 9         | 11         |
| Private business                    | 64       | 7        | 11        | 18         |
| State-owned companies               | 48       | 14       | 15        | 23         |
| Poles' material conditions          | 49       | 13       | 23        | 15         |
| Polish international security       | 58       | 5        | 20        | 17         |
| Poland's position in Europe         | 68       | 6        | 12        | 14         |
| Poles' self-esteem                  | 45       | 4        | 38        | 12         |
| Agriculture                         | 75       | 7        | 7         | 11         |
| Respect for the law                 | 37       | 8        | 38        | 16         |
| Functioning of the political system | 34       | 10       | 34        | 22         |
| Level of bureaucracy                | 7        | 41       | 40        | 13         |

Source: CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*, CBOS: Warsaw April 2007 (March-April 2007 data), pp12 14, 15, 17, 18 and 20.

58% of respondents felt that EU accession had increased Polish international security, while only 5% felt that it had reduced it. 68% also felt that EU accession had had a positive impact on Poland's position in Europe, while only 6% felt that the impact was negative. A September 2007 TNS OBOP survey also found an increase in the number of respondents who felt that EU accession had had a positive impact on Poland's international status from 45% in May 2004 to 65% and fall in those who felt that it had had no impact from 33% to 19%, (only 9% felt that it had had a negative impact).<sup>11</sup> Similarly, an earlier April 2006 ISP survey found that 54% of respondents felt that EU accession had improved Poland's standing in the world compared with only 7% who said that it had made it worse.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, a March-April 2007 CBOS survey found that 60% of respondents now felt that Poland had the influence of a medium-sized state within the EU (up from 47% who felt that it would have such an influence in February 2004) compared to 28% who felt it had the influence of a small state (down from 44% in 2004).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, as **Table 4** shows, 45% of Poles felt that

<sup>10</sup> For data from earlier years see: CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*.

<sup>11</sup> See: TNS OBOP, *Opinia o członkostwo u Unii Europejskiej w pierwszej połowie września 2007r*, p4. For 2004 data see: TNS OBOP, *Opinia o członkostwo u Unii Europejskiej w pierwszych dniach maja 2004r*, p6. The number of 'don't knows' fell from 14% to 7%.

<sup>12</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych. *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*. ISP: Warsaw, May 2006 (April 2006 data). 34% said it had made no difference and 5% did not know.

<sup>13</sup> See: CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*, p16. 1% counted it among those states with a large influence and 11% did not know.

EU accession had increased their self-esteem and only 4% felt that it had made it worse.

So how does one explain the enduring (indeed, increasingly) high levels of support for the EU in Poland in the three years after accession? Why was there no post-accession decline in Polish support for EU membership, or 'Eurosceptic backlash', as expectations of what EU membership might entail confronted the post-accession reality? The key to understanding this is the fact that Poles actually had very low (one might argue, realistic) expectations of what EU membership would actually deliver for them, in the short term at least. Indeed, the way that Polish-EU relations developed in the period that followed the June 2003 EU accession referendum<sup>14</sup> contributed significantly to this, by creating a post-referendum but pre-accession decline in enthusiasm for EU membership or 'hangover'. No sooner had Poland voted to join the EU, and even before it became it became a member state, the Polish government became embroiled in a row in autumn 2003 over the new EU voting system proposed in the draft constitutional treaty that emerged from the Convention on the Future of Europe. The draft treaty appeared to reduce Poland's influence by replacing the weighted voting system agreed at the December 2000 Nice summit - which gave Poland (along with Spain) 27 votes in the Council of Ministers, only two fewer than the four largest member states (Britain, France, Germany and Italy) - with a new voting system requiring a 'double majority' of member states representing 60% of the EU's population, for the passage of legislation. The Polish government, led by the communist successor party, the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej: SLD), took an uncompromising stance in defence of the Nice voting provisions, based on a very broad domestic political consensus. This included generally pro-EU opposition parties such as the liberal-conservative Civic Platform whose parliamentary leader Jan Rokita even coined the slogan 'Nice or Death' when

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<sup>14</sup> When Poles voted for accession overwhelmingly by 77.45% to 22.54% on a 58.8% turnout. See: Clare McManus-Czubińska, William L. Miller, Radosław Markowski and Jacek Wasilewski, 'The Misuse of Referendums in Post-Communist Europe,' *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol 20 No 1, March 2004, pp56-80; Aleks Szczerbiak, 'History Trumps Government Unpopularity: The June 2003 Polish EU Accession Referendum,' *West European Politics*, Vol 27 No 4, September 2004, pp671-690; Krzysztof Jasiewicz, 'Knocking on Europe's Door: Voting Behavior in the EU Accession Referendum in Poland,' *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol 51 No 5, September/October 2004, pp34-44; Mateusz Fałkowski and Jacek Kucharczyk, *Obywatele Europy: Integracja europejska w polskim życiu publicznym*, Warsaw: ISP, 2005; and Radosław Markowski and Joshua A. Tucker, 'Pocketbooks, politics and parties: The 2003 Polish Referendum on EU membership', *Electoral Studies*, Vol 24 No 3, 2005, pp409-443. For analyses of Polish public attitudes towards the EU prior to accession see, for example: Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, ed., *Polska Eurodebata*, Warsaw: ISP, 1999; Marek Kucia, 'Public Opinion in Central Europe on EU Accession: The Czech Republic and Poland', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1999, pp143-155; Aleks Szczerbiak, 'Polish Public Opinion: Explaining Declining Support for EU membership', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol 39 No 1, 2001, pp107-124; Jack Bielasiak, 'Determinants of Public Opinion Differences on EU Accession in Poland', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol 54 No 8, 2002, pp1241-1266; Aleks Szczerbiak, *After The Election, Nearing The Endgame: The Polish Euro-Debate In The Run Up To The 2003 EU Accession Referendum*, Opposing Europe Research Network Working Paper No 7/Sussex European Institute Working Paper No 53, May 2002, Brighton: Sussex European Institute; Katarzyna M. Wilk and Goldie Shabad, 'The Impact of Social Class and Political Experience on Support for Poland's Joining the European Union in Post-Communist Poland,' in Kazimierz M. Słomczyński, ed., *Social Structure: Changes and Linkages. The Advanced Phase of Post-Communist Transition in Poland*, Warsaw: IfiS, 2002, pp243-260; Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, ed., *Przed referendum europejskim - absencja, sprzeciw, poparcie*. Warsaw: ISP, 2003; Kazimierz M. Słomczyński and Goldie Shabad, 'Dynamics of support for European integration in post-communist Poland', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol 42 No 4, 2003, pp503-539.

he called on the government to veto any treaty that departed substantially from the Nice voting provisions. Consequently, it was the Polish (and Spanish) government's strong defence of the Nice voting system and opposition to the new voting provisions that was one of the main factors contributing to the breakdown of negotiations at the December 2003 Brussels EU summit at which the new constitutional treaty was supposed to have been agreed.<sup>15</sup>

The barrage of negative publicity in Poland surrounding the negotiations on the draft constitutional treaty, and the apparent threat that it represented to Polish interests, meant that, by the time of Polish EU accession in May 2004 (and the subsequent June EP election), there were certainly reasons to assume that the positive feelings generated at the time of the accession referendum had, to some extent at least, subsided. Indeed, as **Table 1** shows, CBOS survey data shows that there was a decline in support for EU membership in Poland after the June 2003 referendum from 69% in October 2003 to 60% in February 2004, and an increase in opposition over the same period from 23% (indeed the number of opponents had actually fallen to only 18% in May and June 2003) to a record high of 31%. A February 2004 CBOS survey also found a marked decline in those who felt that accession would have a positive impact on the Polish economy, reduce unemployment and improve Poles' material conditions. At the same time, there was a notable increase in those who felt that EU accession would increase: food and energy prices (which, as discussed below, it did), the level of taxation and national insurance contributions, and the cost of traveling on public transport.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, TNS OBOP survey data found a substantial drop in the number of respondents who felt that EU accession would have a positive effect on Poland from 57% in July 2003 to only 38% in February 2004 and increase in those who felt that the effects would be negative from 17% to 27%.<sup>17</sup> The key point here is that, although there was, indeed, a (small) 'Euro-sceptic backlash' in Poland, it occurred *after* the June 2003 referendum but *before* EU accession in May 2004. Indeed, this increase in EU-pessimism – triggered, in large part, by the debate over the constitutional treaty – may, ironically, have actually contributed to the subsequent, post-accession surge in EU-enthusiasm by lowering expectations at a critical point immediately prior to accession.

Indeed, survey data conducted during the run up to EU accession, confirms that Polish expectations of what benefits EU membership would actually deliver in the short-term were, indeed, rather low. For example, a September 2003 PBS survey for the 'Rzeczpospolita' newspaper found that, although 48% of respondents felt that the situation in Poland would improve as a result of EU accession, as many as 35% felt that it would actually worsen and 17% thought that nothing would change.<sup>18</sup> An October 2003 OBOP survey for 'Rzeczpospolita' found that only 34% of Poles felt that Poland would benefit overall from EU membership within the first couple of

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<sup>15</sup> The Polish government's other main demand was for there to be explicit references to Europe's Christian traditions in the treaty's pre-ambles.

<sup>16</sup> See: CBOS. *Załamanie się optymizmu w myśleniu o efektach integracji z Unią Europejską*. CBOS: Warsaw, March 2004 (February 2004 data).

<sup>17</sup> See: TNS OBOP, TNS OBOP, *Opinia o członkostwo u Unii Europejskiej w pierwszej połowie lutego 2004r.*, p3. The number who felt that the impact would be neither positive nor negative increased from 18% to 27% while the number of 'don't knows' remained unchanged at 8%. See also: Andrzej Stankiewicz, 'Boimy się że stracimy na Unii,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 17 February 2004.

<sup>18</sup> See: 'Liczymy na Unię,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 26 September 2003.

years compared with 50% who felt that it would not.<sup>19</sup> A November 2003 PBS survey for ‘Rzeczpospolita’ found that only 32% of respondents felt that Poland would, on balance, benefit from EU accession, while 38% thought that the losses would outweigh the gains.<sup>20</sup> A November 2003 CBOS survey found that 39% of respondents felt that Poland would secure less than half of the EU funds for which it was eligible, 24% that it would secure about half and only 19% felt that it would get ‘most’ or ‘all’ of them (15% ‘most’ and only 4% ‘all’).<sup>21</sup> 56% felt that Poland would actually end up being a *net contributor* to the EU budget during the first few years of membership, 12% that it would receive as much as it paid in and only 17% felt that it would be net beneficiary.<sup>22</sup> This was in spite of the guarantees secured by Poland and other candidate countries at the December 2002 Copenhagen summit that concluded the EU accession negotiations that this would not happen. Interestingly, even 49% of those who supported Polish membership of the EU, thought that their country would end up as a net contributor, initially at least!<sup>23</sup> A December 2003 GfK Polonia survey for ‘Rzeczpospolita’ also found that 51% of Poles expected their standard of living to fall after EU accession and only 20% thought that it would increase. 42% expected the health service to deteriorate and only 26% thought it would improve, while 39% thought that the labour market would worsen and only 29% thought that it would improve.<sup>24</sup>

As **Table 5** shows, a survey published in ‘Rzeczpospolita’ on the eve of accession found that there were few areas where Poles expected improvement within the first five years of EU accession - interest rates (27%), unemployment (26%), welfare expenditure (23%) and corruption (23%) - and in many of these areas a substantial number (if not most) Poles also expected things to get worse! Interestingly, although 41% of Poles expected expenditure on economic development to increase in the first five years of membership, only 18% thought that this would also be the case within the first ten years. Similarly, an April 2004 Pentor survey conducted for the ‘Wprost’ journal and ‘Rzeczpospolita’ also found that only 20% of respondents expected their material situation to improve after EU accession, while 37% thought it would stay the same and 32% that it would actually worsen.<sup>25</sup> Only 12% thought that Poles would enjoy a standard of living comparable to that of citizens in other EU states within five years of accession (and only 2% within one year), a further 25% thought that this would occur within ten years, 39% within twenty years and 11% that it would take even longer.<sup>26</sup> The same survey also found that only 21% of respondents felt that Poland’s position within the EU would be a strong one (and only 1% that it would be ‘very strong’) compared with 69% who said it would be weak (23% ‘very weak’).<sup>27</sup> As one commentator put it, summing up Polish attitudes towards the EU on the eve of

<sup>19</sup> See: Filip Gawryś, ‘Polak mniej liczy na Unię,’ *Rzeczpospolita*, 11 December 2003. 14% did not know.

<sup>20</sup> See: Andrzej Stankiewicz, ‘Gorzej o wejściu do Unii,’ *Rzeczpospolita*, 4 December 2003. 20% felt that the gains and losses would even each other out.

<sup>21</sup> See: CBOS, *Przygotowanie Polski do członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, November 2003 (November 2003 data), p7. 18% did not know.

<sup>22</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p8. 15% did not know.

<sup>23</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p9.

<sup>24</sup> See: Andrzej Stanikiewicz, ‘Polacy pesymiści, Litwini optymiści,’ *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 February 2004.

<sup>25</sup> See: Paweł Śpiewak, ‘Eurospolita,’ *Wprost*, 2 May 2004. 11% did not know.

<sup>26</sup> See: *Ibid.* 6% said it would never happen and 7% did not know.

<sup>27</sup> See: *Ibid.* 10% did not know.

accession: “One cannot see a trace of the enthusiasm that accompanied these events (the August 1980 shipyard strikes and the election of Tadeusz Mazowiecki as the first non-communist prime minister in Poland for fifty years in 1989). We are joining the EU with neither a feeling of a great historical victory, nor of a historical defeat. We are joining cautiously, knowing well that much depends on the fate of the Union itself, on Polish politicians, but also on ourselves...The closer that we get to EU accession, the more uneasy and uncertain we are.”<sup>28</sup>

**Table 5: Polish expectations of what will improve/worsen after 5/10 years of EU membership? (%)**

|                                     | Improve |          | Worsen  |          |
|-------------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------|
|                                     | 5 years | 10 years | 5 years | 10 years |
| Opportunity to work abroad          | 76      | 78       | 5       | 4        |
| Expenditure on economic development | 41      | 18       | 19      | 58       |
| Borrowing interest rates            | 27      | 37       | 28      | 18       |
| Unemployment                        | 26      | 20       | 33      | 35       |
| Corruption                          | 23      | 39       | 27      | 20       |
| Welfare expenditure                 | 23      | 51       | 35      | 13       |
| Savings interest rates              | 18      | 25       | 26      | 23       |
| Value of złoty                      | 14      | 24       | 53      | 38       |
| Poles' standard of living           | 11      | 45       | 57      | 27       |
| Family income                       | 9       | 42       | 37      | 24       |
| Family savings                      | 9       | 42       | 45      | 20       |
| Family's standard of living         | 7       | 31       | 41      | 23       |
| Tax levels                          | 7       | 25       | 55      | 22       |
| Prices                              | 1       | 7        | 92      | 69       |

Source: *Rzeczpospolita*, 30 April-3 May 2004

An important factor contributing to this rather pessimistic evaluation could well have been that many Poles thought their country was simply not well enough prepared to take advantage of the opportunities that might arise from EU accession. For example, a September 2003 PBS/*Rzeczpospolita* survey found that 64% of respondents felt that Poland was badly prepared for EU accession compared with only 17% who thought that it was well prepared.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, a November 2003 CBOS poll found that only 11% of respondents felt that Poland was well prepared for accession (and only 1% thought it was ‘very well prepared’), compared with 50% who thought it was badly prepared (20% ‘very badly’), and 30% felt that it was neither well nor badly prepared.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, 46% of respondents blamed the Polish government for this state of affairs, while only 18% blamed the EU and a further 32% felt that the process of EU accession had simply been rushed through too quickly.<sup>31</sup> As **Table 6** shows, the same survey found that a similar pattern emerged when respondents were asked

<sup>28</sup> See: *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> See: ‘Liczymy na Unię,’ *Rzeczpospolita*.

<sup>30</sup> See: CBOS, *Przygotowanie Polski do członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej*, p3. 9% did not know.

<sup>31</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p5. 4% did not know.

whether Poland was well prepared for accession in particular policy areas or sectors of the economy. Only 17% thought that Polish firms and businesses were well prepared (1% 'very well') while 32% thought they were badly prepared (6% 'very badly'). Only 6% thought that the Polish agricultural sector was well prepared (1% 'very well'), while 67% thought they were badly prepared (24% 'very badly'). Only 14% thought that Polish public administration was well prepared (1% 'very well') while 43% thought it was badly prepared (14% 'very badly'). Only 8% thought that Poland was well prepared to benefit from EU funds (1% 'very well') while 53% thought it was badly prepared (16% 'very badly'). Only 13% thought that Poland was well prepared to bring Polish law into line with EU norms (0% 'very well') while 43% thought it was badly prepared (13% 'very badly'). Finally, only 2% thought that Polish public finances were well prepared for EU accession (0% 'very well') while 66% thought they were badly prepared (27% 'very badly'). An April 2004 Pentor survey conducted for 'Wprost' and 'Rzeczpospolita' newspaper immediately prior to accession also found that only 28% of respondents felt that Poland was well prepared for EU membership compared with 61% who thought that it was not.<sup>32</sup>

**Table 6: Evaluations of Polish preparedness for EU membership, November 2003 (%)**

|                                 | <b>Very well</b> | <b>Well</b> | <b>Neither well/badly</b> | <b>Badly</b> | <b>Very badly</b> | <b>Don't know</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Firms/businesses                | 1                | 16          | 36                        | 26           | 6                 | 15                |
| Agriculture                     | 1                | 5           | 18                        | 43           | 24                | 9                 |
| Public administration           | 1                | 13          | 24                        | 29           | 14                | 19                |
| Benefiting from EU funds        | 1                | 7           | 22                        | 37           | 16                | 17                |
| Bring law in line with EU norms | 0                | 13          | 22                        | 30           | 13                | 21                |
| Public finances                 | 0                | 2           | 13                        | 39           | 27                | 19                |

Source: CBOS, *Przygotowanie Polski do członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, November 2003 (November 2003 data), p6.

At the same, the EU had clearly delivered in those areas where Poles hoped and expected that it would, most notably the opening up of borders and access to labour markets in the older member states. As **Table 5** shows, the one area where Poles did unambiguously expect some improvement after EU accession was the opportunity to work abroad: 76% expected this to happen within five years of Poland joining the EU. Similarly, a May 2003 Eurobarometer survey found that for 84% of Poles the EU represented, above all, the ability to work in other countries, 78% cited the freedom to study abroad and 71% mentioned the chance to move there permanently.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, by March 2005 a CBOS survey already found that 22% of Poles were expressing interest

<sup>32</sup> See: Śpiewak, 'Eurospospolita'. 11% did not know.

<sup>33</sup> See: Robert Sołtyk, 'Dwa bieguny Europy', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 July 2003; and European Commission, *Eurobarometer 2003.2: Public Opinion in the Candidate Countries*, Brussels: European Commission, July 2003 (May 2003 data), p110.

in working in another EU country.<sup>34</sup> An October 2006 CBOS survey also found that nearly one third of Poles (31%) said that someone from their immediate family had gone to work in another EU country since accession, an increase from 16% in March 2005.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, an IMAS International survey published in 'Rzeczpospolita' in May 2007 estimated that three million Poles planned to work abroad in the coming year.<sup>36</sup> An April 2006 ISP survey also found that when asked which areas of EU policy the Polish government should be particularly active in promoting, easily the largest number of respondents (56%) said that it should be lifting the barriers that prevented people from working and providing services across the whole of the EU.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, as **Table 7** shows, a March/April 2007 CBOS survey found this was one of those areas that, in the opinion of most Poles, the EU had clearly delivered on: among the greatest perceived benefits of EU accession were the opening of borders (29%) and the ability of Poles to work in other EU states (28%). The same survey found that 93% of Poles felt that EU accession had increased opportunities to work abroad compared to only 1% who said that it had reduced it.<sup>38</sup> A spring 2007 Eurobarometer survey also found that 42% of respondents cited free movement of people, goods and services within the EU as the most important benefit to flow from European integration and a further 32% cited it as the second most positive effect.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See: CBOS, *Stosunek Polaków, Węgrów, Czechów i Słowaków do członkostwa w NATO i UE*, CBOS: Warsaw, April 2005 (March 2005 data), p3.

<sup>35</sup> See: CBOS, *Praca Polaków w krajach Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, November 2006 (October 2006 data), p2.

<sup>36</sup> See: Ewa K. Czaczkowska, 'Ponad 3 miliony Polaków poszuka pracy za granicą,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 15 May 2007.

<sup>37</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p4.

<sup>38</sup> See: CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*, p14. 4% felt that it had no impact and 3% did not know.

<sup>39</sup> See: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 67*, p6.

**Table 7: Perceptions of the benefits of Polish EU accession, 2005-7 (%)**

|                                  | May 2005 | April 2006 | March-April 2007 |
|----------------------------------|----------|------------|------------------|
| Open borders                     | 27       | 24         | 29               |
| Benefits for farmers/agriculture | 26       | 19         | 29               |
| Ability to work abroad           | 24       | 39         | 28               |
| Investments in roads             | 4        | 5          | 15               |
| EU funds                         | 4        | 7          | 13               |
| General economic benefits        | 2        | 3          | 6                |
| New jobs in Poland               | 1        | 3          | 4                |
| Local investment funds           | 1        | 3          | 3                |
| Benefits for business            | 3        | 3          | 3                |
| Better perspectives for youth    | 3        | 2          | 3                |
| Increased trade                  | 4        | 4          | 2                |
| Educational opportunities        | 4        | 4          | 2                |
| Open/free markets                | 2        | 1          | 2                |
| Improved position of Poland      | 2        | 2          | 2                |
| Improved international security  | 1        | 2          | 1                |
| No benefits                      | 17       | 10         | 5                |
| Difficult to say                 | 14       | 16         | 11               |

Source: CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*, CBOS: Warsaw, April 2007 (March-April 2007 data), p7.

Interestingly, as **Table 7** shows, a March-April 2007 CBOS survey also found that in terms of other important perceived benefits of accession, the number of respondents citing investment in roads and EU funds had become steadily more important increasing from only 4% each in May 2005 to 15% and 13% respectively in 2007.<sup>40</sup> The same survey also found that 56% of respondents felt that EU accession had reduced unemployment in Poland compared to only 19% who said that it had increased it;<sup>41</sup> (although, interestingly - as **Table 7** shows - only 4% of respondents cited the creation of new jobs *in Poland* as one of the most important benefits of EU accession). This is striking because a CBOS survey conducted prior to accession in February 2004 found that while 37% of respondents felt that EU accession would reduce unemployment, 30% also said that it would increase it and 18% that it would make no difference.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, as **Table 7** also shows, the proportion of respondents who felt that there were no benefits accruing from EU accession fell from 17% in May 2005 to 10% in April 2006, and only 5% in March-April 2007.

<sup>40</sup> A January 2006 CBOS survey taken in the aftermath of the EU summit that agreed the 2007-13 budget also found that only 18% of Poles thought that securing money from the EU was the most important impact of EU membership on Poland's development compared with 65% who cited freedom of investment, trade and undertaking work and services across the whole of the EU, that flowed from participation in the Single Market. See: CBOS. *Ocena Brukselskiego szczytu i postrzegany stosunek państw UE do Polski*, CBOS: Warsaw, February 2006 (January 2006 data), p6.

<sup>41</sup> See: CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*, p13. 19% said it had made no difference and 6% did not know.

<sup>42</sup> See: CBOS. *Załamanie się optymizmu w myśleniu o efektach integracji z Unią Europejską*, p11. 15% did not know.

Survey data also suggested that, Poles were pleasantly surprised about the impact of accession in some areas where they did not expect the EU to deliver. Perhaps the clearest example of this was the impact on farmers and the agricultural sector. The evolution of public attitudes, and those of farmers themselves, on this issue in the three years since accession is striking because polls conducted in the period leading up to EU membership found that Polish farmers were sceptical towards, and often outright hostile, to the EU. Indeed, they were the only socio-demographic group where there was a majority opposed to Polish EU membership consistently.<sup>43</sup> Many other Poles who were not farmers also felt that EU accession would have a negative impact on the agricultural sector. For example, a September 2003 PBS/Rzeczpospolita survey found that easily the largest number of respondents (47%) cited agriculture as the area in which Poland was least well prepared for EU accession.<sup>44</sup> A February 2004 CBOS survey also found that 49% of respondents thought that the impact of EU accession on agriculture would be negative, while only 27% thought that it would be positive.<sup>45</sup> The same survey also found that only 25% of farmers thought that the impact on their farms would be positive while 24% said it would be negative; although the largest number (32%) thought that it would have no impact.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, an April 2004 CBOS survey conducted for 'Gazeta Wyborcza' immediately prior to accession found that 32% of respondents felt that farmers would lose out from EU membership and only 17% said that they would gain.<sup>47</sup>

However, public evaluations of the impact of the EU on Polish agriculture became increasingly positive after accession, as did those of farmers themselves, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent. A 2006 ISP report, for example, found that within the first few months of EU membership, supporters began to outnumber opponents among farmers due, it argued, to both the direct subsidies that they were receiving through the Common Agricultural Policy and an increase in demand for Polish agricultural produce in other EU member states. Pre-accession forecasts of the impact of EU accession on tended to focus on the fear that liberalisation of agricultural trade would lead to the flooding of the Polish market with foreign produce, so that most Poles, including farmers themselves, were pleasantly surprised when the opposite happened.<sup>48</sup> A PBS survey conducted for 'Rzeczpospolita' in October 2004, five months after accession, found that while most respondents sensed very little improvement in the economy as a whole or their public services, 48% already felt that agriculture had changed for the better (7% 'very much' so) compared with only 17% who felt that it had changed for the worse (4% 'very much so').<sup>49</sup> Another October 2004 PBS survey for 'Rzeczpospolita' survey found that 51% of farmers themselves said that they were pleased that Poland had joined the EU (16% 'very pleased')

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<sup>43</sup> See, for example: Szczerbiak, 'Explaining Declining Support for EU Membership in Poland,' p116. See also: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Chłop, rolnik, farmer? Przystąpienie Polski do Unii Europejskiej*, ISP: Warsaw, 1999.

<sup>44</sup> See: 'Liczymy na Unię,' *Rzeczpospolita*.

<sup>45</sup> See: CBOS. *Załamanie się optymizmu w myśleniu o efektach integracji z Unią Europejską*. CBOS, p27. 6% said it would make no difference and 18% did not know.

<sup>46</sup> See: Ibid. 19% did not know.

<sup>47</sup> See: Piotr Pacewicz, 'Jedna Unia, dwie Polski,' *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 7 May 2004.

<sup>48</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *The Social Perception of the Results of Poland's EU Membership*. ISP: Warsaw, 2006, pp11-12.

<sup>49</sup> See: Marcin Czekański, 'Unia nam jeszcze nie pomogła,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 4 November 2004. 23% felt that it had remained the same and 12% did not know.

compared with only 31% who were dissatisfied (13% 'very dissatisfied').<sup>50</sup> Similarly, a December 2004 CBOS survey found that 65% of respondents already felt that farmers had benefited from Polish EU accession compared with only 14% who said that they had lost out.<sup>51</sup> An April 2005 PBS survey for 'Rzeczpospolita' also found that while, prior to EU accession, only 32% of respondents expected the situation in agriculture to improve, and 34% thought that it deteriorate, one year on, 44% of respondents felt that it had improved compared to only 21% who thought that it had got worse.<sup>52</sup> As **Table 4** shows, a more recent March-April 2007 CBOS survey found that 75% of respondents felt that the impact of accession on agriculture had been positive compared with, as noted above, the 27% who had (in February 2004) forecast that it would be positive; only 7% said that the impact had been negative, compared with the 49% who forecast in 2004 that it would be. As **Table 7** shows, the same survey also found that among the most important perceived benefits of EU accession, cited by 29% of respondents, were felt to be the gains derived by farmers and those working in the agricultural sector. It also found that 79% of respondents counted farmers among the beneficiaries of EU accession and only 7% said that they were losers.

Another area where Poles were pleasantly surprised by the impact of accession was in the amount of money that Poland received from the EU budget. As noted above, survey data conducted prior to accession found that Poles were actually very sanguine about this. These low expectations appeared to be confirmed when, within weeks of joining the EU, Poland, together with the other post-communist new member states, became involved in a bitter fight over the 2007-13 budget with the contributor states, which led to the collapse of negotiations at an EU summit in June 2005. This was a major blow for Poland given that, according to the final compromise deal proposed by the Luxembourg EU Presidency, it stood to become the largest beneficiary of EU funds. However, in the event, Poland was actually able to secure a relatively good deal at the December 2005 EU summit that finally agreed the budget, whereby it would, indeed, become largest net beneficiary of EU regional aid securing around 60 billion euros. A January 2006 CBOS survey on public reactions to the budget deal found that 37% of respondents, the largest single group, felt that Poland achieved all that it could in these negotiations, compared with 32% who felt that its negotiators could have achieved significantly more.<sup>53</sup> More respondents also felt that the outcome of the summit was a positive one for Poland (29%) than felt it was a negative one (9%).<sup>54</sup>

Low expectations of the short term benefits that would accrue from EU membership also meant that Poles were clearly anticipating, and so were not so shocked by, some of its more negative consequences. For example, Polish consumers were hit hard by substantial price increases in the first few months following accession, especially the

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<sup>50</sup> See: Filip Gawryś and Andrzej Stankiewicz, 'Wieś się z Unię integruje', *Rzeczpospolita*, 13-14 November 2004. 18% did not know.

<sup>51</sup> See: CBOS. *Opinie o skutkach członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, December 2004 (December 2004 data), p7. 9% said that they neither gained nor lost and 11% did not know.

<sup>52</sup> See: Anita Błaszczak, 'Sukces rolników, kłopot z korupcją,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 2/3 May 2005.

<sup>53</sup> See: CBOS, *Ocena Brukselskiego szczytu i postrzegany stosunek państw UE do Polski*, p4. Although nearly a third of respondents (31%) did not know.

<sup>54</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p3. Although the largest group of respondents (35%) thought it was neither a success nor failure and a further 28% did not know.

price of foodstuffs.<sup>55</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, as **Table 8** shows a May 2005 CBOS survey found that, when asked to cite the negative effects of EU accession, easily the largest group of respondents (29%), cited price increases. However, opinion surveys conducted prior to accession revealed that Poles were actually expecting such price increase. For example, a February 2004 CBOS survey found that 92% of respondents expected food prices to increase after accession, 3% expected them to stay the same and only 1% to decrease.<sup>56</sup> 86% also thought that energy prices would increase, 4% that they would stay the same and only 3% that they would fall.<sup>57</sup> As **Table 5** shows, a survey conducted immediately prior to accession for 'Rzeczpospolita' also found that 92% of Poles expected prices to increase in the first five years of EU membership while only 1% expected them to fall. So when prices did increase this came as no surprise to most Poles and did not contribute towards a more negative public view of the EU, as Poles had simply 'discounted' them when determining their overall (positive) evaluation of membership. Moreover, as **Table 8** shows, CBOS data also reveals that the number of respondents who cited price increases among the negative effects of accession fell dramatically in subsequent years to only 7% in 2006 and 5% in 2007.

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<sup>55</sup> See, for example: 'Dlaczego nadal jest drogo,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 13 August 2004.

<sup>56</sup> See: CBOS. *Załamanie się optymizmu w myśleniu o efektach integracji z Unią Europejską*, p14. 4% did not know.

<sup>57</sup> See: *Ibid*, p14. 6% did not know.

**Table 8: Perceptions of the disadvantages of Polish EU accession, 2005-7 (%)**

|                                       | May 2005 | April 2006 | March-April 2007 |
|---------------------------------------|----------|------------|------------------|
| Complying with EU standards           | 6        | 5          | 6                |
| Brain-drain                           | 2        | 3          | 6                |
| Price increases                       | 29       | 7          | 5                |
| Losses for farmers/agriculture        | 5        | 6          | 5                |
| Domination by large states            | 3        | 3          | 5                |
| Competition from Western firms        | 5        | 6          | 4                |
| Growth of bureaucracy                 | 3        | 3          | 2                |
| Fall in income                        | 5        | 2          | 2                |
| Costs of EU membership                | 2        | 2          | 2                |
| Rise in living costs                  | 2        | 1          | 2                |
| Negative moral-cultural effects       | 1        | 3          | 2                |
| Restrictive environmental regulations | 0        | 0          | 2                |
| Lack of new jobs                      | 5        | 3          | 1                |
| General economic effects              | 1        | 2          | 1                |
| Lack of access to EU funds            | 0        | 2          | 1                |
| Decline in living standards           | 2        | 0          | 1                |
| 'Second class' treatment              | 2        | 1          | 0                |
| Increased taxes                       | 2        | 0          | 0                |
| No disadvantages                      | 13       | 20         | 24               |
| Difficult to say                      | 28       | 35         | 33               |

Source: CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*, CBOS: April 2007 (March-April 2007 data), p9.

Indeed, as **Table 8** also shows, a March-April 2007 CBOS survey found that three years on it was actually very difficult for respondents to find *any* negative effects of EU accession. Most respondents either found it difficult to say what these negative effects were (33%, up from 28% in May 2005) or felt that there were none (24%, up from 13% over the same period). Interestingly, among those who did perceive downsides, the most commonly cited were the 'brain drain' (6%) - perhaps not surprisingly, given the large numbers of Poles who had, or were planning to, work abroad - together with: complying with EU norms and standards (6%) and domination by large states (5%). However, the numbers citing the latter were actually very small considering that these were often cited as possible negative effects of EU membership in survey data conducted prior to accession.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, while some opponents of EU membership had argued prior to accession that a militantly secular EU would attempt to force abortion, euthanasia and homosexual rights upon a Christian Poland, very few respondents (2%) actually cited any negative moral-cultural effects among the disadvantages. Similarly, in 2007 no respondents appeared to feel that earlier concerns that Poland might join the EU a 'second-class member', with Poles treated worse than citizens from the old EU member states, had materialised.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example: Szczerbiak, 'Explaining Declining Support for EU Membership in Poland.'

One area where Poles appeared to believe that EU accession had not delivered quite as much as they had hoped for was in improving the functioning of Poland's political system. For example, as **Table 5** shows, an April/May 2004 survey for 'Rzeczpospolita' found that 23% of respondents expected corruption to fall within the first five years of EU membership (although 27% also thought that it would increase). Similarly, a February 2004 CBOS survey found that, 52% of respondents expected EU accession to improve respect for the law, while only 11% thought that it would make it worse.<sup>59</sup> 37% of respondents also felt that accession would improve the functioning of the political system and only 18% thought that it would make it worse.<sup>60</sup> However, an April 2005 PBS survey for 'Rzeczpospolita' found that 64% of respondents felt that the level of corruption had actually increased in the first year since accession and only 4% said that it had gone down.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, as **Table 4** shows, by March/April 2007, only 37% of respondents felt that EU accession had increased respect for the rule of law, while 38% said it had made no impact.<sup>62</sup> Only 34% of respondents felt that EU accession had improved the functioning of the political system; the same number said that it had had no impact.<sup>63</sup>

However, even this relative failure to deliver in improving the Polish political system may, ironically, have actually re-inforced support for the EU in Poland. This is because, unlike citizens in many other member states, Poles always trusted EU institutions much more than they did their own - always an important reason why Poles were so supportive of the EU - and the EU's failure to improve the performance of Poland's domestic political institutions may have meant that they continued to view EU ones favourably in comparison. For example, a Reader's Digest survey published in the 'Rzeczpospolita' newspaper in April 2006 found that 72% of Poles said that they trusted the EU compared with only 28% who said that they trusted their own government.<sup>64</sup> As **Table 9** shows, a May 2006 ISP report also found that 83% of Poles felt that their state institutions were concerned primarily with pursuing the interests of those in government and officials compared with only 44% who said this was the case for EU institutions. 30% said that EU institutions were concerned mainly with the interests of ordinary citizens compared with only 7% who said this was the case for Polish ones. While 78% felt that Polish institutions did not operate efficiently, only 23% said this was the case for EU institutions. 45% said that EU institutions operated efficiently compared with only 8% who said that Polish ones did. 78% felt that their national institutions were "somewhat corrupt" but only 28% thought this was the case for EU institutions. 43% said that EU institutions were "generally honest" compared with only 8% who said that Polish ones were. While 65% of respondents said that Polish institutions generally concerned themselves with matters of little relevance only 22% thought that this was the case for EU institutions. 52% said that EU institutions concerned themselves with important matters compared with 17% who said that Polish ones did. A spring 2007 Eurobarometer survey also

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<sup>59</sup> See: CBOS. *Załamanie się optymizmu w myśleniu o efektach integracji z Unią Europejską*, p15. 19% felt that it would have no impact and 18% did not know.

<sup>60</sup> See: Ibid. 20% felt that it would have no impact and 25% did not know.

<sup>61</sup> See: Błaszczak, 'Sukces rolników'.

<sup>62</sup> Although only 8% said that EU accession had made the situation worse and the number who felt that it had had a positive impact had increased substantially from only 19% after the first year of EU membership.

<sup>63</sup> Although, again, only 10% felt that it had made it worse and the number who felt that it had had a positive impact had also increased substantially from only 17% after one year of membership.

<sup>64</sup> See: Jędrzej Bielecki, 'Biurokracja – moloż mile widziany,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 21 April 2006.

found that only 18% of Poles trusted their government and 15% their national parliament,<sup>65</sup> while 68% trusted the EU, an increase from only 33% in spring 2004 and one of the highest levels among EU members (where the average was 45%).<sup>66</sup> 60% respondents trusted the EP (EU average 56%) and the European Commission (EU average 52%) and 54% trusted the Council Ministers (EU average 47%).<sup>67</sup>

**Table 9: Trust in Polish and EU institutions, 2003 and 2005 (%)**

|  | EU institutions |            | Polish institutions |            |
|--|-----------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
|  | March 2003      | April 2005 | March 2003          | April 2005 |
| Concerned mainly with ordinary citizens    | 39              | 30         | 4                   | 7          |
| Concerned mainly with government/officials | 32              | 44         | 89                  | 83         |
| Don't know                                 | 29              | 26         | 7                   | 10         |
|  |                 |            |                     |            |
| Operate efficiently                        | 50              | 45         | 7                   | 8          |
| Operate inefficiently                      | 15              | 23         | 80                  | 78         |
| Don't know                                 | 35              | 32         | 13                  | 14         |
|  |                 |            |                     |            |
| Generally honest                           | 51              | 43         | 8                   | 8          |
| Somewhat corrupt                           | 18              | 28         | 78                  | 78         |
| Don't know                                 | 31              | 29         | 14                  | 14         |
|  |                 |            |                     |            |
| Deal with important matters                | 66              | 52         | 17                  | 17         |
| Deal with matters of little relevance      | 10              | 22         | 65                  | 65         |
| Don't know                                 | 24              | 26         | 18                  | 18         |

Source: Instytut Spraw Publicznych. *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*. ISP: Warsaw, p7.

However, one negative trend was that there was some evidence pointing to a small but noticeable decline in Polish trust of EU institutions compared with the immediate pre-accession period. As **Table 9** shows, the May 2006 ISP report cited above also found that the number of respondents who felt that EU institutions were interested primarily in ordinary citizens actually fell from 39% in March 2003 to 30% in April 2005, while those who said they were interested mainly in the interests of the government and officials increased from 32% to 44%. Those who felt that they operated efficiently fell from 50% to 45%, while those who said they were inefficient increased from 15% to 23%. The numbers that felt that they were “generally honest” fell from 51% to 43%, while those who said they were “somewhat corrupt” increased from 18% to 28%. Finally, the number who believed that EU institutions generally concerned themselves with important matters fell from 66% to 52%, while those who felt that they the prioritised matters of little relevance increased from 10% to 22%. This small but

<sup>65</sup> See: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 67*, p3.

<sup>66</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p5.

<sup>67</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p5.

noticeable decline in trust might be linked to increasing Polish concerns about the level of EU bureaucracy. When asked what was the greatest problem with the EU, an April 2006 ISP survey found that this was the most common answer, cited by 47% of respondents.<sup>68</sup> As **Table 4** shows, a more recent March-April 2007 CBOS survey also found that 41% of respondents thought that EU accession had increased the level of bureaucracy in Poland while only 7% thought it had reduced it.

Another noticeable negative trend was the dissonance between Poles' evaluations of perceived benefits for the country as a whole and those for themselves as individuals. For example, an April 2006 ISP survey found that while 48% of respondents felt that accession had had a positive impact on the country as a whole and only 12% said it had made it worse,<sup>69</sup> only 15% felt that it had improved their own lives compared with 77% who said it had made no difference.<sup>70</sup> For sure, more recent CBOS survey data found that the number of Poles who felt that they had benefited personally from EU accession had increased from 29% (who expected to benefit) in February 2004 to 40% in March-April 2007, while the number who felt that they had lost out fell from 31% (who expected to lose) in 2004 to only 11%.<sup>71</sup> However, as **Table 3** shows, this was still considerably less than the 64% who perceived benefits for the country as a whole. The same March-April 2007 CBOS survey also found that while only 26% of respondents felt that 'people like me' had benefited from EU accession to the EU, the largest group of respondents (54%) felt that they had neither gained nor lost.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, a September 2007 TNS OBOP survey found that although the number of respondents who felt that EU accession had impacted positively upon their own lives increased from 12% in May 2004 to 26% in April 2007, 66% of respondents still felt that it had had no impact (albeit down from 73%).<sup>73</sup>

This dissonance between general and individual perceived benefits could also be seen in the different evaluations that farmers had from that of the general public of both the general impact of EU accession and the impact on the agricultural sector and their own individual farms. The attitudes of farmers were much more ambiguous and the perception of gain considerably lower. While, as noted above, an October 2004 PBS survey for 'Rzeczpospolita' found that 51% of farmers said that they were pleased that Poland had joined the EU and only 31% dissatisfied, the same survey also found that only 24% of them felt that they had benefited from EU accession *personally* (and only 8% who said that they had 'definitely' benefited), compared with 68% who said that they had not (30% 'definitely not').<sup>74</sup> Similarly, while, as noted above, a December 2004 CBOS survey found that 65% of all respondents felt that farmers had benefited from Polish EU accession, only 34% of farmers felt that they had compared

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<sup>68</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p6.

<sup>69</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p3. 36% said it made no difference and 4% did not know.

<sup>70</sup> See: *Ibid.* 7% said it had made them worse and 1% did not know.

<sup>71</sup> See: CBOS, *Opinie o skutkach członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej*, p3.

<sup>72</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p22. Although only 13% of respondents actually felt that they had lost out and while 7% did not know.

<sup>73</sup> See: TNS OBOP, *Opinia o członkostwo u Unii Europejskiej w pierwszej połowie września 2007r*, p5. For 2004 data see: TNS OBOP, *Opinia o członkostwo u Unii Europejskiej w pierwszych dniach maja 2004r*, p6. The number who felt that accession had had a negative impact and those who did not know fell from 8% to 5%.

<sup>74</sup> See: Gawryś and Stankiewicz, 'Wieś się z Unią integruje'. 8% did not know.

with 27% who said they had lost out.<sup>75</sup> A 2006 ISP research report also found that although (at around 60%) support for EU membership among farmers remained higher than it was before accession, there had been a decline during the two years since accession. The authors of the report argued that while Polish farmers welcomed EU agricultural subsidies as an undoubted benefit of accession, they also felt that the level of these subsidies was too low, the procedures for obtaining them too complicated and the length of time that they had to wait for them too long. Polish farmers also complained that there had been a fall in purchase prices for agricultural products, an increase in the price of products required for agricultural production, and that standards for milk products were set at too high a level.<sup>76</sup> A more recent CBOS survey, conducted in March-April 2007 three years after EU accession, appeared to confirm this trend. While, as noted above, **Table 4** shows that 75% of *all respondents* felt that the impact of accession on agriculture had been positive, data from the same survey showed that only 37% of farmers felt that the impact *on their farm* had been a positive one, while 43%, the largest group, felt that it had had no effect.<sup>77</sup>

## 2. Polish attitudes towards further European integration and the EU's future trajectory

So if Poles were generally, with a few caveats, very enthusiastic about their country's membership of the EU, and became even more so since accession, what were their attitudes towards proposals for further European integration in terms of both 'deepening' and 'widening'? Firstly, there was some evidence to suggest that, over the last three years, Poles had developed more firmly rooted opinions on the model of integration that the EU should adopt. For example, one of the clearest themes that emerged from an April 2006 ISP survey was a substantial fall in the number of 'don't knows' in all answers to questions on this topic compared with a CBOS survey conducted three years earlier in July 2003 that asked the same questions.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, in spite of this apparent clarification of attitudes, Polish still appeared to have fairly complex, and often contradictory, sets of attitudes towards the EU's future trajectory. A great deal depended on the particular sphere or policy area under consideration and how the question was framed.

In terms of their general perspectives, Poles appeared to be strongly in favour of pursuing an inter-governmentalist 'Europe of nations' model of integration rather than a federalist 'United States of Europe' approach. For example, an OBOP survey conducted for 'Rzeczpospolita' prior to accession in October 2003, found that 59% of respondents felt the EU should develop as a union of sovereign states co-operating with each other, while only 22% chose more federalist options.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, a more

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<sup>75</sup> See: CBOS. *Opinie o skutkach członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej*, p9. 19% of farmers said they had neither benefited nor lost out and 20% did not know.

<sup>76</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *The Social Perception of the Results of Poland's EU Membership*, pp11-12.

<sup>77</sup> CBOS, *Ocena skutków przystąpienia Polski do UE po trzech lat członkostwa*, p12. Although only 6% felt that it was negative (compared with 24% who had predicted that it would be back in February 2004) and 13% did not know.

<sup>78</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych. *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p7. Although, as we shall see, this actually fed into a slight increase in opposition towards specific European integration measures.

<sup>79</sup> See: Gawryś, 'Polak mniej liczy na Unię'. 12% of respondents wanted the EU to become a single 'proto-state' that determined a large proportion of what went on in the countries that it comprised,

recent May 2007 CBOS survey found that 55% of respondents opted for a model of European integration in which member states retained as much sovereignty as possible and only 22% felt that it should evolve into federal state like the USA.<sup>80</sup> Attitudes on this issue did not appear to have changed very much since accession although the same CBOS report indicated that support for the ‘Europe of nations’ model fell from 65% in March 2003, although the number favouring opting for the federal model also fell slightly from 25%.<sup>81</sup> Poles also appeared to be against the development of ‘vanguard groups’ of EU states engaged in deeper integration, and particularly opposed to notions of a ‘two-speed’ Europe; presumably on the basis that Poland would probably have been excluded from any such ‘inner core’. For example, an April 2006 ISP survey found that only 8% of respondents supported the idea of a number of EU member states integrated more closely with each other, while the remainder co-operated more loosely.<sup>82</sup> The May 2007 CBOS survey cited above also found that 51% of respondents felt that it was undesirable for groups of member states to engage in closer co-operation that excluded the rest of the EU (16% ‘very undesirable’), and only 21% said that it was desirable (2% ‘very desirable’).<sup>83</sup>

Interestingly, though, although Poles were against European federalism in an abstract sense, they appeared to be more supportive of ‘deepening’ when the options were framed more specifically in terms of political and economic integration or closer co-operation between EU member states. For example, a May 2006 ISP survey found that 69% of respondents felt that EU member states should work more closely with one another, compared with only 15% who preferred looser co-operation.<sup>84</sup> A more recent May 2007 CBOS survey also found an increase in the number of Poles who believed that there should be closer integration between EU member states from 16% in July 2005 to 32%, while those favouring looser integration fell from 21% to 18%. The number who wanted a clear division between those states that favoured closer integration on the one hand and those that wanted looser relationships on the other, also fell from 42% to 25%.<sup>85</sup> The same CBOS survey also found that the number of respondents who felt that Poland should integrate its economy with the EU had increased steadily from 65% in 1999 to 85% in June 2007,<sup>86</sup> while 55% also felt that Poland should integrate its political structures with the EU.<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, while most Poles opposed the idea of a ‘two-speed Europe’ in principle, a July 2005 CBOS survey found that 73% of respondents felt that Poland should be part of any ‘vanguard’ group that was formed (37% felt that it ‘definitely should’) and only 7% felt that it should not.<sup>88</sup>

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while 10% opted for a close federation of states transferring a certain proportion of its sovereignty to a pan-European government.

<sup>80</sup> See: CBOS, *O modelu integracji Europejskiej i Eurokonstytucji*, CBOS: Warsaw, June 2007 (May 2007 data), p6. 23% did not know.

<sup>81</sup> See: Ibid., p6. 18% did not know.

<sup>82</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych. *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p7.

<sup>83</sup> See: CBOS, *O modelu integracji Europejskiej i Eurokonstytucji*, p3. 28% did not know.

<sup>84</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych. *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p7. As noted above, 8% of respondents felt that only *some* member states should co-operate with each other very closely and others more loosely, and 8% did not know.

<sup>85</sup> See: CBOS, *O modelu integracji Europejskiej i Eurokonstytucji*, p3. 25% did not know.

<sup>86</sup> See: Ibid., p4. Only 7% were against and 8% did not know.

<sup>87</sup> See: Ibid., p4. 28% were against and 7% did not know.

<sup>88</sup> See: CBOS, *Opinie o funkcjonowaniu Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, September 2005 (July 2005 data), p6. 20% did not know.

However, more doubts, and contradictions, emerged when Poles were asked about their attitude towards specific measures to 'deepen' European political and economic integration in particular policy areas. For example, an April 2006 ISP survey found that 49% of respondents supported creating an institution that would function as a common EU government while 39% were against.<sup>89</sup> However, the same survey also found that Poles were also opposed to the creation of a common EU Presidency by 53% to 33%.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, while Poles also appeared to support further economic integration in principle, they were also clearly in favour of member states retaining certain key economic competencies, notably in the field of taxation. For example, a CBOS survey conducted in March 2004, two months prior to accession, found that opinions were evenly divided on where competencies for economic policy should lie with the same number (45%) favouring this being either partly or mainly an EU responsibility as those who felt that it should be exclusively a member state one.<sup>91</sup> However, the same survey also found a clear majority of respondents wanted taxation to remain an exclusively member state competency: 66% in the case of income tax, and 50% in the case of indirect taxes.<sup>92</sup>

The issue of European economic and monetary union (EMU) exemplified the complexity of Polish attitudes towards deeper integration and the dissonance between opinions when the question was framed in either broad or specific terms. On the one hand, a spring 2007 Eurobarometer survey found that 54% of Poles supported the idea of EMU with one single currency (the euro) in principle and only 36% were against.<sup>93</sup> However, other surveys revealed a different pattern when respondents were asked specifically about their attitudes towards Polish accession to the eurozone, with increasing hostility to the idea. Indeed, this was one area where there had been a noticeable decline in support for deeper European integration since accession. For example, a CBOS survey conducted in January 2002 - shortly after the introduction of the euro in twelve out of the fifteen EU member states, but prior to Polish EU accession - found that 64% of respondents supported Poland adopting the euro (35% strongly) while only 22% opposed (9% strongly).<sup>94</sup> This was actually higher than the level of support for Polish EU membership at that time, which stood at 'only' 57%.<sup>95</sup> However, one could already see the emergence of doubts about introducing the euro in Poland in a May 2006 CBOS survey which found that, although 62% of

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<sup>89</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych. *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p8. However, there was a substantial increase in those against, compared with the figures revealed in a CBOS survey conducted three years earlier in March 2003 that asked the same question, from 23% to 39%, and concomitant fall in the number of don't knows from 25% to 12%. See: CBOS, *Jakiej Unii chcemy*. CBOS: Warsaw, March 2003 (March 2003 data), p4.

<sup>90</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych. *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p8. 13% did not know. Again, there was a substantial shift opinion compared with the figures in the CBOS survey conducted three years earlier that found a narrow majority of 39% to 34% in favour of a common EU President. Again, this shift in opinion was largely accounted for by a fall in number of don't knows from 27% to 12%. See: CBOS, *Jakiej Unii chcemy*, p4.

<sup>91</sup> See: CBOS, *W jakich sprawach powinna decydować Unia Europejska, a w jakich państwa członkowskie*, CBOS: Warsaw, April 2004 (March 2004 data), p5.

<sup>92</sup> See: CBOS, *W jakich sprawach powinna decydować Unia Europejska, a w jakich państwa członkowskie*, p5.

<sup>93</sup> See: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 67*, p8. Although this was below the EU average of 63% in favour.

<sup>94</sup> See: CBOS, *Opinie o wprowadzenia euro*, CBOS: Warsaw, January 2007 (January 2007 data), p3. 14% did not know

<sup>95</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p4.

respondents still supported this idea in principle and 23% were against, only 7% of respondents supported eurozone accession as soon as possible even if this meant limiting public expenditure. 55% supported the adoption of the euro but only when this could be achieved without making such cuts.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, by January 2007, CBOS found that 46% of respondents were actually opposed to Polish accession to the eurozone (20% strongly) compared with 44% who supported it (19% strongly).<sup>97</sup> Even 42% of those who supported Polish EU membership were against Polish accession.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, among the 44% of respondents who did support eurozone accession, only 43% thought that this should happen within the next two years.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, a TNS/Open Europe survey published in March 2007 found that 58% of Poles would have voted against adopting the euro in a referendum while only 32% would have supported it.<sup>100</sup> A May 2007 TNS OBOP survey also found that 47% respondents were against Poland adopting the euro, with only 36% in favour.<sup>101</sup> However, paradoxically a May 2007 GfK Polonia survey actually found an increase in those who said that they would vote in favour of adopting the euro from only 32% (14% 'definitely') in June 2005 to 46% (16% 'definitely') and fall in those who said that they would vote to retain the zloty from 53% (23% 'definitely') to 44% (19% 'definitely').<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, the same survey also found that only 14% of respondents felt that euro accession should happen as soon as possible, while 45% said that this should occur over a much longer period.<sup>103</sup>

Why did Poles become increasingly hostile to the idea of eurozone accession? Some analysts argue that this arose mainly from fears that adopting the euro would lead to price increases. This was rooted in the widely held perception that such increases had occurred in other EU countries that adopted the euro at the beginning of the decade and re-inforced by Poles' own recent experiences following Polish EU accession. As noted above, price increases were the most commonly cited negative impact of EU membership in surveys conducted one year after accession. For example, a May 2007 TNS OBOP survey found that 73% of those opposed to Polish accession to the eurozone cited price increases among the three most important reasons and 57% as the most important, by far the most common factor cited.<sup>104</sup> A May 2007 GfK Polonia survey also found that the main concerns that Poles had about adopting the euro were price increases (61%) and a possible deterioration in their living standards (47%).<sup>105</sup>

<sup>96</sup> See: CBOS, *Postawy Polaków, Węgrów, Czechów i Słowaków wobec euro*, CBOS, September 2006 (May 2006 data), p4. 15% did not know. Interestingly, though, only 5% of respondents felt that the euro would never be introduced in Poland. See: *Ibid.*, p3.

<sup>97</sup> See: CBOS, *Opinie o wprowadzeniu euro*, p3. 10% did not know.

<sup>98</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p4. 49% were in favour and 9% did not know.

<sup>99</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p5.

<sup>100</sup> See: Open Europe, *Poll on the future of Europe: Main findings report* at <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/research/mainfindings.pdf>. (undated; accessed on 24 March 2007). 10% did not know. In fact, the poll was conducted in 27 EU member states and Poles were among the most sceptical about adopting the euro.

<sup>101</sup> See: TNS OBOP, *Poparcie polaków dla wprowadzenia euro*, TNS OBOP: Warsaw, July 2007 (May 2007 data), p2. 17% did not know.

<sup>102</sup> See: 'Polacy chcą zamienić złotego na euro,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 17 September 2007.

<sup>103</sup> See: *Ibid.* 27% thought that Poland should never adopt the euro.

<sup>104</sup> See: TNS OBOP, *Poparcie polaków dla wprowadzenia euro*, p4.

<sup>105</sup> See: 'Polacy chcą zamienić złotego na euro,' *Rzeczpospolita*. The number citing concerns about price increases had actually increased from 52% in June 2005 to 61%. See: 'Polacy pozytywnie o prowadzeniu euro' at <http://www.gfk.pl/page.php?id=801&print=1> (Accessed 26 September 2007).

On the other hand, most surveys suggested broad Polish support for the adoption of common EU foreign and defence policies. For example, an April 2006 ISP survey found that 52% of respondents supported the creation of a minister responsible for EU foreign policy, an increase from 45% supporting this proposition in a June 2003 CBOS survey, compared with only 35% who were against, although this had also increased from 29%.<sup>106</sup> A more recent spring 2007 Eurobarometer survey found 81% of Poles in favour of a common EU foreign policy, above the EU average of 72% and one of the highest proportions among member states.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, an April 2006 ISP survey found that 51% supported the creation of army units under common EU command, an increase from 44% supporting this proposition in a January 2003 CBOS survey, with 37% against, although this had also increased from 32%.<sup>108</sup> The latter finding was particularly striking given that the armed forces were ranked consistently among the most trusted institutions in Poland in opinion surveys. Moreover, in spite of Poland's popular stereotype as the 'new Atlanticist'<sup>109</sup> or even the 'America's Trojan horse' within the EU,<sup>110</sup> most Poles did not appear to see any contradiction between broad support for the USA in the international affairs and their strong backing for the adoption of common EU foreign and defence policies. Indeed, a June 2003 TNS OBOP survey found that 51% of respondents actually felt that the EU was more important for Poland's 'vital interests' than the USA, while only 12% choose the latter.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, a TNS OBOP survey published in 'Rzeczpospolita' in October 2003 found that 63% of respondents preferred to see the EU as a superpower compared with only 10% who wanted to see the USA in this role.<sup>112</sup> In fact, the CBOS polling agency found that the largest group of supporters of the US-led intervention in Iraq, that was opposed by most EU member states, was to be found among Polish EU-enthusiasts (one third) compared with Eurosceptics (one fifth); suggesting that the real divide was between those Poles who supported international co-operation more generally and those who took a more isolationist stance, rather than between those who wanted closer co-operation with *either* the EU or the USA.<sup>113</sup>

However, returning to this theme of the complex and contradictory nature of Polish support for further European integration, it is interesting to consider for a moment what precisely Poles felt they were agreeing to when they said that they wanted EU common foreign and defence policies. In particular, did they see this as an alternative or complimentary (or even subordinate) to the continuation of foreign policy formation at the domestic level and Poland as a significant military actor in its own right? Once again the precise wording of the question appeared to be very important

<sup>106</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p8. The number of don't knows fell from 26% to only 13%.

<sup>107</sup> See: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 67*, p8.

<sup>108</sup> See: CBOS, *Jakiej Unii chcemy?* p4; and Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p8. The number of 'don't knows' had fallen from 24% to only 12% over the same period.

<sup>109</sup> See: Kerry Longhurst and Marcin Zaborowski, *The New Atlanticist: Poland's Foreign and Security Policy Priorities*, London: Chatham House, 2007.

<sup>110</sup> See: 'Is Poland America's donkey or could it become or could it become NATO's horse?' *Economist*, May 10 2003, pp41-42.

<sup>111</sup> See: TNS OBOP, *Polska w polityce światowej*, TNS OBOP: Warsaw, July 2003 (June 2003 data), p4. 20% said that they were equally important and 17% did not know.

<sup>112</sup> See: 'Marzenia o europejskiej potędze', *Rzeczpospolita*, 4-5 October 2003

<sup>113</sup> See: Katarzyna Sadłowska, 'Po drodze nam i z Europą, i z Ameryką,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 16 May 2003. See also: CBOS, *Unia Europejska a współpraca transatlantycka – polacy o dylematach polityki zagranicznej*, CBOS: Warsaw, May 2003 (May 2003 data).

in determining what precisely Polish attitudes were. For example, an autumn 2006 Eurobarometer survey found that 43% of Poles felt that decisions concerning European defence policy should be taken at EU level (slightly below the EU average of 49%), 29% felt that such decisions should be best left to NATO (EU average 17%), and only 18% to national governments.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, early CBOS surveys, admittedly conducted prior to accession, suggested that opinions were more divided on this issue: with 61% of respondents agreeing with the proposition that EU member states should determine their own foreign policy compared with only 36% who disagreed.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, a March 2004 CBOS survey found that only 13% of respondents said that foreign policy should be an exclusively EU competency, compared with 46% who said that member states should determine this independently and 30% who said that this should be decided jointly by the EU and member states.<sup>116</sup> The same survey also found that only 22% of respondents felt that defence policy should be mainly an EU competency, while 36% felt that it should be shared between the EU and national governments and 35% said that that it should be solely a member state competency.<sup>117</sup>

One area where Poles did appear be strong supporters of further European integration was on the question of ‘widening’ or EU enlargement. For example, a spring 2007 Eurobarometer survey found that 76% of Poles were in favour of EU enlargement, the highest in any EU member state and well above the EU average of 49%.<sup>118</sup> Data from national opinion polls appeared to confirm this trend. For example, a July 2005 CBOS survey found 66% of Poles in favour of EU enlargement: 30% felt that the EU should enlarge to include all those countries that wanted to join, and a further 36% felt that it should include some (but not all) other EU applicants. This was a fall from 72% in November 2004, although within that overall total there was an increase in those supporting ‘comprehensive’ enlargement from 20%. At the same time, only 18% of respondents felt that the EU should not enlarge at all, a small increase from 12%.<sup>119</sup> Interesting for an overwhelmingly Catholic country with high levels of Church attendance, most Poles did not appear to believe that religion should be an important criteria in determining whether or not an applicant country should be admitted to the EU. For example, as **Table 10** shows, an November 2004 CBOS survey found that when asked what conditions a country should fulfil to be admitted to the EU (respondents were asked to choose two): 68% cited a stable market economy; 57% that it should be well governed, and respected the rule of law and human rights; and 30% opted for a stable, democratic political system. Only 11% felt that the country should belong to the Christian cultural sphere and 10% that it should be located within Europe’s geographic borders. However, although most Poles may have supported the principle of EU enlargement, they did not necessarily see it as a priority issue. For example, an April 2006 ISP survey found that, when asked in which policy areas the Polish government should be particularly active within the EU, only 8% of respondents cited further EU enlargement.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>114</sup> See: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 66: Public Opinion in the European Union. Executive Summary: Poland*, Brussels: European Commission, January 2007 (September-October 2006 data), p5.

<sup>115</sup> See: Sadłowska, ‘Po drodze nam i z Europą, i z Ameryką’.

<sup>116</sup> See: CBOS, *W jakich sprawach powinna decydować Unia Europejska*, p5. 11% did not know.

<sup>117</sup> See: CBOS, *ibid.*, p5. 11% did not know.

<sup>118</sup> See: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 67*, p8.

<sup>119</sup> See: CBOS, *Opinie o funkcjonowaniu Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, September 2005 (July 2005 data), p9. 15% did not know.

<sup>120</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p4.

**Table 10: Polish attitudes on conditions to be fulfilled for EU admission, November 2004**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| A stable market economy                     | 68% |
| Respect for the rule of law, human rights   | 57% |
| Stable democratic system                    | 30% |
| Part of the Christian cultural sphere       | 11% |
| Location within Europe's geographic borders | 10% |

Source: CBOS. *Opinie o dalszym rozszerzenie Unii Europejskiej*. CBOS: Warsaw. December 2004 (November 2004 data), p3.

One area that Poles felt strongly should remain exclusively a member state competency was the moral-cultural sphere. For example, a CBOS survey conducted prior to accession in March 2004 found that 65% of respondents felt that abortion law should be solely a member state competency compared to only 11% who wanted this to be determined jointly at both at the EU level and 9% who said that it should be mainly an EU competency.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, a more recent May 2007 CBOS survey found that 63% of respondents were against EU integration in the moral-cultural sphere compared with only 27% who were in favour.<sup>122</sup>

So what were Polish attitudes towards the most important recent initiative to move forward the European integration process: the EU constitutional treaty and its successor the 'reform treaty'? Ostensibly, whatever the misgivings of their political elites, polls certainly indicated high levels of support for the treaty among the Polish public. For example, a May 2006 ISP report found that 68% of respondents agreed that the EU needed a constitution and only 16% disagreed.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, as **Table 11** shows, a spring 2007 Eurobarometer survey found that 69% of Poles were in favour of a 'European constitution' in principle, slightly above the EU average of 66%.

<sup>121</sup> See: CBOS, *W jakich sprawach powinna decydować Unia Europejska*, p5. 15% did not know.

<sup>122</sup> See: CBOS, *O modelu integracji Europejskiej i Eurokonstytucji*, CBOS: Warsaw, June 2007 (May 2007 data), p4. 10% did not know.

<sup>123</sup> Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p8. 16% did not know.

**Table 11: Responses to the question ‘Are you in favour of the European Constitution?’ (% replying Yes), April-May 2007**

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Belgium           | 82        |
| Slovenia          | 80        |
| Hungary           | 79        |
| Germany           | 78        |
| Spain             | 75        |
| Italy             | 72        |
| Cyprus            | 69        |
| <b>Poland</b>     | <b>69</b> |
| Romania           | 69        |
| France            | 68        |
| <i>EU average</i> | 66        |
| Luxembourg        | 66        |
| Lithuania         | 66        |
| Portugal          | 64        |
| Slovakia          | 64        |
| Ireland           | 62        |
| Greece            | 61        |
| Estonia           | 61        |
| Bulgaria          | 60        |
| Latvia            | 59        |
| Malta             | 56        |
| Netherlands       | 55        |
| Czech Republic    | 55        |
| Austria           | 49        |
| Finland           | 47        |
| Sweden            | 47        |
| Denmark           | 45        |
| UK                | 43        |

Source: European Commission, *Eurobarometer 67: Public Opinion in the European Union. First Results*, Brussels: European Commission, June 2007 (April-May 2007 data), p36

Support for a European constitution in principle did not, of course, necessarily translate into support for an actual treaty, although data from national opinion polls appeared to broadly confirm this. For example, as **Table 12** shows, CBOS polling data conducted between July 2004-June 2005, showed support for ratification of the constitutional treaty ranging from 43%-68% and the number opposed 7%-24%.

**Table 12: Polish attitudes towards ratification of the EU constitutional treaty, July 2004-June 2005 (%)**

|            | <b>July 2004</b> | <b>November 2004</b> | <b>February 2005</b> | <b>April 2005</b> | <b>May 2005</b> | <b>June 2005</b> |
|------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| For        | 56               | 68                   | 64                   | 56                | 60              | 43               |
| Against    | 22               | 11                   | 7                    | 15                | 14              | 24               |
| Don't know | 22               | 21                   | 29                   | 29                | 26              | 33               |

Source: CBOS, *Opinie o ratyfikacji Europejskiej Konstytucji*, CBOS: Warsaw, June 2005, p5

Interestingly, this led to the unusual situation whereby, following the compromise deal agreed by the centre-left government led by caretaker prime minister Marek Belka at the June 2004 EU summit (discussed below), it was actually Polish supporters of the treaty as much as Eurosceptics who, initially at least, pushed hardest for it to be ratified by referendum. This was because the treaty was extremely unlikely to secure the two thirds parliamentary majority required, given that all of the main opposition parties were implacably opposed to it; except for Civic Platform that did not have a clear position.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, polls suggested – and, as noted above, the actual results confirmed - these Eurosceptic and anti-treaty parties were likely to increase their representation after the autumn 2005 election, making the parliamentary ratification route even more problematic. On the other hand, as **Table 12** shows, polls appeared, initially at least, to give the pro-treaty camp a clear margin of victory in a ratification referendum. Moreover, although it was clearly in their interests for parliament to make this choice, opponents of ratification could not be seen to oppose holding a referendum and did not do so, at least not until the French and Dutch No votes in May and June 2005 when they argued that the ratification process should be suspended. Rather, they concentrated on delaying the referendum and, specifically, opposed combining it with the first round of the presidential election scheduled for autumn 2005, which most supporters of the treaty favoured in order to surmount the problem of securing the minimum 50% turnout required to make a ratification referendum constitutionally valid.<sup>125</sup>

However, it is far from clear that Poles really were as enthusiastic about the constitutional treaty as these polls suggested. Firstly, these high levels of support for were based on very little knowledge of what it actually entailed. For example, an April 2005 CBOS survey found that only 13% of respondents said that their knowledge of the treaty was sufficient for them to make a decision on how to vote in a ratification referendum (and only 2% that it was ‘definitely sufficient’) compared

<sup>124</sup> Civic Platform originally opposed the draft treaty on the grounds that the new voting provisions contained within it were much less favourable to Poland than those contained in the Nice treaty. However, the party was also broadly supportive of the European integration process and, in the event of a referendum, would have come under intense pressure to change its stance to avoid being isolated on the European centre-right. On the other hand, adopting a pro-treaty position would have involved both losing face and alienating the party from the Law and Justice party, which was both unambiguously opposed to it and, at that time, everyone assumed would be Civic Platform’s future coalition partner.

<sup>125</sup> Presidential elections were the only post-1989 polls in which more than 50% of Poles consistently turned out to vote.

with 78% who admitted that it was not (including 42% who said it was ‘definitely insufficient’).<sup>126</sup> Similarly, an April 2006 ISP survey found that, although 75% of respondents said they had heard of the treaty, only 15% felt that they were well informed about it. 56% said they had heard of it but lacked basic information about what it entailed, while 29% admitted that they had never heard of it.<sup>127</sup> A more recent May 2007 CBOS survey found that only 27% of respondents said that they were interested in the treaty (and only 4% ‘very interested’), compared with 69% who were not interested, including 43% who were ‘not at all interested’.<sup>128</sup>

Secondly, when one looks in more detail as to why Poles said that they supported the treaty it was often more a general expression of support for EU membership, and, until the French and Dutch No votes at least, a fear that Poland would be isolated within the EU if it did not ratify it. For sure, an April 2006 ISP survey found that 59% of respondents felt that the constitutional treaty was essential for the effective functioning of the EU compared to 28% who said that it could do without it.<sup>129</sup> 49% felt that ratification of the treaty was in the interests of EU citizens compared with 36% who felt that it would simply increase EU bureaucracy. Similarly, 51% of Poles said that that the treaty was necessary to ‘tidy up’ EU legislation compared to 33% who thought that it would simply increase the number of unnecessary regulations.<sup>130</sup> However, although Poles may have believed all of these things to be true, this was not necessarily the most important reason why they supported ratification of the treaty. As **Table 13** shows, an April 2005 CBOS survey found that the main reason why Poles said that they would vote Yes in a ratification referendum, cited by 47% of supporters, was simply because they supported Poland’s EU membership. An April 2006 ISP survey also found a similar linkage: 75% of those who evaluated Polish EU membership positively felt that a European constitution was needed, while only 40% of those who took a negative view of membership saw such a need.<sup>131</sup> As **Table 13** also shows, the second most common reason, cited by 23% of respondents, was a fear that, by rejecting it, Poland would become isolated and damage its position within the EU. On the other hand, only 15% of respondents said they supported the treaty because it was advantageous for Poland and 12% because it improved the functioning of the EU.

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<sup>126</sup> See: CBOS, *Polacy o Europejskiej Konstytucji*, CBOS: Warsaw, April 2005 (April 2005 data), p10. 9% did not know.

<sup>127</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p9.

<sup>128</sup> See: See: CBOS, *O modelu integracji Europejskiej i Eurokonstytucji*, p7. 4% did not know.

<sup>129</sup> An apparent increase in support compared with the July 2005 UKIE/Pentor survey that found 51% felt it was essential and 40% who thought that the EU could do without it. See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p10 fn4.

<sup>130</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p10.

<sup>131</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p8.

**Table 13: Reasons for supporting ratification of the EU constitutional treaty, April 2005 (%)**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| I support Poland's EU membership                                       | 47 |
| Rejecting it has negative consequences for Poland's position in the EU | 23 |
| It is advantageous for Poland  | 15 |
| It improves the functioning of the EU                                  | 12 |
| Other reasons  | 1  |
| Difficult to say   | 2  |

Source: CBOS, *Polacy o Europejskiej Konstytucji*, CBOS: Warsaw, April 2005 (April 2005 data), p8

The fact that fear of isolation within the EU was such a significant factor driving support for the constitutional treaty in Poland could be seen in the sharp drop in support for it in opinion polls conducted immediately after the French and Dutch No votes. For example, as **Table 12** shows, a June 2005 CBOS poll found a fall in those who said that they would vote for the treaty from 60% to only 43%, while those who said that they would vote No increased from 14% to 24%, and the number of 'don't knows' increased from 26% to 33%. Other polls conducted at the same time appeared to confirm this trend. For example, a June 2005 GfK Polonia poll for 'Rzeczpospolita' found that only 46% of respondents said they would now vote Yes in a ratification referendum and 32% would vote No. A poll conducted by the same agency two years earlier (which excluded 'don't knows') had found that 77% of respondents would vote Yes and only 23% No.<sup>132</sup> A June 2005 OBOP telephone poll for 'Gazeta Wyborcza' also found supporters of the treaty outnumbering opponents by only a relatively narrow margin of 51% to 40%.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, a later April 2006 ISP survey found that 44% of respondents felt that a new constitution should have been drafted following its rejection in the French and Dutch referendums, 13% that it should have been abandoned completely and only 22% felt the EU should have pushed ahead with ratification of the original treaty.<sup>134</sup>

Thirdly, highlighting the importance of how the question was framed, some other polling evidence found opinion to be much more cautious and divided when attitudes towards the constitutional treaty (and, indeed, other measures to 'deepen' integration) were framed explicitly in terms of a loss of sovereignty and transfer of powers from the national to the EU level. For example, a TNS/Open Europe survey published in March 2007 found that opinion was divided evenly in response to a question asking

<sup>132</sup> See: Andrzej Stankiewicz, 'Konstytucja: słabe "tak",' *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 June 2005. 22% did not know.

<sup>133</sup> See: Maciej Kochanowicz, 'Konstytucja UE traci poparcie Polaków,' 8 June 2005 at <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/kraj/2029090,34342.html> (Accessed 8 June 2005).

<sup>134</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych. *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p9. ISP interpreted this as an expression of pragmatism rather than an evaluation of the chances of the current one being adopted: if the EU could not succeed in getting the current one ratified, then it should start the process again from the beginning.

how respondents would vote on ‘a new treaty that transferred more powers to the EU’, with as many saying that they would vote in favour as against (38%).<sup>135</sup>

All of this suggests that polls showing generally favourable Polish attitudes towards the EU translating into specific support for the EU constitutional treaty might have been very misleading. Indeed, it is far from clear that such polling evidence provides us with a reliable guide as to how Poles would have voted in a ratification referendum had one been held. Interestingly, Polish supporters of the constitutional treaty were so concerned by the polls conducted immediately after the French and Dutch No votes - and following the decision of the June 2005 EU summit to, in effect, suspend ratification – that they ended up postponing the ratification referendum proposed for the autumn of that year.

### **3. Out of step with the voters?: Why did Poles vote for Eurosceptic parties?**

So how does one explain the fact that public support for the EU in Poland increased to record levels since accession, with a widespread perception that membership had brought significant benefits, but Poles still voted in such large numbers for parties that were critical of, or hostile to, European integration in the 2004 EP election, the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections and, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent, the 2007 parliamentary election? One factor that helps to explain this dissonance between an apparently Euro-enthusiastic public and Eurosceptic political elites is the fact that European issues had a very low salience in these elections: parties did not really focus on them in their campaigns and voters did not appear to consider them among the most important in determining their vote. For example, domestic and non-European issues dominated the 2004 EP election campaign in Poland and, with a few notable exceptions, most parties did not present voters with clear choices about the EU’s future trajectory and Poland’s role within it. Perhaps surprisingly, given the earlier controversy that had surrounded it in the previous months, there was even relatively little mention of the constitutional treaty during the campaign.<sup>136</sup>

Similarly, Poland’s relations with the EU played virtually no role in either the 2005 parliamentary or presidential elections and did not feature very prominently in most party programmes or in their campaigns more generally.<sup>137</sup> At one stage, it appeared that they might play a more significant role in 2005, when, as noted above, it seemed that the Polish referendum to ratify the EU constitutional treaty would be held together with the first round of the Presidential election. However, as also noted above, the referendum was postponed when, following the strong rejection of the treaty in France and the Netherlands, opinion polls began to show a sharp fall in the number of respondents supporting ratification. Interestingly, an April 2005 CBOS survey (admittedly, conducted at the very beginning of the campaign) found between 47%-57% of respondents did not know the stance on the constitutional treaty taken by the eight main parties contesting the elections. This was even the case among

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<sup>135</sup> See: Open Europe, *Poll on the future of Europe: Main findings report*, undated at <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/research/mainfindings.pdf>. (undated; accessed on 24 March 2007). 8% of respondents said that they would abstain and 16% did not know.

<sup>136</sup> See: Szczerbiak, ‘Poland’.

<sup>137</sup> See: Aleks Szczerbiak, ‘Europe and the September/October 2005 Polish Parliamentary and Presidential Elections,’ *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network Election Briefing No 22* at [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epern\\_eb\\_22\\_poland.pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epern_eb_22_poland.pdf), (Accessed on 18 April 2007).

substantial numbers of the party's own supporters including: 21% of Civic Platform voters, 35% of Democratic Left Alliance voters, 31% of Law and Justice party voters, 40% of League of Polish Families voters and 45% of Self-Defence voters. Indeed, 48% of Law and Justice party voters, 28% of Self-Defence voters and 11% of League of Polish Families voters (together, more understandably, with 76% of Civic Platform voters) actually thought that their parties' supported the treaty!<sup>138</sup> In other words, one interpretation of the 2004 and 2005 election results could be that Eurosceptic or Euro-critical parties performed well *in spite* rather than *because* of their criticisms of or hostility to European integration.

European issues, and foreign affairs more generally, had a somewhat higher profile in the 2007 parliamentary campaign than in other recent Polish elections. This was partly because the Law and Justice-party led government's foreign and EU policies were extremely controversial both in Poland and abroad among its EU partners, but also because the campaign coincided with the run up to an EU leaders' meeting, held two days before polling day, that was due to secure agreement on the EU reform treaty.<sup>139</sup> However, although parties gave European and international issues somewhat more prominence than in previous elections, without detailed statistical analysis it is more difficult to evaluate precisely how salient they were in actually determining voting behaviour. In fact, the 2007 election was, essentially, a plebiscite on the performance of a controversial and polarising government in which the way that EU relations and foreign policy had been conducted were an important component in determining more general attitudes towards that government. For supporters of the Law and Justice party, the new, more assertive foreign policy, and the fact that it exemplified a break with the policies pursued by post-1989 political elites more generally, would have been an important factor contributing to their overall positive evaluation of the government. For opponents of the government, on the other hand, the Law and Justice party's foreign policy, of which European policy was an important component, exemplified its more general incompetence and confrontational style of politics that they rejected. Nonetheless, in spite of their somewhat higher profile in this campaign, EU and foreign policy issues were still very much secondary to domestic ones in terms of party's electoral strategies and appeals and it was unlikely that they were of primary importance for most Poles when deciding how to cast their vote.

However, perhaps an even more important reason why Polish voters displayed such high levels of Euro-enthusiasm but Poland had such apparently Eurosceptic political elites was that, while most Poles may have been supportive of EU membership and European integration in principle, they also appeared to have a very 'realistic' perception of how the EU functioned. In other words, they saw the European integration project as a zero-sum game, where competing interests clashed and where Poland had to fight hard in order to defend its interests and secure the maximum possible benefits from EU membership. As a May 2006 ISP report put it aptly: "...the Union is still not perceived by Poles as a 'common home', but rather as a 'sack of money' and great possibilities, which every country tries to take advantage of for itself...the Union is perceived as a soulless institution which one can take advantage

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<sup>138</sup> See: CBOS, *Polacy o Europejskiej Konstytucji*, p11-13.

<sup>139</sup> See: Aleks Szczerbiak, 'Europe and the September 2007 Polish Parliamentary Election, *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network Election Briefing No 37*, available at: [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epern\\_37\\_poland2007.pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epern_37_poland2007.pdf)

of without bearing any consequences.”<sup>140</sup> For sure, Poles believed that their country needed to co-operate closely with other member states, and even to enter into ‘strategic partnerships’ with particular countries, in order to achieve its objectives. For example, an August 2006 CBOS survey found that 67% of respondents felt that Poland should have permanent allies with whom it should co-operate over a long period, compared with only 18% who felt that it should simply form short-term tactical alliances over specific matters.<sup>141</sup> They even appeared to have a fairly pragmatic approach to co-operating with Germany, about whom the Law and Justice party had been so critical both during the 2005 election campaign and subsequently when in government.<sup>142</sup> For example, a May 2006 ISP survey found that 72% of respondents felt that Poland had to co-operate and compromise with Germany compared to only 20% who said that it had to confront it in order to defend its national interests.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, an August 2006 CBOS survey found that, of the 67% of respondents who felt Poland should make long-term strategic alliances, 73% felt that one of these allies should be Germany, 47% France, 37% Britain and 14% the Czech Republic. Among all respondents the figures were: 49% Germany, 31% France, 25% France and 9% the Czech Republic.<sup>144</sup>

However, notwithstanding this willingness to co-operate and compromise with specific countries to achieve particular objectives, Poles remained deeply suspicious of the motives of other EU member states, especially the larger ones, and felt that their government needed to be prepared to fight hard in order to defend the country’s interests and secure its position within the EU. For example, an October 2003 TNS OBOP survey for ‘Rzeczpospolita’ found that 77% of respondents agreed with the statement that “rich EU member states only looked after themselves and concessions had to be extracted from them through hard bargaining” (36% felt this strongly) and only 15% disagreed (2% strongly).<sup>145</sup> 41% of respondents felt that Poland could count on the support of the rich EU member states (and only 6% felt this strongly) while 45% felt that it could not (12% strongly).<sup>146</sup> Similarly, CBOS data cited in a 2006 ISP

<sup>140</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p5.

<sup>141</sup> See: CBOS, *O polityce polski w Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, September 2006 (August 2006 data), p3. 15% did not know.

<sup>142</sup> Indeed, a less accommodating approach to Polish-German relations was felt to be an important element of the party’s attempt to ‘re-claim’ foreign policy from the post-1989 establishment. During the 2005 election campaign the Law and Justice party was extremely vocal in its criticisms of both German plans to build a Baltic Sea gas pipeline with Russia that would by-pass Poland, and proposals by organisations representing Germans expelled from Poland after the Second World War to set up a museum in Berlin. Relations between the two countries deteriorated further in July 2006 when President Lech Kaczyński pulled out of a summit meeting with France and Germany; apparently on grounds of ill-health, but which many commentators argued was linked to the publication of a derogatory article about the Kaczyński twins in a German satirical magazine. Then, in August 2006, when the Germans expellees’ organisation staged an exhibition in Berlin, prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński organised a visit to the site of a former Nazi concentration camp as a mark of protest. Interestingly, a June-July 2007 CBOS survey found a decline in the number of Poles who considered Germany one of their country’s main EU allies from 35% in January 2006 to only 14% and increase in those who saw Germany as among those countries most hostile to Poland from 25% to 48%. See: CBOS, *Sprzymierzeńcy Polski w Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, July 2007 (June-July 2007 data), pp4-5.

<sup>143</sup> See: Mateusz Fałkowski, *Razem w Unii. Niemcy w oczach Polaków. 2000-2005*, ISP: Warsaw, 2006 at <http://www.isp.org.pl/files/4250689630858192001144158676.pdf> (Accessed 16 October 2007) p38.

<sup>144</sup> See: CBOS, *O polityce polski w Unii Europejskiej*, p5.

<sup>145</sup> See: Gawryś, ‘Polak mniej liczy na Unię’.

<sup>146</sup> See: *Ibid.* 14% did not know.

policy paper found that 62% of Poles believed that EU member states were concerned primarily with pursuing their own interests while 7% felt that they were interested in those of the EU as a whole.<sup>147</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, 60% of Poles felt that their country had to be prepared to engage in a determined defence of its national interests in its relations with the both the EU and particular member states, compared with 34% who felt that it had to ready to achieve compromises.<sup>148</sup> This suspicion of the motives of other EU member states, particularly the larger ones, was exemplified by Polish attitudes towards co-operation with Germany. Although, as noted above, most Poles felt that they should co-operate with Germany in order to achieve Poland's strategic objectives, a July 2007 CBOS survey found that 51% of respondents felt that Poland should be concerned about the strengthening of Germany's position within the EU (35% 'definitely' so) and only 30% felt that it should not (4% 'definitely' not).<sup>149</sup>

This 'realistic' approach to EU politics, encompassing a distrust of the large EU member states and support for a taking a 'tough' stance in defending Poland's national interests, could be seen in Polish attitudes towards their governments' stance on the EU constitutional treaty, particularly the need to engage in a determined defence of the Nice voting provisions. For example, an October 2003 TNS OBOP survey for 'Rzeczpospolita' found that 29% of respondents broadly supported the Democratic Left Alliance-led government's critical response to the draft EU constitution prepared by the convention for the future of Europe, while a further 26% actually thought that it was too moderate and accommodating and only 8% said that it too radical and uncompromising.<sup>150</sup> Only 4% of respondents felt that the draft constitution should have been accepted in its original form, while 44% wanted it to be amended (7% 'radically') and a further 8% rejected outright.<sup>151</sup> An October 2003 CBOS survey also found that only 5% of respondents felt that the government should accept the voting system proposed in the draft constitution, while 46% felt that it should defend the Nice voting system with determination, and a further 26% said that it should do so even if this meant blocking the adoption of the draft constitution if this demand could not be achieved.<sup>152</sup> A PBS survey for 'Rzeczpospolita' published just after the December 2003 summit found that 67% of respondents felt that Democratic Left Alliance prime minister Leszek Miller had acted correctly in taking a hard line on the retention of the Nice voting system, while only 15% thought that he had acted incorrectly.<sup>153</sup> 57% felt that the Polish government should continue to stand its ground on this issue even in the wake of the failed summit, while only 31% felt that it should soften its stance.<sup>154</sup> Similarly, a January 2004 CBOS survey, also conducted in the aftermath of the summit, found that 36% of respondents, the largest group, felt that Poland should continue to support the Nice voting provisions even if this meant that

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<sup>147</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *The Social Perceptions of the Results of Poland's EU Membership*, p17. 19% said that they pursued both the EU's interests and their own in equal measure and 12% did not know.

<sup>148</sup> See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p5.

<sup>149</sup> See: CBOS, *Opinie o sytuacji Polski na arenie międzynarodowej i stosunkach z Niemcami*, CBOS: Warsaw, July 2007 (June-July 2007 data), p10. 19% did not know.

<sup>150</sup> See: Igor Janke, 'Konstytucja europejska tak, ale później,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 12 November 2003. Although the single largest group of respondents (37%) did not know.

<sup>151</sup> See: Ibid. Although, again, the largest number of respondents (44%) did not know.

<sup>152</sup> See: CBOS, *O przyszłej konstytucji Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, October 2003 (October 2003 data), p4. 23% did not know.

<sup>153</sup> See: 'Premier wrócił z tarczą,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 18 December 2003. 18% did not know.

<sup>154</sup> See: Ibid. 12% did not know.

the constitutional treaty was not adopted and only 8% that Poland should agree to the new voting system proposed in the draft.<sup>155</sup>

However, surveys of Polish attitudes towards the constitutional treaty also suggested that most Poles recognized that there was a balance to be struck in such negotiations when defending their country's interests and occasions when, having achieved all that they realistically could, Poland had to step back and compromise rather than appearing to block progress towards European integration. For example, as noted above, although a October 2003 CBOS survey found a clear majority supported the government's stance in defence of the Nice voting system, only a minority of respondents (26%) felt that it should continue to defend it if this meant blocking the constitutional treaty.<sup>156</sup> Similarly, the January 2004 CBOS survey cited above found that almost as many respondents felt that Poland should have agreed to a compromise deal (33%) as felt that Poland should continue to defend the Nice voting provisions even if this meant that the constitutional treaty was not adopted (36%).<sup>157</sup> Moreover, following the Socialists' election victory in the March 2004 election, the new Spanish government indicated a softening of its stance on the voting provisions issue. This apparent loss of its main ally prompted the Polish delegation at the June 2004 EU summit, led by the caretaker centre-left premier Marek Belka, to agree to a compromise deal which involved retaining the double majority system but raising the voting thresholds to 55% of member states representing 65% of the population.<sup>158</sup> In event, Poland signed the draft EU constitutional treaty at the October 2004 EU summit. Interestingly, an April 2004 CBOS survey conducted in the run up to the June summit found that 31% of respondents actually felt that the Polish government

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<sup>155</sup> See: CBOS, *Poparcie dla członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej, opinie o Unijnej Konstytucji i skutkach niepowodzenia Brukselskiego szczytu*, CBOS: Warsaw, January 2004 (January 2004 data), p5. Although 33% of respondents felt that Poland should agree to a compromise deal and 23% did not know.

<sup>156</sup> See: CBOS, *O przyszłej konstytucji Unii Europejskiej*, p4.

<sup>157</sup> See: CBOS, *Poparcie dla członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej, opinie o Unijnej Konstytucji i skutkach niepowodzenia Brukselskiego szczytu*, p5.

<sup>158</sup> At the same time, in a separate declaration, the summit agreed that if 34% of member states or those representing 26% of the EU population opposed a measure in the Council of Ministers it could be delayed for further consultations. However, Poland was unable to secure the inclusion of references to Christianity in the treaty; although Pope John Paul II praised the delegation subsequently for holding out on this issue until the last possible moment. Interestingly, while most Poles felt that treaty should contain such references to Christianity they seemed more prepared to compromise and less determined that the government should hold out on this issue than on voting rights. For example, a survey published in 'Rzeczpospolita' in June 2003 found that 60% of respondents felt that the pre-ambule to the EU constitution should include references to Christian values, and only 27% felt that it should not (13% did not know). See: Andrzej Stankiewicz, 'Chcemy wartości w konstytucji,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 20 June 2003. However, an October 2003 CBOS survey also found only 15% of respondents felt that Poland should block the draft constitution if it did not contain references to Christianity compared with 26% who felt that it should do so if it abandoned the Nice voting provisions. See: CBOS, *O przyszłej konstytucji Unii Europejskiej*, pp4 and 6. Similarly, an April 2005 CBOS survey found that only 25% of those respondents who said they would vote against the EU constitutional treaty in a ratification referendum cited the fact that it did not contain reference to Europe's Christian traditions as the main reason, compared with 44% (the largest group of respondents) who said that they would do so because it contained proposals that were 'disadvantageous for Poland' (an implicit reference to the change of voting provisions). See: CBOS, *Polacy o Europejskiej Konstytucji*, p9. An April 2006 Institute of Public Affairs (ISP) survey also found that, when asked in which areas the Polish government should be particularly active within the EU, only 11% of respondents said that this should include supporting Christian values. See: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, *Polacy o Unii Europejskiej i Traktacie Konstytucyjnym*, p4.

should have followed Spain's lead and supported a compromise agreement and only 28% felt that it should have continued to support the Nice voting system, while the largest single group of respondents (41%) did not know how the government should proceed.<sup>159</sup>

Nonetheless, most Poles also appeared to support the new Law and Justice party-led government's tough negotiating stance in the run up to the June 2007 summit where the German EU Presidency revived the treaty. For example, a May 2007 CBOS survey found that only 14% of respondents felt that Poland should have accepted the constitutional treaty as it was agreed originally, while 35% felt that either the existing text should be amended (22%) or that a completely new treaty should be drafted (13%).<sup>160</sup> Similarly, an OBOP survey for the 'Dziennik' newspaper published in the run up to the June summit even found that 49% of respondents felt that Poland should veto further discussions on the constitutional treaty if other EU governments did not agree to re-open negotiations on the EU voting system issue and only 28% disagreed with this approach.<sup>161</sup>

However, while Poles appeared to favour a more assertive foreign policy, opinions were divided on how effectively the Law and Justice-led government had pursued such a policy. On the one hand, a June 2007 GfK Polonia survey conducted for 'Rzeczpospolita' during the weekend of the summit also found that 55% of respondents felt the government's tough rhetoric was vindicated and that Poland's negotiators in Brussels had achieved either a success (13%) or a partial success

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<sup>159</sup> See: CBOS, *Opinie o integracji w przedzień rozszerzenia Unii Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, April 2004 (April 2004 data), p7-8. In fact, opinion polls conducted after the summit showed that Poles were divided on whether the Belka government had, indeed, secured the best possible deal on the voting provisions issue for Poland. For example, A PBS survey for 'Rzeczpospolita' published immediately after the summit found that 42% of respondents felt that the Polish delegation was right to sign up to the constitutional treaty while 34% felt that it should not have done so (24% did not know). Only 36% felt that the constitutional treaty agreed at the summit was contrary to Poland's interests, while 43% felt that it was not (21% did not know). Consequently, 47% of respondents said that they would vote to ratify the treaty in a referendum compared to 33% who said that they would vote against (20% did not know). See: 'Tak dla traktatu', *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 June 2004. On the other hand, a July 2004 CBOS survey, found that only 16% of respondents felt that the Polish delegation had obtained the best possible deal, while 58% (including 32% of those supporting the governing centre-left parties) said that it had conceded too easily (26% did not know). See: CBOS, *Stosunek Polaków do Konstytucji Europejskiej*, CBOS: Warsaw, July 2004 (July 2004 data), pp1-3.

<sup>160</sup> See: CBOS, *O modelu integracji Europejskiej i Eurokonstytucji*, pp7-8. Although, interestingly, the largest group of respondents (51%) did not know how the government have should have proceeded. Indeed, 55% did not actually know what the Polish government's position on the constitutional treaty was and, of the 45% who thought that they did, only 29% identified correctly that it wanted the existing treaty to be amended, 13% that it wanted a completely new treaty and 3% even thought that it favoured accepting the existing draft.

<sup>161</sup> See: 'Polacy chcą weta unijnego szczytu,' 15 June 2007 at <http://www.dziennik.pl/Load.aspx?TabId+209&lsnf=p&f=48719> (Accessed 15 June 2007). 23% did not know. Most Poles also appear to have supported the Law and Justice-led government's earlier November 2006 decision to veto talks between the EU and Russia on a new bi-lateral co-operation agreement. For example, a December 2006 CBOS survey found that 65% of respondents felt that the government was right to apply its veto (30% 'definitely' so) compared with only 10% who felt that it was not (and only 1% 'strongly'). 25% said they did not know. See: CBOS, *Opinie o sprawie polskiego weta przeciw rozmowom UE-Rosja*, CBOS: Warsaw, December 2006 (December 2006 data), p1. 31% also felt that the veto would strengthen Poland's position within the EU and only 18% thought that it would weaken it. See: *Ibid*, p3. 25% said it would have no impact and 26% did not know.

(42%), while only 25% felt that they had failed (11%) or partially failed (14%).<sup>162</sup> On the other hand, a June-July CBOS survey found that only 23% of respondents felt that the outcome of the summit was a success for the Polish government, compared to 28% who said it was neither a success nor a failure and 15% who said it was a defeat.<sup>163</sup> 30% felt that the Polish delegation could not have achieved any more on the issue of the voting system, while 29% felt that it could.<sup>164</sup> More generally, only 21% of respondents felt that the Law and Justice-led government's policies had led to an improvement in Polish-EU relations, 33% felt that they had made them worse and 30% felt that they had neither improved nor worsened them.<sup>165</sup> An August-September 2007 CBOS survey also found that only 21% of respondents evaluated the conduct of foreign policy under the Kaczynski government positively, 32% said that it was 'adequate' and 44% that it was 'inadequate'.<sup>166</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

One interpretation of the high vote for Eurosceptic parties and EU-critical parties and candidates (and record low turnout) in the 2004 European Parliament election, 2005 presidential and parliamentary election, and – albeit to a lesser extent – 2007 parliamentary election, was that it reflected post-accession disillusionment with the EU as expectations of what membership might entail confronted the harsh reality. However, in spite of the high vote obtained by parties that were extremely critical of, or even hostile to, the EU, in recent elections, and Poland's image as the 'new awkward partner', Polish support for EU membership remained very high and, if anything, increased to record levels in the three years since accession. Poles were very satisfied with, indeed enthusiastic about, EU membership, more so than citizens in many other member states, and positive about the effects of accession on most aspects of their lives. The Polish public clearly did not share the Euroscepticism of some of its political elites.

Why was this the case? The key to understanding these continuing high levels of support for the EU was the fact that Poles did not actually expect a swift transformation of their country as a result of EU accession and actually had fairly low (arguably, realistic) expectations of what, and how soon, benefits were likely to accrue. Thus, they were unlikely to be disillusioned when these benefits did not materialise quickly. So, for example, when prices increased in the first few months following accession, this came as little surprise and was 'discounted' by them when determining their overall (positive) attitudes towards the EU. Moreover, most Poles felt that the EU had broadly delivered in those areas where people hoped or expected it would, especially access to Western labour markets and the opportunity to work abroad. In other areas, Poles were pleasantly surprised by the positive effects of accession, notably agriculture where there was a major shift in attitudes among both

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<sup>162</sup> See: Wojciech Lorenz, 'Niespójna strategia,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 June 2007; and Jarosław Olechowski and Wojciech Lorenz, 'Czy Polska mogła zyskać więcej,' *Rzeczpospolita*, 25 June 2007. 20% did not know.

<sup>163</sup> See: CBOS, *Opinie o rezultatach szczytu UE w Brukseli*, CBOS: Warsaw, July 2007 (June-July 2007 data), p1.

<sup>164</sup> See: *Ibid*, p4.

<sup>165</sup> See: CBOS, *Opinie o sytuacji Polski na arenie międzynarodowej i stosunkach z Niemcami*, p5. 16% did not know.

<sup>166</sup> See: CBOS, *Szczegółowe oceny działalności rządu*, CBOS: Warsaw, September 2007 (August-September 2007 data), p2. 13% did not know.

the general public and (although not quite to the same extent) farmers themselves. Whereas prior to accession most Poles felt that the impact of EU accession on the agricultural sector would be negative, they now think that it has been positive. There was, in fact, a (small) 'Eurosceptic backlash' in Poland, after the June 2003 referendum but before EU accession in May 2004. It was triggered, in large part, by arguments over the proposals contained in the draft EU constitutional treaty to change the voting system in the Council of Ministers in a way that appeared to reduce Poland's influence. However, ironically, this post-referendum 'mini-backlash' may have actually contributed to the subsequent surge in support for the EU by lowering expectations at a certain critical point immediately prior to accession.

Poles were much less clear about what the negative effects of EU accession were. Moreover, the fact that most Poles appeared to believe that accession had had less impact in improving various aspects of Poland's political system than they had hoped may, ironically, have actually bolstered support for the EU. This relative failure meant that, unlike citizens in many other member states, Poles continued to trust EU institutions much more than they did their own; although there was also some evidence pointing to a small decline here compared with the immediate pre-accession period, that might be linked to the increasing Polish concerns about the level of EU bureaucracy. Another negative trend was the dissonance between Poles' perceived benefits of EU accession for the country as a whole and for themselves as individuals. This was particularly true in the case of farmers among whom the perception of gain was considerably lower than that of the general public in terms of their evaluation of the impact on both the agriculture sector as a whole and their own individual farms.

Moreover, these high levels of support for EU membership did not necessarily indicate that Poles were equally supportive of all attempts to further 'deepen' European integration. Indeed, in spite of the apparent clarification of attitudes on the most desirable model of European integration, Poles still appeared to have fairly complex, and often contradictory, sets of attitudes towards the EU's future trajectory. A lot depended on the particular sphere or policy area under consideration or how the question was framed. In terms of general perspectives most Poles preferred a 'Europe of nations' inter-governmental model to a federal 'United States of Europe' model and felt that the EU should develop as a union of independent states. They also opposed the idea of 'vanguard groups' of EU states engaged in deeper integration, and were particularly against the notion of a 'two-speed' Europe - no doubt based on the premise that Poland would be excluded from any 'inner core'; although, if such a group was formed, Poles wanted to be part of it in order to avoid marginalisation within the EU.

However, while a clear majority opposed EU federalism in the abstract sense, they also appeared to be generally supportive of the idea of 'deeper' political and economic European integration. A more complex picture, and more doubts, emerged when Poles were asked about specific policies of policy spheres. For example, while broad support for European political integration was reflected in backing for some kind of 'common EU government', Poles were opposed to the notion of a 'common EU President'. While they supported the idea of further European economic integration in principle, they were strongly opposed to taxation policy being determined at the EU level. Although they backed the notion of a single European currency, they were much more divided on the question of Polish accession to the

eurozone. Indeed, this was one area where there had been a notable decline in enthusiasm for further EU integration in Poland in the three years since accession. Interestingly, in spite of Poland's popular stereotype as the EU's 'new Atlanticist', Poles did not appear to see any contradiction between a strong pro-US stance in the international arena and support for the adoption of common EU foreign and defence policies. However, it was not clear whether they saw this as an alternative or complimentary to the continuation of foreign policy formation at the domestic level and Poland as a significant military actor in its own right. As far as 'widening' was concerned, most Poles supported the principle of EU enlargement, although they did not appear to see it as a priority. There were also some policy areas that Poles clearly believed should be determined by member states alone rather than at the EU level, notably moral-cultural issues, such as abortion law.

The complexity of Polish attitudes towards deeper integration, and importance of how the question was framed, was exemplified by views on the EU constitutional treaty, the most important recent initiative to move forward the European integration process. On the one hand, polls indicated high levels of Polish support for both the idea of a European constitution in principle and for ratification of the actual treaty itself. However, other evidence suggested that such polls were misleading as they were based on a lack of knowledge of what the treaty actually entailed. They were often simply a reflection of general support for EU membership and, until the French and Dutch No votes at least, a fear of Poland being isolated within the EU if it rejected the treaty. Indeed, polls conducted in the wake of the French and Dutch No votes revealed just how brittle this support was. Other survey evidence suggested that Poles were much more divided on whether or not they would support such the constitutional treaty (or its successor) if the choice were framed explicitly in terms of loss of national sovereignty.

So why did the Polish public appear to display such high levels of Euro-enthusiasm but vote for such apparently Eurosceptic or EU-critical political elites? This was due partly to the low salience of the European issue in Polish elections so that, arguably, Eurosceptic parties performed well in spite, rather than because, of their hostility to European integration. However, perhaps even more importantly, notwithstanding their apparent EU-enthusiasm, most Poles also appeared to have a very 'realistic' perception of how the EU functioned. This was based on a deep suspicion of the motives of the large member states and a belief that countries such as Poland had to fight their corner with determination to defend their national interests and secure the maximum benefits from EU membership and access to resources. This 'realistic' approach to EU politics and support for political leaders who were committed to a taking a 'tough' and assertive stance in 'defending Poland's national interests' could be seen clearly in public support for their governments' determined efforts to defend the Nice voting provisions during the debates on the new EU constitutional/reform treaty.

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