

EUROBAROMETER 63.4

EUROPEAN UNION PUBLIC OPINION

SPRING 2005

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 May 9th and June 14th 2005, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe, carried out wave 63.4 of the Eurobarometer, on request of the European Commission, Directorate-General 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 and aged 15 years and over. The Eurobarometer 63.4 has also been conducted in the two accession countries [Bulgaria and Romania] as well as in the two candidate countries (Croatia and Turkey) and the Turkish Cypriot Community. The basic sample design applied in all states is a multi-stage, random [probability] one. In each country, a number of sampling points was drawn with probability proportional to population size [for a total coverage of the country] and to 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 the very same Greek national public opinion.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people's homes and in their national language.

PREVIEW AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE GREEK PUBLIC OPINION

About 8 in 10 Greek citizens (EL: 78% - EU25: 53%) feel very attached to their country. This is the fifth highest percentage in the whole survey sample following those of members of the Turkish Cypriot Community (86%), and citizens of Turkey (85%), Denmark (80%) and Bulgaria (79%).

1 in 2 Greek citizens (EL: 54% - EU25: 60%) states he/she is fairly satisfied with the life he/she leads. Very satisfied with his/her daily life appears to be felt by only 1 in 10 Greek citizens (11%), which is substantially lower than the European average (EU25: 21%). It should be noted that 1 in 4 Greek citizens (26%) is not very satisfied with his/her daily life (EU25: 15%), while 1 in 10 Greek respondents (9%) admits complete dissatisfaction (*not at all satisfied*) with his/her daily life (EU25: 4%).

Uncertainty and pessimism are evident in Greek positions regarding their country's economic situation and employment situation.

- The majority of the Greek sample (59%) predicts worse economic developments for Greece in the forthcoming year. Greek citizens appear to be among the most pessimistic of the total survey sample (EU25: 37%).
- Deterioration in the employment situation in Greece is foreseen by 63% of the Greek sample. This is the highest negative percentage in any of the countries that took part in the survey (EU25: 42%).
- A majority of Greeks polled do not foresee any change (either positive or negative) in the coming year, when it comes both to the financial situation of their households (54%) and to their personal job situation (61%).
- **Only 35% of Greek citizens (EU25: 42%) expect their personal situation to improve in the next five years.** One in four Greeks (25%) is worried that his/her personal situation will get worse in the next five years. This is the highest negative percentage in the total European sample (EU25: 14%). Lastly, 31% (EB62.0: 28%) of Greek citizens expect that their personal situation will stay about the same over the same period of time.

However, 2 in 3 Greek citizens appear to be satisfied with their quality of life (EL: 66% - EU25: 77%). In addition, they expect an improvement in their quality of life (EL: 47% - EU25: 52%) in the next five years.

Greek citizens seem to be very pessimistic regarding the Greek economy (EL: 86% - EU25: 62%), the Greek employment situation (EL: 93% - EU25: 78%), as well as the present situation regarding social security (EL: 75% - EU25: 49%) in Greece. However, the majority of Greek public opinion (56%) appears to be satisfied with the European economy (EU25: 50%). 40% of Greek respondents (EU25: 30%) foresee a deterioration in the Greek economy in the next five years. However, they expect that the European economy will improve over the same period (EL: 50% - EU25: 56%).

Greek citizens appear to be among the most pessimistic of the total survey sample, as they state that the economy (EL: 84% - EU25: 46%), employment situation (EL: 85% - EU25: 57%) and social security (EL: 75% - EU25: 38%) in Greece are worse when compared with the average of the other countries in the European Union.

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 & EB62.0) the most important issue Greece is facing is unemployment (EL: 64% - EU25: 50%). A large part of the Greek poll expresses concern about the economic situation of their country (EL: 42% - EU25: 27%) and rising prices / inflation (EL: 33% - EU25: 16%). Concern about crime is expressed by 17% of Greeks surveyed (EU25: 23%), while 1 in 10 is worried about pensions (EL: 10% - EU25: 11%).

The majority of the Greek poll believes that the European Union should set as top priority the fight against poverty and social exclusion (EL: 64% - EU25: 44%), as well as the fight against unemployment (EL: 61% - EU25: 46%).

Greeks most fear the transfer of jobs to other EU Member States. The great majority of the Greek sample (87%) feels most endangered by the possibility that jobs will be transferred from Greece to other EU Member States that have lower production costs, and, consequently, it will lead to an increase of unemployment in their country. European citizens overall share the same concern (73%). Furthermore, **a common fear for 7 in 10 Greeks seems to be that the building of Europe will cause more difficulties for farmers (72%, EU25: 62%).**

A negative image **of the notion of globalization is held by 66% of the Greek poll (EU25: 46%).** Greeks (EL: 49% - EU25: 38%) identify globalization with the delocalisation of some companies to countries where labour is cheaper.

THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN TACKLING PROBLEMS

Greek citizens find the EU's role to be mostly positive. Greek citizens believe that the European Union plays a positive role in the protection of the environment, defence and foreign affairs, the fight against terrorism (51%) and public transport (44%). On the other hand, Greeks see the role of the European Union to be negative when it comes to issues of major importance for Greek citizens, such as rising prices / inflation, immigration, taxation, pensions and unemployment.

6 in 10 Greeks (59%) not only believe that the European Union will play a more significant role in their daily life within the next five years, but also wish it to do so (67%). In both cases the Greek sample records some of the highest percentages in the current survey, while the European average is significantly lower (47% and 51% respectively).

The majority of Greek and European citizens agree that the level of quality of life in Europe is higher than the in United States (EL: 50% - EU25: 46%), Japan (EL: 43% - EU25: 44%), China (EL: 66% - EU25: 70%) and India (EL: 76% - EU25: 76%).

A majority of Greeks consider that the European economy performs worse than the economies of both the United States (EL: 37% - EU25: 39%) and Japan (EL: 43% - EU25: 45%). Compared with the economies of China (EL: 49% - EU25: 38%) and India (EL: 68% - EU25: 59%), the European economy performs better in both cases, according to those Greeks surveyed.

The majority of the Greek poll considers that, in order to improve the performance of the European economy, **priority should be to facilitate the creation of companies (EL: 66% - EU25: 46%), as well as to improve education and professional training (EL: 66% - EU25: 60%).**

Greek citizens (71%, the highest percentage shared with the Turkish poll), more than any other Europeans, express their trust in the prospects for the European economy, by agreeing that it has the capacity to become the world's top economic power in the next five years. The relevant European average is noticeably lower (EU25: 35%).

GREECE'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Greece has benefited from being a member of the European Union. The majority of the Greek poll (56%, percentage slightly reduced compared with the previous Eurobarometer survey EB62.0: 61%) views positively the country's membership of the European Union. **It is worth noting that Greek citizens (69%) consider that their country has mostly benefited from being a member of the European Union (EU25: 55%).**

The fact that his/her country is member of the European Union makes the Greek feel safer. This is a view expressed by 70% of the Greek poll, reaching the second highest percentage among the 25 Member States, following the Republic of Cyprus (78%). In addition, Greeks feel there is more political (60%) and economic (52%) stability due to their country's membership in the European Union.

1 in 2 Greeks (EL: 50% - EU25: 43%) foresees that his/her country will be more influential in the European Union in the future (EB62.0: 58%).

1 in 2 Greeks polled (50%) does not believe that the interests of Greece are well taken into account in the European Union, whereas the contrary is claimed by 41% of the Greek poll. The European averages are 47% and 37% respectively.

Almost 6 in 10 Greek citizens (58%) do not believe that their personal view counts in the European Union (EU25: 53%), while 34% of Greek and 38% of EU25 respondents share the contrary belief.

THE IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union conjures up a positive image for the majority of the Greek poll, as 1 in 10 Greeks (10%) opts for a very positive image of the EU (EU25: 8%) and 44% attribute a *fairly positive* image to the EU (EU25: 38%).

The EU means mostly the '**freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union**'. In general, Greek respondents point to the positive aspects of the European Union when asked what does the EU mean to them personally. More specifically, the Greeks mainly identify the EU with the *freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union* (55%), with the *maintenance of peace* (48%) and with the *common single currency, the euro* (37%). However, 30% (EU25: 19%) of the Greek sample associates the European Union with the problem of *unemployment*.

The survey attempts to identify the feelings that the European Union evokes in Greeks and it may be seen that **the feeling of hope is expressed by 1 in 2 Greek citizens (EL: 50% - EU25: 44%).**

EU positive role – USA negative role. A highly negative position is taken by the majority of the Greek public regarding the international role of the United States, whereas a positive position is recorded regarding the international role of the European Union on matters like peace, the fight against terrorism, world economic development, the fight against poverty and environmental protection. It should be noted that the “negative” percentages recorded by the Greek sample are in most cases the highest in the total survey sample. Greeks express their strong negative opinion regarding the international role that the United States play regarding *peace in the world* (85%); *the fight against poverty in the world* (76%); *the protection of the environment* (73%); *the fight against terrorism* (73%); and, *the growth of the world economy* (67%). On the other hand, Greek respondents view positively the role that the European Union plays in all the above issues: *peace in the world* (61%); *the protection of the environment* (60%); *the fight against terrorism* (58%); and *the growth of the world economy* (46%). Concerning *the fight against poverty in the world*, only 38% of Greeks attribute a positive role to the EU (the second lowest percentage after that recorded by Sweden (37%).

INFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

Television remains the most used EU information source. In line with the results of previous Eurobarometer surveys, television continues to be the most used source of information for the Greek public (83%) when interested in getting information on the European Union, its policies and institutions. A significant percentage of Greeks (27%) turn to discussions with relatives, friends and colleagues (EU25: 23%), while the daily newspapers constitute the third most important source for acquiring relevant information (25%). 1 in 5 Greeks (20%) prefer the radio (EU25: 32%).

Greek and European citizens in general choose television as the main information source, as they claim (64% and 67% respectively) to watch the news on a daily basis. It is worth noting that Greeks present the highest negative percentages of the total sample, stating that not only did they never read the news in daily newspapers (EL: 35% - EU25: 15%), but also that they never listen to the news on the radio, just like Turkish citizens (EL: 42% - EU25: 17%).

Objective but limited presentation of EU by the Greek media. The majority of both the Greek and European public evaluates the information it receives from the media, when covering the European Union, to be objective (television 44%, radio 37% and press 43%). Television, although constituting their main source of information on the EU, talks *too little* about the European Union, according to 54% of Greek respondents, recording the second highest percentage in the total survey sample (after the Netherlands: 58%). The average European citizen appears to differ, considering that television talks *about the right amount* about the EU. Regarding the radio, Greek respondents (39%) find that it does not make reference to the European Union as much as it should. Lastly, regarding the press, 35% of Greeks interviewed do not consider EU coverage to be adequate, while 33%, as well as the majority of the overall EU25 sample (50%) seems satisfied, agreeing that the press talks *about the right amount* about the EU.

As results from the answers given by respondents to a relevant quiz demonstrate, **Greek citizens' level of knowledge on special EU-related issues may be characterized as satisfactory, especially when compared to the results recorded by other European respondents.** By way of an example, 62% of Greeks interviewed –among the highest percentages in the total sample– appear to know that the European Union consists of 25 Member States, whereas the overall EU25 average is significantly lower (49%). Moreover, a majority of Greek citizens, with the highest percentage of the survey, are aware of the fact that Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by EU citizens (EL: 81% - EU25: 50%). It is worth mentioning that **47% of the Greeks surveyed were not aware that the**

European Union has its own anthem (EU25: 27%), by answering, 'don't know' to the relevant question.

TRUST IN NATIONAL AND EU INSTITUTIONS

Greek citizens express their trust in the European Union and their distrust in the Greek Government and the Greek Parliament. The European Union in the current survey – as in the previous ones (EB60.1, EB61.0 & EB62.0)– records a high percentage of preference, thus confirming the trust which a significant part of Greeks interviewed have demonstrated in recent Eurobarometer surveys on the EU.

- **Greek citizens trust the European Union (EL: 57% - EU25: 44%).** The percentage is among the highest in the total survey sample,
- **1 in 2 Greeks does not trust the Greek Parliament (51%).** A significant increase is observed in the percentage of Greeks expressing distrust, from 36% in the last survey to 51% in the present one.
- **6 in 10 Greek citizens do not trust the Greek Government (57%).** A significant increase is observed in the Greek percentage of distrust from 45% in the previous Eurobarometer survey to 57% in the current one.
- **6 in 10 Greek citizens continue to express distrust in the United Nations (62%).** In line with previous Eurobarometer surveys, the Greek sample continues to express distrust in the United Nations, in recording the second highest negative percentage of the total survey sample, following that of the Republic of Cyprus (66%).

ENLARGEMENT OF THE EU

Greeks remain strong supporters of enlargement, as they explicitly opt for the prospect of further enlargement with more countries joining the European Union in the forthcoming years (EL: 60% - EU25: 50%). It should be noted that Greeks, more than any other European citizens, consider that the European Union should be enlarged but by incorporating only some of the countries wishing to accede to it (70%).

Greek citizens seem to favour the readiness of countries like Switzerland (85%), Norway (81%) and Iceland (74%) to accede to the European Union as full members. **Greeks, as well as the majority of European citizens, express negative views regarding the possible accession of Turkey (EL: 70% - EU25: 52%) and Albania (EL: 58% - EU25: 50%).** Greek respondents express diverging views regarding FYROM, since 45% (EU25: 43%) support its future accession to the EU, while 47% (EU25: 41%) oppose it.

Greek –as well as European citizens overall– justify their views concerning the accession of Turkey, by not only identifying the negative effects of such an event, but also by not to citing any positive outcome resulting from Turkey joining the European Union.

- **51% (EU25: 33%) of Greeks do not consider that Turkey partly belongs to Europe by its geography**, in contrast with Turkish citizens, 63% of whom believe that the geographical position of their country proves that it partly belongs to Europe. It should be noted that Greece records the highest percentage –after the Republic of Cyprus (69%)– in the total sample. It is also worth noting that a significant part of the Greek sample (46%), as well as the majority of the overall European sample (55%), agrees with the statement in question.
- **Greeks (76%) and citizens of the Republic of Cyprus (91%) – recording the highest percentages– express their total disagreement that Turkey partly belongs to Europe by its history**, while the respective European average is significantly lower (42%). It should

be noted that 58% of Turkish respondents consider that their country partly belongs to Europe by its history.

- **Although a vast majority of Turkish citizens (65%) maintain that their country's accession to the European Union would strengthen the security in this region, Greek respondents (55%) share an opposing view** (EU25: 45%).
- **Respondents in Austria (68%), Greece (62%), the Republic of Cyprus (61%) and Germany (60%) – in recording the highest negative percentages of the total sample – do not think that Turkey's accession to the EU would favour the mutual comprehension of European and Muslim values.** European public opinion appears to be divided, as 41% agree with this assumption, while 44% disagree. It should be noted that the members of the Turkish Cypriot Community (73%), and citizens of Sweden (60%) and Turkey (59%) record the highest percentages in the survey of those considering that Turkey's full accession to the European Union would favour the mutual comprehension of European and Muslim values.
- **Almost 7 in 10 Greeks (EL: 67% - EU25: 54%) believe that the cultural differences between Turkey and the European Union Member States are too significant to allow for this accession.** It is also worth noting that the members of the Turkish Cypriot Community – in recording the highest percentage in the sample (74%) – as well as the Turkish poll (57%), share the same view.
- **7 in 10 Greeks (EL: 69% - EU25: 50%) do not think that Turkey's accession would favour the rejuvenation of an ageing European population.** The view of the Greek, as well as the European public, is totally different to that expressed by the Turkish poll (74%), who claim that Turkey's membership would contribute to the rejuvenation of Europe's population.
- **Almost 8 in 10 Greeks (EL: 77% - EU25: 63%) believe that Turkey's joining could risk favouring immigration to more developed countries in the European Union.** It should be noted that 65% of Turkish citizens express the same view.
- Greek (95%) and European citizens (84%) seem to understand the main criteria that a country wishing to join the European Union must satisfy, as a majority of them believe that **in order to join the European Union in about ten years' time, Turkey will have to systematically respect human rights.** 71% of the Turkish public also appear to agree with this view. Another significant condition regarding Turkey's accession seems to be the economy of the country, as **9 in 10 Greeks (EL: 90% - EU25: 76%) consider that to join the European Union in about ten years, Turkey will have to significantly improve the state of its economy.** 75% of Turkish citizens express the same view.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Greek citizens welcome the idea of having common European policies, with 67% being in favour of such a development. The same is observed among European citizens, but in a lower percentage (58%).

The disappointment of Greek citizens from using the euro is apparent. In previous Eurobarometer surveys, which included the same question, the majority of the Greek poll appeared to be in favour of a European Monetary Union with a single currency –with high percentages (EB62.0: 62%). However, in the current survey the positive percentage has dropped significantly and the views expressed by the Greek sample totally diverge, with 49% (EU25: 59%) being in favour and 49% (EU25: 35%) against. It should be noted that the percentage of Greek respondents who are against the European Monetary Union with a single currency is the second highest after the United Kingdom (64%).

As in previous Eurobarometer surveys, the majority of Greek public opinion is **in favour of a common defence and security policy (EL: 80% - EU25: 77%) and a common foreign policy among the Member States of the European Union towards other countries (EL: 76% - EU25: 67%).**

6 in 10 Greeks express the necessity for a Constitution for the European Union (EL: 60% - EU25: 61%). A drop is recorded in the relevant percentages, from 69% in the previous Eurobarometer EB62.0 to 60% in the current one.

Greek citizens seem to trust the Greek Government (27%) and journalists (23%) most to inform them about the European Constitution. The same applies in Europe overall with scores of 16% for national governments and 22% for the press. Next in line in terms of trust are European institutions, like the European Parliament (EL: 13% - EU25: 11%) and the European Commission (EL: 10% - 8%).

Greek and European citizens consider that **the adoption of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe will make the running of the European Union more democratic (EL: 67% - EU25: 64%), more efficient (EL: 69% - EU25: 63%) and more transparent (EL: 58% - EU25: 56%).** Moreover, Greek and European citizens believe that, if all Member States adopt the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, **the European Union will be stronger in the world (EL: 73% - EU25: 71%) and more competitive economically (EL: 72% - EU25: 63%), as well as more socially-minded (EL: 61% - EU25: 53%).**

Greek citizens seem willing to support actions of the European Union, which will help strengthen its international role and become an international player both in political and social issues.

- 91% of Greek citizens think that European Union foreign policy should be independent of United States foreign policy.
- The European Union should work to guarantee human rights around the world, even if this is contrary to the wishes of some other countries (91%).
- Greek and European citizens are in total agreement - 88% and 83% respectively - that when an international crisis occurs, European Union Member States should agree on a common position.
- 88% of Greek and 69% of European respondents consider that the European Union should have its own seat in the United Nations Security Council.
- Member States of the EU should have a common immigration policy towards people from outside the European Union (78%).
- The majority of the Greek poll (63%) tends to agree with the view that the European Union should have a rapid military reaction force that can be sent quickly to trouble spots when an international crisis occurs (EU25: 68%).
- The European Union should have its own Foreign Minister who can be the spokesperson for a common European Union position (71%).

Greek citizens appear to be "fairly satisfied" with the way democracy works both in Greece (42%) and in the European Union (41%). The European averages are 45% and 44% respectively ■