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Germany and Europe in 2004: The European Union – Hopes and Fears

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MAIN RESULTS

Germans continue to be pessimistic in 2004

- Two out of three Germans expect a further decline in the employment situation in the next couple of months.
- This general pessimism increasingly influences the evaluation of the personal situation as well. More people expect things to get significantly worse both with regard to their financial situation and their life in general.
- Thus, the Germans continue to be noticeably more worried than the EU-average. For the first time, a relative majority of Germans feel that their situation has deteriorated over the last five years.

Scepticism with regard to latest enlargement of the European Union

- More than a quarter of Germans are in favour of the enlargement of the European Union to include ten new member countries, while more than half are against it.
- Overall, the Germans advocate an acceleration of the European integration process.
- Four out of ten citizens expect the European Union to take on a more important role over the next five years.
- There is a clear majority against enlargement of the EU in the future.
- Every third citizen feels well informed about the enlargement – more than the EU-average.

Ongoing strong support for a Common European Security Policy

- A broad majority of the German public continues to support a more prominent European role in the area of security policy. German support for this policy domain is noticeably above the EU-average.
- The importance of these issues is expressed in the remarkable long-term stability of the public's views on this topic.
- The high degree of support and the relative importance attributed to individual policy areas remain unchanged.



Clear majority for the “double majority” rule of voting

- Germany is the only country where the majority of the population favours a voting procedure within the Council of Ministers that takes into account the population size of each country.
- More than half of Germans favour a longer term for the presidency of the European Council.
- As in the EU as a whole, a relative majority wants to retain the right of veto.

Germans consider the European Parliament influential

- Almost every other German views the European Parliament as more powerful than its own national parliament, the “Bundestag”.
- The share of Germans that feel their interests are represented by the European Parliament is clearly above the EU average.
- Two out of three Germans consider the elections for the European Parliament to be really important.
- Germans think that their national institutions have a greater effect on their lives than the European institutions.

Trust in EU-institutions is on the rise

- Germans consider EU-institutions to be more and more important. In addition, trust in them is increasing.
- Almost unchanged, every fourth German holds a positive view of the European Union.
- For most of the Germans, the European Union stands for the euro, freedom and peace.
- The share of the German population that thinks that German membership of the EU is a good thing remains at much the same level as in October 2003, and is lower than the EU-average.
- A larger share than in the last survey thinks that Germany has benefited from being a member of the European Union.
- Three out of four Germans think that Germany’s voice counts in the European Union.
- With regard to their identity, the majority of Germans, as well as the majority of Europeans as a whole, see themselves simultaneously as citizens of their respective countries and as Europeans.
- The Germans’ satisfaction with democracy in their own country continues to decline and has fallen to the lowest level in the last four years.
- In both West and East Germany, the share of the population that is satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union continues to be below the EU average.

Among Germans the negative aspects of globalisation outweigh the positive sides

- High uncertainty and fear dominate German views on globalisation
- Germans are especially concerned about the loss of jobs.



- Germans trust the European Union most when it comes to controlling the effects of globalisation.
- Unemployment is still considered to be by far the most important problem in Germany; and, in second place, by a wide margin, the general economic situation.
- For people in East Germany, unemployment is a considerably more important issue than for the people in the West.

Germans wish to find more information about the EU in the media

- Four out of ten Germans say that there is too little information about the EU in the German media.
- Television, daily newspapers, and the radio remain the main sources of information about the European Union. These sources are, however, now more frequently used than they were a year ago.
- Germans rate their knowledge on the EU, its policies, and institutions higher than the average European citizen. Compared to other member countries, their self-assessment ranks in second place.
- However, with regard to their objective level of knowledge about the EU and its institutions, Germans are not at the top of the list.