

EUROBAROMETER 63.4

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2005

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CYPRUS
(AREAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF
THE CYPRUS GOVERNMENT)

The survey was requested and coordinated by the Directorate General Press and Communication.

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

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.

EUROBAROMETER 63.4 - CYPRUS

(AREAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS)

Summary

1. Life in the Republic of Cyprus

Eurobarometer 63.4 is the second wave of Eurobarometer surveys carried out in Cyprus since the country's accession to the European Union. Cyprus has joined the European Union with the political problem remaining unsolved and with the "acquis communautaire" applicable only in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus.

In their majority, citizens of the Republic of Cyprus are satisfied with their life:

- Eight out of ten state that they are satisfied in general with their life. Compared with the Autumn 2004 wave of the Eurobarometer, a decline is observed in the degree to which citizens of the Republic of Cyprus appear to be satisfied with their lives.
- An important portion of the population (44%) feels that their personal situation has improved within the past five years. Still, three out of ten find that it has deteriorated.
- The proportion of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus who feel that over time their personal situation has improved is higher than the EU average (Cyprus 44%, EU-25 37%).

Short-term expectations (for the next 12 months) are less optimistic:

- Most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus foresee that their life will remain the same (43%) or that it will worsen (16%) within the following year.
- Only 16% expect their financial situation to improve and only 14% that personal employment conditions will improve.

Expectations as to the future of the national economy and of employment conditions in Cyprus (CY) are much more pessimistic than personal expectations:

- The majority expects that on a national level both the economic and employment conditions will deteriorate within the following 12 months (56% and 61% respectively).
- In relation to the EU average, citizens of the Republic of Cyprus appear more pessimistic as to their country's economic and employment conditions.
- Still, in comparison with the Autumn 2004 Eurobarometer wave, citizens of the Republic of Cyprus now appear somewhat more optimistic as to the country's economic situation (68% stated that they expected it to worsen in Autumn 2004 compared to 56% in Spring 2005). Nonetheless, pessimism as to employment conditions has increased (54% Autumn 2004, 61% Spring 2005).

Citizens of the Republic of Cyprus are more optimistic as to their longer term (in five years' time) prospects:

- Four out of ten expect that their personal situation will improve, while 32% expect that it will remain unchanged. Two out of ten expect that it will deteriorate.
- Long-term expectations remain at the same levels recorded in the Autumn 2004 wave.

The main problems that Cypriot society faces today are crime (46%), inflation (36%) and the economic situation in general (21%):

- The three main problems remain the same as those recorded in the Spring 2004 and Autumn 2004 waves.
- Compared with the Autumn 2004 Eurobarometer, an increase is recorded in the degree that unemployment (17%) and the medical healthcare system (17%) are perceived as being the island's most serious problems.

A majority of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus are satisfied with the way democracy works in Cyprus (CY):

- The incidence of being satisfied by the way democracy works in Cyprus (CY) is higher than the respective EU average (CY 68%, EU-25 53%).
- Among member states, Cyprus (CY) ranks seventh in terms of the proportion of its population satisfied with how democratic institutions operate.

2. Trust in Institutions

Most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus trust the main national institutions, but they distrust political parties:

- Most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus trust the Government of Cyprus (60%), the justice system (64%) and the House of Representatives (54%). In contrast, only two out of ten trust political parties.
- In relation to the results of the Autumn 2004 wave, a decrease is observed in the trust placed in the Government, the House of Representatives and political parties.

Trust in the European Union decreases:

- Slightly more than half of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus tend to trust the European Union. At 54%, however, the percentage of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus who trust the EU is slightly lower than what it was in Autumn 2004 (59%).
- Still, the level of trust among citizens of the Republic of Cyprus in the European Union is higher than the average of all member states (CY 54%, EU-25 44%).
- In general, however, there is a drop in the level of trust placed by European citizens in the European Union since the Autumn 2004 Eurobarometer wave (Spring 2005 44%, Autumn 2004 50%).

Most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus trust the European Parliament and the European Commission:

- Six out of ten citizens of the Republic of Cyprus trust the European Parliament and the European Commission. For both Institutions, the level of trust expressed by citizens of the Republic of Cyprus is higher than the EU average.
- The level of trust in both Institutions remains at about the same levels as it was in the autumn of 2004.

The majority of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus are satisfied with the way democracy operates in the European Union:

- Some 57% of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus are satisfied with the way democracy works in Europe, a percentage that is higher than the EU average (49%).

Most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus do not trust the United Nations:

- Only one in four citizens of the Republic of Cyprus tends to trust the United Nations. Compared with the total population of all member states, the incidence of trusting the United Nations is significantly lower in the Republic of Cyprus (CY 25%, EU-25 52%).
- Cyprus (CY) exhibits the least trust towards the United Nations among all member states.

3. Opinion on accession and image of the European Union

A year after Cyprus's accession to the European Union, only four out of ten citizens of the Republic of Cyprus believe that the accession has been a positive development:

- Some 40% of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus hold a neutral stance (neither positive, nor negative), while 16% consider the accession to have been a negative thing.
- The incidence of having a positive attitude towards the accession is lower in Cyprus (CY) than the average of all member states (CY 43%, EU-25 54%).

Only four in ten citizens of the Republic of Cyprus believe that their country has benefited from joining the EU. On the contrary, half of them believe that Cyprus has not benefited from the accession:

- The opinions expressed mirror those expressed in the Autumn 2004 wave.
- Along with the United Kingdom (40%) and Austria (41%), Cyprus (CY 40%) has the lowest proportion of citizens considering that EU membership has benefited their country.

Even though only four out of ten citizens of the Republic of Cyprus find that their country's accession to the European Union has been a positive development and that their country has benefited, 56% has a positive image of the European Union:

- The proportion of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus with a positive image of the European Union is significantly higher than the average in member states as a whole (CY 56%, EU-25 47%).
- Moreover, more citizens of the Republic of Cyprus appear to have a positive image of the EU now (56%) than what they did in the autumn of 2004 (51%).

The majority of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus (62%) foresee that within the next five years the European Union will play a more important role in their daily lives:

- At the same time, an even higher proportion of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus express the wish that the European Union plays a more important role in their daily lives within a year's time (77%).

- Among all member states, the incidence of expecting and wishing the European Union to play a more important role in their daily lives is highest among citizens of the Republic of Cyprus.

Most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus associate the European Union with positive attributes. Some, however, link the EU with negative characteristics:

- Citizens of the Republic of Cyprus principally associate the EU with freedom to travel, study and work in any country of the European Union (80%). At the same time, they associate the European Union with peace (54%), democracy (37%), social protection (36%), variety of cultures (28%) and a stronger voice in the world (28%).
- The major negative associations of the European Union involve unemployment (37%) and crime (31%).

The European Union brings hope to most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus (60%):

- Associating the European Union with the feeling of hope is much more pronounced among citizens of the Republic of Cyprus than it is among citizens of the member states as a whole (CY 60%, EU-25 44%).
- Nevertheless, the level at which citizens of the Republic of Cyprus associate the European Union with trust is declining (Spring 2005 23%, Autumn 2004 31%), while the level of mistrust is increasing (Spring 2005 23%, Autumn 2004 14%).

Citizens of the Republic of Cyprus feel strongly attached to their country and weakly attached to the European Union:

- Citizens of the Republic of Cyprus exhibit a very high degree of attachment to their country (97%). This level is higher than the EU average and amongst the highest recorded in any member state.
- Only 32% feel attached to the European Union. This is the lowest percentage recorded in any member state.

4. Attitude towards the future of the European Union

In general, citizens of the Republic of Cyprus support further integration of the European Union:

- Among citizens of the Republic of Cyprus, the strongest level of support is expressed in a Common Defence and Security Policy (94%) and a Common Foreign Policy (88%).
- The development of a European political union has the support of 63%, while 53% favour a monetary union and 70% support further enlargement.

5. Knowledge and information on the EU

Most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus describe their knowledge on issues relating to the European Union as average:

- On a ten-point scale the average self-assessment reaches only 4,6 and is thus below the mid-point of the scale.
- The same holds for the member states as a whole, where the average is only 4,4.

Awareness on issues relating to the operation of the European Union among citizens of the Republic of Cyprus is deemed satisfactory:

- On specific questions posed in the survey, such as the number of member states, the way the Representatives in the European Parliament are elected, the existence of a European Union anthem and the year of the latest European elections, the incidence of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus giving the correct answers ranges from 41% to 78%.
- On all of the issues under investigation, the incidence of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus giving the right answer exceeds the EU average.

Among citizens of the Republic of Cyprus knowledge on issues relating to the European Constitution appears significantly more limited:

- The incidence of being aware of specific aspects and provisions of the Constitution (creation of a Foreign Minister of the European Union position, provision that if a million citizens request it they can pass a law, the election of the President of the European Council, adoption of direct European Union taxation, disappearance of national citizenships and on whether a member state is allowed to withdraw from the EU if it wishes so) ranges from between 13% and 57%.
- On most issues, the level of awareness among citizens of the Republic of Cyprus does not deviate significantly from the EU average.

Eight out of ten citizens of the Republic of Cyprus state that they know where the bulk of the European budget is spent. Most, however, are mistaken:

- Most believe that the biggest part of the budget is spent on administration and personnel costs (24%), an opinion that is also shared by most of the total population of the EU (31%).
- Only two out of ten citizens of the Republic of Cyprus correctly state that the largest part of the Union's budget goes to the agricultural sector.

Television is the main source of information for citizens of the Republic of Cyprus:

- Either on a daily basis or several times each week, 83% watches news broadcasts on the television. The role played by other media is significantly more limited.

Television is also the main source of information on the European Union, its policies and its Institutions:

- The overwhelming majority of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus get their information on issues relating to the EU from the television (72%). The same holds for the total population of all member states (70%).
- Other significant sources of information on issues relating to the EU include discussions with relatives, friends and colleagues (35%), the radio (27%), the Internet (25%), the daily press (24%), books, brochures and informative leaflets (21%).

Even though citizens of the Republic of Cyprus believe that the European Union is not adequately presented through the media, the general consensus appears to be that the media present the Union in a fair and unbiased manner:

- Only three out of ten citizens of the Republic of Cyprus believe that the European Union is given sufficient coverage by the national media.
- Nevertheless, almost half the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus believe that the three most widely used information channels (television, radio, newspapers) provide an objective coverage of issues relating to the European Union.
- The incidence of considering the coverage of EU-related issues to be objective coincides with the EU average.

6. Constitution

The majority of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus favour the idea of a European Constitution:

- The majority of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus (73%) still support the idea of a European Constitution. The level of support remains at the same high levels as it was in the Autumn 2004 wave.
- The idea of a European Constitution also finds the support of the majority of European citizens (61%).

Only a limited number of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus are aware of the content of the proposed European Constitution:

- Two out of three citizens of the Republic of Cyprus have heard about the European Constitution, but only a marginal 7% are aware of its provisions.
- The level of awareness as to the provisions of the European Constitution is also low among the total population of all member states (13%).
- Among all member states, Cyprus (CY) has the highest proportion of citizens that have not heard about the European Constitution (38%).
- Only 44% of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus are in favour of the proposed Constitution. This percentage is marginally lower than the EU average (CY 44%, EU-25 48%).

Republic of Cyprus public opinion recognises that adopting the Treaty for the establishment of a European Constitution will have a positive impact on the running of the European Union:

- Some 76% agree that it will make the European Union more democratic, 77% that it will make it more efficient and 74% that it will make it more transparent.
- Cyprus (CY) is among the member states with the highest proportion of population agreeing that adoption of a European Constitution will have a positive impact on the running of the European Union.

Citizens of the Republic of Cyprus are also positioned positively regarding the effect that the adoption of a European Constitution will have on the standing of the European Union in the world:

- The absolute majority of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus agree that adoption of a European Constitution will make the European Union stronger in the world (82%), more competitive economically (77%) and more socially minded (79%).
- The above percentages are the highest recorded among all member states.

7. European Union position in the world

Most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus believe that the European Union plays an important role in world issues:

- Most recognise the positive role played by the European Union in the protection of the environment (80%), world peace (74%), the fight against terrorism (64%), growth of the world economy (65%) and the fight against poverty (64%).
- At the same time, the majority of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus consider that the international role of the European Union has grown in significance over the past five years (66%).

The majority of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus are of the opinion that the European economy is in good standing:

- Some 68% believes that the status of the European economy is good, a percentage which is significantly higher than the EU average (50%).
- Comparing it with other economies in the world, the dominant opinion among citizens of the Republic of Cyprus is that the European economy is at the same level as the U.S. economy, is fairing worse than the Japanese economy and is better than the Chinese and Indian economies.

Most citizens of the Republic of Cyprus believe that the European Union could become the world's top economy within the next five years:

- Citizens of the Republic of Cyprus appear much more optimistic than the total population of all member states that the European economy could become the world's dominant economy within the next five years (CY 65%, EU-25 35%).

Citizens of the Republic of Cyprus associate the term "globalisation" with the establishment of foreign companies in Cyprus and the increased competition that local companies have to face:

- Citizens of the Republic of Cyprus associate globalisation the most with the influx of foreign investment to Cyprus (25%) and the increased competition that Cyprus's companies face (28%).

8. Young people's attitude towards the European Union

- Half of Cyprus's youth trust the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Commission.
- Only four out of ten young people consider Cyprus' entry into the European Union to be a positive development and that Cyprus has benefited from the accession.
- Among the younger generation (aged 15 to 24) of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus, 51% have a positive image of the European Union. The incidence of having a positive image of the EU is significantly higher among those in tertiary education (69%).
- Young Cypriots and those in tertiary education associate the European Union the most with freedom to travel, study and work in any country of the EU and with peace.
- At the same time, the European Union gives young Cypriots and those in third level education the feeling of hope.

- The level of attachment to the European Union is very weak among the younger generation of the Republic.
- Most of the younger generation and those in third level education support the policies associated with further development of the European Union.
- Awareness of and knowledge on basic issues relating to the European Union is limited among the younger generation of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus and there is considerable room for improvement.
- The primary source of information on the European Union for both the younger generation of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus and those in third level education is the television. The Internet is the second most used source of information.
- Most youngsters support the idea of a European Constitution. Only a few, however, are aware of the provisions of the proposed Constitution and only four out of ten are in favour of its adoption.
- Nevertheless, the majority recognises that the adoption of the treaty for establishing a European Constitution will have a positive impact on the way the European Union operates, as well as its standing in the world.