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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUSTRIA

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1. Many Austrians believe they are well informed about the European Union (27%) or think that they have at their command at least an average level of information (32%). The main sources of information about the European Union continue to be the mass media (television, above all, but also daily newspapers and radio). 56% rate the extent of national media coverage of the EU as being the right amount, and 50% also think that the national media present the European Union objectively.

2. Respondents say that the euro (for 50%) and the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU, more than any other factors, characterize the meaning of the EU to them. More negative aspects that Austrians associate with the Union include the waste of money, unemployment and increases in crime and bureaucracy. Compared to other Member States, Austrians display fewer positive and more negative associations. Furthermore, these negative associations have increased since spring 2003. At an emotional level, Austrians, above all, express hope (32%) and also, relatively often, anxiety (28%), as well as mistrust (27%). A fifth of the poll claims indifference (21%). 16% state trust, 10% rejection, and only 4% report feelings of enthusiasm in relation to the EU. Negative exceed positive sentiments. On average, the opposite is true for the EU-15 as a whole.

3. As regards identity, 46% of the population feel Austrian only; 43% say they are firstly Austrian and then European; only 10% identify mostly or exclusively with Europe. Nevertheless, more than two-thirds (69%) are very or fairly proud to be Europeans.

4. Four out of ten rate the current speed of building Europe as relatively high; yet, the speed Austrians desire is even higher. While 45% advocate a development towards a European political Union, 35% are against that, and 20% have no opinion on the issue. Once again, in this poll, Austrians signal more scepticism than the majority of citizens in the other Member States.

5. Shortly before the next wave of enlargement becomes reality, 19% advocate enlargement to include all countries wishing to join, 43% think that the Union should only include some of the countries wishing to join and 27% state that none of the accession states should be admitted.

6. 35% rate Austria's membership of the EU as a good thing and 20% as a bad thing; 42% believe that it is neither good nor bad. 40% think that Austria has benefited from becoming a member, 45% disagree and 15% don't know. These assessments have deteriorated since autumn 2002. In general, the EU holds a positive image for 31%, a negative one for 25% and a neutral one for 38%.

7. Among the EU institutions and bodies, in Austria, the Court of Justice of the European Union (58%), the European Central Bank (52%) and the European Parliament (50%) enjoy the most trust of the European. Just under half (47%) also trust the European Court of Auditors, 42% European Commission and 38% the Council of Ministers. The European Ombudsman, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee elicit approximately equal measures of trust and mistrust. Confidence in most EU institutions and bodies has not improved since spring 2003; the perception of the Commission in this regard has even declined, yet again.

8. Austrians consider unemployment, reforms of the pension system, the economic situation and fighting crime to be the most important policy issues their country faces at the moment. The health care system, rising prices/inflation, but also immigration, public transport and taxation all receive medium priority. It is noteworthy that Austrians tend to attribute a mostly negative or irrelevant role to the EU precisely in relation to the issues that concern them most, namely unemployment and pensions. 45% are satisfied and 44% are not satisfied with the way

democracy works in the European Union. The level of satisfaction with the way national democracy works is markedly higher (55%).

9. Despite all the scepticism that respondents show with respect to the EU regarding various policy areas that also concern their own country, from a global perspective, Austrians still attribute a more positive role to the EU than to the US. This is particularly the case regarding the Union's role for peace in the world, the fight against terrorism and efforts to protect the environment.

10. Fighting unemployment, maintaining peace and security in Europe, protecting the environment, fighting poverty and social exclusion, terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, guaranteeing the quality of food products and fighting illegal immigration should all be priority issues among the actions the European Union could take, according to the Austrian poll.

11. More than three-quarters (76%) support an institutional structure where the European Commission is composed of commissioners coming from each of the Member States. 72% advocate the resignation of the President of the European Commission and the Commissioners if they do not have the support of a majority in the European Parliament. 67% are in favour of a European Monetary Union with one single currency; 65% advocate one common foreign policy among the Member States of the EU towards other countries, and almost as many favour a common defence and security policy among EU Member States (64%).

12. A majority supports further development of the Common Security and Foreign Policy, as well as of the European Security and Defence Policy, whereby special attention should be paid to an EU foreign policy independent of US foreign policy, the guaranteeing of human rights, agreeing on a common position when an international crisis occurs, ensuring a say for neutral Member States in EU foreign policy and a common immigration policy towards people from outside the EU.

13. Now, just as in previous years, almost two-thirds of the Austrians (64%) agree that the EU should have a constitution; only 6% do not share this opinion. At the same time, this does not imply consensus on the contents of the draft. 44% consider that the six-month duration of the Council presidency should be retained because it gives each Member State a chance to hold it on a regular basis, while 36% think the period of the presidency should be extended because six months is too short a period to achieve significant results (20% don't know). Austrian opinions tend to be contrary to the EU15 average in this regard.

14. 62% of Austrian citizens think the national right of veto in certain areas should be retained in order to preserve essential national interests; 20% want it to be limited to a very few essential areas, and 6% think it should be given up for all decisions in order to make the European Union more efficient. Small Member States, in general, appreciate the right of veto, and Austrians are among those who are the most fervent supporters of this.

15. Austrians display considerable levels of trust in state institutions (police, justice and the national legal system and the army), television and radio, as well as charitable or voluntary organizations. The UN and, to some extent, also the print media, still enjoy more trust than mistrust. The national parliament (Nationalrat) elicits about as much trust as mistrust. The Austrian government, however, suffers a slight deficit of trust. There is a clear trend of mistrust shown for religious institutions, trade unions, the European Union, large companies and, above all, for political parties. Compared to the EU15 average, most state institutions and media, as well as political institutions enjoy more trust than elsewhere in the EU.

16. In terms of their expectations for 2004, about two-thirds of the population thinks that neither their lives in general nor their personal job situations will get worse. Two-thirds do not expect a change in the financial situation of their household either. 17% think 2004 will be better and 15% that it will be worse in this regard. If Austrians anticipate change at all, they expect changes for the better. These comparatively stable, optimistically tinged views of their personal situation contrast sharply with their assessments of the future for the country in general: 44 % expect that the Austrian employment situation will worsen (while 35% think it will remain the same and 15% expect it will be better); and 32% anticipate a worsening of the economic situation (46% believe it will not change and 17% expect an improvement).