

EUROBAROMETER 60.1

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2003

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Denmark

The survey was requested and coordinated by the Directorate General Press and Communication.

This report was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Denmark.

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The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

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Executive Summary

This Executive Summary presents the overall results from the EU Eurobarometer Poll no. 60.1. The answers for the survey have been collected in Denmark between October 9th and November 11, 2003.

The main conclusions of the survey are as follows:

Constitution and political union

The Danes are most sceptical towards constitution

33% of Danes were not in favour of the EU having a constitution. This question was asked between October 9th and November 11th 2003, thus some weeks before the Brussels Summit in December 2003. This makes the Danes the most sceptical members of the EU, even though the number of people answering the question in the affirmative rose 3 points to 45%. Women are the most sceptical. While 52% of men want a constitution, only 40% of women do. The majority of Danes who place themselves right of the centre politically support a constitution, while those who place themselves on the left are split down the middle on the issue.

Young people want an EU constitution

If the younger Danes could take the decision, the EU would get a constitution. 54% of 25-39-year olds answer this question positively, which makes them the most positive age group in Denmark. Only in the 55+ age group do more people give a negative rather than a positive answer when asked whether the EU should have a constitution.

Citizens of the UK, Finland and Sweden are more sceptical than Danes on political union

The British, Finns and Swedes are more sceptical than the Danes when it comes to the wish for a political union. Whereas the average European citizen is much more positive towards a European political union than the average Dane, the opposite is true for the citizens of the UK, Finland and Sweden.

The Danes prefer a directly elected President of the European Commission

31% of Danes think that the President of the European Commission should be elected directly, while 27% think that he or she should be chosen both by the European Parliament and the Heads of State or Government. A majority of Danes (53%) wants to keep the right of veto, whereas 30% want the right of veto to be limited to a very few essential areas.

EU foreign policy – and other Danish opt-outs

The Danes want common foreign policy decisions

Fewer Danes now want the Danish government to make decisions alone on foreign policy and the fight against drugs, whereas a stable, low number want Danish decision-making to stand alone in the fight against organized crime, trade in human beings and international terrorism. At the same time, a large majority of Danes prefer the Danish government to make the decisions when it comes to immigration policy, rules for asylum and acceptance of refugees. More than half of Danes consider that the Danish government should take decisions on defence policy.

The Danes moving towards the EU15 average

On foreign policy and defence, in the latest EB survey, it can be seen that the Danish figures are moving closer to the EU average. In 1999, the Danish were 19 percentage points more sceptical than the EU15 average with respect to both foreign and defence policy. In 2003, this difference had fallen to a 14 percentage point differential with respect to defence and a 12 percentage point differential with respect to foreign policy.

A majority in favour of the euro and defence and security policy- and foreign policy

At the time of the poll, October 9th – November 11th, i.e. after the euro referendum in Sweden and before the rupture of the stability pact, there was a clear majority in favour of Danish membership of the euro and participation in defence and security policy and foreign policy. Among women, however, there were 50% against the euro and 45% in favour of it.

The EU should guarantee human rights

The Danes are above the EU-average when it comes to a wish for the EU to guarantee human rights, even when it is against the wishes of some member states. Otherwise, the Danes are generally below the EU-average when it comes to support for specific elements of foreign and defence policy.

The Danes are still positive towards enlargement

At 63%, the Danes are the most favourable of all EU citizens towards for enlargement of the EU. The Danes' positive attitude is markedly above that of the EU-average at 47%. The Danes are a little less positive when asked whether the EU should be enlarged to include all the countries that wish to join. Only 18% of the Danes agree on this point, whereas 25% of the EU-average hold this opinion.

Outlook on the future and the EU's role

The Danes are satisfied...but do not have high expectations

In the EU, the Danes are among the most satisfied with the lives they lead. They do not, however, have high expectations for the immediate future. Most markedly, 44% think that the employment situation will fare worse in 2004. This number is up by 24 percentage points from 2003. This made the Danes the Europeans most likely to change their minds on the outlook on the employment situation from 2003 to 2004.

Unemployment most important challenge

Not surprisingly, unemployment is the uppermost priority of the Danes, when asked to consider the two most important challenges their country is facing. 42% choose unemployment, while 34% choose crime as one of two of the most important challenges. Health care comes in third position, chosen by 24%, while 22% opt for immigration and 18% the economic situation as being the most important challenges facing Denmark.

The EU plays a positive role for the economy

In relation to the challenges singled out by the Danish poll, the economy is the area in which they see a role for the EU. 45% think that the EU plays a positive role, although 19% think it plays a negative role. The Danes do not see unemployment as something that can be solved by the EU. 26% think that the EU plays a negative role in the fight against unemployment, while 22% think that the EU plays a positive one.

Common fight against crime wanted

The fight against international terrorism is at the top of the list of areas in which decisions should be made jointly within the EU, according to the Danes. 83% answered positively in this regard, while only a few less want common decisions on the fight against the trade in humans, the fight against drugs and the fight against organized crime. When it comes to the acceptance of refugees, immigration policy and rules for political asylum, however, more than 60% of Danes think that the Danish government should make the decisions.

Membership, knowledge and confidence

The Danes think that EU-membership is a good thing

57% of Danes consider their country's membership of the EU to be a good thing, whereas the EU-average is only 48%. The Danes, it appears, tend to rate their EU-membership far more positively than, for example, Swedes or Finns. At the same time, more Danes, than is the case for the EU-average, think that EU membership is a bad thing, whereas fewer Danes fall within the "don't know" camp. Most Danes thus seem to have clear views on their country's membership of the EU. Furthermore, 67% of Danes think that Danish membership has been advantageous, while 21% think it has been disadvantageous. The longer the time spent in fulltime education by the respondent, the

greater the likelihood that they will see membership of the EU as being advantageous to Denmark.

The Danes – more than others – connect the EU with peace and bureaucracy

The Danes diverge from the EU-average in two respects, when asked to consider what the EU means to them personally. Danes are much more likely to answer that the EU means peace. Furthermore, Danes are also more likely to respond that the EU means bureaucracy and waste of money. Additionally, Danes, like other Europeans, connect the EU with the euro and freedom to travel, study and work everywhere in Europe.

More Danes would regret it if the EU were scrapped

If the EU were scrapped it would provoke stronger feelings in Denmark than in most other EU member states. 45% of Danes would be very sorry if the EU were scrapped, whereas the same is only true for 37% of the EU-average. 18% of Danes would be very relieved, whereas this only goes for 15% of EU-15 citizens, on average. Only 27% of Danes would be indifferent, whereas 37% of EU citizens, overall, do not appear to have strong feelings regarding this issue.

Television preferred medium for EU-information

Television is the preferred medium for EU-information among all educational groups. While better-educated groups want information from daily newspapers or the Internet, the figures are lower among respondents who have spent less time in fulltime education. A majority of Danes think that the media talk about the right amount about the EU. 27% of those who believe that they know a lot about the EU would like greater media coverage of the EU.

The Danes' trust in the EU has fallen – but is now on the European average

The Danes' trust in EU's institutions has fallen steadily in 2003. The Danes tend to trust the EU Court of Justice the most, followed by the European Parliament. Trust in all institutions has fallen since the last Eurobarometer survey in Spring 2003, in which it was generally higher than in the preceding years. Trust in the European Parliament has gone from 50% in 2000 through 62% in Spring 2003 to 55% in this latest poll. The equivalent figures for the Council of Ministers were 39% in 2000, 56% in Spring 2003 and 51% in Autumn 2003, whereas the European Commission has gone from 39% in 2000 to 56% in Spring 2003 to 45% in this poll. The Danes' trust in the EU's institutions now, in most cases, is close to the EU-average.