

## **Perception of Poland's neighbours**

The attitude of Poles to neighbours is differentiated. It is best towards Czechs and Slovaks, to whom about half express positive feelings, and worst towards Russians, approached positively by about one-fifth of respondents. In order to detect what lies at the source of this attitude, an open question was asked in which respondents enumerated typical attributes of neighbouring nationalities. On this basis, stereotypical images of residents of states bordering Poland can be drawn.

About half of respondents (51%) have some image of a typical Czech. It is dominated by qualities related to good-natured character: he is perceived as a happy, smiling, person with a good sense of humour (16%). A typical Czech, in Polish view, is a good, helpful person (7%), nice and polite (7%). Czechs are considered to be beer-drinkers (5%). Just as often, Polish people think that Czechs enjoy life, like to have fun (4%). The other positive qualities associated with Czechs are: openness and tolerance (3%), hard work (2%), pragmatism, and entrepreneurship (2%), as well as being good neighbours (2%). Negative qualities appeared relatively rarely. Some respondents consider Czechs to be bad neighbours, hostile towards us (2%).

Although attitudes to Czechs and Slovaks are very similar, characterising a typical Slovak was more difficult than describing an average Czech. Almost two-thirds of respondents (63%) could not give any characteristic attributes. The remainder most commonly think that a typical Slovak, is happy, merry and good-natured (7%), nice and polite (7%), as well as helpful, friendly and good (6%). Less commonly, respondents mentioned such qualities as: hard-working (2%), enterprising, clever (2%), open and tolerant (2%), positive towards us (2%), enjoying life (2%). There are no negative traits in the image of a typical Slovak.

Stereotypical image of Poland's western neighbours is clearer: only 23% of respondents have no mental associations with a typical German. His primary attributes are related to order and discipline. In this group there are traits such as: exact, well-organised, disciplined, orderly, punctual, law-abiding (27% altogether). Most of these references were positive or neutral, but sometimes this "German order" appeared in a negative context. Some respondents characterized a typical German as pedantic, stiff, unable to improvise (3% in total). Other frequent traits are: hard work (14%) and trustworthiness, being honest and reliable (14%). Another commonly mentioned attribute is entrepreneurship and industriousness. In this context respondents think that Germans are thrifty, pragmatic and resourceful (12%). A smaller group characterised Germans as nice, polite and cultured (7%). Less frequently there appeared such characteristics as: good, friendly, helpful, sensitive (4%) and open, tolerant (2%). Some respondents described Germans as self-assured, confident, decisive (5%). Others focused on their appearance, saying they are tidy and neat (3%). In their image there are also such positive traits as: patriotism (2%), intelligence and competence (2%). In the answers there were references to high living standards, wealth (4%). Among the negative traits associated with Germans are conceit and arrogance (7%). A smaller proportion spoke about bad relations between Poles and Germans (3%), and described Germans as unpleasant, impolite (3%). They are sometimes seen as serious and lacking a sense of humour (2%). Other negative descriptions are: stingy, mean with money, excessively economical (2%).

Respondents had severe difficulties describing a typical Lithuanian: seven-tenths (71%) had no associations at all. The others most commonly mentioned hostile attitude of Lithuanians to Poles living in Lithuania. In this context they referred to their negative attitudes to Poland

and Poles, or absence of good relations (6%). The catalogue of negative traits includes such as: unpleasant, rude (2% in total), vengeful, envious, quarrelsome, intransigent (2% altogether). Some positive traits associated with Lithuanians are: good, friendly, helpful (3%), nice, polite (2%), hard-working (2%).

The image of a Ukrainian is quite distinct and complex. Only less than two-fifths of respondents declared ignorance in this matter. According to annual CBOS surveys on attitudes to other nationalities, the attitude to Ukrainians is highly polarized: the groups of people declaring sympathy and antipathy are almost equal. This ambivalence is reflected in answers to the question about attributes of a typical representative of this nationality. On the one hand, Ukrainians are perceived as hard-working (6%), good, friendly, (5%), nice, pleasant (4%), brave, courageous (4%), strong, decisive (3%). On the other hand, the image of Ukrainians bears many negative qualities. Some respondents perceive Ukrainians as evil, vengeful, envious, ruthless (10%), dishonest, fake in manner (4%), hostile, mean-spirited, quarrelsome (3%), corrupt, lawless (2%), unpredictable (2%), bad neighbours in general, with negative attitude to Poles (3%). Some respondents referred to difficult material situation of the Ukrainian people (4%). A number of answers contained references to current events in Ukraine. Ukrainians were described as subjugated, persecuted, they were called a nation striving for peace and freedom (5%). There were also references to difficult events in Polish-Ukrainian history (3%).

Most respondents (62%) were unable to name typical qualities of a Belarussian. Respondents relatively frequently questioned the existence of a stereotype when it comes to Belarussians: they said that there are all kinds of Belarussians, or that they are ordinary, grey, average (5%). The other respondents, when naming typical traits, usually called them good people, friendly and good-natured (4%), hard-working (4%), not very wealthy or even poor, living in bad material conditions (4%), similar to us (4%). According to other opinions, they are intimidated, frightened, subordinated by the authorities in a non-democratic country (4%). Some respondents referred to current events (3%), sometimes mentioning the president of Belarus. Positive traits associated with Belarussians include: nice and polite (3%), honest and sincere (2%), clever (2%), hospitable (2%). Among negative traits are: uneducated, simple (2%), drunks, people who abuse alcohol (2%).

In the attitude to Russians there is an ambivalence of evaluations which can be summarised by the phrase: the people are good, their government is bad. A third of respondents (35%) could not name any attributes of a typical Russian. The remainder commonly characterized people of that nationality by reference to drink and lack of moderation in its consumption (10%). Somewhat less frequently, the associations with Russians concerned unequivocally negative traits, such as: evil, cruel, vengeful, envious, ruthless (8%). Slightly less often a typical Russian is seen as someone good, friendly, warm, benevolent (6%), as well as polite, nice and cultured (4%). Russians are also seen as strong, decisive, resolute, stubborn and self-assured (5%), as well as emotional (2%). Some of the other positive traits of Russians are: the ability to enjoy life, have fun, be careless (3%), openness, ability to compromise (2%), hospitality (2%), calm nature and happiness (2%). Sporadically respondents mentioned bad material situation of Russians (2%). Among their negative characteristics are: intolerance, xenophobia, imperialistic tendencies (4%). Some people referred to Polish-Russian relations, claiming that Russians are bad neighbours (4%). Others think that Russians are easily manipulated by propaganda (5%), suppressed and intimidated by the authorities (2%) or referred to the current political situation in Russia (2%). Other negative descriptions of Russians are: impolite, arrogant, rude (4%), dishonest or fake in behaviour (3%), conceited, too self-assured (3%) and references to lawlessness and lack of respect for law: cheat, thief, thug, fraud (2%).

**Images of Poland's neighbours**

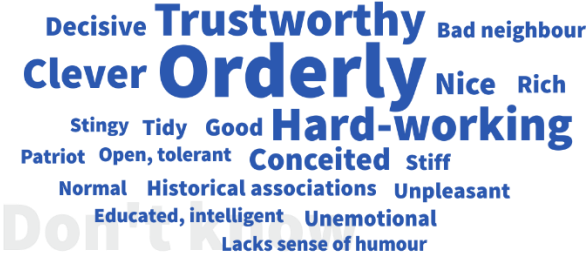
**Typical Czech**



**Typical Slovak**



**Typical German**



**Typical Lithuanian**



*Properties mentioned by at least 2% of respondents*

## Images of Poland's neighbours

### Typical Ukrainian

Nice Hard working Poor  
Brave Good **Evil** Dishonest, insincere  
Intimidated, frightened Cheat Similar to us  
Bad neighbour Historical associations Unpleasant  
Decisive Normal Unpredictable

### Typical Belarussian

Hospitable Nice  
Good Similar to us  
Hard-working Normal Poor Heavy drinker  
Trustworthy Intimidated, frightened  
Clever Associations with current situation

### Typical Russian

Brave Cheat Good Nationalist, occupant  
Poor Decisive **Evil** Easily manipulated  
Conceited Nice **Heavy drinker** Relaxed  
Enjoying life Bad neighbour Unpleasant  
Hospitable Trustworthy Normalny Dishonest, insincere  
Open, tolerant Emotional Intimidated, frightened  
Associations with current situation

*Properties mentioned by at least 2% of respondents*

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More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "How Do We Perceive People from Neighbouring Countries", September 2015. Fieldwork for national sample: July 2015 (N=1044) and August 2015 (N=1040). The random address samples are representative for adult population of Poland.