

POLITICS AND EVERYDAY LIFE

A GERMAN VIEW OF POLAND AND RUSSIA

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

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Main conclusions

- The Polish image in Germany is generally good with some exceptions. We find improvements in the opinions on the Polish character Polish-German relations. Opinions concerning the Polish state remained stable. Germans acceptance of Poles in various social roles has deteriorated since 2008.
- Russia is perceived very negatively by German society. The image of the Russians is worse than the image of the Poles as well.
- About one in four Germans has been in Poland since 1989 (24%). The inhabitants of the eastern lands are the most common visitors to Poland.
- German knowledge on Poland and Russia comes mainly from TV and the press.
- Poland and the Poles are associated with situations from everyday life, including work (40% of all associations). This tendency has remained stable over the years. An important part of the associations is connected with the Polish criminality (14,5%). Despite this Germans also stress the professionalism of Polish workers and the fact that their services are cheap. Polish landscapes, regions and cities are being mentioned ore often than previously. Historical associations do not play a crucial role.
- Germans associate Russia mainly with lack of democracy in the political system and with alcohol.
- There have been no crucial changes in the opinions on how the Polish state works in the last years. Half of the respondents, similar to previous years, think that there is corruption in Poland (50%), and one third that the bureaucracy makes it difficult to get things done (29%). At the same time more Germans than before claim the Polish economy is developing well (40%) and that there is a good organization of work (15%).
- The picture of Russia is worse than that of Poland. According to 82% of the respondents there is corruption in Russia and nearly two thirds (62%) think the Russian bureaucracy makes it difficult to get things done. Only 9% of those asked share the opinion that the democracy in Russia is similar to that in Western Europe and that there is good work organization. Even less people claim that the civic freedoms are

respected and the media in Russia are allowed to criticize the government (5% in each case).

- Germans assess positively German investments in Poland. Also the investments in Russia are perceived by the Germans as developing and profitable. These opinions are, however, worse than those concerning Poland.
- The information that a given product comes from Poland neither motivates nor demotivates Germans to buy it.
- Among seven societies listed in the questionnaire the Dutch (55%) and the French (50%) are the most liked, followed by the Americans (43%) and the British (37%). Although the Poles are liked by more than one fourth of the Germans, this places them penultimate on this list, before the Russians (15%), but after the Greeks (34%). The level of the positive feelings has not changed much in the last years. The middle values (in the scale from 1 – like very much, to 5 – do not like at all) have changed from 2,9 in the years 2000 and 2008, 3,2 in 2006 to 3,0 today.
- The Poles are more accepted in all of the social roles than rejected. Generally 61% of the Germans do not have anything against a Pole in any of the social roles. The most accepted roles are that of a colleague at work (79%) and a person living in Germany (74%). Amongst all respondents 62% have nothing against a Pole as a German citizen. Lower levels of acceptance can be found in Germans attitudes concerning roles of Poles which demand more personal contacts, such as: a friend (57%) and a daughter- or son-in-law (49%) and as a boss (53%). The percentage of the acceptance in some of the roles has decreased in recent years. This decrease is, however, not connected with a growth of negative feelings, but with an increased frequency of choosing the answer “difficult to say.”
- The acceptance of Russians in various social roles correlates to acceptance of the Poles in similar roles. The values here, however, are definitely lower (around 14%-17%).
- While assessing the three societies: Germans, Poles and Russians with given characteristics, the Germans have a very positive opinion regarding

their own character. They perceive the Poles and Russians definitely worse as themselves. Germans see Polish and Russians as quite similar while different from German society. The Poles end up, however, much better off than the Russians. The perception of the Polish character has positively increased very much in recent years.

- France and the Netherlands are the countries that the Germans perceive as the most important partners for cooperation with Germany among the ten states that have been assessed. In both cases three fourths of the respondents think Germany should collaborate with them very closely. Next on the list are: USA (69%), United Kingdom (58%) and Japan (55%). Poland can be found in the middle of this list (48%), followed by another German neighbor from this region of Europe – the Czech Republic (43%) and China (39%). Closer cooperation with Russia is desired by even less respondents (34%).
- The Germans assess Polish-German relations very positively. The percentage of the positive answers has reached a new high (70%) and is nearly the same as Polish assessment.
- The opinions on German-Russian relations are split. Nearly half of the respondents think they are good (47%) while only a few percentage points less assesses them as bad (42%).
- According to 59% of the Germans, Germany should concentrate on cooperation and compromise in its relations with Poland. One third of the respondents (32%) disagree and believe that Germany should rather focus on its own interests. The policy towards Russia should look like in a different way. Germans are split in their opinions on which approach Germany should take in its relations with Russia (48% for compromise and 43% for own interests).
- The biggest group of Germans think Poland has no influence on EU-Russia relations (39%). Nearly one fourth (24%) claim that Poland help to build the relations between Brussels and Moscow. 15% hold the opposite opinion. This percentage has decreased (from 26%) since 2008.
- More than half of those asked think Poland and Germany have common interests in their policy towards Russia (52%).

- Germans who have already visited Poland or based knowledge on contacts with Poles living in Germany, assess Poland and the Poles much more positively than those who do not have this experience. This tendency can be observed in responds concerning Russia but not in everywhere.
- Generally more positive opinions regarding Poland and Poles are expressed by the Germans who live in the East rather than in the West.