

# Introducing the Eurobarometer

Eurobarometer public opinion surveys ("standard Eurobarometer surveys") have been conducted on behalf of the Directorate-General for Information, Communication, Culture, Audiovisual of the European Commission each Spring and Autumn since Autumn 1973. They have included Greece since Autumn 1980, Portugal and Spain since Autumn 1985, the former German Democratic Republic since Autumn 1990 and Austria, Finland and Sweden from Spring 1995 onwards.

An identical set of questions was asked of representative samples of the population aged fifteen years and over in each Member State. The regular sample in standard Eurobarometer surveys is 1000 people per country except Luxembourg (500) and the United Kingdom (1000 in Great Britain and 300 in Northern Ireland). In order to monitor the integration of the five new Länder into unified Germany and the European Union, 2000 persons have been sampled in Germany since Eurobarometer 34: 1000 in east Germany and 1000 in west Germany.

The present surveys are carried out by national institutes associated with the "INRA (Europe) European Coordination Office". This network of institutes involved was selected by tender. They are all members of the "European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research" (ESOMAR) and comply with its standards.

The figures given for the European Union as a whole, which are shown in this document, are weighted on the basis of the adult population in each country. In certain cases, the total percentage in a table does not always add up exactly to 100%, but a number very close to it (e.g. 99 or 101), because of rounding. When questions allow for several responses, percentages often add up to more than 100%. Percentages shown in the graphics may display a difference of 1% compared to the tables because of the way previously-rounded percentages are added.

In accordance with normal practice for this type of survey, the European Commission disclaims all responsibility for questions, results and commentaries. This report, which was drawn up by the Surveys and Public Opinion Research Unit (X.A.2 ; Head of Unit : Anna Melich) of the Directorate-General for Information, Communication, Culture, Audiovisual, is an internal working document of the European Commission.

## Types of surveys in the Eurobarometer series

The European Commission (Directorate General X) organises general public opinion, specific target group, as well as qualitative (group discussion, in-depth interview) surveys in all Member States and, occasionally, in third countries. There are five different types of polls available:

- Traditional Standard Eurobarometer with reports published twice a year
- European Continuous Tracking Survey (CTS) which replaced the Monthly Telephone Monitoring, as of January 1996, with quarterly reports published in "Europinion"
- Telephone Flash EB, also used for special target group surveys (e.g. Top Decision Makers)
- Qualitative research ("focus groups"; in-depth interviews)
- Central and Eastern EB, an annual survey of general public opinion in 16 Central and Eastern European countries in cooperation with DG I and DG 1A

The face-to-face general public standard Eurobarometer polls, the telephone Flash EB polls and qualitative research serve primarily to carry out surveys for the different Directorates General and comparable special services of the Commission on their behalf and on their account.

## Highlights

- Economic and social expectations for 1997 are in the main pessimistic. Economic conditions in Member States are not expected to improve. More positive exceptions are observed in Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, where approximately one in three persons anticipates 1997 being a better year than 1996.
- Pessimism is highest in Germany, France, Belgium and Greece, with only one in ten persons expecting 1997 to be better.
- At a personal level EU citizens are more positive, with a majority (58%) expecting no change in their job situation in 1997. Nearly one in two EU citizens expect the employment situation generally to deteriorate. Again pessimism runs particularly high in Germany with 74% in East Germany and 65% in West Germany expecting the job market to get worse.
- Standard indicators show a drop in support for the European Union over the past twelve months. Support for membership has declined 5%, support remains highest, but showing no increase, in Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands and is at its lowest in Sweden, Austria, the United Kingdom, Finland and Germany.
- Support for issues relating to the democratic processes remain strong and two thirds of Europeans support the development of common defence and foreign policies.
- Support for a common European currency has increased by 4% in the past twelve months to 51%, but the vast majority (77%) of the general public feel ill informed, 2% feel “very well” informed and 19% feel “well” informed. Those feeling informed tend to be men, the well educated and from the higher socio-economic groups.
- The proposed date of 2002 for the introduction of the Euro is not well known, nevertheless two thirds of EU citizens expect the new currency to be introduced by that date. The mass media and the financial institutions are expected to play a main information role for the introduction of the currency.
- Just over half (51%) of EU citizens describe themselves as European to some extent, but there has been a rise (+6%) in those considering themselves as “nationality only”. The political left is more likely to regard itself as European than those considering themselves to belonging to the right: 58% compared to 38%.
- Amongst EU citizens the most trusted are the Germans, the Swedes, the Danes and the Dutch. The level of trust in one’s fellow citizens is highest in Denmark (61% trusting each other “a lot”) and Sweden (56%), elsewhere people are more equivocal and in some countries as many as one third “do not know” if they can trust each other.
- Television is the primary news source of the majority of EU citizens, while radio and the print media tend to be additional sources for northern Europeans, they are much less so in the southern states.
- Seven in ten EU citizens feel ill informed about the Union and the majority, 67%, would like to learn more. Levels of knowledge concerning citizens rights were varied, certain areas such as the right to study and work in another Member State are understood, but a number of others rights are less well known. The expected sources of information about the EU are television and the press, but in national contexts there are considerable differences e.g. the Internet is cited by 42% in Sweden, but only 11% in Spain.
- Nine in ten Europeans want “cleaner air in their towns and cities”, but a minority 43%, support “cutting pollution by taxation on private vehicles and fuel”.
- A vast majority (82%) of Europeans consider giving aid to poor countries as important, and 24% would like to see the European Commission increase its aid “a lot”, in comparison with 15% wanting their national governments to substantially increase their participation.

## Major News Items around the time of the Field Work October to November 1996

1st July 1996	Ireland assumes presidency of the European Union
18th July	The bureau of the European Parliament recommends the setting up of a temporary committee of inquiry into BSE
25th July	Coup d'Etat in Burundi
14th September	Elections held in Bosnia Herzegovina

13th	October	Shooting of Greek Cypriot by Turkish Cypriot security forces
20th	October	European and local elections held in Finland The "White March" is held in Brussels to show solidarity with the parents of the victims of the Belgium paedophile ring
22nd	October	President Chirac clashes with Israeli security forces during a walkabout in Jerusalem Conflict on the border of Zaire and Rwanda intensifies and an estimated 250.000 refugees flee the area
23rd	October	Scientists in Britain established link between BSE and CJD
25th	October	Reports say the situation in Kivu in eastern Zaire is deteriorating
30th	October	EU farm ministers approve beef market support package
31st	October	Half a million refugees are on the move as the camps of Uvira and Bukavu are raided by conflicting forces. Commissioner Bonino calls for more action and aid
3rd	November	Rumanian legislative elections Bulgarian presidential election : opposition candidate Petar Stoianov wins
5th	November	Bill Clinton re-elected Democrat President of United States
6th	November	Commission presents forecast of economic data for EMU criteria
7th	November	EU ministers meet on Zaire and urge meeting of UN Germany publishes figures indicating an increase in unemployment
8th	November	UN envoy sent to Zaire Chancellor Kohl makes exceptional expenditure cuts
11th	November	Economic and finance council postpones decision on a stability pact European Court of Justice rejects British case against 48 hour working week
12th	November	UN vote against US embargo of Cuba

## Editorial

This current Eurobarometer reports on the results of two surveys conducted at the end of 1996, these two surveys namely Eurobarometer 46.0 and 46.1 were conducted amongst the public at large between the 12th October and the 22nd November 1996. The greater part of the report is based upon the findings of the earlier survey, but the section on the single currency is based on the combined results of the two waves, with a resulting cumulative sample size of 32 000, the details of the samples are to be found in the annexes.

The closing of nineteen-ninety six was marked by a number of events both on the world stage and in Europe. Internationally, we saw the unfolding drama in Africa with growing tensions in Zaire and Rwanda, resulting in the movement of huge numbers of the civilian population with all its associated distress.

In the political sphere elections had been held in Bosnia Herzegovina, while in America on the 5th November William Jefferson Clinton was elected to a second term in the White House. Finally November had seen elections in both Rumania and Bulgaria.

In the European Union the repercussions of the BSE crisis continued to reverberate and the cost counted. In October scientists in Britain announced they had established a link between BSE and CJD. In the meantime, a European Parliament Temporary Committee of Enquiry was examining the evidence and was scheduled to report by the end of the year, in reality this report was finally tabled in February 1997.

European integration was also high on the political agenda. The debate concerning the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) preparing the revisions to the European Union treaties was in progress. The Dublin II summit was soon to discuss a general outline for a draft revision of the treaties entitled "The European Union today and tomorrow - Adapting the European Union for the benefit of its peoples and preparing it for the future"<sup>1</sup>.

This document is divided into five main sections :

1. An area of freedom, security and justice
2. The Union and the citizen
3. An effective and coherent foreign policy
4. The Union's institutions
5. Enhanced co-operation - "flexibility"

The conclusion of this work is scheduled for approval at the European Council of Amsterdam to be held on 16th and 17th June 1997.

In addition, the discussion surrounding the introduction of the single currency, the Euro, was well advanced and was beginning to come to the forefront of public debate, talk of convergence criteria and the associated issue of unemployment were on the political agenda in most Member States.

Shortly after the fieldwork and just before the publication of this report Europeans had celebrated, on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1997, the fortieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. How do Europeans view the state of the Union forty years on and on the eve of new steps towards European integration ?

The first and traditional set of questions deals with peoples' expectations for 1997. How do people assess their life situation in general, how do they judge their country's economic performance and indeed their own financial situation and finally the situation of the job market both at national and European level ?

The second chapter deals with the state of European integration as measured by our series of standard indicators, some of which have recorded trends in public opinion since 1970<sup>2</sup>, initially

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<sup>1</sup> Further information on the published documents may be found on:  
Internet Europa server: <http://www.cc.cec/agenda/igc-home/notes/cover.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Long term trend data is published from time to time in a separate Eurobarometer entitled "Trends".

amongst the six founder members of the Union and later incorporating the newcomers as they each joined .

Chapter Three deals in the first part with issues relating to the Intergovernmental Conference. We measure support for current policy issues such as economic and monetary union, the development of common defence and foreign policies, and issues relating to the democratic process and accountability. We go on to examine attitudes towards subsidiarity and to determine which policy areas European citizens believe should be treated at national and which at European level.

The chapter concludes with a section on the single currency, examining support for the Euro, how well informed people feel about the new currency, who or what they see as their main information sources and finally, whether they believe their own country will fulfil the so called "Maastricht criteria".

Chapter Four is dedicated to the questions of national identity and national trust. Do the citizens feel a sense of European identity one with another? How much do we trust each other and those of different nationalities from within the Union and those from without ?

The penultimate chapter focuses on the use of the different media (television, radio and press) as news sources. How well informed do people feel about issues concerning the European Union and their personal desire for more information. The second part of this chapter deals with respondents knowledge of their rights as European citizens and where they expected to find information concerning these rights. Finally as is traditional, in Ireland we asked people if they were aware that their country was currently holding the EU presidency and how important this role was for Ireland.

The final chapter is entitled "Other dimensions of the European Union". In this chapter we describe some results from topics covered by the survey which were contracted by other Directorates General in the Commission. In this Eurobarometer survey these included a section on energy and the environment and on aid to third countries. The brief sections here are only an indication of the larger series of questions asked, and which form part of separate reports.

Further information on the published documents may be found on:  
Internet: Europa server: <http://europa.eu.int>