

# EUROBAROMETER 62

EUROPEAN UNION PUBLIC OPINION

AUTUMN 2004

## 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.

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Introduction.** Between October 2<sup>nd</sup> and November 8<sup>th</sup> 2004, the TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe, carried out wave 62 of the Standard Eurobarometer, on the request of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Press and Communication, Opinion Polls.

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 Standard Eurobarometer was also conducted in the three candidate countries [Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey] as well as in Croatia and the northern part of Cyprus. The basic sample design applied 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 1000 Greek residents, shows complete homogeneity with regard to nationality. This fact allows us, to a great 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 interviewees' homes and in their national language.*

### PREVIEW OF GREEK PUBLIC OPINION

**Less satisfied of their daily life than other European citizens.** 1 in 2 Greek citizens claims to be *fairly satisfied* with the life he/she leads (52%, EU25: 58%). Based on the average calculations, European citizens overall –EU25 average- appear to be more satisfied with their daily lives than Greek citizens. However, the results of the current Eurobarometer survey, compared to those of previous surveys [EB58.1 & EB60.1] present Greek citizens to be somewhat more satisfied with their daily lives than they were before.

**Pessimistic expectations of life over the next twelve months.** Compared to the last Eurobarometer survey [EB61.0 – spring 2004], in the current survey, Greeks appear to have lower expectations for the year to come. Feelings of insecurity and pessimism are observed in the current survey as Greek citizens estimate that things will get worse in the next twelve months as far as the economic [EL: 58% - EU25: 43%] and employment situations [EL: 57% - EU25: 47%] in Greece are concerned. However, when it comes to the financial situation of Greek households [EL: 49% - EU25: 52%] and Greeks' personal job situation [EL: 57% - EU25: 60%], public opinion does not foresee any change, either positive or negative. More specifically:

- A significant increase in the Greek percentage –from 13% in the previous EB61.0 survey to 22% in the current one [EU25: 13%]- who expect that their life in general will get worse during the twelve months to come. On the other hand, 37% [EU25: 35%] of the Greek sample predicts that their life in general will improve.
- In spring 2004, 34% of the Greek citizens expected that the economic situation in Greece would improve in the year to come. In the current survey, the percentage that foresees an improvement in the Greek economic situation has dropped considerably to 14% [EU25: 18%]. Furthermore, whilst, in spring 2004 [EB61.0], Greeks appeared to be the most optimistic among EU citizens with the highest percentage recorded, they now appear to be the most pessimistic of the total survey sample. Likewise, the percentage of the Greek poll that expects a deterioration in the country's employment situation has increased significantly from 28% last spring to 57% in the current survey [EU25: 47%].
- Many of the Greeks surveyed [EL: 49% - EU25: 52%] do not foresee any change [either positive or negative] when it comes to the financial situation of their households. The

percentage of Greeks believing that their household's financial situation will improve has dropped from 34% in the last EB survey [EB61.0, spring 2004] to 22% [EU25: 24%].

- The majority of Greek respondents [57%] believe that their personal job situation will neither get better nor worse in the year to come [EU25: 60%].
- Lastly, 40% [eleven percentage points lower than the previous EB61.0, spring survey] of Greek respondents predict that their personal situation will definitely improve in the next five years [EU25: 42%].

## GREEK FEARS AND CONCERNS

**Unemployment remains the issue of major concern.** As in the previous Eurobarometer surveys [e.g. EB59.1, EB60.1 & EB61.0] the most important issue Greece is facing is unemployment [69%]. Greeks appear to express this concern more strongly than other EU25 citizens, while the EU25 average is significantly lower [EU25: 46%]. Moreover, 71% of the Greek poll believes that the European Union should accord the fight against unemployment [EU25: 44%] uppermost priority, as well as the fight against poverty and social exclusion [EL: 57% - EU25: 40%].

**Greeks' greatest fear is the transfer of jobs to other EU member states.** The great majority of Greeks [79%] express the fear that jobs will be transferred from Greece to other EU member states with lower production costs thus leading to increased unemployment in their country. The rest of the European Union citizens appear to share the same concern [EU25: 74%].

- Concern is also expressed by 7 in 10 Greek respondents [EL: 73% - EU25: 65%] as they fear that increased European integration might cause more difficulties for Greek farmers.
- The majority of the Greek sample [63%] fears that EU member states will be called upon to contribute more to the European Union's budget [EU25: 64%].
- Lastly, 6 in 10 Greek citizens fear a possible increase in drug trafficking and international organized crime [EL: 61% - EU25: 65%].

**Greek citizens find the EU's role to be mostly positive.** Greek citizens believe that the European Union plays a positive role in the area of foreign affairs [57%]; in the fight against terrorism [51%]; in protection of the environment [51%] and in the country's defence [49%]. On the other hand, Greeks see the role of the European Union to be negative when it comes to issues of major importance to Greek citizens, such as rising prices/inflation [EL: 45% - EU25: 49%] and the fight against unemployment [EL: 36% - EU25: 37%].

6 in 10 Greek citizens [59%] not only believe that the European Union will play a more significant role in their daily lives within the next five years, but also want it to do so [67%]. It should be noted that in both cases, the Greek figures are the highest in the current survey, while the EU25 averages are 47% and 51% respectively.

## GREECE'S EU MEMBERSHIP

**Greece has benefited from being a member of the European Union.** 6 in 10 Greek citizens [61%, ten percentage units lower than the previous EB61.0 survey] view positively the country's membership of the European Union [EU25: 56%]. Furthermore, the vast majority of Greek respondents [76%] consider that their country has for the most part benefited from being a member of the European Union. [EU25: 53%].

- 8 in 10 Greeks [80%, reaching the highest current survey percentage] find that their country is currently more influential in the European Union than it was ten years ago [EU25: 55%]. Moreover, Greek citizens believe that their country will become, in the future, more influential in the European Union [EL: 58% - EU25: 49%].
- Greek citizens, more than any other EU25 citizen, claim they feel safer due to their country's membership in the European Union [EL: 73% - EU25: 50%]. It should be noted that a significant percentage of European public opinion [EU25] tends to disagree with this statement [42%].
- The majority of the Greek poll – recording the highest percentage in all the EU25 member states – feels that there is more political [EL: 65% - EU25: 42%] and economic [EL: 59% - EU25: 44%] stability due to their country's membership on the European Union.
- Although 6 in 10 Greek citizens believe that their country's voice counts in the European Union [EL: 60% - EU25: 68%], 57% of Greek respondents do not share the same belief about their own voices, as they do not believe that these count in the European Union.

**Sense of identity: Greek or/and European.** As in previous Eurobarometer surveys, Greek citizens mainly identify with their primary nationality, with 57% seeing themselves to be solely Greek. However, 37% of the Greek poll 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.

**Most are very proud to be Greek.** Greeks [83%] and Turks [90%] record the highest survey percentages of those declaring themselves to be very proud for their nationality [EU25: 45%]. As far as European identity is concerned, Greeks appear to be fairly proud of it (EL: 49%, EU25: 52%).

**Very attached to Greece, not very attached to the EU.** When compared to other European citizens, Greeks appear to be most attached to their country (EL: 84%, EU25: 56%). As far as the European Union is concerned, only 15% [EU25: 20%] of the poll appears to be very attached and 33% [EU25: 48%] to be fairly attached, while 35% [EU25: 23%] declare they are not very attached and 16% [EU25: 7%] not at all attached to the European Union.

## THE IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**The European Union conjures up a positive image for the majority of the Greek public opinion** [very positive image, EL: 15% - EU25: 10% and fairly positive image, EL: 43% - EU25: 40%].

**The EU means, above all, the 'freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union' to Greeks.** In general, Greek respondents point to the positive aspects of the European Union when asked what the EU means to them personally. More specifically, Greeks mainly identify the EU with *freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union* [EL: 56% - EU25: 53%]; with the *maintenance of peace* [EL: 49% - EU25: 36%];

and with the common single currency, the euro [EL: 44% - EU25: 44%]. However, 28% [EU25: 18%] of the Greek sample associates the European Union to the problem of unemployment.

**EU positive role - USA negative role.** More than all other EU citizens, Greeks express their strong negative opinion - recording the highest 'negative' percentages - with respect to the international role that the United States tends to play regarding peace in the world [EL: 88% - EU25: 58%]; the fight against poverty in the world [EL: 83% - EU25: 54%]; the protection of the environment [EL: 77% - EU25: 59%]; the fight against terrorism [EL: 80% - EU25: 42%]; and, the growth of the world economy [EL: 74% - EU25: 38%]. On the other hand, Greek respondents view positively the role that the European Union plays in all the above issues: peace in the world [EL: 60% - EU25: 61%]; the fight against poverty in the world [EL: 41% - EU25: 45%]; the protection of the environment [EL: 59% - EU25: 58%]; the fight against terrorism [EL: 57% - EU25: 59%]; and, the growth of the world economy [EL: 52% - EU25: 49%].

**Greeks want maximum acceleration of the European integration process.** Greeks believe that the European Union is being built at a relatively medium speed. In a speed scale [from 1 'standing still' to 7 'running as fast as possible'], Greek public opinion is placed between 3, 4 and 5, with percentages of 23%, 31% and 18% respectively. It should be noted that a significant percentage [45%] 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. The Greek sample, as well as the Turkish one, records the highest percentage in the survey, while the EU25 average is only 16%.

## INFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

**Television remains the most used and preferred EU information source.** In line with previous Eurobarometer surveys, television continues to be the most used [76%] and preferred [65%] source of information for Greeks when they are asked about sources of information on the European Union, its policies and its institutions. Daily newspapers constitute the second most important source to acquire relevant information [37%], as well as discussions with relatives, friends and colleagues [24%]. Only 11% of Greek citizens use the Internet as the main source to get information on issues related to the EU.

**Objective but limited presentation of the EU by the Greek media.** The majority of the Greek poll [EL: 47% - EU25: 44%] sees the Greek media as objective in how they present the European Union. It should be noted that 54% of the Greek sample feel that there is limited media coverage on European Union issues, while 29% of them find Greek media coverage on the European Union to be adequate.

**Not only improved, but also a relatively good level of EU knowledge.** The degree of knowledge that Greeks display regarding the European Union may be characterized as 'good and improved', especially when compared to the previous EB61.0 survey where it was found to be medium-low when the false answers – in contrast with the correct ones in the current survey – given by Greek respondents to a quiz included in the survey are analyzed. For example, 7 in 10 Greeks [EL: 70% - EU25: 58%] appear to know that the European Union consists of 25 member states. It is worth mentioning that in the previous EB61.0 survey 40% of the Greek sample was not aware of the correct number of the EU member states as they declared that it consisted of only 12 countries. Moreover, Greek citizens [EL: 85% - EU25: 58%, recording the highest percentage of the survey] know that the Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by citizens of the European Union.

**Positive symbolic importance of the European flag** is seen in the consciousness of the Greek citizens as they declare that it stands for something good [EL: 76% - EU25: 69%], although the majority [EL: 54% - EU25: 40%] does not identify with it. Nevertheless, Greek citizens support the idea of placing the European flag next to the national one outside all public buildings in Greece [EL: 64% - EU25: 55%]. In addition, the vast majority of the Greek poll appears to be aware of the European flag as they claim to have seen this symbol [EL: 93% - EU25: 94%].

#### TRUST IN THE EU INSTITUTIONS, BODIES AND OTHER AGENCIES

As in previous EB surveys, the vast majority of Greeks [82%] primarily express their trust in the army; secondarily, in charitable or voluntary organizations [67%], the national legal system [66%] and the national police [65%]. Moreover, at least **6 in 10 Greek citizens [63%] say they have trust in the European Union.**

**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 poll when it comes to 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, above all, in the European Parliament [EL: 66% - EU25: 57%] and in the European Commission [EL: 61% - EU25: 52%].

#### EUROPEAN UNION COMMON POLICIES

**'Pro' EU common policies.** In line with results in previous Eurobarometer surveys [EB58.1, EB59.1, EB60.1 & EB61.0], the Greek population remains 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 European defence and security policy among the EU member states [EL: 83% - EU25: 78%].
- Common foreign policy among the EU member states towards other countries [EL: 80% - EU25: 69%].
- European Monetary Union with a single currency, the Euro [EL: 62% - EU25: 63%], and
- Enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years [EL: 62% - EU25: 53%].

#### EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

**Yes to an EU constitution.** Greek citizens remain firm in their belief that the European Union should have a constitution [EL: 69% - EU25: 68%].

Greek and European citizens are in favour of the **European Commission being composed of commissioners coming from each of the EU member states** [EL: 82% - EU25: 78%].

**Preference for joint decision-making within the European Union in most sectors currently examined, except cultural policy [63%], national defence [59%] and basic rules for broadcasting and press [51%],** which, according to Greeks, should be subject to Greek government decision-making. It should be noted that in the previous EB survey the issues of

cultural policy and the basic rules for broadcasting and press troubled the Greek public (the issue of whether decisions should be made by the national government or jointly within the EU).

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 within the European Union. Greek respondents clearly express their preference for joint decision-making in the following areas: *Protection of environment; Currency; Humanitarian aid; Health and social welfare; Fight against poverty and social exclusion; Fight against unemployment; Agriculture and fishing policy; Support to regions which are experiencing economic difficulties; Education; Scientific and technological research; Foreign policy towards countries outside the European Union; Information about the EU, its policies and institutions; Fight against international terrorism; Fight against the trade in, and exploitation of, human beings; Fight against drugs; Juvenile and urban crime prevention; Fight against organised crime; Immigration policy, as well as rules for political asylum; And, finally, tackling the challenges of the ageing population, accepting refugees.*

**EU decides for European defence policy.** The majority of the Greek poll believes that the European Union [67%], rather than the national government [27%], should make decisions concerning European defence policy. Only 1 in 100 Greeks [1%, the lowest reading in the survey, along with that of Cyprus] believes that NATO should make decisions concerning European defence policy.

**Greeks call for an active EU role on the international scene.** Greek public opinion supports measures that would enhance the EU's political role and its say in the international arena. More specifically, Greek respondents:

- believe that the European Union's foreign policy should be independent of that of the United States [EL: 90% - EU25: 82%];
- think that the European Union should have its own seat on the United Nations Security Council [EL: 86% - EU25 71%];
- want EU member states to agree on a common position when an international crisis occurs [EL: 86% - EU25: 83%];
- believe that the European Union should have a rapid military reaction force that can be sent immediately to troublespots when an international crisis occurs [EL: 69% - EU25: 71%];
- Support the idea of EU having its own Foreign Minister who can be the spokesperson for a common European Union position [EL: 76% - EU25: 67%].

**YES to the development of a European political union.** Greek citizens [71%] support the development of a European political union more than any other European citizens do, while the EU25 average is considerably lower at 59% ■

*The National Editor, responsible for the analysis and presentation of the EB 62.0 survey results, is Ms. Olga Stavropoulou [MILITOS, Emerging Technologies & Services].*