

EUROBAROMETER 61

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2004

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GREECE

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction. Between February 20th and March 28th 2004, the European Opinion Research Group, a consortium of market and public research agencies, carried out wave 61.0 of the standard Eurobarometer, on request of the European Commission's Directorate-General Press and Communication, Public Opinion Analysis Unit.

The research covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union 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 was drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and population density.

The Greek sample, comprising 1005 Greek residents, shows complete homogeneity with regard to nationality. This enables us to view the research results and assumptions as representative of Greek national public opinion.

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

❖ **Preview of the Greek public opinion**

Compared to the last Eurobarometer survey (EB60.1/Nov. 2003), Greeks now appear to have higher expectations for the year to come. Relative optimism for higher quality life expectations for the next 12 months is observed in the current survey concerning the economic and the employment situation in Greece, the financial situation of Greeks' households and their personal job situation, especially when compared with the feelings of insecurity and pessimism that were expressed by Greek public opinion in the previous Standard Eurobarometer survey (EB60.1 / Nov. 2003).

More specifically:

- Greeks predict an improvement in their living conditions over the next 12 months (GR: 42% - EU15: 32%). In November 2003, the figure was 7 percentage points lower.
- In November 2003, only 16% (EB60.1) of Greek public opinion expected the economic situation in Greece to improve in the year to come. In the current survey, the proportion of the poll expecting an improvement in Greece's economic situation has doubled (34%). Furthermore, Greeks appear to be the most optimistic of all EU15 citizens reaching the highest percentage while the EU15 average is limited at 18%. It is worth noting that the percentage of Greek citizens predicting that things would be worse as far as the country's economic situation was concerned has dropped considerably from 56% in last November (2003) to 23% at the current survey.
- Many of the Greeks interviewed (48%) do not foresee any change (either positive or negative) when it comes to the financial situation of their household. Nevertheless, the percentage of Greeks (34%) that appear to believe that their household's financial situation will improve has not only increased (by 12 percentage points) since the last EB survey (Nov. 2003), but it is also the highest amongst the EU15 Member States (EU15: 22%).

- The percentage of Greeks who express optimism in regard to the employment situation in the country has doubled - from 15% to 30% - since the last EB survey (Nov. 2003). Accordingly, the percentage of the Greek poll that expected the country's employment situation to deteriorate has dropped significantly from 55% last November to 28% in the current survey.
- The majority of Greek respondents (54%) believe that their personal job situation will neither get better nor worse in the coming year (EU15: 60%).
- Lastly, 1 in 2 Greeks predicts that his/her personal situation will definitely improve in the next five years.

❖ **Greek fears and concerns**

Unemployment remains the issue of greatest concern. As in previous Eurobarometer surveys (e.g. EB59.1 & EB60.1), the most important issue Greece is facing, for 3 in 4 Greeks, is unemployment (75%). Greeks appear to express this concern more strongly than all other EU15 citizens, while the EU15 average is significantly lower (EU15: 44%).

Greeks most fear the transfer of jobs to other EU Member States. The vast majority of the Greek sample feels threatened by the possibility that jobs will be transferred from Greece to other EU Member States that have lower production costs and, consequently, that this will lead to an increase in the country's unemployment level. Other European citizens appear to share the same concern (EU15: 72%).

- Concern is also expressed by 6 in 10 Greek citizens regarding the possible increase of drug trafficking, as well as of international organized crime (61%).
- 6 in 10 Greek respondents also fear that European integration might create more difficulties for Greek farmers.
- Lastly, the majority of the Greek sample (58%) fears that EU Member States will be called upon to pay more and more into the European Union's budget (EU15: 64%).

Greek citizens generally find the EU's role to be positive. On the one hand, Greek citizens believe that the European Union plays a positive role in foreign affairs (59%) and the defence (54%) of their country; in the fight against terrorism (49%) and crime (43%); and, in addition, in the economic situation of Greece (43%). On the other hand, Greeks perceive the EU's role to be negative where issues such as price rises/inflation (40%), immigration and unemployment (34%) are concerned.

7 in 10 Greek citizens (66%) not only believe that the European Union will play a more significant role in their daily life within the next five years, but also want it to do so (73%). It should be noted that, in both cases, the Greek figure is higher than all of the EU Member States, while the relevant EU15 averages are 42% and 44% respectively.

❖ **Greece's membership of the EU**

Greece has benefited from being a member of the European Union. 7 in 10 Greek citizens (71%) view their country's membership of the European Union positively (EU15: 48% & EU25: 47%). Furthermore, the vast majority of Greek respondents (82%, the highest figure of all the EU15 Member States) are of the opinion that their country has mostly benefited from being a member of the European Union. (EU15: 47% - EU25: 48%).

- Greek citizens, more than all other EU15 citizens, claim they feel safer due to their country's membership of the European Union (GR: 76% - EU15: 41%). It should be noted that a relative majority of European public opinion (EU15) tends to disagree with this statement (47%).
- More than all other European citizens (EU15), Greeks believe (75%) that their country is now more influential in the European Union than it was ten years ago (EU15: 50%).
- The majority of Greeks – the highest figure in any of the EU15 Member States – feel that there is greater economic (65%) and political (64%) stability due to their country's membership on the European Union.

Sense of identity: Greek and/or European. As in previous Eurobarometer surveys, Greek citizens mainly identify with their primary nationality - with 55% perceiving themselves to be solely Greek. Nevertheless, 39% of the Greek sample expresses a sense of dual identity, meaning that there are significant numbers of Greek citizens who see themselves in the near future as being primarily Greek and secondarily European.

❖ **The image of the European Union**

In general, the European Union conjures up a positive image for the majority of Greeks (46%).

EU mostly means the 'euro' to Greeks. As a general rule, Greek respondents point to the positive aspects of the European Union when asked what the EU means to them personally. More specifically, Greeks mainly associate the EU with the adoption and use of the *common single currency, the euro* (GR: 49% - EU15: 50%); *peace* (GR: 44% - EU15: 31%); and, with *freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union* (GR: 42% - EU15: 51%). However, 25% (EU15: 19%) of the Greek sample link the European Union to the problem of unemployment.

Greeks want to accelerate the speed of building the European Union to a maximum. Greeks believe that the European Union is being built at a relatively medium speed. On a speed scale (from 1 '*standing still*' to 7 '*running as fast as possible*'), Greek public opinion falls between 3, 4 and 5, with percentages of 19%, 30% and 19% respectively. It should be noted that a significant percentage (45%) believes that the speed of 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. The Greek sample records the highest percentage in all of the EU15 countries – significantly above the EU15 average of 15% itself a figure comprising a wide variation in results.

❖ **Information on the European Union**

Television remains the most frequently used information source on the EU. As in the previous Eurobarometer surveys, television continues to be the most used (75%) source of information for Greeks when they wish to get information on the European Union, its policies and institutions.

Objective presentation of EU by the Greek media. The majority of the Greek poll (GR: 51% - EU15: 41%) considers the Greek media to be objective in its presentation of the European Union. It should be noted that 46% of the Greek sample estimated that media coverage on European Union issues is too limited, while 37% find Greek media coverage of the European Union to be about the right amount.

Medium-to-low level of EU knowledge. The level of knowledge of the Greek sample with respect to the European Union, is seen to be medium-low when the incorrect answers given by Greek respondents to a quiz contained in the survey are reviewed.

- 40% of the Greek sample do not appear to know that the European Union consisted of 15 Member States (before enlargement), as they incorrectly agreed that it consisted of 12 Member States.
- 42% of Greek respondents were unable to give a response as to whether the statement that the European Community was created just after the World War I, in the early 1920s, was true or false. A similar proportion (41%) of the sample answered correctly that this statement was false.
- Concerning the flag of the European Union, Greek citizens (EU15: 71% - EU15: 67%) do not seem to know that the number of stars (twelve – which is traditionally a symbol of perfection, completeness and unity) has nothing to do with the number of Member States. It is, however, encouraging that at least the majority of Greek respondents appear to recognize the EU flag, agreeing that is blue with yellow stars (75%).

❖ **Trust in the EU institutions, bodies and other agencies**

- The vast majority of Greek public opinion (84%) expresses its trust, firstly, in the army, and, secondly, in the national legal system (73%) and the national police (72%).
- **7 in 10 Greek citizens (68%, the highest percentage recorded in the EU - EU15 & EU25: 41%) declare their trust in the European Union.** It should be noted that this percentage of trust in the European Union has increased in comparison with previous Eurobarometer surveys (EB 59.1: 55% and EB60.1: 65%).

- **A majority of Greek citizens appear to be aware of EU institutions and bodies**, especially the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Court of Justice and the Council of Ministers of the European Union. Some ignorance is observed by an important part of the Greek sample in the case of some other EU institutions, such as the Committee of Regions, the European Court of Auditors and the European Ombudsman.
- **Sense of trust in EU institutions and bodies.** Greek respondents express a sense of trust in EU institutions and bodies and, most of all, in the European Parliament (70%, the highest percentage in the EU15) and in the European Commission (GR: 63% - EU15: 47% - EU25: 48%).

❖ **European Union common policies**

'Pro' EU common policies. In line with findings in previous Eurobarometer surveys (EB58.1, EB59.1 and EB60.1), Greeks remain supportive of the development of EU common policies. More specifically, the majority of the Greek sample takes a positive stand on the:

- Principle of a common EU defence and security policy (GR: 80% - EU15: 72% - EU25: 74%),
- Common EU foreign policy towards other countries (GR: 78% - EU15: 65% - EU25: 66%),
- European Monetary Union with a single currency, the Euro (GR: 64% - EU15: 60% - EU25: 60%), and
- Enlargement of the EU to include ten new Member States in May 2004 (GR: 66% - EU15: 42% - EU25: 46%), as well as other countries in the future (60%). It should be noted that Greek citizens, in both cases, record the highest percentages in the European Union.

❖ **European integration**

- **Yes to an EU constitution.** Greek citizens remain firm in their belief that the European Union should have a constitution (GR: 66% - EU15: 63% - EU25: 63%).
- Concerning new rules for majority voting within the EU Council of Ministers contained in the draft of the European Constitution, the majority of Greeks believe that **each Member state should have one vote**, regardless of the size of their population. (GR: 55% - EU15: 43%)
- **Must maintain the right to veto.** As in previous Eurobarometer surveys, Greek citizens insist that the right to veto should be maintained in order to preserve and safeguard essential national interests (70%).
- 43% of the Greek sample believes that the **six-month presidency period of the European Council should be retained** because it gives each Member state the chance to hold the presidency of the EU on a regular basis. However, an equivalent share of the poll (42%) believes that the presidency

period should be extended in order to allow the presiding country to achieve more significant results.

- Greek and European citizens are in favour of the **European Commission being composed of commissioners coming from each of the EU Member-States** (GR: 80% - EU15: 69%).

❖ ***The issue of globalization***

- A majority of Greeks believe that globalization does not have any positive effect either at personal (54%) or at national (51%) level.
- **37% of Greek respondents, when asked who they most trust to get the effects of globalisation under control, say that they place greatest trust of all in the European Union** (EU15: 27%). To Greeks, the second most capable of dealing with the consequences of globalization appears to be their national government, support levels for which were highest of all in the Union (GR: 34% - EU15: 19%) ■

The National Editor, responsible for the analysis and presentation of the EB 61.0 survey results, is **Ms. Olga Stavropoulou** (MILITOS, Emerging Technologies & Services).