

Etatism versus liberalism: Economic attitudes in Poland after the world crisis

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Abstract

Purpose: The paper analyses etatist and liberal economic attitudes in Poland, their changes after the last economic crisis, and the differences in this respect between socio-occupational groups with a particular focus on managers, professionals, and business owners, on the one hand, and other working and non-working groups, on the other hand.

Methodology: Individual-level data from three representative surveys conducted in 2012,² 2016, and 2017 on stratified random samples of the whole adult Polish population are analyzed.

Findings: Despite public legitimization of economy based on private ownership and the free market, Polish public opinion still shows strong preference for public ownership and state interventionism. This preference slowly diminishes. It differs between various socio-occupational groups: managers, professionals, and business owners are more liberal than others, especially non-working people and farmers.

Research implications: Since strengthening the regulatory and controlling functions of the government in economic life is the recent tendency in Poland and other countries, the slowly growing liberal attitudes may counteract this direction. So far, however, the Polish public opinion strongly supports governmental intervention in the economy.

Originality: So far, no one wrote a similar analysis of changes in etatist and liberal economic attitudes in the post-crisis Poland.

Keywords: attitudes, etatism, liberalism, governmental intervention, capitalism

JEL: Z13, L59, P10, B55, A19

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The general background, research problems, hypotheses, and data sources

The last world economic crisis had threefold consequences for the academic and public debate on the economy which are, to some extent, intertwined. The first consequence concerns the possible pace and new forms of economic development (e.g., Stiglitz, 2000; Castels et al., 2017; Fioramonti, 2017; Borowy and Schmelzer, 2017). The second marks the departure from neo-liberalism to such ideas about the preferred operating mode of the economy as neo-Keynesian, neo-etatist, neo-nationalist, new left, and – close to the last two – neo-pragmatist. Some of them greatly differ from each other, some are similar, and some may even mean almost the same thing under different names. The list of publications that covers them is so long and diverse that even a selection of the most important ones is impossible (for a representative example, see: Serra and Stiglitz, 2008; Kołodko, 2009; Stiglitz, 2010; Tanzi, 2011; Castels et al., 2012; Kołodko and Koźmiński, 2017). The rapidly growing number of new composite indices of socio-economic development is the third consequences of the recent crisis and the resulting search for new approaches to development. They are usually described as “beyond GDP,” while a better name would be that of “beyond economy” but not “apart economy” – since they emphasize human well-being, people’s satisfaction, happiness, and flourishing (e.g., Stiglitz et al., 2009; Flourbaey and Blanchet, 2013; Estes, 2013; Huppert and So, 2013; OECD, 2016; Kozminski et al., 2014; 2015; 2016; 2016a; Phelps, 2014; Zagórski, 2016).

This article provides insight into the Polish attitudes relevant to the discussion about neo-liberalism and neo-etatism. While public attitudes and opinions influence economic and political behavior, the strength of this influence and its evaluation is beyond the scope of this article. Its limited aim is to document the changes in Polish economic attitudes after the last world economic crisis. The author will do this in a paradigm of public “economic imagination,” understood as the imagination of desired economic goals, economic roles of various institutions and their good or bad fulfilment, relations between political powers, economic management and people, ideas about economic and social justice, model of industrial relations, etc. (Koźmiński, 1982; Koźmiński and Zagórski, 2011; 2014; 2015). Of course, people may use different terminology when speaking about these issues, often in simple everyday language. They usually have some ideas about them – sometimes well-established, sometimes quite vague. The notion of economic imagination is ingrained in the notion of economic culture, which consists of social norms, attitudes, motivations, beliefs, and assumptions about business, work, earnings, and other aspects of economic life (Phelps, 2013, p. 194). However, the economic culture is usually more stable and deeper ingrained in social life than public imagina-

tions, which mostly react to the realities of today. Indeed, the visions of the economy may also be quite stable in stable socio-economic conditions. However, they are prone to the changes with the changing actual situation. That is the case with the public ideas about the economic roles of the government. Moreover, Polish historical experience with the communist government, supposedly omnipotent in the past system of the centrally planned economy, still influences the present ideas about these roles.

Several sociological studies, conducted since the beginning of transformation to the current times, have proved that the Polish society expects a strong governmental involvement in economic life, especially – albeit far from exclusively – in the assistance of both economic enterprises and people (Frentzel-Zagórska and Zagórski, 1993; Kolarska-Bobińska and Rychard, 1996; Jershina, 1999; Kelley and Zagórski, 2000; Marody, 2000; Zagórski, 2014; Koźmiński and Zagórski, 2009; Rae, 2015). One may treat such expectations as a persistent part of the Polish economic culture. However, that does not preclude their changes.

In the last decade, Poland was an exceptional country in Europe because the Polish GDP has never diminished during the world crisis. On the contrary, it was steadily rising, albeit much slower than before. However, the picture looks much less rosy when one measures the changes not by the GDP but by the index of socio-economic development composed of a very diversified set of detailed indicators that describe various aspects of the external (international) and internal (national) functioning of Polish economy, as well as objective and subjective aspects of the social situation. Such index reveals the negative impact of the crisis on the Polish economy and society (Koźmiński et al., 2014; 2015; 2016; 2016a).

Despite continuous growth of the GDP, the general timbre of the Polish economic discussions during and after the last world crisis has been similar to the discussions in other countries. The suggestions dominate that the economies of many nations need more governmental intervention, control, and regulation. These ideas are not new to the Polish public. About fifty percent of Poles in 2012 and 2013 believed that insufficient governmental control of the economy was one of the important causes of the world crisis. Only about twenty percent thought otherwise, and the rest either had an ambivalent opinion (“yes and no”) or knew nothing about it (Zagórski and Koźmiński, 2015, p. 31). The ongoing discussions should have influenced Polish economic attitudes, thus strengthening etatist ideas.

On the other hand, governmental intervention may be especially necessary during the crisis. When the crisis ends, such need may appear less apparent. Many people

may think that governmental intervention is strongly needed when something goes wrong, but should not go too far in a normal, relatively good economic situation. Thus, this study proposes two conflicting hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. The news and popular economic discussions during and after the crisis suggest to the public opinion that economic difficulties have been caused or facilitated at least by a lack of sufficient governmental control, regulation, or even direct involvement. This may lead to a more general belief that the previously dominant liberal approach went too far; hence, the government must restrain and control the free market and play a more pronounced role in everyday economic life. The longer the discussions, the larger popularity of such ideas, thus the stronger the etatist attitudes.

Hypothesis 2. Since the crisis has ended, the economic intervention appears less necessary than during the difficult time. That is, the longer the time since the crisis, the less governmental intervention people feel they need; thus, the etatist attitudes disappear.

Public attitudes may be influenced by both of these contradictory mechanisms, which cancel or reduce each other. If so, a third hypothesis is in order:

Hypothesis 3. If people still follow the ongoing popular economic discussion about the necessity to restrict the system that is too liberal and impose more governmental control over the economy, they may form more etatist attitudes. However, since the same people may see governmental intervention as highly necessary to stop the crisis and recover but not needed when everything goes well, the ongoing economic may have a reverse result, i.e. may reduce etatist inclinations. Thus, the two contradictory influences may cancel each other and have a small effect on economic attitudes. One must yet empirically discover the direction of such a small effect, if there is one at all.

Late Andrzej Malewski showed in his very old but newly discovered and recently published article that Polish engineers and managers expressed in the communist time more etatists attitudes than the workers (Malewski, 2017). This finding contradicts similar findings from Western capitalist societies, where managers and professionals were more economically liberal than the workers. At that time, almost all Polish engineers and managers were employed by the public sector, since no private business existed outside agriculture except for a small number of family-owned businesses. As Malewski explained, etatist attitudes expressed by engineers and managers in the communist Poland – untypical from the Western point of view – served to defend their leading role and economic as well as social position in the dominant public sector. It

remains to be seen whether this has changed in the capitalist Polish economy. The fourth hypothesis claims that such change did take place:

Hypothesis 4. Managers, professionals, and business owners in the Polish economy, dominated today by the private sector, have less etatist (less pro-governmental intervention) attitudes than the workers and even more so than pensioners and other non-working persons (mostly unemployed and house-wives) who depend on public social benefits and services.

These hypotheses will be verified by the secondary analysis of individual-level data from three representative surveys conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) for Koźminski University in 2012, 2016, and 2017. CBOS conducted the surveys with the computer-assisted personal interview method on a stratified, nation-wide, random samples of ca. 1000 adult respondents each. The inspiration for this paper stems from the book on the economic attitudes in time of uncertainty (Zagórski et al. 2015). The main aim of this paper is, thus, to analyze the changes in economic attitudes in a post-crisis period.

The changes in post-crisis economic attitudes

Support for capitalist economic system

The analysis of changing economic attitudes should begin with the most general one, namely public support for the capitalist economic system. Unfortunately, the available data are for 2016 and 2017 only, so one cannot assess longer term changes in this respect.

Many studies from different countries, Poland included, indicate that strong support for democracy as the best political system is quite stable or changes very slowly and is surprisingly weakly (though significantly) correlated with evaluations of the actual functioning of democracy in a given time and country. This is true irrespective of great fluctuations of the current evaluations which are under the influence of political situation and events (Fuchs et al., 1995; Norris, 1999; Fuchs and Roller, 2006; Roguska, 2007; Zagórski, 2001; 2014). Thus, the first question is not only about the extent but also the changes in support for the capitalist free-market economic system (Table 1).

The overwhelming majority of Poles express their appreciation for the capitalist economic system. However, about one-fourth of them still express a longing for the centrally-

-planned socialist economy, and quite a substantial number has no idea which system is the best. The more important is the fact that – contrary to the quite stable support of the democratic political system – the support of free-market capitalism is rapidly changing. The number of supporters grew from 52 to 61 percent in only one year. That may indicate a positive effect on public support for the existing economic system by its apparent ability to recover from an economic crisis. On the other hand, such rapid change may indicate a relatively weak embedment of pro-capitalist attitudes in the whole value system of the Polish society. While democratic attitudes are already a stable element of the Polish political culture – though there is still a danger of a return to authoritarian attitudes, as the current political situation may suggest – the pro-capitalist stance is not so well grounded in the Polish economic culture. It is recently gaining popularity but is still lower than support for democracy: 50–60 versus 60–70 percent.

Table 1. Support for capitalist free market economic system (2017–2017). Percentages

Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that free-market economy based on private ownership, i.e. capitalist economy, is the best possible economic system?	2016		2017	
	Definitely agree	14.4	51.8	18.0
Rather agree	37.4	42.5		
Rather disagree	20.7	27.4	18.1	26.0
Definitely disagree	6.7		7.9	
Difficult to say	20.8	20.8	13.5	13.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own elaboration.

One must emphasize that the number of people who disapprove of the private free-market system remains almost unchanged, while the number of those expressing pro-capitalist attitudes is significantly growing at the cost of diminishing numbers of the undecided. That may suggest the existence of a rather small but quite stable core group of critics of capitalism versus a less stable and small majority of the supporters of the capitalist economic system.

Are pro-capitalist attitudes stronger among managers, professionals, and business-people, as our hypothesis suggests?

Table 2. Support for capitalist economic system (2016–2017). Percentages

Socio-occupational groups*	Year	Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that free-market economy based on private ownership, i.e. capitalist economy, is the best possible economic system?			
		Definitely agree, rather agree	Definitely disagree, rather disagree	Difficult to say	Total
Business owners, self employed	2016	75.9	13.7	10.4	100.0
	2017	69.2	21.1	9.7	100.0
Students	2016	74.5	15.3	10.2	100.0
	2017	65.7	12.5	28.8	100.0
Managers, professionals	2016	72.3	23.4	4.3	100.0
	2017	78.3	19.3	2.4	100.0
Semi-professionals, clerical	2016	62.9	23.6	13.5	100.0
	2017	64.1	17.9	18.0	100.0
Pensioners	2016	48.0	28.2	23.8	100.0
	2017	56.2	30.0	13.8	100.0
Sales – service personnel	2016	46.2	38.4	15.4	100.0
	2017	56.3	23.7	10.0	100.0
Farmers	2016	44.0	36.0	20.0	100.0
	2017	55.2	37.9	6.9	100.0
Other non-working	2016	43.1	22.8	34.1	100.0
	2017	45.8	32.5	21.7	100.0
Workers	2016	37.3	34.0	28.7	100.0
	2017	54.7	24.3	21.0	100.0

* Ranked by percent of answers “definitely agree” and “rather agree”.

Source: own elaboration.

There are great differences between socio-occupational groups in respect of their attitudes to capitalism. Business owners, self-employed, managers, professionals, and students approve of the capitalist system the most. About 65–75 percent of them believe that the free-market economy based on private ownership is the best possible economic system. These groups are the most educated, young, and privileged in the capitalist

social structure. The least pro-capitalist are workers, farmers, salespeople, service personnel, pensioners, and other non-working persons. Only about half of them considers capitalism to be the best system. They are less educated and occupy lower social positions. Semi-professionals and representatives of administrative-clerical occupations remain in between these two extremes. However, one must stress that all the unenthusiastic groups outside of the broadly understood social elite show a substantial increase of pro-capitalist feelings, while two of the three top groups – business owners and self-employed, as well as students – become more skeptical. To conclude, not only the average legitimacy of the capitalist economy increases but also the difference in size between groups of its supporters and opponents diminishes.

These findings concern the comparison between two consecutive years only, so they should be treated with some reservation. Some of the revealed changes in attitudes of particular social groups seem surprisingly large, though the general pattern looks reasonable and consistent. Dynamic analyses of further issues will concern three different years in five years span, so their results may be more robust.

Is private sector better than public?

Private ownership is the defining feature of the capitalist economy. Thus, the acceptance of capitalism should be accompanied by the perception of the private economic sector as better in many aspects than the public sector. Such perception constitutes a part of economic imagination. Ordinary people usually have no hard evidence for the superiority of one sector over the other in different respect. Nevertheless, they may have a quite consistent imagination about it, based on everyday experience and the news (Table 3).

Poles perceive the private economic sector as much better than the public sector in such respects as efficiency (productivity), effectiveness (profitability), good use of workforce abilities, and the satisfaction of consumer needs (supplying consumers with sufficient volume of diversified goods and services). About 50–60 percent of Poles perceive private sector as better in these respects in all the three years under analysis, while only about 20–35 percent opposed. The rest sees both sectors as similar or have no opinion. Thus, the private sector receives better evaluation than public one when valued with strictly economic criteria.

Things are quite different through the lens of social criteria. Only about 15–25 percent believe that the private sector assures better earnings for employees, safer employment, better human relations between employees and managers or owners, more ethical

business relations, and more care for non-economic social goals – the so-called “business social responsibility” – while about twice as many, or even more, perceive public sector as superior in these respects to.

Table 3. Perceived superiority of private economic sector over public sector (2012–2017)

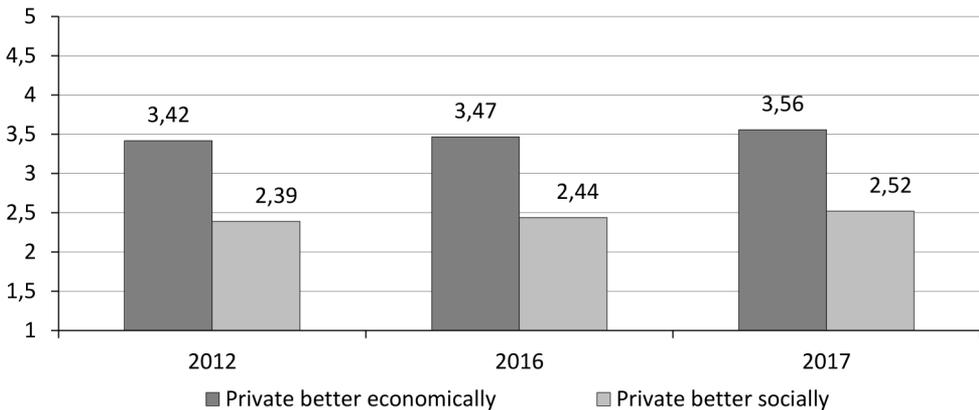
Are private or public sector better from in following respects?*	Year	Private better		Roughly the same	Public better		Public better	Total
		Definitely	Somewhat		Somewhat	Definitely		
Productivity	2012	27.5	30.2	17.3	8.8	8.3	7.8	100.0
	2016	20.4	25.5	15.5	12.3	10.8	5.5	100.0
	2017	33.3	25.9	21.8	8.7	6.9	3.3	100.0
Profitability	2012	27.7	26.7	13.7	9.5	8.3	14.1	100.0
	2016	28.7	26.3	12.6	14.1	9.7	8.6	100.0
	2017	28.9	29.2	18.1	9.7	7.6	6.6	100.0
Consumer needs satisfaction (diverse supply)	2012	19.0	21.3	23.0	10.7	12.5	13.6	100.0
	2016	25.7	25.4	23.3	16.0	8.9	7.0	100.0
	2017	25.0	24.2	27.2	10.0	7.0	6.6	100.0
Effective use of workforce abilities/skill	2012	17.1	23.7	19.4	19.6	13.4	11.8	100.0
	2016	24.2	20.3	19.9	16.0	12.5	7.6	100.0
	2017	23.5	21.7	25.4	14.3	11.1	4.0	100.0
Good earnings of employees	2012	11.0	17.6	19.5	19.6	20.1	12.3	100.0
	2016	8.6	14.6	24.5	21.0	23.0	8.4	100.0
	2017	10.0	15.3	27.7	18.6	22.7	5.7	100.0
Relations between employees and managers or owners	2012	7.2	11.5	24.8	21.7	22.8	12.1	100.0
	2016	8.0	9.4	31.9	20.4	19.4	10.9	100.0
	2017	8.4	13.2	34.8	17.5	20.1	5.9	100.0
Honest conduct of business	2012	6.1	10.1	24.0	22.0	21.3	16.6	100.0
	2016	6.7	10.6	30.2	18.2	18.1	16.2	100.0
	2017	7.6	9.0	33.4	21.3	19.1	8.6	100.0
Social responsibility	2012	5.5	9.5	18.6	25.7	20.6	20.2	100.0
	2016	4.7	9.3	24.8	23.5	20.2	17.7	100.0
	2017	6.1	9.9	27.5	21.8	23.7	11.0	100.0

* Ranked by percent of those who see private sector as better than public.

Source: own elaboration.

Table 3 suggest that the favorable feelings for the private sector increase with time. However, such a conclusion is insufficient when based on this table only, because one has to analyze the changing frequencies of strong and moderate opinions about many matters, as well as the changing numbers of ambivalent opinions or refrainment. In order to facilitate trend analyses, this study assigned the values to particular opinions: 1 – Public definitely better, 2 – Public somewhat better, 3 – About the same, 4 – Private somewhat better, 5 – Private definitely better. Factor analysis³ confirmed that all opinions about the superiority of one sector over the other form two separate groups (syndromes). Each of them stems from opinions highly correlated between themselves but weakly correlated with those from the other syndrome. The analysis indicate that evaluations of two sectors from economic and social points of view form two separate groups of opinions. Consecutively, the mean value (from 1 to 5) of all opinions concerning economic aspects and another mean value of opinions about social aspects, have been separately computed for each year (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Perception of private economic sector as better than public sector. 1–5 scale* (2012–2017)



* Values above 3 indicate average perception of private sector as better, value 3 means “roughly the same” and values below 3 mean perception of public sector as better.

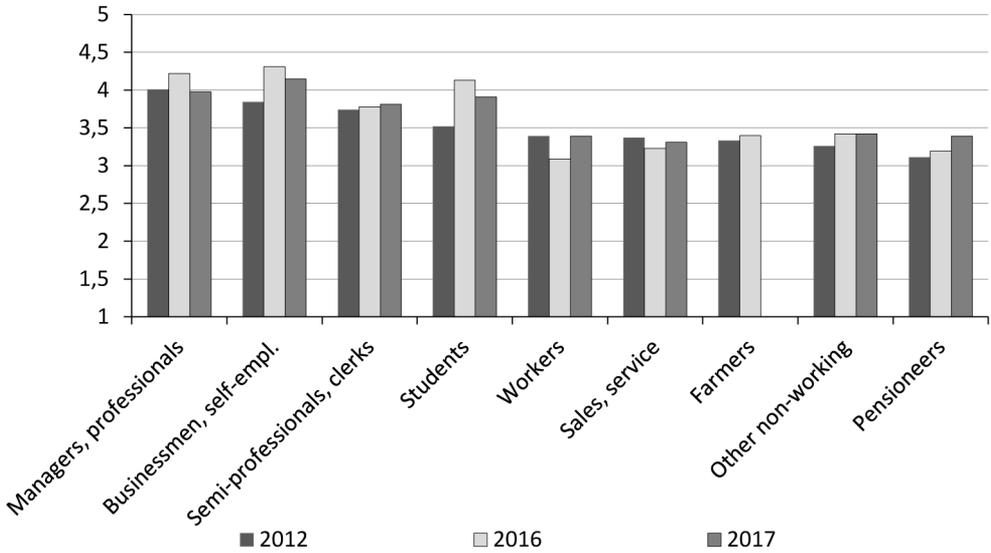
Source: own elaboration.

We may draw two conclusions. The first claims that Poles perceive the private economic sector as better from the point of view of economic functioning while the public economic sector as better from the social point of view. The second stresses that the

³ That is, principal component analysis with varimax rotation. Factor analyses are not present here due to lack of space.

opinions about the private sector very slowly but constantly improve in both respects during the post-crisis period. Let us now observe the differences in this respect between socio-occupational groups.

Figure 2. Socio-occupational differences in perception of private sector as better than public sector from economic point of view. 1–5 scale* (2012–2017)

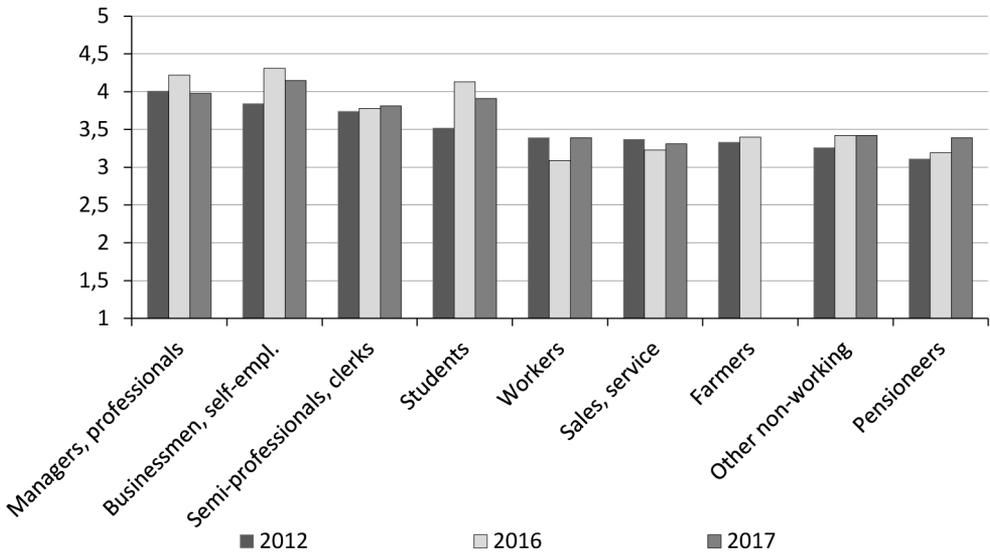


* Values above 3 indicate average perception of private sector as better, value 3 means “roughly the same” and values below 3 mean perception of public sector as better.

Source: own elaboration.

Figures 2 and 3 clearly display that managers, professionals, business owners, self-employed, semi-professionals, administrative employees, and students perceive the private sector in a more positive light (in both respects) than other socio-occupational groups. It should be also stressed that the improvement of opinions about social functions of the private sector is more apparent among less enthusiastic groups.

Figure 3. Socio-occupational differences in perception of private sector as better than public sector from social point of view. 1–5 scale* (2012–2017)



* Values above 3 indicate average perception of private sector as better, value 3 means “roughly the same” and values below 3 mean perception of public sector as better.

Source: own elaboration.

Private or public ownership?

As already discussed, the majority of Poles consider capitalism to be the best possible economic system. Since private ownership is a defining characteristic of the capitalist economy, one may expect that the public opinion would prefer private ownership in the majority of economic branches. However, that is not the case. The results of many earlier studies indicated a very positive attitude to public ownership in Poland. This is also true in a post-crisis time (Table 4).

Poles want the private sector to dominate only in the farming, retail, and building industry. However, a quite significant number would like a substantial participation of the public sector in these branches of economy as well.

As many as 75–80 percent of respondents would like the public ownership to dominate in such branches as forestry, electricity production, mining, railways, health services, schools, and universities.

Table 4. Preferences concerning private and public ownership (2012–2017)

Economic branches/ enterprises*	Years	Do you think that economic branches listed below should be government owned (public) or private?						
		Only public	Majority public	Doesn't matter	Majority private	Only private	Difficult to say	Total
Forests	2012	60.0	19.6	10.6	4.0	1.7	4.1	100.0
	2016	60.9	21.8	10.3	3.2	1.0	2.8	100.0
Electric power stations	2012	59.3	22.3	7.7	4.0	1.8	4.9	100.0
	2016	49.3	29.2	10.9	4.8	1.4	4.2	100.0
	2017	59.2	24.8	9.4	2.8	1.8	2.0	100.0
Mining	2012	55.7	21.5	8.6	6.6	2.4	5.2	100.0
	2016	44.6	21.1	11.2	10.5	6.7	6.0	100.0
	2017	51.0	19.4	11.6	7.8	6.9	3.3	100.0
Railways	2012	50.5	21.3	10.1	8.6	5.4	5.2	100.0
	2016	44.4	25.4	14.3	7.4	3.1	3.4	100.0
Health service	2012	49.2	27.3	9.8	8.4	2.5	2.8	100.0
	2016	40.3	33.1	11.2	9.8	3.3	2.3	100.0
	2017	38.9	33.0	13.6	9.0	4.3	1.4	100.0
Schools, universities	2012	43.4	37.7	14.8	1.6	.7	1.8	100.0
	2016	45.5	37.6	12.1	2.4	.8	1.5	100.0
	2017	43.7	37.3	14.5	2.2	1.2	1.8	100.0
Pension funds	2012	40.2	18.8	14.3	10.2	4.4	12.0	100.0
	2016	39.4	22.3	13.6	7.2	4.3	12.1	100.0
Postal service	2012	42.2	20.3	20.0	8.5	4.4	3.7	100.0
	2016	32.2	27.0	26.7	7.8	5.3	1.8	100.0
Banks	2012	37.9	23.0	17.9	11.1	3.8	6.4	100.0
	2016	33.6	33.8	17.6	8.9	2.1	4.0	100.0
	2017	37.9	31.2	17.6	8.9	1.9	2.6	100.0
Telephone service	2012	25.3	13.4	27.6	15.8	12.1	5.8	100.0
	2016	18.0	16.0	36.7	17.0	7.7	4.6	100.0
Manufacturing industry	2016	19.1	22.5	34.5	14.2	5.7	4.0	100.0
Building construction	2012	17.4	13.4	26.0	24.1	13.6	5.5	100.0
	2016	9.1	10.9	39.6	24.0	13.7	2.6	100.0
	2017	8.0	11.6	34.1	28.8	16.1	1.4	100.0
Retail trade	2012	11.9	9.9	31.6	23.9	19.7	3.1	100.0
	2016	10.9	10.1	44.5	22.5	10.6	1.4	100.0
	2017	8.6	8.7	40.7	25.1	15.1	1.7	100.0
Farms	2012	6.7	6.0	12.4	31.1	39.6	4.1	100.0
	2016	5.8	4.9	19.2	32.8	33.6	3.7	100.0
	2017	5.0	4.2	19.2	32.5	36.9	2.2	100.0

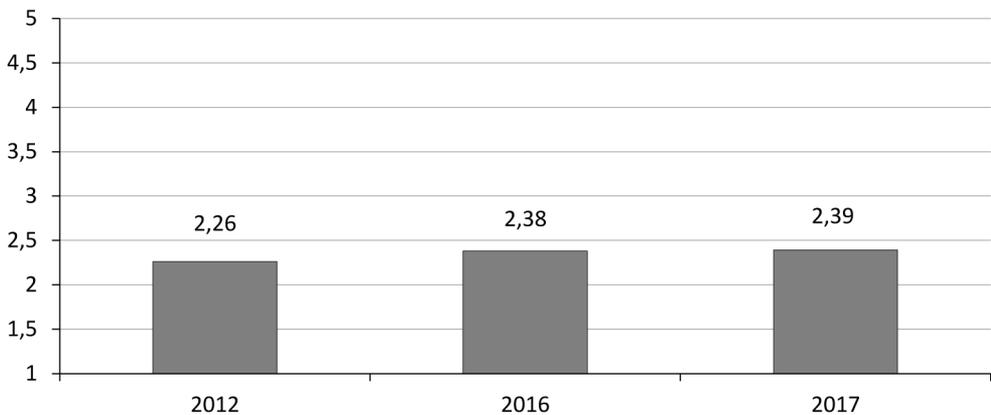
* Ranked by percent of those who prefer public ownership.

Source: own elaboration.

In the middle appear pension funds, postal services, banks, telephone companies, and manufacturing industries, but still more Poles prefer their public ownership to private.

A scale from 1 (all public) to 5 (all private) has been applied in order to assess the changes in attitudes to private and public ownership, similar to the scale measuring perceptions of private sector superiority in economic and social respects. Factor analysis distinguished no separate groups of economic branches, so only one general indicator of pro-private attitude was computed for those kinds of enterprises for which the data for all three years are available.

Figure 4. Preference for private ownership in economy. 1–5 scale* (2012–2017)



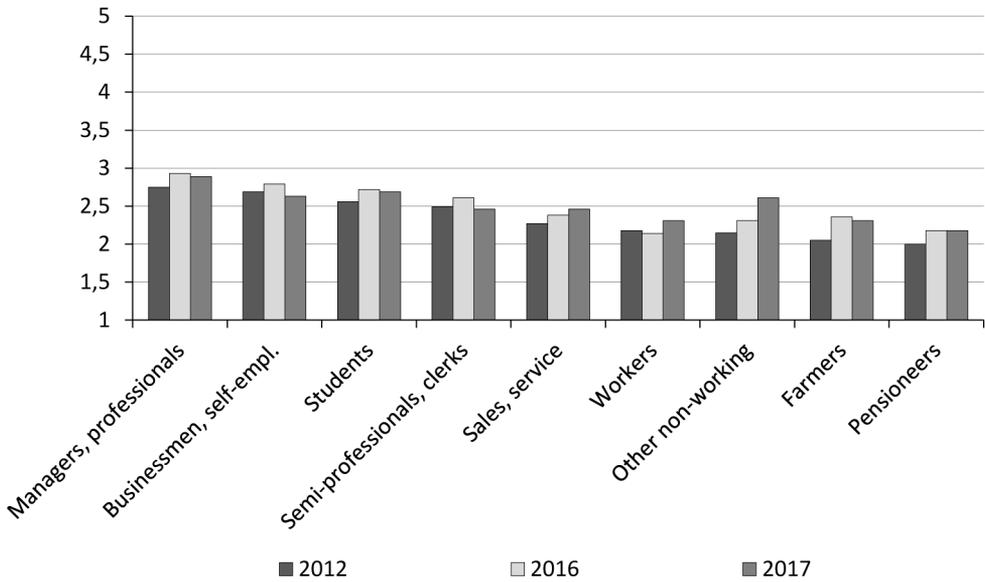
* Values above 3 indicate general preference for private ownership. Value 3 indicates ambivalent attitude. Values below 3 indicate preference for public ownership.

Source: own elaboration.

There are few changes between 2012 and 2017 in preferences for the private and public ownership of the Polish economy as a whole (when the mean attitudes for all branches are considered). Poles prefer public ownership in the whole period under investigation. There is some change in favor of private ownership, but it is very small, if not negligible. The question remains, who is more and who is less inclined to support the private sector (Figure 5).

Similar to other pro-capitalist and pro-private attitudes, private ownership receives the most support from managers, professionals, business owners, self-employed, semi-professionals, clerical workers, and students. The support for private ownership is rising in the groups which like this ownership the least.

Figure 5. Socio-occupational differences in preference for private ownership. 1–5 scale* (2012–2017)



* Values above 3 indicate general preference for private ownership. Value 3 indicates ambivalent attitude. Values below 3 indicate preference for public ownership.

Source: own elaboration.

The attitude of farmers seems interesting. They very strongly support private ownership in agriculture because they own farms, but surprisingly enough, they very strongly support the public ownership in general. Only the pensioners prefer public ownership stronger than the farmers.

State interventionism

Economic discussions after the crisis predominantly concern the scale and preferred kinds of governmental intervention rather than good or bad sides of private and economic sectors and the optimal balance between private and public ownership. Polish public opinion generally supports governmental intervention in economy, though not necessarily in its extreme form (Table 5).

About one-third of all respondents think that the government should intervene in the economy only if something goes wrong. This number has greatly increased since 2012. A very similar number expresses the opinion that the government should set a legal framework for the economy but not get directly involved. The number of those who

believe that the less governmental intervention, the better for the economy rose from below 10 percent in 2012 to almost 15 percent in 2017. At the same time, the number of supporters of as much governmental intervention as possible dropped from about one quarter to only 15 percent. However, the support for governmental involvement strongly differs between particular kinds of intervention.

Table 5. Accepted scope of governmental intervention in economy (2012–2017)

Opinions on governmental intervention	2012	2017
The less governmental intervention in economy, the better.	8.7	13.5
The government should intervene in economy only if something goes wrong.	22.5	36.2
Government should only set the legal rules for economy but not intervene in it.	31.9	30.8
The greater the governments involvement in economy, the better.	25.3	15.7
Difficult to say.	11.5	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: own elaboration.

Table 6. Public opinion on desired forms of governmental intervention in economy (2012)

In your opinion, should the government...?*	Year	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Yes and not	Rather not	Definitely not	Difficult to say	Total
...create new work places	2012	75.7	17.6	2.8	1.8	1.2	.9	100.0
	2016	53.4	32.1	6.2	3.9	2.9	2.0	100.0
	2017	54.4	29.5	7.8	5.5	2.1	.6	100.0
...give cheap credit or tax reduction to those setting new businesses	2012	56.7	33.7	5.0	2.1	.9	1.7	100.0
	2016	51.1	40.3	4.7	1.3	.5	2.2	100.0
...finance modernization of agriculture	2012	35.9	34.8	10.4	9.2	3.7	6.0	100.0
	2016	28.6	37.7	16.2	8.5	4.3	4.8	100.0
	2017	29.3	39.9	14.1	9.7	4.2	2.8	100.0
...forbid foreign companies to buy Polish enterprises	2012	35.3	18.9	13.4	16.2	9.6	6.5	100.0
	2016	35.6	22.5	16.7	14.6	7.0	3.5	100.0
	2017	33.1	18.0	18.6	18.8	9.3	2.2	100.0
...help falling private enterprises	2012	25.6	28.4	20.0	14.0	6.3	5.8	100.0
	2016	25.5	29.6	18.2	14.7	8.5	3.4	100.0
	2017	28.5	28.5	18.5	14.1	8.2	2.3	100.0

...set wages and salaries	2012	22.2	28.4	15.5	17.6	9.3	6.9	100.0
	2016	17.5	32.2	22.4	14.6	9.3	4.0	100.0
	2017	18.8	28.9	19.8	18.7	11.3	2.6	100.0
...set consumer prices	2012	16.6	22.5	21.5	19.9	13.1	6.5	100.0
	2016	10.3	22.7	21.9	25.1	16.3	3.7	100.0
	2017	9.0	19.7	18.7	27.2	22.8	2.7	100.0
...limit possibilities to employ foreigners	2012	11.3	18.2	15.4	34.0	17.4	3.8	100.0
	2016	11.2	17.5	17.2	31.8	19.3	3.0	100.0
	2017	16.3	16.2	18.1	29.0	18.4	2.1	100.0

* Ranked by percent of those supporting given form of intervention.

Source: own elaboration.

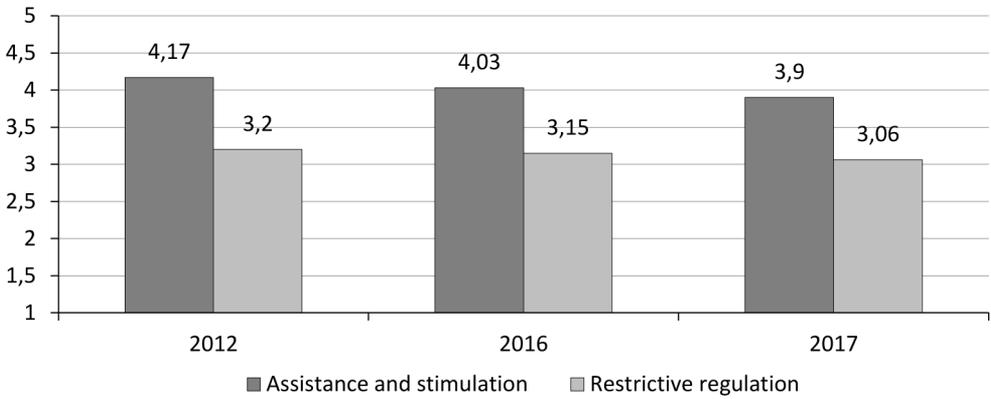
Nearly ninety percent support the idea that the government should create new workplaces and assist in the establishment of new businesses by the provision of cheap credit or tax reduction. The least popular are such forms of intervention as determining wages, salaries, and consumer prices, as well as limiting the possibility of foreigners' employment in Poland. A quick overlook of the data presented in Table 6 suggests that the pro-intervention attitudes tend to diminish in most realms of economic life.

The generalized measures of interventionist attitudes have been computed as average values on a scale from 1 to 5, similarly to previous pro-private measures. Factor analysis distinguished two groups of possible interventions. The first group consists of such forms of governmental involvement in the economy as creating new work places, helping new businesses and private enterprises in trouble, and financing the modernization of agriculture. These forms of intervention may be jointly called "assisting and stimulating the economy". The second group consists of such governmental activities as setting earnings and prices, forbidding takeovers of Polish enterprises by foreign companies, and limiting possibilities of employment of foreigners. They may be jointly called "restrictive regulations" (Figure 6).

Figure 6 depicts three important findings. First, Polish public opinion supports both types of governmental intervention. The values of both scales exceed 3 which is the middle (neutral) point. Second, the support for governmental assistance and stimulation of economy significantly exceeds the support for restrictive regulations. Third, the support for both types of intervention diminishes in time, but this decline is not very fast.

The levels of support of both forms of intervention substantially differ between socio-occupational groups (see Figures 7 and 8).

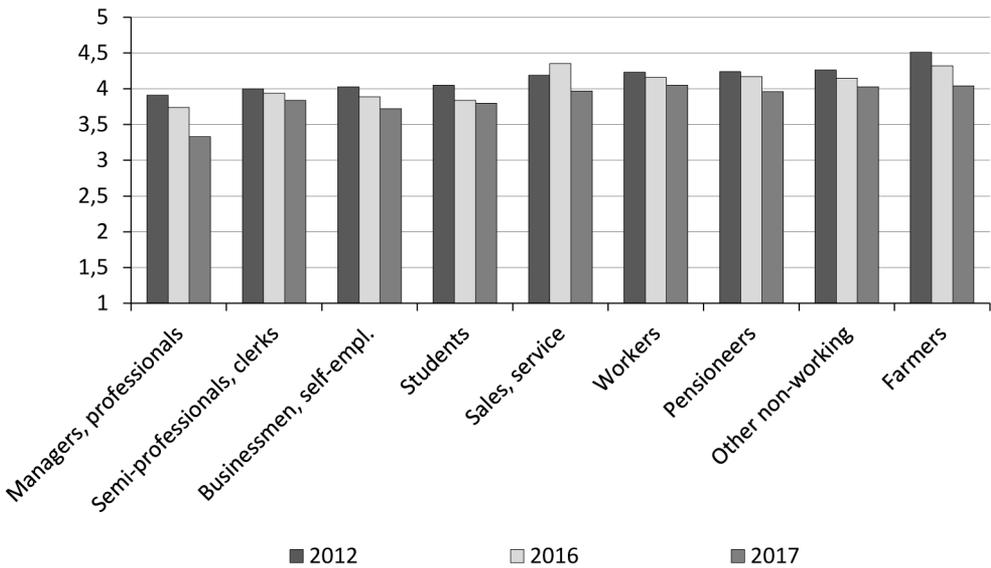
Figure 6. Acceptance of two forms of governmental intervention in economy. 1–5 scale* (2012–2017)



* Values above 3 indicate general acceptance of governmental intervention. Value 3 indicates ambivalent attitude. Values below 3 indicate disapproval of governmental intervention.

Source: own elaboration.

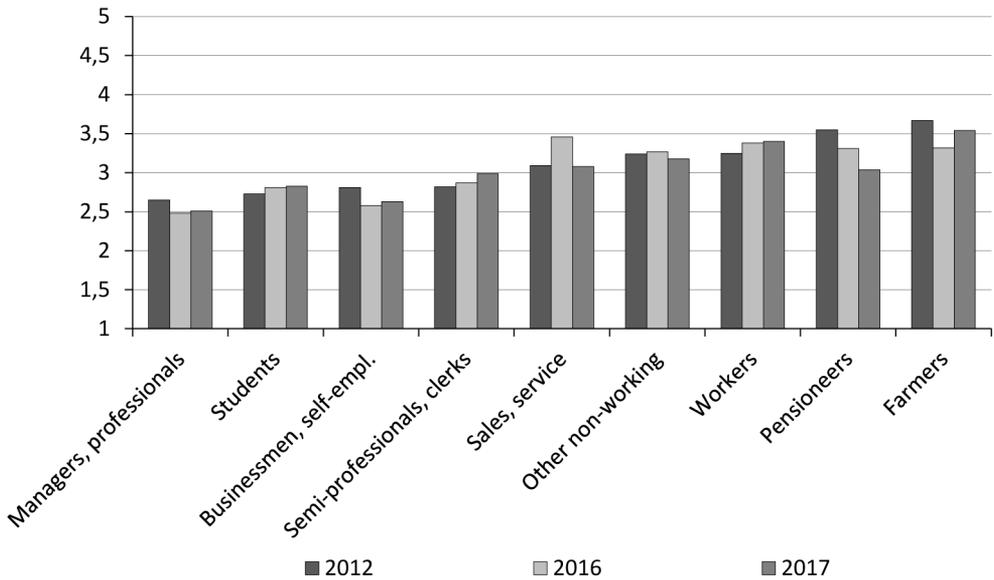
Figure 7. Socio-occupational differences in support for governmental intervention in form of assisting and stimulating economy. 1–5 scale* (2012–2017)



* Values above 3 indicate general acceptance of governmental intervention. Value 3 indicates ambivalent attitude. Values below 3 indicate disapproval of governmental intervention.

Source: own elaboration.

Figure 8. Socio-occupational differences in support for governmental intervention in form of restrictive regulations. 1–5 scale* (2012–2017)



* Values above 3 indicate general acceptance of governmental intervention. Value 3 indicates ambivalent attitude. Values below 3 indicate disapproval of governmental intervention.

Source: own elaboration.

Similar to other attitudes discussed above, the data on both types of governmental economic intervention show a relative liberal tendency of managers, professionals, business owners, self-employed, semi-professionals, clerical workers, and students, in comparison to other groups. Moreover, the pro-intervention attitudes the most quickly decline among managers and professionals. They probably perceive governmental intervention as detrimental for effective management. The support for both kinds of intervention is the strongest among farmers, the group that benefits from the EU funds distributed by the government. Workers, pensioners, non-working people also strongly support intervention.

Conclusions

The data proves the second rather than the first hypothesis to be true. The more time passed from the economic crisis, the less popular the etatist attitudes in Polish society are.

However, the third hypothesis is also true. The changes in the analyzed economic attitudes are not very big, because of conflicting influences between public discussion about the necessity for governmental intervention on one hand and the passage of time since the crisis, which has instigated the demands for this intervention on the other hand.

The data furthermore supports the fourth hypothesis that, contrary to the findings from the communist period, the managers, professionals, business owners and self-employed express more liberal attitudes in the economic life than other groups. While communist governmental intervention was perceived by managerial-professional groups as strengthening their role and their interests as government's representatives, the state intervention in recent times is perceived more as reducing business and managerial independence.

Finally, it has to be emphasized that, despite predominant legitimization of the economic system based on private ownership and the free market, the preference for public ownership in economy and for governmental intervention diminish slowly and still remain quite strong.

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