

# BAROMETER OF EMPLOYEE SHARE OWNERSHIP POLICIES IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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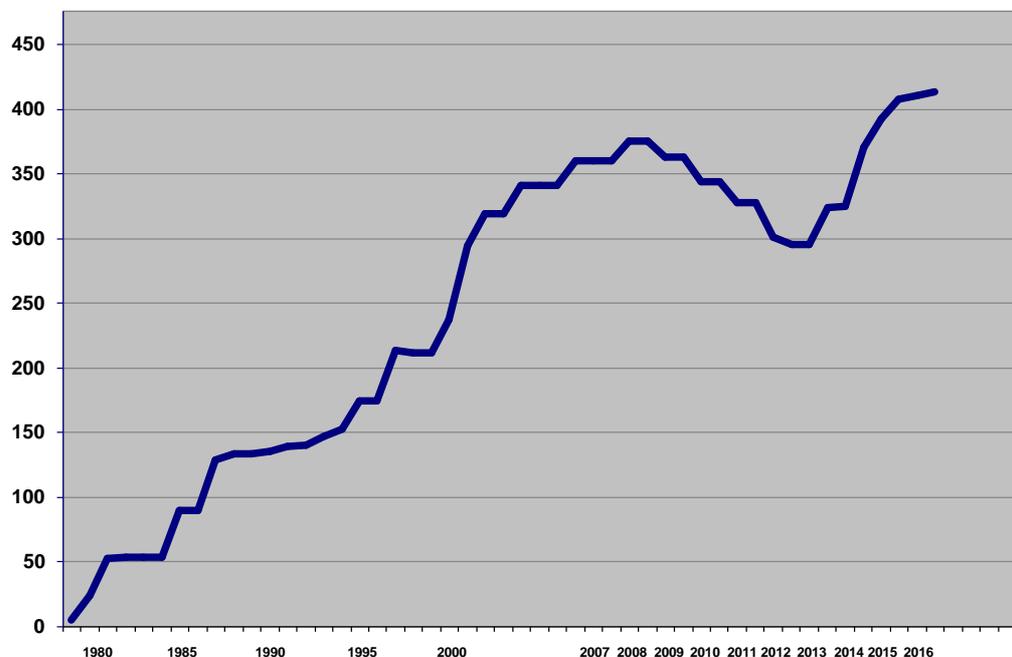
# BAROMETER OF EMPLOYEE SHARE OWNERSHIP POLICIES IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

## ABSTRACT

It is known that the mass development of employee share ownership depends mainly on incentive policies. The mass development of employee share ownership brings better motivation, productivity, profitability, higher growth, more and better jobs. This is good for all. But it depends on policy will to initiate the virtuous circle through appropriate fiscal incentives. After 2008, some European countries took negative decisions, removing or decreasing fiscal incentives, which led to a decline of the number of employee shareholders. Some other European countries took the opposite way, applying new or higher incentives, which led to a higher number of employee shareholders. All these policy decisions in various European countries, in a positive or a negative way, can be summarized through a single dedicated tool. This is the reason of the setting up of the EFES "Barometer of employee share ownership policies in European countries". Before 2009, the barometer showed a continuous increase, practically all policy decisions being positive. A negative phase occurred from 2009 to 2013. Since then, most policy decisions are positive again.

# BAROMETER OF EMPLOYEE SHARE OWNERSHIP POLICIES IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

BAROMETER OF EMPLOYEE SHARE OWNERSHIP POLICIES IN EUROPE



After increasing continuously since 1980, the number of employee shareholders in Europe was slightly declining from 2011, before stabilizing in 2015<sup>1</sup>.

This was partly due to the impact of the European financial crisis that erupted in 2008.

However, the impact of the policy decisions taken in European countries was probably the most important factor in this change.

It is known that the mass development of employee share ownership depends mainly on incentive policies<sup>2</sup>.

The mass development of employee share ownership brings better motivation, productivity, profitability, higher growth, more and better jobs. This is good for all. But it depends on policy will to initiate the virtuous circle through appropriate fiscal incentives. A recent study showed that the balance of fiscal costs and benefits of the

<sup>1</sup> [Annual Economic Survey of Employee Share Ownership in European Countries in 2015](#), EFES, Brussels, 2016

<sup>2</sup> [Fiscal incentives are indispensable prerequisites for the development of employee share ownership](#), EFES, Brussels, 2014

ESOP policy for the US federal budget in 2015 was \$2 billion (costs) compared to \$17 billion (benefits), a net gain of \$15 billion for the federal budget<sup>3</sup>.

After 2008, some European countries took negative decisions, removing or decreasing fiscal incentives, which led to a decline of the number of employee shareholders. Some other European countries took the opposite way, applying new or higher incentives, which led to a higher number of employee shareholders.

In 2009-2012, France and Ireland reduced their fiscal incentives, as well as Denmark, Greece and The Netherlands, where all incentives were removed.

In contrast, significant policy progress occurred in the UK in 2014-2016, as well as in Spain, in Hungary, in Austria (which doubled its fiscal support on 1.1.2016), and in Romania.

In addition Denmark will restore in July 2016 the incentives that were removed in 2011.

This is typical of the recent changes in European policies: One of the first deeds of the new Danish Government in 2011 (Ms Thorning-Schmidt, socialist) was to remove all incentives. One of the first deeds of the new Danish Government in 2016 (Lars Rasmussen, conservative-liberal) is to restore them.

Finally, Vice-Prime Minister Morawiecki announced a long-term plan in five points for the development of Poland, including employee share ownership, and a new Polish "Forum for Employee Ownership and Domestic Capital Development" was set up in April 2016.

All these policy decisions in various European countries, in a positive or a negative way, can be summarized through a single dedicated tool. This is the reason of the setting up of the EFES "**Barometer of employee share ownership policies in European countries**".

Since 2009, all policy decisions taken in European countries can be found in the table of "Recent policy decisions regarding employee share ownership in European countries", available on the EFES website<sup>4</sup>. All decisions are recorded thanks to cooperation with leading specialized international law firms<sup>5</sup>.

Before 2009, all policy decisions taken in European countries, from the first one in 1962, were recorded based on the history of legislation in each European country, as described in the Pepper IV Report<sup>6</sup> and by specialized international law firms.

Each policy decision is weighted by the relative weight of each country in the assets held by all employee shareholders in the 31 European countries (28 countries of the European Union, plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland), leading to the "barometer".

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<sup>3</sup> [The Impact of Employee Ownership and ESOPs on Layoffs and the Costs of Unemployment to the Federal Government](#), Corey Rosen, NCEO, Oakland, 2015

<sup>4</sup> [Recent policy decisions regarding employee share ownership in European countries](#), EFES, Brussels.

<sup>5</sup> [Virtual Center for employee ownership and participation](#), EFES, Brussels.

<sup>6</sup> [The Pepper IV Report](#), Inter-University Centre Berlin/Split, Berlin, 2009.

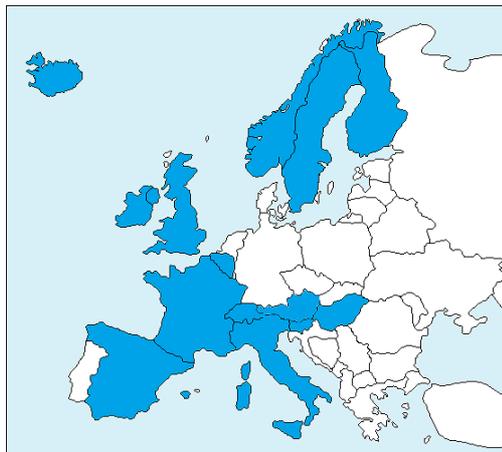
It is a true barometer, because it is based on policy decisions, which will later have real impacts. It announces future developments. For instance, the barometer declined from 2009, while the number of employee shareholders declined from 2011.

The barometer shows that policy decisions were mainly negative from 2009 to 2013. Since then, most policy decisions are positive again and in fact, we see the swelling wave that could already be announced in 2013<sup>7</sup>.

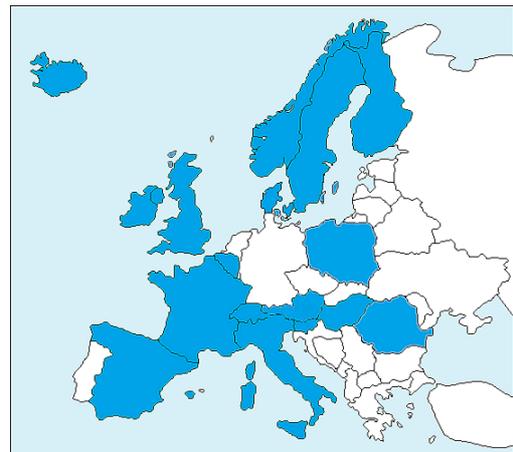
Before 2009, the barometer showed a continuous increase, practically all policy decisions being positive. Two periods have to be highlighted, with a stronger increase: 1983/1987 (Margaret Thatcher in the UK, Edouard Balladur and privatizations in France) and 1998/2001 (8 European countries applying higher or new incentives on options and restricted share plans: Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, UK).

In 2016, 14 of the 28 countries of the European Union apply incentive policies for employee share ownership, compared to 11 countries one year before. This is a remarkable change.

**2015**



**2016**



The EFES Barometer of employee share ownership policies will be published every six months, through [this dedicated webpage](#).

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<sup>7</sup> [A new wave for employee ownership in Europe](#), EFES Newsletter, Décembre 2012

For all information

Marc Mathieu

Secretary General

EFES - European Federation of Employee Share Ownership

FEAS - Fédération Européenne de l'Actionariat Salarié

Avenue Voltaire 135, B-1030 Brussels

Tel: +32 (0)2 242 64 30 - Fax: +32 (0)2 808 30 33

E-mail: [efes@efesonline.org](mailto:efes@efesonline.org)

Web site: [www.efesonline.org](http://www.efesonline.org)

The EFES' objective is to act as the umbrella organization of employee owners, companies and all persons, trade unions, experts, researchers, institutions looking to promote employee share ownership and participation in Europe.

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