

# #shareEU

**SHAPING OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP  
IN THE POST-TOTALITARIAN SOCIETIES.  
REFLECTIONS AFTER 15 YEARS OF EU ENLARGEMENT**



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## Report ShareEU. Poland

### 1) A brief history of authoritarianism/totalitarianism.

In Poland, as in other countries of the Eastern bloc, we saw a transition from a totalitarian system (in 1948-56) to an authoritarian one (from the thaw in 1956 to the fall of communism in 1989). According to the definition coined by the Spanish political scientist Juan Linz, the society in Poland can be described as post-totalitarian, i.e. the one which, after the politics of Gomułka's thaw, underwent a process of de-Stalinization and departed from totalitarian aspirations.

In Poland, in the years 1948-1956, i.e. during the Bierut rule (the so-called Stalinist period), the most important elements defining the totalitarian system were met: 1) 1948, after the unification of the Polish Workers' Party and the Polish Socialist Party, a single-party was established - the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), which eliminated competing political parties as well as independent organizations and associations from public life; 2) there was one communist ideology (Marxism-Leninism), 3) the top-down control of the economy (also agriculture through the quota system) was introduced, 4) there was terror against the so-called "enemies of the system", and 5) the communist authorities exercised mass control over the means of public communication<sup>1</sup>.

The communist authorities not only introduced preventive censorship and political control of the media, but also destroyed the structures of civil society (public organizations were deprived of independence). They tried to subjugate the Church, and associations operating within the Catholic Church were infiltrated by the security services. As Roman Bäker rightly pointed out, in the case of Poland, the term "incomplete totalitarianism" or "imperfect" seems most relevant. Although Poland until 1956 was part of the model type of a totalitarian single-party system, the charisma of its leader had external sources and was not immanent.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the classic definition of totalitarianism, developed by Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, a totalitarian society can be considered to be characterized by the following features: 1) one official state ideology, at least passively accepted in society and covering all aspects of human existence; 2) one mass, hierarchical political party, often identical with the bureaucratic organization of governments; 3) System of full police control over the society; 4) Monopoly of the ruling party and its cadres over all media; 5) Exclusive control of the ruling party over coercive measures; 6) Central management of the economy. See C.J.Friedrich, Z. K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Cambridge Massachusetts 1956, p. 9-10

Until March 1953, Tygodnik Powszechny, which was partially independent from the authorities, was in charge of it, although, like other publishing houses, it was subject to preventive censorship and strong institutional pressure. The communist system in Poland was perceived as being imposed from the outside, without deeper cultural, economic and social roots. In the case of Polish society, the strength of national cultural identity was so deep that all attempts to ideologize it ended in an almost complete failure.<sup>2</sup>

Two examples show that there is considerable social resistance to the new system: 1) the failure of the collectivization process and 2) the existence of the Church.

The transition from a totalitarian to an authoritarian system took place as a result of the so-called thaw in 1956. After 1956, certain possibilities arose to create civil initiatives independent of the state and parties. The situation of the Church improved, Primate Stefan Wyszyński was released, religious education returned to schools for a short time (it functioned until 1961). It was allowed to organize five clubs of the Catholic intelligentsia (in Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań, Toruń and Wrocław). Various societies of city lovers, youth organizations, student organizations and scouts renewed their activities, and additionally some of them enjoyed a certain autonomy. After the confrontation of the authorities with the church, 'relations of conflict of cooperation' were formed.

The Church supported the system of defense of human and civil rights, education and upbringing of young people, thus breaking the monopoly of the state, as well as the institutions of an independent society (eg the Social Council at the Primate of Poland). He also organized an independent circulation of information and communication: own newspapers, leaflets, books and radio broadcasts were published. In the years 1970-1980, illegal institutions of opposition to the system began to take shape in intellectuals and workers, aimed at defending human rights and its fundamental freedoms, such as the Workers' Defense Committee, established in September 1976 and transformed in the fall of 1977 into the Committee for Social Self-Defense KOR, the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civic Rights (ROPCiO), created on March 26, 1977, as well as the Confederation of Independent Poland with Leszek Moczulski and the Young Poland Movement - with Aleksander Hall. The Flying University and the Society for Scientific Courses were established in Warsaw on the initiative of the Korow community. Two spheres of social involvement, i.e. the Catholic Church and the activities of the opposition in the 1970s, enabled a certain revival of civil society in 1980 and the establishment of the Solidarity Trade Union.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 12

**2) The transformation.** The transformations of 1989. From post-communist society to active civil society

Mirosław Marody - recalling the typology of Zygmunt Bauman's conceptualisation of the transformations of 1989 - proposes to distinguish between the revolutionary political changes that led to the fall of the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal and Franco's regime in Spain, from the comprehensive systemic changes in the countries of the former Eastern bloc, including, and even in a special way, in Poland.<sup>3</sup> Such an analytical perspective seems to be particularly relevant in the context of the presented research report because, on the one hand, it allows for a structural comparative analysis of the essence and significance of constitutional transformations, and at the same time allows for grasping the dynamics of social processes in terms of values and attitudes. And so, consistently, following Marody and Bauman, we can assume that while the transition from authoritarianism to parliamentary democracy in Spain by Franco and Portugal by Salazar bore the hallmarks of a political revolution, the transformation of 1989 in Poland should be considered in terms of a systemic transformation.<sup>4</sup>

The transformation in Poland was a comprehensive institutional change in the political system, but also a profound social change. In the systemic layer, the constitutional order based on the principles and values of a democratic state of law and parliamentary democracy was strengthened. In the economic dimension, the foundations of the free market economy were laid on the ruins of an inefficient economy based on central planning and command-and-control regulatory mechanisms. Finally, in the social dimension, we had to deal with very deep identity changes. The Orwellian society controlled by the ideological state of real socialism had to find itself in the new political and economic reality. The Polish People's Republic homo sovieticus mentally confronted the reality of an open civil society with the key principle of normative pluralism. As a consequence, new identity divisions emerged in Polish society. After 1989, the main levels of identity divisions ran largely along the lines marked by the findings and consequences of the Round Table Agreement. The round table agreement concluded in April 1989 between representatives of the state authorities and the Polish United Workers' Party and representatives of the democratic opposition centered around the trade union and the Solidarność social movement paved the way for a democratic system transformation. This

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<sup>3</sup> Mirosława Marody, *Od społeczeństwa drugiego obiegu do społeczeństwa obywatelskiego*, *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1999, 4(155), s. 35–53. A także: Zygmunt Bauman, 1993. *A Post-modern Revolution*. W: *From a One-party State to Democracy: Transition in Eastern Europe*. J. Frentzel-Zagórska (red.), Amsterdam–Atlanta, GA, Rodopi B.Y., pp. 3–20.

<sup>4</sup> Mirosława Marody, *Od społeczeństwa drugiego obiegu do społeczeństwa obywatelskiego*, op.cit.

agreement was also a symbol of transition to post-communist Poland. In symbolic terms, the Round Table Agreement established the most fundamental social division into post-communist and solidarity Poland. This division dominated the public sphere in Poland until the accession to the European Union in 2004.

The period of systemic transformation in Poland after 1989 was also a time of profound changes in the sphere of civil society. The civil society of the "second cycle" in the times of real socialism, referring to the reflections of Mirosława Marody, transformed into an active civil society, which co-created institutions, norms and practices of pluralist social life in the conditions of a democratic state aspiring to membership in the European Union. Contestation has not ceased to be one of the main forms of civic activity, but has been expanded and enriched with the activity of the dynamically developing sector of non-governmental organizations and other forms of civic activation and mobilization

### **3) The current situation.** Europeanization of civil society in times of "democratic backsliding"<sup>5</sup>

Paradoxically, in the current political situation, civil society in Poland is once again becoming a "samizdat" civil society. Contesting ideologization and appropriation of the public sphere by the ruling camp comes to the fore of civic activity, as it was before 1989. The paradox of this situation lies in the fact that it is Europe and Europeanness, and in particular the European Union, to which the "return" became the *raison d'état* and the choice of civilization after 1989, now appearing to be a field of confrontation between the liberal civil society and the ideologically inherent view of the ruling group on social and political life. Thus, we are dealing with a reconstruction of the PRL dichotomous reality of the ideological and private fatherland using the terminology of Stanisław Ossowski.<sup>6</sup>

Under the conditions of "democratic backsliding"<sup>7</sup>, the defense of values and norms that are integral to the European Union space - being pushed out of the mainstream of public life by the authorities - becomes the DNA of the liberal, open and pluralist civil society in Poland. Empirically, the manifestation of such civic activity are spontaneous protests of citizens in defense of the constitutional order, the independence of judges, respect for civil rights and the

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Rupnik, 'Is Central Europe Backsliding? From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash', *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 18, Number 4 October 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Stanisław Ossowski, *O ojczyźnie i narodzie. Dzieła. Tom III*, PWN, Warszawa 1967

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Rupnik, 'Is Central Europe Backsliding? From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash', *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 18, Number 4 October 2007.

pluralism of the public sphere.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, an increasing activity of civil society can be observed in those areas where the state authorities do not want to, for ideological reasons, and / or are unable to fulfill their constitutionally defined obligations, while privileging those forms of civic activity that coincide with the ideologization of the public sphere by the authorities. In conclusion, today's civil society in Poland is becoming a space of confrontation, contestation and subsidiary involvement in relation to state power.

#### **4) Description of research design and survey sample**

In this research project, both quantitative methods (questionnaire questionnaire) and qualitative methods (in-depth interviews) were used, which resulted from the specificity of the research subject and the adopted research assumptions. Quantitative methods make allow for identification of phenomena and measurement of their distribution, while qualitative methods allow for explaining the processes occurring.

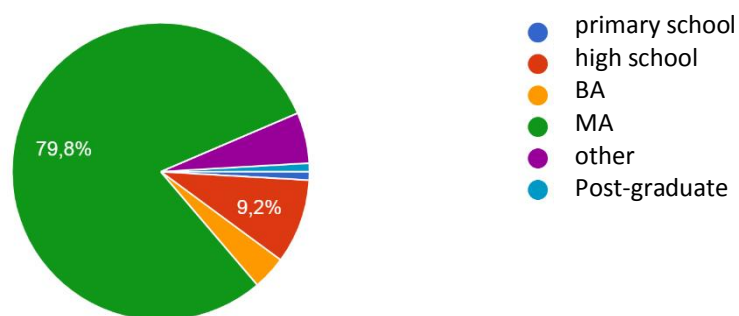
The questionnaire surveys were carried out in the period from April 3, 2020 to May 23, 2020. The research sample was (N: 109). The questionnaire survey was carried out with persons who can be considered opinion leaders in local communities. They are persons shaping both attitudes towards civil society and the discourse used to describe it. For this reason, there is a significant overrepresentation of persons with higher education degree in the research sample. In addition, the pandemic situation and related epidemic restrictions meant that the questionnaires could only be filled in remotely using online platforms, which also influenced the greater share of persons with degree in higher education in the research sample. These persons in principle are less exposed to digital exclusion.

Details of the respondents' educational background distribution is presented in the diagram below:

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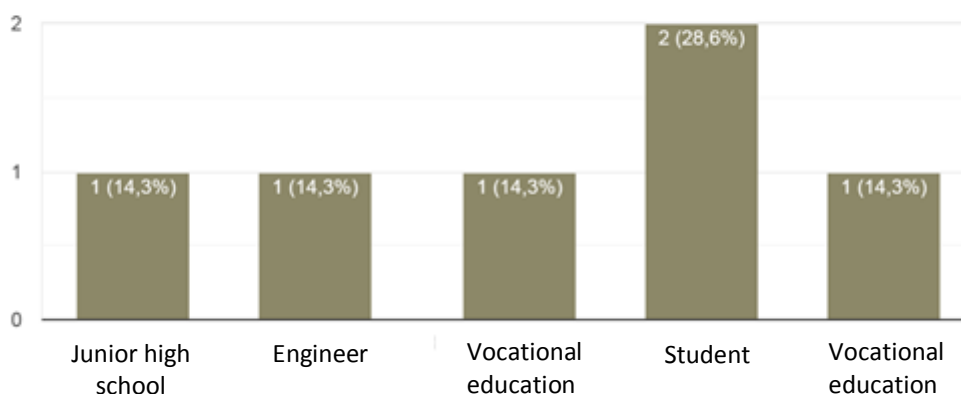
<sup>8</sup> Zofia Kinowska-Mazaraki, The Polish Paradox: From a Fight for Democracy to the Political Radicalization and Social Exclusion. *Soc. Sci.* **2021**, 10, 112. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10030112>, Accessed 10 lutego 2022

### Level of education



The diagram clearly shows that in terms of education variable, the vast majority of respondents - almost (80%) - declared degree in higher education, which is consistent as the survey focused on opinion leaders operating in the field of education sector. Consequently, 3.7% of the respondents indicated a bachelor's degree. Secondary education was declared by 9.2% of the respondents. Other levels of education were indicated by a minority of respondents and their detailed distribution is presented in the chart below:

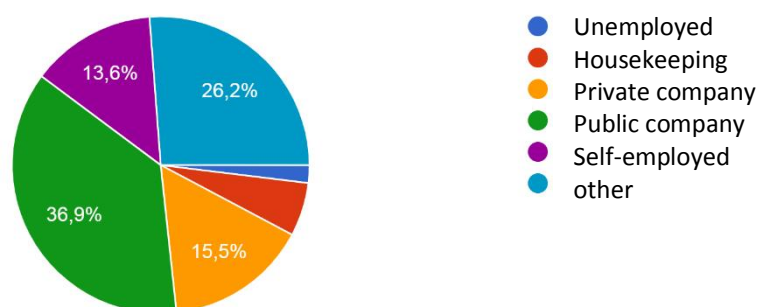
If other



When asked about their profession, as many as 22 respondents did not answer this question, which accounted for almost 24% of all respondents. On the other hand, out of 87 answers given, the most numerous group, namely 31%, were teachers/academics/educators/educational instructors. Another significant group which constituted 7% of all interviewed in this sample - were public administration office/local government/ administration staff employees. The sample also included individuals working as a lawyer, architect, medical doctor, banker, barista, entrepreneur, journalist, driver, opera singer, tourist guide or IT specialist.

In terms of the employment structure, the greatest number of respondents - namely 37% - declared the fact of employment in the public sphere (offices /schools). Respondents working in private companies constituted 15.5% of the survey sample, while self-employment was declared by 13.6% of all interviewed . Home office activity or taking care of the family was declared by less than 6%, while only 1.9% of the respondents declared that they were unemployed. An exceptionally large percentage of the respondents - namely 26.2 % - indicated the category of "other employment form", which mainly referred to such categories as: retiree, pensioner, student. A detailed breakdown is given in the diagram below:

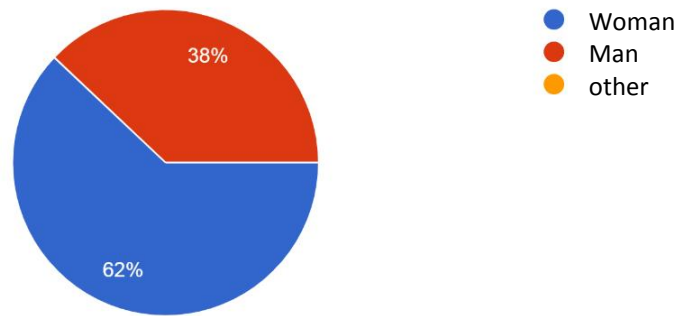
### ***Employment***



In the presented sample, the majority of respondents are women. Their share was 62% as related to 38% of men. The over-representative share of women is largely due to the fact that the field of education is definitely a more feminized area.

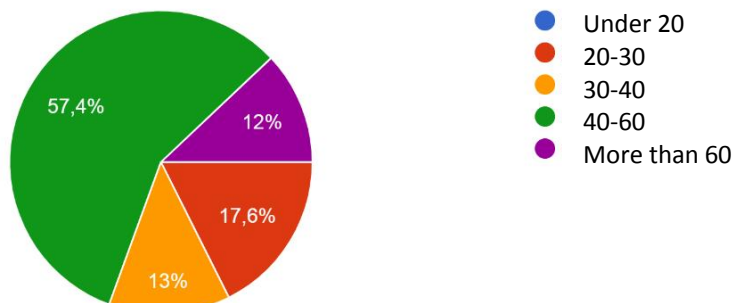


### ***Gender***



In terms of the age variable, the structure of the research sample was as follows. The most numerous group were people aged between 40 and 60. All together these persons constituted 57.4% of the respondents. This is due to the fact that this demographic cohort has the greatest impact on shaping public discourse. Most often opinion leaders recruit from the group of people with an established social and professional position, etc. The second largest group were people aged 20 to 30 years, accounting for a total of (17.6%). Respondents aged 30 to 40 constituted (13%), a comparable percentage (12%) were people over 60 years of age. There were no respondents under 20 years of age in the survey. The detailed distribution of the age structure of the research sample is presented in the diagram below:

### ***Age***



The last significant variable taken into account in the research was the size of the city/town where the respondents live. In most cases, as many as nearly 60% of the respondents lived in large cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants. The share of the remaining groups in relation to the place of residence was relatively even and ranged between 13% and 15%. Almost 15% of the respondents live in cities between 100,000 and 500,000 inhabitants. The respondents constituting 13% of interviewed number were respondents from cities between 25,000 and 5,000 inhabitants. (14%) are people living in small towns with less than 5,000 inhabitants. Characteristically, respondents from cities between 50,000 and 25,000 inhabitants accounted for less than 1% of the respondents.

The survey covered 5 thematic threads. The first part (questions 1-8) concerned civic engagement. The second (questions 9-12) re to the issue of systemic transformation. The third group (questions 13-21) concerned the perception of the European integration process. The fourth part of the questions (22-25) concerned the topic of open society versus closed society and the resulting civil practices in democracy. The last, fifth part of the questions (26-28) referred to the issue of the sense of agency in the surrounding reality, the transmission of knowledge about civic attitudes and patriotism.

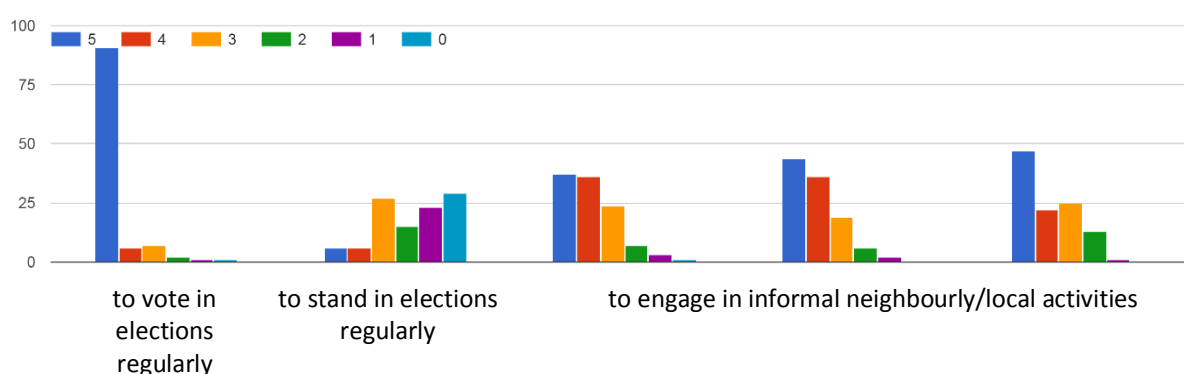
The structure of the questionnaires included both closed and open-ended questions, with the type of closed-ended question definitely dominating. In the selected closed-ended questions, the answer "other" was included, with the possibility of specifying an answer that was not included in the proposed cafeteria.

The in-depth interview questionnaire included four thematic threads relating to the following issues: local democracy, remembrance of the authoritarian / totalitarian past, European integration and the transmission of civic knowledge. The interviews were coded as follows: the first letter W or M means sex, the numbers indicate the age range, e.g. 30-40, the last letter refers to the type of locality: L - large cities, M - medium-size cities, S - small cities, V - village. There were a total of (XXX) interviews in the period (XXX)

## Part I. Civic engagement

This part of the survey questionnaire aimed at identifying civic engagement as well as finding an answer to what the respondents understand by civic engagement. In the first question, the respondents were asked to answer the following question: ‘who do you think is an active citizen? In this case, as in other questions of this type, respondents were asked to refer to a grading scale ranging from 5 to 0 where 5 meant ‘most important’ and 0 meant ‘completely irrelevant’. Respondents were asked to comment on several attitudes presented to them: ‘Do you consider an active citizen to be’: a / regular voter in elections, b / regular runner in elections, c / engaging in the activities of non-governmental organizations, d / engaging in informal local and neighborly initiatives, e / a trustworthy person, you can always rely on. The detailed distribution of responses is presented in the chart below:

**1. What does it mean to you to be an active citizen? Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer**



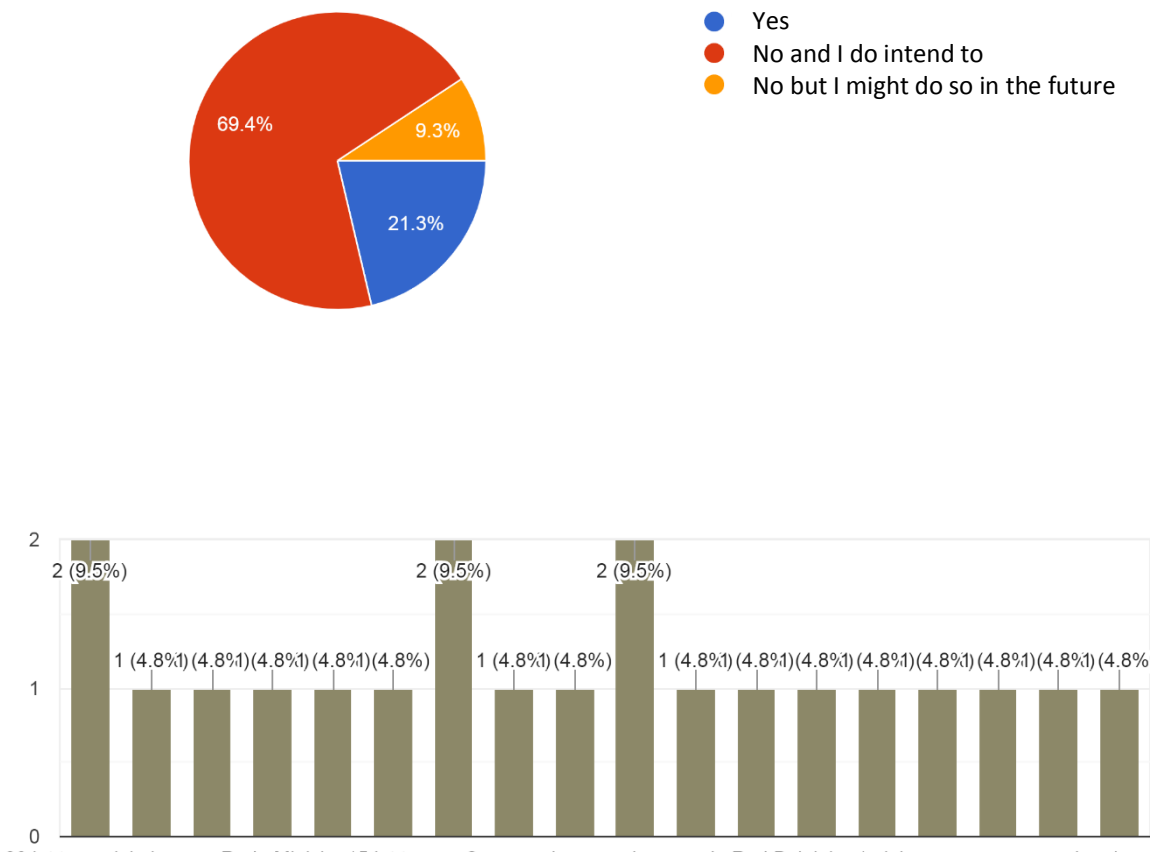
The findings indicate several important correlations. The use of active voting rights (voting in elections) is perceived as the most important determinant of civic involvement, receiving a total of over 90% direct references. On the other hand, the use of passive voting rights (running in elections) is perceived almost as the opposite of civic involvement, where only a few percent of respondents consider it as an indicator of being an active citizen, while almost (50%) is of a decidedly opposite opinion. Such results come as no surprise. Deteriorating opinions about the political elite result in the reluctance of citizens to actively engage in political life, which is undoubtedly a serious problem for the functioning of civil society. Subsequent indicators, such as: involvement in the activities of non-governmental organizations, involvement in informal local and neighborhood activities, and capital of trust played - in the opinion of our respondents

- a very important role in identifying civic involvement. Accumulatively, the total positive references significantly exceeded 50% in each case. Such results correlate with other studies, which indicate the formation of a strong foundation of civil society at the local level, within small homelands – local neighborhoods.

A serious problem regarding to the exercise of passive voting rights is shown in the diagram below. This diagram makes it clear that almost 70% of the respondents did not run in the elections and do not intend to do so in the future:

The diagram below explains the types of elections (21.3%) our respondents took part in. Characteristically, elections to self-governing representative bodies dominated in this case. However, it is worth emphasizing that most often they concerned 20-10 years time horizon in terms of relatively distant past:

*If yes, when and what kind elections they were?*



15 year ago, municipal elections (city council), Self-government elections, Parliamentary elections, City district council elections, Parliamentary elections, Self-government elections 2006, Self-government elections, municipal elections (city council)

In the next diagram presented below we see attitudes towards involvement in the activities of non-governmental organizations. The results indicate a relatively high civic involvement of the respondents. More specifically, almost 60% of them were involved in the activities of some non-governmental organization and 23% of the respondents who declared no experience in this regard declared an intention to do so in the future at the same time:

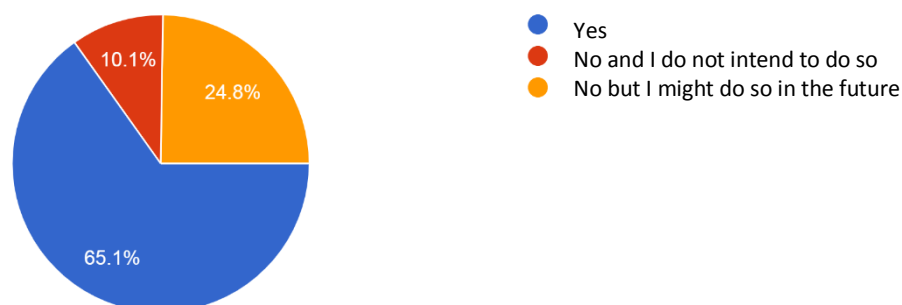
**3. Did you take part in informal civic initiatives, social movements or neighbourly initiatives?**



In an open-ended question, the respondents were also asked to specify concrete activities of non-governmental organizations they were involved in. In this case, we received 60 responses. A detailed analysis of these responses indicates that the initial optimistic picture of involvement in the initiatives of non-governmental organizations should be slightly revised. The responses of the respondents were dominated by indications of formal NGOs, such as: scouting, Greenpeace, Avaaz, Polish Humanitarian Action, Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, 'WIOSNA' [SPRING] Association, Society of Large Families, Amnesty International, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and many others. However, it should be emphasized that the respondents in this category also indicated political parties or social movements (e.g. Committee for Defense of Democracy), which may indicate that some of them do not fully understand the essence of NGOs. Thus the actual indicator of involvement in the activities of non-governmental organizations seems certainly lower than the one shown in the diagram above.

In the case of informal civic initiatives and social movements, the involvement of respondents was relatively high. More specifically, as many as 65% of them declared such involvement. Furthermore, almost 25% intend to do so in the future. These results correlate with other research studies that confirm the growing civic involvement in local matters, e.g. in the activities of municipal movements, charity initiatives, as well as informal political initiatives, especially after 2015. A detailed distribution of answers is presented in the diagram below:

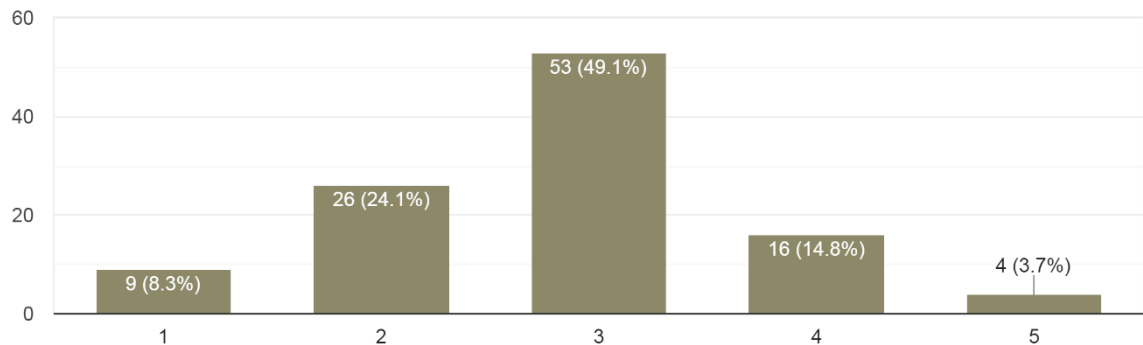
**4. Did you take part in informal civic initiatives, social movements or neighbourly initiatives?**



A detailed analysis of civic involvement patterns in informal initiatives provided in the open question - 59 responses in total - confirmed that in this case it was mainly about grassroots initiatives within the realm of local communities (urban movements, neighborhood initiatives), charity activities, informal political initiatives (Committee for Defense of Democracy 'KOD', women's movements, Citizens of the Republic of Poland 'Obywatele RP', etc.) and environmental movements (youth climate strike, local pro-environmental initiatives).

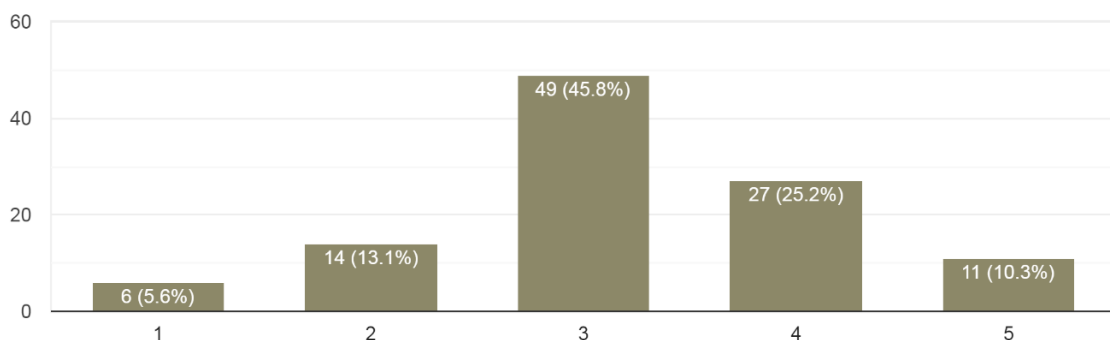
The next question referred to social integration. Despite the declared high commitment to civic affairs, the respondents perceive their local communities as relatively poorly integrated. When asked about the level of social integration and self-help in given localities, the respondents most often - 49% of them - answered that it was "so-so". However, what is particularly important, the total negative responses were 32.5%, while the total positive responses were only 18.5%. This may indicate that, apart from committed local leaders, the majority of residents remain passive. A detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the chart below:

**5. How do you assess level of social integration and neighbourly assistance in your community?**  
**[1 very low, 2 low, 3 neither low nor high, 4 high, 5 very high]**



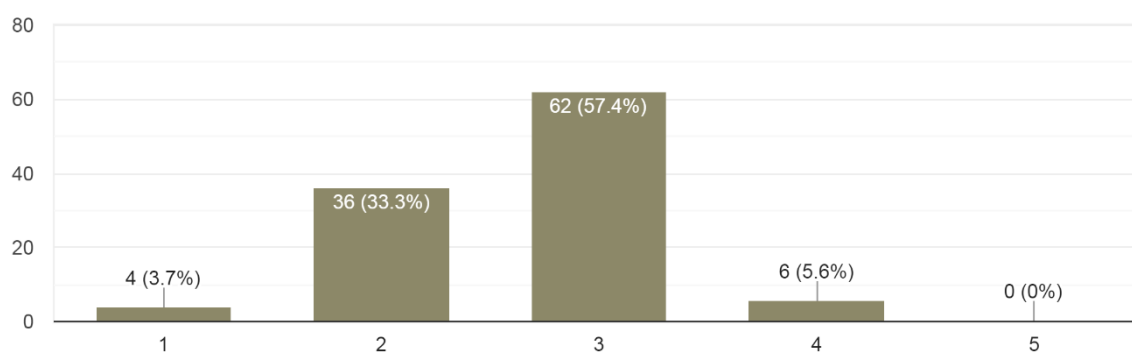
Taking into account assessment of the dynamics of changes in the context of social engagement and self-help, the respondents emphasize slow, but firm positive developments in recent years. Although 45.8% of the respondents did not notice any changes in this respect, the total number of positive indications was 35.5%, while the negative indications number was 18.7% only. These findings confirm the general tendency of increasing level of social capital in local communities. A detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the chart below:

**6. Regarding question number 5 – was the situation better or worse anytime before?**  
**[1 definitely worse, 2 worse, 3 neither worse nor better, 4 better, 5 definitely better]**



As far as social trust in local communities indicator is concerned, the results show that we are dealing with a very unfavorable situation in this regard. The vast majority - namely 57.4% - of the respondents believe that trust in their localities can be described in terms of "so-so". On the other hand, 37% of respondents express the view about low or very low level of trust, while only 5.6% points to a high level of trust. What seems particularly worrying is that none of the respondents indicated a definitely high level of trust in a given local community. A detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the chart below:

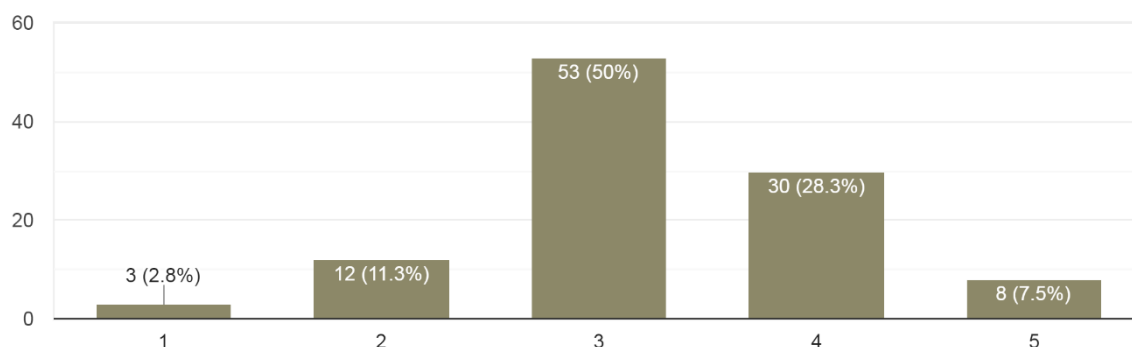
**7. How do you assess the level of people-to-people trust in your community? [1 very low, 2 low, 3 neither low nor high, 4 high, 5 very high]**



The results concerning the dynamics of changes in the context of social trust in local communities bring slightly more optimism. In this case, despite the fact that exactly 50% of the respondents do not notice any changes, the respondents much more often indicate improvement in this matter and that corresponds to 35.8% of all indications. Moreover, 7.5% of the respondents believe that the situation is definitely better in this regard. However, only 14.1% of the respondents believe that the situation is worse than it used to be. A detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the chart below:



**8. Regarding question number 7 was the situation better or worse anytime before? [1 definitely worse, 2 worse, 3 neither worse nor better, 4 better, 5 definitely better]**



Summarizing this research thread, it should be emphasized that despite the clearly observed consequences of many years of experience of the sociological vacuum and the trauma of post-1989 systemic change, the research findings prove ongoing development of civic attitudes and civic involvement in local communities, which was also pointed out by respondents during in-depth interviews. As put by one of the respondents:

*I think that the situation has improved. I have in mind here initiatives implemented under the so-called civic budget framework. (W / 60 / L).*

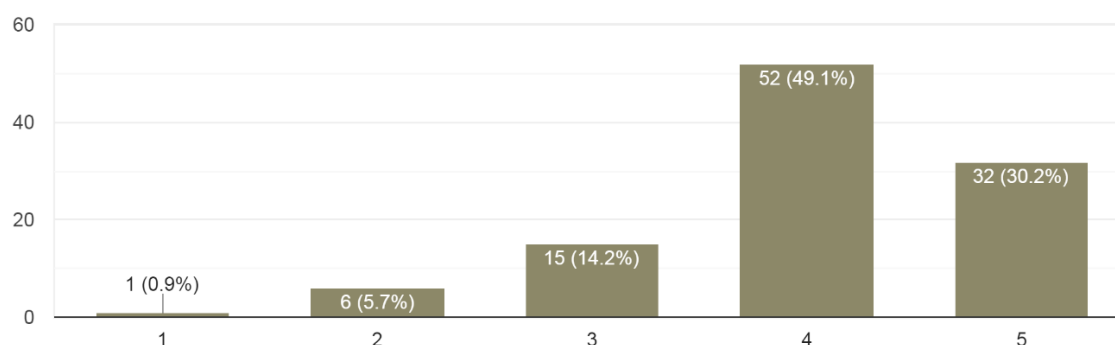
*Certainly, the civic involvement in my town has improved a lot. There are many associations, clubs, e.g. senior citizens, the 'third age' universities, non-governmental organizations. There are many civic initiatives, consultations are carried out on various issues, e.g. revitalization of a given area, etc. These developments took place thanks to the cooperation of the city government with citizens. Of special importance there has been the European Union support project, which were used for improvement of local public infrastructure (W / 60 / L ).*

## **Part II. The post-1989 systemic transformation**

The next part of the questionnaire concerned the assessment and attitudes towards the post-1989 systemic transformation. In the first question referring to the general opinion on the outcomes of the transformation from the perspective of the whole country, the vast majority of respondents - namely 79.3% - assessed it positively and, what is worth emphasizing, as many as 30% assessed the transformation definitely in positive terms. Only 6.6% of the respondents

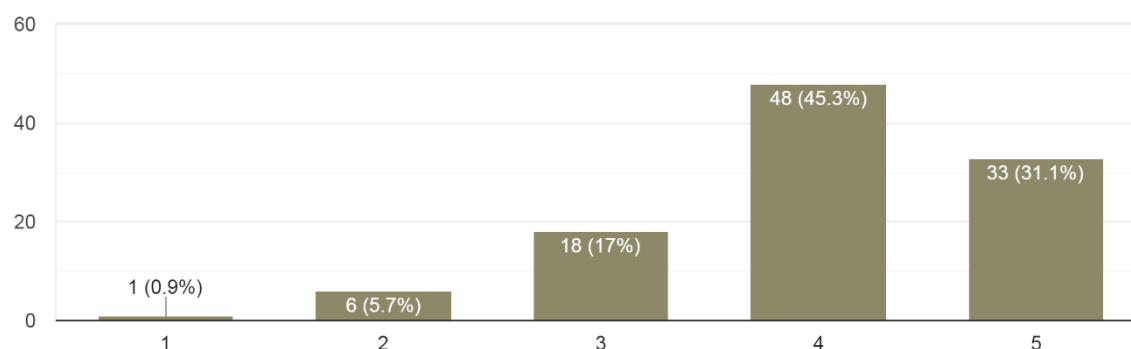
believed that the systemic transformation had negative consequences for the country. Characteristically, however, a relatively large percentage - namely 14.2% of the respondents - had no precise opinion on this matter. A detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the chart below:

**9. How do you assess 30 years of transformation from the whole country perspective? [1 definitely negative, 2 negative, neither negative nor positive, 4 positive, 5, very positive]**



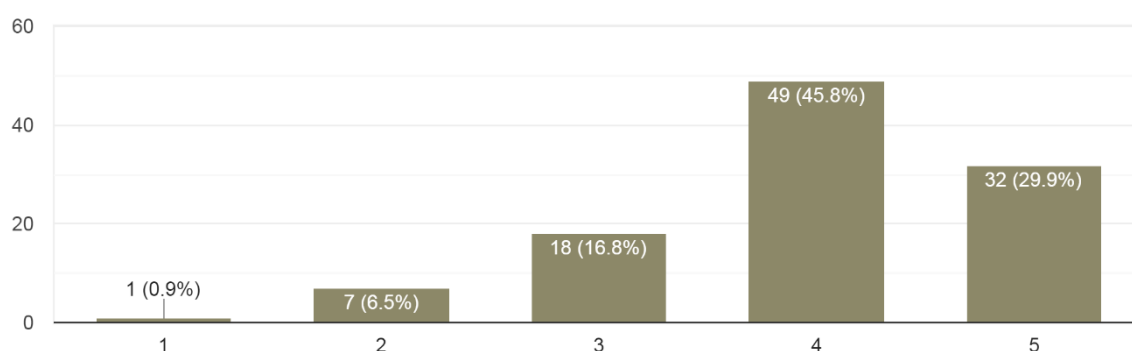
Regarding assessment of the systemic transformation as seen from the perspective of one's own locality, the results are very similar to the national perspective. In this case, however, the number of undecided opinions expressed by the respondents - namely 17% - slightly increased, while the percentage of those who assessed the transformation positively - namely 76.4% - slightly decreased. On the other hand, in the case of persons assessing the transformation negatively, the percentage remains unchanged. A detailed breakdown of responses on this topic is presented in the chart below:

**10. How do you assess 30 years of transformation from your local community perspective? [1 definitely negative, 2 negative, neither negative nor positive, 4 positive, 5, very positive]**



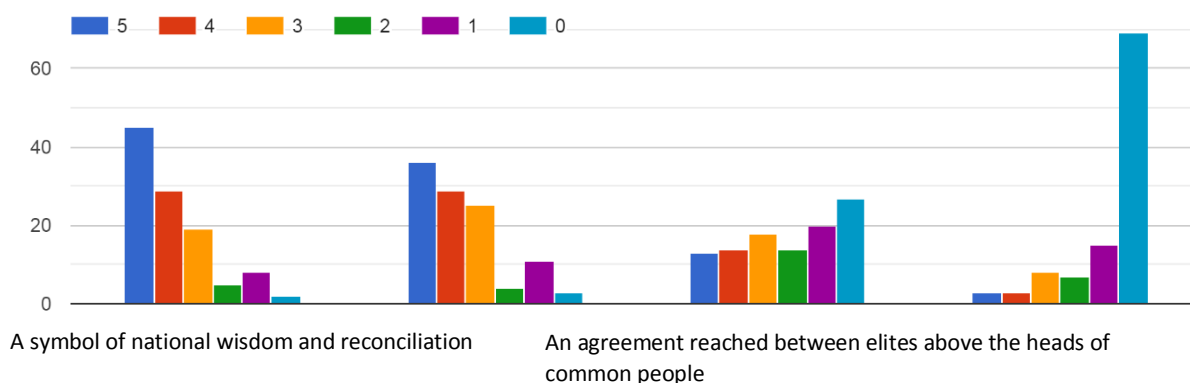
Regarding personal perspective, the assessment of the transformation coincides with the previous indicators. Consequently, we did not notice any significant differences in this case. The detailed distribution of answers is presented below:

**11. How do you assess 30 years of transformation from your personal perspective? [1 definitely negative, 2 negative, neither negative nor positive, 4 positive, 5, very positive]**



One of the key variables describing attitudes towards transformation in Poland is the attitude to the Round Table agreement. The "Round Table" has been one of the most important symbols in the modern history of Poland, while the specific features of this symbol mean that it binds and divides with equal power. For this reason, the attitude to the "Round Table" agreement is often treated as a variable indicating actual attitudes towards systemic transformation. In the question related to attitudes towards the "Round Table" agreement, the respondents were asked to comment on the statements symbolizing the following meaning of the Round Table agreement : a / symbol of national wisdom and reconciliation; b / a model example of democratic practices; c / elites getting along over the heads of ordinary citizens; d / national treason. A detailed distribution of answers is presented in the diagrams below:

**12. How do you assess the Round Table Agreement and the 1989 change? ? Please allocate to each answer a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant)**



Respondents generally considered the "Round Table" agreement to be a symbol of national wisdom and reconciliation. The definite support towards the Round Table agreement was expressed by a total of over 70% respondents. Similar results were recorded in the case of perceiving the "Round Table" as a model example of democratic practices, although it should be emphasized that the total negative responses in this case reached almost 15%. Regarding the issue of "elites getting along over the heads of ordinary citizens", the respondents did not have an unambiguous opinion in this case. On the one hand, slightly more responses were recorded that do not agree with such a statement, but the general distribution of responses indicates that such a narrative is deeply rooted in Polish society. On the other hand, with regard to the last question examined in this thread, the perception of the "Round Table" as a national betrayal, the respondents strongly rejected such an interpretation, and the total responses indicated such an interpretation did not exceed 5%.

Summarizing, it should be emphasized that the systemic transformation is perceived in a definitely positive way regardless of whether a national, local or personal perspective. Also, the key symbol of transformation and transition to liberal democracy - the Round Table talks - are viewed positively, which is important because this symbol is often used in the rhetoric of anti-democratic populist parties.

It should be emphasized, however, that despite the generally very good assessment of the transformation, the respondents also pointed to its negative aspects in the in-depth interviews. These being:

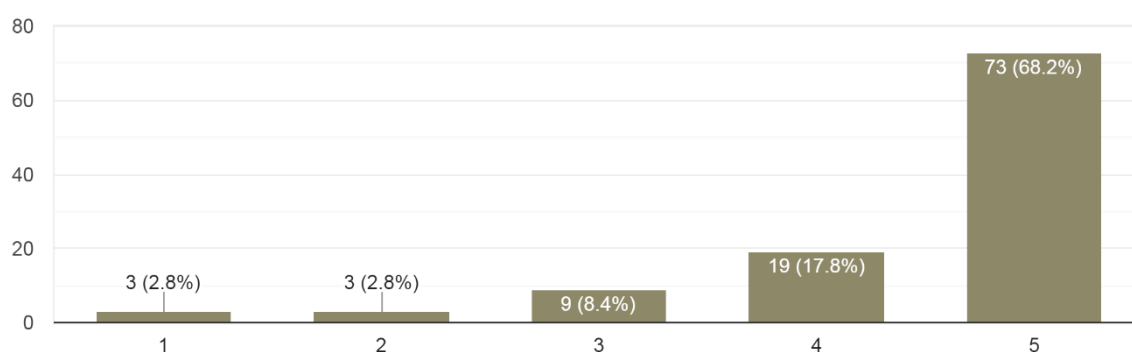
Poor social protection, especially of pensioners, low wages in relation to prices and wages in Europe, impoverishment of part of the society. (W / 40-60 / S).

Lack of settlements with the previous system, the mentality and rigidity of some institutions have not changed. (K / 30-40 / S).

## Part II. European integration

Another thread in this research project was the analysis of attitudes towards European integration and Poland's accession to the European Union. The first question related to the general assessment of Poland's accession to the European Union, and the detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the chart below:

**13. How do you assess your country's membership of the EU in the range from 1 to 5 [[1 definitely negative, 2 negative, neither negative nor positive, 4 positive, 5, very positive]**



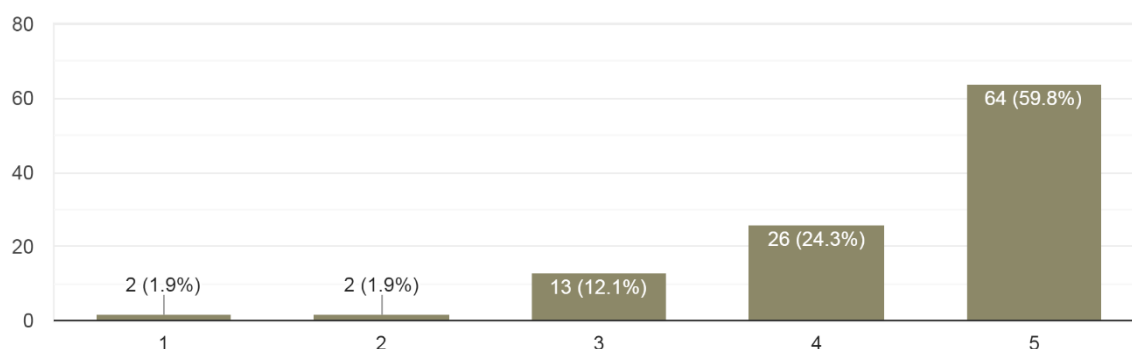
Accession to the EU - which comes as no surprise - is rated highly positive. We recorded a total of 87% positive indications.. It is especially worth emphasizing that as many as 68.2% respondents indicated the EU accession as a definitely positive. Such results are in line with the trend that has continued since the beginning of accession, according to which the support for Poland's membership in the EU has remained at a very high level for years. The developing populism in Poland, raising Eurosceptic threads, does not translate into the attitudes of Polish society towards the assessment of Poland's accession to the EU.

The next question referred to the assessment of EU membership from the perspective of the local community. Also in this case, positive statements definitely prevailed. Altogether such indications reached 84% of all polled. The respondents were slightly less enthusiastic in this case. More specifically, less than 60% of them assessed EU accession positively from the perspective of their city community. Additionally, the number of the undecided opinions

increased significantly to 12.1%. A detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the chart below:

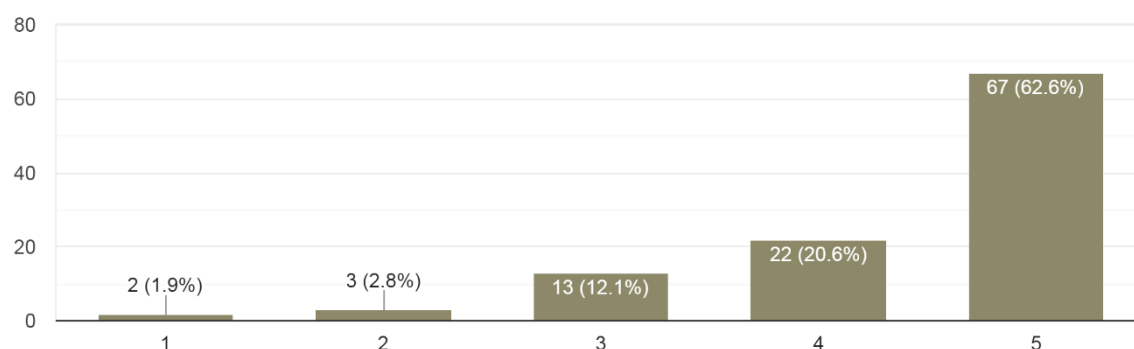
Taking into account the personal perspective, we got almost the same results as compared with the local perspective. This is largely due to the fact that the experience of everyday life determines the personal perspective and, thus, it is very strongly correlated with the local dimension that sets the framework for everyday interactions and attitudes. A detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the chart below:

**14. How do you assess your country's membership of the EU from your local community perspective in the range from 1 to 5 [[1 definitely negative, 2 negative, neither negative nor positive, 4 positive, 5, very positive]**



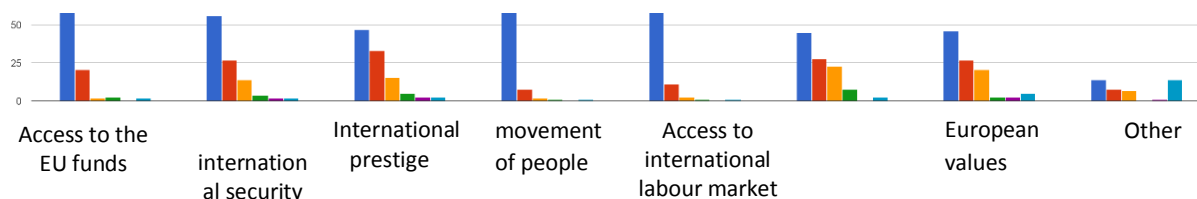
In this part of the questionnaire set, the respondents were asked to assess the balance of profits and losses of Poland's membership in the EU. In the first place, the questions referred to the benefits of joining the EU. In this case, the response cafeteria included the following issues: a / access to EU funds; b / international security; c / international prestige; d / freedom of travel; e / opening the international labor market; f / greater tolerance and openness to others; g / European values. In the open question, the respondents could also comment on additional issues and in this case we received 19 responses. Detailed response results are presented in the charts below:

**15. How do you assess your country's membership of the EU from your personal perspective in the range from 1 to 5 [[1 definitely negative, 2 negative, neither negative nor positive, 4 positive, 5, very positive]**



Issues related to the freedom of movement were assessed by far the best. The freedom to travel and the opening of the international labor market were assessed positively in almost 100%, and it should be emphasized that on average more than 90% of the respondents assessed them positively. The access to the EU funds was also assessed very positively. It obtained a total of more than 90% indications. According to the respondents, international security and international prestige increased thanks to the accession to the EU. These issues were also highly rated, although in these cases we recorded a slight - less than 10% - increase in the category of undecided attitudes. As far as issues related to European values are concerned we noted the increase in tolerance. On the other hand, however, although these values were generally assessed as positive – namely above 50% - we have also noted more skeptical responses. These results correlate with other studies showing that while the freedom of movement and financial benefits of EU membership are assessed positively, the issues related to the cultural and value sphere are less enthusiastically assessed.

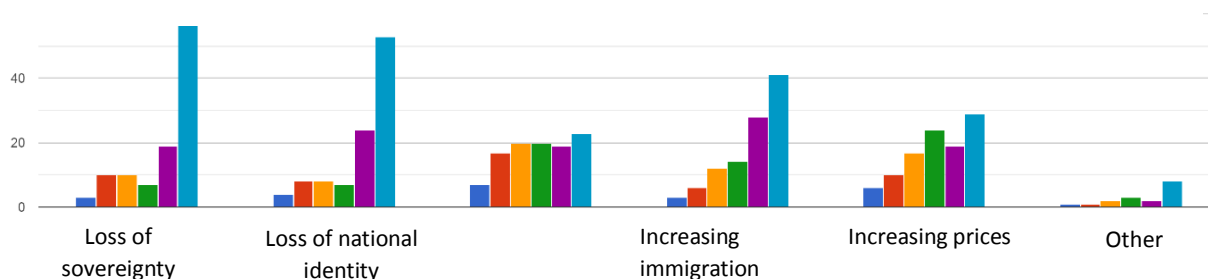
**16. What were most important advantages of your country's membership in the EU from national perspective ? Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer**



As far as an open-ended question is concerned, where respondents were asked to comment on additional benefits of EU membership, we received 19 responses that indicated such issues as: development, the need for Polish legislation to comply with EU law, exchange of scientific research, open borders, education, freedom, dignity, activation of citizens, the new value of "common good" (Latin *bonum commune*), academic cooperation, international exchange, opportunities for research scholarships, legal and civilization standards, drawing intercultural role models from others, education opportunity, harmonization of legal regulations, educational programs for pupils, students, teaching and academic staff, learning freedom; free movement of goods, education in other EU countries; access to knowledge and scientific projects.

In regard to the question related to the threats resulting from Poland's membership in the EU, the respondents chose answers from the following cafeteria: a / loss of sovereignty; b / a threat to the national identity; c / domination of foreign capital; d / influx of foreigners; e / price increase. Also in this case, the respondents could enter indicate other threats. All together they indicated five of them. A detailed distribution of responses is presented in the charts below:

**17. What were most important threats related to your country's membership in the EU in national perspective? Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer**



It needs to be emphasized that the issues relating to the loss of sovereignty and the threat to European identity turned out to be the least significant threat. The total percentage of respondents who considered that EU membership poses a threat to these issues did not exceed 10%. The influx of foreigners was also not perceived in terms of significant threats, although in this case the percentage of approx. 20% of respondents with ambivalent attitudes increased significantly. These results are symptomatic because these issues are most often discussed in the populist and Eurosceptic discourse and, as confirmed by other studies, do not find much



reflection in Polish society. Two other issues raised greater concern among our respondents. In the case of price increases, indications definitely rejecting such a threat still prevailed reaching almost 30% of indications. On the other hand indirect indications, which can be classified as ambivalent, already totaled over 40%. The greatest skepticism among the respondents was caused by the issue of the domination of Western capital. Although in this case of the answers placed at the end of the scale we saw that over 20% of indications do not agree with such a position as compared with less than 10% of the affirmative answers, the answers can generally be interpreted as skeptical.

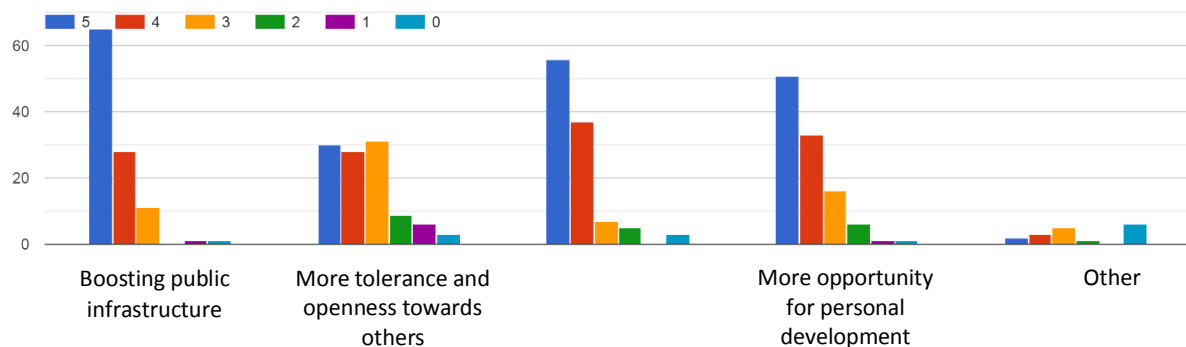
In the case of an open-ended question, the respondents indicated only 4 additional threats resulting from Poland's membership in the EU. Although 5 answer options were offered in total, but one of them was formulated as "no threats". In this case, the following threats were highlighted: corruption, incomplete law, "wild" capitalism, disrespect for the culture and heritage of the state, poor quality imported food products replacing local ones of very good quality, increased number of emigrating young people.

The very fact of pointing to so few additional threats compared to the above-mentioned 19 additional benefits proves that the respondents perceive Poland's accession to the EU definitely in terms of benefits rather than threats.

When assessing EU membership from a local perspective, the respondents choose the answers from the following cafeteria: a / infrastructural development, b / greater tolerance and openness to others, c / the possibility of working legally in the West, d / greater opportunities for self-fulfillment, also in this case possible was to enter additional benefits.

A detailed breakdown of the answers to this question is presented in the charts below:

**18. What were most important advantages of your country's membership in the EU for your local community ? Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer.**



The development of infrastructure was assessed the best. The positive answers definitely exceeded (90%) of the indications, while the total negative answers amounted to only approx. (2%). These results do not differ from other studies findings indicating that the development of infrastructure is one of the best assessed aspects of Poland's accession to the EU. The possibility of working legally in the West was also very well assessed, although there were clearly fewer answers "I strongly agree". It is understandable as, on the one hand, labor migrations to an EU country have become an important economic impulse for local communities, but on the other hand, it has come at a high social cost.

Equally well, though slightly less enthusiastic, the respondents spoke about the possibilities of self-realization, but we practically did not notice the responses indicating that such opportunities had worsened. The issue of tolerance and openness to others was assessed as the worst. It is true that in this case, positive responses prevail. They were, however, moderate, and the total responses indicating the respondents' ambiguity in this matter amounted to almost (45%). In an open question, the respondents mentioned 4 additional benefits, they were: numerous infrastructure and soft projects, e.g. educational, social, numerous civic projects financed from EU funds; participation of schools in EU projects; tourism; increased income from tourism.

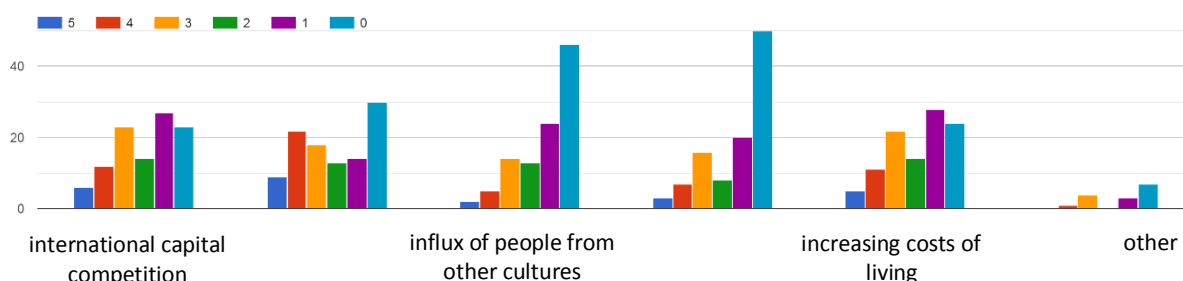
Significant changes in infrastructure were also highlighted by the respondents during in-depth interviews, both inhabitants of big cities, small cities and villages. As an example, there are some of the most characteristic statements:

*“The city has changed a lot, new streets have been built, market squares have been revitalized, a sport hall has been built, a park is being built, and churches have been restored. (F / 60 / M). My city has become very beautiful. The center has been renovated with care for the conservation of monuments and greenery. Many places friendly to rest in the city have been created. Not to mention new roads and a beltway.” (K / 60 / D).*

*“A lot has changed in my town: we have new roads, a water supply system, a sewage system, two new kindergartens, a nursery, a common room and a community center, and now a bicycle lane is being built. A lot of small companies were also created with EU funding.” (M / 40-60 / W).*

In the context of threats resulting from accession to the EU, respondents could choose from the following cafeteria: a / competition of international capital, b / depopulation related to migration work in the West, c / influx of people from other cultures and religions, d / disappearance of local traditions and customs, e / increase in the cost of living and an open-ended question with the possibility of entering your own suggestions. A detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the charts below:

**19. What were most important threats of your country's membership in the EU for your local community ? Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer**

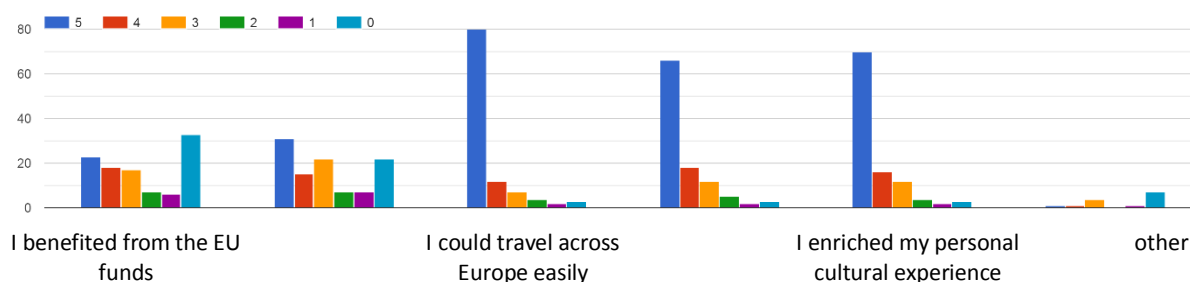


Cultural issues, such as the influx of people from other cultures and religions and the disappearance of local traditions and customs, where a total of approx. (70%) of respondents considered such threats to be definitely irrelevant, triggered relatively limited fear. The issue of depopulation of given localities related to departures for work in the West was indicated by approx. (40%) of respondents as a decidedly insignificant threat, but already approx. (30%) saw this phenomenon as a definite threat. The threats related to economic issues, such as competition of international capital and an increase in the cost of living, were perceived in a similar way. In both cases, threats in these matters were perceived by approx. (15%) of the respondents, however (45% -50%). pointed out these issues as completely unimportant threats.

In the open question, the respondents gave two answers, pointing to additional threats: commercialization of society, commercialization of culture, reduced level of education, mass media's promotion of consumerism; lack of respect for dignity of a human being.

Subsequent questions related to the evaluation of the action against the EU from a personal perspective. In the first one, the respondents were to refer to the benefits they personally derived from EU membership. In this case, they chose the following cafeteria: a / I used EU funds; b / I have raised my professional competences; c / I could freely explore Europe; d / I felt a citizen of Europe; e / I have enriched my cultural experiences, and an open-ended question with the possibility of entering my own answers. A detailed breakdown of individual answers is presented in the charts below:

**20. What were most important advantages of your country's membership in the EU for you personally ? Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer**

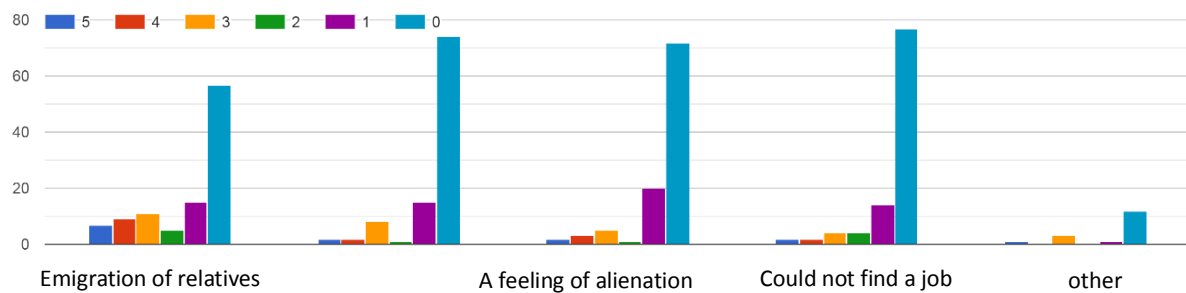


The issues related to the freedom of travel were assessed definitely the best. Here as many as (90%) of the respondents considered it to be the most important benefits they gained from EU membership. Also, issues related to the cultural aspect were rated very highly. Both the statements "I felt like a European citizen" and "I enriched / enriched my cultural experience" were assessed positively by approx. (80%) of the respondents. Most of the respondents, about 55% in total, did not use European funds personally. By far the worst assessed was the improvement of professional competences thanks to the accession to the EU, in this case over (65%) of the respondents responded negatively.

In the open question, only 4 additional answers were added, but very extensive: *"by helping refugees and traveling around the world, I was able to appreciate the color of my EU passport and the practical lack of borders within the European Union. Our organization was able to implement Visegrad Fund projects in which three out of four partners must be EU members. But before that "I felt a citizen of Europe" and I hitchhiked freely on it (thanks to which my son has dual citizenship, because he was born outside Poland and from his father from outside Poland, which I appreciate especially now, when the last five years of the rule of Law and Justice have shaken our sense of home security. I would like to indicate "3" as the answer because Poland's accession to the EU has not changed anything in these dimensions in my life. I choose the middle of the scale so as not to distort the final results; the opportunity to participate in Erasmus; I had all this before joining the EU, so nothing new was added; high energy and motivation to act when everything is new and possible."*

In the question related to the negative consequences of accession to the EU being felt from a personal perspective, the respondents had the following cafeteria at their disposal: a / leaving their relatives abroad; b / decrease in the sense of personal security; c / feeling of alienation; d / difficulties with finding a job and an open question with the possibility of adding additional answers. A detailed distribution of answers is presented in the charts below:

**21. What were major threats of your country's membership in the EU for you personally ? Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer**



According to the respondents, all the issues mentioned in this question did not constitute significant threats and in most cases they agreed in almost (100%). Only in the case of the relatives leaving abroad, slightly more than (10%) of the respondents indicated significant negative consequences. Two additional answers were included in the open question, namely: internal problems within the country, large bureaucracy, unclear law, distance between Polish law and European law, lack of information, superficial social consultations, lack of education in general; bankruptcy of one's own company.

Summing up this topic, it is necessary to emphasize the unequivocally positive assessment of the European integration process, which was also emphasized during in-depth interviews, paying attention, among others, to such issues:

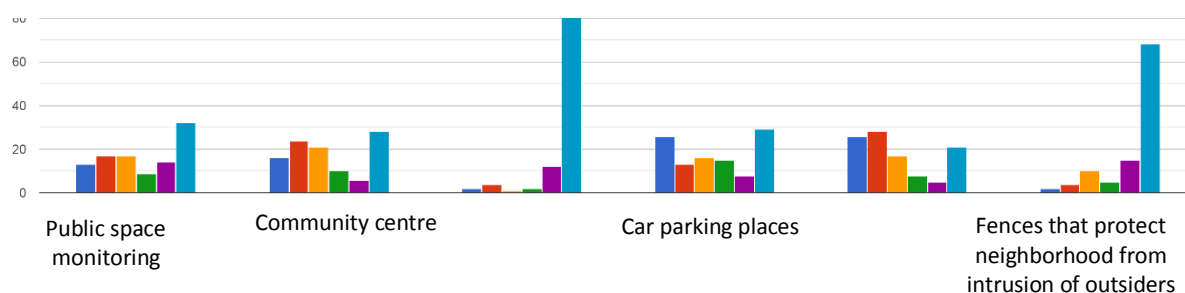
It makes it possible to use the experience of other European countries. European public opinion may be a certain emergency brake on undemocratic changes in Poland. (K / 30-40 / S).

Belonging to the European Union requires compliance with certain rules. This is our duty. (K / 60 / D).

#### Part IV. Open society vs closed society. Civic participation in local communities

The nature of civic participation in local communities is of key importance for the formation of an open civil society. Consequently, another set of questions has been devoted to this problem. The first question in this section relates to the development potential of public spaces and the so-called third places where social capital is shaped. In this case, the respondents were to respond to the questions related to what they lack the most in the immediate vicinity. In this case, the respondents chose from the following cafeteria: a / monitoring; b / meeting places, e.g. a community center, c / a place where you can practice your faith, d / parking places, e / places where you can picnic with friends, f / fences against strangers, gated estates. A detailed distribution of answers to this question is presented in the charts below:

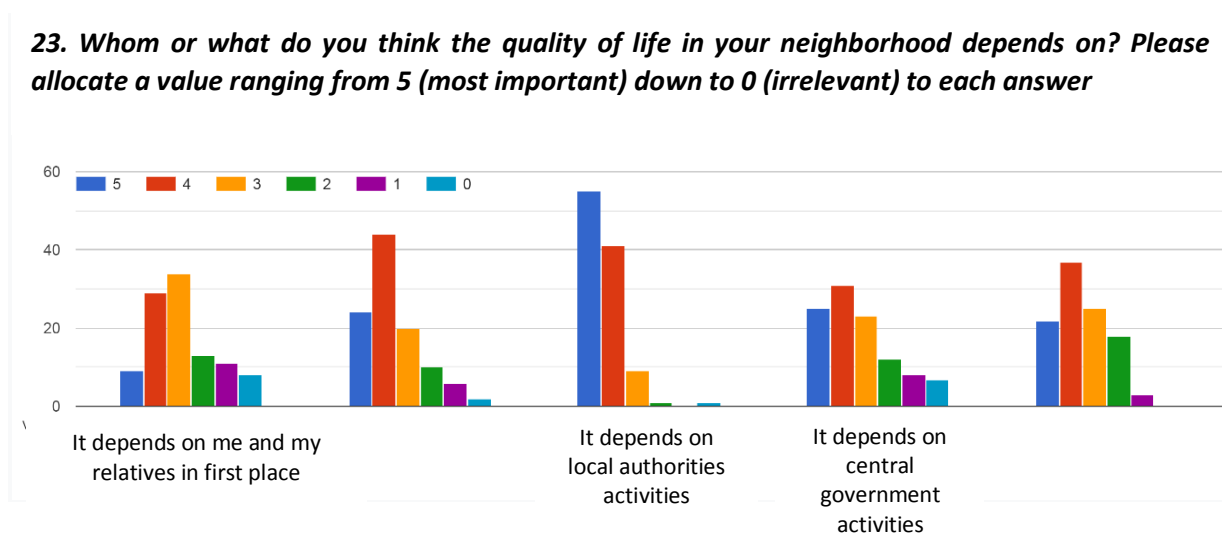
**22. What seems to be missing the most in your neighborhood/community. Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer**



By far the lowest deficit is noted in relation to places where you can practice your faith, almost (100%) of respondents believe that such places are available in other neighborhoods. This is conditioned by two factors, first of all, Polish towns and villages are indeed very much filled with places of religious worship, the vast majority of which are Catholic. Secondly, they are still relatively mono-cultural and religiously homogeneous, so even if representatives of religions other than Catholic may indicate such deficits. It is actually a small percentage of the population. In the case of neighbourhood monitoring, approximately (40%) of the respondents indicated it as a significant deficit, which indicates the problem of neighbourly ties and trust in the immediate vicinity. However, in the case of the question about fences to protect against strangers, the vast majority of respondents (85%) definitely consider this issue to be irrelevant. Seemingly, this may indicate the relative openness of local communities, but such responses are also determined by the fact that the development of gated estates and the privatization of

public spaces has become a real scourge of Polish cities, which are already sufficiently saturated with gated estates and various fences. The greatest deficit pointed out by the respondents was the lack of places for picnicking together and meeting places, e.g. community day care rooms, i.e. those spaces where social capital and a space for deliberation are created. It is worth emphasizing that the deficit of such places was indicated as more important than the lack of car parking spaces, which may indicate the need for socialization and / or significant infrastructural deficiencies for such practices.

In the next question, the respondents were asked to indicate who has a decisive influence on the quality of life in a given locality. In this case, the respondents selected answers from the following cafeteria: a / only from me and my relatives (family), b / good cooperation with neighbors, c / actions of local authorities, d / actions of the central government, d / actions of non-governmental organizations . A detailed distribution of responses is presented in the charts below:



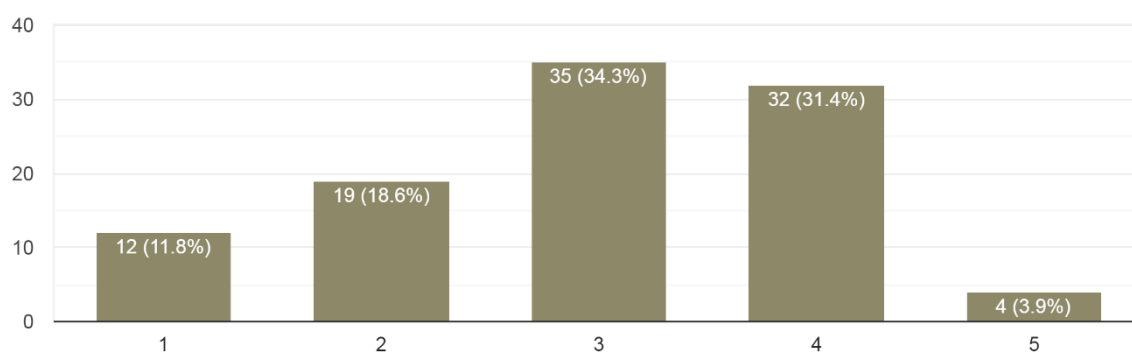
According to the respondents, local authorities are of key importance for the quality of life of local communities, which was clearly indicated by over (90%) of the respondents. These findings correlate with other surveys, emphasizing a very good assessment of the activity of local government. Cooperation with neighbors was also assessed very highly, in total, approximately (65%) considered this issue very important, and the role of non-governmental organizations (60%) was likewise highly rated. The personal impact on the quality of life in their town / city was assessed much lower, and less than 40% of the respondents considered it important. The role of the central government was indicated by a relatively large number of respondents (55%), which, in a way, is a consequence of strong centralist traditions.



## **Part V. The meaning of civic agency, transmission of knowledge about civic attitudes and patriotism.**

In subsequent questions in this part of the survey, respondents were asked to comment about their meaning of civic agency in the surrounding reality, the transmission of knowledge about civic attitudes and patriotism. The first question concerned the assessment of whether the respondents have a sense of influence over what is happening at the level of the entire country. A detailed distribution of responses is presented in the chart below:

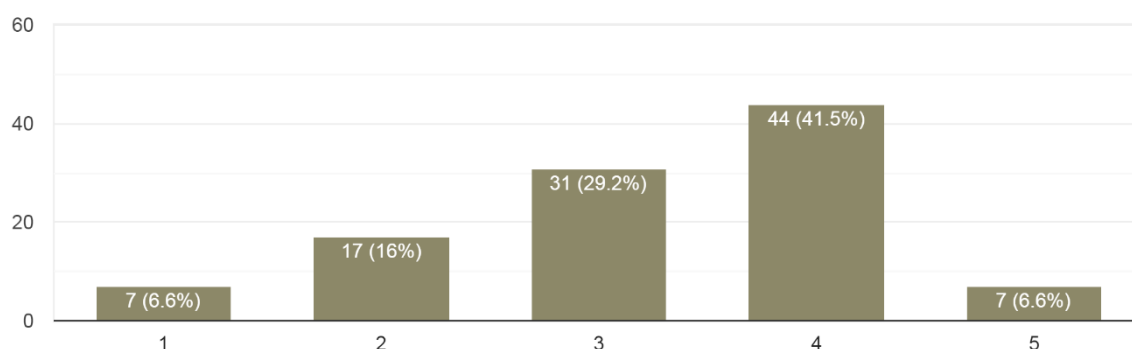
***24. Do you feel that you as citizen have an impact on what has been happening in your country?  
[1 definitely no, 2 no, 3 Can't say, 4 yes, 5 definitely yes]***



In this case, the indications of the meaning and impact of civic agency for public sphere at national level slightly prevail, as (37%) of the respondents think so, and slightly less (30%) that they do not have such an influence. It is worth emphasizing that many (34.3%) respondents do not have an opinion on this subject.

The second question concerned the assessment of whether the respondents have a sense of influence on what is happening at the level of their local community. The detailed distribution of responses is presented in the chart below:

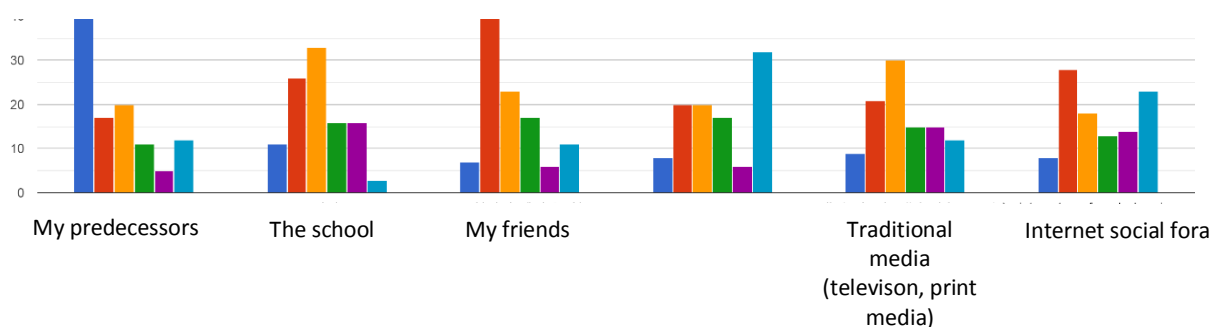
**25. Do you feel that you as citizen have an impact on what has been happening in your local community? [1 definitely no, 2 no, 3 Can't say, 4 yes, 5 definitely yes]**



At the local level, the meaning of civic of agency is much better assessed. In total, they were 52% of the respondents indicating such positive correlation, while the opposite opinion was expressed by 25% of the respondents. In this case, we also noted fewer undecided responses (29.2%). These results show that civic practices are fairly well entrenched at the local level, however they are much weaker at the state level.

The next questions concerned the transmission of knowledge about civic and democratic attitudes. In this case, the respondents had the following cafeteria of questions at their disposal: a. / My ancestors, b / school. c / my colleagues. d / workshops and trainings carried out by non-governmental organizations, e / traditional media (television, newspapers), f / internet discussion forums. A detailed distribution of answers is presented in the charts below:

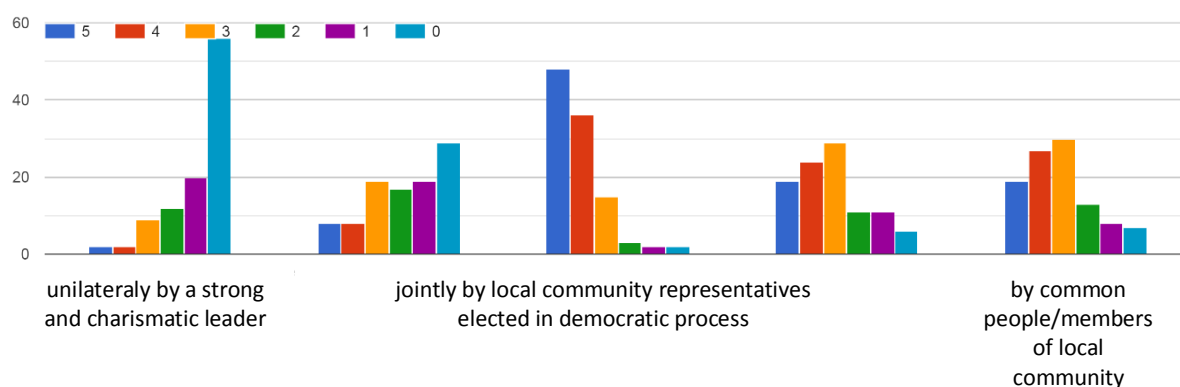
**26. Who has impacted your civic and democratic attitudes the most? Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer**



According to the respondents, their ancestors had the greater impact on the transmission of knowledge about civil society. Altogether this transmission channel was indicated as very important by approx. (55%) and colleagues (45%). This points to a more traditionalist model of society, especially since those institutions of modern society whose role is to educate on civic issues, in our respondents' opinion, do not play a major role in this case. This applies to both schools and traditional (printed) media, which are indicated as much less important in the process of civic education. What is particularly worth emphasizing, in the opinion of the respondents, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) do not work at all in this role, the vast majority of responses indicated that they do not play a major role in the process of civic education.

The next question concerned the assessment of the ways of making decisions and exercising power. The respondents could choose from the following cafeteria questions: a / one-man by a strong leader; b / by a strong leader with his team; c / by democratically elected representatives of the community; d / by experts / technocrats, e / by ordinary residents. A detailed distribution of answers is presented in the charts below:

**27. According to you the best decisions for local community are undertaken at the following level:  
Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer**



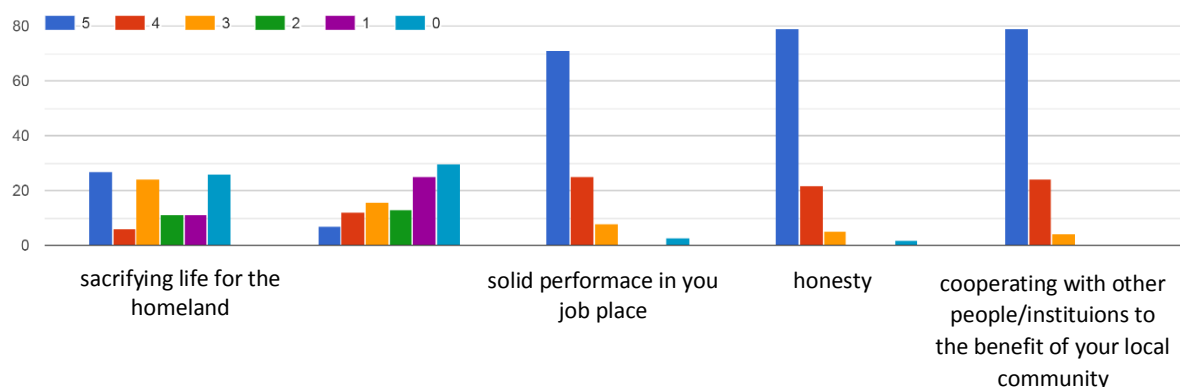
The results indicate very pro-democratic attitudes of the respondents, almost (80%) reject the model of one-man strong leadership. On the other hand, almost (90%) believe that the representatives of the community elected in democratic elections are the best model of exercising power. Characteristically, both the technocratic model of exercising power (by experts) and the participatory model (by ordinary residents) received exactly the same

indications, with cases of rather moderate responses predominating in this, indicating a lack of an opinion on this issue.

The last question concerned the question of patriotism. In this case, the respondents had the following cafeteria at their disposal: a / sacrificing their lives for the motherland; b / publicly demonstrating national pride; c / doing your job well; d / honesty, e / cooperation with others for the benefit of your community. A detailed distribution of answers is presented in the charts below:

### **28. What does patriotism mean to you?**

***Please allocate a value ranging from 5 (most important) down to 0 (irrelevant) to each answer***



The answers given point to a decidedly civic model of patriotism. Almost (100%) respondents believed that patriotism consists in doing one's job well, honestly and cooperating with others for the benefit of one's community. While little more than (30%) of the respondents agreed with the issue of sacrificing one's life for the motherland as a determinant of patriotism, only approx. (15%) with the issue of public dismantling of national pride.

## **Conclusions:**