

EUROBAROMETER 65

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2006

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CYPRUS

(AREAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF
THE CYPRUS GOVERNMENT)

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EUROBAROMETER 65.2 - CYPRUS

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

Summary

A. Life in Cyprus

Eurobarometer 65.2 is the fourth survey in the Eurobarometer series conducted in Cyprus after its accession to the European Union. Cyprus joined 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.

Citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus are satisfied with their life:

- The overwhelming majority of citizens (85%) are satisfied with the life they lead.
- The level of satisfaction remains at almost the same level recorded in spring 2005.

Most of the citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus do not expect changes with regard to their personal situation in the coming 12 months:

- Most expect that life in general will remain the same (44%), whereas 33% of the poll expects that it will improve and 11% that it will deteriorate.
- About half of the respondents (53%) do not expect a change in the financial situation of their household, whereas 18% expect that it will improve and 25% expect that it will deteriorate.
- Six out of ten citizens expect stability in their personal employment situation. Some 16% believe that their personal employment situation will improve in the near future, whereas 8% expect that it will deteriorate.
- Over time, short-term expectations regarding personal issues remain unchanged.

Expectations as to the evolution of the national economy and of employment conditions are dominated by pessimism:

- Approximately half of Cypriot citizens expect that both the economic situation of their country and employment conditions will deteriorate within the next 12 months.
- It should be noted, however, that public opinion is more optimistic in comparison with the autumn 2005 Eurobarometer (worse economic situation of country: spring 2006 47%, autumn 2005 60%; worse employment conditions: spring 2006 46%, autumn 2005 62%).

The majority of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus believe that their personal situation has remained stable or improved over the past 5 years:

- Some 41% of the citizens claim that their personal situation has improved over the past 5 years, whereas 31% consider it to have remained stable. Only 26% feel that their personal situation has deteriorated.

There is a climate of optimism with regard to citizens' expectations in relation to their personal situation over the next 5 years:

- The majority of citizens expect an improvement (39%) or stability (31%) in their personal situation. Only a limited number (16%) anticipate some deterioration in their personal situation.
- A similar level of optimism with regard to an improvement in their personal situation was also recorded in the autumn 2005 wave of Eurobarometer.

A vast majority of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus feel attached to their country (97%), their town/village (91%) and their region (89%). The percentage of people who feel attached to the European Union, however, is just 27%.

- The percentage of citizens who feel attached to Europe/ the European Union is the lowest recorded among all member states.

At present, the two major problems worrying citizens remain crime (47%) and inflation (30%).

- An important percentage of respondents also express their anxiety regarding unemployment (25%) and the economic situation of the country (23%).
- The major problem that the European Union as a whole faces, unemployment, ranks third in the series of problems that concern Cypriot public opinion, but it is becoming more prevalent as time goes by.

The level of trust shown by citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus towards the Cyprus Government and the Cyprus Parliament has decreased considerably:

- Compared with the last Eurobarometer survey in autumn 2005, the citizens' trust in their national Government has decreased (spring 2006, 56%: autumn 2005 66%). The same holds for the Cypriot Parliament (spring 2006, 44%: autumn 2005 58%) and, to some extent, the legal System (spring 2006, 53%, autumn 2005 59%).
- The phenomenon of low levels of trust in political parties recorded in previous waves persists (27%).

Citizens continue to show a high level of trust in the European Union:

- The majority of citizens trust the European Union (61%), whereas only a relatively low percentage trusts the United Nations (27%).
- The percentage of citizens in the areas under the control of the Cypriot government who trust the United Nations is the lowest recorded in any of the member states surveyed.

Citizens assess positively the current situation in several areas:

- A majority of citizens view positively the situation that exists in several areas (Cypriot economy, European economy, the country's environment, social protection, quality of life and personal financial situation), with the most positive responses being recorded for personal financial situation (73%) and quality of life (84%).
- The only area in which negative assessments exceed the positive ones is employment which is judged favourably by only 43%.

Based on the opinion of the citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus, more information should be the primary objective of public authorities in order to limit energy consumption (56%):

- The development of tax incentives for the promotion of efficient energy usage (26%), the adoption of higher standards for the efficiency of energy consuming machines (28%) and stricter controls on existing energy consumption standards (24%) are accepted by a minority of citizens.

Most citizens favour decision-making in the face of energy challenges being made on a national level:

- Some 45% of citizens believe that decisions dealing with energy challenges should be taken at national level, whereas 35% of them consider that it should be taken at European level.

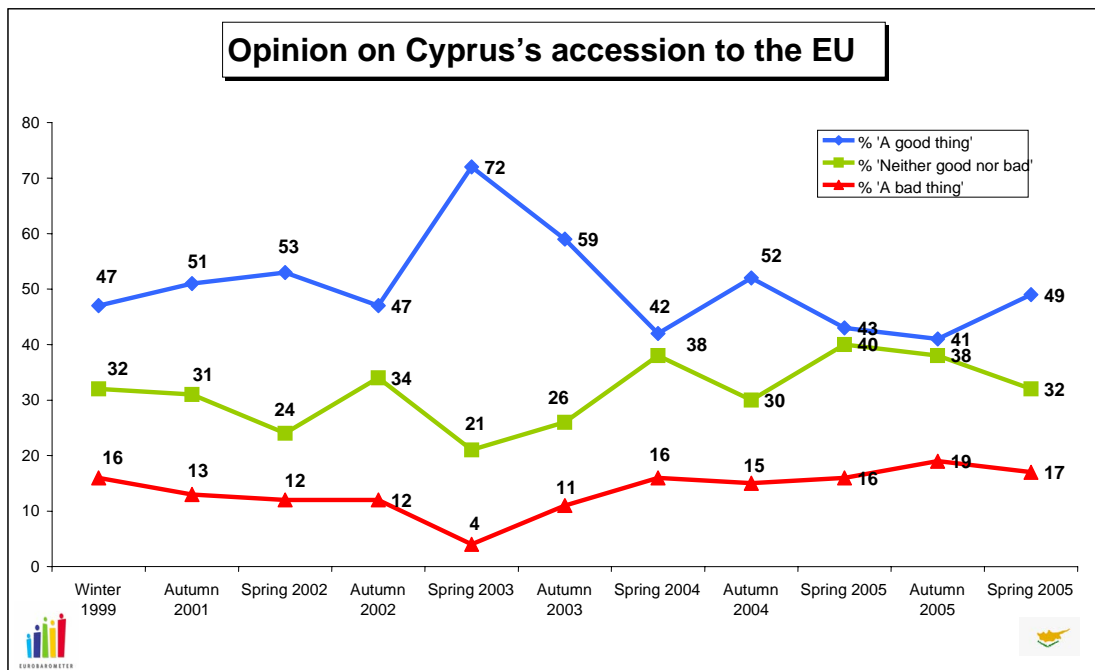
B. Europeans and the European Union

The majority of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus trust the basic institutions of the European Union:

- Trust in the European Parliament is expressed by 60% of Cypriots, trust in the Council of the European Union by 57%, trust in the Court of Justice of the European Communities by 60% and trust in the European Central Bank by 50%.

Half of the citizens residing in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus see Cyprus's membership of the European Union positively.

- The incidence of positive opinions shows an increase compared with the Eurobarometer waves of the previous year.
- Cyprus (CY), however, is included in the ten countries with the lowest incidence of positive opinion regarding EU membership.



Over time, the percentage of citizens who believe that Cyprus has benefited from accession to the EU remains stable:

- Four out of ten citizens believe that Cyprus has benefited from its accession to the European Union. This percentage remains among the lowest among all member states.

More than half of the citizens (53%) state that they have a positive image of the European Union:

- The percentage of citizens with a positive image of the European Union exceeds the percentage of citizens who believe that Cyprus's participation is a good thing (49%) and that, in general, the country has benefited from membership (40%). Similar results were observed in previous Eurobarometer waves.

Among citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus the European Union primarily means "freedom of movement" (freedom to travel,

study and work anywhere in the European Union) (72%) and, secondly, it means "peace" (48%).

Somewhat more than half of citizens residing in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus state that they understand the way the European Union works:

- With 54% of citizens stating that they know how the European Union works, Cyprus (CY) is among the top ten countries in terms of the incidence of citizens who claim to know how the Union operates.

Most of the citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus are aware of the institutions of the European Union:

- An absolute majority of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus have heard of the European Parliament (82%), the European Commission (75%), the Council of the European Union (75%) and the Court of Justice of the European Communities (80%). A significant percentage is also aware of the European Central Bank (58%).

Citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus characterise their knowledge with regards to the European Union as being average. The same holds true for the total population of all member states:

- On a ten-point scale (1 being the lowest grade and 10 being the highest) the average rating of knowledge of Cypriot citizens reaches 4,6, whereas the respective European average is logged at 4,5.

The level of knowledge of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus is considered satisfactory with regard to the statements "The EU currently consists 15 Member States" and "the Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of the EU":

- More specifically, 68% of respondents correctly point out that the statement "The EU currently consists of 15 Member States" is wrong, while 59% correctly point out that Members of the European Parliament are indeed elected directly by the citizens of the EU.
- The percentage, however, that recognises as incorrect the statement "most of the European budget is spent on administrative and personnel actions", is lower (27%).

An absolute majority of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus recognise that the institutions of the European Union play an important role in the life of the European Union:

- The importance of the role of the European Parliament is recognised by 82%, that of the European Commission by 80%, that of the Council of the European Union by 81%, that of the Court of Justice of the European Communities by 81% and that of the European Central Bank by 87%.
- For all institutions, the incidence of Cypriot (CY) citizens with a positive opinion of their importance is higher than the EU average.

Almost two-thirds of citizens residing in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus expect that, in the future, and specifically within the next five years, the European Union will play a more important part in their daily lives:

- Cypriot (CY) citizens' views as to the role of the European Union remain at about the same levels as those recorded in autumn 2005 and remain far higher than the average of all member states (Cyprus-CY 63%, EU-25 41%).

An absolute majority (72%) of Cypriot citizens would like the European Union to play a more important role in their daily lives in the future:

- The percentage of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus who would like the European Union to play a more important role in their daily lives is the highest among all member states.

The positive role played by the European Union on local issues is recognised by a significant portion of citizens:

- Cypriots consider that the European Union plays a positive role in the following issues: protection of the environment (62%), defence/ foreign affairs (55%), the education system (48%) and the fight against terrorism (42%).
- The role of the European Union is seen as being more limited on issues such as public transport, pensions, financial situation, the fight against crime, immigration, the fight against unemployment, taxation and rising prices/ inflation.

Most of the citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus have fears on specific issues relating to European integration:

- Citizens worry the most about the increase in drugs trafficking and international organised crime (84%).
- A significant proportion of citizens are also worried about the transfer of jobs to countries with lower production costs (69%), the difficulties that Cypriot farmers will face (62%), an economic crisis (66%), the end of the Cyprus pound (61%), the fact that Cyprus will pay increasingly more towards the European Union (54%) and the loss of national identity and culture (50%).

Citizens in the area under the control of the Republic of Cyprus believe that the main priority of the European Union should be the fight against poverty and social exclusion (49%):

- The fight against unemployment (40%), the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking (39%) and maintaining peace and security in Europe (35%) are also frequently mentioned.
- The main priorities set by citizens in areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus coincide with those set by European citizens as a whole.

C. Citizens and mass media

Television remains the main information source on issues relating to the European Union, its policies and institutions for citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus, as well as for European citizens as a whole,:

- Some 73% of Cypriot citizens (CY), and 70% of the EU25 overall are informed through television on issues relating to the European Union.

Half of citizens watch television news programmes on a daily basis:

- Daily news information from the radio and newspapers is at low levels (28% and 18% respectively).
- The percentage of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus who are informed on a daily basis through the mass media is among the lowest recorded in all member states.

Most citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus consider that the coverage of the European Union by television, radio and the written press is limited:

- The incidence of believing that the presentation of the European Union through television is at the right level is recorded at 28%, whereas for the radio and the written press it is respectively recorded at 21% and 27%.
- For all three types of media, the percentage of Cypriot citizens (CY) who believe that coverage of the EU is at the right level is the lowest recorded among all the member states.

Most citizens share the opinion that coverage of the EU by the media is objective: television (47%), radio (39%), and written press (38%):

- Nevertheless, the incidence of those respondents considering that coverage of the European Union is objective by television, radio or the written press is among the lowest recorded among all member states.