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# Poles and Germans in common Europe:

Evaluation of mutual relations and international situation 30 years after signing the Treaty of Good Neighbourhood and Friendly Cooperation

Polish-German Barometer 2021



JACEK KUCHARCZYK, AGNIESZKA ŁADA

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RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL  
SITUATION 30 YEARS AFTER  
SIGNING THE TREATY OF GOOD  
NEIGHBOURHOOD AND  
FRIENDLY COOPERATION

POLISH-GERMAN BAROMETER 2021

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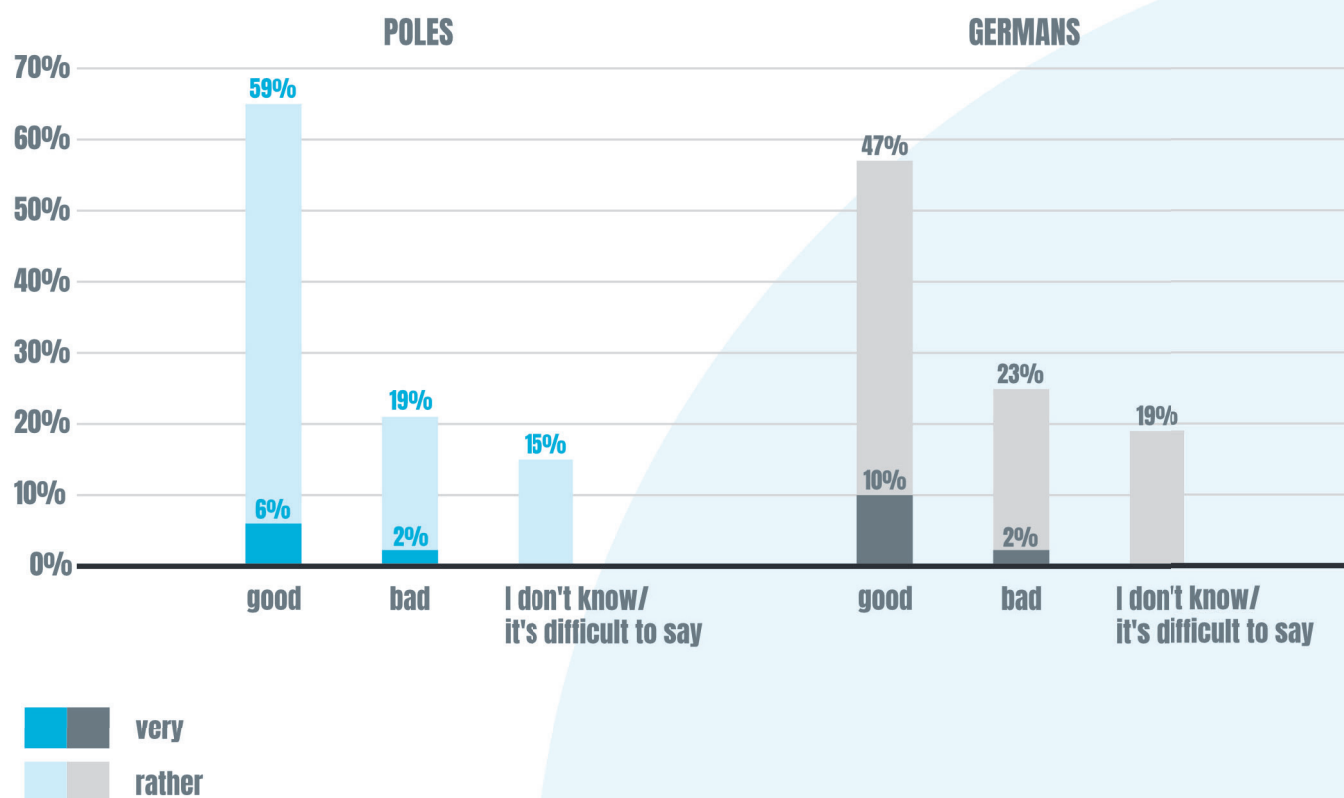


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## What are the relations like between Poland and Germany?

Responses of Poles and Germans in 2021





- ▶ Both the Polish and German publics have a positive view of current Polish-German relations. Sixty-five percent of Poles and 57% of Germans describe them as good or rather good.
- ▶ The main reason why Poles and Germans see their relations as good are the similar economic interests of both countries (54% of Poles and 42% of Germans). The second reason given are the efforts and actions of public authorities and citizens to promote reconciliation between Poles and Germans. Germans give this answer twice as often as Poles (27% and 14%, respectively).
- ▶ Half of the respondents who claim that Polish-German relations are bad believe this is a result of the policy of the Polish government towards Germany (49% of Poles and 52% of Germans). Twelve percent of respondents point to the countries' difficult historical experience.
- ▶ Poles and Germans agree (64% and 65%, respectively) that in the countries' mutual relations, the focus should be mainly on the present and the future and not on the past.
- ▶ In the opinion of the Poles and Germans surveyed, Germany is more successful in tackling the effects of the coronavirus crisis. This is the view held by 38% of Poles and 43% of Germans.
- ▶ Poles and Germans indicate different areas of priority for bilateral cooperation. Poles place cooperation for the energy independence of Europe (33%), cooperation to strengthen European democracy and prevent the growth of populist and nationalist forces (32%), and cooperation to enhance the creativity and competitiveness of the European economy (31%) at the top of the list. On the German side, cooperation to strengthen European democracy and cooperation to overcome social and regional inequalities in Europe share the top spot (32% each), immediately followed by cooperation for an ambitious European policy addressing the climate crisis (30%) and cooperation to fight terrorism (29%).
- ▶ Half of the Poles surveyed positively assess Germany's European policy, agreeing that it contributes to better cooperation in Europe. At the same time, one in five respondents believes that the German policy leads to exacerbating disputes and tensions in Europe. The percentage of respondents giving a positive answer to this question has been falling since 2015 and is now at its lowest point since the beginning of the survey.
- ▶ Less than half of Polish respondents believe that Germany respects the interests of other countries, and as many as one-third believe that Germany pursues its interests even at the expense of other countries.

- ▶ German opinions on Poland's European and foreign policies are very divided, and the percentages of negative and positive views are almost equal, with a large group of respondents unable or unwilling to answer this question.
- ▶ Twice as many Poles believe that increasing German defence spending to the NATO-agreed limit will also enhance Polish security (48%) as feel concerned about it (25%).
- ▶ Half of Germans believe that strengthening the German military will improve the sense of security in Poland and other countries of the North Atlantic Alliance, but one in four of those surveyed believes that increasing the German military budget may raise concerns in Poland and elsewhere.
- ▶ Nearly two-thirds of Germans surveyed (63%) and over one-third of Poles (37%) believe that the new U.S. administration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris is a change for the better. Many fewer respondents – 17% of Poles and 11% of Germans – think it is a change for the worse, and a significant percentage of respondents in both countries found it to be a change neither for the better nor for the worse or declined to answer the question.
- ▶ Both Germans and Poles think highly of the role the European Union plays in the world. As many as two-thirds of those surveyed agree that the European Union contributes to strengthening order and security in the world, while only 18% of Germans and 14% of Poles believe that it exacerbates disputes and conflicts in the world.
- ▶ The public in Poland and Germany have a similar view of the global role of the United States. Almost half of the Poles and Germans surveyed declare a positive opinion, but at the same time, around a third of Germans and a quarter of Poles believe that the United States contributes to exacerbating disputes and conflicts in the world.
- ▶ Poles and Germans assess Russia's global role similarly. The vast majority of respondents in both countries believe that this country exacerbates disputes and conflicts in the world.
- ▶ The global role of China is also much more often assessed negatively than positively by the public in both countries, though a large number of respondents in Poland and Germany were unable to answer this question.
- ▶ The responses to the questions asked often correlated with the political preferences of the respondents. This was especially notable on the Polish side, where there is a strong polarisation of opinions between the voters of the ruling Law and Justice party and the supporters of the opposition (excluding the far-right Confederation). The former are usually more critical of German policies.



The years 2020-2021 will probably be remembered as a period when most spheres of life were dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. The same was true about Polish-German relations. Difficulties in crossing the border for people working on the other side connected with the obligation to undergo quarantine or testing, the temporary suspension of supply chains because of the border closure in the spring of 2020, the virtually complete suspension of the personal encounters that form the structure of city and regional partnerships or youth exchanges, the severe restriction of tourist travel to the neighbouring country – these are just a few examples of the obstacles and changes that have affected these relations. On the other hand, further political developments have taken place, and Polish-German economic cooperation has continued to grow – in 2020, Poland ranked fifth among Germany's most important trading partners. During this difficult time, the trade volume between the two countries broke another record and reached 122.9 billion EUR. Other topics, known from previous years, have also been present in the public discourse, such as the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, the threat to Europe posed by Russia and China, the strengthening of the European economy, the restructuring of the relations between the European Union and the United States, or the commemoration of Poland's suffering during World War II. Most of these areas saw dynamic changes taking place simultaneously in 2020. The construction of Nord Stream 2 was not pursued for some time due to U.S. sanctions. The poisoning of Alexei Navalny by the Russian security services again raised the question of the limits to cooperation with Moscow. The US presidential election changed the setting for transatlantic relations. Due to the economic impact of the pandemic, the question of the innovation and competitiveness of the European economy has taken on new importance. Finally, in the autumn of 2020, the Bundestag passed a resolution obliging the German government to create a memorial for Polish victims and a place for meetings in the center of Berlin. All of this was taking place at the same time as Poland's presidential election campaign in the first half and the German presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2020. All these events may have influenced the public's perceptions of the neighbouring country and their mutual relations.

The year 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany of 17 June 1991, which further emphasizes the importance of questions about the condition of Polish-German relations. That is why it was particularly important to conduct this edition of the Polish-German Barometer



survey in this anniversary year. For many years now, this representative public opinion poll has been making it possible to see how Poles and Germans assess each other's country, its society and their bilateral relations. In 2021, in view of the previously mentioned events, we decided to focus our analyses on some of their aspects – on European policies and global issues, in addition to the assessment of bilateral relations.

At the same time, the pandemic has obviously affected the ability to conduct surveys. Until now, we had been using the method of personalised computer-assisted surveys, that is, surveys conducted by interviewers in the respondents' homes. During the pandemic, this method, although still sometimes used, is not advisable for epidemiological and organisational reasons. We had to change the method, and the 2021 Polish-German Barometer has been conducted using the CAWI method, that is, using an internet panel. The survey was carried out from 26 February to 8 March 2021 by Kantar Public using online panels in Poland and Germany. The nationwide samples of 1,000 respondents each are representative of the general population aged 18 to 75 by gender, age, education and place of residence. Due to the change in methodology and the limitation of the age range of respondents resulting from their online survey capabilities, the results from earlier years and from 2021 should be compared with caution, and in some places, note should be taken of the change in methodology.

Traditionally, when analyzing the results, we have looked at whether the responses were influenced by the age of the respondents (we focused here on the differences between the youngest respondents, aged 18 to 24, and the older ones), their region of residence (especially in the Länder and voivodeships neighbouring the other state) and their political party preferences. The statistics provided allow us also to see if the assessments of men and women differ. An analysis of the responses showed that the gender division does not differentiate the opinions of the respondents – similar tendencies are noticeable in consecutive editions of the Barometer surveys.

We would also like to invite anyone interested in comparing the changes in the results over time to visit the websites created for the project: [www.barometr-polska-niemcy.pl](http://www.barometr-polska-niemcy.pl) and [www.deutsch-polnisches-barometer.de](http://www.deutsch-polnisches-barometer.de). There one can compile various data, create graphs and analyse changes.



Poles and Germans are positive about the condition of Polish-German relations. Sixty-five percent of Poles and 57% of Germans describe them as very or rather good. Every fifth Pole and every fourth German has a bad opinion about them (20% and 25%, respectively). Among Polish respondents, the percentage of those who perceive the condition of these relations as good has declined (by seven percentage points), while the number of respondents who have a bad opinion about them has increased (by six percentage points).

Sixty-five percent of Poles and 57% of Germans have a good opinion of the condition of the relations between Poland and Germany

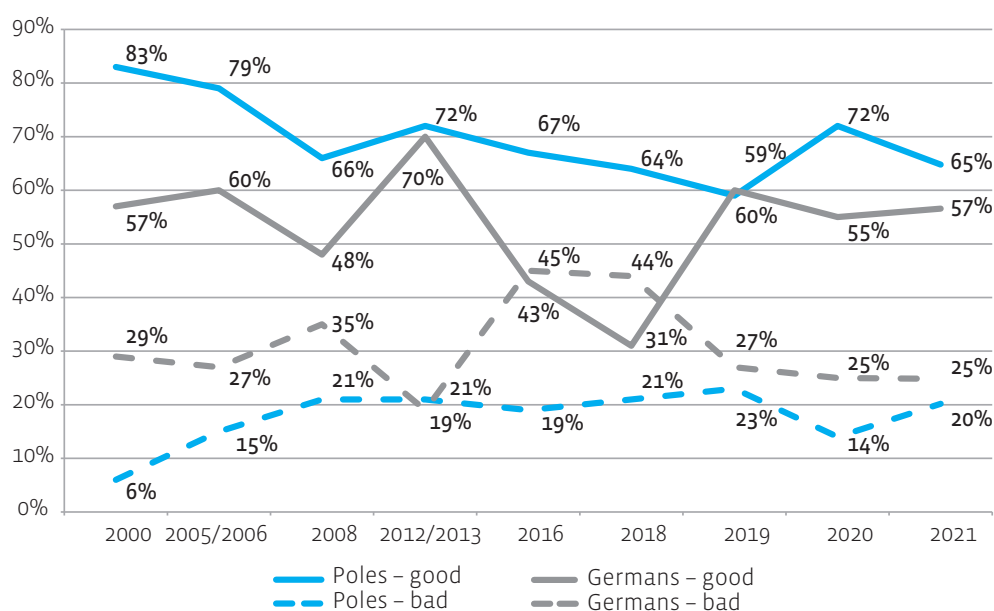


Figure 1.  
What are the relations like between Poland and Germany? Responses of Poles and Germans in the years 2000-2021

Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.

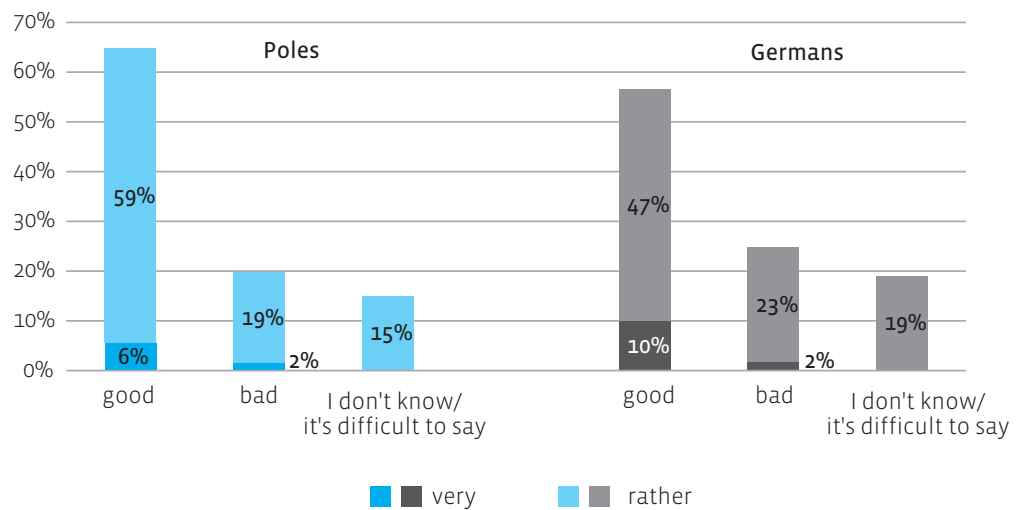
When analysing the detailed responses, one can see that, as in recent years, an extremely small percentage of Polish respondents view the countries' relations as "very bad" (2%). Similarly, the percentage of very positive opinions has remained stable over the years (4-6%). Some fluctuations occur between groups indicating that the condition of the relations is "rather" good or bad.

Inhabitants of voivodeships bordering Germany (77%) are more often convinced that Polish-German relations are good than those living in other voivodeships (63%). Younger respondents, ages 18-24 and 25-44, rate them better than older ones, ages 45-64 and 65-75 (72% and 68% versus 61% and 59%). In terms of political party preferences, voters of Szymon Holownia's Poland 2050 Movement stand out (73% rate the relations as good) compared to supporters

of Law and Justice (62%) and the Civic Coalition – including Nowoczesna, the Green Party and the Polish Initiative (61%).

Figure 2.  
What are the relations  
like between Poland and  
Germany? Responses  
of Poles and Germans  
in 2021

Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.



On the German as well as the Polish side, the percentage of respondents stating that the relations are very bad remains stable and low (2-3%). On the other hand, the group of respondents who believe that the relations are very good has increased by four percentage points. Every fifth German, a higher percentage than in Poland, has no opinion about the state of the relations with their largest eastern neighbour.

The responses depend on the age of the German respondents. The younger age groups (18 to 24 and 25 to 44) are more likely to have a good opinion of the relations (66% and 69%, respectively) than older respondents – 45 to 64 and 65 to 75 years of age (51% and 37%). Neither political party preference nor residence in the Länder bordering Poland had any influence on the opinions of the respondents, nor did the East-West divide.

### Reasons for the positive opinions about the state of the relations between the two countries

In order to understand why the respondents assess the state of their countries' mutual relations positively or negatively, we asked them to indicate the reasons for their answers. The main reason why Poles and Germans perceive the relations as good is the converging economic interests of both countries. This is the

The main reason why  
Poles and Germans assess  
the relations between  
both countries as good is  
the convergence of their  
economic interests

answer chosen by 54% of Poles and 42% of Germans. The second most popular answer refers to the ambitions and actions of public authorities and citizens to promote reconciliation between Poles and Germans. At the same time, Germans choose this answer twice as often as Poles (27%, as opposed to 14%). This may be due to public debates recently held in Germany. The Polish suffering, especially that experienced during the Second World

War, has been publicly discussed relatively more often in recent months than in previous years. The reason for that was, among other things, the commemorated anniversaries of important war-related events (1939, 1944, 1945) in 2019 and 2020, but also some specific political activities. At the end of October 2020, the Bundestag passed a resolution obliging the German government to create a memorial and a place for meetings with Poland in the center of Berlin in order to commemorate the Polish victims of the Second World War and to create the foundations for a better understanding of Polish history in Germany. The concept was discussed among politicians and experts, with some members of the public having a chance to follow the debate. Finally, the reason why this answer was selected by the respondents more often may be the belief of Germans that efforts aimed at reconciliation are and have been undertaken and are effective.

Similar groups of respondents named the policies of both governments as the reason for the good condition of Polish-German relations. German respondents slightly more often attributed the positive influence to their own government (13%), while 8% of respondents on both sides of the border indicated the Polish government's policy.

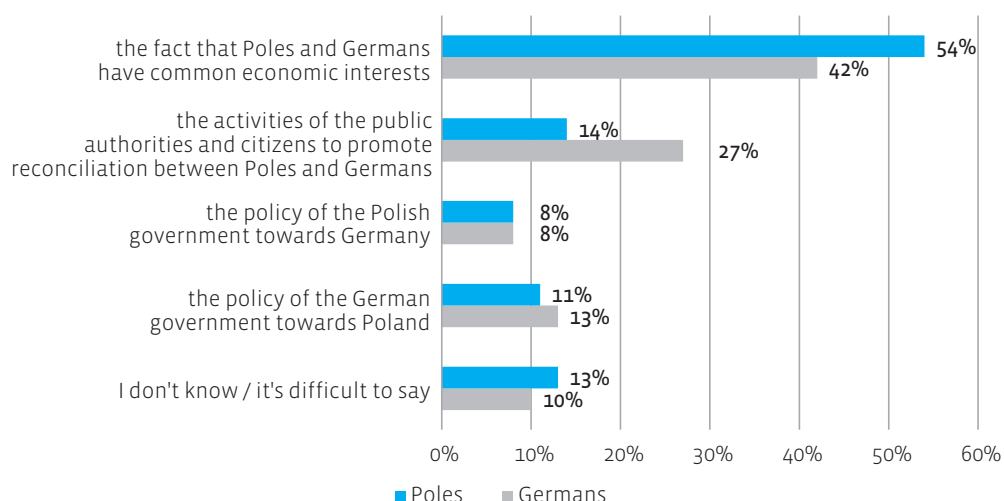


Figure 3.  
You have described the Polish-German relations as good. This is mainly the result of... Responses of Poles and Germans in 2021

Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.

The distribution of answers described above is – on the Polish side – related to political preferences. The merits of the German government in this regard are more often indicated by voters of the opposition, especially the Polish Coalition (22%), the Civic Coalition (15%) and Confederation (17%), than by those supporting Law and Justice (5%). The response that good relations with Germany are a result of the actions of the Polish government is, predictably, chosen by supporters of Law and Justice (18%) more often than by supporters of the Civic Coalition (1%), The Left (3%) and the Poland 2050 Movement (3%). Responses also differ depending on the age of the respondents. The two oldest age groups (from 45 to 64 years of age – 62%; from 65 to 75 years of age – 74%) point to common economic interests more often than the younger groups (from 18 to 24 years of age – 46%; from 25 to 44 years of age – 45%).

On the German side, neither place of residence nor party preference affects the responses. Only the youngest German respondents point to the actions of the German government more often than the older age groups (27%).

### Reasons for negative assessment of the countries' mutual relations

Half of those surveyed who consider the condition of Polish-German relations to be bad see the reason for this in the Polish government's policy toward Germany (49% of Poles and 52% of Germans). Other reasons are given much less often and with varying degrees of intensity by Poles and Germans. While nearly every fourth Pole who has a negative opinion of the Polish-German relations believes that the German government's policy is responsible for this (23%), the number of those voicing such an opinion is only half as big as the number voicing the previously mentioned opinion that it is the Polish government who is responsible for the bad condition of the relations. The German government is blamed by only 6% of the Germans surveyed. The countries' divergent economic interests are ranked by both groups of respondents as the third reason for the poor condition of relations (14% of Poles and 19% of Germans). According to both Poles and Germans, the economy definitely unites rather than divides the two countries. Poles place difficult historical experience as the last on the list of reasons for poor relations (12%). Germans choose this answer slightly more often (17%). Thus, in both cases, this answer is chosen relatively rarely, especially when

Half of the surveyed who consider the condition of Polish-German relations to be bad see the reason for this in the Polish government's policy toward Germany

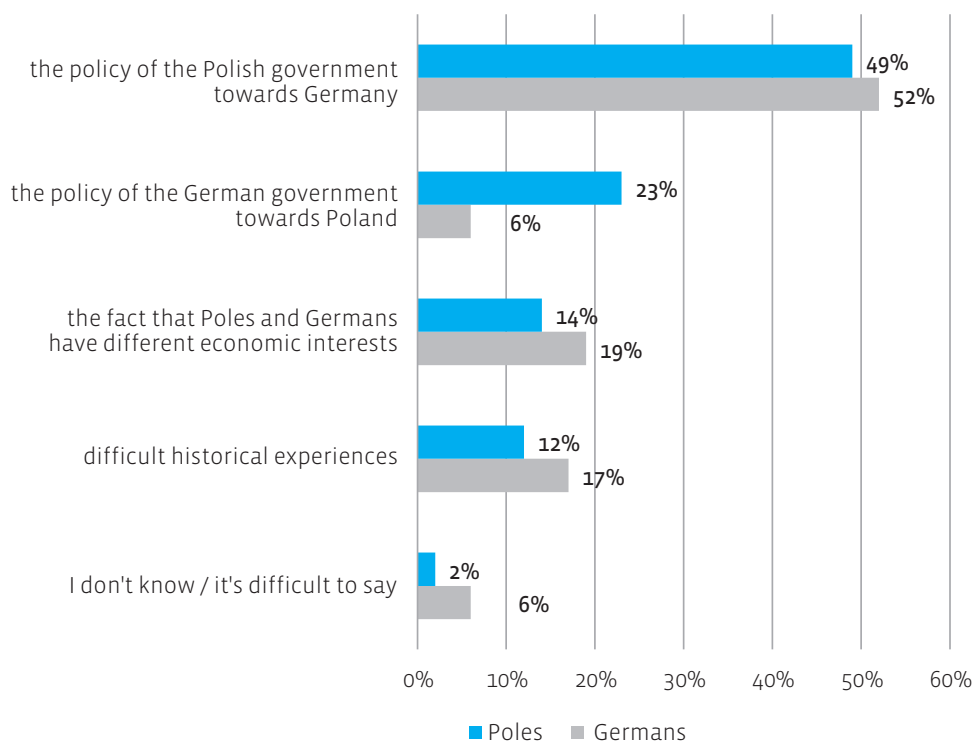


Figure 4.  
You have described the Polish-German relations as bad. This is mainly the result of... Responses of Poles and Germans in 2021

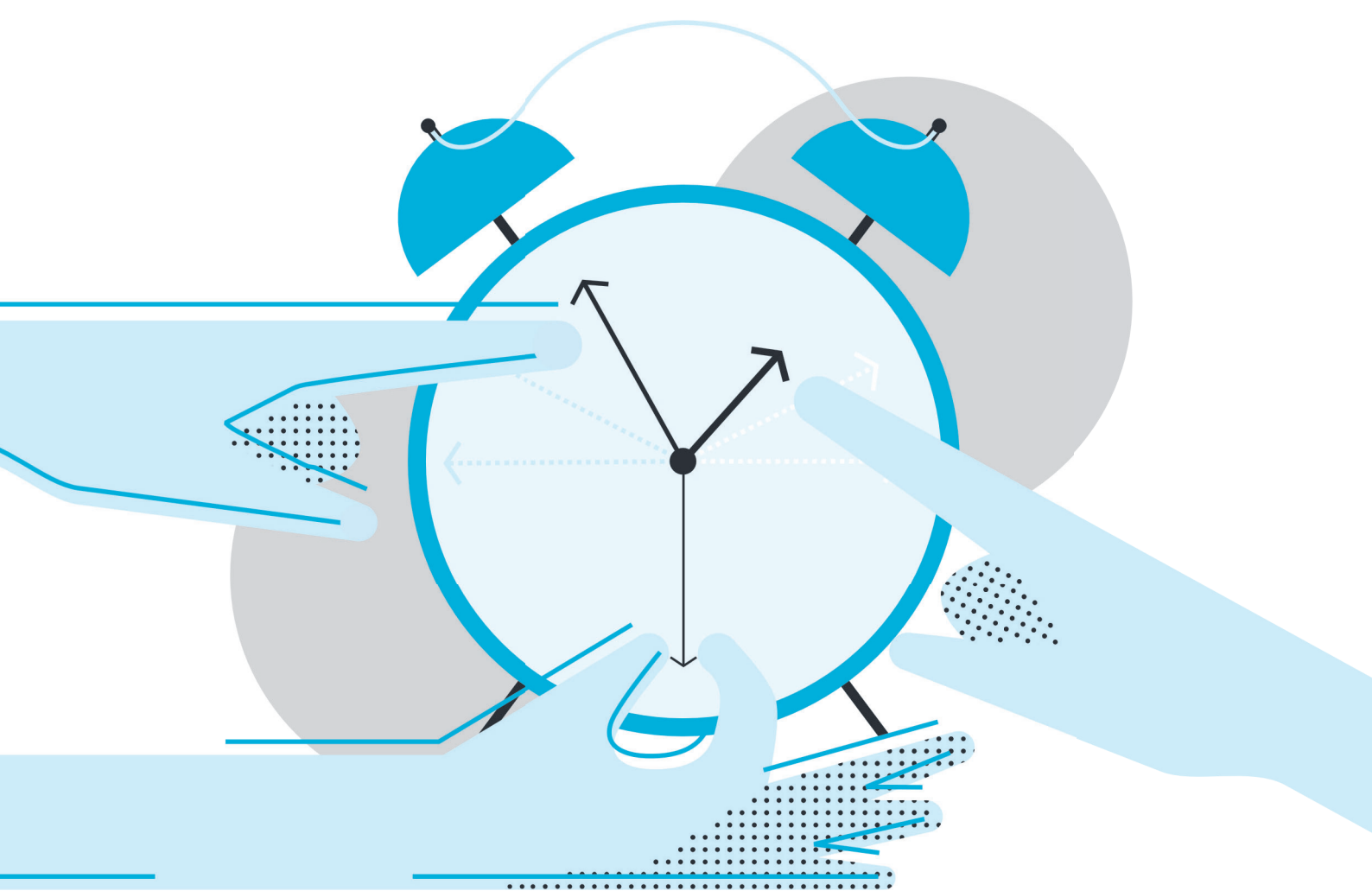
Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.

juxtaposed with the powerful rhetoric used in Poland among those close to the government emphasizing the injustices and tragedies that Poles have suffered from Germans.

The question of what exactly made the respondents state that the Polish government is responsible for the bad situation in Polish-German relations remains open. On the Polish side, as one might expect, the supporters of the opposition (Civic Coalition – 89%; The Left – 97%; Movement Poland 2050 – 58%) are more likely to blame the government than the voters of Law and Justice (5.3%). In Germany, political divisions do not play a role here.

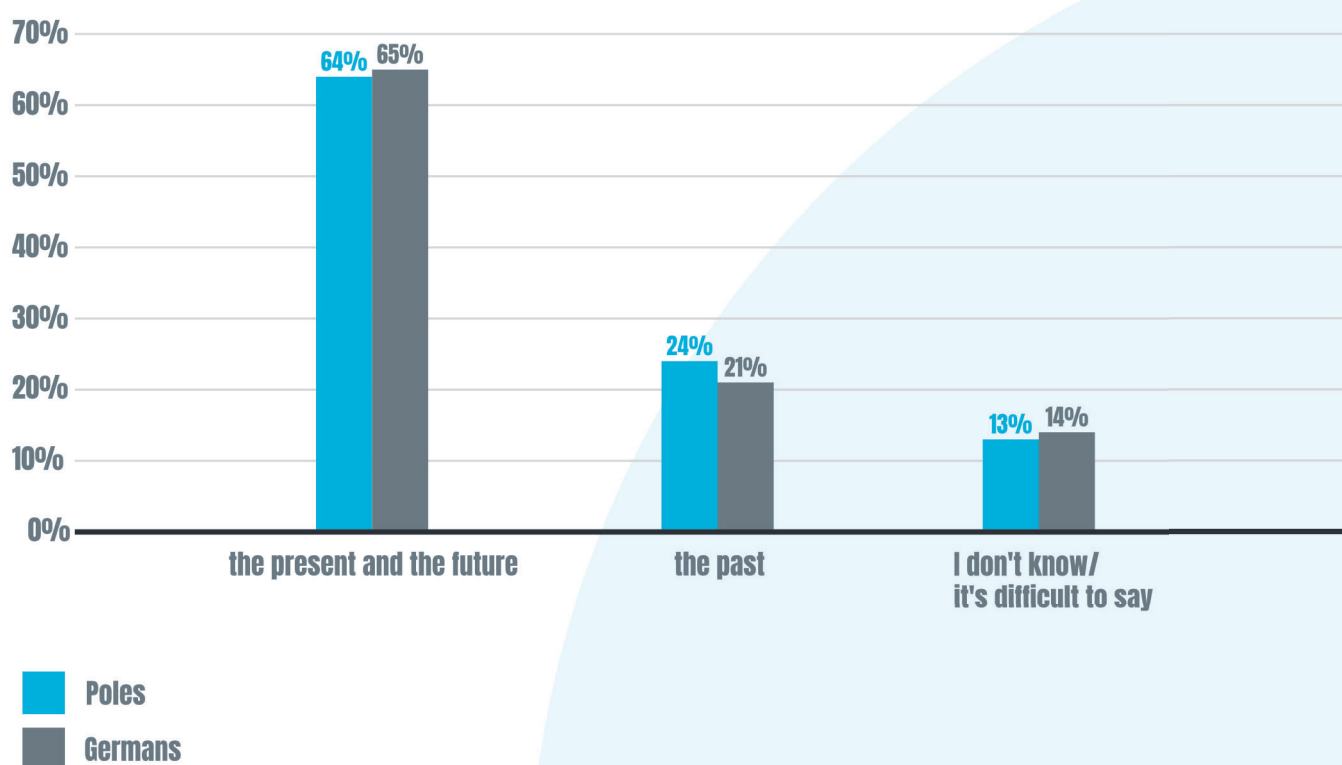
Holding the Polish government responsible for the current bad state of Polish-German relations can also be explained by the events of the past year concerning the situation around the coronavirus crisis. The sudden closing of the borders in the spring of 2020 in response to the first cases of the disease and the relatively long duration of border-crossing restrictions (the requirement of a two-week quarantine upon return) imposed on cross-border workers, schoolchildren and others who regularly move between Poland and Germany were described in the media as detrimental to the development of Polish-German relations. In particular, concerns were raised that this would disrupt important economic contacts (a breakdown of supply chains). At the same time, it was a fact that there were not enough contacts between the Polish and German authorities to jointly solve the problem of cross-border traffic during the pandemic. Here, however, the question must be asked as to how many respondents were aware of the above issues and were guided by such assessment when answering the question. The analysis of the press from the spring of 2020 shows that the topic was present in the media, especially on the Polish side, which could have influenced the respondents and would confirm the claim, substantiated by the 2020 Barometer survey, that media reports do influence the respondents' perception of the world. However, in retrospect (winter 2021 survey), this was quite a distant event. As shown by comparing the responses of people from border regions, and thus relatively more affected by the restrictions, no differences can be noticed on the Polish side. On the German side, residents of eastern Länder (16%), especially those on the Polish border (17%), were more likely to blame their own government for the poor state of Polish-German relations than those from western Länder (4%).

On the German side, another event that may have influenced the negative assessment of the Polish government's policy was the negotiation of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework. The Polish threats of a veto put a question mark over the positive conclusion of the process in which the federal government was heavily involved during the German presidency of the Council of the European Union. Indirectly, this also affected the relations between Poland and Germany. In this, as in other cases, it is from such events, even remote ones, that the image of a given country or society is created, and therefore they should be taken into account as a set of factors.



## In relations with Germany/Poland, should the focus be more on the issues concerning the present and the future or the past?

Responses of Poles and Germans in 2021



## Priorities in the countries' mutual relations – the past *versus* the future



June 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation. The document emphasized early on that both sides sought to “close the painful chapters of the past” and were “aware of the commonality of their interests and of their joint responsibility for the construction of Europe.” In the year of the milestone anniversary of the signing of the treaty, it is all the more relevant to ask whether both societies now believe that in the relations with the other country the focus should be more on the present and the future or on history.

The responses indicate that Poles and Germans agree (64% and 65%, respectively) that in their mutual relations the focus should be on the present and the future and not on the past.

Poles and Germans agree (64% and 65%, respectively) that in their mutual relations, the focus should be on the present and the future and not on the past

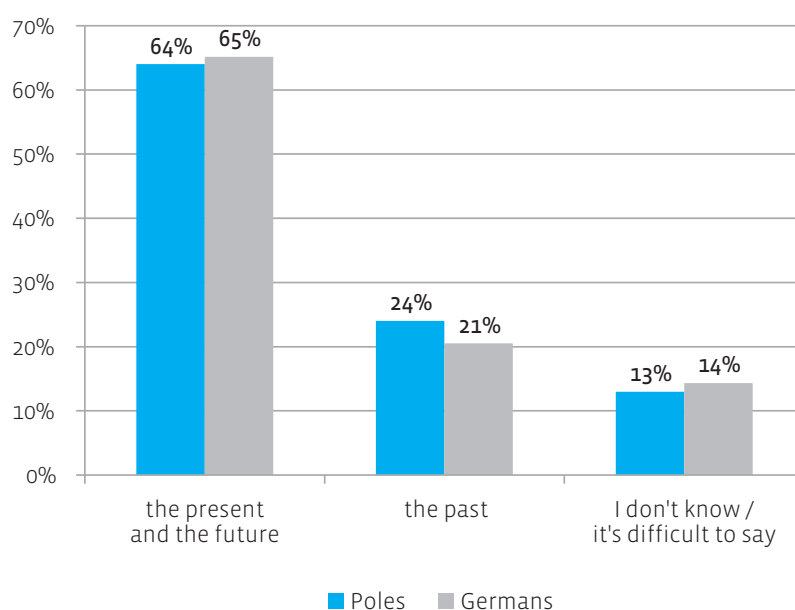


Figure 5.  
In relations with Germany/  
Poland, should the focus  
be more on the issues  
concerning the present  
and the future or the past?  
Responses of Poles and  
Germans in 2021

Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.

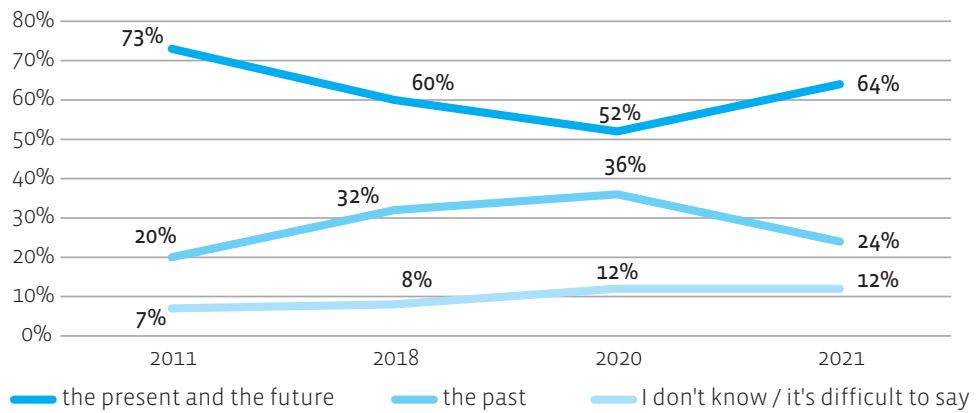
The opinions of the Poles surveyed on this issue have changed appreciably over the past year. The percentage of respondents choosing to focus on the present and the future has increased by twelve percentage points. The percentage of those who indicate the need to deal first with the issues of the past declined by the same margin. There may be many reasons for this change. In the year of the pandemic, current issues have become particularly relevant. Poles have had the opportunity to learn how important it is to work together



to solve current problems. At the same time, issues related to history were relegated to the background in the Polish public debate – compared to previous years – as everyone was preoccupied with fighting the consequences of the pandemic.

Figure 6.  
In relations with Germany, should the focus be more on the issues concerning the present and the future or the past? Responses of Poles in 2011, 2018, 2020 and 2021

Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.

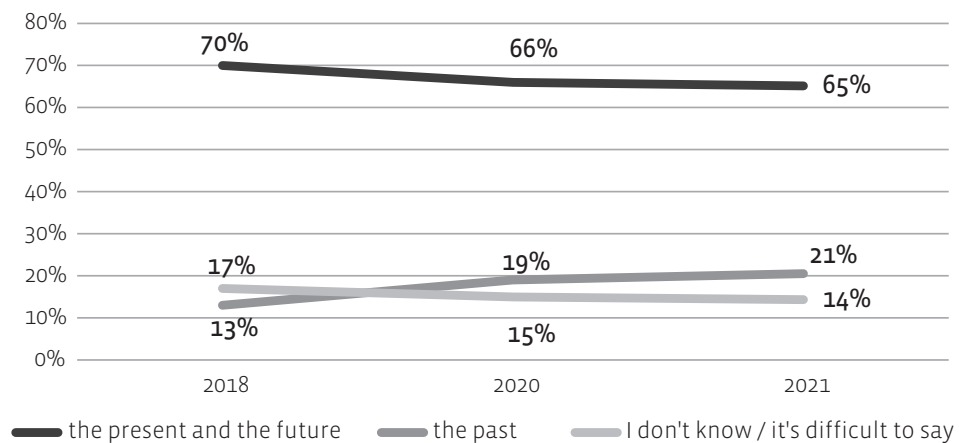


The need to focus on the past in the relations with Germany is more often mentioned by the supporters of Law and Justice (59%) than those of the Polish Coalition (21%), the Poland 2050 Movement (17%), the Civic Coalition (8%) and The Left (8%).

On the German side, there have been practically no changes over the last year, the differences falling within the statistical margin of error. However, this current decrease, though statistically insignificant, is a change in the same direction as in the period 2018-2020; hence, over the years, it may indicate a certain trend.

Figure 7.  
In relations with Poland, should the focus be more on the issues concerning the present and the future or the past? Responses of Germans in 2018, 2020 and 2021

Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.



Liberals are also more likely than voters of other parties to be convinced of the need to put the present and the future first (90%). On the other hand, East Germans are relatively more likely to point to the past than West Germans (27% to 19%).

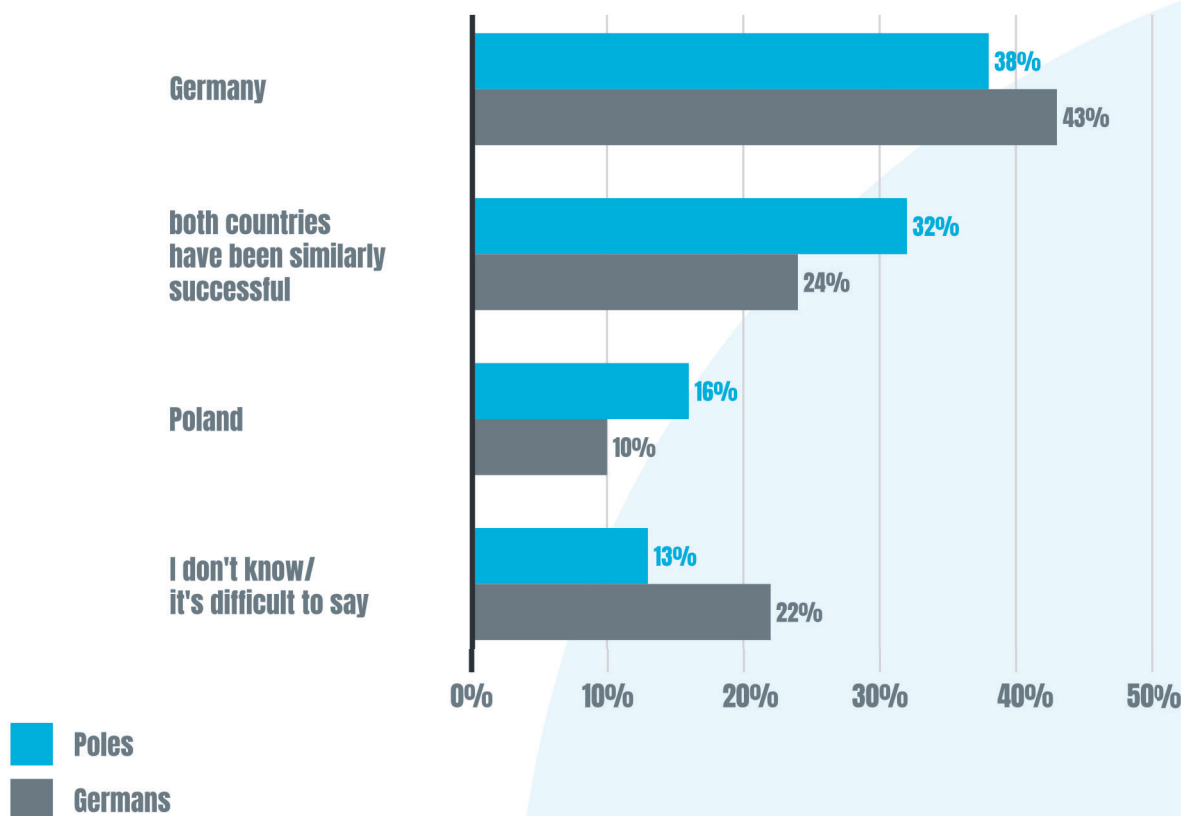
At the same time, no correlation can be discerned between the answers to this question and the overall assessment of the state of Polish-German relations on either side of the border. However, such a correlation can be seen if one compares it with the answers to questions about the reasons for such assessment of the condition of the relations. Poles who say that in relations with Germany the focus should rather be on the past are much more likely than those who choose to focus on the present and the future to blame the German government for the poor condition of the relations (47% to 19%) or to believe that difficult historical experience is the reason for the poor relations (24% to 7%). They are also less likely to say that the reason for the poor condition of the relations is the policy of the Polish government (4% to 72%).

On the German side, there is only one correlation – those respondents who say that it is important to focus on historical issues are more likely than others (27% to 14%) to believe that the difficult past is the reason for bad relations.



## Which country has been more successful in tackling the effects of the COVID-19/ coronavirus pandemic (health, economic and other)?

Responses from Poles and Germans in 2021



## Assessing the actions of the neighbouring country in response to the pandemic



In 2021, it would be hard not to ask respondents to evaluate their neighbouring country's response to the pandemic. The question referred to tackling its effects in both the health and economic spheres and asked respondents to indicate which of the two countries has been more successful. On both sides of the border, respondents believe that Germany has been more successful in this respect (38% of Poles and 43% of Germans). Poland is indicated by half as many Poles (16%) and a quarter as many Germans (10%). Every third Pole (32%) and every fourth German (24%) respondent chose the answer that both countries are doing comparably. A relatively large percentage of Germans – 22% – have no opinion on this matter.

According to the Poles and Germans surveyed, Germany has been more successful than Poland in tackling the effects of the coronavirus crisis

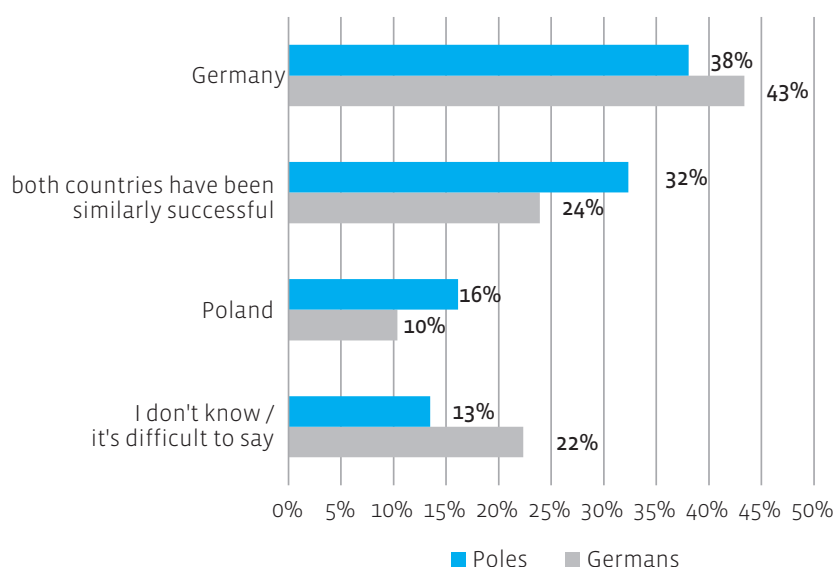


Figure 8.  
Which country has been more successful in tackling the effects of the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic (health, economic and other)?  
Responses from Poles and Germans in 2021

Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.

The above responses are, on the one hand, related to the assessment of the actions of one's own government and, on the other, to one's views about the neighbouring country. Therefore, a broader perspective is provided in this case by polls conducted in the same period in both countries on their government's policy towards the pandemic. According to an IBRIS survey conducted for the daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* during this period, one in ten Poles believed that the Polish government was handling the pandemic well. Less than one in three felt that the government was rather not handling it well. This distribution of responses is consistent with the opinions expressed in our

Barometer survey: Poles relatively rarely indicated that their country was better in coping with the pandemic. At the same time, the low opinions about the actions of their own government probably are in line with the traditionally entrenched belief in Polish society that the German state is well run and can, therefore, solve problems effectively. This image of Germany as a country emerges from the associations Poles have with Germany (examined in the 2020 Polish-German Barometer) and from their overall positive assessment of the German state (*ibid.*). At the same time, the percentage of the surveyed Poles who indicate that both countries are coping in a similar way is only slightly lower (32%, as opposed to 38%).

An analysis of the media coverage during the first wave of the pandemic is helpful in interpreting these data. The Polish press paid considerable attention to the situation in Germany, describing the actions of the government, its successes and failures in the fight against the pandemic, praise from experts and effective support for the economy, as well as shortcomings in the health care system and protests by German opponents of the restrictions. The picture presented by the media was nuanced, which may have led some Polish respondents to believe that the two countries fared similarly.

Further interpretation of the opinions described above can be based on an analysis of responses broken down by voter groups. Law and Justice supporters (43%) are more likely than supporters of the opposition to point to Poland as the country better handling the pandemic (Civic Coalition and The Left – 4% each; Movement Poland 2050 – 5%). The answer that Germany is more successful in fighting the pandemic is chosen more often by those supporting the Civic Coalition (63%) and The Left (69%) than by supporters of Law and Justice (8%), Confederation (25%) and the Polish Coalition (35%). In Poland, the choice of answer was not influenced by the fact of living near the Polish-German border.

In Germany, the assessment of the government's work is traditionally better than in Poland, but during the period of the Barometer survey, this, too, has declined compared to the previous month. At the beginning of March, 50% of Germans surveyed were satisfied with the work of Angela Merkel's cabinet. However, in the assessment of the specific measures taken (organisation of the vaccination campaign, providing information to the public, economic support), those who were dissatisfied prevailed by a wide margin – 65-74% of the total number of respondents. Still, even those who were critical of their own government could claim that it performed better than the Polish government. This should not come as a surprise, since the supporters of Alternative for Germany, a party that has inscribed on its banners the criticism of the federal government's actions related to the pandemic (and other issues), were the most likely to indicate Poland in this respect (33%). The answer that Germany is handling the pandemic better is more often given by supporters of the current ruling parties, the CDU and SPD (61% and 55%, respectively), than of the

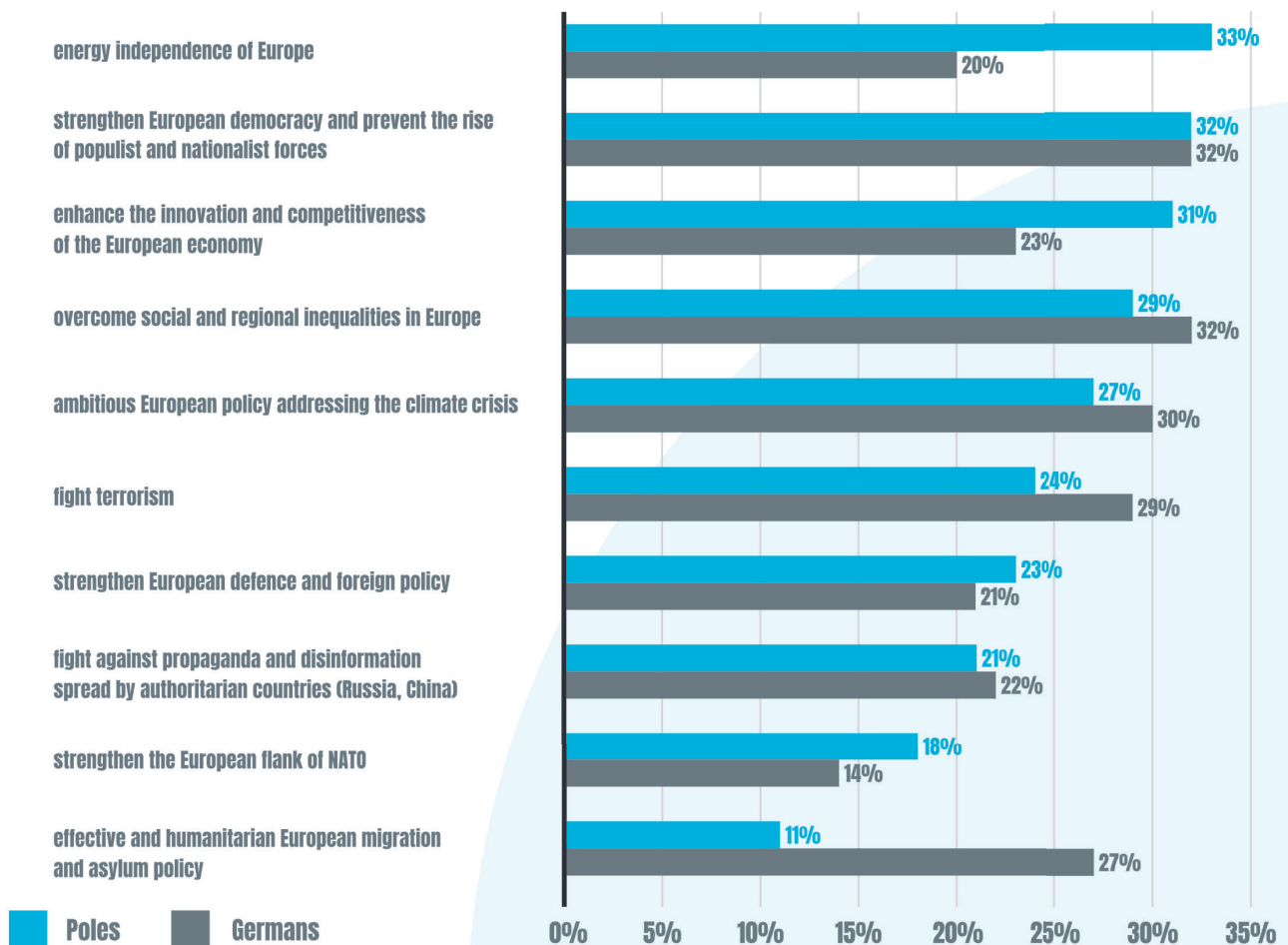
opposition. Place of residence does not play a role in the distribution of German responses to this question.

In general, Germans have an ambivalent view of Poland. Recently, as indicated by a broader study on this issue in the 2020 Polish-German Barometer, although the percentage of negative associations concerning the functioning of the Polish state was relatively low, the overall assessments were not particularly positive (usually Germans chose answers in the middle of the scale or were not able to assess the functioning of various spheres of Polish life). An analysis of German press reports for the first half of 2020 shows that the image of Poland during the pandemic was dominated by the theme of the ongoing electoral campaign and the change of the election date. The description of the behaviour of the ruling coalition was particularly negative. This may have additionally affected Germans' assessment of how Poland was coping with the crisis.



## In what areas should Poland and Germany cooperate closely?

Responses of Poles and Germans in 2021

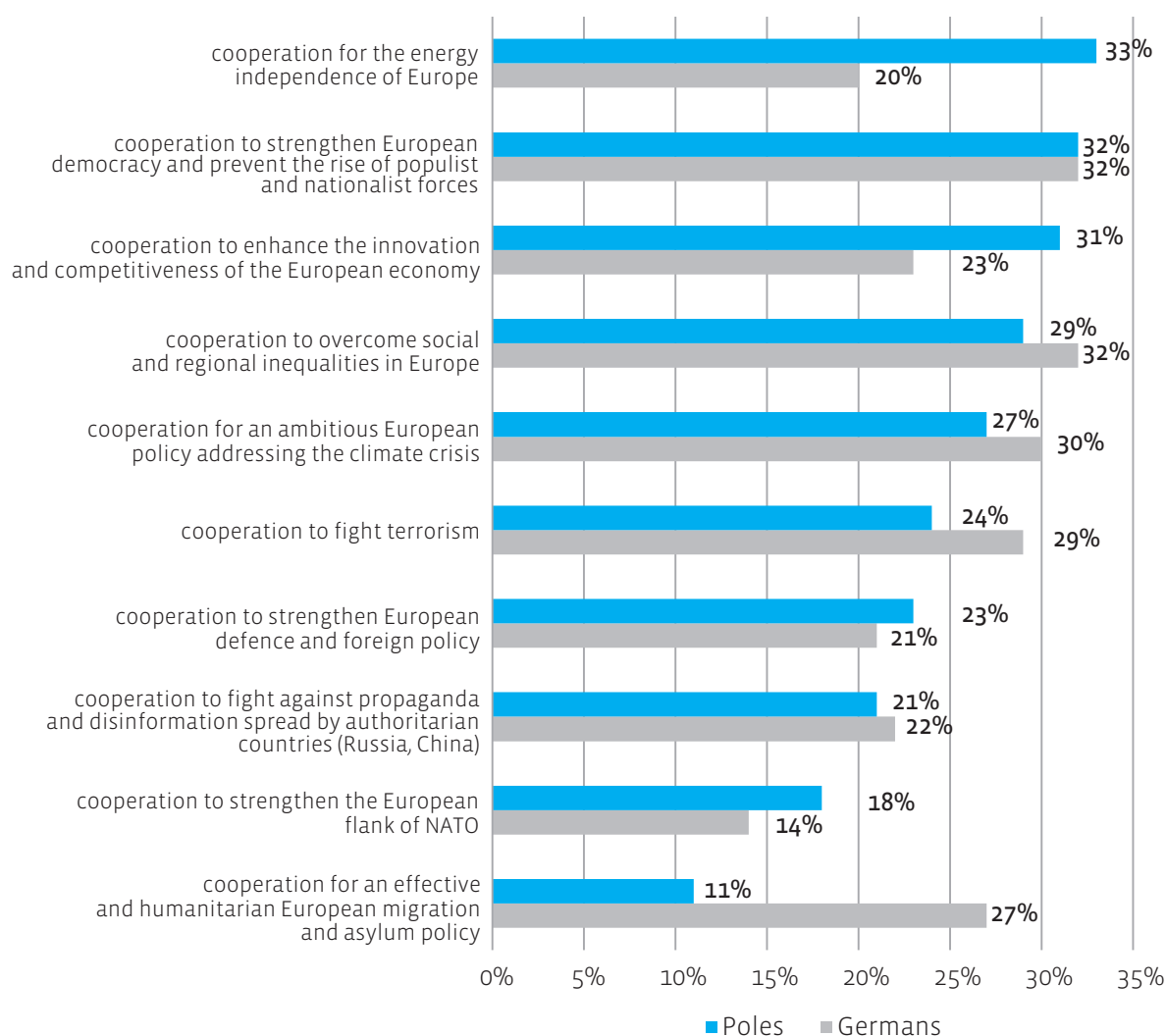




The situation related to tackling the effects of the pandemic may have also influenced Poles' and Germans' assessment of the areas in which they think both countries should cooperate closely. The percentages of respondents in both countries who indicated a given area (they could choose up to three areas) differ in most cases. In the first three positions, Poles list cooperation for the energy independence of Europe (33%), cooperation to strengthen European democracy and prevent the growth of populist and nationalist forces (32%), and cooperation to enhance the innovation and competitiveness of the European economy (31%). For Germans, the top spot is shared equally by cooperation to strengthen democracy and cooperation to overcome social and regional inequalities in Europe (32% each), followed closely by cooperation for an ambitious policy addressing the climate crisis (30%) and cooperation to fight terrorism (29%). Thus, one of the priorities is the same, while the others show notable differences. The particularly significant difference in responses concerns the percentage of people choosing energy policy (thirteen percentage points in favour of Poland) and migration and asylum policy (sixteen percentage points in favour of Germany). This is not surprising, as both areas are traditionally important topics in the politics and public debate of both countries, and from their national perspectives, they require joint European action. For Poland, energy security is crucial, as Poles perceive energy policy as part of the state security. The construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, therefore, starkly raises the question of European solidarity in the field of energy. As the primary destination of migrants to Europe, Germany is interested in a pan-European solution in this area.

Several other, albeit smaller, differences are not surprising, either. Germans are somewhat more likely to pay attention to the climate (30% to 27%), while Poles are more likely to point to the need to strengthen NATO's European flank (18% to 14%). The importance of joint efforts to fight terrorism is currently greater on the German side (29% to 24%), because international issues, and global terrorism is one of them, are generally more present in the German media than in the Polish media. Likewise, the threat of terrorism to one's own country has been highlighted more often in Germany in recent months, for example, in the wake of information about Russian hacker attacks on the German administration or references to the terrorist attack in Hanau on 19 February 2020.





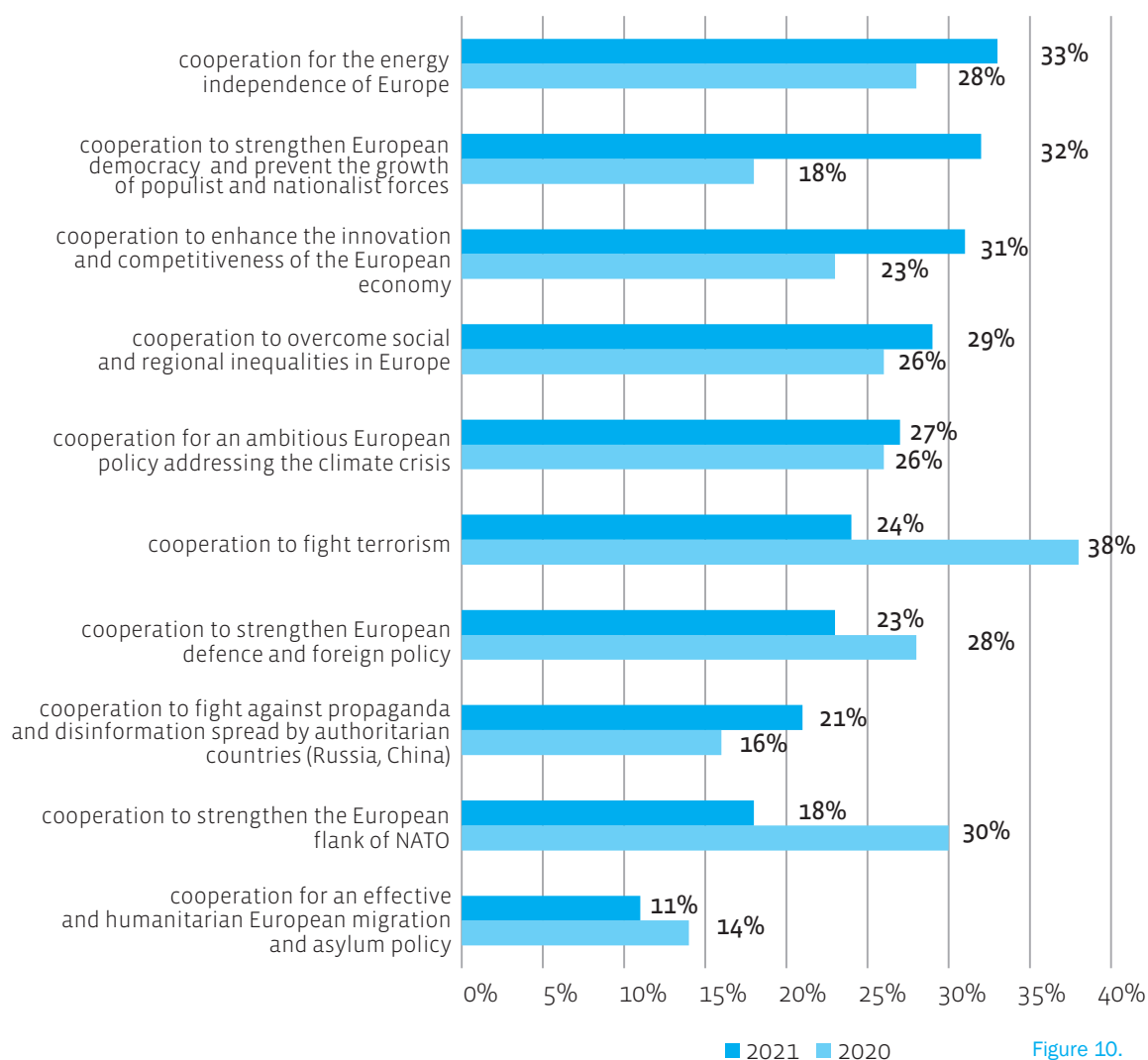
**Figure 9.**  
In what areas should  
Poland and Germany  
cooperate closely?  
Responses of Poles and  
Germans in 2021

Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.

Respondents could choose a maximum of three answers.

The year of the pandemic has brought changes in the perception of the areas of priority for cooperation between Poland and Germany. Due to the pandemic and the concerns that it has evoked, Poles much less frequently than in the previous year point to the need for cooperation to fight terrorism (a decrease from 38% to 24%), cooperation to strengthen the European flank of NATO (a decrease from 30% to 18%) or European defence and foreign policy (a decrease from 28% to 23%). These topics have virtually disappeared from the political debate, and the danger of neglecting these areas or adopting a nationalistic approach to them has faded in the face of the challenges posed by the health and economic situations. Therefore, it is not surprising that there was an increase in those voicing the opinion that it is worth cooperating with Germany in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the European economy (from 23% to 31%). Concerns regarding Russia's actions related to the poisoning and arrest of the opposition activist Alexei Navalny, as well as China's initial policy of concealing the appearance of the SARS-CoV-2 virus,

were reflected in an increase in Poles' belief that action should be taken together with Germany to fight disinformation promulgated by authoritarian countries (an increase from 16% to 21%). Discussions about the application of U.S. sanctions against companies building Nord Stream 2 and subsequent decisions to continue its construction, in turn, led Poles to feel increasingly strongly that Germany should pay attention to European energy solutions. Finally, discussions about the rule of law in Poland have increased the group of Polish respondents who would like to see cooperation between the two countries in order to strengthen European democracy. Those choosing this answer are more likely to be supporters of the Civic Coalition (53%), The Left (53%) and the Poland 2050 Movement (43%) than of Law and Justice (18%).



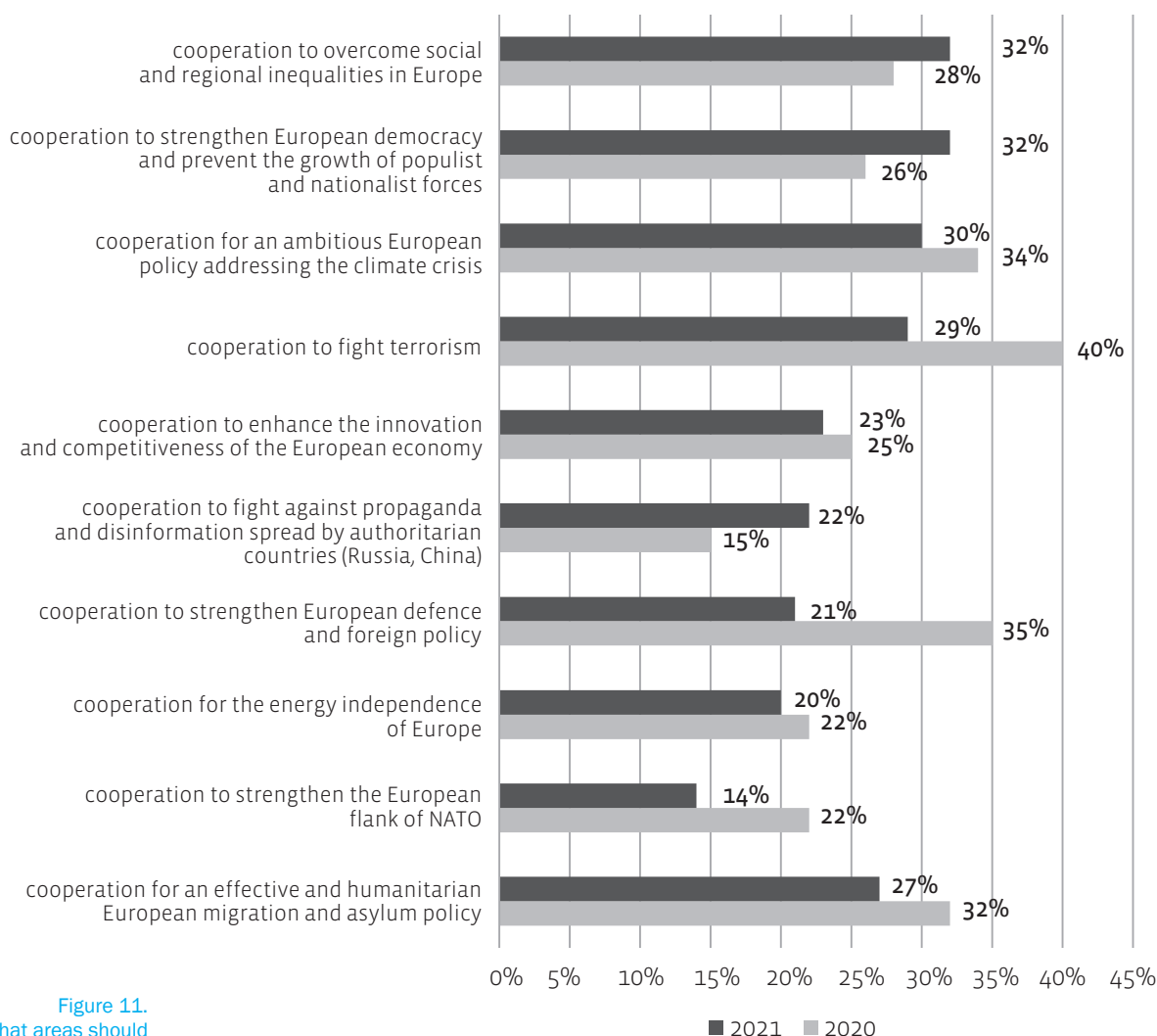
Respondents could choose a maximum of three answers.

Figure 10.  
In what areas should Poland and Germany cooperate closely?  
Responses of Poles in 2020 and 2021

Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.

Other responses also show the political polarisation typical of Polish society. Law and Justice voters (17%) were less likely to point to cooperation aimed at improving the climate than supporters of the Civic Coalition, The

Left and the Poland 2050 Movement. Those leaning towards The Left more often support cooperation to overcome social inequalities (42%), while voters of Confederation more often than those of the Civic Coalition, The Left and the Poland 2050 Movement chose cooperation to enhance innovation in the economy (50%). The issues of cooperation with Germany on fighting terrorism or on energy policy did not reflect differences in political party preferences.



**Figure 11.**  
In what areas should  
Poland and Germany  
cooperate closely?  
Responses of Germans in  
2020 and 2021

Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.

Respondents could choose a maximum of three answers.

The youngest respondents are distinguished by their choice of several issues. Poles between the ages of 18 and 24 are more likely to support cooperation to overcome social inequalities than other groups (38% to 27%). The opposite tendency occurs when indicating the need to strengthen European democracy. In this case, people over the age of twenty-five choose this answer more often (34%) than younger people (20%). Likewise, older respondents are more likely than those aged 18 to 24 (35% to 22%) to point to jointly building Europe's energy independence.

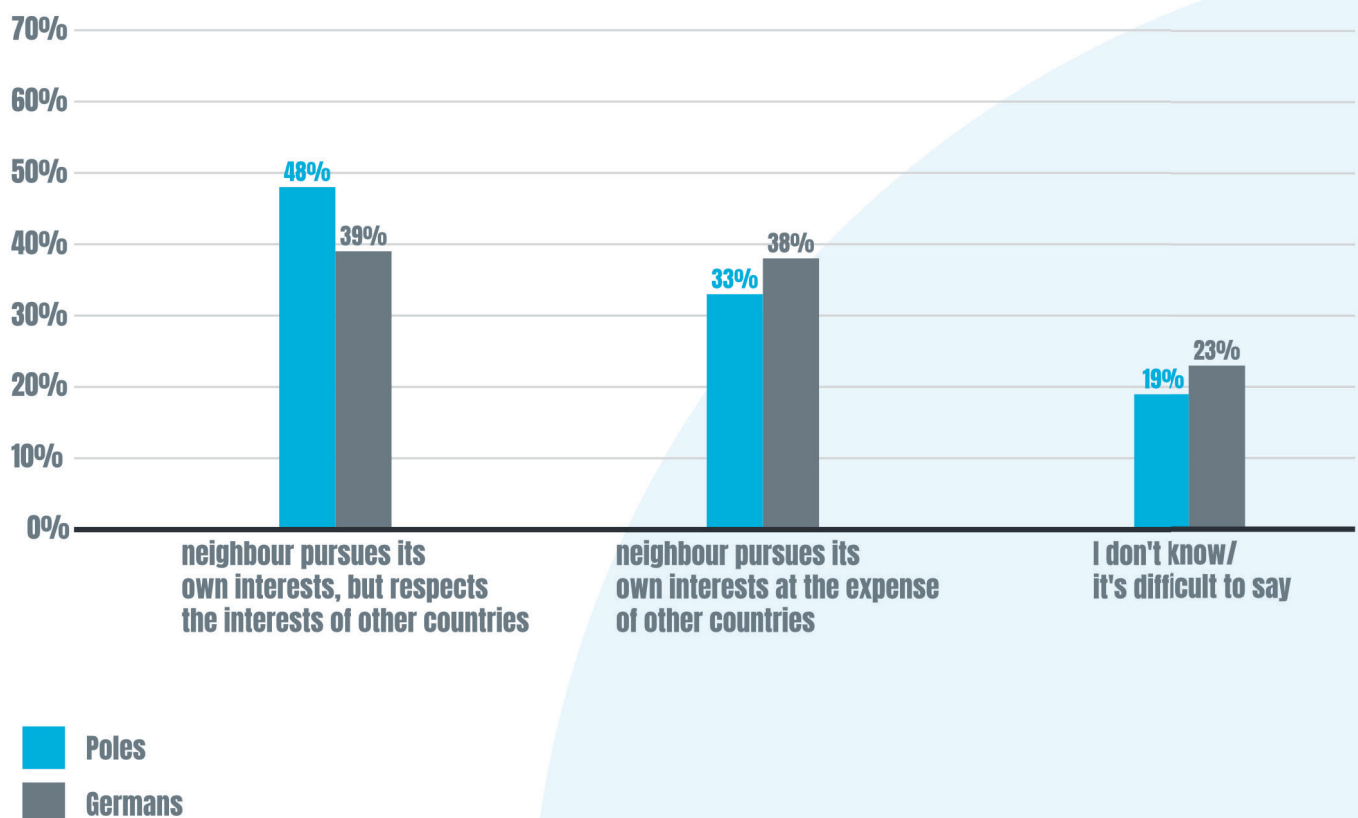
Among German respondents, some of the changes in opinions about which areas to prioritize in cooperation are similar to those in Poland and can be explained in the same manner. This concerns such areas as strengthening NATO's European flank (a decrease from 22% to 14%), European defence policy (a decrease from 35% to 21%) and the fight against terrorism (a decrease from 40% to 29%). The statement that Poland should cooperate on migration policy is also selected less often than in the previous year (a drop from 32% to 27%). The increase in the frequency of responses stating that Germany should cooperate with Poland to fight the propaganda of authoritarian countries (from 15% to 22%) can also be explained in the same way as the similar change on the Polish side.

In some cases, the opinions of respondents can be linked to their political views, but this applies only to supporters of parties that have a well-known, distinctive stance in a given area. Voters of The Left are much less likely than other respondents to say that it is necessary to cooperate to strengthen NATO's European flank (7% of this party's voters chose this answer) or the European security policy (8%), and more likely to say it is worth cooperating to overcome inequalities in Europe (43%). Liberal supporters, on the other hand, are relatively more likely than others to emphasize the need to work towards enhancing innovation (48%). Those who support the Alternative for Germany are the least likely of those surveyed to support joint efforts to strengthen European democracy and prevent the growth of populist and nationalist forces (18%). It is interesting to note that there are no statistically significant differences between the choices made by supporters of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats. Nor do they exist between the youngest respondents and the older age groups. In the East-West divide, they are only visible in the areas of cooperation to strengthen European democracy and migration policy. In both cases the inhabitants of the western Länder (34% and 30%) are more likely to support cooperation than those from the eastern Länder (25% and 18%).



## How should we assess neighbor's foreign policy?

Responses of Poles and Germans in 2021





In Europe, Germany is seen as one of the two main drivers of European integration (alongside France), and the main player in EU politics. Poland, one of the larger EU member states, has also aspired to play an important role in European politics since the beginning of its membership in the Community. In the Polish-German Barometer, we have been asking for years about perceptions of the other country's European policy – whether it contributes to better cooperation or exacerbates tensions in Europe.

### Polish assessment of Germany's European and foreign policies

In 2021, we noted a significant decline in the percentage of Polish respondents who believe that Germany's European policy contributes to better cooperation in Europe. Less than half of the respondents (49%) agreed with this statement, which is the worst result since the beginning of our research. At the same time, the percentage of Polish respondents who believe that Germany contributes to exacerbating European disputes and tensions was similar to that of the previous year. The number of those who do not have a definite opinion on this issue has also increased.

Only half of Poles believe that Germany contributes to better cooperation in Europe. This is the worst result since the beginning of the survey

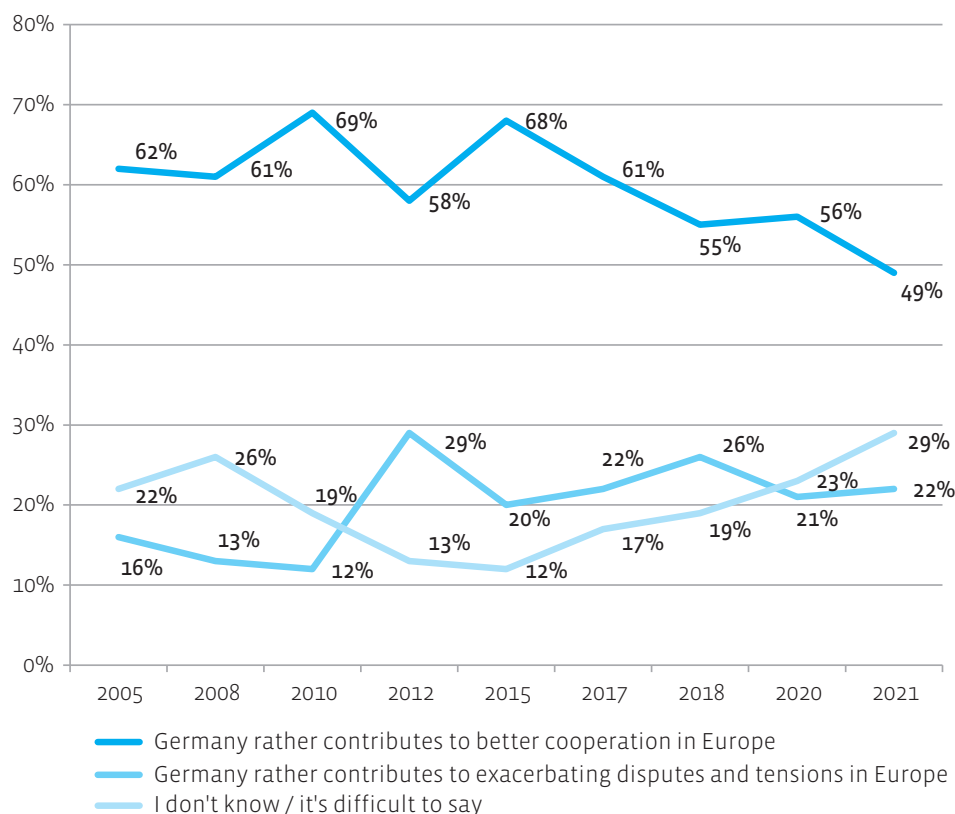


Figure 12.  
How should we assess  
Germany's European  
policy? Responses of Poles  
in the years 2005-2021

Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.

Polish opinions of Germany's European policy have been steadily deteriorating since 2015, that is, since the United Right (Law and Justice and two smaller right-wing parties) came to power. The critical comments made by politicians of the ruling coalition about Germany's European policy are probably the main reason for this trend. In particular, right-wing politicians and the pro-government media blame German influence for the EU institutions' (primarily the European Parliament and the European Commission) criticisms of the Polish authorities for systematic violations of the rule of law.

Supporters of the ruling Law and Justice party overwhelmingly (57%) believe that German policy tends to provoke disputes and tensions in Europe

The argument about the political nature of the change in the perception of Germany's European policy is confirmed by the strong differences in opinions among the supporters of different political groups in Poland. Ardent supporters of the ruling Law and Justice party overwhelmingly (57%) believe that Germany's policy tends to provoke disputes and tensions in Europe. At the other extreme, we find the supporters of the opposition Civic Coalition, a vast majority of whom (80%) believe that Germany's policy contributes to better European cooperation. The vast majority of those who support other opposition parties believe the same: The Left (75%); Szymon Holownia's Poland 2050 Movement (70%); or the Polish Coalition (60%). At the same time, among the supporters of the latter two opposition formations, there are slightly more people critical of the German policy than among the voters of the Civic Coalition (14% and 20%, respectively). Among the more prominent opposition formations, critical opinions about German policies prevail only among supporters of the far-right and Eurosceptic Confederation (43%), but even here, there are more positive opinions than among Law and Justice voters (29% to 19%).

Neither age nor region of residence of the Polish respondents significantly differentiates their assessment of Germany's European policy. However, an important variable is one's overall opinion of Polish-German relations. People who view these relations as bad have a slightly worse opinion of Germany's European policy, although even in this group most respondents believe that this policy contributes to better cooperation in Europe. The reverse is also true – those who are critical of Germany's European policy are more likely to believe that relations between the two countries are bad.

Only 48% of Polish respondents agree with the statement that Germany conducts its foreign policy with respect for the interests of other countries

In the current survey, we asked (again, for the first time since 2015) about the assessment of Germany's foreign policy towards other countries. Here, too, there has been a relative deterioration in the assessment compared not only to the last one, but also to previous measurements. Currently, only 48% of Polish respondents agree with the statement that Germany conducts its foreign policy with respect for the interests of other countries, while previously this answer was chosen by the majority of Polish respondents. Interestingly, a smaller percentage

than six years ago believe that Germany's foreign policy is being pursued at the expense of other countries; the lower number of positive assessments is primarily due to the fact that a relatively larger percentage of respondents chose the "it's difficult to say" response. This change, in turn, may be due, in part, to the survey method used this year (see *Note on methodology*).

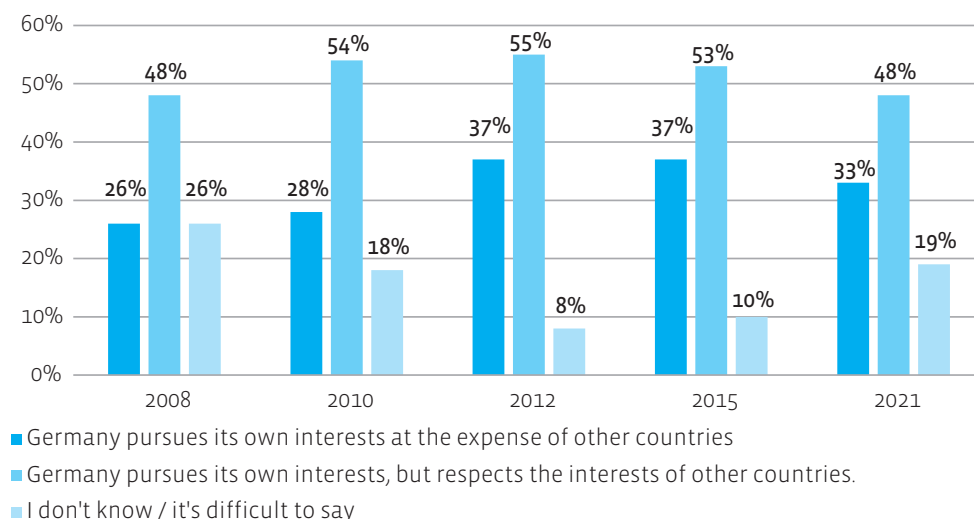


Figure 13.  
How should we assess  
Germany's foreign policy?  
Responses of Poles in the  
years 2008-2021

Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.

As in the case of the previous question, respondents' answers are differentiated primarily by their political affiliation. A clear majority of Law and Justice (72%) and Confederation voters (67%) believe that Germany ignores the interests of other countries, while 78% of Civic Coalition voters and 74% of those supporting The Left believe that Germany's foreign policy is based on respect for the interests of other countries. Almost 60% of Movement Poland 2050 supporters and every second voter of the Polish Coalition hold a similar opinion. Among the supporters of the latter two parties, scepticism towards German policies is clearly visible, that is, about 30% of their voters consider German's foreign policy to be characterised by national egoism, which consists in pursuing one's own political interests even at the expense of the interests of other countries.

### German assessment of Poland's European and foreign policies

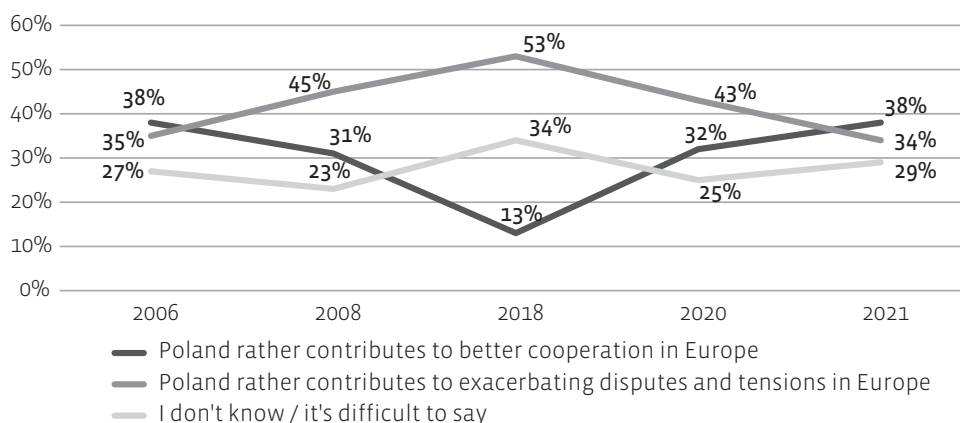
In 2021, German assessment of Poland's European policy has improved slightly. However, there is still a greater number of respondents (38%) who believe that Poland's policy contributes to the exacerbation of disputes and tensions than believe that it promotes better European cooperation. As in previous years, a large percentage of respondents are unable to answer this question. Unlike in the case of Polish opinions about Germany's European policy, where positive opinions clearly prevail, the German public does not have a clear opinion on this issue and remains divided.

Germans are divided in their  
assessment of Poland's  
European policy



Figure 14.  
How should we assess  
Poland's European policy?  
Responses of Germans in  
the years 2006-2021

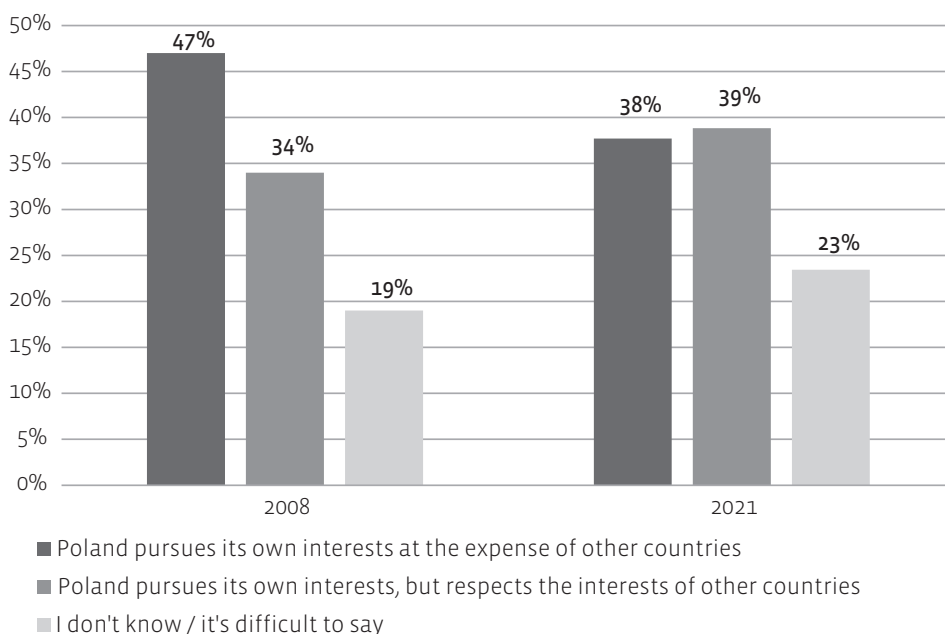
Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.



The electorates of the main German political parties are as divided in their assessment of Poland's European policy as the general public. FDP supporters are distinguished by their critical view of this policy. Among other voters, negative opinions slightly outnumber positive ones, and only among the voters of Alternative for Germany are these proportions reversed.

Figure 15.  
How should we assess  
Poland's foreign policy?  
Responses of Germans in  
2008 and 2021

Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.



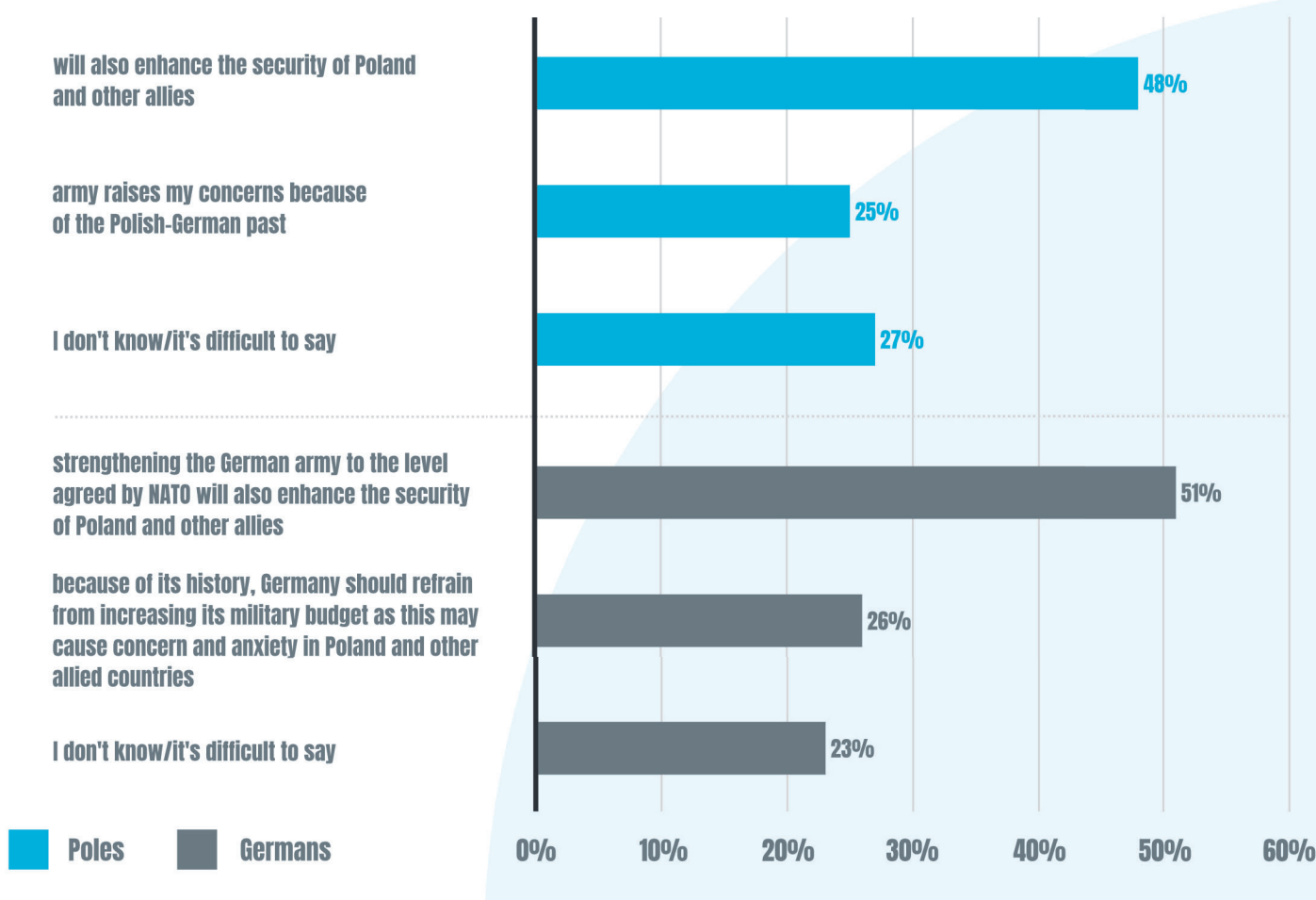
The German respondents do not have a clearly defined opinion on the question of Poland's respect for the interests of other countries in pursuing its own political goals. A similar percentage of the respondents consider Polish policies to be characterised by national egoism to the percentage of those who consider it to be respectful of the interests of other countries, but none of these opinions is a majority opinion because a considerable percentage of the respondents are unable to provide an answer to this question.

The divide in opinions on this issue can also be seen among the supporters of the main German political forces. In each of these groups, except for the



## Will strengthening the German army enhance the security of Poland?

Responses of Poles and Germans in 2021



supporters of Alternative for Germany, critical opinions prevail, although the percentage of such opinions never exceeds half of the respondents. The supporters of CDU-CSU and the Greens, as well as the SPD and the FDP, have the most critical views. More than a third of the supporters of these parties have a positive opinion of Poland's foreign policies. The electorate of the left-wing *die Linke* is almost evenly divided, and only among supporters of Alternative for Germany do more than half (58%) of the respondents have a positive view of Poland's foreign policies.

One should also note certain differences in the assessment of Poland's foreign policy in the eastern and western *Länder* of the Federal Republic. Residents of eastern Germany are generally less critical of Poland's European and foreign policies. On the other hand, older respondents – those over forty-five years of age – are more critical of Poland's policies than the younger generation.

German assessment of Poland's foreign policy in 2021 is clearly less critical than it was in 2008, when it was influenced by the experiences of Poland's European policy in the period immediately following the country's accession to the EU, especially Poland's opposition to the adoption of the European constitution (the project fell through after being rejected in referendums held in France and the Netherlands). Apparently, in 2021, the German public has, to some extent, become accustomed to Poland's foreign policy often deviating from the EU mainstream, a recent example being Poland's (and Hungary's) threat to veto the EU budget in order to block the "rule of law mechanism", which the Polish authorities perceived as a threat to the judicial changes they were implementing and which had been criticised by Brussels. Taking into account that the change in the evaluation of Polish policies results in a decrease in the percentage of negative opinions and a relatively low level of positive opinions, it can be concluded that the German public attaches less importance to Poland's European policy now than it did at the time of the EU eastern enlargement. This is probably due to the fact that since then, the EU has experienced a number of crises (sometimes called the "polycrisis") that caught the attention of the German public.

### Opinions about German defence spending

Poland and Germany have different approaches to the obligation assumed by the member states of the transatlantic alliance (NATO) to allocate at least 2% of their GDP to defence. While Poland has been striving for years to fulfil this requirement, German spending on the *Bundeswehr*, though growing, has been clearly falling short of those commitments, for which the country has been criticised by the United States (especially intensively during Donald Trump's administration) as well as by Poland's political class and some influential media. On the German side, the argument can sometimes be heard that Polish public opinion would probably be alarmed by information about a significant

increase in German military spending, given what has happened in the past. In this year's Barometer, we therefore once again asked Polish respondents about their opinions on a possible increase in German defence spending from the point of view of the country's commitments to NATO.

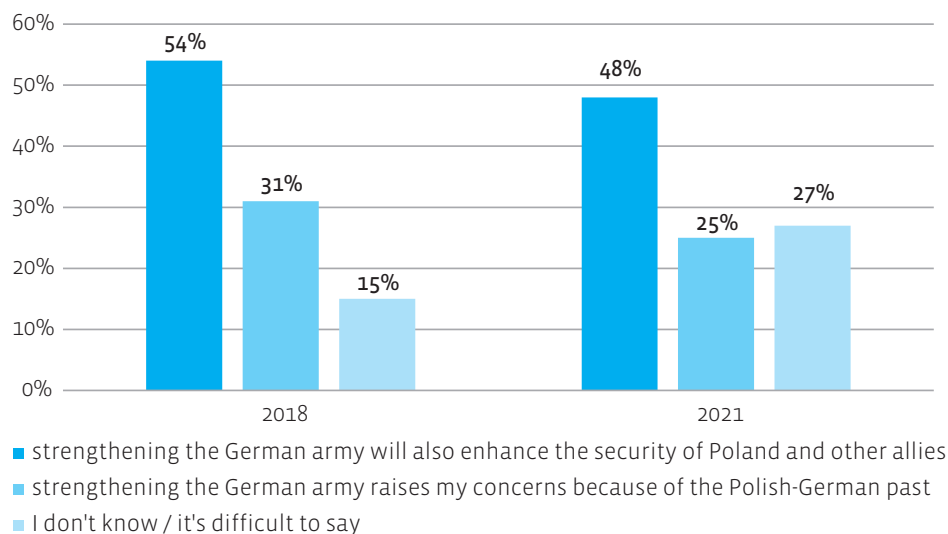


Figure 16.  
Will strengthening the  
German army enhance  
the security of Poland?  
Responses of Poles in  
2018 and 2021

Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.

Polish public opinion is divided on this issue, but almost every second person surveyed believes that an increase in Germany's military spending will also increase the security of Poland and other allies. Only one in four people surveyed says that higher spending raises their concern. Compared to the 2018 survey, the percentages of those approving of higher spending on the Bundeswehr have clearly declined, but fewer people also say they are worried about such a scenario. On the other hand, the number of those who did not have a clear opinion on the matter has almost doubled, which may be a result of using a different survey methodology (see *Note on methodology*). This does not change the basic fact that twice as many Poles believe that an increase in German defence spending will also increase Polish security and they are not worried about it.

Two times more Poles believe that increasing German defence spending will also increase Polish security than are worried about it

The opinions regarding Germany's defence spending are strongly correlated with the respondents' political sympathies. Supporters of the main opposition forces view the higher expenditure positively: Civic Coalition (76%); The Left (70%); and the Poland 2050 Movement (63%). On the other hand, supporters of the ruling Law and Justice party (just like the Polish Coalition and Confederation) are clearly divided on this issue: 41% of Law and Justice voters believe that greater German defence spending will increase Poland's security, while at the same time, 36% of the ruling party's supporters express their concerns about this. About a third of the Polish Coalition and Confederation voters express such concerns as well. At the same time, while there are more people in these voter groups who positively view an increase in

military spending, in both cases, they constitute less than half of the respective group.

### Half of Germans think that strengthening the German army will increase the security of Poland and other allies

The German public has also seen a shift in the attitude towards the call for increased defence spending since 2018. Today, half of Germans believe that this will improve the sense of security in Poland and in the other countries of the North Atlantic Alliance. Only one in four people surveyed believes that a German increase in military spending will primarily raise concerns in Poland.

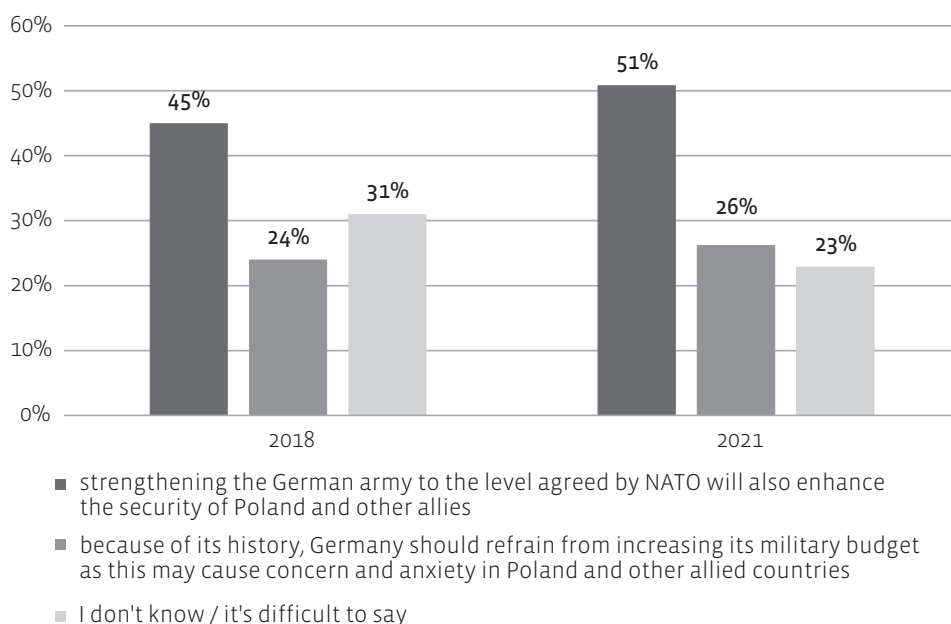


Figure 17.  
How will strengthening of the German army affect the security of Poland?  
Responses of Germans in 2018 and 2021

Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.

### Polish and German opinions on increasing military spending in Germany are now very similar

This change goes in the opposite direction to the change in Polish opinion on this issue, which means that at present, Polish and German opinions on increasing defence spending are very similar. In both countries, support for higher defence spending is clearly greater than concerns that such a policy might raise.

Importantly, the majority of respondents among the voters of the main German political groups declare support for higher spending on the Bundeswehr. At the same time, a significant percentage of the supporters of each of these parties (between 30% and 40%) acknowledge the concerns of Poland and other allied countries. Only FPD voters are almost unanimous on this issue, with 80% of them supporting higher defence spending as a way to increase the security of NATO allies.

Here, too, we see some differences in the views of residents of Germany's eastern and western regions. The former are relatively more likely to agree that higher defence spending could raise concerns in Poland, but even in eastern Germany, more respondents agreed with the opposite view. The youngest respondents were more likely than the older ones to believe that increased

defence spending would raise concerns in Poland. Such fears are shared by 41% of respondents aged 18 to 24 and 29% of those aged 25 to 44. Only in the former group do more respondents believe that the increase in German military spending will raise concerns in Poland rather than strengthen the sense of security.

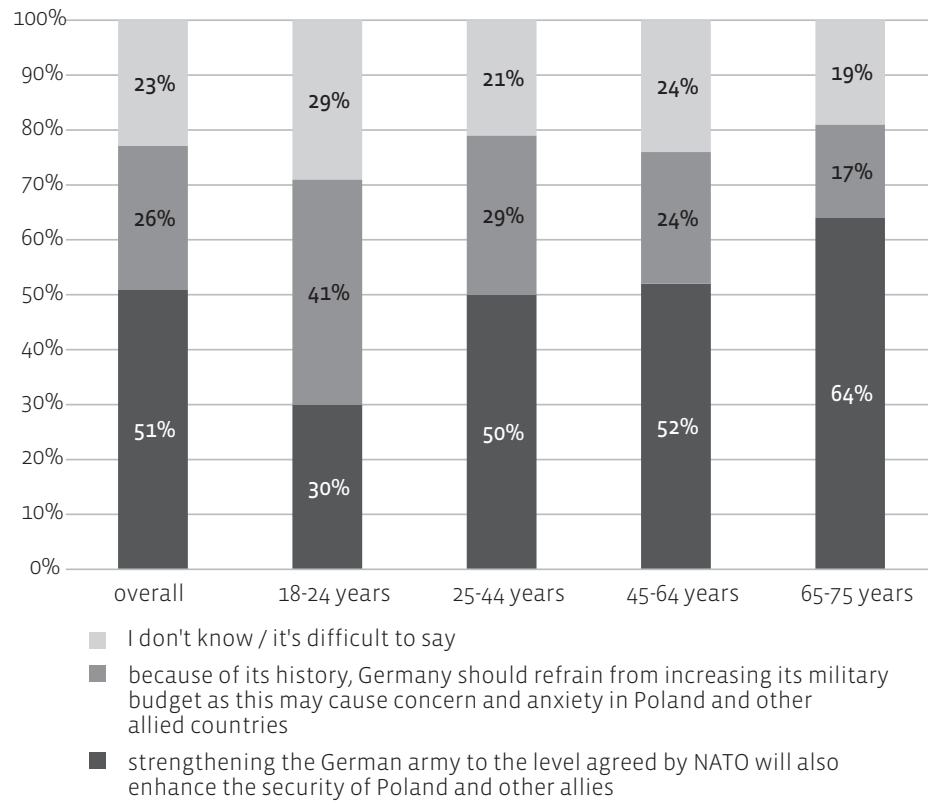
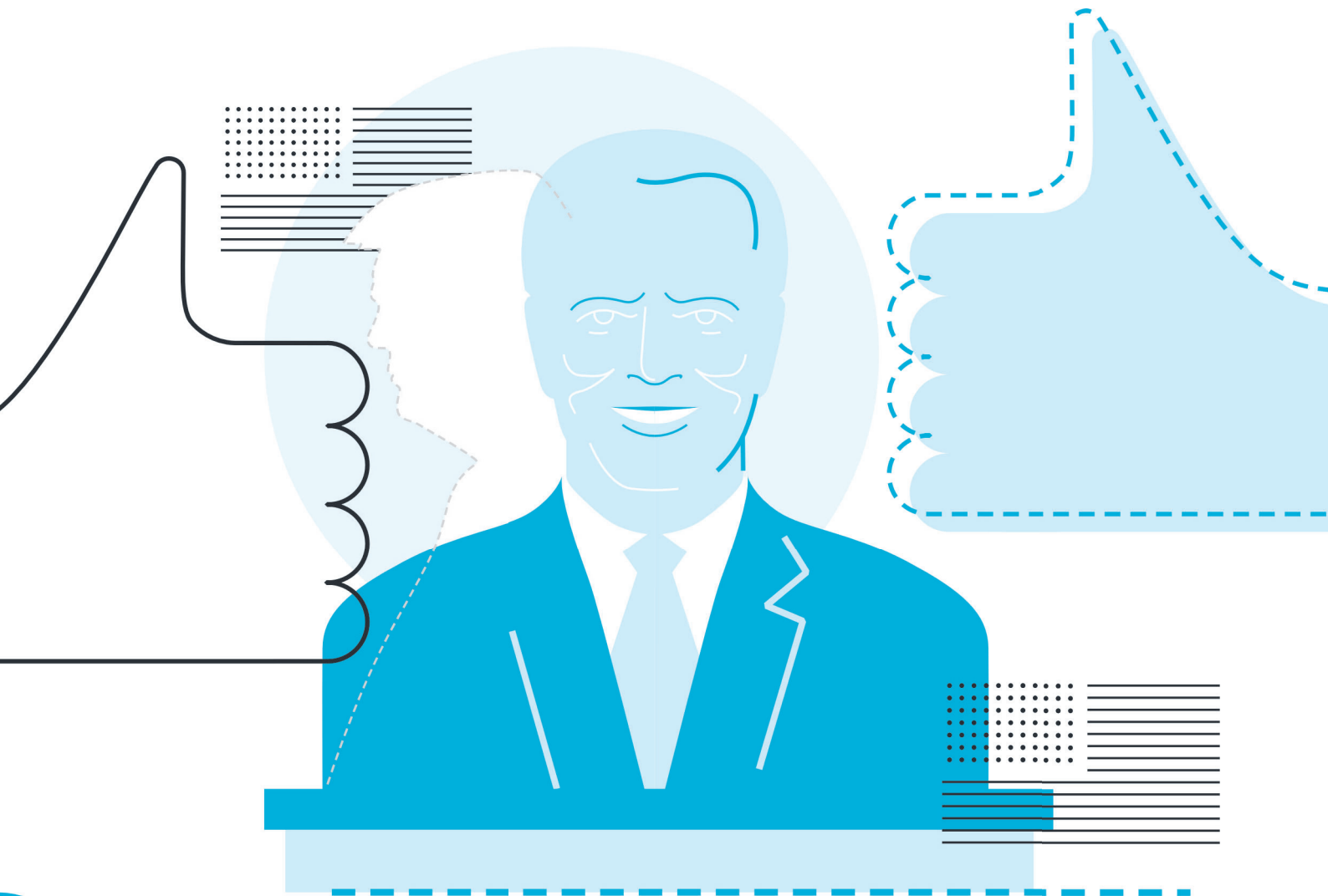


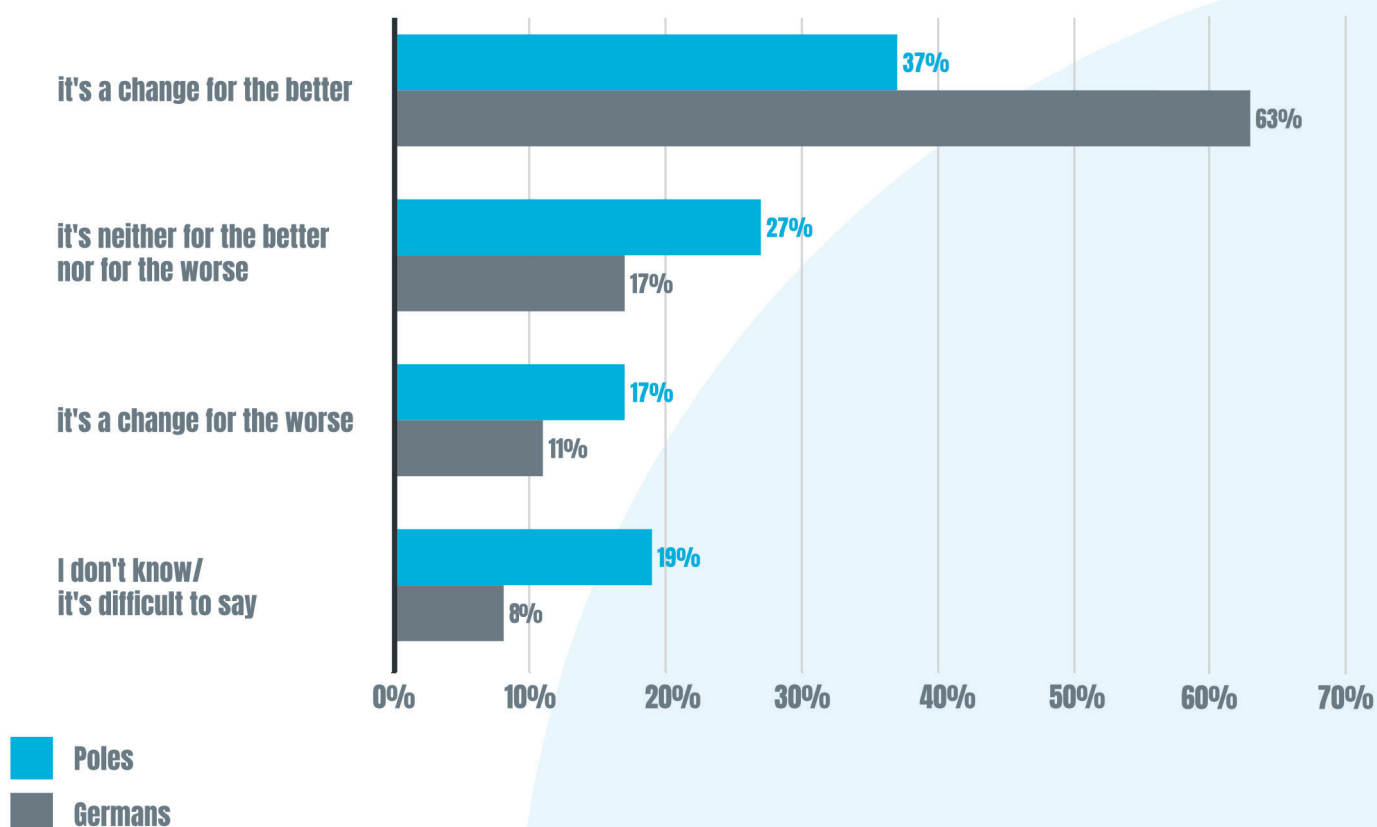
Figure 18.  
Will strengthening the  
German army enhance  
the security of Poland?  
Responses of Germans  
in 2021 by age of the  
respondents

Source: Polish-German  
Barometer 2021.



## How should we assess the taking of power in the United States by the administration of Joe Biden from the point of view of the respondent's country?

Responses of Poles and Germans in 2021





### Assessments of the change in the White House

In January 2021, the Democratic administration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris took power in the United States. Since transatlantic relations are very important for both the Polish and German foreign and security policies, we asked about the attitudes of the societies in both countries toward this change. The answers on the Polish and German sides differ significantly, which is primarily related to their differing opinions about the outgoing president, Donald Trump. Almost two-thirds of the Germans surveyed believe that the change in the White House is a change for the better for their country, while only 37% of Polish respondents agree with such a statement. At the same time, the difference between the percentage of people in Poland (17%) and Germany (11%) who think this is a change for the worse for their country is much smaller, which is probably due to the fact that some Polish respondents have a fixed opinion about transatlantic relations, regardless of which administration is in power in the United States. This may also indicate that the previous relatively positive Polish assessments of Donald Trump's presidency may have resulted, in part, from the high priority given in Poland to relations with the United States.

Almost two-thirds of Germans and only 37% of Poles see the change in the White House as a change for the better from their country's perspective

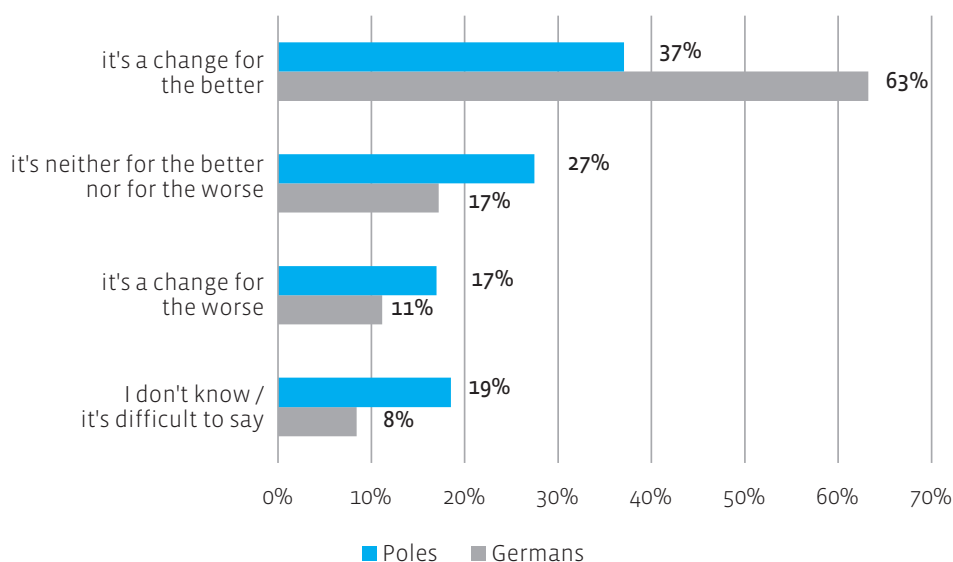


Figure 19.  
How should we assess the taking of power in the United States by the administration of Joe Biden from the point of view of the respondent's country? Responses of Poles and Germans in 2021

Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.

In Poland, the assessment of the change of administration in the United States is strongly correlated with political divisions. As many as 76% of Civ-



ic Coalition supporters and only 10% of Law and Justice voters feel hopeful about the new US administration, while supporters of the ruling United Right coalition are much more likely (40%) than supporters of the Civic Coalition (4%) to consider this change as bad. The voters of The Left and the Poland 2050 Movement also mostly regard this change as good.

Among the voters of the main German political forces, the change in the White House enjoys enthusiastic support. Only the supporters of Alternative for Germany stand out here – 26% of these respondents think it is a change for the worse. However, even in this group, the change in Washington is viewed positively by almost half of those surveyed. Interestingly, in Germany, the enthusiasm for the change of the US administration grows with the age of the respondents. The youngest respondents are significantly less likely to consider the change as good than the older ones.

### Perception of the role of the superpowers in the global arena

The new opening in American politics raises once again the question of how the public in Germany and Poland perceive the role of the “superpowers” in shaping the global order. In this year’s Barometer, we repeated the question of whether the European Union, the United States, China and Russia play more of a positive or negative role in the world order.

Both Germans and Poles think highly of the role the European Union plays in the world. As many as two-thirds of the people surveyed agree that the European Union contributes to strengthening order and security in the world, while only 18% of Germans and 14% of Poles believe that it exacerbates disputes and conflicts in the world.

Positive assessment of the European Union’s actions for the global order is clearly dominant among the supporters of all the major political parties in Poland except Confederation

Positive opinions about the European Union clearly prevail among voters of all the major political parties in Poland, with the exception of Confederation. The greatest Euro-enthusiasts are supporters of the Civic Coalition (88%) as well as The Left (87%) and the Poland 2050 Movement (83%). Among voters of the ruling Law and Justice party, the global role of the European Union is seen positively by 55% of respondents and negatively by 22%. Only among Confederation voters do negative opinions prevail (41%) over positive ones (29%).

Just as in Poland, supporters of the main political forces in Germany are very positive about the role of the European Union in the global order. Three-quarters of CDU-CSU, SPD, Green and die Linke supporters and two-thirds of FDP supporters hold this view. Only supporters of Alternative for Germany are less enthusiastic than the other electoral groups about the role of the EU. Half of them assess its role positively, but more than one-third (significantly more than in other voter groups) perceive it negatively.

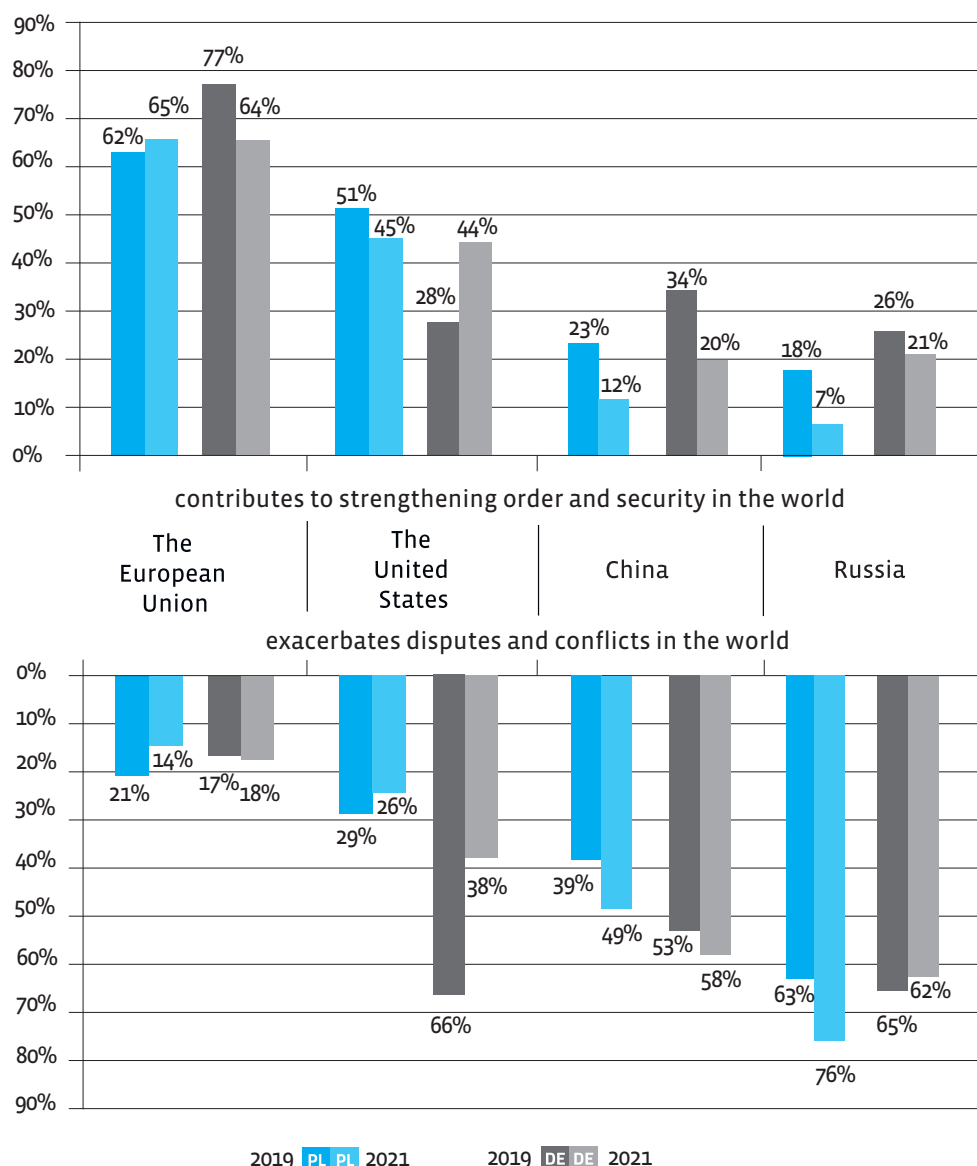


Figure 20.  
How should we assess the impact of the superpowers on the international order? Responses of Poles and Germans in 2019 and 2021

Source: Polish-German Barometer 2021.

The public in Poland and Germany have a similar view of the global role of the United States. Positive views are expressed by 45% of respondents in Poland and 44% of respondents in Germany. The significance of the change in the White House is worth noting here – as recently as 2019, only 28% of German respondents gave a positive answer to this question, and as many as two-thirds (66%) believed that the United States contributed to exacerbating global disputes and conflicts. Currently, more than a third of German respondents (38%) think so. About a quarter of Polish respondents agree with this negative view of America’s global role. In Poland, compared to the survey conducted two years ago, there has been a decline in both positive and negative opinions, the response “it’s difficult to say” having increased, which can

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be explained by the fact that the survey was conducted shortly after the new administration took power.

Positive assessments of the role of the United States in the global order predominate in all voter groups except Confederation – here, only 26% agree with such an assessment and as many as 49% believe that the United States contributes to exacerbating disputes and conflicts. The Left's voter base is also divided: 41% have a positive and 32% a negative view of the country's global role. Supporters of the Civic Coalition (68% of positive responses), Law and Justice (58%) and the Poland 2050 Movement (55%) think best of the role played by the United States.

Among supporters of the main political parties in Germany, there is no clear view on the role of the United States in shaping the world order, but for the most part, positive opinions outweigh negative ones. The exceptions are supporters of Alternative for Germany and die Linke, among whom more voters express a critical opinion of the role of the United States than a positive one.

As many as 62% of Germans and 76% of Poles are convinced that Russia plays a negative role in the international order.

Contrary to popular belief, the public in Germany and Poland is not divided in its assessment of Russia's global role. As many as 62% of Germans and 76% of Poles are convinced that Russia plays a negative role in the international order. Only 7% of Poles and 21% of Germans hold positive opinions of the Russian policy. Poles are, thus, clearly more critical of Russia than Germans, but in both cases, the criticism clearly outweighs the relatively few positive views. At the same time, it is worth noting that compared to 2019, Polish opinions about Russia have become even more critical, while they have slightly improved in Germany.

Voters of all major political forces in Poland are critical of Russia's role in world politics

Russia's role in the international order is assessed expressly negatively by supporters of all major political forces in Poland. Such an opinion of Russia is given by 95% of the supporters of the Poland 2050 Movement, 93% of the voters of the Civic Coalition, 85% of the supporters of Law and Justice, 77% of the supporters of The Left, 76% of Confederation and 67% of the Polish Coalition. The last grouping also has the relatively largest percentage of positive evaluations of Russia (27%). In the other groups, clearly less than every tenth party supporter gave a positive assessment of Russia's global role.

In Germany, too, a clear majority of committed supporters of the main political parties are critical of Russia's global role, with the Green and the FDP voters being the most critical and those of Alternative for Germany being slightly less so. Inhabitants of the eastern Länder are slightly less critical of Russia, but even here, negative opinions about Russia's influence on the international order clearly prevail.

As in the case of Russia, Polish and German opinions on China's influence on the world order are mostly negative. Fifty-eight percent of Germans and

49% of Poles are convinced that China contributes to global conflicts. Positive opinions, on the other hand, are significantly less common in Poland than in Germany, while nearly two-fifths (39%) of Polish respondents avoided answering this question. In Germany, the percentage of those undecided or unsure is significantly lower but still relatively high (22%). Only every fifth German is positive about the global role of the Chinese superpower. Both in Poland and in Germany, we noted an increase in opinions critical of China's policies and a simultaneous decrease in positive opinions.

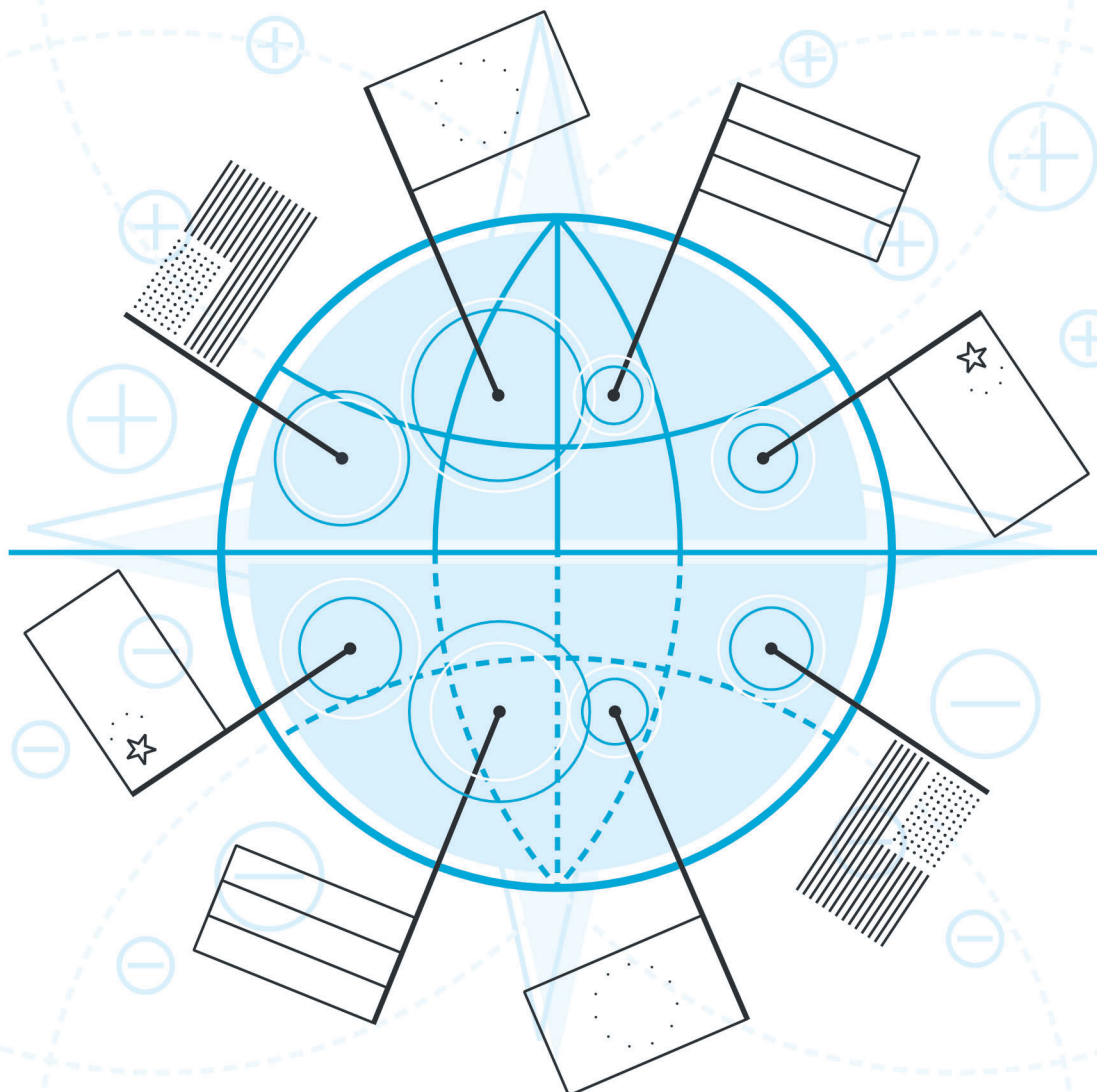
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As in the case of Russia, negative assessments of China prevail among supporters of all the main political forces in Poland, although the percentage of negative responses is lower than in the case of Russia and fluctuates between 50% and 60%. As with the question about Russia, the Polish Coalition's electorate is less critical of China's global role, while the Civic Coalition's voters give the lowest number of positive responses. There is a significant percentage of "it's difficult to say" answers amongst the supporters of each of the political groups.

The global role of China is viewed negatively by a vast majority of supporters of the main political parties in Germany, including supporters of Alternative for Germany and die Linke. SPD supporters are relatively less critical, but even among them, the number of China critics is twice as high as the number of those who positively assess Beijing's contribution to the global order. Moreover, there are no significant differences in these opinions between the inhabitants of the eastern and western Länder.

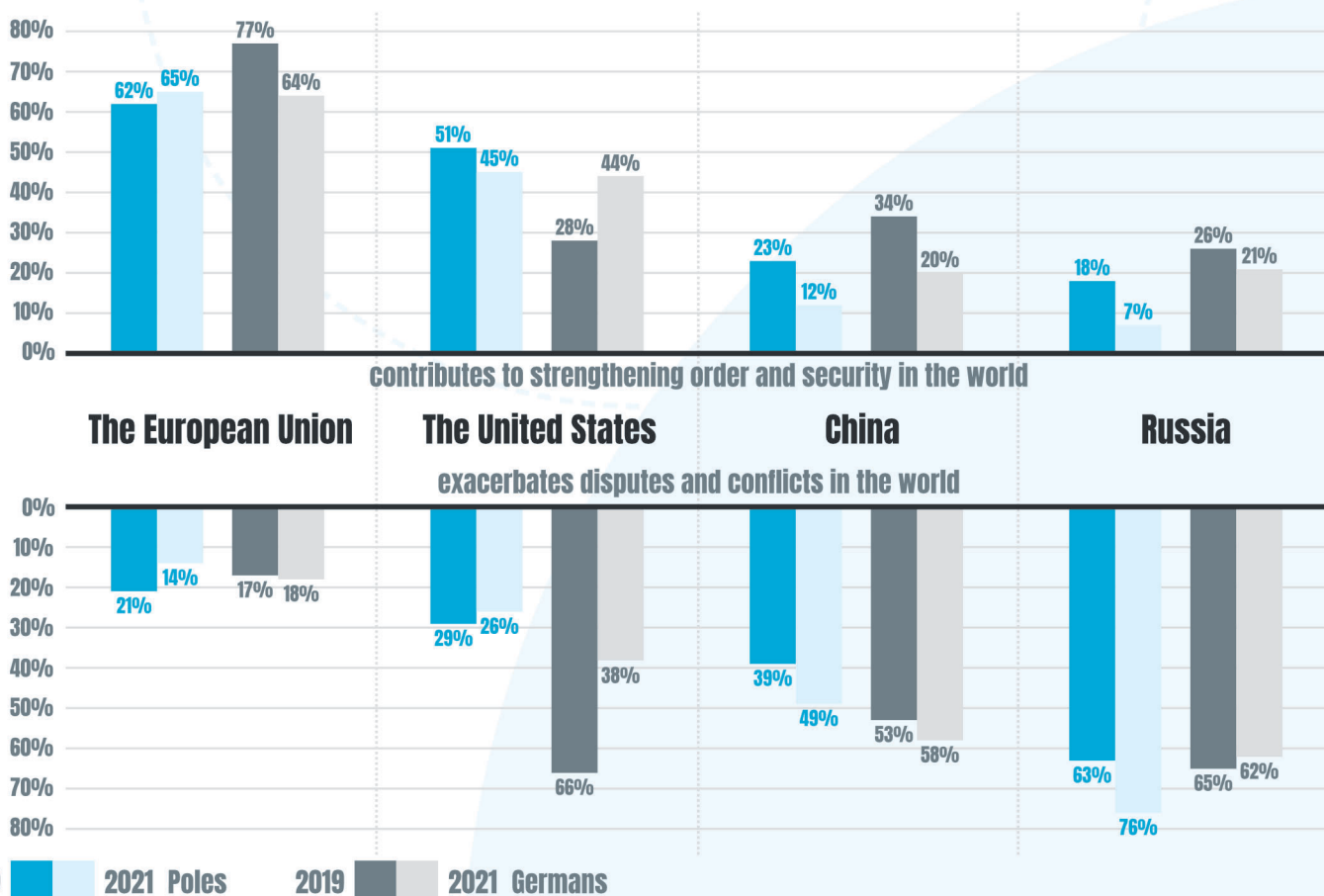
Interestingly, in Poland, the views of the youngest group of respondents (aged 18-24) on the role of the superpowers in shaping the global order do not differ significantly from the rest of the society. If there are differences in assessments of the younger generation compared to the rest of the respondents, they consist mainly in more frequent refusal to answer ("I don't know/it's difficult to say").

When analyzing differences in their assessment of the role of the global powers among the different age groups of German respondents, it is clear that younger respondents (in the age groups from 18 to 24 and from 25 to 44) have fewer positive opinions about the roles of the European Union and the United States and fewer critical opinions about the roles of China and Russia than people belonging to the older generation (from 45 to 64 and from 65 to 75).



## How should we assess the impact of the superpowers on the international order?

Responses of Poles and Germans in 2019 and 2021





The year of the pandemic has been – and still is – unique in every way. This makes it all the more difficult to analyse the results of opinion polls and to identify the changes in attitudes and opinions that will remain with us for longer, since some of the results are probably influenced by the unusual situation of a global pandemic. However, it is worth highlighting a few observations that can be drawn from examining and compiling the data described above.

In the year marking the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation, the question of what makes people assess Polish-German relations as good or bad takes on greater meaning. Respondents clearly point to common economic interests as the reason for a positive assessment of the mutual relations. However, it is worth emphasizing here that the economy and politics are interconnected. Good economic relations are dependent on the political climate. Reducing the relations between our countries to investments and the flow of goods, if there is no will for deeper political cooperation, as sometimes happens in Poland, is not enough to see the mutual relations as good. On the other hand, underestimating the potential of economic relations with one's neighbour and focusing political attention on other markets, which in the light of the economic data are definitely less important, as sometimes happens in the German political world with regard to Russia, does not foster multidimensional good German-Polish relations, either.

The survey shows that there are many areas where cooperation is needed. Respondents from both countries have not identified a single dominant one, as their answers have been divided among many spheres. This should not be surprising. The two neighbouring countries, so close in terms of culture and common interests, should, indeed, cooperate closely in all the areas we suggested in the survey. The period of the pandemic highlights the importance of such cooperation, showing the interdependence of different areas of cooperation, especially within the European Union. It can be said that on the anniversary of the treaty, when the goals that accompanied its signing – Poland's integration into NATO and the European Community – have been duly achieved, new tasks have emerged. These include, for example, ensuring the functioning of the European economy, European security, including climate security, energy security and health security, and further efforts to overcome European inequalities on various levels. Today, Poland and Germany can carry out these tasks together as equal partners as members of the same international organisations. This requires acceptance on both sides – a kind of embracing the situation where Germany is no longer an “advocate”, “teacher”

or “support”, and Poland is no longer a “supplicant” or “pupil”. Some of these roles have already been abandoned, but they are still too often revisited in communication, which can sometimes impede constructive cooperation. On the Polish side, this, in turn, requires that the rhetoric of the political “getting up from our knees” be accompanied by a specific agenda for cooperation and not by populist slogans referring to the countries’ difficult shared history.

At the same time, Poles and Germans are not alone with these tasks; they function in a global world. From this perspective, it is worth noting that despite the hopes that the Polish and German societies may have for the new American administration, the global role of the United States is viewed positively by less than half of both societies. In both countries, positive opinions about the role of the European Union on the international arena are at least twenty percentage points higher than good opinions about the role of the United States. This is significant, especially in view of the sometimes-apparent belief of Germans that Poles are “blindly” pro-American or in view of German doubts as to whether Poles appreciate the importance of the European Union. At the same time, a certain worrying tendency is clearly noticeable in this area, namely that the younger generations of Germans are less pro-European and less pro-Atlantic, as well as less critical of authoritarian powers such as Russia and China, than the older ones, who had been largely influenced by the experience of the collapse of the communist system in Europe and the reunification of Germany.

Finally, for yet another year in a row, the Polish-German Barometer clearly shows how polarised the views on Germany and Polish-German relations are in Poland and how they depend on the political preferences of the respondents. Most of the issues covered by the survey are assessed quite differently by supporters of the ruling party and those of the opposition. On the German side, this variable is much less significant than in Poland.

These results in a year of historical anniversaries should give us food for thought. They show that we have already achieved a lot together, but they also show how much is still to be done. The further process of getting to know each other, of shaping good neighbourship and friendly cooperation, requires, on the part of the Germans, greater sensitivity to the Polish perspective, as well as greater interest in the views on the other side of the Oder and Neisse rivers. At the same time, there must also be a will for multifaceted cooperation on the Polish side. Without the will for dialogue and constructive cooperation to build the future, we can expect another “ice age” in German-Polish relations at the highest level, which will also have a negative effect on the mutual perception of Germans and Poles.





The survey was conducted between 26 February and 8 March 2021 by Kantar Public on online panels in Poland and Germany. Nationwide samples of 1,000 respondents each are representative of the general population aged 18 to 75 by gender, age, education and place of residence.

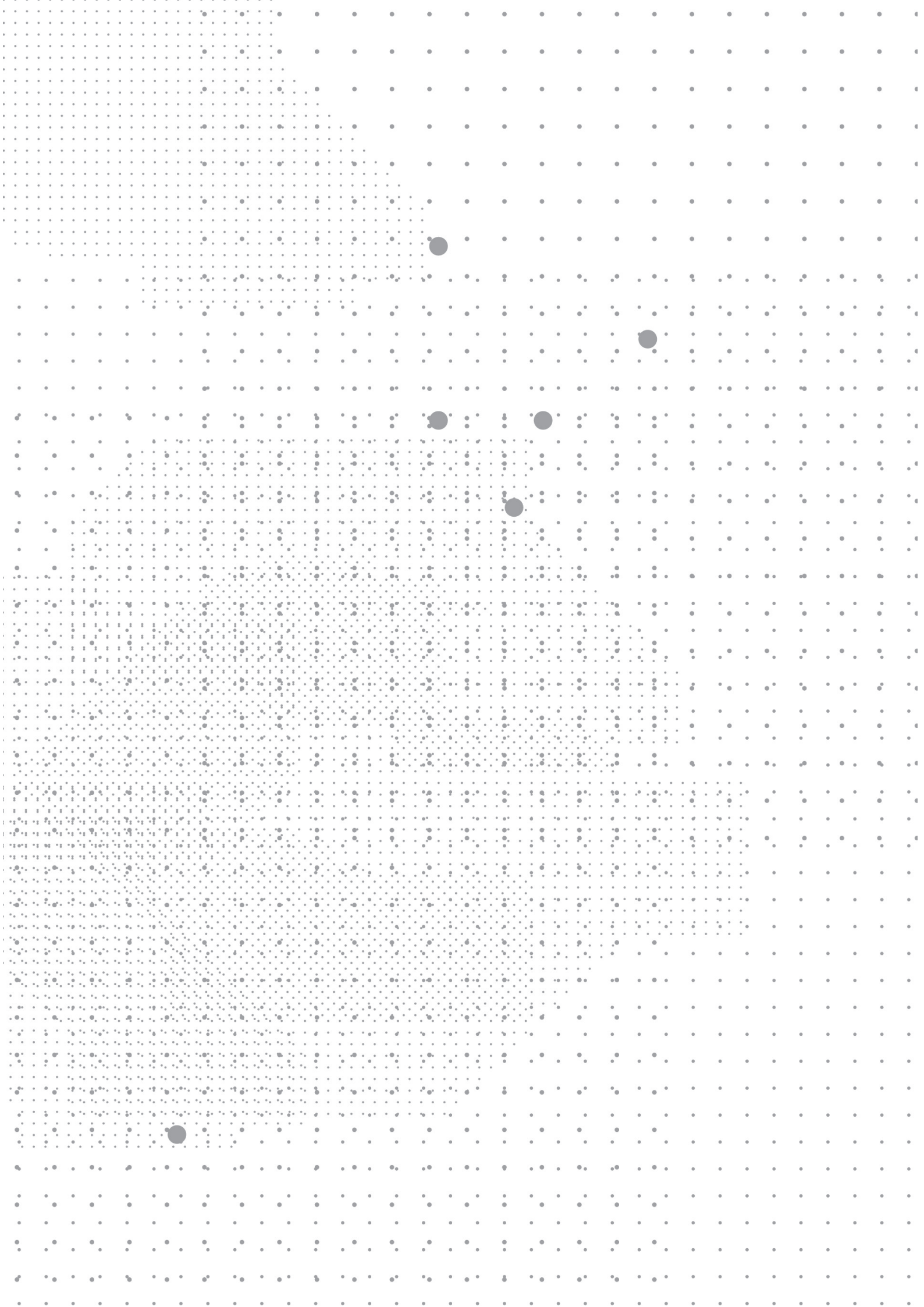
In the sample, the age of respondents was limited to the range of 18 to 75 years. This is because with online surveys, it is difficult to reach the elderly audience; in addition, older people who use the Internet are not a good representation of their general age category. The youngest respondents between the ages of 16 and 18 were also dropped from the survey. These individuals were usually unable to answer questions in previous surveys. For comparison, in a CAPI survey in 2020, there were 62 people (6.5%) in a sample of 1,000 people in Germany, and 35 people in Poland (less than 3%) over the age of seventy-five, and about 4% and 3% of 16 to 18-year-olds, respectively.

When analysing the results, it should be remembered that in the CAWI method, respondents choose the response “it’s difficult to say” relatively more often than in phone or face-to-face surveys, as these answers are visible on the computer screen, while in interviews conducted by an interviewer they are not read, but only marked at the respondent’s request.

At the same time, an online survey has its advantages. Respondents have more time to reflect and can better analyse the question because they can see the questions and possible answers on the computer screen. This is particularly important when the survey concerns complex issues where most people do not have a clear opinion. The CAWI method also provides respondents with a feeling of greater anonymity in comparison to the face-to-face method and thus reduces the effect of respondents answering according to the interviewer’s presumed expectations.

The structure of panelists is close to the structure of all Internet users. The Internet user base in Poland is not evenly matched to the population structure of all Poles – there are certain social groups whose representation in the population is very low. However, through targeted recruitment, Kantar tries to reflect the structure for all demographic groups in its research. Panelists are regularly profiled, allowing Kantar to invite only those respondents who meet the survey criteria. Timing and inconsistency of responses are controlled accordingly.







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The "Polish-German Barometer" is a project that regularly surveys and presents the opinions of Poles and Germans about German-Polish relations and their current challenges. The surveys have been conducted since 2000 by the Institute of Public Affairs in Warsaw in cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Poland. In the years 2013 and 2016, the survey was realised in cooperation with the Bertelsmann Foundation. In 2018, the Körber Foundation was a partner of the study, and in 2019, the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, which had already supported the publication of the project in 2006, 2008 and 2018. From 2020, the German Poland Institute will also be a partner of the study.

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