Germans and Poles: Common history divides the European neighbours

Results of the German-Polish Barometer 2018

Hamburg/Warsaw, 29 May 2018. The European neighbours Germany and Poland seem to hardly know each other. 66% of Germans and 70% of Poles have never visited the other country after 1989. This is one result of the “German-Polish Barometer 2018”, a representative survey commissioned by the Institute of Public Affairs, the Körber Foundation and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Overall, more than half of the Poles (56%) are friendly towards Germans, while 29% of Germans reciprocate this feeling. The figure on both sides of the Oder River depends on whether respondents have ever visited the other country. Of the Germans who have been to Poland regularly since 1989, 70% say they like the country. The equivalent figure for regular Polish visitors to Germany is 68%. These approaches to rapprochement are being overshadowed by a newly-emerging debate. “In view of the chequered and at many points encumbered shared past, what Germany and Poland have achieved together in and for Europe has been a success story,” says Gabriele Woidelko, Head of Department History and Politics at the Körber Foundation. “However, recently controversies have arisen again between the neighbouring countries in tackling history-related issues”, Woidelko continues.

Disagreement over Polish sacrifices and demands for war reparations from Germany

Germans and Poles disagree on whether the sacrifices that the Polish people have made throughout history have been sufficiently recognised by the international public. 50% of Poles feel there has been insufficient recognition, 17% of Germans share this opinion. For some months the question has repeatedly arisen in the Polish debate over German-Polish history of potential demands for war reparations from Germany to offset Poland’s losses in World War Two. Polish society is divided on this, with 46% of survey respondents supporting reparations, because Polish losses from World War Two have still not been properly financially
compensated, and 40% saying the issue is closed, and the two
countries should focus on working together in the EU. Among
surveyed Germans the vast majority (76%) feel that there should be
no payments and the countries should devote themselves to
cooperation within the EU.

**Only every second German identifies with Europe**
The value of Europe plays a very different role for the citizens of
the two countries. Asked what they identify with most closely, 83%
of Germans and 86% of Poles say their country. For 75% of Germans
and 83% of Poles, the local community where they live also plays a
major role. Identification with Europe is very different: while 54%
of German respondents feel this framework is important, Poles are
more committed Europeans, with 73% identifying. “Joining the
European Union was a declared goal of Poland’s democratic
governments after 1989, based on broad social demand for
membership of this community,” explains Agnieszka Łada of the
Institute of Public Affairs.

**Bilateral relationships should focus on the present and the
future**
Respondents in both countries agree that current German-Polish
relationships should focus primarily on the present and the future,
a view supported by 70% of Germans and 60% of Poles. Concern
with the past plays a minor role in Germany at 13%, while 32% of
the population in Poland feel that history-related issues are the
main problem in bilateral relations. This figure has actually risen
compared with the 2011* survey, when only 20% of Poles wanted to
focus on the history. The assessment of today’s relations generally
also differs sharply: 64% of Poles describe the relationship as good,
compared with only 31% of Germans. Regular visits seem to have a
positive influence on this evaluation, with 51% of regular German
visitors to Poland feeling that bilateral relations are good,
compared with only 28% of those who have never yet visited
Poland.

Further information and survey results are available to
download at:
https://www.koerber-stiftung.de/german-polish-barometer

- Results brochure with selected graphics
• all statistics as a presentation

Media services (please request these through the Press Office)
• Interview with Gabriele Woidelko. Head of Department History and Politics at the Körber-Stiftung

* About the German-Polish Barometer:
The research in Poland and in Germany has been conducted for the Institute of Public Affairs, the Körber Foundation and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. GfK Polonia carried out the surveys in Poland between the 5th and 12th of April, 2018, on a representative group of 1000 Poles over 15 years of age. GfK SE carried out the surveys in Germany between the 6th and 13th of April, 2018, on a representative group of 1000 Germans over 14 years of age.
Survey method: face-to-face interviews. The Institute of Public Affairs has been conducting this research since the year 2000 in cooperation with the Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Poland. In 2018, the Körber Foundation is the partner of the research project. The Project was implemented with the financial support of the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation.