

Focus on Poland

European Sovereignty

Ipsos survey on behalf of the Fondation Jean-Jaurès and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

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Survey conducted by Ipsos on behalf of the Fondation Jean-Jaurès and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Some 8,000 people were interviewed over the internet via Ipsos' Access Panel between 28 December 2020 and 8 January 2021, making up eight samples of 1,000 persons representative of the national population of persons aged 18 and over in France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden. The sampling was carried out in accordance with the quota method (sex, age, occupation, rural/urban location, region). This summary presents the results on Poland.

IN POLAND, PEOPLE TAKE A MORE POSITIVE VIEW OF SOVEREIGNTY ...

The Poles have not often been sovereign in their history, which perhaps explains their particular attachment to the term. Over two-thirds (69 %) have a positive view of it, and over three-quarters among people aged over 50. This is one of the highest percentages among the eight countries in the survey, along with Germany (73 %). Only 3 % of Poles have a negative view of the word »sovereignty«, as against 21 % whose opinion is »neither positive nor negative«. Poles are also above the European average in considering the term to be »modern« (31 %, the same as Germany, in contrast to a 20 % average among the eight countries in the survey), as against 17 % who consider it »outdated« (32 % on average) and 41 % who see it as »neither one nor the

other«. While the majority do not associate it with any political orientation (»neither right-wing nor left-wing«, 46 %), others associate it rather with the right (28 %) than with the left (7 %).

In Poland, sovereignty refers first and foremost to »independence« (mentioned by 65 %, 23 percentage points higher than the European average of 42 %) and to »freedom« (61 %, as against only a 28 % European average, an extremely significant difference of 33 percentage points). The association between sovereignty and freedom is not observed anywhere else to such a degree. »Self-determination« (mentioned by 40 % as against a 34 % European average) takes third place. The ideas of »power« (mentioned by 9 % as against a 37 % European average), »nationalism« (6 % in Poland, 31 % on average) and »protectionism«, by contrast, are mentioned much more rarely than elsewhere. In Poland, sovereignty is associated much more often with the notion of »independence in relation to others« (69 %, a European record for this item) and »living in accordance with one's own values and preferences« (60 %). There is significantly less concern with »the ability to assert one's own interests« (37 %) and »cooperation freely agreed with one's partners« (35 %).

... AND A VERY FAVOURABLE VIEW OF THE ASSOCIATED EXPRESSIONS NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN SOVEREIGNTY

The very positive connotations of the term »sovereignty« in Poland also foster understanding and appreciation of related

expressions. Most Poles have a good idea of what »national sovereignty« (83 %), »European sovereignty« (75 %) and even »strategic autonomy« (64 %) mean – all these scores are higher than the corresponding European average (71 %, 63 % and 61 %, respectively). Overall, these expressions are clearly more highly thought of than elsewhere. In Poland, national sovereignty evokes »something positive« in three-quarters of respondents (76 %, the highest score alongside Romania out of the eight countries in the survey, with an overall average of 57 %), while European sovereignty elicits positive associations in 69 %, including in 88 % of supporters of PO, 82 % of supporters of SLD and even 69 % of those close to the PiS. Again, this is a European high, as against an average for the eight countries in the survey of 52 %. Finally, six Poles out of 10 also take a favourable view of »strategic autonomy«, again more than 10 percentage points higher than the average (60 % / 49 %).

The majority of Poles do not see a contradiction between European sovereignty and national sovereignty. For 61 % of them, the terms sovereignty and Europe are compatible »because European sovereignty and national supervisory board are complementary«, as against 39 % who take the view that they are contradictory »because sovereignty refers above all to the nation«. In turn, there is a political divide on this issue between people on the political left, three-quarters of whom consider the two notions complementary, and people on the right, who are clearly much more divided.

POLES BELIEVE IN EUROPEAN SOVEREIGNTY AND WOULD LIKE TO STRENGTHEN IT

For two out of three Poles (65 %, with 35 % taking the opposite view), Europe's sovereignty is already a reality. Once again, this is the highest figure out of the eight countries in the study, as against a European average of 51 %. By way of comparison, only 36 % of French respondents take this view, while 64 % do not, the opposite state of affairs.

It has to be said that Poles are less demanding than their European neighbours when it comes to the essential elements that Europe has to have before it can be considered sovereign: »a strong economy«, considered essential by 59 % of Poles, but by 69 % of Europeans overall; »a common security and defence policy«, mentioned by 53 % of Poles and 67 % of Europeans; and »strong defence of its own values – democracy, rule of law – both internally and externally« (mentioned by 48 % in Poland, with a 61 % European average).

All the other elements are considered by a majority to be »important, but not essential« in Poland, while by European average each one is deemed »essential«. »Safeguards on European production in such strategic areas as food and health« (mentioned by 46 % as »essential« in Poland, with a 65 % European average), possessing »European energy sources« (43 % / 60 %), having »common instruments for combating foreign interference« (40 %, 58 %), »control over the EU's external borders« (39 %, 59 % European average), »its own tax revenues« (32 % / 53 %), »control over strategic infrastruc-

ture (ports, airports, energy ...)« (29 %, 52 %); and »control over digital infrastructure (social networks, Cloud, 5G ...)« (24 % / 46 %).

Whether it's a reality or not, most Poles (78 %) would like to strengthen European sovereignty, as well as national sovereignty (80 %). In each case they are above the European average (73 % and 77 %, respectively). Such reinforcement would help in combating »the terrorist threat« more effectively (mentioned by 43 % in Poland, 37 % European average) and, a particular view shared with Latvia, in standing up against »Russia's great-power ambitions« (mentioned by 30 % in Poland and 31 % in Latvia, as against a European average of only 13 %).

The other reasons mentioned are substantially in line with the average ranking in the eight countries in the study, although with varying degrees of intensity. Thus strengthening European sovereignty would make it possible to tackle »the challenge of climate change« (mentioned by 32 % in Poland, with an average of 34 %), »the threat to health« (26 % / 31 %), and »China's great-power ambitions« (20 % / 20 %). »Their country's lack of clout at international level«, on the other hand, is mentioned by only 17 % in Poland, as against an average of 27 %. One perhaps detects here an underlying national pride that is more pronounced than elsewhere.

Poland is, however, perfectly in line with the European average with regard to the main obstacles to strengthening European sovereignty. The fact that the supposedly eurosceptic Andrzej Duda, who is also close to the Kaczyński brothers, has been president of Poland since 2015, does not prevent Poles from ranking in first place »the fact that some European countries are governed by nationalists« (mentioned by 22 %, although only half that among PiS supporters). Ranked at the same level is »pressure from certain foreign countries in whose interest it is that Europe does not become stronger« (22 %, 32 % among PiS supporters), followed by »cultural differences between European countries« (18 %), »the weakness of the European institutions (Commission, Parliament), as they stand at the moment« (16 %), »popular reluctance in various European countries« (12 %) and »pressure from big industrial corporations or digital platforms« (10 %).

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Hiroshimastraße 28, 10785 Berlin, Germany

Responsible for this publication in the FES:
Catrina Schläger | Head of Department International Policy Analysis

Cover picture: Jan Scheunert | picture alliance / ZUMAPRESS.com

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