

RESEARCH

REPORTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

JACEK KUCHARCZYK, AGNIESZKA ŁADA, ŁUKASZ WENERSKI

# UKRAINIANS LOOK TO THE WEST

## – POLICY ASSESSMENT AND EXPECTATIONS

INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

| BertelsmannStiftung



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# **UKRAINIANS LOOK TO THE WEST**

– POLICY ASSESSMENT  
AND EXPECTATIONS

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
European Programme

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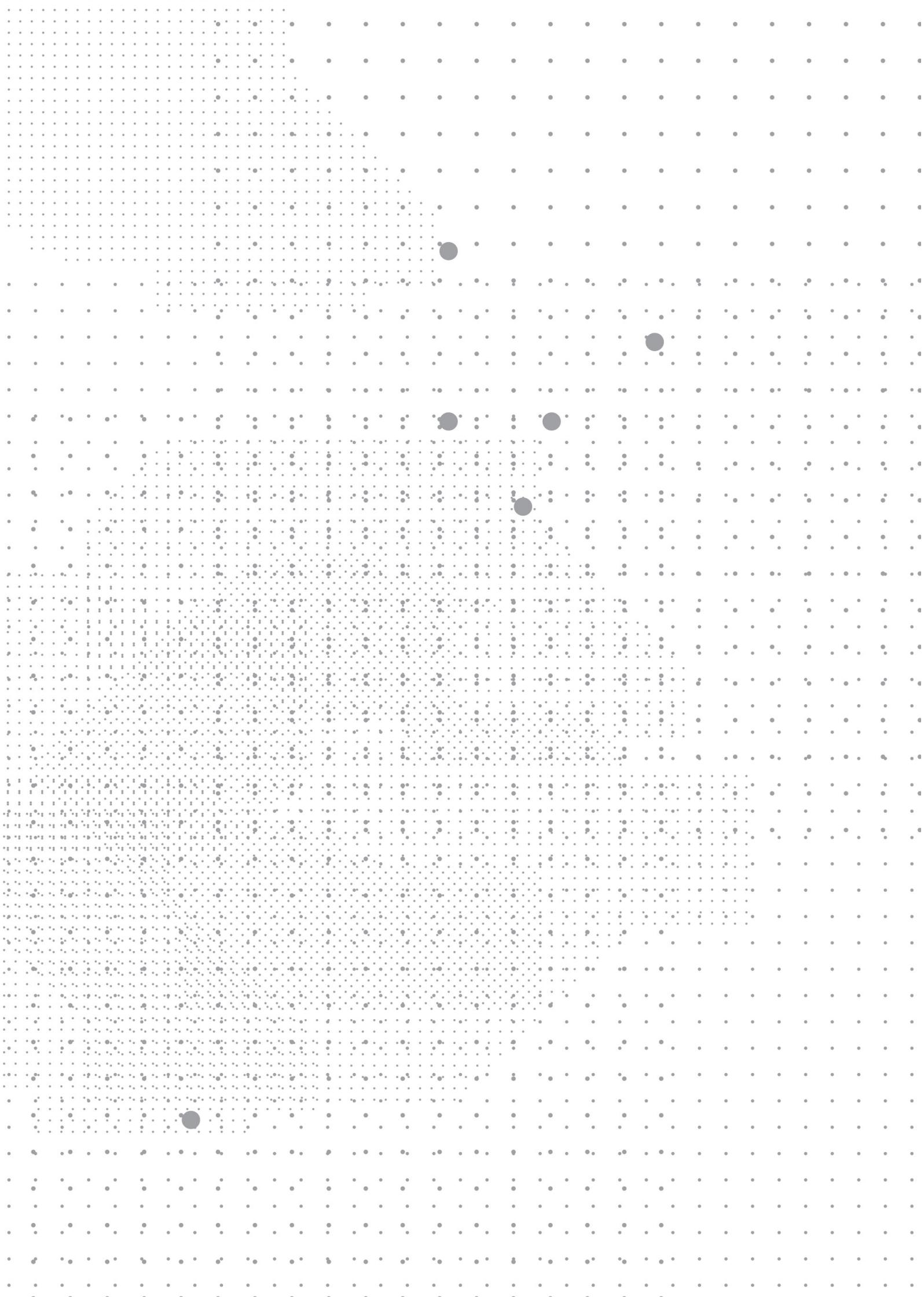
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- ▶ Ukrainian society is in favour of a pro-European course for its country. Just like three years ago, currently (in 2015) half of Ukrainians (51%) support their country's accession to the European Union. At the same time, the percentage of people who are favourably disposed towards the model of integration proposed by Russia – the Eurasian Union – has decreased by half. This integration direction is currently supported by 17% of respondents.
- ▶ Ukrainians support their country joining NATO. Among persons who would take part in a referendum concerning NATO, two-thirds would be in favour of membership of this organisation.
- ▶ Ukrainians recognise the advantages of closer ties between their country and the EU: they consider that it is in the interests of Ukraine (57%), and that it will strengthen its international position (59%) and economy (56%). At the same time, they consider that closer ties are also beneficial for the EU (53%). In the last two years, belief in the positive consequences of Ukraine drawing closer to the EU has weakened, in most cases by about 10-20 percentage points. However, this decrease is accompanied not so much by an increase in negative answers (these have changed by percentages that lie within the margins of statistical error), as by an increase in the group of people who are not able to give an answer to this question.
- ▶ An even greater drop concerns assessments of possible tightening of ties between Ukraine and Russia. Here the percentage of positive answers has dropped by 17-39 points since 2013. However, in this case, there was an increase not only in groups of people who could not answer, but also those who negatively rate closer ties with Russia. What is more, in all cases negative opinions outweigh positive ones.
- ▶ Ukrainians are divided in their opinion as to whether their country has drawn closer to or moved further away from the EU in the last year. The largest group of respondents states that in the last year, Ukraine has neither drawn closer to nor moved further away from the EU (44%). Comparable groups of respondents give more decisive answers: 21% consider that their country has drawn closer to the EU, while 23% state that it has drifted away.
- ▶ Half of Ukrainians hold Russia responsible for the current conflict (49%). One-third claim that both countries bear responsibility in equal measure (33%), and 9% point to Ukrainian responsibility.
- ▶ On average, half of Ukrainians favourably rate the policies of Western countries towards the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Positive opinions clearly outweigh the negative ones, but there is also a relatively large percentage

of persons who are undecided (about one-fifth of respondents). Polish policy (57%) is most favourably perceived, followed by that of Germany (52%), the EU (51%), and the United States (46%).

- ▶ The support that most Ukrainians expect from the EU and its member states is humanitarian aid for refugees (75%) and economic aid (73%). Over half of respondents also expect the lifting of visas (56%) as well as the sending of military equipment to the training of the Ukrainian army (55%). One-third respondents would like Western countries to send their troops to Ukraine.
- ▶ Ukrainians strongly support sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries. In total, two-thirds of respondents want a tightening (50%) or maintenance (15%) of the current sanctions. A clear minority are in favour of easing (6%) or lifting sanctions (8%), but as many as one-fifth of respondents do not have an opinion on this matter (21%).
- ▶ A positive attitude to the West is most common among Ukrainians living in western regions, and those who are better educated and younger.

## Introduction

Ukrainian society is facing a deep political, economic and social crisis, which has been aggravated by the policies of the Russian government, escalating from economic pressure to military intervention. This Russian reprisal for Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity seems to have strengthened the determination of Ukrainians in their pro-European choice, which was confirmed through democratic presidential and parliamentary elections. The annexation of Crimea and the military activities of Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine have met with condemnation on the part of Western democracies. The EU and the United States imposed economic sanctions on Russia. At the same time, international institutions and individual countries have supported Ukrainian reforms so that Ukraine could emerge from the crisis and strengthen ties with the EU and Western democracies while defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The aim of the present study was to determine how Ukrainian society evaluates the policies of the most important Western partners supporting Ukraine's path to democracy and economic development, and to find out what the expectations are as to further actions by the international community. A further aim of the study was to check whether popular support for integration with European structures remains firm.

The Institute of Public Affairs conducted studies in Ukraine in 2000, 2010, and 2013. On this basis, it is possible to observe the dynamics of change and indicate how the current conflict has influenced the views of Ukrainian residents. At the beginning of 2015, the Institute of Public Affairs together with the German Bertelsmann Stiftung also examined the opinions of Poles,

Germans, and Russians concerning the conflict. The results were presented in the report “Close Together or Far Apart? Poles, Germans and Russians on the Russia-Ukraine Crisis”, which revealed many similarities between Poles and Germans in their perceptions of the current situation and the need to undertake action by their respective governments. The study also revealed, among other findings, the lack of consent on the part of the Russian public to send Russian troops to eastern Ukraine.

The present opinion poll – commissioned by the Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung in Ukraine – was carried out by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Olexander Razumkov Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies from 22 to 27 July 2015, on a representative sample of 2011 adult Ukrainians via the face to face method.<sup>1</sup>

In the study, similarities and differences in answers of respondents were analysed depending on age, education, and region of residence. In the case of classification according to place of residence, the country was divided into five regions: West (Zakarpattia, Lviv, Volyn, Rivne, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi), Centre (Khmelnyskyi, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, Kyiv, Cherkasy, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, Chernihiv oblasts), South (Mykolaiv, Kherson and Odessa oblasts), East (Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia and Kharkiv oblasts), and Donbas (unoccupied territories in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts).

## A Pro-European Course for Ukraine

Ukrainian society has never been uniform in its opinions about the direction in which the country should go – towards integration with the EU or with Russia. Studies conducted at the Institute of Public Affairs since 2000 have confirmed this divide. In both 2000 and 2010, surveys indicated that a part of society was in favour of acceding both organisations – the EU the Union of Belarus and Russia. However, about half of all respondents have always favoured acceding to the EU. In late 2013, just before Euromaidan started, 50% of respondents favoured Ukraine joining the EU, whereas 33% favoured the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, and 12% did not want their country to join either of these two communities.

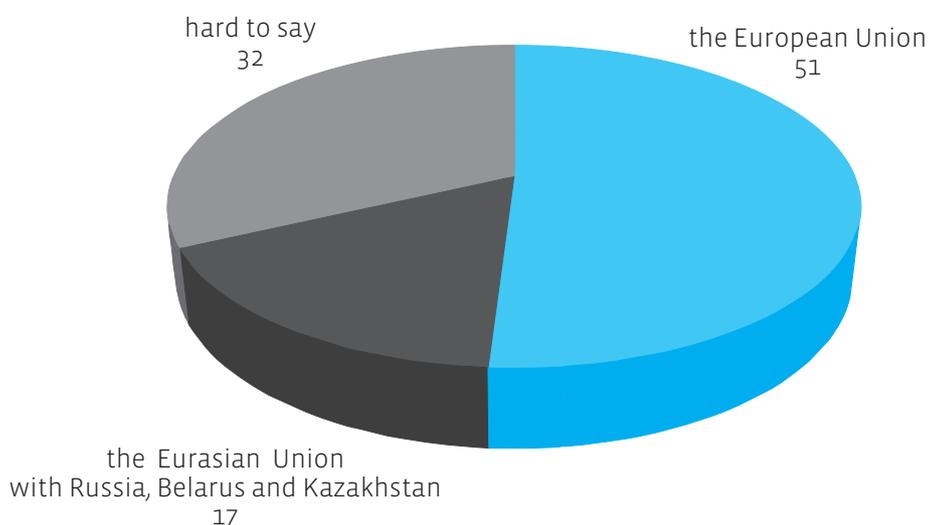
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**1** The study did not encompass the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the occupied territories in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Before the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict (January 2014), these regions (parts of which are currently encompassed by the conflict) were inhabited by the following numbers of people: Autonomous Republic of Crimea – 1,967,000 people, the city of Sevastopol – 386,000 people, Donetsk Oblast – 4,344,000 people, Luhansk Oblast – 2,240,000 people. The population of Ukraine was then 42,837,000 inhabitants (source: [https://ukrstat.org/operativ/operativ2015/ds/kn/kn\\_r/kn0515\\_r.html](https://ukrstat.org/operativ/operativ2015/ds/kn/kn_r/kn0515_r.html) [accessed: 8 August 2015]). The conflict sparked a huge wave of migration – according to United Nations estimates, close to 1.3 million inhabitants have already moved from the occupied regions – from Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and from Crimea – to other parts of Ukraine. Many people from these regions have also emigrated to other countries – including to the EU and Russia.

Similarly, in 2015, half of Ukrainians (51%) are in favour of accession to the EU. However, the proportion of people who are more favourably inclined towards the model of integration proposed by Russia (the Eurasian Union) has decreased by half. This direction of integration is currently supported by only 17% of respondents. At the same time, currently, the percentage of respondents who do not have a defined opinion in this matter is relatively large (32%).

Figure 1.  
Which union should  
Ukraine join? Replies by  
Ukrainians in 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute  
of Public Affairs and  
Bertelsmann Stiftung,  
2015.



The above data show firstly that Russian policy towards Ukraine engenders reluctance towards integration projects proposed by Moscow amongst a large section of Ukrainians. At the same time, the large percentage of undecided respondents highlights the uncertainty of parts of Ukrainian society as to which solution would be best for their country.

Half of Ukrainians are in favour of their country's accession to the European Union. Those in favour of joining the Eurasian Union are in the minority. Their percentage has halved in relation to 2013.

The Russian direction of integration is losing support, as Ukrainians have been effectively discouraged from it by Russian policy. At the same time, support for integration with the EU has not grown, which may be linked with disillusionment among part of Ukrainian society with the results of hitherto relations with the EU (e.g., lack of membership perspective, insufficient help from the EU, or scepticism towards the pro-EU elite currently governing Ukraine). Those who earlier supported cooperation with Russia do not believe that integration with the EU would be a better choice for Ukraine.

Among various groups of respondents, differences, often very significant, can be observed regarding their choice of preferred direction of integration. A division into regions is, above all, visible. The most pro-European is the west of Ukraine – where as many as 82% of respondents support integration with the EU and only 5% are inclined towards the Eurasian Union. In the remaining parts of the country, accession to the EU is less popular – in the centre of the

country, support for it is 53%; in the south – 39%; and in the east– 38%; whilst in the unoccupied territories of Donbas – 32%. In these regions, there is, at the same time, great indecision – one-third of respondents cannot indicate which direction of integration they prefer. Integration with the Eurasian Union is more popular than the European direction only in Donbas and only by three percentage points (see *Anex*, p. 27).

Breakdown by age group shows that support for integration with the EU is particularly high among respondents from the 18-24 (60%) and 25-29 (59%) age groups. Support for Ukraine’s accession to the EU falls the higher the age of respondents, and in the group of people aged 60 and over is 42%. At the same time, support for the second direction of integration – with the Eurasian Union – increases the higher the age is. Among people aged 18-24, it is only 9%, whilst among the oldest age group – 22%.

In the choice of the direction of integration, a strict correlation with level of education can be observed – support strengthens for integration with the EU and weakens for integration with the Eurasian Union with an increase in level of education.

Support for their country’s pro-Western course can also be perceived in the support of Ukrainians for their county’s integration into NATO. Nearly two-thirds of respondents declare readiness to take part in a potential referendum on this subject (62%). Amongst them, a decisive majority of people supports Ukraine’s accession to NATO (64%). On the other hand, 37% from amongst those willing to take part in a referendum is against NATO accession.

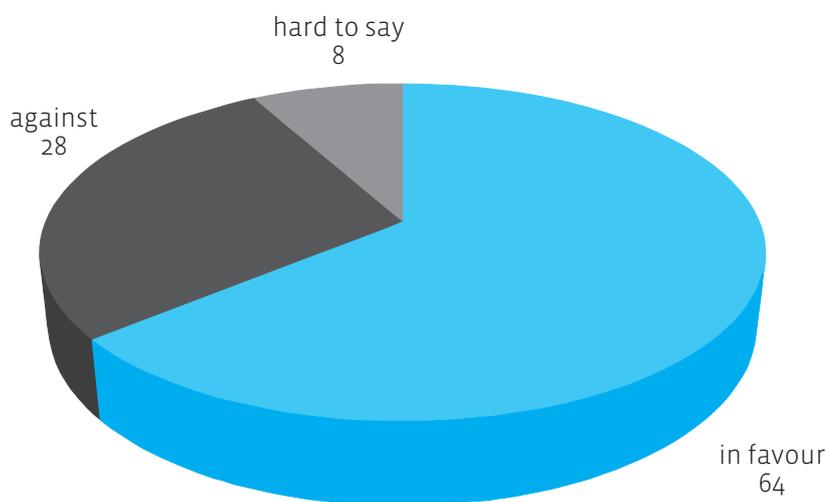


Figure 2.  
How would you vote in a referendum concerning Ukraine’s membership of NATO? Replies of Ukrainians who would participate in a referendum (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

Ukrainian society is very consistent on both issues – drawing closer to the EU and NATO: two-thirds amongst respondents who indicate the EU as a direction of integration are also in favour of Ukrainian membership of NATO.

The scale of support for NATO membership of the country depends on the place of residence, age, and education. Support for NATO accession

Ukrainians are in favour of their country joining NATO. In a potential referendum on the subject, among persons who would take part in it, two-thirds of respondents would be in favour of this solution.

predominates in the west and centre of Ukraine. Amongst residents of the south, east, and Donbas, the conviction that Ukraine should not become a member of the alliance tends to dominate (see *Anex*, p. 27). Support for integration with NATO is strongest among respondents aged 18-24, and weakest among people aged 60 and over. As in the case of support for the EU, the percentage of supporters increases with level of education regarding being in favour of membership of NATO.

Ukrainians perceive that closer ties between Ukraine and the EU may bring many benefits to Ukraine. Most respondents consider that it is in the interests of Ukraine (57%), will strengthen its international position (59%) and is important for its economic development (56%). Persons who do not agree with these statements are in the minority (21%, 14%, and 19% respectively).

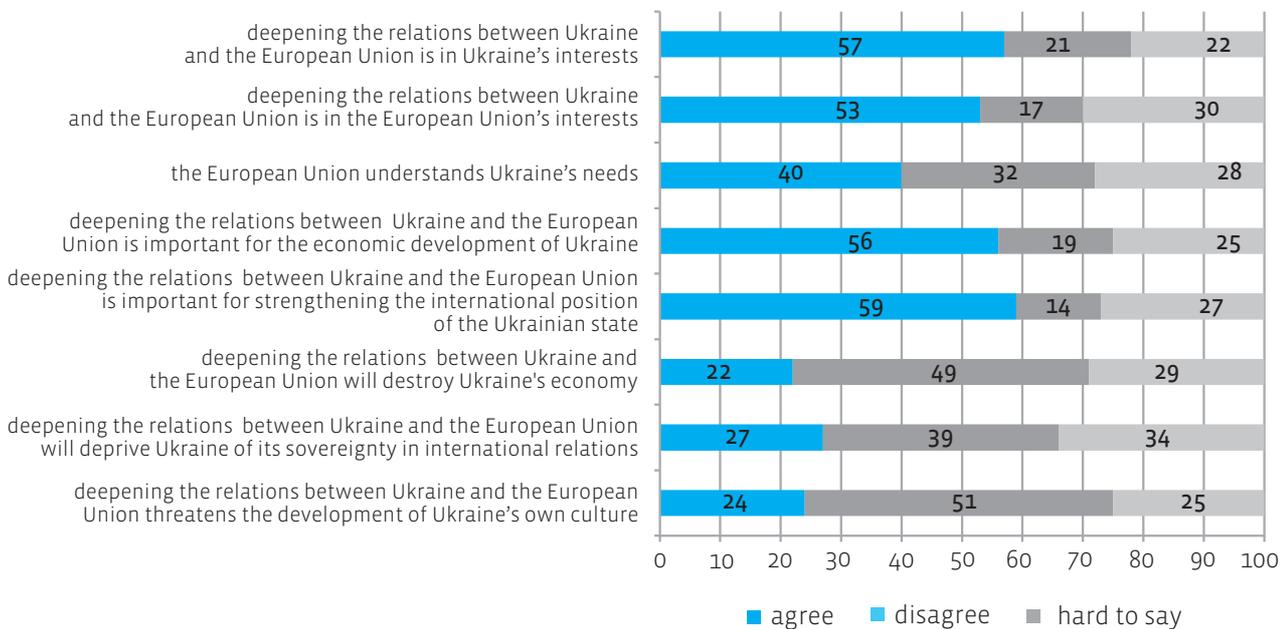


Figure 3. What is your opinion on deepening relations between Ukraine and the European Union? Replies by Ukrainians in 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

At the same time, a clear minority of respondents agree with statements concerning possible negative outcomes of integration, such as that drawing closer to the EU will deprive Ukraine of sovereignty in international relations (27%), will destroy its economy (22%), or threaten the development of its own culture (24%), whereas many more respondents reject them (39%, 49%, and 51% respectively). Over half of the respondents also consider that drawing closer is in the interest of the EU (53%). A large group also agrees with the opinion that the EU understands Ukraine (40%), although in this case, the percentage of people who think the opposite is not much lower (32%).

The biggest advantages concerning closer ties with the EU are perceived by inhabitants of western Ukraine<sup>2</sup> and better educated people.<sup>3</sup> The positive perception of closer ties with the EU decreases among the 50-59 age group. There is a particularly noticeable drop among the oldest studied group (60 and over).<sup>4</sup>

Support for Ukraine's integration with the EU is closely linked with the conviction that strengthening ties with the EU is in the interest of Ukraine. Practically all (95%) of the respondents who support Ukraine's membership of the EU indicate the benefits of closer integration. Two-thirds of those in favour of a pro-Western course for Ukraine believe that the EU understands Ukraine's needs; 89% consider that stronger ties with the EU are important for the economic development of Ukraine; and 88% are convinced of the strengthening of Ukraine's position on the international arena in connection with this integration. The supporters of the pro-Western option, are not, however, free of doubts. Some of them tend to agree that Ukraine may lose its independence in international relations (19%) and also that Ukrainian culture is threatened (15%) by deeper integration with the EU.

Ukrainians perceive the advantages of their country drawing closer to the European Union; they consider that it lies in the interests of Ukraine, and will strengthen its international position and economy. At the same time, they consider that it is also beneficial for the European Union.

Respondents who prefer Ukraine's integration with the Eurasian Union, however, often perceive a threat in integration with the EU. Over half of the respondents from this group see a threat to the Ukrainian economy (59%) and culture (52%) in integration with the EU. The positive effects of Ukraine drawing closer to the EU, on the other hand, are perceived by only a small percentage of respondents in this group – 13% perceive a positive influence on Ukrainian economy, and 16% on the international position of their country

At the same time, respondents consider that strengthening the ties between Ukraine and the EU is also in the EU's interest. Seventy per cent of supporters of the pro-Western direction share this conviction. These people also believe that the EU understands the needs of Ukraine. This group can be called Euro-enthusiasts. Their assessments are thus motivated differently than those of people who are in favour of closer ties with Russia, amongst whom half (49%) believe that a pro-Western course by Ukraine is in the interests of the EU. Forty per cent of respondents consider that Ukraine's integration

**2** Eighty-two per cent of respondents from this region consider that closer ties are in the interests of Ukraine; 55% consider that the EU understands the needs of Ukraine; 81% consider that drawing closer is important for the economic development of Ukraine; 80% believe that the EU can help in strengthening the international position of Ukraine. In the remaining regions, drawing closer to the EU is assessed less positively, whilst at the same time the percentage of people who are unable to assess the influence of drawing closer to the EU on the situation of Ukraine is growing (from 20% to 40%).

**3** The higher the level of education, the more frequently respondents agree that closer relations with the EU are in the interest of Ukraine, the EU understands the needs of Ukraine, and closer ties strengthen the position of Ukraine and are important for the economic development of the country.

**4** Half of respondents from the 60 and over age group consider that closer ties with the EU correspond to the interests of Ukraine (compared to 57% of the general population), are significant for strengthening its international position (51% compared to 59% of the general population) and economic development of Ukraine (49% compared to 56% of the general population). One-third are of the opinion that the EU understands the needs of Ukraine, whilst among all respondents this percentage is 40%.

with the EU will be in the interests of both parties. One in ten consider that such integration is in the interests of Ukraine, but does not have an opinion regarding possible benefits for the EU. Similar group of respondents believe that integration with the EU is only in the interests of the EU, but will not benefit Ukraine (10%).

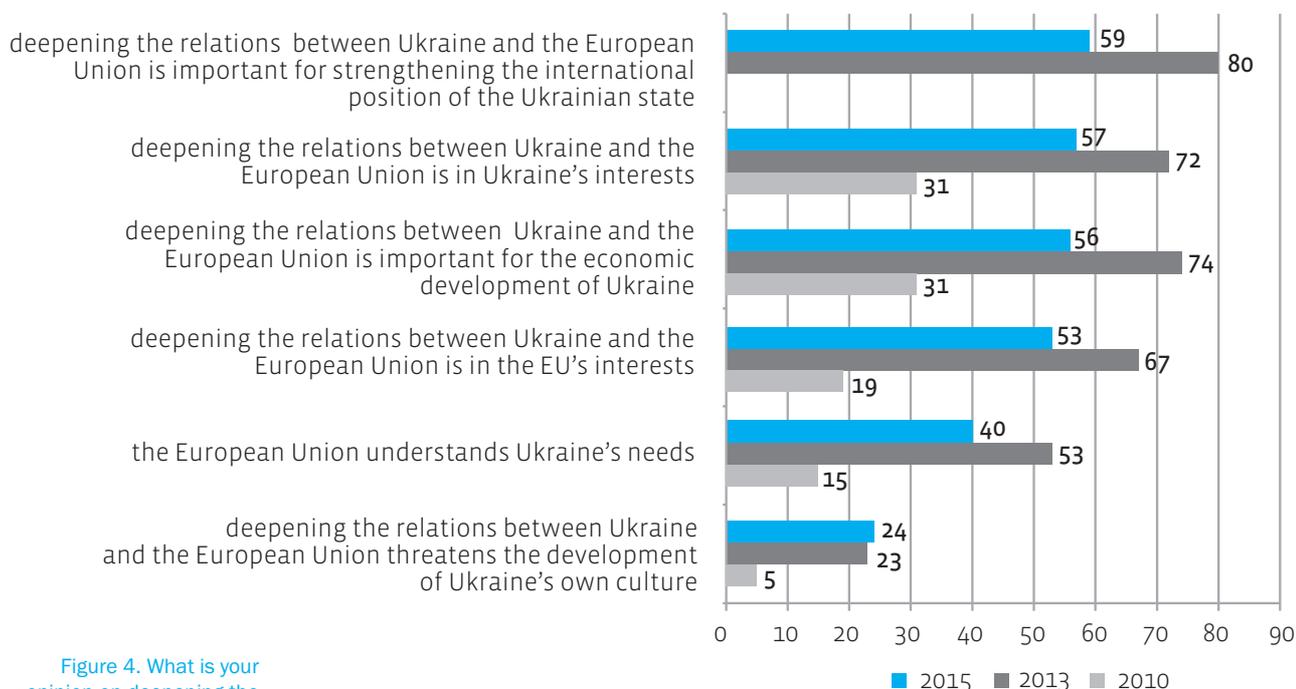


Figure 4. What is your opinion on deepening the relations between Ukraine and the European Union? Replies by Ukrainians in 2010, 2013, and 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs, 2010 and 2013, and the Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

Comparing the latest IPA study with the results from the 2013 poll shows that belief in positive consequences of stronger ties between Ukraine and the EU has weakened – in most cases by a dozen or so percentage points (by 13% to 21%, to be precise). However, this decrease is not correlated with an increase in the number of negative answers but with an increase in the group of people who feel unable to give an answer to this question. Whereas in 2013, the percentage of undecided respondents ranged between 6% and 13%, currently it oscillates within the range of 22% to 34%. Such a change shows a growing sense of uncertainty towards the EU. The protracted economic crisis within the eurozone may be having an influence on this – showing that membership of the EU is not a ticket to a continuous increase in prosperity. Secondly, some Ukrainians who rate the actions of the EU towards the current crisis in Ukraine negatively may manifest their discontent through a cooler attitude to the EU. These people may have doubts as to whether the EU will be able to help Ukraine in the future, as currently its activity disappoints them.

However, there was a very large increase in positive statements on the subject of drawing closer to the EU between 2010 and 2013 – sometimes by tens of percentage points, with a lot of people considering that the EU was the right choice for Ukraine.

The views of Ukrainians on the subject of their country drawing closer to Russia are clearly less favourable than in the case of drawing closer to the EU. Negative opinions about Russia often outweigh positive ones, or there are sometimes a similar numbers of positive and negative answers.



On the whole, Ukrainians tend to disagree that Russia understands Ukraine's needs and that closer relations with Russia are in Ukraine's interest. Almost half the respondents see Russia as a threat to Ukraine's sovereignty in international relations, while the opinions are almost equally split regarding the importance of Russia for Ukrainian economy and culture. However, a clear majority thinks that Russia has an interest in deepening its relations with Ukraine.

Figure 5. What is your position on a possible deepening of relations between Ukraine and Russia? Replies by Ukrainians in 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

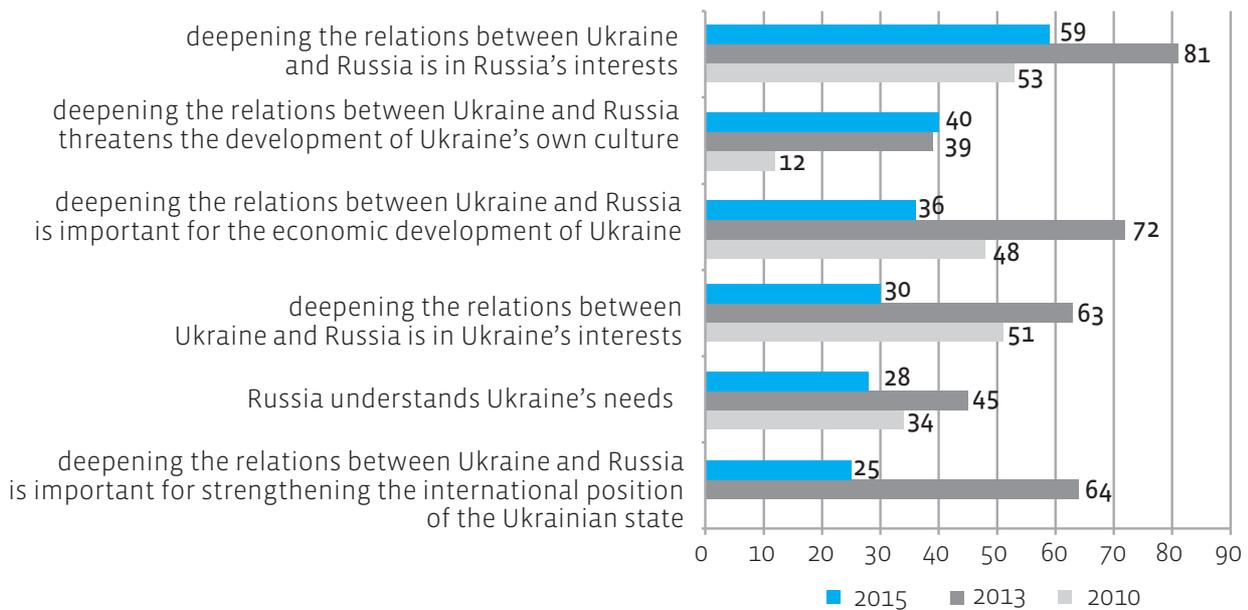


Figure 6. What is your position on a possible deepening of relations between Ukraine and Russia? Positive replies by Ukrainians in 2010, 2013, and 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs 2010 and 2013 and the Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

A comparison of respondents' answers concerning the relations with Russia in 2013 and 2015 shows that the percentage of positive answers has fallen in this case by 17-39 percentage points. In this case, however, not only has the group of undecided respondents grown (currently 21-32 percentage points), but also the number of those who negatively assess the prospect of closer relations with Russia increased by 4-18 percentage points. The percentage of respondents who agree that closer relations with Russia are in the interests of Ukraine, are important for Ukraine's economic development or will strengthen Ukraine's international position has decreased by half. This clearly shows an increase in distrust of Russia and a belief that a possible integration with Russia is not a desirable scenario.

A breakdown by region shows significant differences in attitudes towards the prospect of closer relations between Ukraine and Russia. Western Ukraine is the area of the country that is most critical of relations with Russia, followed by the centre, and then south and east of Ukraine. However, it should be emphasised that the unoccupied territories of the Donbas region deviate somewhat from this pattern – respondents from this area perceive various aspects of closer ties with Russia more negatively than inhabitants of eastern regions.

The opinions of younger respondents stand out in particular in questions concerning various aspects of relations with Russia.<sup>5</sup> Criticism of relations

<sup>5</sup> Barely 18% of people from the 18-24 age group consider that establishment of closer ties with Russia is consistent with the interests of Ukraine (compared to 30% of respondents in general) and that Russia understands the needs of Ukraine (compared to 28% of respondents in general). Forty-four per cent of respondents from this age group state that stronger ties with Russia will damage the Ukrainian economy (36% among respondents in general), and somewhat less than one quarter (24%) consider that drawing closer is important for economic development of Ukraine (compared to 36% of respondents in general). Half of the respondents in the 18-24 age group consider that closer relations with Russia threatens the development of Ukrainian culture, whilst among respondents in general this percentage is 40%.

with Russia also intensifies with an increase in education levels. The better their education is, the more likely respondents are to agree that stronger ties with Russia are a threat to Ukraine's sovereignty, to disagree that closer relations with Russia will strengthen the international position of Ukraine, and that integration with Russia is consistent with the interests of Ukraine.

A drop in trust towards Russia and an increased reluctance for closer ties between Ukraine and Russia is noticeable among Ukrainians.

Just as respondents who are in favour of pro-Western integration positively assess its effects, so, too, supporters of a pro-Russian direction mostly have a good opinion about the effects of drawing closer to Russia. Among supporters of an eastern direction of integration, 85% agree that closer ties with Russia are consistent with the interests of Ukraine, 78% believe that Russia understands the needs of their country, 89% perceive benefits for the development of the Ukrainian economy, and 68% believe in strengthening Ukraine's international position in result of closer relations with Russia. However, among supporters of a pro-Russian direction there are also small groups of respondents who call into question the positive effects of integration with Russia, even though they are generally in favour of this direction for Ukraine. Sixteen per cent of the supporters of membership of the Eurasian Union consider that strengthening ties with Russia undermines the position of Ukraine in the international arena, 8% expect negative influence on Ukrainian culture, and 6% consider that it would damage the economy of Ukraine.

Supporters of the pro-Western course agree that closer relations with Russia would negatively affect the position of Ukraine on the international scene (63%) and the Ukrainian economy (54%), and that it constitutes a threat to Ukrainian culture (58%). At the same time, among supporters of the pro-European option, 21% believe that closer ties with Russia are important for the Ukrainian economy, 14% believe that they will strengthen Ukraine's international position, and 17% believe that Russia understands the needs of Ukraine.

Both among supporters of integration with the EU and supporters of integration with the Eurasian Union, over half consider that strengthening of ties between Ukraine and Russia is consistent with the interests of Russia itself. Sixty-one per cent of respondents declaring support for a pro-European course for Ukraine are convinced of such a convergence of interests, as are 86% of supporters of an alliance with the Eurasian Union. Also, in response to the question whether stronger relations with Ukraine are in the interest of the EU, supporters of both the pro-European and pro-Russian direction tend to agree more than in the other questions about the consequences of deepening relations with the EU and the Eurasian Union. This shows that in Ukrainian society, there seems to exist an opinion about Ukraine as a geopolitical trophy in the struggle between East and West.

The clear pro-Western attitude of Ukraine is shown, however, by the presentation of positive answers to all questions concerning the EU and Russia. Differences in favour of the EU in some cases are over 20 percentage points. Ukrainians associate integration with the EU in comparison with Russia much more frequently with an opportunity to strengthen the international position of Ukraine and its economy.



Figure 7. What is your position on a possible deepening of relations between Ukraine and the European Union/Russia? Replies by Ukrainians in 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

IPA studies conducted in previous years showed that there was a significant group (42%) in Ukraine which advocated simultaneously drawing closer to both the EU and Russia. Current results indicate that this group is smaller than ever. Only every tenth respondent acknowledges that both directions of integration are consistent with Ukraine's interests (positively answering both the question as to whether closer ties with the EU are in Ukraine's interests and the same question about stronger ties with Russia). Similarly, 10% of respondents consider that both the EU and Russia are aware of Ukraine's interests, and also that closer ties with both Russia and the EU will strengthen Ukraine in the international arena. At the same time, every tenth Ukrainian considers that closer ties with each of these two partners threatens the independence of Ukraine in international relations. Eight per cent of respondents believe that neither of these two options is a threat.

Ukrainians are, however, divided as to whether their country is moving towards the West (towards the EU). The largest group of respondents claim Ukraine has neither drawn closer to nor moved away from the EU over the last year (44%). Similar numbers of respondents chose opposite answers: 21% believe that the country has drawn closer to the EU and 23% that it has moved further away.

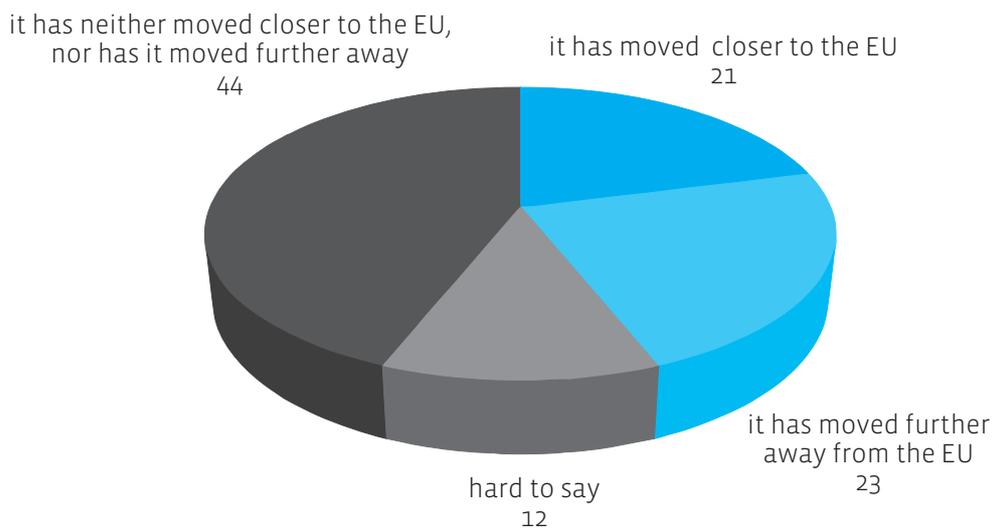


Figure 8. Has Ukraine moved closer to or further away from the European Union over the last 12 months? Replies by Ukrainians in 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

When the answers are broken down by region, it turns out that only respondents from Western Ukraine most frequently opted for the answer “Ukraine and the EU have moved closer to each other over the past 12 months”. A total of 37% of respondents in western Ukraine gave this answer. In the other regions, the most popular answer was that little had changed in relations between the EU and Ukraine. In southern and eastern regions, as well as in the Donbas region, more respondents believe that the EU and Ukraine have moved further away from each other rather than closer together.

Respondents’ opinions on Ukraine’s closeness to the EU over the last 12 months reveal a strong correlation with age. People aged 60 and older less frequently believe that Ukraine and the EU have moved closer together (17%), while this view is most frequently held by those aged 18-24 (25%).

Ukrainians are divided in their opinions as to whether their country has moved closer to or further away from the European Union.

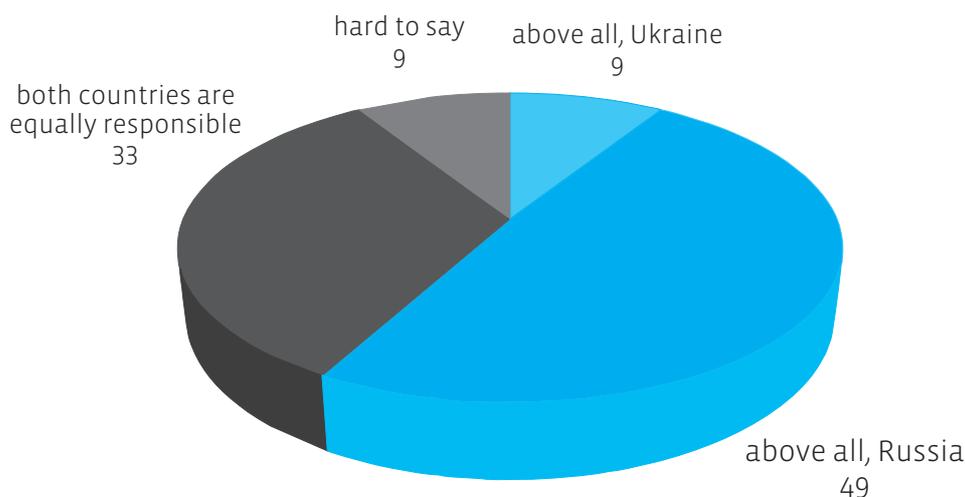
Ukrainians are divided on whether their country has moved closer to the EU depending on whether they are in favour of European integration or prefer to move closer to Russia. The most common view among supporters of integration with the Eurasian Union is that Ukraine has moved neither closer to nor further away from the EU over the past 12 months (51%). However, at present, in this group there is also the widespread belief that the distance between Ukraine and the EU is increasing (33%). Among the proponents of a European path to integration for Ukraine, the percentage of those who believe that Ukraine has moved closer to the EU (36%) is almost identical with the percentage of those who believe that this issue has remained unchanged over the last year (37%). Almost one-fifth (18%) consider that Ukraine has moved further away from the EU.

A sharp fall of support for closer integration of Ukraine with Russia can be explained by the belief that the latter is responsible for the continuing conflict. This is the view taken by half of the respondents (49%). However, one-

third of respondents believe that both countries – Russia and Ukraine – are responsible for the conflict, while 9% only blame Ukraine.

Figure 9.  
Who do you think is responsible for the Ukrainian-Russian conflict? Replies by Ukrainians in 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.



More Ukrainians point to the guilt of both countries than did respondents from Poland who answered the same question in February 2015. At that time, barely one-fifth (20%) of Poles claimed that the blame lies with both Ukraine and Russia, while 61% stated that Russia is primarily responsible for the conflict.

Once again, respondents' answers depend on their age. This is because the percentage of respondents who blame Ukraine for the conflict increases with age. In the 18-24 age group, only 5% of respondents believe that Ukraine is responsible, as compared with 12% of those who are 60 years old or above.

Differences in answers were also determined by regional factors. In the west of Ukraine, 5% placed most of the blame for the war on Ukraine, while 67% think that Russia is the guilty party. Respondents from the Donbas region are at the opposite end of the spectrum – 18% mostly blame Ukraine for hostilities, whereas 24% regard Russia as responsible. The most common view held by respondents in southern and eastern Ukraine as well as in the Donbas region is that both countries carry equal blame for the conflict.

When education is taken into account, there is a clear correlation indicating that the higher the level of education, the more likely respondents are to believe that Russia bears responsibility for the conflict and the less inclined they are to regard both sides as equally guilty.

Half of Ukrainians consider that Russia is responsible for the current conflict. One-third consider that both countries bear equal responsibility.

### Positive Assessment of Western Policy

It can be presumed that the support for Ukraine's pro-Western orientation will largely depend on the assessment of the policies of the EU and its member

states towards Ukraine and in relation to the Ukraine-Russia conflict. These include political initiatives and political attitudes, and the economic or military support offered. Such activities can encourage or discourage the strengthening of ties with the West and strengthen or weaken the trust that Ukrainians have in the Western world, including the EU.

Half of Ukrainians rate the policy of Western countries towards the conflict highly. Positive opinions prevail over negative ones. Poland's activities (57%) are perceived best, then those of Germany (52%), the EU (51%), and the United States (46%). The policy of the United States garners the worst opinions (35%), while negative assessments of the EU, Germany, and Poland are held by: 29%, 26%, and 22% of respondents respectively. As in earlier questions, a relatively high proportion of respondents – one-fifth – does not have an opinion on this matter.

Half of Ukrainians rate the policy of the West towards the Ukraine-Russia conflict highly. Polish policy garners the most praise.

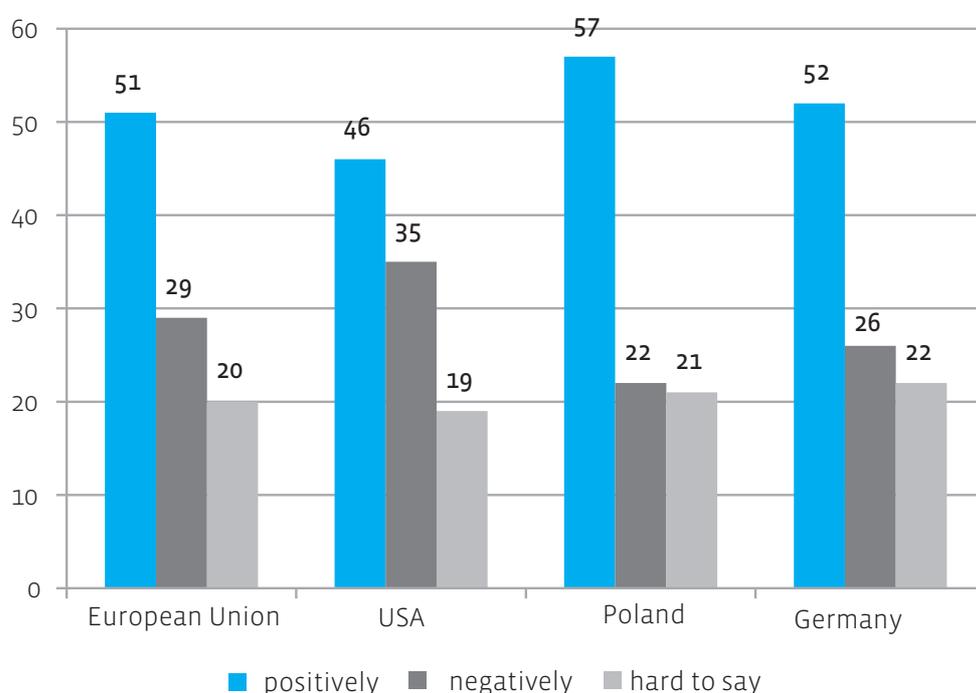


Figure 10. How do you assess the policies of the European Union, United States, Poland, and Germany towards the Ukrainian-Russian conflict? Replies by Ukrainians in 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

Positive and negative assessments of the policies pursued by the above-mentioned countries and the EU partly coincide with one another. One in every five respondents hold negative views of all these countries, while 60% of the respondents do not give a negative score to any Western country or the EU.

The number of respondents with a positive view of the policies adopted by Western countries in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict declines the further east one goes. Those respondents who have a positive opinion of the policies of the EU, Poland, and Germany are more inclined than the respondents as a whole to support a European path to integration (the level of support for EU entry among those with a positive opinion of the policies of the EU, Poland and

Germany varies between 73% and 79%, while the average is 51%). This indicates that the positive assessment of the actions of the EU itself as well as those of its member states correlates with the pro-European stance of Ukrainians. At the same time, however, one-fifth of those who have a negative opinion of the policies of the EU, Poland, and Germany also favour a Western direction of integration, which may be an indication of the impatience on part of the Ukrainian public with the thus far results of the policies of the key Western partners. At the same time, those respondents who have a positive view of the actions of the United States are more in favour of Ukrainian membership of NATO than the other respondents.

### Expectation Towards Western Partners – Humanitarian Aid for Refugees and Economic Support

Ukrainians above all expect humanitarian aid for refugees and economic aid from the European Union. They less frequently point to lifting visas and sending military equipment and training the Ukrainian army. One-third would like troops from EU countries to be sent to Ukraine.

Facing armed conflict in the east of the country and deep economic crisis, Ukraine expects concrete support – which meets its real needs – from the international community, especially from its closest neighbours. The most expected support – indicated by three-quarters of respondents – is humanitarian aid for refugees (75%) and economic aid (73%). Over half of respondents also expect the lifting of visas (56%) as well as sending military equipment to eastern Ukraine and training the Ukrainian army (55%), while every third respondent would like EU states to send their troops to Ukraine.

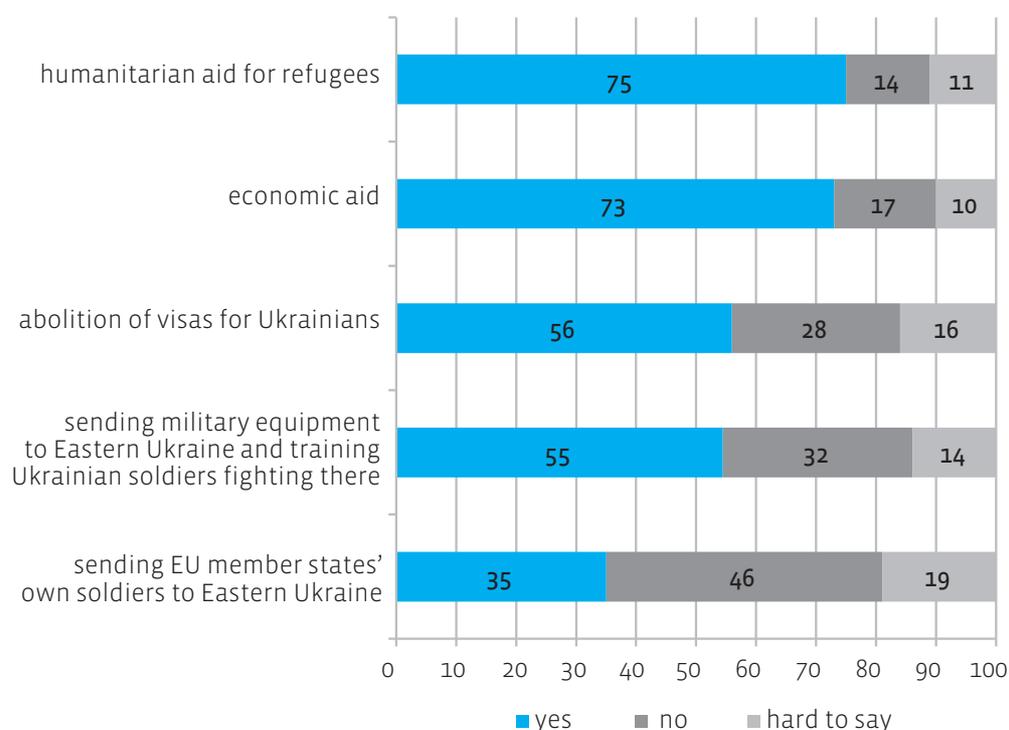


Figure 11. What kind of support do you expect for Ukraine from the European Union and its member states, including Poland and Germany? Replies by Ukrainians in 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

The high percentage of people who expect help for refugees should not come as a surprise. According to data presented by the United Nations from May 2015, the annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbas have led to a situation where about 1,300,000 people have already decided – or been forced – to migrate to other regions of Ukraine that are not affected by the war.<sup>6</sup>

Answers indicating the need for economic help in the current disastrous state of the Ukrainian economy are also understandable. In the course of last year (2014), Ukraine's GDP fell by 6.8%, and in the first three months of 2015 by 18% in comparison with the first three months of 2014. Inflation in April reached 61% in relation to the previous year, which resulted in a clear impoverishment of society.<sup>7</sup> In February 2015, the minimum wage fell to 1,218 hryvna (approximately 50 euros), in other words, less than it is in Bangladesh, Ghana, and Zimbabwe.<sup>8</sup>

What is surprising, however, is that only around half of Ukrainians consider that the lifting of visas would be a preferable form of support for their country (although twice the number of people support this solution than oppose it). This may be due to several factors. Respondents may not perceive the link between the lifting of visas and support for Ukraine – on the contrary, some may even judge that if some inhabitants go abroad, this may be detrimental for their country. In Ukraine, anxious voices can be heard saying that too many people have already emigrated and that there won't be anyone left to rebuild the country. Respondents may at the same time relate the question to their own personal situation (as this issue directly concerns citizens). In this case, no opinion – or not recognising the need for such help – may be linked to the fact that many Ukrainians still do not go abroad (and do not even move within their own country), and, furthermore, do not even possess a passport. Surveys conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs in 2013 show that barely 31% of Ukrainians possessed a passport entitling them to travel abroad. At the same time, 40% emphasised that they had never been abroad. Part of the public may also feel too poor to travel. Thus, for a large part of Ukrainian society, the lifting of visas is a purely hypothetical act.

The relatively low support for the demand to send armies from other countries to help Ukraine suggests that some Ukrainians may fear that their territory will be transformed into an area of wider confrontation between the West and Russia. It seems that they prefer to make use of equipment and face the attackers themselves, without relying on the armed forces of EU countries.

Expectations of help vary depending on a respondent's region of origin. Expectations of economic aid are much stronger among respondents in the west (83%) and the centre of the country (78%) than in the south (61%), east (67%), and the Donbas region (65%). There is also more expectation in west and

<sup>6</sup> [http://zn.ua/UKRAINE/v-ukraine-chislo-vnutrennih-bezhencev-dostiglo-1-3-mln-chelovek-oon-176231\\_.html](http://zn.ua/UKRAINE/v-ukraine-chislo-vnutrennih-bezhencev-dostiglo-1-3-mln-chelovek-oon-176231_.html)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2015-06-16/okret-na-mieliznie-poglebiajace-sie-problemy-ukrainskiej>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ekonomia.rp.pl/artykul/1197569.html>

central Ukraine (75% and 64%, respectively, with an average of 55%) of military aid (weapons and training) from Western countries. Moreover, the percentage of people in western and central Ukraine who expect direct military intervention from the West is higher than the percentage of respondents who do not desire such help (56% as against 33% in the west, and 41% as against 35% in the centre). On the other hand, the number of respondents in all regions (including the Donbas) who would like to see visas waived is greater than the number of people who do not expect support in this area. The one exception in this case are the eastern regions in Ukraine (Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, and Kharkiv oblasts).

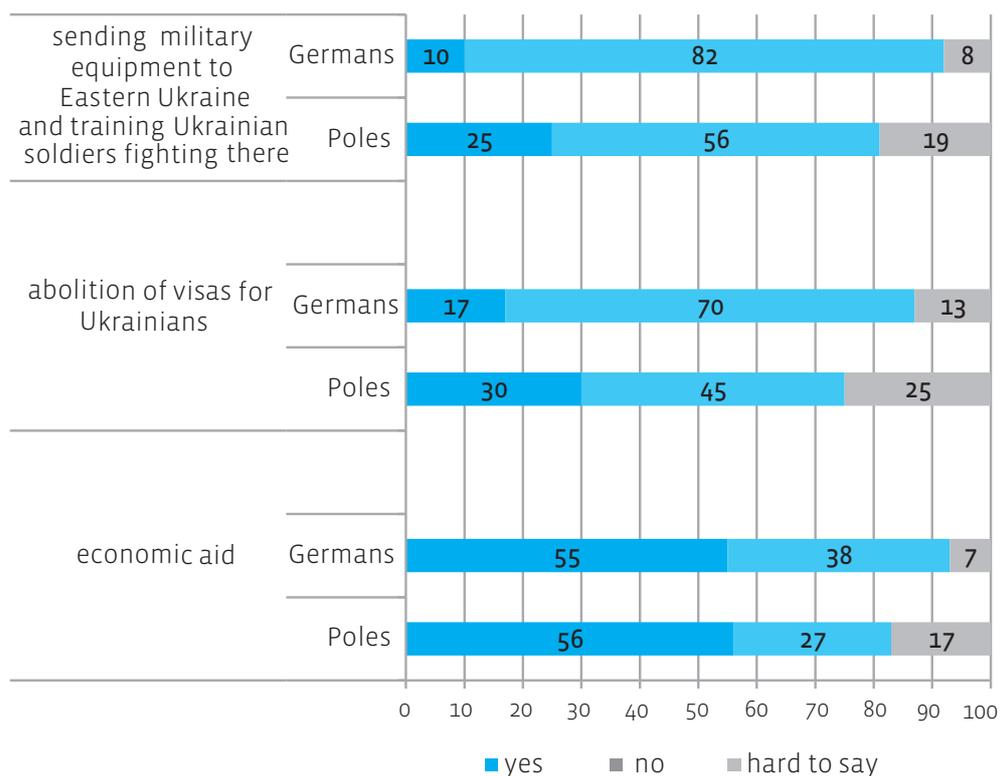
The higher the respondents' level of education the more likely they are to expect help from countries in the West.

Moreover, the help expected by respondents depends on their age. Overall, EU involvement is desired more by respondents aged 18-24 and 24-29 than by respondents in other age groups. On the other hand, people aged 60 and above are more opposed to EU involvement than respondents as a whole.

The one exception concerns the issue of humanitarian aid for Ukraine – in this case, differences in the respondents' age are not visible. Moreover, the higher the respondents' level of education, the more likely they are to expect help from countries in the West.

Figure 12. What kind of support should your country give Ukraine? Replies by Poles and Germans in February 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.



Significant differences can be perceived while comparing the expectations of Ukrainian society with the opinions of Poles and Germans on assistance to Ukraine. Although the percentage of Poles and Germans in favour of their

respective country imparting economic aid to Ukraine is relatively high, amounting to over half of the respondents, it is decidedly lower than the percentage of Ukrainians who expect such aid. Whereas, half of Ukrainians would like Ukraine to receive support for their army from EU countries, only one-tenth of Germans and one-quarter of Poles in February 2015 were in favour of sending military equipment to Ukraine or training the Ukrainian army. Scepticism in Poland and Germany is also prevalent regarding the lifting of visas. The expectations of over half of Ukrainians in this matter is supported by only 30% of surveyed Poles and 17% of surveyed Germans.

From a comparison of the above data, it transpires that significant differences exist between the level of expectations of residents of Ukraine regarding foreign help for their country and the readiness to impart such aid on the part of societies of two key EU countries, i.e., Germany and Poland.

### **Support for the Tightening of Sanctions**

As a result of the annexation of Crimea and military involvement in eastern Ukraine, the EU imposed political and economic sanctions on Russia, the main purpose of which was to support Ukraine and force Russia to stop its aggressive policy towards this country. Although sanctions are having a negative effect on the Russian economy, they have not significantly changed the Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine.

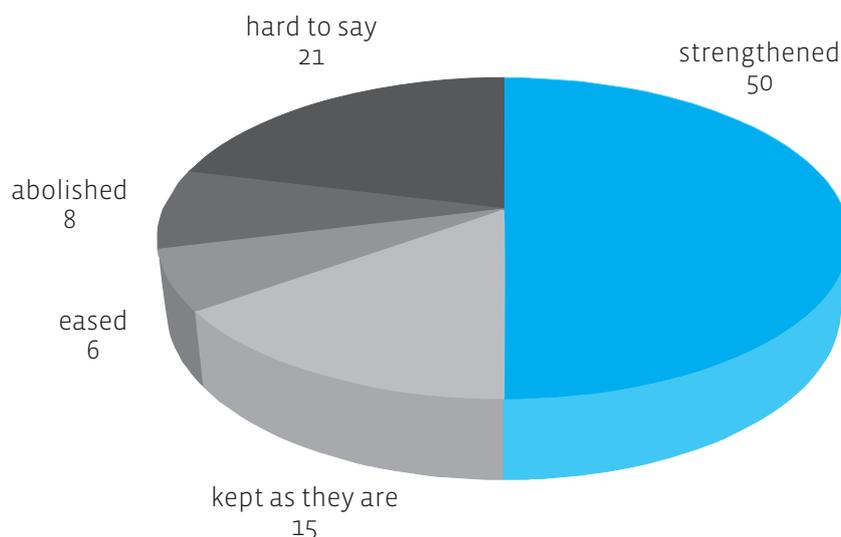
Sanctions enjoy strong support in Ukraine. Two-thirds of respondents are in favour of maintaining or tightening them, with 15% of respondents in favour of maintaining them in their current form, although 50% consider that the current sanctions are insufficient and need to be tightened. These people probably not only think that tightening sanctions is a legitimate step (as Russian troops are intensively involved in the conflict), but also that additional sanctions will encourage the Russian government to stop its aggressive actions.

A clear minority of surveyed Ukrainians want sanctions to be relaxed (6%) or lifted (8%), and the remainder are undecided (21%), which in this case is relatively high. Such a large percentage of undecided respondents may indicate that many people do not understand what link they have with the situation in Ukraine.

Half of Ukrainians are in favour of tightening sanctions against Russia.

Figure 13.  
The current sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU should be: Replies by Ukrainians in 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.



Views regarding the future of sanctions depend on respondents' perception of who is responsible for the outbreak of the conflict. The largest part of those respondents who believe Ukraine is responsible demand that sanctions against Russia be lifted (40%). On the other hand, the prevailing opinion among those who see Russia as culpable is that sanctions need to be increased (75%). Furthermore, those respondents who believe both sides are equally responsible for the conflict are more inclined to favour increasing sanctions than other solutions, although not so willingly as the previous group does (32%). At the same time, however, the largest number of respondents who blame both sides for the conflict have no opinion on the future of sanctions (36%).

Those in favour of increasing sanctions are at the same time more inclined than others to believe that aid should be provided to refugees, Ukraine should receive economic assistance and military support in the form of equipment and training of soldiers, and visas should be waived. On the other hand, compared with these forms of support, they are less in favour of the idea of sending the army to eastern Ukraine, although they are more favourably disposed to this idea than the respondents in general.

Support for the sanctions imposed by Western countries varies from region to region in Ukraine. The desire for tougher sanctions is strongest in the west of Ukraine (74%), and least popular in Donbas (26%) and the east of the country (27%). The percentage of people in all regions of Ukraine who believe that sanctions should be increased is higher than the percentage of respondents who claim that sanctions should be lifted.

Whether or not to increase sanctions against Russia is also strongly related to age. Respondents aged 60 and above stand out from the others in this respect. They are more opposed to sanctions than the respondents as a whole (13%). The strongest support for tougher sanctions comes from respondents aged 18-24 (55%) as well as those in the 40-49 age group (56%). The high level of support for broadening sanctions among 40-year olds may be

due, as has already been mentioned above, to the strong opposition to Russia's current policy precisely among this group of respondents, as well as to the fact that they are bearing the main economic burden of the war. Differences in education levels are also important – the higher their education level, the more likely the respondents were to support increasing sanctions and the less inclined to believe that sanctions should be lifted.

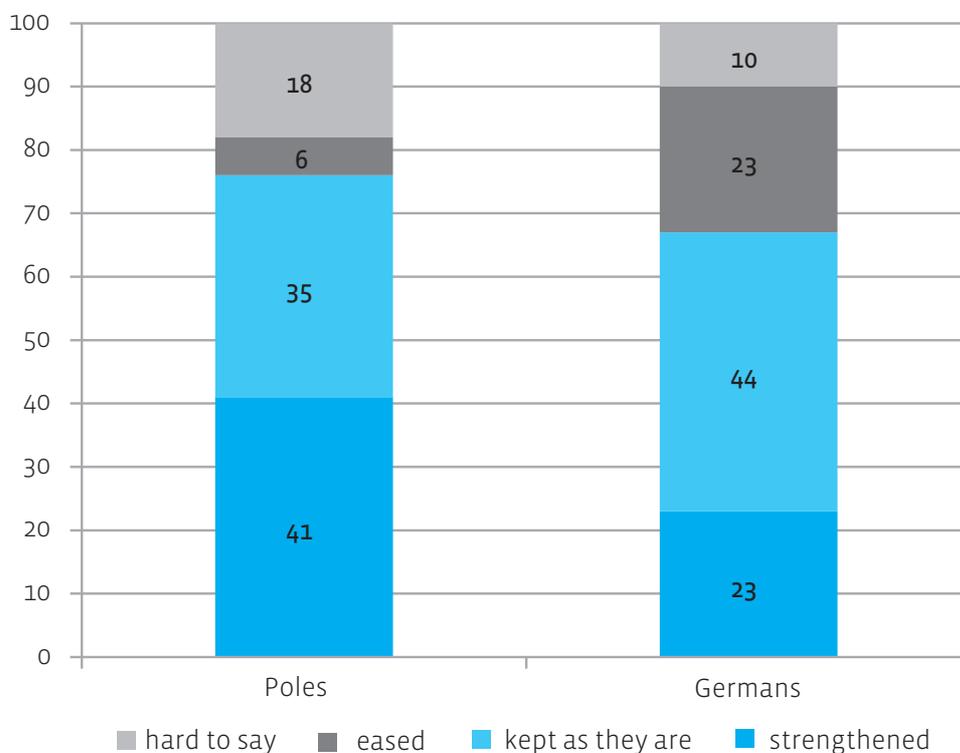


Figure 14. The current sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU should be: Replies by Poles and Germans in February 2015 (%)

Source: The Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

When asked about the preferred future of sanctions in February 2015,<sup>9</sup> Poles and Germans were in favour of tightening them or leaving them at current levels, with Polish responses, in particular, being close to Ukrainian ones in the matter of the possibility of tightening sanctions. A small minority of Poles were in favour of easing sanctions in February 2015, and this percentage is identical with the current percentage of Ukrainians sharing this opinion. One should note, however, that these results are not fully comparable, because in the research in Ukraine, respondents also had the possibility of answering that sanctions should be lifted.

## Conclusions

The data presented here clearly show that in spite of significant costs borne by Ukrainian society, the European choice still enjoys support among most of Ukrainian society, whilst support for closer political and economic ties with

<sup>9</sup> And thus at a time when the decision in the EU about a successive prolongation of sanctions in their existing form had not yet been taken.

Russia is falling. At the same time, traditional divisions in Ukrainian society are noticeable, i.e., between inhabitants of western regions and the young and better educated on the one hand, and more Eurosceptic groups in the east and older Ukrainians on the other. One major factor behind this division may be Ukrainians' access to information on the EU and its involvement in the crisis. While overall support for European integration remains relatively steady, there is certain impatience with the results of EU-Ukrainian relations and perceived lack of progress in many fields. This clearly points to the need for improving the communication by the EU and its member states and to more energetically counter Russian propaganda aimed at the Ukrainian population. Moreover, such steps should not be limited to the young and educated, although strengthening their support for a pro-Western approach is also necessary.

Ukrainians also generally positively assess the policies of their Western allies. They support the economic sanctions imposed on Russia and would like them to be tightened. At the same time, they expect clear support from EU countries, with the priority for them being economic and humanitarian aid. For Poland and the other Western countries involved in the Ukrainian transformations, the challenge is to continue to meet these expectations in such a way that the process of democratic and market reforms in Ukraine becomes a success.

Important activities have already been arranged – Western countries and international institutions are planning to invest billions of euros to support Ukraine. Support mechanisms from the EU include – 1.8 billion euros as Macro Financial Assistance coming from the EU budget,<sup>10</sup> 1.4 billion euros as grants, loans from European Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (up to eight billion euros), and support through the Neighbourhood Investment Facility. What is more, the EU is ready to help modernise Ukraine's gas transit system and provide technical assistance during the process of reforms.<sup>11</sup> The International Monetary Fund will provide a 15-billion-euro loan, while the United States has declared readiness to give Ukraine two billion dollars in 2015 as well as plan further support.<sup>12</sup> In January 2015, Polish officials declared the provision of Ukraine 100 million euros in financial support.<sup>13</sup> In April this year, the German national bank KfW announced that it will support the reconstruction of eastern Ukraine with the amount of 500 million euros.<sup>14</sup> What is crucial now is the appropriate exploitation of financial resources by Ukraine and the further readiness of the West to develop support for this country and adjust it to the contemporary need of reforming the Ukrainian state.

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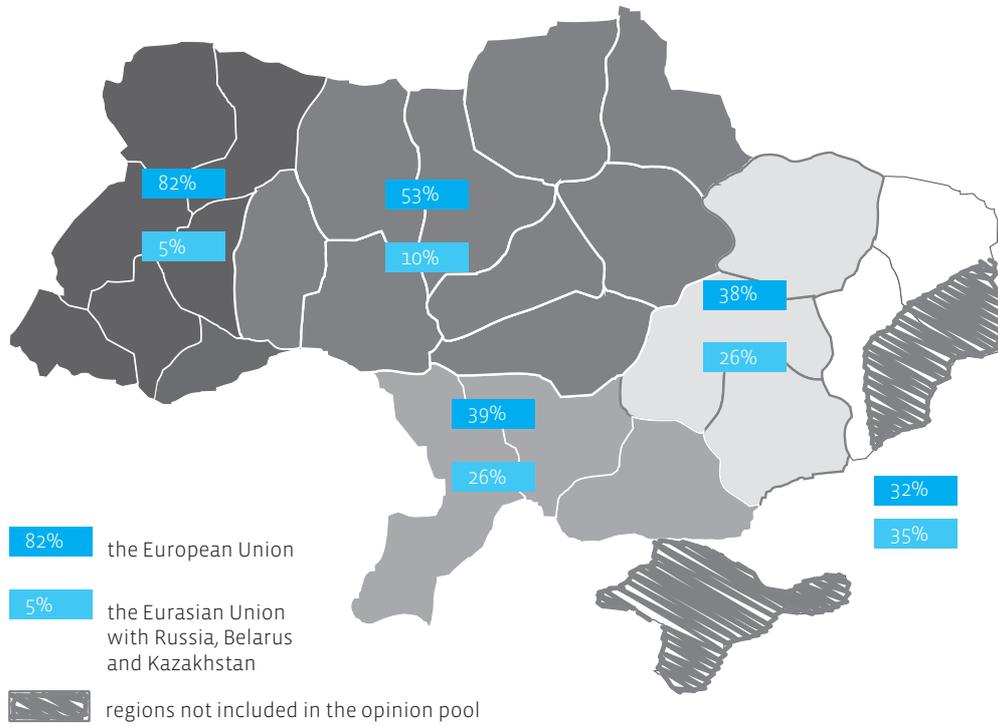
**10** [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-3020\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-3020_en.htm)

**11** [http://europa.eu/newsroom/files/pdf/ukraine\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu/newsroom/files/pdf/ukraine_en.pdf)

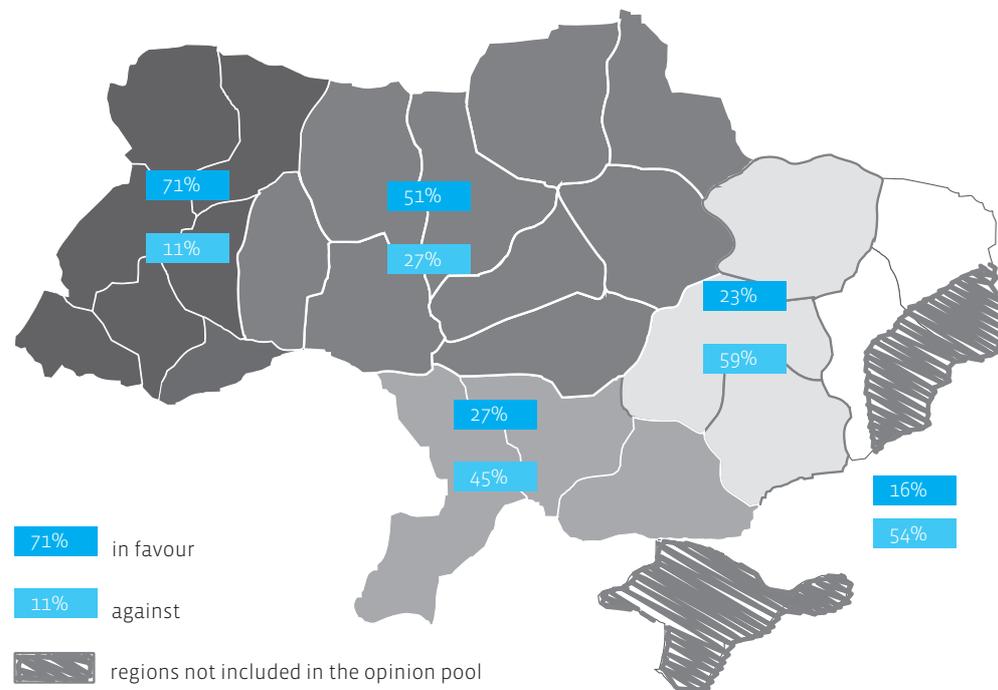
**12** <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/41903692-5bc3-11e5-a28b-50226830d644.html#axzz3nt7C3RWP>

**13** <http://tvn24bis.pl/ze-swiata,75/rzad-polski-zapoczatkowal-program-kredytowania-ukrainy-jaceniuk-to-ogromne-wsparcie-calej-gospodarki,507398.html>

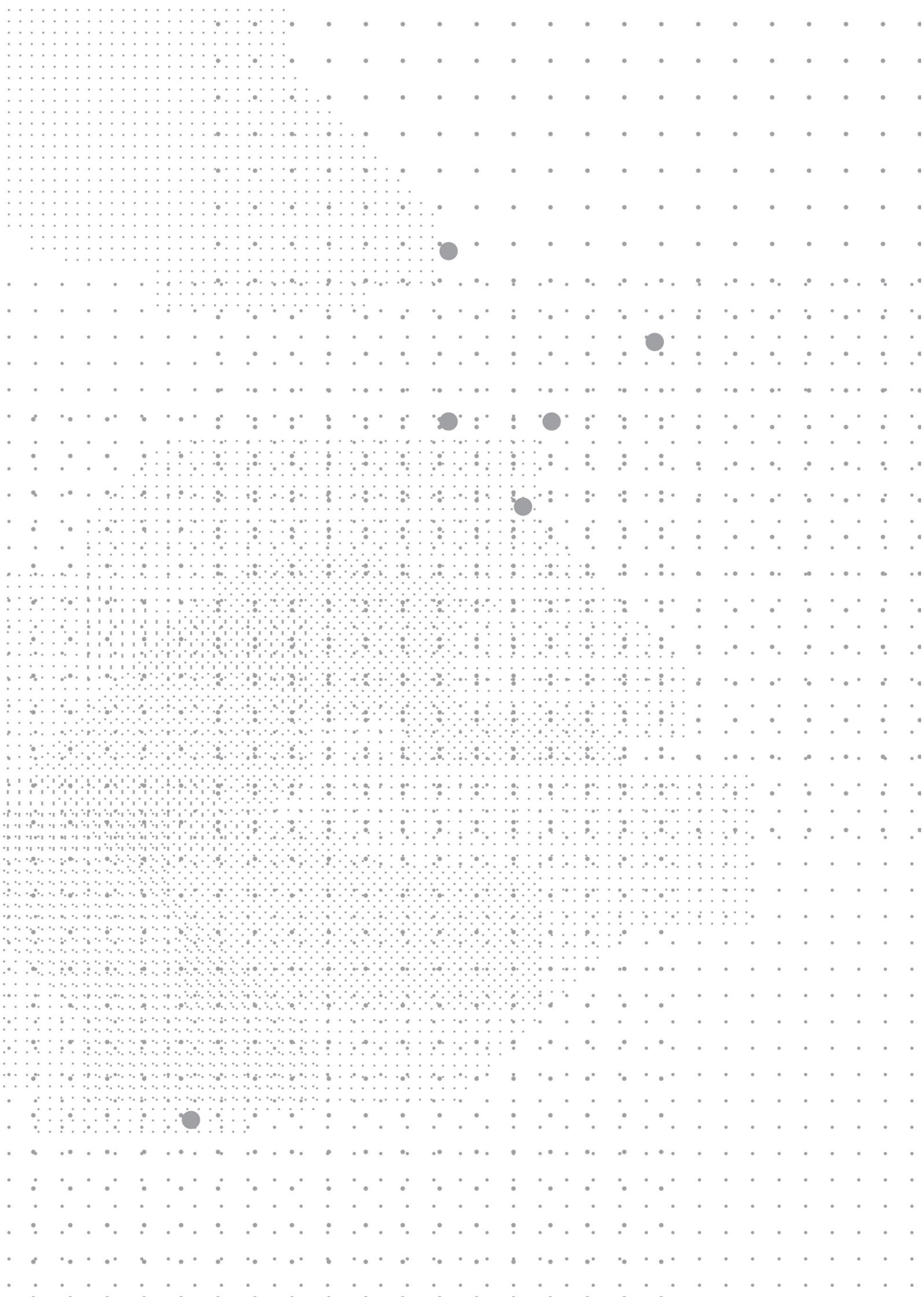
**14** <http://www.money.pl/gospodarka/wiadomosci/artukul/pomoc-dla-ukrainy-niemcy-udziela-500-mln,40,0,1815592.html>



Map 1:  
Which union should Ukraine join? Replies by Ukrainians in 2015 (regions, %)



Map 2:  
How would you vote in a referendum concerning Ukraine's membership of NATO? Replies of Ukrainians who would participate in a referendum (regions, %)





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### List of joint publications by the Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Foundation on Eastern policy:

- J. Kucharczyk, A. Łada, Ł. Wenerski, *Close together or far apart? Poles, Germans and Russians on the Russia-Ukraine crisis*, 2015 [PL, EN]
- A. Łada, *Eastern policy 2014. Five misunderstandings between Poles and Germans*, 2014 [PL, DE]
- G. Gromadzki, Ł. Wenerski, *A challenge for liberal democracy*, 2014 [EN]
- J. Fomina, Ł. Wenerski, Y. Taran, *Language, Identity, Politics – the Myth of two Ukraines*, 2014 [PL, EN]
- G. Gromadzki, Ł. Wenerski, *Society – the decisive player in Ukrainian politics*, 2014 [EN]
- G. Gromadzki, Ł. Wenerski, *Going forward anyway: the Polish view of the crisis of the Eastern Partnership*, 2013 [EN]
- J. Kucharczyk, A. Łada, C. Ochmann, Ł. Wenerski, *Politics and everyday life. A German view of Poland and Russia*, 2013 [PL, DE, RU]