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## IS IT WORTHWHILE TO JOIN THE EUROPEAN UNION?

In the last three years, the support of Poles for access to the European Union has decreased significantly: the percentage of those who support integration has fallen from 80% to 55%. More and more frequently the reasonableness of fast and complete integration is questioned. On the contrary, the idea that this process should take more time is becoming more and more popular. This approach would involve a delay in obtaining the full membership in the EU and an introduction of long transition periods with regard to many aspects of life.

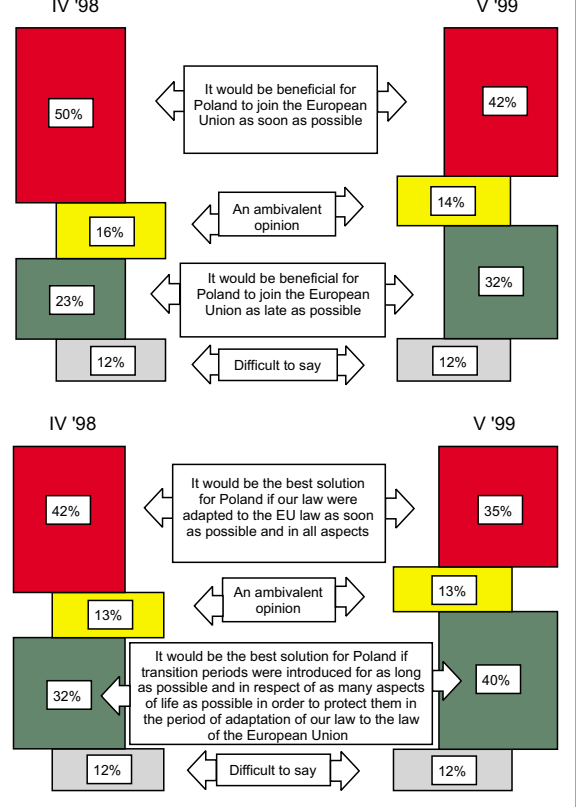
Growing scepticism with regard to the integration is also reflected in the fact that expectations as to the effects of the integration for Poland and Poles have become worse. The decrease of optimism is visible in all areas of life evaluated by our respondents, i.e. the economy, the civilisation and the way the integration may affect the attitudes and behaviour of Poles.

Support for integration with the EU depends on the respondents' hopes for improvement of the economic situation of Poland. Although most Poles are optimistic with regard to this issue, expectations connected with the state of the economy after our entry into the EU are less optimistic than a year ago. At present, improvement is expected in general and with regard to private firms, while the forecasts for state-owned enterprises and especially farms are dominated by fears.

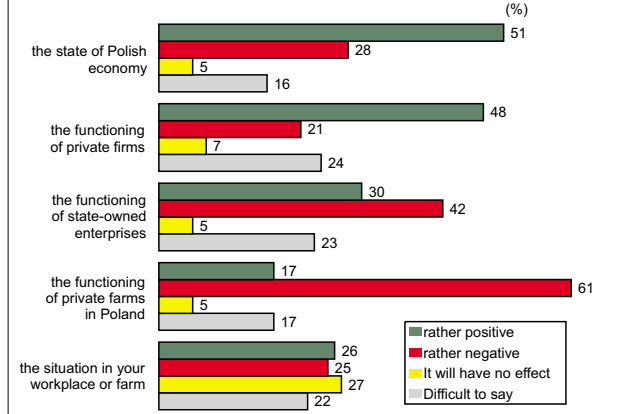
A decline of expectations as to the economic benefits is accompanied by decreasing hope that the level of unemployment will become lower and the Poles' standard of living will improve. Only slightly less than two fifths of respondents (38%) expect that the integration will have a positive effect on the living conditions of Poles (last year every other Pole expected so). Unlike in the years 1994 and 1996, now most respondents believe that after our entry into the Union unemployment will rise.

As far as particular domains of integration are concerned, a majority of respondents (65%) accept economic integration of Poland with the EU countries. A large part of respondents tend to support the unification on the political level. On the other hand, most respondents (64%) express the opinion that culture and lifestyle are the areas where Poland should maintain its distinct character.

### OPINIONS ABOUT PACE OF JOINING THE EUROPEAN UNION



### IN YOUR OPINION, WILL THE INTEGRATION OF POLAND WITH THE EU HAVE A RATHER POSITIVE OR RATHER NEGATIVE EFFECT ON:



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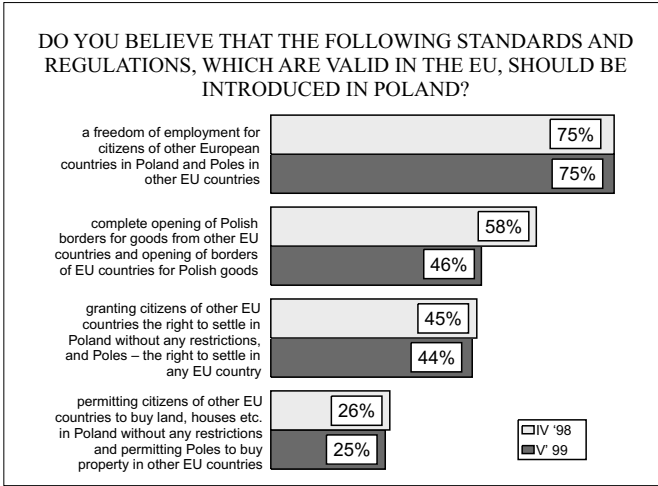
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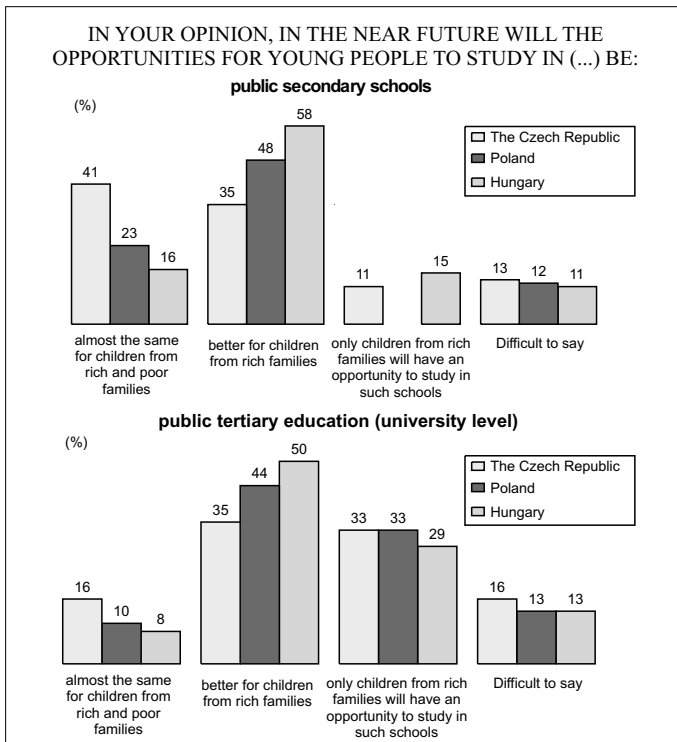
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More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Is it worthwhile to join the European Union advantages and disadvantages of the integration", July 1999.

## POLES, THE CZECH AND HUNGARIANS ON EDUCATION

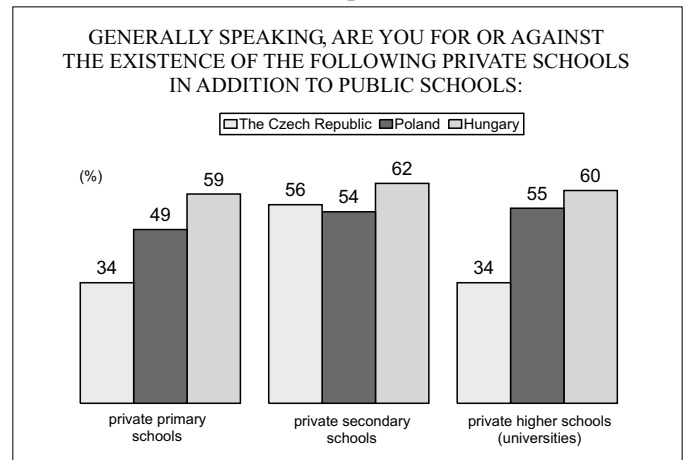
The UNICEF report on education in post-communist countries shows a deep crisis of the schooling system in some of these countries. However, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are mentioned in this report among the few countries of the region that do reasonably well. In Poland, a reform of the educational system is just about to begin. Comparative survey conducted in cooperation with IVVM in the Czech Republic and TARKI in Hungary shows that the social evaluation of the Polish public school system is not really bad. It places us between the Czech Republic, where the educational system obtained the highest evaluations, and Hungary, where it was evaluated the lowest.



The level of education provided by public schools obtained much more positive than negative evaluations in each of the three countries. Opinions on primary education are relatively the highest. The opinions of Poles and the Czech are similar as far as the level of secondary education is concerned. The evaluation of public universities and colleges (higher schools) is relatively the highest in Poland.

The opinions of Poles, the Czech and Hungarians on the equality of educational opportunities of young people differ significantly. Almost three quarters of Hungarians, half of Poles and only slightly more than one third of the Czech believe that "the poor" and "the rich" do not have equal access to public secondary schools. Even more respondents notice unequal opportunities in the public system of tertiary education: 84% in Hungary, 70% in Poland and 60% in the Czech Republic. In the respondents' opinion the inequalities in access to education will still growing. Hungarians are the most pessimistic in their forecasts concerning this matter, while the Czech are the most optimistic.

Hungarians, who are the most critical of the public school system in their country, at the same time are the strongest supporters of the existence of private schools. The Czech, whose opinion on the public school system in their country is the highest, are relatively the strongest opponents of private schools. Poland is situated between those two countries in this respect as well.



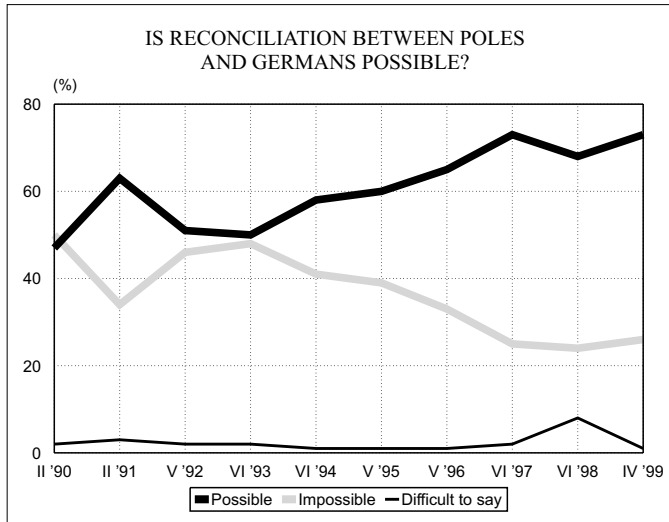
More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Poles, the Czech and Hungarians on education in their countries", July 1999.

## RECONCILIATION WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS

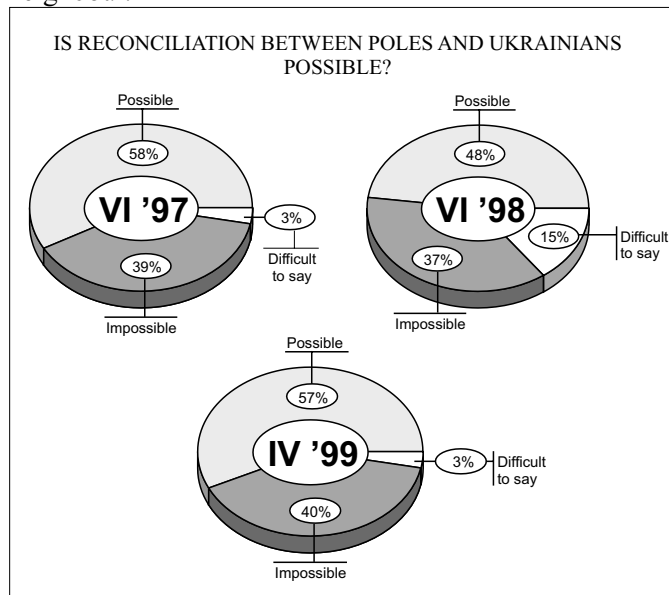
Presently Poland borders on seven countries. Our relations with two of them Germany and Ukraine are particularly affected by dramatic events from the past. Despite difficulties, the burden of history seems to lose its importance now. Will good official relations of Poland with Germany and Ukraine result in an improvement of the relations between residents of our countries?

A vast majority of respondents believe that reconciliation between Poland and Germany is possible. The Poles' views in this respect have been changing very

dynamically during the 1990s. At the beginning of this decade, the Poles' opinions were divided and pessimists slightly outnumbered the optimists. Since 1993 we have observed a fast growth of the number of persons who believe that reconciliation is possible. The optimism reached its highest point in the years 1997 and 1999, when almost three quarters of respondents believed that Polish-German reconciliation is possible.



The opinions on the possibility of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation are much less optimistic. Although the number of those who believe it to be possible is also higher than the number of those who express the opposite opinion, the majority is significantly smaller than in the case of our reconciliation with the western neighbour.



The attitude to our reconciliation with both Germans and Ukrainians first and foremost depends on the age of respondents. The oldest respondents are the most cautious and pessimistic in their opinions, while young people are clearly more optimistic. One may suppose that the attitude to these issues is mainly affected by personal experience and the atmosphere in which the successive generations grew up. Education is another factor which strongly differentiates attitudes towards our reconciliation with Poland's neighbours. Respondents

with primary education are the most sceptical. On the other hand, a considerable majority of those with higher education believe that reconciliation is possible in both cases.

Attitudes towards neighbours depend also on political views. Respondents identifying themselves with the left in both cases think that reconciliation is impossible more frequently than persons declaring right-wing views. It is particularly visible in relation to Ukrainians: the opinions of respondents with left-wing views are divided, while among those with right-wing views the opinion that reconciliation is possible has significantly more supporters than opponents.

More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Poles on the possibility of our reconciliation with Germany and Ukraine", June 1999.

## THE BALANCE OF CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE LAST DECADE

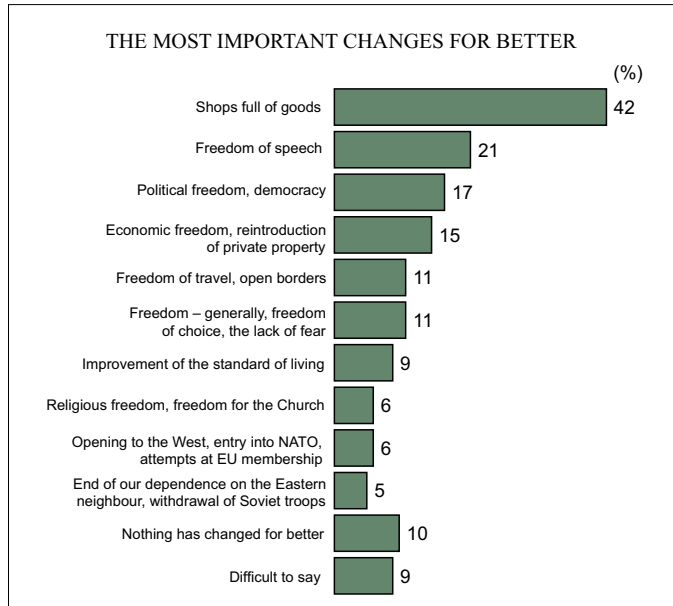
Poles generally appreciate the changes that began after 1989. In an open question we asked our respondents what, in their opinion, has changed for better. Two groups of issues were mentioned the most frequently. The first includes gains and benefits connected with the introduction of market economy. The second is related to the regaining of freedom, both on a national scale and with regard to individual rights of citizens.

As compared with the communist Poland, the most visible change for better, mentioned by over two fifths of respondents, is the fact that shops are now full of goods which for years had been scarce or unavailable. We may assume that this aspect was also taken into account by those respondents who used more general expressions, such as the introduction of economic freedom or market economy. One in eleven respondents indicated the improvement of the economic situation and the Poles' standard of living.

Among different freedoms regained after the change of the political system, the most appreciated one is the freedom of speech, which among other things involves the liquidation of censorship and the establishment of free press. Almost one in six respondents regards the political freedom regained after many years as the most important change for better. Political freedom is understood as the introduction of a multiparty democracy and free parliamentary and presidential elections. One in nine respondents appreciates the possibility of free foreign travel without unnecessary bureaucracy and control by the police the most. One in nine respondents mentioned the regaining of freedom in general. More than one in sixteen respondents mentioned the fact that the Church regained full rights or that religious freedom was reintroduced. The same percentage of respondents pointed to the opening of our country to the West, i.e. our entry into NATO and attempts at membership in the EU, as the most important change for better.

The respondents mentioned also the end of our dependence on the Soviet Union and withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland, the subversion of communism, suppression of hyperinflation and stabilization of the

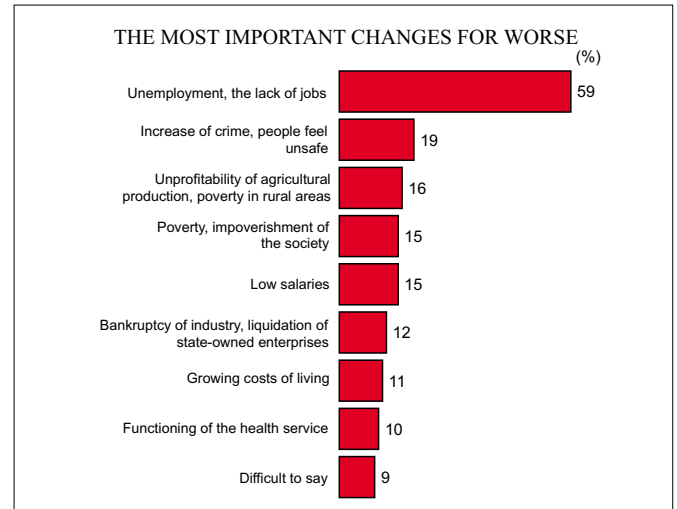
currency (złoty). Structural reforms aimed at improvement of the functioning of important areas of life, such as the pension system, healthcare system and education were also mentioned as positive changes (2% of indications each).



One in ten respondents does not notice any positive changes that have taken place during the last ten years. The feeling that nothing has changed for better is connected with personal situation of respondents. The older and the less educated respondents are, the more frequent this attitude is. The number of the dissatisfied is the highest among unskilled workers, pensioners and farmers.

The emergence of unemployment undoubtedly is seen as the most distressing change for worse in the last decade. The fact that people feel unsafe due to the increase of crime rates and the weakness of the administration of justice is another bad side of the transformation. Another change for worse is the emergence of poverty zones. Part of it is associated with worsening the situation in agriculture. Disadvantages of the introduction of free market economy also include bankruptcy of state-owned

enterprises and increase of the cost of living accompanied by a feeling that incomes do not grow accordingly.



More or less one in twenty respondents mentioned corruption, bribery and demoralisation of those in power (6%), the falling numbers of new houses and flats built as well as the establishment of paid schools (5% of indications each). The situation of hired workers was also regarded as a set-back of the last decade, especially such aspects as: deterioration of working conditions, increased exploitation of workers and arbitrary actions of private employers (4%). Other aspects that were mentioned include: the lack of social safety, uncertain future and the lack of perspectives for certain social groups (3% each). Some respondents believe that the existence of big differences between the rich and the poor is also bad. Changes in the lifestyle of Poles were also mentioned. They include more material approach to life, quest for money, devoting almost all efforts to work at the expense of other spheres of life, including the family life (2%). The list of set-backs also includes issues related to the introduction and increase of taxes (2% of indications each).

More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Shops full of goods and the feeling of freedom – the balance of changes that have taken place in the last decade", July 1999.

**In addition to the bulletins referred to above, the following have been published recently (in Polish):**

- What taxes?
- Did we listen to the Pope carefully?
- Opinions on the situation in Kosovo after the cease-fire.
- Opinions on nurses' protests. Acceptation and evaluation of the effectiveness of various forms of protest.
- Opinions on prenatal examinations.
- Attitude to reforms six months after their implementation.
- The politician of the decade, the event of the decade.
- Opinions on the health service after implementation of the reform.
- Political party preferences in July.

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