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THE MEMBERSHIP OF POLAND IN THE EU – BENEFITS AND OBLIGATIONS¹

ABSTRACT

The present paper offers an analysis of the attitudes of Polish citizens towards the process of European integration. Two major points can be highlighted, based on the data obtained from various opinion surveys, e.g. CBOS, PBS, ISP, OPTEM, and Eurobarometer. The first one concerns the initial high level of scepticism in Poland about the decision to join the EU. The results of the public opinion polls indicated that Poles had agreed to be the Member State more “under pressure exerted by the course of history and that of the current European affairs” rather than “by an informed choice”. It may well be that due to this scepticism, Poland, as one of the few countries to join the EU, did not experience the so-called post-accession shock. On the contrary, the results of surveys suggested that there was a rapidly growing belief among Poles in positive repercussions of the accession, at least until the time when the effects of the economic crisis began to transpire. The second problem deals with how Poles see themselves as the members of the European Community. The data show that Polish citizens consider the membership in the EU as a fact of life, an existing condition that does not stimulate their action if the affairs are not directly associated with their own interests. That is probably the reason why Poles do not feel co-responsible for the European project. They still see the Union as an organisation that is supposed to bring profit but, at the same time, they do not feel obliged to actively take on responsibilities that follow.

Key words

EU, membership in EU, European Parliament

¹ Translated by Izabela Czerniak (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu).