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● Age Concern royal party.

Public support for the EU plunges across Europe, says survey

PUBLIC support for the European Union has fallen sharply in its biggest member states over the past year, a survey showed yesterday, weeks before Britons vote on whether to leave

the 28-nation bloc. The survey of 10 large EU states by the Washington-based Pew Research Center showed strong support for Britain to stay in the EU, with 89 percent of Swedes, 75 percent of Dutch and 74 percent of

Germans viewing a so-called Brexit as a bad thing. But most striking was a plunge in the percentage of Europeans who view the EU favourably, a development which appears linked to the bloc's handling of the refugee crisis and the

economy. The fall was most pronounced in France, where only 38 percent of respondents said they had a favourable view of the EU, down 17 points from last year.

Favourability ratings also fell by 16 points in

Spain to 47 percent, by eight points in Germany to 50 percent, and by seven points in Britain to 44 percent.

Public support for the EU was strongest in Poland and Hungary, countries which ironically have two of the most EU-

sceptical governments in the entire bloc. The Pew survey showed that 72 percent of Poles and 61 percent of Hungarians view the EU favourably.

"The British are not the only ones with doubts about the European Union," Pew said.