



Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself? Poland Case Study

- New research from the Institute of Public Affairs (Poland), as part of a Demos (UK) cross-European project, finds that Poland remains staunchly pro-EU in feeling, despite the ascension of a right-wing authoritarian Government.
- Polish attitudes towards globalisation are also overwhelmingly positive, with almost 4 in 5 citizens believing it has had a positive effect on the country, and EU institutions are more trusted than the national Government
- Despite a common hypothesis linking the rise of populism to economic 'left-behinds', the research finds supporters of the Government (the PiS) are much less concerned about economic security than Islamic terrorism, migration and national security

New research conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs (Poland) for a cross-European project on fear and populism in Europe led by Demos (UK), strongly refutes the argument that the rise of populist politics in Poland is not the result of a popular uprising of the economic 'left behinds'.

The study shows that Polish citizens do not see themselves as losers of globalisation, and are considerably more likely to recognise its benefits than citizens in Germany, France, Spain, Sweden, Poland and the UK. Four in five of respondents believe globalisation has had a positive impact on Poland as whole, and the study demonstrates that this number drops only one percentage point (to 79%) among PiS supporters.

This positive attitude is echoed by consistent support for the European Union. Despite the Government's scepticism towards European integration, only 8% of Poles would support leaving the EU, with that figure increasing to just 13% among PiS supporters.

This research disputes the theory that right-wing populism in Poland is driven by feelings of being economically left behind in the post-communist era, revealing that economic concerns are not dominant either nationally (27%) nor amongst supporters of the populist Government (17%). This is consistent with Poland's economic performance, which has been one of the best in Europe since the collapse of the Iron Curtain.

Support for the Government and its authoritarian approach seem to be rather driven by social and cultural, and geopolitical, concerns - particularly fear of Islamic terrorism (53%), immigration (27%) and Russian aggression (40%) the most concerning for PiS supporters.

Overall, 46% of PiS supporters believe that greater cultural and ethnic diversity has changed Polish society for the worse and 58% believe that specifically Muslim migration poses a threat to traditional Polish and Christian values.

By contrast, supporters of the Opposition (the PO) are themselves fearful of the growth of authoritarianism, including concerns about political parties undermining the rule of law (51%), the security forces being given too many powers (27%) and a shift towards social conservatism (35%). The research highlights the significant role that civil society groups are playing in ensuring a robust resistance to the Government's authoritarianism and the defence of democratic values.

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Notes to Editors

Demos is Britain's leading cross-party think tank: an independent, educational charity, which produces original and innovative research. Visit: demos.co.uk

The Institute for Public Affairs is a leading Polish think tank: an independent centre for research and analysis, providing research, expert opinions and recommendations on the fundamental issues of public life. Visit: isp.org.pl

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The full research, methodology and an executive summary are available to download [here](#).

This study was part of a major pan-European research project from the UK-based think tank, Demos, which sought to capture how an emerging culture and politics of fear is gripping the European Union as a whole, and its unique manifestations within member states. The project addressed five levels of impacts: party politics, public policy, social cohesion and integration, media rhetoric, citizens and identity.

Demos undertook extensive pan-European research, as well as conducting specific analysis on the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union, and commissioned exclusive new academic research within five other member states to provide a snapshot of the 'flash-points of fear' on the ground in Germany, France, Spain, Poland and Sweden. The project was supported by two high-level workshops in Brussels, bringing together thought leaders from across the European Union, to map local level impacts and devise solutions at EU, national and grassroots levels.