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## **Germany and Europe in 2003: The European Union on the threshold of enlargement**

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### **MAIN RESULTS**

#### **Germans are consistently more pessimistic than they were a year ago**

- A clear majority of Germans expect that the economic, as well as the employment, situation will worsen in 2004.
- With regard to their personal job situation, about one in ten Germans fears that things will be worse in 2004 and one in three Germans expects the financial situation of their household to deteriorate. The majority does not expect any changes in their personal life for 2004.
- In Germany, the level of satisfaction with life in general is clearly below the EU average. Furthermore, life satisfaction remains significantly lower in East Germany than it is in West Germany.

#### **Majority in favour of one of several enlargement options**

- A majority of Germans are in favour of enlarging the EU to include either all or some of the countries willing to join; however, Germany is below the EU average in this regard.
- In Germany, general approval of enlargement has decreased since April 2003 and continues to be below the EU average.

#### **Majority supports political union**

- A stable absolute majority of Germans is in favour of the development of the EU towards a political union.
- A relative majority of Germans support the direct election of the President of the European Commission.
- More than half of the people in Germany say that the duration of the presidency of the European Council should be extended beyond six months.
- Seven out of ten Germans and EU citizens feel that the President of the European Commission and the Commissioners should resign if they no longer have the support of a majority in the European Parliament.
- More than 60 percent of Germans, as well as EU, citizens are in favour of a constitution for the European Union.
- For the first time, less than half of the population in Germany would like to maintain the right of veto in order to preserve essential national interests.

### **Unemployment remains the most important issue for Germans**

- A clear majority of German citizens hold a positive view of EU policies in the areas of security (defence, foreign policy, fighting terrorism), while at the same time are critical of the EU's role in the areas of prices and inflation, unemployment, taxes and immigration.
- Maintaining peace and security in Europe and the fight against unemployment are considered by nine out of ten Germans to be the areas of priority for the EU. At the same time, four out of five Germans think that the EU is very effective or fairly effective in this realm.
- Similarly, an absolute majority considers EU policies to be effective in the areas of citizen rights, consumer protection and the protection of the environment.
- By far the most important issue for all Germans continues to be unemployment, trailed by a considerable margin by the economic situation in general.
- East Germans mention unemployment as an important issue far more often than West Germans. At the same time, nine out of ten citizens regard the fight against unemployment as a central priority for the EU. Nevertheless, unemployment is also considered an issue area in which EU policies are not very effective. Consequently, only four out of ten are in favour of making decisions in this area at European instead of national level.

### **Strong and stable support for common European decisions on security issues**

- The public strongly supports the European coordination or the taking over of responsibilities in the area of security, as was formulated in the Amsterdam Treaty: almost nine out of ten respondents support common decisions within the EU in the fight against terrorism, in the fight against the trade in, and exploitation of, human beings, in the fight against organized crime and in the fight against drugs.
- An indication for the importance that these issues have in the public eye is that those opinions have remained quite stable over time.
- The same holds for policy areas of the Maastricht Treaty: A stable three-quarters of the population say that questions of foreign policy should be decided at European level, and more than seven out of ten Germans feel the same about decisions on currency issues.

### **More Germans would regret it if EU were scrapped**

- More people than before would regret it if the European Union were to be scrapped. In this regard, the Germans are above the EU average.
- Every fourth German holds a positive view of the European Union.
- For most of them, the European Union stands for the Euro, freedom and peace.
- The share of the citizens who think that Germany's membership in the European Union is a good thing has fallen, however, and is now below the EU average.
- 37% of the Germans and 46% of EU citizens feel that their countries benefit from membership of the European Union.
- The assessment of the importance of the European institutions has increased slightly. However, the degree of trust towards these institutions, on average, has fallen slightly in Germany and the EU as a whole.

- Among Germans, those institutions that have an independent supervisory function, such as the European Court of Justice, the European Central Bank, and the Court of Auditors, enjoy a higher degree of importance and trust than in the EU as a whole. However, despite a positive trend, the degree of trust in and importance of the European Commission and the Council of Ministers remains lower in Germany than in the EU as a whole.
- The majority of Germans see themselves in the near future as both Germans and Europeans. Across the European Union, a growing number of people regard themselves simultaneously as citizens of their respective countries and as Europeans.
- In both West and East Germany, the share of the population that is satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union is lower than the EU average.
- Their satisfaction with democracy in Germany continues to decline and has fallen to the lowest level in the last four years.

#### **In times of crises, European citizens expect a common European position in the areas of foreign policy and security policy**

- German citizens expect that the EU should agree on common positions in the areas of foreign policy and security policy in times of crises and that it should be able to conduct its foreign policy independently of the USA.
- Overall, in the eyes of the public, the foreign policy and security policy issues agenda has remained quite stable between April and October 2004.
- Fewer and fewer people consider NATO an important actor in European defence policy, while a growing number of the citizens state that the European Union or the national governments should make the decisions concerning European defence policy.
- The population views the EU's role in international politics in a positive light, while being quite critical of the politics of the US.

#### **Germans consider their national media's coverage of EU impartial**

- A considerable number the Germans say that there is too little information regarding the EU in the German media and a relative majority thinks that the German media present the EU objectively.
- The main sources of information about the European Union are television, daily newspapers and the radio.
- Germans would prefer to receive information about the European Union through television, daily newspapers and the radio.
- Germans rate their knowledge on the EU, its policies, and institutions higher than the average European citizen.