

EUROBAROMETER 61

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LUXEMBOURG

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Eurobarometer survey in Luxembourg

Strong agreement for role of EU foreign policy to be strengthened

Citizens in favour of one Commissioner per Member State

Polled in the context of the Eurobarometer survey, Luxembourg's citizens clearly express a desire for a reinforced role for the EU in the area of foreign policy.

Citizens feel that the EU should work to guarantee human rights all over the world. They are in favour of a seat for the EU in the United Nations Security Council, a common defence policy, a foreign policy that is independent of that of the United States, a common asylum and immigration policy, a rapid military reaction force and an EU Foreign Minister. For almost all these topics, Luxembourg's figures are above the EU15 average.

A majority considers that the EU already plays a positive role in foreign policy, defence, protection of the environment and the economic situation. Negative exceed positive views regarding the following issues: immigration, inflation, the fight against unemployment and taxation.

The Eurobarometer 61.1 survey, conducted by the European Commission in spring 2004, gives a general overview of what Europeans think about European integration, their knowledge about the EU, their perception of EU policies and its institutions, as well as their views on the European elections. The survey took into account Luxembourg's special demographic situation, with a sample comprising three-quarters Luxembourg nationals and one-quarter nationals of other EU Member States. The commentary in the special report, produced on behalf of the Commission's Representation in Luxembourg, therefore refers to "people in Luxembourg", a broader concept than Luxembourg nationals proper.

In favour of the euro, against enlargement

Various proposals were put to the citizens concerning EU's role and its activities. In Luxembourg, there is strong support (88%) for a European Monetary Union with one single currency, the euro, followed by teaching school children about the way European institutions work (87%).

Luxembourg's residents favour a Commission composed of Commissioners from each Member State and a European Constitution. In Luxembourg, respondents are equally divided as to whether the duration of the EU Council Presidency, which is currently fixed on a period of six months, should be maintained as it is (45%) or extended because six months is too short to achieve significant results (44%). At EU15 level, one in two is in favour of an extension and one-third favour the current arrangement. As to the possibility of the speed of the European integration process being faster in one group than in the other countries, a majority of Luxembourg respondents is not in favour. Over half of Luxembourg's citizens (51%) are against enlargement in contrast to 37% who are in favour of it.

In comparison to the results of the survey conducted in autumn 2003, the percentage of people in favour of retaining the right of veto - one of the main issues under discussion in the context of the European Constitution - has risen both within Luxembourg and at European level. In the meantime, the number of people in favour of abolishing the right of veto has slightly fallen. Nearly two-thirds of those polled in Luxembourg consider that the right of veto has to be maintained to preserve national interests. Only 6% are in favour of dropping it. One person in five thinks that the right of veto should be restricted to a few essential subjects.

Positive opinion on the Members of the European Parliament

In Luxembourg, four-fifths of those surveyed totally agree or tend to agree that the European elections are really important (EU15: 66%). For 60%, the European Parliament has more authority than their national parliament. For 57%, the Members of the European Parliament defend their interests well (EU15: 37%); but a quarter disagreement - an opinion shared by 44% of European citizens overall.

With figures higher than the European average, the Members of the European Parliament are known thanks to their appearances on television, in newspapers, and on the radio (with percentages ranging from 60% to 43%). A quarter of the poll had not heard or seen anything, or had any contacts with any Member of the European Parliament since the last European elections.

A real demand exists for news about the Members of the Parliament. In Luxembourg, more than 40% of the poll claimed to be interested in seeing Members of the European Parliament on television. One-third want to read more about them in the national press and nearly 30% want to hear about them on the radio. One-third claims to be not interested in such news.

The vast majority in favour of EU membership

Three out of four persons surveyed in Luxembourg are in favour of their country being a member of the EU, a view shared by only half of Europe's citizens on average. More than two-thirds of the Luxembourg poll believes that their country has benefited from EU membership. This figure contrasts with the EU15 average of only 47%.

In Luxembourg, more than half of citizens think that national media talk enough about the EU, one-third that they do not talk enough about it and a small minority that they talk too much.

Half of the citizens in Luxembourg (49%) say that media speak objectively about the EU, whereas 28% say that coverage on the EU is too positive.

A strong support for the euro

Within two years, the euro has gained strong support. For 61% of Luxembourg's residents, the euro is the primary symbol of the EU. For 57%, the EU is associated with freedom to travel, study and work. 43% of citizens identify the EU with peace. Nearly one-third of the poll says that it represents a stronger voice in the world and that it contributes to cultural diversity.

Citizens in Luxembourg quote as negative aspects of the EU the loss of their cultural identity (14%), bureaucracy (15%) and for 22% the contribution to unemployment. For 40% of the Luxembourg poll, the EU is associated with more crime - much higher than the European average of 19%. For 20% of those surveyed in Luxembourg, the EU represents a waste of money.

Distrust regarding the effects of globalisation

Views regarding the control of the effects of globalisation are far from unanimous. In Luxembourg, 32% of citizens place their trust in the EU, in contrast to the EU15 figure of 27%. Luxembourg's citizens (27%) trust their national government more than the average EU15 citizen (19%). 22% of those polled in Luxembourg place their trust in citizens themselves compared with a figure of 23% at EU15 level. The average EU citizen has a higher level of trust in consumer rights associations than those polled in Luxembourg.

Distrust is almost total for multinationals and the United States' government. A tenth of those polled trust no one to get the effects of globalisation under control.

Citizens are afraid of an increase of drug trafficking and organised crime

Speaking about their fears resulting from a wider Europe, citizens in Luxembourg cite an increase in drug trafficking and of organised crime (78%), the transfer of jobs to other member countries (73%) and a loss of the use of their national language (69%). Other fears are potential problems for Luxembourg's farmers, a loss of power for the smaller member countries, having to make a more important contribution to the European Union budget, the loss of social benefits, the loss of national identity and economic crisis.

Unemployment is the major problem on national level

Luxembourg residents think that the major national problems are the same as one year ago and concern about certain issues has grown considerably. In Spring 2004, citizens polled cited in first place unemployment (52%), then the economic situation (19%), inflation (17%), immigration (17%), the education system (16%), crime (15%) and housing (13%).

First a national of one's own country, then European

As a rule most of those surveyed consider themselves, for the near future, firstly as nationals of their own country and, secondly, as Europeans. 46% in the EU15 as a whole held this view compared with 39% in Luxembourg. In the EU average, the national feeling is stronger: the rate of persons feeling themselves only as nationals of their own country is clearly higher (41%) than in Luxembourg, where it has grown slightly (27%).

Most people satisfied with how democracy works

81% of Luxembourg's citizens are satisfied with how democracy works in their country, but 17% say the opposite. Almost two-thirds are satisfied with how democracy works in the EU. Only 18% in Luxembourg but 40% at EU15 level are not satisfied.