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Knocking on Europe's Door: Voting Behavior in the EU Accession Referendum in Poland

May 13, 2004

Abstract

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