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***TOMORROW'S EUROPE DELIBERATIVE POLL®* AS A PROPOSAL TO RESEARCH EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION**

Abstract

This article discusses a project known as *Tomorrow's Europe* deliberative poll®, whose participants consisted of inhabitants of the 27 Member State countries of the European Union. The first section of the article presents the stages of that interesting study and briefly describes its most important results. The second section discusses essential issues to potential organizers of such polls, and more importantly to interpreters of the research data. It focuses on issues such as: problems related to conducting deliberations in a multi-lingual environment; the acculturation of the research method itself; the possibilities for researching Europea public opinion; and benefits resulting from this type of study.

Key words: deliberative poll®, deliberation, public opinion

The deliberative poll®, which is the subject of this article, is a public opinion research¹ tool conceived, presented, and copyrighted by James Fishkin, which

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¹ The aim of conducting deliberative polls®, which from the point of view of James Fishkin, was supposed to counteract weaknesses of survey researches, is strictly related to the concept of deliberative democracy, which for the needs of this paper is defined after J. Bohman, as a way of reaching agreement on public issues which is based on “[...] thinking among free and equal citizens.” [Bohman 1998: 401]. This kind of reasoning, namely deliberation, enables to raise the quality of discussion, avoid realizing personal particular interests and counteract rational ignorance of respondents/voters. Applying rules of deliberative debate requires of researchers of social phenomena an implementation of appropriate methods and research procedures, and deliberative polls® are one of such novel proposals. It should be noted that there is not one consistent concept

was applied for the first time in 1994 in Great Britain. Deliberative polls® can be conducted at the local, national as well as international levels. Over twenty such deliberative opinion polls have been conducted so far on topics such as crime (Great Britain 1994), the future of monarchy (Australia 1996), the adoption of the Euro currency (Denmark 2000), reconciliation with the Aborigines (Australia 2001), policies towards the Roma community (Hungary 2001, Bulgaria 2002), the healthcare system (Italy 2006), an employment and job creation policy (Hungary 2008), local budgeting (China 2008), and the management and use of a municipal stadium (Poland 2010).

The deliberative poll® is a registered trademark and its application requires the prior consent of Fishkin and participation of his collaborators in the intended research program. They monitor and ensure the poll is conducted in accordance with the model originated by its creators. The technique, which will be thoroughly discussed in this article, is multi-stage and time-consuming, and in addition requires substantial funding. Organizers interested in conducting the poll need to obtain sponsors on their own and gain the necessary funds not only for conducting the research program, but also for remunerating participants as well as covering the appearance fees for Fishkin's collaborators, who monitor the poll proceedings. In order to conduct the program numerous conditions and various operations must be met and executed, which include in the first instance organizational activities related to assembling a research team. This involves identification of the subject matter and organization, obtaining funds, ensuring close collaboration with the media, securing the collaboration of experts on the subject under deliberation, selecting a company to conduct public opinion surveys, and securing a venue where the deliberation will be held, which may entail providing the participants with board and accommodation. Subsequently, a representative sample of inhabitants of the relevant area needs to be elaborated (e.g. a town, country, region, etc.) according to the topic of deliberation, and an opinion survey needs to be prepared on the basis of a previously prepared survey questionnaire designed by members of the research team. This poll is first conducted on uninformed respondents; this is sometimes referred to as an initial interview ('zero interview') [Bukowski 2011: 135]. Next a subgroup of potential deliberation participants is drawn from the initial sample group, who need to be persuaded to take part in further research and deliver previously prepared

of deliberative democracy, and the most well-known proponents of this approach include: Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls, as well as Joseph M. Bessette, James Bohman, Joshua Cohen, John S. Dryzek, Jon Elaster, John Gastil and others.

materials on the subject of deliberation. The respondents who are invited to enter the deliberation are notified about the venue, date of meeting and how many days the procedure will take to complete. Briefing materials should be of a 'balanced information' character (which James Fishkin regards as diverse and neutral in content), which means they should offer various perspectives on the subject and present all issues related to the subject under deliberation comprehensively, impartially, and accessibly. For this reason experts in the field must be engaged in the research project. It is expected that the respondents who are sent the briefing materials will study them carefully. Deliberative polls engage participants to discuss topics in small groups, which are drawn from a random sample of respondents recruited for further stages of research. At the same time as recruiting respondents, the organizers should secure and appropriately train people who will moderate discussions, known as 'facilitators'. A skilled facilitator "is substantively neutral, while not a member of any group works for its good" [Schwarz 2002: 8]. This is approximately the point at which the preparatory stage is completed and the debate proceeds, which might last up to two days, depending on the subject of deliberation as well as on the funds of organizers. Deliberations are comprised of small group discussions and plenary sessions. Experts representing interested parties and outside specialists take part in both the small group discussions and plenary sessions. In the course of a plenary session each member of a group may ask the experts questions, which are formulated during the small group discussions [Kubiak, Krzewińska 2012: 15]. However, experts are not allowed to suggest any definitive conclusions, but can only present factual data. The discussions are attended by representatives of media, non-governmental organizations, and parties potentially interested in the results of deliberations. The outcome of the deliberation is to formulate (preferably) a common opinion on the debate subject, aimed at reaching a consensus or, if a consensus is not achievable, delineating those issues and areas where agreement has and has not been reached. The event is concluded with a polling of the sub-group participants again. The research tool in this measurement consists mainly of original questions from the initial interview questionnaire and several additional evaluation questions aiming at assessing the entire research program. It is assumed that the results of the final poll should be taken into account when deciding on the deliberation subject. Both the final outcomes and the course of the deliberation should be covered in the media. As a consequence, the changes in the attitudes and opinions of citizens after people have been provided with more balanced and complete information can be observed and discussed.

Organizing a deliberative poll® is not a simple task, particularly if organized on an international scale. Collaboration needs to be established with various public opinion research companies; opinion poll questionnaires and briefing materials need to be translated; a venue where an event will be held needs to be secured and board and accommodation for the participants need to be arranged; and multiple media need to be invited in order to cover the course of the event and the results of the deliberations.

TOMORROW'S EUROPE DELIBERATIVE POLL® – A CASE STUDY

This research deserves particular attention because it was conducted under the personal supervision of James Fishkin and Robert Luskin, it was conducted on a supranational scale, and was the first of two² research programs conducted so far involving citizens of the European Union as such. The research was carried out between August 20th and October 14th, 2007. During the first stage a random sample of citizens from the 27 Member States of the European Union (3550 persons in all, including 200 from Poland) was researched by means of a questionnaire interview technique.³ The survey was coordinated by the TNS Sofres Company (TNS OBOP in Poland), which is present in 25 countries. The questionnaire consisted of 119 close-ended questions, nine of which tested respondents' knowledge about the European Union (those questions concerned e.g. its territory, major institutions and their range of competence, decision-making procedures etc.) and questions on their preferences regarding solving problems which affect areas such as economic and social care and the role of the EU in the world. From the sample group participating in the baseline poll a sub-group of approximately 500 people was drawn up and mailed identical briefing materials, written in their national languages, to help acquaint them with the project. These materials were compiled by experts with utmost care to achieve a substantive balance of information and neutrality. Prior to sending out

² The second deliberative poll® with inhabitants of the EU was conducted in the first half of 2009 at Dolce-Lupe Hostels and Resorts in Brussels. In the baseline survey 4300 respondents were surveyed, of which 400 deliberation participants were drawn. In the debate, there were 348 participants from 27 countries. Information on this research is available at the website of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford.

³ In many countries the survey was conducted by the phone.

the briefing materials four EU parliament members representing different political parties were consulted in terms of their substantive content.⁴

The booklet of materials was also very carefully prepared in terms of graphic design and contained the following thematic sections:

1) *The European Union today* (with subsections: Map of the EU; What the EU does and does not do; The EU budget; How the EU works – Main institutions and decision making processes).

2) *Economic and Social Welfare in a World of Global Competition* (with subsections: Challenges and opportunities – Jobs; Different approaches – Jobs; Challenges and opportunities – Pensions; Different approaches – Pensions; Level of action – Jobs and Pensions).

3) *Our Role in the World* (with subsections: Challenges and opportunities – Global peace and security; Different approaches – Global peace and security; Level of action – Global Peace and Security).

Ad. 1): *The European Union today* section covered information such as: history of the European Union, its territory, population, major institutions and their competences, decision-making procedures, budget structure, socio-economic indicators for particular countries (unemployment rate, HDI – a synthetic composite index of a particular country's developments in three fundamental areas: healthcare, education, and standard of living of the population).

Ad. 2) The second section, *Economic and Social Welfare in a World of Global Competition*, discusses opportunities and threats in the labor market and social welfare system (i.e. pensions), along with potential solutions to particular issues and arguments 'for' and 'against' in relation to each option. For example, as regards pensions four options were proposed: 1) a demographic option, which encourages birth rate growth, migration and mobility within EU; 2) increasing and improving conditions for the employment of older people through activities such as: more effective positioning of older people on the labor market and raising pensions for those who work longer; 3) changing the state pension system (potential increase in the retirement age, raising pension premiums in order to make the system efficient; 4) encouraging higher interest in private pension schemes among citizens.

⁴ The EU MPs – Andrew Duff, United Kingdom, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; Jens-Peter Bonde, Denmark, Group for Independence and Democracy, Pierre Jonckheer, Belgium, Greens/European Free Alliance; Pervenche Bérès, France, Party of European Socialists – all acknowledged that the briefing materials were well-balanced.

Ad. 3) The third section, *Our Role in the World*, considers two issues: global development and safety as well as relations with the ‘near neighbors’ of the EU. Regarding the first issue the following options were proposed (among others):

- isolationism,
- resigning itself to the leadership of the USA,
- regional initiatives to increase the significance of the European Union in the world
- diplomatic and non-military actions,
- military interventions under a UN mandate; and
- military interventions of particular countries.

As far as the second issue - relations with the neighbors of EU - is concerned four different variants defining those relations were presented: 1) focusing on EU internal affairs while ignoring neighbors and resigning from EU enlargement; 2) maintaining good relations with the neighbors but without enlarging the EU; 3) adopting strict criteria for the potential enlargement of the EU; 4) unlimited further enlargement. Arguments were presented ‘for’ and ‘against’ each of these options with respect to global development and safety as well as relations between the EU and its ‘near neighbors’.

Additionally, on the subject of global safety four different approaches were described with respect to how much the EU and particular member countries should engage themselves in solving problems related to the issue of safety. The following approaches were proposed:

- collective decision-making (by all countries) at the level of the EU;
- a multi-speed approach, i.e. each EU member state is left to decide for itself;
- the currently-realized variant, i.e. support, cooperation, and complementary actions
- Member States should decide for themselves, taking actions according to their interests.

Once again arguments ‘for’ and ‘against’ each approach were offered.

The booklet also included telephone numbers and internet websites for people who wished to obtain additional information about the issues covered in it. The readers of the booklet could also learn which state or private institutions and European companies offered their scientific, logistic and financial assistance to prepare and realize the deliberative poll®.

People from the sub-group (500 people) were invited to take part in a deliberative poll® which took place in the facilities of the European Parliament in Brussels between 12th and 14th October 2007. At this stage of the project

362 persons took part— including 26 Poles. This group might be regarded as a representative sub-group, and even though men and better educated individuals were somewhat overrepresented in it, the differences were not statistically significant. Shortly upon their arrival the participants were asked to fill out questionnaires comprising predominantly the same questions as the survey in the initial interview. This second measurement was aimed at pointing out the potential influence of the initial research⁵ on the participant's views of a given subject. As the authors of the research relate: "There may well be some learning and some attitude change from T1 to T2, a period during which the prospective participants tend to start paying heightened attention to media stories concerning the topics they knew they would be talking about in Brussels, to talk more about those topics with family, friends, and co-workers, and even, in some cases, to research them, in the library or on the web." [Luskin, Fishkin, Boucher, Monceau⁶ 2008].

The small groups in which the deliberations were to take place were randomly formed by drawing. A facilitator assisted each group work and the discussions were simultaneously interpreted into the various languages of the participants – however, owing to organizational conditions related to interpretation capabilities each group was limited to persons speaking no more than three different languages.

After completing the work in groups, in accordance with the typical procedures employed in this technique a plenary session with the presence of experts took place, during which the participants were able to ask previously prepared questions. A final, third measurement of knowledge and opinion was conducted on the last day of the meetings. When the results were compiled a short report was sent to the media, and the distribution of answers to all questions from the survey was posted on the websites *Tomorrow's Europe*⁷ and the Center for Deliberative Democracy. While it is not the intention of this article to present detailed results of the measurements obtained with respect to the issues involved in this project,

⁵ The effect of the influence of the first measurement on the results obtained in the second measurement is well known and documented in panel research, and is called the 'panel effect' [Koseła, Sulek 2005: 42] In experimental studies it is postulated that the pre-test (that is the first measurement of the independent variable, which is made before introducing the stimulus) might be a contamination factor and might affect the post-test result [Sulek 1979: 75].

⁶ Available at: <http://cdd.stanford.edu/research/papers/2008/EU-enlargement.pdf> (accessed on 30 October 2012).

⁷ The website stopped working after changes to its graphic format had been introduced and the only information currently available is that the materials will be posted there shortly (<http://www.tomorrowseurope.eu/> (accessed on 30 October 2012)).

it is worthwhile to examine some conclusions which might be drawn based on the gathered material. It turned out that:

1. The third (final) measurement showed an increase in knowledge about the European Union both in the group of “old” and “new” citizens. The number of correct answers to factual questions grew in both cases by almost 16% (in the sub-group of “new” citizens from 39% to 54%; in the “old” group from 40% to 56%).
2. The “new” members of EU more frequently changed their opinions than the “old” members. For example, in answer to the question whether it is good for a country to be a member of the European Union 73% of the respondents from the ‘new’ Member States answered *yes* in the first measurement, while 89% answered in the affirmative in the second (a difference of 16%). In the group of the ‘old’ EU citizens, 82% answered *yes* in the first measurement and 91% in the second (a difference of 9%).

It is also worth noting that the receipt of information and discussions thereof brought about a significant concurrence of views between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ EU citizens. For example, in the first measurement only 72% of the ‘new’ EU citizens felt that investing in new technologies favors growth of competitiveness on global markets, while 88% of the ‘old’ citizens gave positive answers to the question posed. In the second measurement no differences were noted between the two above groups (93% positive answers from both groups).

Besides presenting quantitative data in frequency tables and cross tabulations and calculating proper measures for defining the dependencies between variables, an analysis was undertaken of the transcript the discussions in order to isolate the arguments used by members during deliberations. The statements were coded by means of specially prepared categories.⁸

TOMORROW’S EUROPE – ACHIEVEMENTS AND LIMITATIONS

The research itself was carried out in a wide-ranging fashion as far as both the organizational and promotional sides are concerned. Suffice it to say that the whole project cost € 1.4 million, which at first glance is a quite high amount for

⁸ An example of this kind of analysis with regard to discussion concerning the access of Turkey to the European Union was presented in *Considered Opinions on Further EU Enlargement: Evidence from an EU-Wide Deliberative Poll* [Luskin, Fishkin, Boucher, Monceau 2008] posted on the following website: <http://cdd.stanford.edu/research/papers/2008/EU-enlargement.pdf> (accessed on 30 October 2012).

realizing a social research study on the opinions of the European Union citizens. However, if we concern ourselves not only with the strictly research aspect (related to developing a concept of the project, including questionnaires, conducting three opinion surveys, preparing and moderating small group and plenary discussions and compiling research results), but also take into account the organizational issues regarding transportation, board and accommodation of the project participants, and the work of simultaneous interpreters, then the cost does not appear to be so high, even though it is clearly impossible to be borne by a small research team having limited funds at their disposal. It was possible to realize the project only under the sponsorship and protection of a large institute such as *Notre Europe*⁹, which initiated and coordinated the *Tomorrow's Europe* research, as well as the receipt of financial support from several international corporations, e.g. Allianz. Although these issues are related to the organizational side of the research, they demonstrate rather clearly that European-wide deliberative polls®¹⁰ cannot be conducted too frequently.

Is there a 'place effect' in deliberative polls®?

The respondents who decided to participate in the deliberation went on what can only be called a 'sponsored' trip to Brussels, and did not have to spend any money during their stay there. Thus it is legitimate to ask whether there was a sponsorship influence, which might also involve a 'place effect', i.e. the impact of where the research took place. While this is only a hypothesis the actual participation rate of 90% of those invited to take part in the project seems like a very high response rate, which might have been affected by the venue where the deliberation took place and the related prospect of an attractive journey. Is it then legitimate to ask if we are dealing with a new behaviour of respondents, which manifests itself in practicing what might be labeled 'deliberative tourism'?¹¹ When analyzing the issues that were discussed in debates it might be assumed

⁹ The major aim of the Institute, established by Jacques Delors, is organizing seminars, public symposiums, initiating researches and publishing their results. The areas of interest include issues concerning the European Union, democracy in action, European identity, European budgeting etc. More information can be found on the Institute website: www.notre-europe.eu.

¹⁰ The presented list of doubts, limitations of the deliberative poll® does not include those which result from criticizing the idea of conducting public surveys, philosophical and methodological criticism of their assumptions. Therefore, considerations concerning only the characteristics of international deliberative polls® and their problems were deliberately restricted in this paper.

¹¹ When focus group interviews started to be realized in Poland there appeared 'professional participants' of FGIs, who treated their remuneration for their participation in the research as a way of earning a living [Lisek-Michalska 2007: 61]

with a rather high degree of certainty that these are issues which EU citizens do not speak about on a daily basis. Another factor, one that might have somewhat discouraged potential participants, was the use of methodological jargon in the briefing materials. J Clive Matthews argues: “A system of gauging public opinion that involves a “scientific” selection, “balanced” briefing materials and a “moderated” debate? All three words in inverted commas are instantly going to raise suspicions – “scientific” sounds too much like the obfuscation of a shampoo advert, “balanced” sounds too much like the utterly misleading slogan of the utterly biased Fox News, and “moderated” sounds too much like censored.” [Matthews 2007].

Apart from methodological terms, briefing materials also included economic and/or political science terms which, although used in moderation, might pose some difficulty for respondents, as well as reading and absorbing information from a 26-page booklet. In spite of these ‘discouraging’ elements of the research however, the participants decided to commit a free October weekend to it, which in part gives rise to the hypothesis that participants were strongly attracted to the venue of the research.

Can the deliberative poll® research European public opinion?

Now let’s examine another aspect of the research, namely the purpose that the survey results are supposed to serve. As James Fishkin, an originator of this method, claims, in the course of the *Tomorrow’s Europe* debate researchers and observers were able to ‘see’ European public opinion by following the movements and thoughts of the participants, who created a European ‘microcosm’ of sorts. “Thousands and thousands of words have been written about Europe’s public sphere, and there have been speculations and academic debates [...] but no one has ever actually observed or listened to European public opinion. [...] This European microcosm [...] brought the old and the new Europe together in the same room.” [Buonocore 2007]. Here one needs to pose a question – what is European public opinion and in what sense might we speak about a discrete ‘European public opinion’? Referring to two most popular ways of understanding the term ‘public

opinion'¹² – as aggregate and collectivist,¹³ - it might be concluded that in the case of the former European public opinion certainly exists as the public opinion is “[...] a collection of answers given in representative surveys” [Zeller 1998: 217]; while according to the latter definition European public opinion is rather an entity without a designatum in reality. “The first view [*aggregate* A.K.] denotes an aggregate of individual opinions held by community members on a certain problem, which could be described by means of a statistical distribution of opinions on the subject, or a modal opinion (most frequently expressed)” [Nowotny 2000: 16]. If we assume that European public opinion is nothing else but a sum of opinions of inhabitants from EU member countries, then it may be fair to assume that such an ‘opinion’ might have been noted during the *Tomorrow’s Europe* project. The issue is viewed differently however if we opt for the collectivist approach to public opinion, where “[p]ublic opinion is no mere aggregate of separate individual judgments, but an organization, a cooperative product of communication and reciprocal influence.” [Cooley 1929: 121]. In this view public opinion is formed when there are socially important, interesting issues which constitute subjects of spirited debate. In addition, there must be a more or less definable public which has an opinion and is willing to share it. As far as the European deliberative poll® is concerned, it may be argued that the ‘public’ was created for the purpose of the project itself. As Ian O’Flynn comments: “Deliberative polls create a public that has never existed and probably never will exist. Political groups are not comprised of random samples, information is rarely balanced, safe deliberating spaces are generally hard to find, and so forth.” [O’Flynn 2007]. It is only the interactions among people interested in a particular subject that legitimize the existence of

¹² I do not discuss here the term ‘operational definition,’ according to which public opinion would be an entity measured by a public opinion study. Definitions related to an attitude called ‘operationalism’, which states that „[...] scientific notions are the same as collections of measurement and calculation operations. The mentioned operations denote the meaning (in the empirical sense) of scientific terms” [Grobler 2006: 151]. Following this way of reasoning it may be said that intelligence is what an intelligence test measures, while an attitude is what we measure by means of a scale measuring an attitude, etc. However, creating operational definitions contains certain drawbacks because a variety of research procedures used to study a phenomenon would produce different categorizations of the same phenomenon. Accordingly we could speak about WAIS-R intelligence or intelligence of Raven’s Progressive Matrices, as they are the most popular tests to measure intelligence. Similarly, regarding attitudes we would have a Likert’s attitude (measured on one scale) and/or a Thurstone’s attitude (measured on another scale)

¹³ In this paper only two ways are presented, although as Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann notes in her book “The Spiral of Silence”, in 1965 American scholar Harwood Childs collected about 50 definitions of public opinion [Noelle-Neumann 2004: 77], and since then other definitions have probably been created as well.

the public opinion in the collectivist sense. Accordingly, if certain issues are not discussed in a country it may be concluded that there is no public opinion on them. Consequently one might pose the question whether, before the European deliberative poll®, there were any public debates on the role of EU in the world, EU enlargement, or social welfare in the world of global competition in the given countries surveyed. The answer is probably yes, but equally probably in rather narrow environments of people keenly interested in these problems. Apparently Timothy Garton Ash concurs, as he claims in *The Guardian* of 18 October 2007 that, besides debates in the European Parliament which are ignored by most citizens, there are neither deliberative environments nor European issues which are widely discussed (perhaps except for football and the Madeleine case).¹⁴ If there are any discussions which engage inhabitants from different European Union countries they epitomize ‘elite conversations’ [Ash 2007]. In the same article the author presents a basic reason which, in his view, hinders or prevents such discussions: “And the biggest single reason for this is quite simply that we speak and think in so many different languages. The heart of Europe’s democracy problem is not Brussels, it’s Babel.” [Ash 2007]. Obviously, certain social groups, such as politicians, economists, social activists or even ordinary citizens, might have an opinion on a subject, however two things must be remembered: firstly, even “a substantial number of people might have similar opinions, but as long as each of them is unaware of other people’s opinions, their private views do not combine into a public opinion” [Sułek 2001: 23]; and secondly, the deliberative poll® described in this paper attracted a representative sample of inhabitants of EU countries, not a group of particularly interested, socially active citizens. The existence of a European public opinion in the collectivist sense might be confirmed only if the *Tomorrow’s Europe* participants had, on their return to their home countries, started a public discussion which initiated the crystallization of public opinion on these issues. Public opinion would have to affect lives of the public and hold and function on a public level [Nowotny 2000: 17].

The role of initiating public discussion could also be played by the various media which were invited to take part in the deliberative poll®; but this would require that they comprehensively cover the whole project and support in some fashion the formation of a public opinion on the matter. Few links to newspaper articles or official blog posts which describe the research are available on the

¹⁴ The case of Madeleine Beth McCann, a daughter of a British couple who disappeared from a hotel room in Portugal, occupied the front pages of newspapers not only in Great Britain, but also most European states.

website of The Center of Deliberative Democracy. Even if at the time the research was conducted the media covered it more intensively, none of the addresses refers to websites in all countries represented in the research project.¹⁵

What tasks does the deliberative poll® pose for facilitators?

Let's now consider another issue, which was raised by Francesco Marchi, who was a facilitator of a discussion group at a table occupied by citizens of Italy, France, Belgium and Luxemburg. These were people with most diverse socio-demographic characteristics, different views and life experiences, speaking different languages; who discussed issues which were somewhat imposed on them, and following rules established prior to the discussion [Marchi 2007].

A major task of the facilitator is to moderate the debate in such a way so that none of the participants dominates the discussion or forces his or her opinion on others, and so that each participant has an equal opportunity to express his or her views on a subject and in addition can utilize a comparable amount of time. Moreover, the facilitator ensured that members of the poll stuck to the main subject so that the discussion did not wander off course. It should be emphasized that special care needed to be taken that people who use different languages and live in different countries with diverse rules for public discussions were able to suspend their own private rules and adhere to the rules externally imposed on them. It seems that this is possible only if there is a 'guardian' to ensure a properly led deliberation, ideally if he or she is prepared earlier or is selected by the participants.¹⁶ The facilitator performs three roles in the deliberation: normative, technological and leadership. The first one (normative) involves defining the purposes and rules of the debate. The second role (technological) comprises supporting communication, ensuring that ideas are expressed clearly, and asking auxiliary questions. The third role (leadership) depends on the performance of executive functions characteristic for people who organize a debate – setting time limits, ensuring that the rules are adhered to, and keeping the debate members task-focused. The facilitator "[...] intervened in the case of lengthy digressions of participants, assisted in forming the debate conclusions, reminded about prior established arrangements whenever necessary, and performed all activities supporting task execution". [Rycielski, Żylicz 2007: 83]

¹⁵ In Poland the information may be found in the annual report of the Institute of Public Affairs, which supervised the research in Poland.

¹⁶ Not all techniques employing deliberation rely on discussions moderated by trained, professional facilitators. There are techniques where a group leader is chosen from among the participants – e.g. Open Space Technology.

The facilitators' task in the *Tomorrow's Europe* deliberative poll® was made more difficult inasmuch as not only did the moderated discussion participants not know one another (which is the same for deliberative polls® taking place in one country, or focus group interviews), but they also spoke different languages. The performance of facilitators in such cases requires, in my view, excellent preparation as regards both substantive and interpersonal aspects.

The provision of simultaneous interpreting to the discussions at the tables had its advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, the discussion dynamics were decelerated, as the participants received 'filtered' versions of the discussion through earphones at the same time the speakers were talking, which produced some confusion in the flow of the discussion. Therefore the rapid and instantaneous exchange of arguments was hampered and the group dynamics, which is usually a pertinent indicator of the quality of a discussion,¹⁷ was necessarily lowered.

However, an advantage of such an unnatural deceleration of the discussion might be noted as well. During the discussion participants used the interpreting time to better comprehend other members' statements and to prepare their own. Perhaps thanks to such forced pauses the participants were able to formulate more relevant arguments to include in their statements. In their article, Espen D.H. Olsen and H.-J. Trenz emphasize the issue related to multi-lingual discussions and argue the following: "Discussions in pluri-lingual settings tend to run slowly. Slow debates might be less conclusive but are also more balanced and single speech acts are more reflected. Participants know that their statements need to be understandable and grounded to be properly translated and understood by the others." [Olsen, Trenz 2010: 12].¹⁸

Do deliberative polls® realize their theoretical assumptions?

James Fishkin has pointed out on numerous occasions the superiority of deliberative polls® over ordinary one-dimensional surveys. He claims deliberative polls® allow us to find out "[...] what the entire mass public would think about some policy issues or some candidates if it could be given an opportunity for extensive reflection and access to information." [Fishkin 1991: 81]. It's also worth

¹⁷ The issues related to the dynamics in group discussions were discussed by H. Malinowski in the article *Communication in focus group interviews*. [Malinowski 2007: 67–1004].

¹⁸ Although the article deals with the second of the European deliberative polls®, *Europolis*, it differed only slightly from *Tomorrow's Europe* with respect to the organizational side (it also concerned a European question, participants represented a variety of countries, and was held in Brussels), accordingly, the majority of general comments regarding one of those studies may be applied to the other.

considering another portion from this quotation which describes the benefits participants receive from taking part in the discussion when they are truly given an opportunity for an extensive reflection, which is supposed to be realized in the course of small group discussions. It seems the statement may be slightly overdone, as in fact the discussions are time-limited, which induces the facilitator to closely monitor the discussed topics and cut digressions short in order to realize the task assigned to the group. How long would conversations in small groups have to last to enable all members (at times as many as twenty at a table) to voice their opinions and speak long enough¹⁹ to fully cover the subject? This does not mean that this type of research would need to last many days in order to provide participants with enough time to explore a subject in-depth, although it should be noted that there are such deliberations – known as a ‘citizen’s jury’ – where participants spend 4-5 days together, dividing their time between group discussions and questioning expert witnesses.

Another matter concerns supplying respondents with information, which, as was mentioned earlier, is supposed to be ‘balanced’. Such information neutrality might appear only after selecting and describing certain aspects. How should we understand this? Initially some information²⁰ is chosen; however it is not possible to include a great deal of data on a specific affair in a non-comprehensive booklet, thus at this stage briefing materials need to be selected, which results in decidedly less balanced information. Consequently the authors of the booklet for respondents attempt to ensure the neutrality of previously chosen information, hence in essence we are discussing the neutrality of selected information. However the question arises: if respondents are supposed to be provided with all aspects of a problem, e.g. in the case of *Global peace and security* four approaches were presented²¹ –

¹⁹ In the article of James Fishkin and Cynthia Farrar *Deliberative polling. From experiment to Community Resource*, the authors wrote about setting no time-limits to the statements of deliberation participants; yet the tasks realized in its course determine that a moderator should both observe time-limits and ensure equal opportunities of expression for all participants [Fishkin, Farrar 2005: 74–75]

²⁰ Obviously I do not mean the choice of subjects for deliberative polls® because this process occurs in a distinct earlier phase than designing the booklet.

²¹ By the way, it should be noted that it is quite debatable to differentiate the second approach *Multi-speed with Arguments for* „1. Each country has specific needs and should be able to decide how much or how little they want to cooperate with other member states. 2. This approach allows member states to experiment without violating coordination or regulation from Brussels.” and the 4th Approach *No EU role with Arguments for* “1. National governments are best placed to decide. 2. This approach allows different countries or regions to experiment with different solutions, leading

what is the situation if a participant comes up with another, different, proposed solution to the problem? Is this to be discussed?

It should be also considered whether, besides verifying ‘balanced’ briefing materials, an examination into their level of comprehension among ordinary citizens of the EU was made, and if so, whether such comprehension was checked in relation to the booklet prepared in every language. This procedure would be reminiscent of a pilot research tool in survey studies, but would refer to information tools. And there is one more aspect related to balancing information, namely the choice of people who assess the balance. Does the choice of some and not other experts not affect the final assessment? Would other members of the European Parliament have made the same assessment as the four members who were chosen?

What is the level of acculturation in international deliberative polls®?

While I do not wish to repeat all the points contained in the critical analysis of the deliberative poll® included in the article *Deliberative poll® -an inventory of problems*,²² I think that one of them deserves particular attention, because what seemed arguable in the case of an ordinary deliberative poll® held within a single society seemed to be an insurmountable obstacle in the *Tomorrow's Europe* project. This significant issue concerns the acculturation of this way of proceeding, or in other words, making it a natural, safe, scientific and commonly used way of gaining information [Kubiak 2007: 63]. As J. Clive Matthes, previously cited in this article, aptly observed: “Fishkin laid out three criteria for success: was it representative, was it deliberative, and will decision-makers listen? But these criteria leave off the single most important – will the people accept the method?” [Matthes 2007]. An attempt to describe the levels of acculturation in the various countries where citizens took part in the *Tomorrow's Europe* project would require conducting in-depth methodological analyses concerning the entire method, not just public discussions on significant social matters. As far as I am aware this kind of reflection was absent in the two European deliberative polls®.

The question of acculturation of the method does not seem to bother J. Fishkin, for whom it seems more important that the deliberative poll® approach solves problems which pose difficulties for researchers conducting ordinary public opinion surveys; namely it prevents irrational ignorance, the collection of artifacts

to innovation and a healthy competition.” [Tomorrow's Europe... 2007: 17]. They appear to be very similar and in their entry definitions they convey virtually identical ideas.

²² Those interested are referred to volume LXI of *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, where the above-mentioned article was published [Kubiak, Krzewińska 2012]

(non-attitudes or phantom opinions), and finally opens up to potential respondents information from many sources and does not restrict them to those who think like them [Fishkin 2007]. Although in the further part of our description we are unable to determine how the deliberative poll® solves these problems, nonetheless it is not difficult, knowing the procedure of the research, to find a remedy to the limitations of classic surveys. The deliberative poll® differs from an ordinary survey in two fundamental aspects: number of opinion surveys, and deliberation between these measurements. If the solution to the problem was to study the same respondents at least twice, the 'problems' which Fishkin discusses could be handled by, e.g., panel research. But deliberation is an element which prevents such limitations by providing respondents with information and an opportunity to speak about an issue, which in turn enables them to consider it more thoroughly and not merely resort to choosing the most readily available information, which might come in the form of answers to questions from a questionnaire. Moreover, the deliberation is an opportunity to meet and discuss with people who do not belong to a circle of personal acquaintances, to listen to them and their diverse views on a subject, and to try to reach consensus on a common opinion which would be the basis to formulate a question to experts. An additional value of deliberative polls® is that participants feel appreciated by virtue of the fact that they are asked about their views. They also have an opportunity to ask questions and listen to answers from specialists on a subject - specialists whom they could not otherwise meet.²³ The deliberative poll® allows participants to listen to other people's opinions, and to present their own points of view on the basis of information received and in the context of an ongoing discussion. The participants of the deliberative poll® were able to visit the European Parliament, learn about its operations, and experience the difficulties which EU parliament members face when trying to formulate a common opinion on important issues with politicians from other countries, who represent different viewpoints and speak other languages. The deliberative poll® may also influence participants' behavior, as respondents, often previously indifferent to political or economic questions, may develop an interest in them, and perhaps even act and engage at a local level. This was well illustrated by J. Fishkin's description of his experiences from the first deliberative poll®, which took place in Great Britain. He relates that

²³ Similarly to research which utilized sociological intervention, wherein the study participants – social activists – have an opportunity to meet with interlocutors, who are important persons to the development of the movement [see e.g.: A. Matuchniak-Krasuska, Sociological Intervention of A. Touraine. Participant's comment., *Studia Socjologiczne* 1995, no 3–4, 1995].

“[...] a woman came up to me and said she wanted to thank me. Her husband was in the sample... and in thirty years of marriage he had never read a newspaper. But she said that once he was invited to this event he had started to read every newspaper every day – and he was going to be much more interesting to live with in retirement...” [Fishkin 2007].

CONCLUSIONS

It should be kept in mind that although deliberative polls® have been defined by D. Held as institutions of deliberative democracy²⁴, they are not “[...] magical tools for resolving the democratic and legitimacy deficits associated with particular political settings.” [Fiket, Olsen, Trenz 2011: 25]. They benefit the poll participants far more than the citizens or whole populations from which they were chosen. This is because the high costs and complex organizational challenges of this type of research cause it to be conducted relatively rarely and such a study involves only a small percentage of a country’s inhabitants (in the three deliberative polls® where Polish citizens participated, a total of 204 people were polled). Participants of deliberative polls® acquire certain skills which are useful for effective functioning in democratic systems. In particular they improve their communication skills; their knowledge on the subject of deliberation; their degree of understanding of different opinions and attitudes on a given topic; learn group decision-making processes; and how to persuade other participants to their point of view, all of which facilitates the establishment of new social connections [Wesołowska 2010: 30–33]. To a decidedly lesser degree the deliberative poll® might constitute a tool for researching European public opinion, particularly because the cyclical and significantly cheaper *Eurobarometer*²⁵ studies might be utilized for this purpose.

In their conclusions to the preliminary report from the *Tomorrow’s Europe* project, James S. Fishkin, Robert C. Luskin, Stephen Boucher, and Henri Monceau defined deliberative polls® as “polls with human face” [Fishkin, Luskin, Boucher,

²⁴ David Held enumerates deliberative polls, alongside deliberative days and citizens’ juries, and treats them as value-adding procedures and supplementary tools which may be utilized in modern democracies. [Held 2010: 319–327]

²⁵ Eurobarometer is a cyclical public opinion study conducted at the request of the European Commission, in which representative samples of inhabitants of all EU countries and candidate countries take part. Measurements are made twice a year on samples of 1000 people on average from every county. For more information and results of particular studies, see://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion

Monceau 2008: 13], which is attenuated by the opportunity to observe how people divided into small groups “[...] think, learn, and talk about the issues under good conditions.” [Fishkin, Luskin, Boucher, Monceau 2008: 13]. Creating such ‘good conditions’ requires *only* or *as much as*: preparing appropriate materials, training facilitators, and engaging the right experts. The organizers of the research hoped it would become a good beginning for similar practices, which were supposed to turn the inhabitants of the European Union member countries into active citizens of the EU engaged in discussions on vital political, social and economic topics. It’s hard to assess to what extent this postulate was realized – from 2005 to 2009 eleven wide-ranging initiatives were conducted whose major aim was to involve EU citizens in decision-making processes at the international level [Boucher 2009], and both EU-wide Deliberative Polls® – *Tomorrow’s Europe* and *Europolis* were parts of those activities.

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**SONDAŻ DELIBERATYWNY® TOMORROW'S EUROPE JAKO PROPOZYCJA
BADANIA EUROPEJSKIEJ OPINII PUBLICZNEJ**

(Streszczenie)

W artykule prezentuję sondaż deliberatywny® *Tomorrow's Europe*, którego uczestnikami byli mieszkańcy 27 krajów-członków Unii Europejskiej. W pierwszej części artykułu przedstawiam etapy tego interesującego badania i pokrótce referuję jego najważniejsze rezultaty. Druga część poświęcona jest omówieniu kwestii istotnych dla potencjalnych organizatorów, a co ważniejsze interpretatorów otrzymanych rezultatów badań. Moja uwaga skupia się m.in. na: problemie związanym z prowadzeniem deliberacji w wielu językach, kwestii dotyczącej akulturacji samej metody badawczej, możliwościach zbadania europejskiej opinii publicznej oraz korzyściach wynikające z realizacji tego typu badań.

Słowa kluczowe: sondaż deliberatywny, deliberacja, opinia publiczna.