

EUROBAROMETER 64

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2005

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CYPRUS

(AREAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF
THE CYPRUS GOVERNMENT)

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EUROBAROMETER 64 - CYPRUS

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

Summary

1. Life in Cyprus

Eurobarometer 64 is the third survey of the Eurobarometer series conducted in Cyprus after its accession into the European Union. Cyprus accessed into the European Union with the Cyprus problem remaining unsolved and the *acquis communautaire* being implemented only in the areas under the control of the government of the Republic of Cyprus.

In their majority, the citizens with their life:

- A percentage of 85% of the citizens states that it is satisfied with their life in general.
- Opinions on this matter remain almost the same as those expressed during the Spring of 2005.

The citizens are reserved as to the near future (following 12 months):

- Most expect that life in general will remain the same (41%), whereas 37% expects that it will improve. The incidence of these two opinions being expressed is very close to the average of all member states.
- Only 18% expects an improvement of the financial state of its household, a percentage that is lower than the average of all member states (25%) and among the lowest recorded in all member states.
- Only 15% believes that its personal employment conditions will improve in the near future, a percentage which is lower than the average of all member states (22%).

Pessimism dominates the evaluations as to the evolution of the national economy and of employment conditions:

- The majority (60%) expects that the economic situation of the country will deteriorate within the next 12 months. The percentage of those that share this opinion has increased since the Spring of 2005 (56% Spring 2005, 60% Fall 2005).
- The absolute majority of citizens residing in areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus (62%) judge that employment conditions in the country will worsen within the next twelve months. Forecasts as to the employment conditions in the country remain at levels similar to those of Spring 2005.
- Citizens' evaluations as to the national economic situation and employment conditions are much more pessimistic than the EU average (Worse economic conditions: Cyprus (CY) 60%, EU-25 39%. Worse employment conditions, Cyprus (CY) 62%, EU-25 40%).

The majority of the citizens trusts most state institutions, but does not trust political parties and large corporations:

- The highest level of trust is expressed towards the National Guard (70%). Most also trust the fundamental state institutions, which are the Cyprus Government (66%), the Cyprus Parliament (58%) and the Justice/ legal system (59%). Only 19%, however, trusts political parties.
- The level of trust placed in the fundamental state institutions (Government, Parliament, Justice/ legal system) is higher than the average of all member states. The phenomenon of low trust towards political parties is universal among citizens of all member states. Among the entire EU population, only 17% trusts political parties. A high percentage of the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus also trusts religious institutions (61%).

The major problems that Cyprus faces at present are inflation (44%), crime rate (37%) and the financial situation in general (29%).

- Over time, the three main problems remain the same as those recorded in previous Eurobarometer waves. Rising prices, however, is already alarming citizens more than any other problem. At present, Cyprus (CY) follows Latvia (66%), as the member state with the second highest incidence of citizens being troubled by inflation.
- The major problem that the European Union faces in its entirety, unemployment, ranks fourth in the series of problems that worry Cyprus public opinion (Cyprus (CY) 24%, EU-25 44%), but is becoming more prevalent as time goes by.

Most of the citizens believe that the primary objective of the country in the following 10 to 15 years should be to fight inflation:

- The primary concern of the country according to the opinion of most citizens should be to fight inflation (45%) and followingly to maintain order (33%).

The citizens favour the collective decision making by the Republic of Cyprus and the European Union on most aspects of governance:

- The absolute majority supports collective decision making on scientific and technological research, support of areas with economic hardships, protection of consumers, health and social welfare, the fight against crime, the fight against terrorism, the agricultural and fishing policy, the fight against unemployment, defence and foreign affairs, migration, protection of the environment, the energy policy and the competition policy.
- Only on matters relating to taxation and pensions does the majority believe that decisions should be taken autonomously by the Republic of Cyprus, while on issues relating to education opinions are split.
- On all issues under investigation, the proportion of citizens residing in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus that support collective decision making is higher than the EU average.

2. The individual and the European Union

The European Union still manages to evoke among most citizens the feeling of hope (59%):

- Among citizens residing in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus, the European Union primarily evokes the feeling of hope (59%). At the same time, it also evokes trust (29%), but also anxiety (35%).
- Associating the European Union with feelings of hope, trust and also anxiety is more intense among Cypriot citizens when compared to the total population of the European Union (Hope: Cyprus (CY) 59%, EU-25 (42%), Trust: Cyprus (CY) 29%, EU-25 (22%), Anxiety: Cyprus (CY) 35%, EU-25 21%).
- The highest level of associating the EU with feelings of hope is recorded among Cypriot citizens (Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots).

Four out of ten citizens agree with the statement “my voice matters in the European Union”:

- The proportion of citizens residing in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus that agrees that its “voice matters in the European Union” reaches 40% and surpasses that of the total population of the European Union (34%).

The citizens realise that they are not very involved in European Union affairs, but the desire for more active involvement exists:

- Only 20% of the citizens feel that it is sufficiently involved with European issues. The respective percentage among the total EU population reaches 26%.
- Six out of ten citizens state that they would like to be more involved in European issues but that they do not know how they can do this. The incidence of Cypriots (CY) interested in being involved with European issues is higher than the EU average (Cyprus (CY) 59%, EU-25 47%).
- The overwhelming majority of the citizens supports the opinion that the European Union (88%), as well as the Republic of Cyprus on a national (91%) and a regional level (91%) should exert more efforts so that citizens could involve themselves more with European affairs.

Most of the citizens accept their identification with Europe and in parallel feel proud of their national origin:

- Almost two years after Cyprus accession, only 38% of the population states that it has never felt being European.
- In their majority, citizens recognize that they have dual citizenship, describing themselves as being a Cypriot and a European citizen (58%).
- As a whole, citizens are proud of their origins, whereas identifying themselves with being European citizens induces the feeling of pride in only half of them.

The citizens assess that the immediate priorities of the European Union should be the fight against poverty and social isolation, the fight against unemployment, the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking and the preservation of peace and security in Europe:

- These actions are perceived as being among EU's top priorities by the entirety of the EU population as well.

3. Cyprus Participation in the European Union

Almost two years after Cyprus' accession into the European Union the proportion of citizens who consider this to be a positive thing remains relatively low (41%):

- Some 38% holds a neutral stance (neither positive, nor negative), while 19% of the citizens is positioned negatively towards the accession.
- The proportion of citizens with a positive opinion as to the accession is much lower than that of the total population in all member states (Cyprus (CY) 41%, EU-25 50%).

Only four out of ten citizens believe that the country has benefited from the accession into the European Union. The opposite opinion is held by 53%:

- Assessment of the benefit of entering the European Union remains almost unchanged since the period when Cyprus first entered the European Union two years ago.
- The proportion of citizens who consider that the country has benefited from its accession is much lower than the average of the total population in all member states (Cyprus (CY) 39%, EU-25 52%).

The citizens recognize that the accession has been beneficial to the exporting and service sectors and the standard of living. On the contrary, they assess that the accession has had a negative impact on the industrial and agricultural sectors and on employment conditions:

- The citizens assess that the accession has had a positive impact on the service sector (63%), the exports sector (52%) and on the standard of living (49%).
- The accession is seen as having had a negative impact on the industrial (52%) and agricultural sectors (58%) and on employment conditions (59%).

The proportion of those having a positive image of the European Union has declined with respect to the Eurobarometer conducted in the Spring of 2005:

- A positive image of the European Union is held by 52% of the citizens, a percentage which is lower than the one recorded in the Spring of 2005.
- The image that citizens have of the European Union remains better than the image held by the total population in all member states (Cyprus (CY) 52%, EU-25 44%).

4. Confidence in EU Institutions and knowledge relating to the EU

Most citizens trust the European Commission:

- Fifty-seven percent of the citizens trusts the European Commission, a figure which is much higher than the average of all member states (46%)
- With respect to the Spring 2005 Eurobarometer a decline is recorded in the percentage of those who trust the European Commission (Spring 2005 62%, Fall 2005 57%).

Most of the citizens also trust the European Parliament:

- Among citizens, 60% trusts the European Parliament, a percentage which is higher than the average of all member states (51%).
- The incidence of trusting the European Parliament is marginally lower than what it was in the Spring of 2005 (Spring 2005 62%, Fall 2005 60%).

More than half of the citizens feel that they know the way the European Union works:

- Some 56% of the citizens feel that they know how the European Union works.
- The respective percentage among the total population of all member states is relatively lower (41%).

The majority of citizens, as well as most of the citizens of the European Union as a whole, recognize that their knowledge of the European Union is average:

- On a ten-point scale the self-assessment average of knowledge on matters relating to the European Union reaches only 4,2 and is placed below the mid-point of the scale (5,5).
- The picture is the same for the total population in all member states. Its self-assessment average also reaches 4,2.

On specific issues relating to the way the European Union operates, the level of knowledge of citizens is satisfactory enough:

- On specific issues such as, the number of member states, the way European Parliament members are elected, the existence of a European Union anthem and the year the latest European Parliament elections were held, the incidence of giving the correct answer ranges between 45% and 74%.

Three quarters of the citizens state that they know where the bulk of the European Union budget is spend on. Most, however, are mistaken:

- Most have the wrong impression that most of the funding of the budget is spend in administration and personnel expenses (23%), an opinion which is also shared by most European citizens in their entirety (31%).
- Only 13% correctly acknowledges that most of the European budget is spend on the agricultural sector. Among the total population of the European Union the agricultural sector is mentioned by 17%.

The citizens consider that in general the media do offer sufficient coverage of European issues. Most, nonetheless, believe that the coverage offered is objective:

- Only three out of ten citizens assess that the presentation of the European Union through the television, the radio and the printed press is sufficient.
- Half of the citizens share the opinion that the three major mediums of communication (television, radiophone, newspapers) cover objectively the issues relating to the European Union.
- Comparatively to the Spring 2005 Eurobarometer the percentage that assesses that that the European Union is presented as much as it should through the media remains at relatively the same levels, while an increase is observed in the percentage that assesses that the European Union is presented objectively.

6. Political Union and the European Constitution

In their majority, citizens favour the European political union:

- Seven out of ten citizens support a European political union, a proportion much higher than the average of the total population of all member states (55%).
- Among citizens, being in favour of a European political union is more pronounced at present than what it was in the Spring of 2005 (63%).

The citizens recognize that the adoption of the Treaty for establishing a Constitution for Europe has a positive impact on the functioning of the European Union:

- Some 79% agrees that the European Union's operation will be more democratic, while 77% believes that it will be more effective and 76% that it will be more transparent.
- Cyprus (CY) and Belgium have the highest incidences of agreement that adoption of the Constitution will have a positive impact on the operation of the European Union.

The dominant opinion among citizens is that adopting the Treaty for establishing a Constitution will have a positive impact on the international standing of the European Union:

- Most agree that establishing the Constitution will make the European Union more powerful in the world (78%), more economically competitive (79%) and more socially oriented (77%).
- Cyprus (CY) is among the countries with the highest incidence of citizens evaluating that the adoption of the Treaty for establishing the Constitution will have positive effects on the standing of the European Union.
- The absolute majority (69%) shares the opinion that a European Constitution is essential in guarantying the proper functioning of European institutions.

The citizens favour the enlargement of the European Union:

- Some 67% is in favour of further European Union enlargement. The respective percentage among the total population of all member states is significantly lower at 49%.
- The citizens are more in favour of the accession of Switzerland, Norway and Iceland. The lowest degree of support is expressed towards Turkey's accession (16%).

The same is true of the total population of the European Union. In their entirety, European Union citizens are more in favour of Switzerland, Norway and Iceland joining the European Union and least in favour of Turkey's accession (31%).