

# **KNOCKING ON EUROPE'S DOOR:**

## **Voting Behavior in the EU Accession Referendum in Poland**

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TITLE VIII PROGRAM

## **Project Information**\*

**Principal Investigator:** Krzysztof Jasiewicz  
**Council Contract Number:** 819-22g  
**Date:** May 13, 2004

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\* The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract or grant funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, funds which were made available by the U.S. Department of State under Title VIII (The Soviet-East European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained herein are those of the author.

## **Executive Summary**

In this paper, data from two public opinion polls conducted on representative samples of the Polish adult population at the time of the June 2003 referendum on the EU accession are examined to test two different hypotheses about the causes of Euro-skepticism in Poland. One hypothesis links the anti-EU resentments with structural factors generating “competitive disadvantage” among individuals and groups. The other points out the motivational role of ideological factors – beliefs that Poland’s membership would harm its national and religious (Catholic) identity.

Both hypotheses found some confirmation. Yet the analyses demonstrate that the anti-EU stand is associated not so much with structural factors or religiosity *per se*, but rather with a subjective perception of being a loser in the process of transition away from communism. Those who question the post-1989 reforms – political as much as economic – tend to be more skeptical about the EU itself and about Poland becoming its member.

## **Introduction**

On December 13, 2002, the fifteen states composing the European Union made in Copenhagen the historic decision to expand the Union by including ten new members, mostly post-communist countries of East-Central Europe, among them Poland. This decision has been ratified by the legislatures of the current member-states and, in a referendum on June 7 and 8, 2003, by the people of Poland. It will take effect on May 1, 2004.

Ever since the demise of the Soviet bloc, Poland's membership in the European Union has enjoyed wide support among the Polish public. In the referendum, 77% cast a vote in favor and 23% against the accession, with a turnout of 59% of eligible voters (for an analysis of the referendum see section below). Among Polish political elites, throughout the 1990s, all major parties, from the post-communist SLD on the left, to the centrist Freedom Union (UW), to the Electoral Action Solidarity (AWS) on the right, shared a virtual consensus in favor of a quick accession to the European and Atlantic structures.

Poland achieved one of her major goals in this respect in March 1999, when she was accepted as a member of NATO. In the Polish parliament only one faction, the seven-deputies strong Catholic organization Polish Alliance voted against the ratification of the Washington Treaty. In the October 2000 presidential election, candidates critical of Poland's EU membership did not fare well, collecting together no more than 10% of the vote.

Yet in the September 2001 parliamentary election, the Euro-skeptical forces recorded significant gains. The League of Polish Families (LPR, a grass-roots Catholic coalition, stemming from the former Polish Alliance), which made its anti-EU stand the focal point of its campaign, won 8% of the vote and 38 seats in the Sejm. The Self-Defense (originally a radical organization of Polish farmers, since 2001 a catch-all party), which voiced strong objections to policies of all post-1989 governments and questioned the conditions of Poland's entry to the EU, won 10% of the vote and 53 seats. Several other parties, such as the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), the Labor Union (UP), or a new post-Solidarity organization Law and

Justice (PiS), expressed only conditional support for the integration with the EU. Only two parties, the SLD (the leader of the coalition that has ruled between 2001 and 2004 and included also the UP and until 2003 the PSL) and the Civic Platform (another new, post-Solidarity organization, in opposition to the current government), which between them garnered 265 of the 460 seats in the Sejm, might be considered unequivocally pro-EU. The popularity of Euro-skeptical parties has been reconfirmed in the October 2002 municipal elections. From an unquestionable objective of Polish foreign policy, Poland's membership in the EU, as well as its specific conditions, has become an object of political debate.

The controversy over the nation's future place in Europe reflects fundamental cleavages in Polish politics. Ever since the establishment of the new democratic regime, the political field in Poland has been defined by two cross-cutting cleavages: socio-economic, between support for the neo-liberal free market/free enterprise policies and the option in favor of state interventionism in the economy and welfare state-type social policy; and ideological, between the inclusive and exclusive political philosophies. The latter cleavage has been usually articulated as a choice between secular and confessional conceptions of social order, or between civic and ethnocentric visions of the Nation.

Moreover, as evidenced in many analyses (Wade, Lavelle, Groth 1995, Grabowska 1997, Jasiewicz 2002, Szawiel 1999), Poles tend to be motivated in their mass political behavior not by their social position or economic considerations, but rather by their values and ideological beliefs. The evidence suggests further that one end of this axiological continuum is relatively well-defined. It represents the traditional system of values, combining Polish nationalism with a strong attachment to Catholic dogmas and a condemnation of communism as a virtual negation of those values. The other end of this continuum is defined more by rejection of this nationalistic-Catholic syndrome than by any positive factors.

Fundamentalist Catholicism and ethnic nationalism generate rejection of the EU as allegedly based on "materialism," secularism, and "cosmopolitanism," which, once Poland becomes a member, would destroy her national identity and the religiosity of the Polish people. Such ideas have been strongly articulated on the waves of *Radio Maryja*, a nation-wide radio network, which reaches out to as

many as four million regular listeners and enjoys a virtual monopoly on Catholic broadcasting in Poland. Over the course of the past decade it has become the focal point of anti-European resistance. In its campaign, it has been joined by printed media, such as dailies *Nasz Dziennik* and *Nasza Polska*. All these media outlets have already proven their political efficiency, as in 2001 they were instrumental in securing for the League of Polish Families its seats in the Sejm.

Since among the political elite Euro-skepticism is closely associated with a strong attachment to the Catholic faith, one might also expect that on the mass public opinion level religiosity will be a good of predictor of pro- and anti-European attitudes. Yet analyses of public opinion polls conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s (see for instance Kolarska-Bobińska 2001, Koseła et al. 2002, Jasiewicz 2003a and 2004) suggest that the variance in these attitudes stems rather from structural factors. Pro-European attitudes have been positively correlated with social status (education, occupation, income) and place of residence, and negatively with age; Euro-enthusiasts have dominated almost completely among well-educated young urban professionals, but remained a minority among poorly educated, older peasants.

While there has been a positive correlation between religiosity and Euro-skepticism, it has never been as strong as correlations with structural factors. It is fair to say that among Euro-skeptics one could find mostly people who already perceive themselves as losers in the transition away from Communism and who feel vulnerable to the challenges, which Poland's entry to the Union might pose for them, their families, and their communities. They seem to make up the core constituency of the Self-Defense, which in the 2001 and 2002 elections was able to attract a following not only among the rural, but also the urban population. Furthermore, political leaders and experts, Polish as well as European, have also pointed out structural issues, and specifically the agricultural sector, as the source of anti-EU attitudes (see Kolarska-Bobińska, Rosner, Wilkin 2001, Halamska et al. 2001, Karpowicz, Osiecka, Kojder 2002, among others).

This phenomenon has been recognized also by the ideological opponents of Poland's entry to EU, who in their pronouncements have been using also arguments of a pragmatic nature. They have focused in particular on the potential for unfair competition between Polish and European producers and merchants, not only in the agricultural sector, but also in manufacturing and services. The public at large

has demonstrated at least some receptiveness to the ideological Euro-skepticism, in particular to the arguments based on economic (purchase of land by foreigners) and political (national sovereignty) nationalism.

Furthermore, the anti-EU media (*Radio Maryja*) enjoy, because of their Catholic identity, a relatively easy access to the milieus where economically and socially motivated Euro-skepticism is the strongest. These are, in particular, farmers, but also other dwellers of rural areas, and certain pockets of the dissatisfied urban population. Also the mainstream media, in the months preceding the referendum, tended to focus, for obvious reasons, on the more controversial aspects of the deal made by Polish and European negotiators in Copenhagen.

The issue of Poland's place in the EU is certain to become a major cleavage in Polish politics for years to come. The forthcoming elections to the European Parliament (scheduled for June 13, 2004) are set to become a major test before the parliamentary and presidential elections, both due before the end of 2005. The current opinion polls indicate the rapid decline in popularity of the ruling SLD/UP coalition, the growth of the moderate center (Civic Platform) and the extreme (anti-EU) left (Self-Defense), and the consolidation of the right (PiS and the Euro-skeptic LPR). In addition, the absence of an heir-apparent to President Kwaśniewski increases the likelihood of a major re-alignment in Polish politics.

This paper will explore both ideological and structural sources of pro- and anti-European attitudes in Poland. In addition, it will place the vote in the referendum in the broader context of voting behavior in Poland, by utilizing variables compatible with the Polish General Election Studies (PGSW). We will begin it, however, with a brief analysis of the accession referendum itself.

### **The June 2003 referendum**

While the opinion polls consistently indicated that the supporters of the EU accession decidedly outnumber the opponents, the referendum was never considered a mere formality. A potential controversy might have emerged, if the turnout in the referendum fell below fifty percent of eligible voters. Such a turn of events seemed quite likely: the turnout in the 1997 constitutional referendum was

42.9%, in the 1997 and 2001 parliamentary elections respectively 47.9% and 46.3%, only in the presidential elections the turnout has regularly fell above the 50% threshold (60.1% in 2000). The 1995 Law on National Referenda provided that only referenda with the turnout exceeding fifty percent are binding, without however specifying what should happen if the turnout was lower.

To remove this ambiguity, the parliament adopted in March 2003 a new Law on National Referenda (subsequently amended in May 2003), which included a separate section regulating referenda related to ratification of international agreements. Article 73.1. of this law stipulates that: “The result of a referendum on granting of consent to ratification of an international agreement (...) shall be valid if more than half of those eligible to vote have cast their vote.”<sup>1</sup> A positive outcome of such a referendum would authorize the President of the Republic to sign the ratification treaty; a negative result would deny such authorization. Article 75 stipulates further that: “If the result of a referendum on granting of consent to ratification of an international agreement is not decisive, the Sejm may adopt anew a resolution on the method of granting consent to ratification of that agreement.”<sup>2</sup> In practice, this article gives the Sejm the right to either call a new referendum or take the issue in its own hands and issue (or deny) the President the authorization to ratify the agreement in question.

This new regulation might have removed the legal ambiguity, but not the political uncertainty regarding the outcome of this process. The political situation in the country was at the time very volatile (which was only in part related to the EU accession issue). It was quite conceivable that the opponents of the EU accession (or of its terms accepted in Copenhagen) could have mobilized a significant number of deputies either to vote against the ratification, or to abstain from voting. While the negative outcome of the vote in the Sejm was still unlikely, a strong opposition to the accession treaty would be embarrassing internationally and damaging politically to all pro-EU forces.

Hence, the campaign conducted by the government, the pro-EU opposition, and the Euro-enthusiastic independents focused on securing an adequate turnout in the referendum. In addition to a

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<sup>1</sup> This quotation comes from an unofficial translation of the 2003 law provided at the State Electoral Commission’s Web site [http://www.pkw.gov.pl/index.jsp?place=Menu2&news\\_cat\\_id=14&layout=1](http://www.pkw.gov.pl/index.jsp?place=Menu2&news_cat_id=14&layout=1) (accessed on April 14, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

vast advertising campaign, also some legal devices were put in place. The tradition of elections in Poland dictates that the voting takes place on a single day, a Sunday. People, in particular in rural areas, have been accustomed to visit the polls on the way home from Sunday Mass. For the EU accession referendum, the Sejm decided that the voting would take place over the period of two days, on Saturday, June 7, and Sunday, June 8, 2003, to allow voters more flexibility with their time and provide easier access to the polls.

This decision prompted yet another debate, regarding the publication of data on turnout at the end of the first day of voting. Polish electoral regulations typically include a provision of “election day silence,” which not only institutes a ban on the actual campaigning on the election day, but also forbids, before the voting stations are closed, the dissemination of election-related information, such as results of public opinion surveys or exit polls. To remove potential controversies, the Sejm amended in May the Law on National Referenda in a way that opened the door for immediate publication of official and unofficial data about the first day turnout.

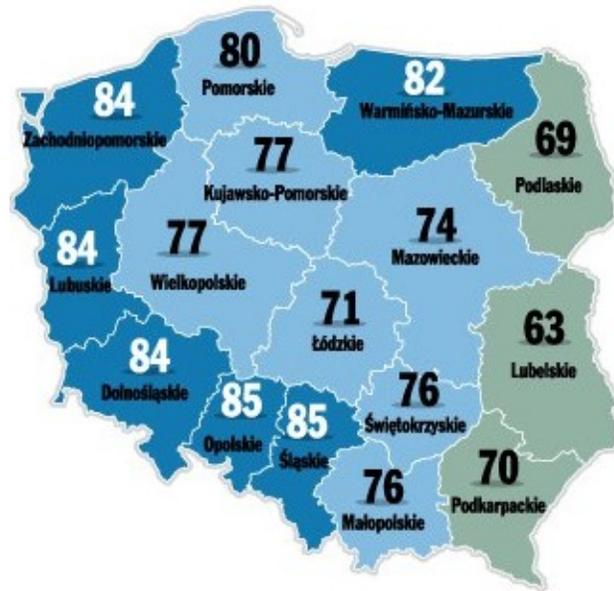
While the pro-EU campaign was focused on the turnout, the opponents of the accession seemed caught off guard and torn between calling for a boycott of the referendum or advocating the nay-vote. The first option became practically moot, at least for those motivated by religious factors, after the Roman Catholic Episcopate of Poland issued on June 1 a pastoral letter urging believers to participate in the referendum (without, however, any suggestions on how one should vote).

The voting took place on June 7 and 8, 2003, in the usual orderly fashion, with no major disturbances reported. The turnout estimate issued by the State Electoral Commission on Saturday night seemed to confirm the fears of the EU proponents: only 17.6% of those eligible did in fact vote on the first day. In all likelihood, the very publication of this result led to mobilization of pro-EU forces on the second day. Eventually, the officially recorded **turnout** in the referendum was **58.85%** of eligible voters, of whom **77.45%** cast the “**yes**” and **22.55%** the “**no**” vote.

The official data (available at the State Electoral Commission Web site: <http://referendum.pkw.gov.pl/sww/kraj/indexA.html>) reveal one interesting phenomenon. In the northern

and western provinces of the country, both the turnout and the support for the EU accession were, on the average, higher than in the central, eastern, and southern provinces. Data for the referendum outcome are presented on the map below (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Vote “Yes” in the EU Referendum by Province (in percent)**



This relationship goes against conventional wisdom and expectations based on some previous analyses. Each of the eight northern and western provinces is in its entirety or at least in substantial part composed of land awarded to Poland from Germany after World War II. Previous analyses (see Jasiewicz 2003a) indicate that people who do not accept purchase of land in Poland by citizens of the EU countries tend to be significantly more Euro-skeptical than those who have no such objections. Furthermore, anti-EU media spread the image of Germans coming back to East Prussia, Pomerania, or Silesia to claim (or simply to buy back) “their” land. For this reason, the Accession Treaty included different transition periods for purchase of land by foreigners. In the north and west it was seven years and elsewhere in the country it was three years.

Regardless of how realistic expectations were of any massive German pursuit of Polish land, people living on the formerly German territories should have been more concerned about such a

possibility and hence more motivated to vote “no” in the referendum. Yet, in reality, the opposite happened. Neither the economic benefits of the border trade with Germany (applicable only to counties within an hour commute to the border), nor other economic factors can fully account for this phenomenon. We will return to this issue in our analyses of survey data.

### **The Outline of Analyses**

Structural and cultural (ideological) phenomena are often interrelated. Religiosity (at least in its behavioral component) is associated (not only in Poland) with an older age, lower education, residence in rural areas, and gender (women tend to be more religious than men). Public opinion poll reports usually present only bi-variate relationships between the views on Poland’s entry to the EU and various demographic, social, economic, and ideological variables. However, it is possible – indeed, quite likely – that some observed relationships are, in fact, spurious. People may object to the pro-EU policy not because they are devout Catholics and reject the allegedly overly secularized Europe, but because they live in the countryside and work on a farm. They may also feel threatened by competition from French or Austrian farmers, or because they feel too old and poorly prepared to cope with the forthcoming changes. The reverse relationship is also conceivable: the old, poorly educated peasants may oppose the EU because of their deep religiosity and a genuine rejection of the libertarian and materialist West. To find out the real character of these relationships, one must perform multi-variate analyses.

In addition to variables reflecting demographic and socio-occupational status of respondents (sex, age, education, place of residence, occupation, employment status and sector, income, etc.), those describing their ideological (religiosity, self-placement on the Left-Right continuum) and political variables (party allegiance, voting patterns) preferences, one should also utilize variables reflecting people’s views and opinions. Structural factors, such as one’s social status and individual or group social mobility, seldom have a direct and immediate effect on one’s policy preferences. In relation to post-Communist Poland it has been observed, for instance, that it is easier to predict one’s voting behavior on the basis of a person’s *subjective* assessment of the regime change or the system performance than on the basis of any *objective* individual factors, such as occupation, income, or the actual level of deprivation

(Powers and Cox 1997, Jasiewicz 1999). One can therefore expect that the stand on the issue of Poland in the EU may be influenced by the individual's evaluation of the current political and economic situation on the national level, in his own household, and his expectations for the future.

Furthermore, attitudes toward the EU seem affected by the assessment of the entire process of the transition away from communism and one's satisfaction with his or her position in the new political, economic, and social order. This assessment is often reflected in the individual's attitudes toward political elites, various elements of the democratic political process, and even democracy as such. In the Polish context, the strong showing of Euro-skeptic parties (LPR, Self-Defense) in the 2001 parliamentary and 2002 local elections can be interpreted as an anti-establishment or even anti-system vote. To explore these phenomena, variables measuring general attitudes toward democracy must also be incorporated.

To address these issues, we will utilize a data set combining the outcome of two public opinion polls conducted by the CBOS polling center on representative samples of Polish adult population, the first shortly before, and the other shortly after the June 7-8, 2003, referendum.<sup>3</sup> Both polls included a standard set of background variables routinely used by the CBOS, as well as a series of standard questions measuring citizens' assessment of political and economic situation in the country. In addition, in the pre-referendum poll the respondents were prompted to disclose their intentions regarding the referendum (whether they intended to vote and how), while in the post-referendum poll they were asked about their actual behavior (whether they did vote and how). These questions were treated as mutual equivalents in the merged file, and appropriately recoded. When controlled by the time of the survey execution (before or after referendum), these variables displayed differences below the level of statistical significance. Therefore, they will be treated in this paper as the reflection of an individual's actual behavior in the referendum and tested against the background of three groups of independent (explanatory) variables:

- (1) socio-demographic (or structural): sex, age, place of residence, province, education,

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<sup>3</sup> The pre-referendum poll was executed from May 29 to June 1, 2003, on a sample of 1260 individuals. I secured access to this data set through the Institute for Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The post-referendum survey took place from July 4 to July 7, 2003, on a sample of 952 individuals. I was able to purchase this data set from the CBOS thanks to a grant

occupation, sector of employment, and income per capita in the household;

(2) ideological: reflecting respondents religiosity (participation in religious services), political ideology (self-identification on the Left-Right dimension), and political preferences (party allegiance at the time of the survey and voting behavior in the 2001 general election);

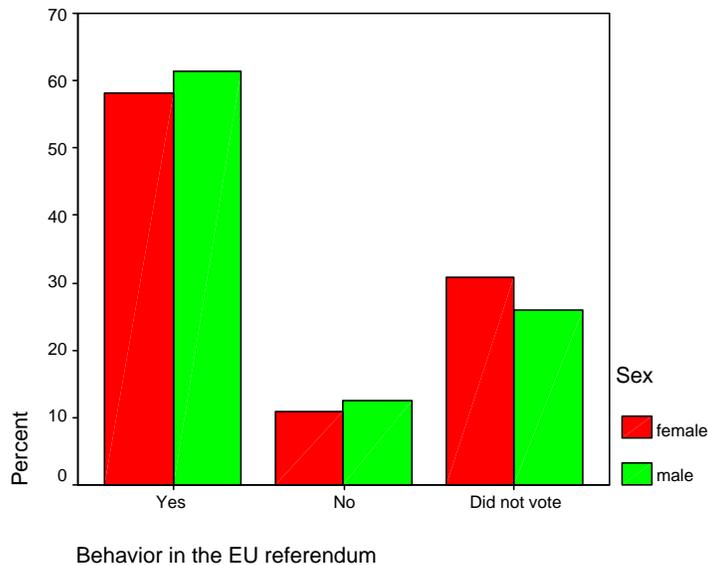
(3) attitudinal: describing respondents' assessment the economic and political developments in the country.

We will begin by presenting bi-variate relationships between the independent and dependent variables, to conclude with an examination of several multi-variate models explaining voting behavior in the EU-accession referendum.

### Bi-variate Analyses: Structural Variables

In the paper, the data are presented in the form of graphs. The actual cross-tabulations, with appropriate statistics, are available from the author at request. In the following graphs, we present the breakdown of voting behavior in the June 2003 referendum by **sex, age, place of residence, province, education, occupation, sector of employment, and income per capita in the household:**

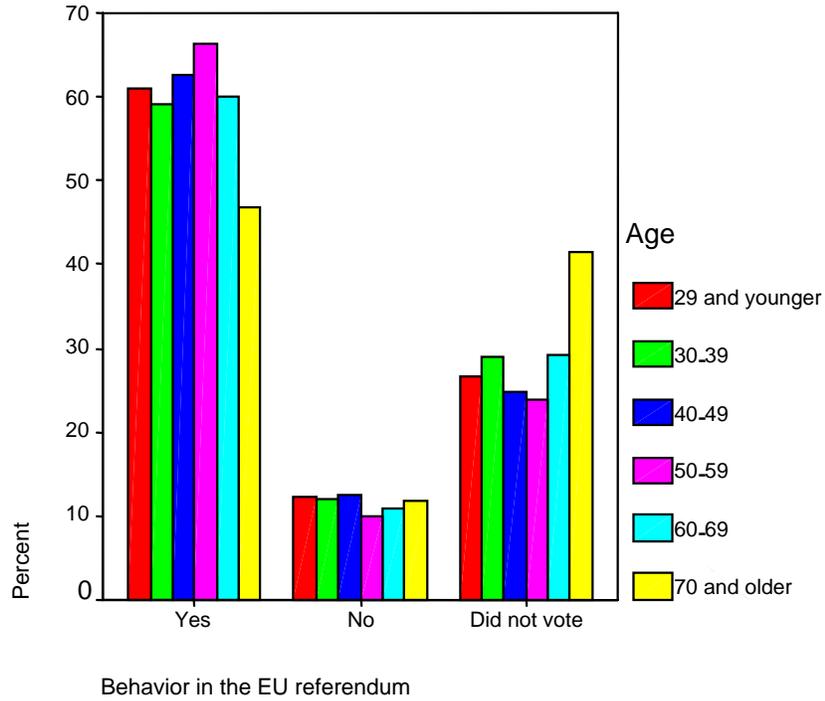
**Graph 1. Behavior in the EU referendum by sex**



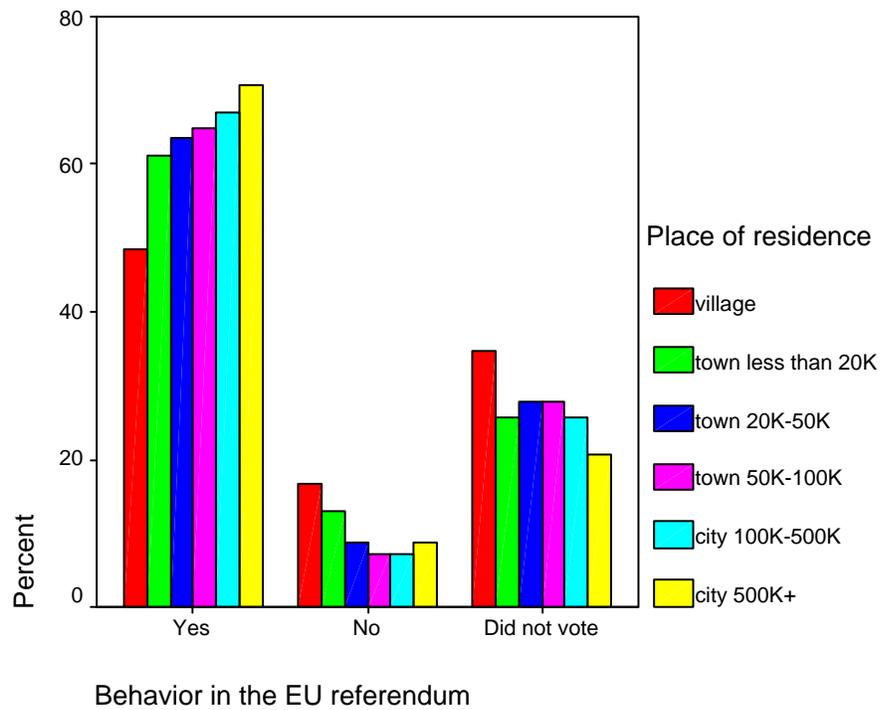
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from the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research. The total number of cases in the merged file is 2212 (1260 + 952).

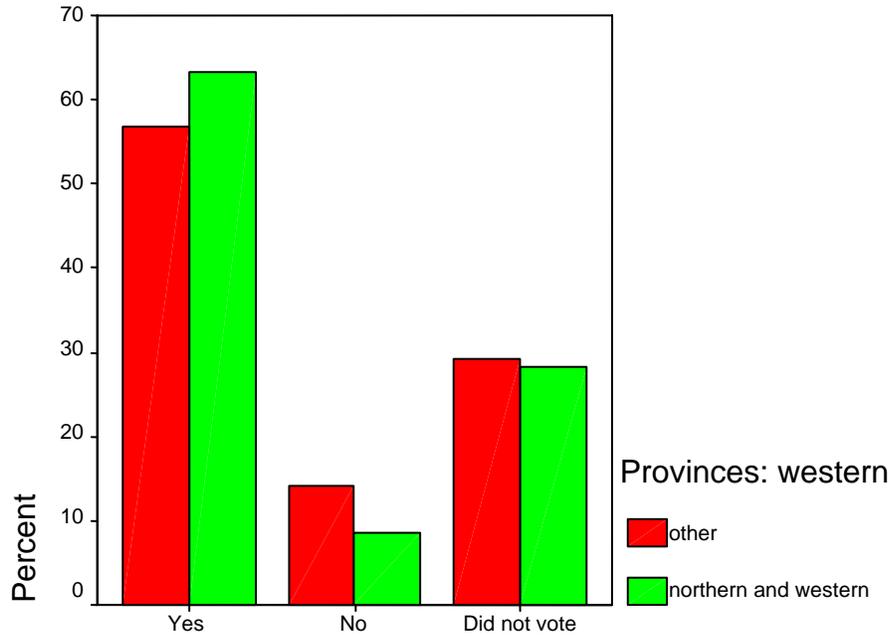
**Graph 2. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Age**



**Graph 3. Behavior in the EU Referendum by place of Residence**

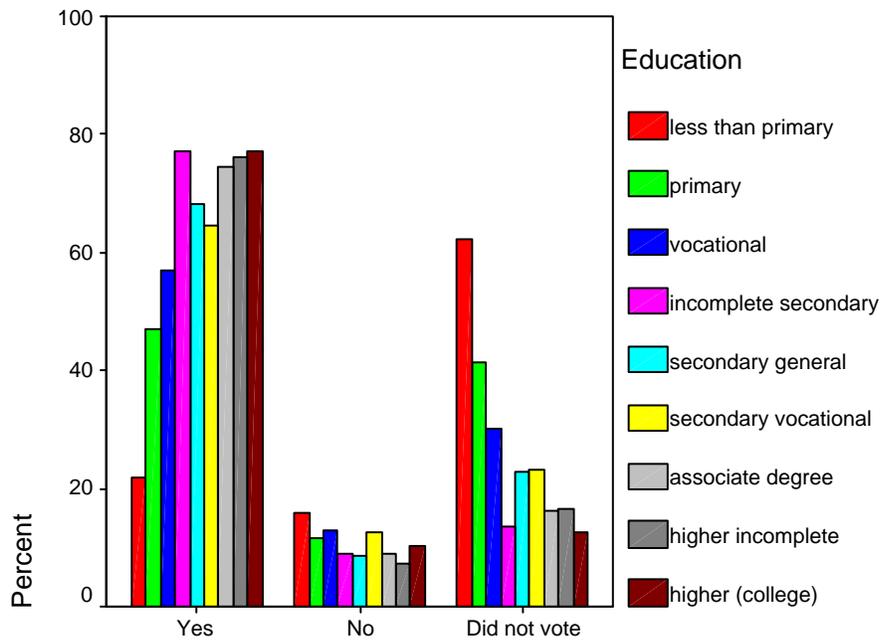


**Graph 4. Behavior in the EU Referendum by province**



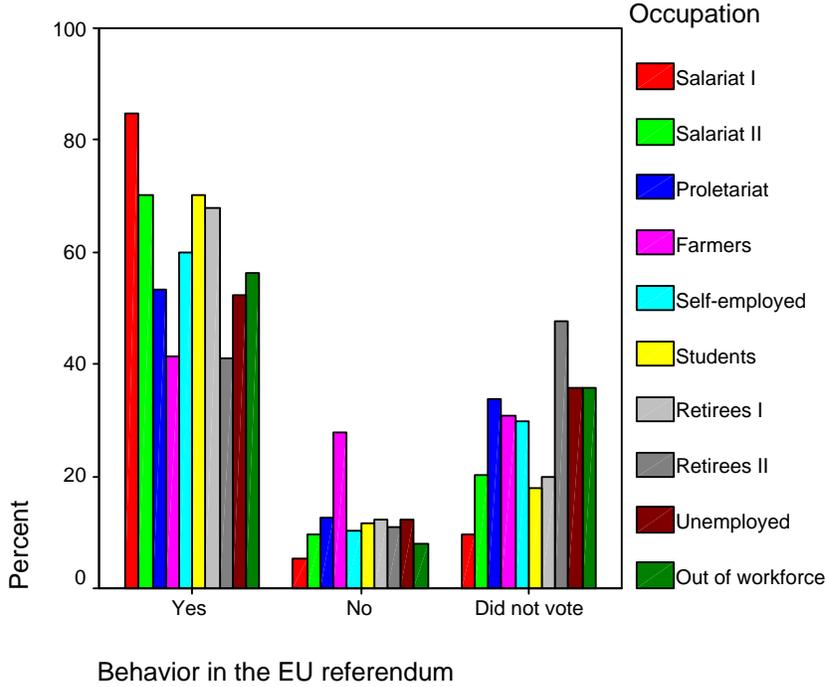
Behavior in the EU referendum

**Graph 5. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Education**

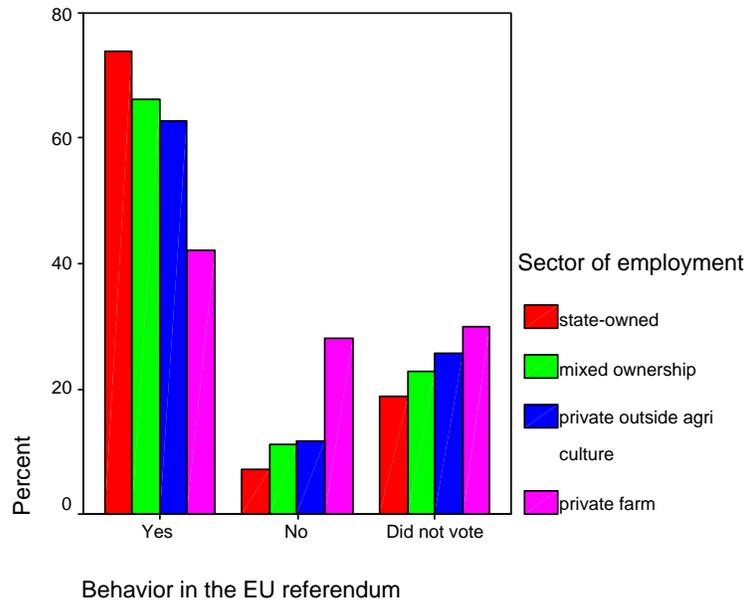


Behavior in the EU referendum

**Graph 6. Behavior in the EU referendum by Occupation<sup>4</sup>**

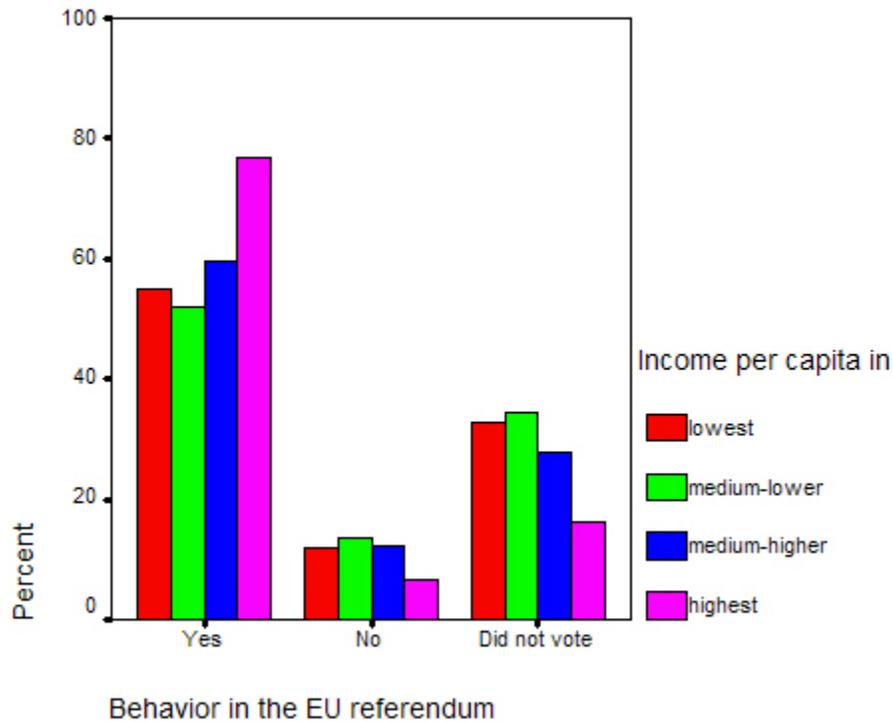


**Graph 7. Behavior in the EU referendum by sector of employment**



<sup>4</sup> The variable **occupation** has been recoded in the following way: *salarial I* = professionals and medium to top level managers; *salarial II* = lower management, clerks, and service workers; *proletariat* = manual laborers, skilled and unskilled, in all sectors; *retirees I* = retirees with education above primary; *retirees II* = retirees with primary or less education; *out of workforce* = homemakers and other not working. The concept “salarial” had been borrowed from the British sociologist John Goldthorpe (1999).

**Graph 8. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Income**



We will not summarize here all the information included in the above graphs. Rather, we will highlight the most important findings:

1. **Sex** of respondents has virtually no impact on their behavior in the referendum. Surprisingly, there is also no relationship between **age** and the way the respondents voted; however, the oldest respondents were significantly less likely to participate in the referendum than all others.

2. All other relationships between the structural variables and the voting behavior are significant, at least at the  $p \leq .05$  level, and in most cases at the  $p \leq .001$  level. Interestingly, in the case of ordinal variables (such as education, place of residence, and income) all these relationships are of non-linear nature. In all cases, there is a single category at one end of the scale that significantly deviates from all others: *less than primary* in **education**, *village* in **place of residence**, the highest quartile in **income**. Also in the case of nominal variables (**occupation**, **sector of employment**) a single category emerges as a spectacular outlier: for both variables it is *farmers*. In the case of provinces there are no single outliers

and survey data are congruent with the official referendum results presented above: in western and northern provinces (which encompass the lands awarded to Poland from Germany at the Potsdam Conference after WWII) the percentage of those voting in favor of Poland's accession to the EU was significantly higher than in the rest of the country.

3. The nature of all these **outliers** is consistent with the expectations based on previous research outlined in the Introduction: they are **correlates of a lower socio-economic status** (lower education levels, living in the rural areas, working on a farm). There is only one outlier recorded at the other end of the socio-economic continuum: those with the highest **income** differ more from the three other categories than those categories among themselves. To a lesser extent, the same is true about those whose **occupation** has been classified as *salarial I*; there is obviously a far reaching overlap between this category and the top quartile of income (53% of those in the salariat I group are in the top quartile of income).

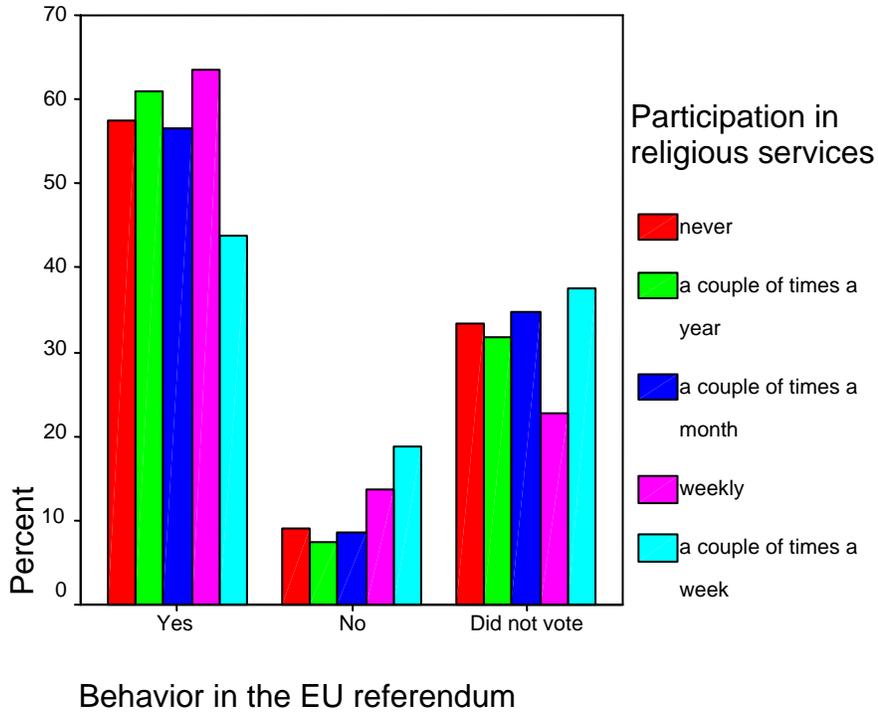
### **Bi-Variate Analyses: Religiosity, Ideology, Politics**

As noted in the introduction, voting behavior in post-communist Poland was throughout the 1990s guided more by the ideological (or axiological) factors, than the structural ones. The terms "ideological" and "axiological" are used here as proxies for what in the German language is referred to as *Weltanschauung* (and in Polish as *światopogląd*). As it has been pointed out (Jasiewicz 1999, 2003b), a very good correlate of this phenomenon, and a relatively strong predictor of voting behavior, one can find in religiosity. In the Polish context, the many possible indicators of religiosity are highly interchangeable; we will use here the one that is used most commonly: the frequency of one's **participation in religious services**.

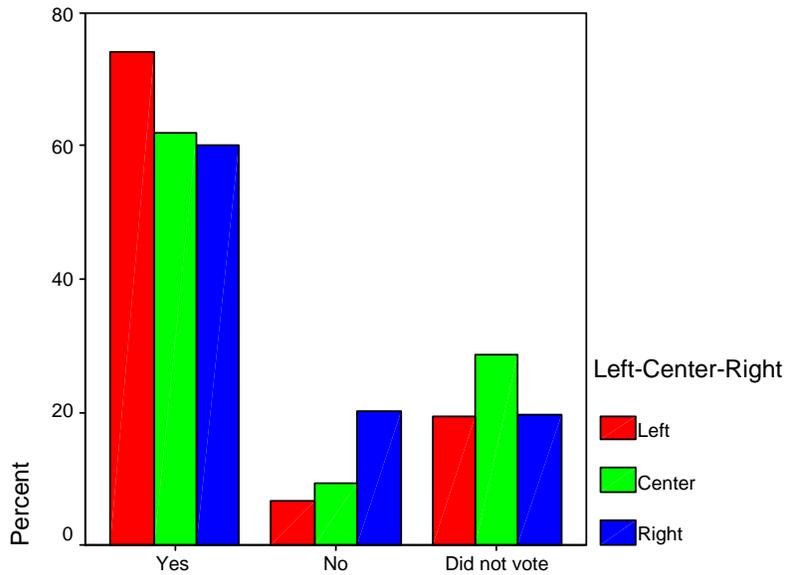
In addition, we will examine here respondents' political ideology, measured by a self-placement on a seven-point scale, from the left to the right, which was recoded here to three categories: *Left*, *Center*, and *Right*. Finally, we will look at the patterns of party alignment among our respondents. For that purpose, we had at our disposal two variables: the way the respondent voted in the most recent, September 2001 general election (party vote in 2001) and party preference expressed in a hypothetical

question how the respondent would vote if the parliamentary elections were held on a Sunday following the day when the interview was conducted. Since both generated very similar results, will use here only the latter. The outcome of these operations is presented in graphs 9 through 11.

**Graph 9. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Religiosity**

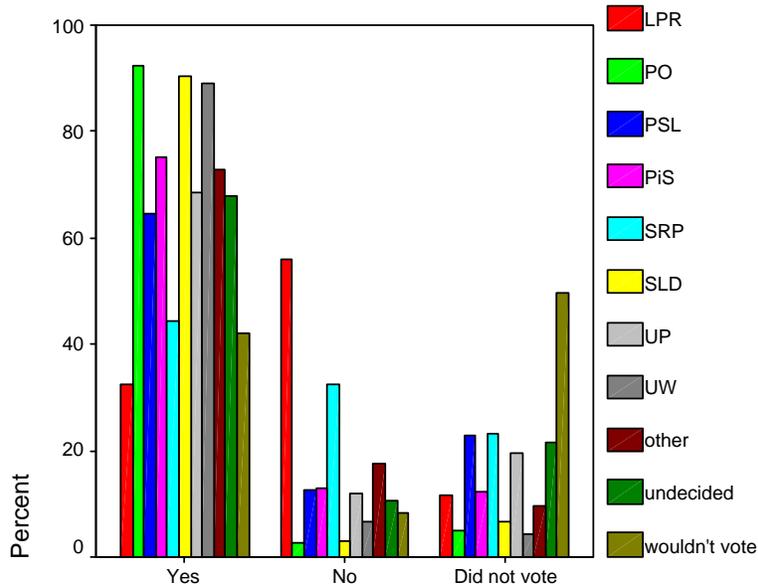


**Graph 10. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Political Ideology**



Behavior in the EU referendum

**Graph 11. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Party Preference<sup>5</sup>**



Behavior in the EU referendum

<sup>5</sup> The abbreviations of party names used in the graph and in the text: LPR = League of Polish Families, PO = Civic Platform, PSL = Polish Peasant Party, PiS = Law and Justice, SRP = Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland, SLD = Democratic Left Alliance, UP = Labor Union, UW = Freedom Union.

It should be pointed out that the effect of religiosity on voting behavior in the referendum is similar in its non-linearity to effects of structural variables, such as age, education, or place of residence. One category, those who attend religious services more often than once a week, stands out in the terms of the frequency of the negative vote (although it's still only 30%). This same group records also the lowest turnout, much lower than those going to church once a week, however comparable to the turnout among those seldom attending religious services.

In a Catholic country, where going to the Mass on every Sunday is still a social norm (in our sample almost half of respondents report such behavior), the real threshold of politically militant religiosity may be associated with almost daily visits to church. Interestingly enough, bi-variate cross-tabulations indicate that this category of most devout Catholics does not deviate much from the entire sample in its composition with regard to education, place of residence, or income; the only significantly overrepresented groups here are women and people over sixty.

The relationship between political ideology and voting behavior is of linear nature, running from the highest support for the EU accession among the left to the lowest among the right, with the “centrists” most often reporting that they did not (or would not) vote. These results are also reflected – albeit with some corollaries – in the patterns of relationship between support for political parties and the choices made in the referendum. Both indicators of party affiliation, the party vote in the 2001 general election (as reported almost two years later) and the declaration of current party preference generate almost identical results. The most Euro-skeptic are the followers of the fundamentalist Catholic (and self-depicted rightist) League of Polish Families. They are the only party constituency giving the EU a collective “no” (by a three-to-two margin).

More skeptical than others are also supporters of the Self-Defense, but among them the three-to-two margin works in favor of the “yes” vote, with the turnout lower than among followers of any other party. (We should add here that while the socio-economic program of the Self-Defense places it on the extreme left, the self-identification of its followers mirrors the distribution of leftists, centrists, and rightists in the entire sample).

Constituencies of all other parties have voiced in the referendum their strong support for the integration of Poland with Europe, ranging from over seventy percent among the followers of the Polish Peasant Party to over ninety percent among supporters of the Democratic Left Alliance, the Civic Platform, and the Freedom Union. The lack of discrepancy between the two party affiliation variables in their impact on the EU accession vote is probably in part due to the deficiencies of human memory (people tend to “forget” that in the past they did vote for a party other than their current first choice), but is still worth noting in the context of the rapidly changing party loyalties on Polish political scene.

Not even a short memory prevented our respondents from reporting their disappointment with the ruling SLD/UP coalition. While 21.2% of the entire sample (with the non-voters included) recalls having voted in 2001 for the joint SLD/UP ticket, only 10.4% would vote in June 2003 for the SLD, and 2.3% for the UP. (In 2004, the support for the SLD fell even further down, to single digits<sup>6</sup> among likely voters, which ultimately led to the virtual disintegration of the coalition and the SLD itself and the resignation of Prime Minister Leszek Miller, announced on March 26, 2004). An analysis of the group of respondents who admitted to have left the SLD/UP coalition for other parties between 2001 and 2003 did not indicate any special association between their motivations to switch party allegiance and the issue of EU accession. This issue might have played some role only in the case of those defecting from the SLD/UP to Self-Defense, among whom every third person voted “no” in the referendum. In contrast, all respondents in the other major group of defectors, to the PO, voted “yes.”

### **Bi-Variate Analyses: Performance Variables**

The data discussed so far seem to confirm the existence of both types of motivations behind Euro-skepticism, which were outlined in the introduction. On the one hand, people with lower socio-economic status reject the accession to the EU much more often than other respondents, although even among them the aye-voters still maintain majority. On the other, the resistance to the EU comes from among the

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<sup>6</sup> In polls conducted in March 2004, CBOS estimated support for the SLD at 10%, OBOP at 9%, while Pentor, for the SLD/UP coalition, at 14% among likely voters (as reported by PAP on March 19, 2004). A CBOS April poll recorded 6% for the SLD and 7% for the Polish Social-Democracy, a group of dissenters from the SLD.

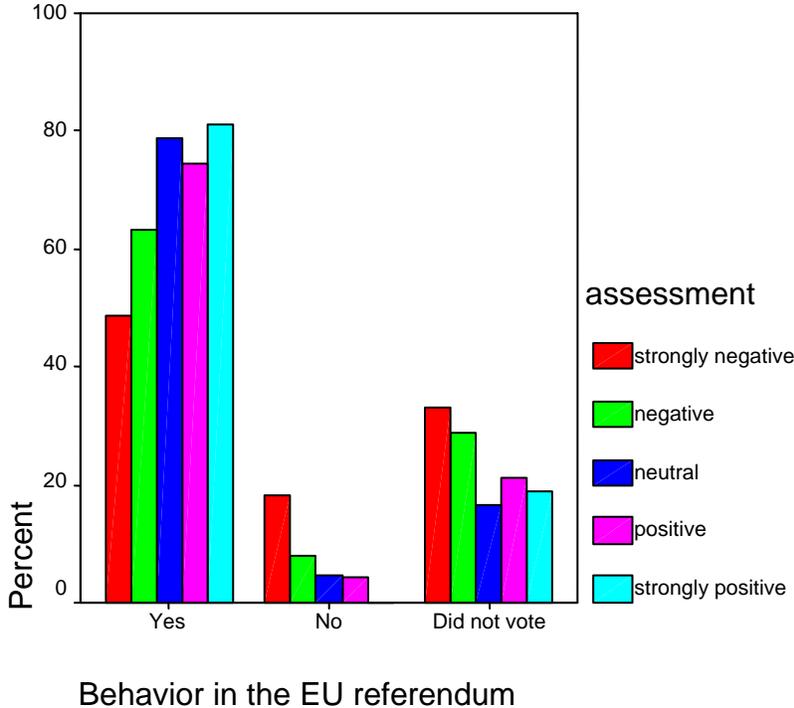
“Catholic Right:” frequent church-goers, and followers of the League of Polish Families. Yet, as already indicated, neither structural nor ideological variables have to (or even tend to) translate into voting behavior in a simple and direct way. Usually, they only create certain predispositions to assess specific events or policies.

The sum of such assessments amounts to a generalized view on the performance of not only the current government, but the political system and the economy as a whole. Once established, this view generates a “definition of the situation” in an individual’s mind, which, in turn, leads to a specific act at the polls. As pointed out by several authors (Powers and Cox 1997, Zagórski 2003, Jasiewicz 2003b and 2004), in the Polish context such assessments tend to become good predictors of voting behavior in their own right, regardless of the structural and/or axiological factors hidden behind them.

In our data set, there are several variables (most of them questions asked routinely by the CBOS in its monthly polls of political issues) that reflect people’s opinions on the situation in the country and the expectations for the next year. The entire questionnaire opens with the question “Generally speaking, is the situation in our country going in the right or the wrong direction?,” followed by the question measuring the general expectations for the year to come, and a series of questions regarding current political situation, current economic situation, current situation on the job market, current situation in the respondent’s workplace, and then expectations for the next year in political life, the economy, the job market, and the respondent’s workplace. Further down in the questionnaire, respondents are asked to assess the current standards of living of their family and the expectations for the next year in this respect. Finally, a similar set of two questions, this time aimed specifically at the assessment of material conditions in respondent’s household and their expected dynamics with a year’s span, is included among the background questions. With the exception of the first question, all other use a five-point scale (either *very good—good—neither good nor bad—bad—very bad*, or *much better—better—no change—worse—much worse*).

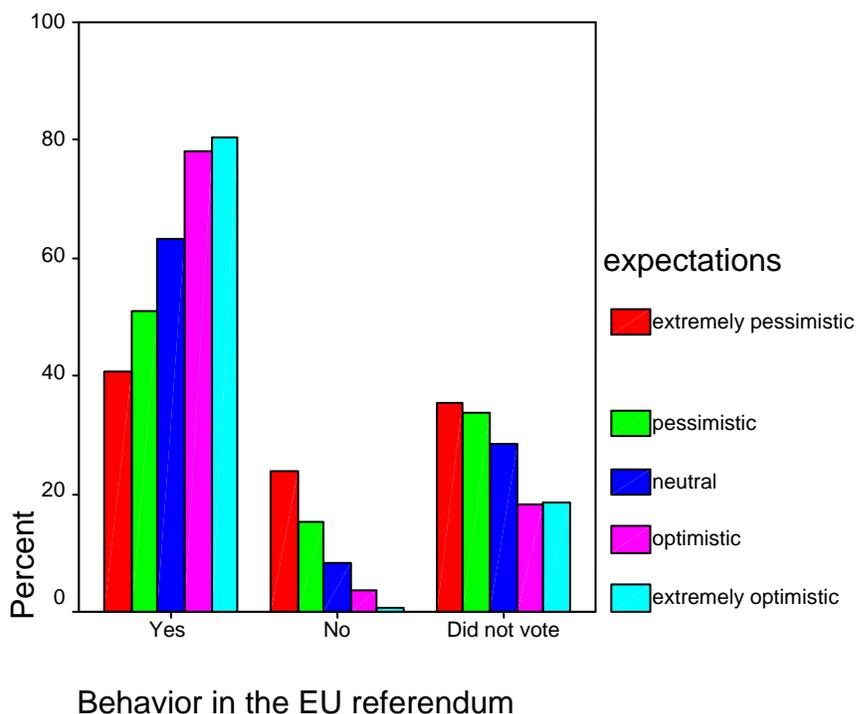
The overall picture emerging from the analysis of all these indicators is one of a society deeply dissatisfied with its current situation. Its expectations for the next year are rather pessimistic, although moderately better than the view of the present (as if the present was so bad, that it could not get any worse...). Furthermore, there is a clear linear association between both the assessment of the current situation and the expectations for the future, and the patterns of behavior in the referendum: the better the assessment and the higher the expectations, the higher the turnout and the more affirmative votes cast. To save the space and to avoid the monotonous repetition of similar graphs and comments, we converted the responses to the questions presented above into two composite variables, one measuring the assessment of the current situation, the other the expectations for the future.<sup>7</sup> The breakdown of behavior and voting in the EU referendum by these two composite variables is given in graphs 12 and 13.

**Graph 12. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Assessment of the Current Situation**



<sup>7</sup> This conversion was accomplished by a simple operation of addition of appropriately recoded responses to single questions, and then grouping of the results of this operation into five categories: *extremely positive—positive—neutral—negative—extremely negative*).

**Graph 13. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Expectations for the Future**

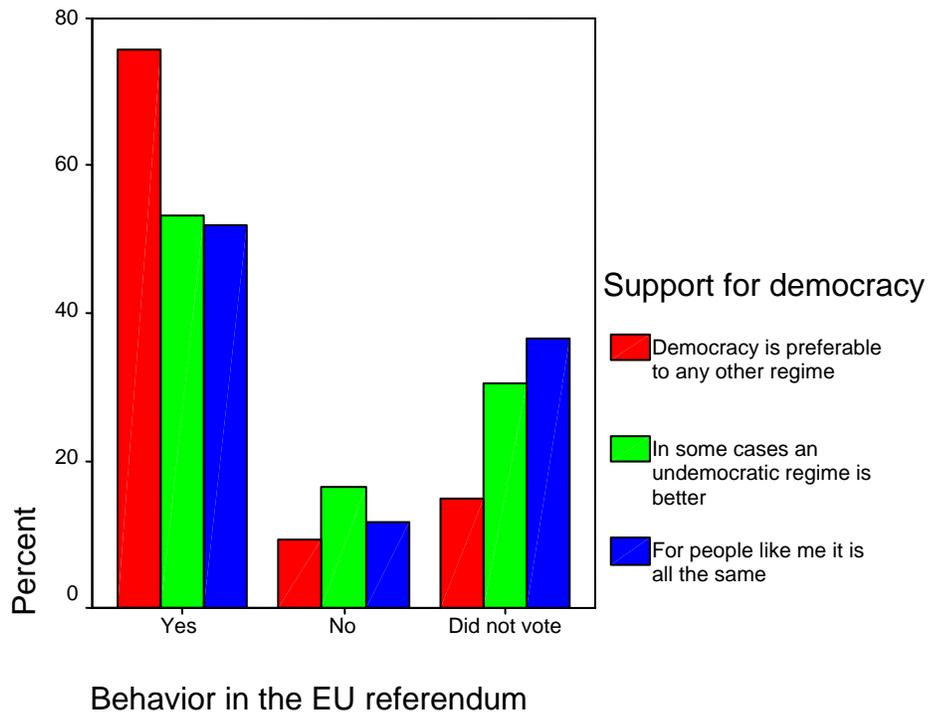


The tables presented above demonstrate very well the linear impact that the assessment of the current situation and the outlook for the coming year have on the voting choices in the EU-Accession referendum. Yet our analyses performed on different data sets (for instance the ones coming from the Polish General Election Studies, or PGSW project) indicate that, while indicators associated with the assessment of the current situation and expectations for the future are generally good predictors of voting behavior (see Jasiewicz 2003b), much better predictions are generated by the assessment of the past, be it the past year or, even more so, the entire period of transition away from communism (since 1989). Furthermore, such evaluation of the years of transition has turned out to play the role of an intermediary between the structural variables and the opinion on Poland's accession to the EU (see Jasiewicz 2004). In short, this relationship may be presented as follows: socio-economic status → assessment of reforms → attitudes toward the EU.

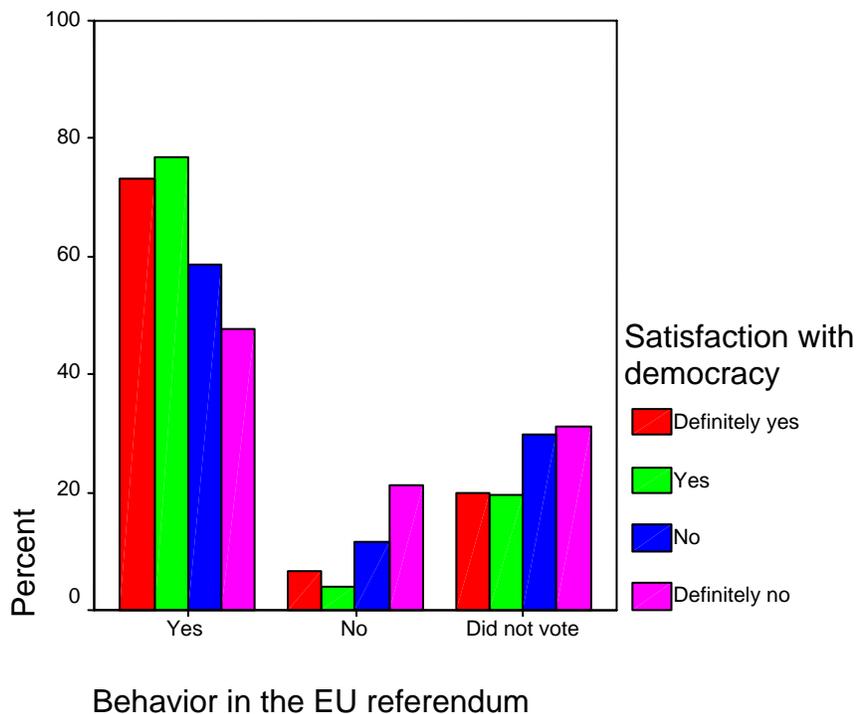
Unfortunately, the pre-and-post referendum data set at our disposal does not include such variables. However, in the post-referendum poll, there were two questions reflecting the general

assessment of democracy and the way it has been functioning in Poland. Such indicators correlate highly with the evaluation of the entire process of reforms. Below, we present the breakdown of responses to these two questions by behavior and vote in the referendum:

**Graph 14. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Support for Democracy**



**Graph 15. Behavior in the EU Referendum by Satisfaction with Democracy in Poland**



Both variables, support for democracy and satisfaction with democracy in Poland turn out to be good predictors for the voting behavior in the referendum, although in somehow nuanced ways: the more general **support for democracy** seems to be more strongly associated with the turnout in elections (those supporting democracy as the best form of government are more likely to vote than those willing to accept other regimes and, in particular, those claiming that the issue is irrelevant for people like them), while the more specific **satisfaction with democracy in Poland** is strongly associated with the vote (yes or no) the respondent actually cast in the referendum.

To sum up all bi-variate analyses: We found out that there are some significant relationships between particular variables (such as education, income, place of residence, or occupation) describing the respondent's socio-economic status and the voting behavior in the referendum. For most of these variables, there was a single category (such as *no primary education, farmer, residence in a village, etc.*) that stood out as an outlier. For the variables reflecting the individual's *Weltanschauung* (such as

religiosity, ideology, or party preference) and opinions on the developments in the country (current, past, and expected in the future), we found a relatively strong – and predictable – impact on the patterns of behavior in the referendum.

### **Multi-Variate Analyses**

Yet, in order to properly assess the role of particular variables in determining the behavior in the EU-accession referendum, one must perform multi-variate analyses that allow to examine impact of a single variable controlling for the effect of all other variables in the model. From among appropriate methods of such analysis, we selected here binary logistic regression. It allows us to determine, for binary variables such as *did vote vs. didn't vote* or *voted yes vs. voted no*, how belonging to a given category (such as being male as opposed to being female or being a farmer as opposed to having some other occupation) changes the likelihood of a given type of behavior (how much more likely or unlikely it is to vote “yes” rather than “no” if one belongs to a given category as opposed to another), controlling for effect of all other variables in the model. We will present here the conclusions of these analyses. The actual tables for several binary regression models, along with author’s comments, are available at request.

For both the participation in the referendum and the way the respondent voted (if he/she did vote) we created three explanatory models. The first model is composed exclusively of demographic and structural variables (sex, age, place of residence, province, education, being a farmer, being unemployed, and income; all recoded to reflect the impact of the outliers mentioned in analyses above), in the second religiosity has been added, while the third includes also variables reflecting one’s attitudes towards political, social, and economic reality in Poland (political ideology and performance variables). The summary of results is presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1. Determinants of Participation in the EU Referendum**

	Variables in equation (in order of the strength of influence)	Variables not in equation (statistically insignificant)
Model 1 (structural variables)	<b>education</b> <b>income</b> <b>age</b> <b>unemployment</b>	<i>sex</i> <i>place of residence</i> <i>farmer</i> <i>province</i>
Model 2 (structural variables plus religiosity)	<b>education</b> <b>income</b> <b>age</b> <b>unemployment</b> <b>religiosity</b>	<i>sex</i> <i>place of residence</i> <i>farmer</i> <i>province</i>
Model 3 (structural variables and religiosity plus political ideology and system performance variables)	<b>political ideology</b> <b>education</b> <b>income</b> <b>support for democracy</b> <b>assessment of the current situation</b> <b>expectations for the future</b> <b>age</b>	<i>sex</i> <i>unemployment</i> <i>religiosity</i> <i>farmer</i> <i>place of residence</i> <i>satisfaction with democracy</i> <i>religiosity</i> <i>province</i>

When only structural factors are concerned, education, income, age, and employment status are associated with participation in the referendum (which was significantly lower among the less educated, poorer, older, and the unemployed). The addition of religiosity expands the list of less likely voters by the most frequent churchgoers. Sex, status of being a farmer, place of residence and province leave no statistically significant impact (controlling for other variables in the model). When the ideological and performance variables are added, political ideology becomes the strongest factor, with those on the extremes, left or right, being more likely to show at the polls than the centrists (apparently, in addition to the die-hard middle-of-the-roaders, those with undetermined opinions tend to locate themselves half way between the left and the right).

Also certain attitudinal variables play here a significant role, in a predictable way: those believing in democracy were more likely to go to the polls, while critical assessment of the situation in the country and pessimistic outlook lowered citizens' motivations to participate in the referendum. From

among structural variables, education, income, and age maintain statistical significance. This finding is consistent with the previous analyses of voting behavior in Poland: less educated, poorer, and the oldest are less likely to vote.

All in all, these models show that the absence during the referendum could have been motivated by either structural factors (low education, low income, older age), or by ideological and political ones (political disenchantment, alienation, and apathy), or, most likely, by a combination of both types. However, there is no evidence of any large-scale boycott of the referendum aimed at jeopardizing its validity.

**Table 2. Determinants of Vote Choice in the EU Referendum**

	Variables in equation (in order of the strength of influence)	Variables not in equation (statistically insignificant)
Model 1 (structural variables)	<b>place of residence</b> <b>income</b> <b>province</b> <b>farmer</b> <b>age</b>	<i>sex</i> <i>unemployment</i> <i>education</i>
Model 2 (structural variables plus religiosity)	<b>place of residence</b> <b>religiosity</b> <b>income</b> <b>province</b> <b>farmer</b>	<i>sex</i> <i>unemployment</i> <i>education</i> <i>age</i>
Model 3 (structural variables and religiosity plus political ideology and system performance variables)	<b>political ideology</b> <b>place of residence</b> <b>expectations for the future</b> <b>satisfaction with democracy</b> <b>assessment of the current situation</b> <b>farmer</b> <b>support for democracy</b> <b>province</b> <b>religiosity</b>	<i>sex</i> <i>age</i> <i>unemployment</i> <i>income</i> <i>education</i>

When one examines only the impact of structural factors, the support for the accession to the EU was significantly lower among farmers, dwellers of rural areas (even if employed outside the agriculture), and people older than seventy, and significantly higher for the inhabitants of western and northern provinces and people with the highest income (in the top quartile). Sex, status of being unemployed, and education proved to be statistically insignificant, when controlled for other variables in the model. (In other words: those with the lowest education did not cast a negative vote in the referendum because of their lack of schooling, but because they happened to live in rural areas, be farmers by trade, and/or be very old). Religiosity, when added to the model, proved to be more significant than all structural factors but place of residence, with the most devout churchgoers being less likely to vote “yes.”

The addition of ideological and performance variables left the status of being a farmer, place of residence, and province as the only significant structural variables, while political ideology and attitudinal variables proved to determine vote in the referendum independently from one’s socio-economic and demographic background. Voters’ decision to support or reject Poland’s membership in the EU reflected the urban-rural cleavage in a way consistent with our hypotheses and commonsensical predictions: rural dwellers (in particular, but not only, farmers) were significantly more skeptical towards the EU than anyone else. The “North and West versus the rest” cleavage also withstood the test of statistical significance in multi-variate analyses, although it is much weaker (and much harder to interpret) than the urban-rural divide.

All in all, while structural variables were not irrelevant in determining the vote against Poland’s accession to the EU, such a decision was more strongly associated with one’s political orientation and attitudes toward various facets of the state of affairs in the country.

## **Conclusions**

If one wants to guess how a Pole voted in the EU accession referendum in June 2003, or whether this Pole even cared to vote, one should in the first place ask which party the interviewed individual supports. Yet, in the Polish context, explaining voting behavior by party identification dangerously

borders the logically flawed *idem per idem* explanation: it is impossible to determine what is a chicken and what is an egg here. Are the followers of the LPR voting against Poland in the EU because such was the call of party leaders whom they (the voters) trust, or do the people who oppose the integration with the EU coalesce in this party (on both the elite and the grass-root level) and hence determine the party's anti-EU stand? In reality, both mechanisms seem to work, and seem to be inseparable from each other. In addition, voter volatility is very high, without any reliable way of linking (within the data file at our disposal) the changes in party identification with any specific policy choices. Therefore, trying to explain voting behavior in the referendum, we have to do it by pointing out structural and attitudinal correlates of voter's actions.

At the beginning of this paper, we presented two different – although complementary to each other – hypotheses about the causes of Euro-skepticism in Poland. One linked the anti-EU resentments with structural factors generating “competitive disadvantage” among individuals and groups. The other pointed out the motivational role of ideological factors – beliefs that Poland's membership would harm its national and religious (Catholic) identity. Both hypotheses found here some – even if only limited – confirmation. Yet the analyses presented here and elsewhere (Jasiewicz 2004) demonstrate that the anti-EU stand is associated not so much with structural factors or religiosity *per se*, but rather with a perception of “the things going in the wrong direction” for the country and/or the respondent, and of having gone so over the course of the years past since the 1989 regime change. Still, it should not be forgotten that even among those “structurally handicapped,” among the most devout Catholics, and among the harsh critics of the present and the hard-core pessimists with regard to the future, only a minority did not vote in the referendum and even a tinier minority voted “no.”

Being an actual loser in the process of transition (we may define such a “loser” as a person whose standards of living declined after 1989 in real or even only relative terms) increases chances of this person objecting to the EU accession. Yet much more important here is one's **subjective perception of being a loser**. Those who feel that the reforms – political as much as economic – launched after the collapse of the communist system did not bring any improvement in their personal lives and/or for the

country (or even brought about a setback) tend to be more skeptical about the EU itself and about Poland becoming its member. They perceive – correctly, it seems – the nation’s membership in this rather exclusive club as a logical consequence and completion of the post-1989 changes. Rejecting the changes, they reject the EU; being anxious about the future, they shy away from the unknown and the unexplored that awaits them behind the Europe’s door.

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