

EUROBAROMETER 60.1

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2003

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GREECE

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

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Between October 1st and November 7th 2003, the European Opinion Research Group, a consortium of market and public research agencies, carried out wave 60.1 of the standard Eurobarometer, on request of the European Commission Directorate-General Press and Communication, Public Opinion Analysis Unit.

The research covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European member-states, aged 15 years and over, resident in each of the member-states. The basic sample design applied in all member-states is a multi-stage, random (probability) one. In each EU country, a number of sampling points were drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and population density.

The Greek sample, containing 1001 Greek residents, shows complete homogeneity with regard to nationality. This fact allows us, to a large and secure degree, to consider that the research results and assumptions are representative of Greek national public opinion.

All interviews took place in person, at the interviewers' homes and in their national language.

Preview of Greek public opinion

Somewhat interested in political discussions. Greek citizens appear to discuss political matters with friends (49%, EU15: 56%) *occasionally*, while 1 out of 3 (33%, EU15: 29%) seems to have lost interest and claims that he/she *never* engages in discussions of a political nature. In contrast, a smaller part of the Greek sample (18%) claims to discuss political matters with friends *frequently*.

Less satisfied with their daily life than other European citizens. Half of Greek citizens state they are *fairly satisfied* with the life they lead (50%, EU15: 60%). Overall, European citizens -EU15 average- appear to be more satisfied with their daily lives than Greeks.

Low quality of life expectations for the year 2004. Greek citizens have low quality of life expectations for the year 2004 as they consider that things will be worse as far as the economic (56%) and employment situation (55%) in Greece are concerned. However, when it comes to the financial situation of their household and their personal job situation, 47% of the Greek sample does not foresee any change, either positive or negative.

Unemployment is an issue of major concern. As in the previous Eurobarometer survey (EB59.1: 62%) undertaken in Spring 2003, the most important issue Greece is facing, at the moment, is unemployment (65%, EU15: 42%). Concern is also expressed for the economic situation of the country (32%, EU15: 27%) and the issue of crime (27%, EU15: 28%).

EU's role: more positive, but negative on crucial issues. In Greece, the European Union's positive role is limited in the defence and foreign affairs (49%), the fight against terrorism (42%) and protection of the environment (41%). It should be noted that Greeks believe that the European Union plays a negative role on two issues that seriously worry them: rises in prices / inflation (47%) and unemployment (39%).

Information on the European Union

Television remains the most used and preferred EU information source. As was seen in previous Eurobarometer surveys, television continues to be the most used (75%) and preferred (73%) source of information for the Greek poll when they are interested to get information on the European Union, its policies and its institutions. Daily newspapers constitute the second most important source for acquiring relevant information (30%), as well as discussions with relatives, friends and colleagues (28%). Only 7 out of 100 Greek citizens use the Internet as the main source to get information on issues related to the EU. It is worth mentioning that 14% of the Greek respondents never look for such information, mainly, due to lack of interest.

Greek media are objective in their presentation of the EU. The majority of Greek public opinion (54%, EU15: 41%) considers the national media to be objective in the way they present the European Union. One in four Greeks (24%, EU15: 23%) thinks that the national media present the European Union too positively, while only 6 in 100 respondents (6%, EU15: 12%) disagree by considering the presentation to be done in a negative way.

Medium level of EU knowledge. The sense of knowledge that the Greek poll considers it has regarding the European Union, is characterised as satisfactory as it is at a medium level (5) of a scale from 1 (*know nothing at all*) to 10 (*know a great deal*). The self-assessment of EU knowledge shows that Greek respondents do not feel they receive sufficient information on the European Union, its policies and its institutions.

General perception of the European Union

Greek satisfaction with their country's EU membership. The majority of the Greek sample (75%) considers that Greece has benefited from being an EU member. As in the previous Eurobarometer surveys (EB58.1 and EB59.1), the Irish (82%) and Greeks appear to be the most satisfied citizens, among the European sample, (EU15: 46%) regarding their countries' membership of the EU.

EU means mostly the 'euro' to Greeks. The Greek citizens tend to point at the positive aspects of the European Union when asked what it means to them personally. More specifically, the Greeks, mainly, identify the EU with the adoption and use of the common single currency, the Euro, (48%, EU15: 48%) and with freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union (41%, EU15: 49%). However, 17% (EU15: 15%) of the Greek sample associate the European Union with the problem of unemployment.

Current speed of building Europe should be accelerated to maximum. Greeks believe that the European Union is being built at a relatively medium rate. With a speed scale (from: 1 *standing still*, to: 7 *running as fast as possible*), Greek public opinion is placed between 3 and 4, with percentages of 21% and 32% respectively. However, a significant percentage (41%) believes that the speed for the building of Europe should be accelerated in order to reach the maximum possible speed by placing its opinion in point 7 '*running as fast as possible*' of the speed scale. It is noted, that this is by far the highest percentage reached among European citizens (EU15: 15%).

Sense of identity: Greek and European. Greek respondents identify mainly with their primary nationality in that more than half of them (51%) perceive themselves to be solely Greek. Nevertheless, 42% of the Greek sample expresses a sense of dual identity, meaning that there is a significant number of Greek citizens who view themselves in the near future as being -primarily- Greek and -secondarily- European.

Mostly being very proud to be Greek. More than any other European citizen, as it is noted that the EU15 average is less than half, reaching 41%, Greek citizens (85%) declare themselves to be very proud for their nationality. As far as their European identity is concerned, they appear to be fairly proud of it (46%, EU15: 48%).

Very attached to Greece, not very attached to EU. When compared with other Europeans, Greeks appear to be the most attached to their country (88%, EU15: 51%) and the least attached, with the

exception of the Dutch, to the European Union. Nevertheless, 35% (EU15: 44%) appear to be *fairly attached* and 17% (EU15: 14%) *very attached* to the European Union.

EU positive role - USA negative role. Greeks - more than all other EU citizens - express their strong negative opinion -*reaching the highest 'negative' percentages*- towards the international role that the United States plays regarding peace in the world (85% - EU15: 53%); the fight against poverty in the world (79% - EU15: 52%); the protection of the environment (77% - EU15: 58%); the fight against terrorism (75% - EU15: 37%); and, the growth of the world economy (70% - EU15: 36%). On the other hand, Greek respondents view more positively than other European citizens the role that the European Union plays in all the above issues: peace in the world (66% - EU15: 60%); the fight against poverty in the world (47% - EU15: 36%); protection of the environment (58% - EU15: 46%); the fight against terrorism (57% - EU15: 54%); and, the growth of the world economy (55% - EU15: 40%).

The weaknesses should be set as priorities: unemployment, poverty, and illegal immigration. Greek citizens encourage the European Union to set as top priorities, certain areas in which they find the EU to be somewhat ineffective, e.g. the fight against unemployment, against poverty and social exclusion and against illegal immigration.

Main dimensions of European integration

Defence, police and justice should be subject to Greek government decision-making. The survey makes reference to a number of areas in which Greeks are called upon to express their opinion on whether decision-making should be made independently by the national government or jointly with the European Union. Greek respondents seem to prefer joint decision-making in most sectors currently examined.

Fight against international terrorism (81%); Fight against the trade in, and exploitation of, human beings (79%); Scientific and technological research (77%); Information on EU and its policies (77%); Foreign policy towards countries outside the EU (75%); Humanitarian aid (75%); Fight against drugs (73%); Juvenile and urban crime prevention (71%, 69%); Fight against organised crime (75%); environmental protection (70%); Currency (69%); Support to regions which are experiencing economic difficulties (69%); Fight against poverty and social exclusion (68%); Unemployment (68%); Immigration policy, as well as rules for political asylum (67%); Tackling the challenges of the ageing population (65%); Accepting refugees (63%); Health and social welfare (59%); Agriculture and fishing policy (57%); and Education (55%).

Nevertheless, as in previous Eurobarometer surveys, some degree of resistance is observed in Greek public opinion about allowing joint decision-making with the EU in the area of defence. More specifically, 56% of the Greek sample believes that the national government should make decisions on defence, while 44% of the respondents believe that decisions should be made jointly with the EU. Likewise, the areas of cultural policy and basic rules for broadcasting and press -as in the previous survey- still trouble the Greek public as regards whether decisions should be made by the national government or jointly with the EU. The percentages of those who actually replied (DK not calculated) for either national government or joint decision-making respectively are the following: [Cultural policy: 50% - 50% - Basic rules for broadcasting and press: 49% - 51%]. Furthermore, Greek citizens express their preference for having the national government making decisions on issues related to police (55%, EU15: 70%) and justice (52%, EU15: 65%). On the other hand, it is seen that the percentages for those in favour of joint decision-making on police and justice issues are the highest among the EU Member States. Lastly, more than 7 in 10 Greek citizens (73% - the highest percentage among the EU Member States) support the idea of the European Union undertaking actions in fields where the national, local and regional governments cannot effectively do so.

EU decides for European defence policy. The majority of Greek public opinion believes that the European Union (66%), rather than the national government (25%), should make decisions concerning European defence policy. Only 1 in 100 Greeks (lowest percentage among the EU member-states) believes that NATO should make decisions concerning European defence policy.

Yes to the development of a European political union. The Greek citizens (74%) support the development towards a European political union more than any other European citizens do. It should be noted that the Greek percentage is the highest among the EU Member States, while the EU15 average is considerably lower at only 53%.

'Pro' EU common policies. As in previous Eurobarometer surveys (58.1 and 59.1), the Greek population remains supportive of the formulation of EU common policies. More specifically, the majority of the Greek sample takes a positive stand on the:

- i. European Monetary Union with a single currency, the Euro (64%, EU15: 59%);
- ii. Common foreign policy among the EU Member States towards other countries (75%, EU15: 64%). It is noted that the Greek percentage has dropped considerably when compared to the previous survey (EB59.1: 82%);
- iii. Principle of a common European defence and security policy among the EU Member States (75%, EU15: 70%). Similarly, the percentage has dropped from the previous survey (EB59.1: 84%).

Greeks call for an active EU role in international scene. The current debate on how much further the Common Security and Foreign Policy and the European Security and Defence Policy should be developed finds Greek public opinion calling for the EU to take measures that would enhance its political role and say in the international arena.

- i. The Greek public opinion wants EU Member States to agree on a common stance when an international crisis occurs (85%, EU15: 81%).
- ii. Greek citizens, more than all other European citizens, (75% highest percentage, EU15: 69%) believe that the European Union should have a rapid military reaction force that can be sent immediately -if decided- to trouble spots when an international crisis occurs.
- iii. They support the idea of the EU having its own foreign minister who can be the spokesperson for a common European Union position (72%, EU15: 63%).
- iv. Most Greek respondents (77%, EU15: 64%) think that the European Union should have its own seat on the United Nations Security Council.
- v. Although, the majority (52%) seems comfortable with the case of Member States that have opted for neutrality to still have a say in the EU foreign policy, a significant percentage (32%) of the Greek sample still tends to disagree with that, while 17% did not take a position on this question.
- vi. More than all other European citizens, Greeks believe that the countries that will join the European Union in May 2004, as a result of enlargement, should already have a say in European Union foreign policy (54% highest percentage, EU15: 35%).
- vii. Like other EU citizens, a great majority of Greek respondents believe that European Union foreign policy should be independent of United States' foreign policy (83%, second highest percentage following Finland with 86% - EU15: 73%).
- viii. The Greek citizens believe that the European Union should guarantee human rights in each Member State, even if this is contrary to the wishes of some Member States (83%, EU15: 76%). Likewise, they think that the European Union should work to guarantee human rights around the world, even if this is contrary to the wishes of some other countries (82%, EU15: 74%).
- ix. Lastly, they are supportive of a common EU immigration policy towards people from outside the European Union (80% highest percentage, EU15: 71%) and of a common EU asylum policy towards asylum seekers (81% highest percentage, EU15: 71%).

Remain very supportive of EU enlargement. As in the previous Eurobarometer survey (EB59.1), Greek respondents, more than all other European citizens (65%, EU15: 47%), appear to be in favour of the enlargement of the European Union to include new countries. However, Greeks are more critical of the way the enlargement is achieved in that 57% (EU15: 37%) of them would prefer EU enlargement to include only some of the countries wishing to join.

EU institutions, bodies and other agents

More trust in EU than in the national government. More than the other European citizens, with the exception of Finnish citizens (88%), Greeks primarily express their trust towards the army (83%, EU15: 64%) and then to the:

- i. National legal system (68% among the highest percentages received, EU15: 47%)
- ii. National police (67%, EU15: 64%)
- iii. European Union (65% highest percentage received among European citizens, EU15: 41%)
- iv. Charitable or voluntary organisations (63%, EU15: 59%)
- v. Religious institutions (60%, EU15: 42%)
- vi. Radio (55% very low percentage compared to some other Member States - EU15: 62%. It is noted that 41% of the Greek public opinion declares mistrust towards the radio.
- vii. National Parliament (54%, EU15: 35%). Second highest percentage in the EU after Denmark (68%). Nevertheless, 43% of the Greek respondents tend not to trust the Greek parliament.

while there is great sense of mistrust observed when it comes to:

- i. Political parties (77%, EU15: 77%)
- ii. Big companies (69% highest percentage, EU15: 58%)
- iii. United Nations (59% being the highest -negative- percentage received among European citizens, EU15: 36%)
- iv. Television (51%, EU15: 41%).
- v. National government (50%, EU15: 60%). Still, 47% claim to trust the Greek government.
- vi. Trades unions (49%, EU15: 51%). Nevertheless, 44% tend to trust the trade unions.
- vii. Greek press (48%, EU15: 49%).

Sense of trust in EU institutions and bodies. Greek respondents appear to be aware of the EU institutions, find they play an important role in the EU and express a sense of trust in them, especially as regards the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Court of Justice and the Council of Ministers of the European Union. Nevertheless, an important part of Greek poll expresses ignorance when it comes to certain EU institutions/bodies, such as the Committee of Regions (55%, EU15: 64%), the European Court of Auditors (45%, EU15: 44%) and the European Ombudsman (43%, EU15: 59%),

Fairly satisfied with the way democracy works. Greek public opinion appears to be *fairly satisfied* with the way democracy functions at both national (43%, EU15: 46%) and European (44%, EU15: 38%) levels. Nevertheless, a great number of the Greek sample expresses its dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in Greece (35%, 'not very satisfied') and in the EU (28%).

Reform of European institutions

YES to a European Union Constitution. Greek citizens (74%), as in previous Eurobarometer surveys, remain firm in their belief that the European Union should have a Constitution. It should be noted that the Greek percentage in favour of a European Union constitution is the highest, with that of Italy (74%), among all EU citizens (EU15: 62%).

EU presidency period should be extended. In the previous Eurobarometer survey (EB59.1), Greek respondents believed that the six-month presidency period of the European Council should be retained because it gave the chance to each Member State to hold the EU Presidency on a regular basis. However, just a few months after the end of the Greek EU Presidency, Greek citizens appear in the current survey to have changed their minds in preferring the period of the Presidency to be extended in order to allow the presiding country to achieve significant results (45%, EU15: 49%). Nevertheless, 37% of Greek public opinion remains true to its previous opinion (EB59.1).

Europeans should have a direct vote for the EC President. Greek citizens (40%) would like to see European citizens directly elect the President of the European Commission (EB59.1: 35%). Still, 1 in 5 Greek citizens considers that solely the European Parliament should elect the President of the European Commission. Moreover, 75% (EU15: 67%) of the Greek sample believe that the President of the European Commission, as well as all the European Commissioners should resign if they do not achieve majority support in the European Parliament. Lastly, 8 in 10 Greek citizens (80%, EU15: 72%) want the European Commission to be composed of commissioners coming from each of the EU Member States.

Must maintain the right to veto. As in previous Eurobarometer surveys, Greek citizens remain firm in their position that the right to veto on important / sensitive decisions must be retained in order to preserve and safeguard essential national interests (65%, EU15: 41%). It is seen that the Greek percentage holding this opinion is the highest reached among all the EU Member States, and at least twenty percentage points higher than the EU15 average.