

EUROBAROMETER 62

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE NETHERLANDS

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

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The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

Context

- Most Dutch people (92%) are satisfied with the life they lead. Around half expect that their country's economic situation will worsen in the coming 12 months.
- Most Dutch people trust the media, especially the radio and the television. A majority has no trust in the Dutch government and the political parties.
- Compared to the European average, the Dutch discuss political matters with friends or family more often.
- 54% of the Dutch see themselves first as Dutch, but then as European. A majority (85%) is proud to be Dutch.

Information and knowledge about the European Union

- Nearly all (97%) Dutch people know the European flag, they are aware that it symbolises Europe or the European Union and they consider it a good symbol for Europe.
- The European Parliament is the best-known European institution: 97% of the respondents know it. After the Parliament, the European Commission and the European Central Bank are the most well known institutions. The European Ombudsman, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, are relatively unknown. Less than 30% of respondents have heard of these bodies. More than 70% trust the European Court of Justice, and the European Central Bank, the European Parliament and the European Commission are trusted by respectively 63% and 57%.
- A majority of the Dutch know that EU citizens do not directly elect the President of the European Commission. They also are aware of the fact that Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by citizens. However, a majority incorrectly thinks that the last elections for the European Parliament took place in June 2002.
- Most of the Dutch think that the largest part of the EU budget is spent on either personnel and buildings or agriculture.
- The Dutch mainly use television or daily newspapers when they search for information about the European Union. Around 40% use the Internet. The television, Internet and daily papers are also sources by which the Dutch would prefer to be informed about the EU.
- 53% of the Dutch think that in their country there is not enough media attention on the European Union.

- Most Dutch people (75%) have seen or read something about the Dutch Presidency of the European Union. Most people also think it is important that the Netherlands chaired the Council of Ministers for the past 6 months.

Role of the European Union

- 75% of the Dutch think their country's EU membership is a good thing. Although most people feel that the big countries have most power in the European Union, they do think that the Dutch voice is heard in the EU. Around 50% of those surveyed claim to know how the EU works.
- The EU conjures up a positive image for 45% of Dutch, although this image is neutral for 39%
- For a majority, the EU means freedom to travel, work and study everywhere in the EU. This is followed by the euro. The European Union provides a feeling of hope to 44% of respondents.
- More than 75% of Dutch are worried that the enlarged European Union will result in a transfer of jobs to countries with lower production costs. The Dutch are less concerned about losing their national identity or culture. Around half expect that the European Union will play a bigger role in their daily lives in 5 years' time.
- More than 50% of Dutch people hold the opinion that the EU plays a positive role in the Netherlands in the following areas: the fight against terrorism, foreign affairs and the protection of the environment. They are less positive about the role of the EU when it comes to the inflation in the Netherlands. Nearly 50% consider the EU to have had a negative role in this instance.

Policy and decision making in the European Union

- A large majority (>75%) prefers joint EU action above national action in the fields of: the fight against international terrorism, human trafficking, organised crime and currency issues. They prefer decisions to be taken at national level in the fields of justice, the aged, the police and urban crime.
- The majority of Dutch are in favour of teaching schoolchildren about the functioning of the European Institutions. A large number (86%) are in favour of a European Commission consisting of one Commissioner from each EU Member State. If a Dutch referendum on the Constitution were to be organised today, 73% would vote yes.
According to the Dutch, the EU should give priority to the fight against crime and drug trafficking, maintaining peace and stability in Europe and bringing the EU closer to citizens. The fight against poverty and terrorism is also regarded to be a priority

item. Only a few people (6%) consider the EU should give priority to the successful implementation of the euro and the accession of new Member States.

- Nearly all (93%) Dutch people agree that the EU should guarantee human rights in each Member State. More than 80% consider that the Member States should take a common position in case of an international crisis and that the EU should have a common asylum policy.
- 55% of the Dutch think that decisions related to European defence matters should be taken by the European Union.
- The Dutch are more positive about the role of the European Union than they are about the role of the US in the following areas: growth of the world economy, peace in the world and the protection of the environment.
- 71% of the Dutch are satisfied with the way democracy functions in the Netherlands. However, only 44% are satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU.