

EUROBAROMETER 65

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2006

NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
DENMARK

This survey was requested and coordinated by Directorate-General Communication.

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

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.

Summary

This report is a presentation of the findings of the Eurobarometer survey conducted in the period from 27 March to 1 May 2006.

The survey took place in the context of the aftermath of the negative results of the French and Dutch referenda concerning the Constitutional Treaty in the early summer of 2005 and the period of reflection called for by the European Council to allow the member states and their citizens to discuss what the Europe of the Future should be like.

This report maps the views of Danes about their lives and the situation in Denmark and Europe, as well as their attitudes and expectations in relation to the European Union.

The Danes: satisfaction and expectations

- ***The satisfied Danes***

Optimism is high among Danes. The unemployment rate is low, market trends are healthy, and measurements made by Statistics Denmark show that consumer confidence is very high. All in all, the Danes are very pleased with the life they lead - so pleased that they come in among the top-ranking countries in Europe in terms of satisfaction.

- ***The optimism of the Danes is well-founded***

The Danes also believe they have good reason to be optimistic. Their assessment of the situation in Denmark is such that they not only give the Danish economic and employment situation top scores; they also give high scores to their personal economic situation and quality of life in general.

- ***Conditions in Denmark above EU average***

Generally, the Danes are not in doubt when they compare various matters in Denmark with the average of the other EU member states: conditions in Denmark are better. This is particularly true of the economy, employment and welfare, all of which get top marks when compared with the EU average.

This positive opinion about the situation in Denmark is reflected in expectations for the coming years: most people expect an improvement or at least the status quo. This applies to life in general, the Danish economy and the national employment rate, as well as to personal financial situation and job situation. As the nation's economy is good and the unemployment rate has reached a historical low, the expectation of status quo can be considered to be a positive attitude on the part of the Danes.

Seen across the EU25, other Europeans share the Danes' positive expectations concerning their personal situation, while they are less optimistic about their respective national economies and employment.

- ***Great trust in national and international institutions***

The general picture is one of a positive socio-economic climate in Denmark, which is reflected in Danish attitudes to selected national and international institutions. Generally, the Danes have great trust in institutions such as the Danish parliament, the UN and the Danish legal system.

- ***Growing trust in the EU***

The European Union and the political parties generally get the lowest scores in terms of trust, though trust in the EU and the political parties has increased since the autumn of 2005. This means that the turbulence experienced in relation to the Constitutional Treaty has had no negative impact on Danes' general trust in the European Union. As a matter of fact, trust has been on the increase since the autumn of 2004.

A characteristic feature of the results is that the Danes' confidence in the selected institutions is clearly above the EU25 average.

The Europeans and the European Union

With the French and the Dutch 'No' to the Constitutional Treaty, it has become time for reflection about Europe's future both in Denmark and in other EU member states. In Denmark, there is increased focus on the citizens' agenda and on their positive and negative expectations in relation to the European Union.

- ***The Danes are concerned about international crime and job losses***

The Danes' primary concerns in connection with further European integration are increased international crime, job losses and increasing financial contributions to the EU.

- ***Less concern about loss of national identity and economic crisis***

Loss of national identity or an actual economic crisis are less of an issue to the Danes. A majority Danes thus have no major concerns about loss of national identity, although such a concern seems to be prevailing in Danish debate about the EU.

- ***Crime, terrorism and immigration are the most important issues facing Denmark***

According to the Danes themselves, Denmark's biggest problems are crime, terrorism and immigration. Danes are concerned both about national crime and international, organised crime that goes across national borders.

With a thirty-year low unemployment rate, it is logical that the Danes do not consider unemployment a problem, contrary to the EU25 average.

- ***The EU plays a positive role in the combat of terrorism and crime***

The EU plays a positive role in fighting potential terrorism in Denmark. The Danes also have a positive view on the EU's role as regards defence and foreign affairs policy, the economic situation and fighting crime. Because of the four Danish opt-outs, Denmark is not part of the European Union's cooperation on justice, immigration and defence. Nevertheless, the Danes think the EU plays a positive role in these areas.

- ***The Danes consider the EU to be a key player in addressing security problems***

The EU is considered to be a key player in addressing the issues that the Danes consider most important: terrorism and crime. While several Danes are concerned that there will be more international crime in a larger Europe, many Danes also see the EU as part of the solution.

- ***Protecting the environment should be a top priority in the EU***

The Danes are fiercely in favour of environmental protection as one of the absolute priorities in the European Union, which suggests that for *Danish* citizens to be satisfied, the European Union must focus on the environment. In other words, people in Denmark probably want to feel the added value of pan-European environmental standards to a much greater extent than the lowest common denominator often mentioned in the news media.

There is currently a tie between the Danes who see the EU's role as a positive role and those who see it as a negative role.

The Danes focus much more on environmental protection than the rest of EU citizens on average.

- ***The EU must also give priority to fighting poverty, peace in Europe and fighting organised crime***

In addition to protection of the environment, the Danes think that the EU should put priority on fighting poverty and social exclusion, on peace and security in Europe and on fighting organised crime and drug trafficking. Once again, the theme of security has a central position in the opinion of the Danes.

- ***The EU must get closer to the European citizens***

Another priority area for the Danes is that the EU should get closer to European citizens, which is in line with some of the considerations of all member states in the wake of the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands. How can the EU gain greater presence and relevance for its citizens?

- ***Neutral or negative view on the EU and immigration***

Most Danes think that the EU's role in relation to immigration is neutral or negative. The fact that there is a relatively higher proportion of Danes who are negative seems to suggest that, following enlargement and the free movement of labour, the European Union is seen as a source of increased immigration.

The free movement of labour was recently debated in connection with a proposal for an internal market for services. An independent Commission report predicts that the opening of the market will generally have a positive effect on employment and economy in the European Union.

This perspective probably meets with more sympathy in EU member states with high rates of unemployment and low pay than among Danes, who are experiencing a boom in Denmark. However, Danes talk about the lack of labour in professions such as builders and doctors, which is a challenge an internal market for services could contribute to addressing.

- ***The EU's role in the future***

The Danes believe that the role of the EU in their daily lives will be the same in five years from now. However, a relatively large proportion of those polled expects the EU to play a *more* important role in the future, while only a few believe the role will be *reduced*.

Most Danes want the EU's role to remain the same in the long term. However, once again a relatively large proportion would like the EU to play a more important role.

This means that the number of Danes who *expect* the EU to play a more important role in the future exceeds the number of people who *want* this to occur. This difference suggests that a number of Danes expect the EU's role in their everyday lives to become more important than they want it to be.

Knowledge about and views on the EU

- ***Historically high support of Danish EU membership***

Danish membership of the European Union is a 'good thing' according to the majority of Danes. The support is at a historically high level as compared with Eurobarometer surveys from the period from 2002 and onwards.

The data for the Eurobarometer survey in the spring of 2005 were gathered in the period *up to and after* the Constitution Treaty was rejected in France and the Netherlands in late May and early June of that year.

Both then and now, the expectation of a 'no' in the referenda and the actual 'no' did not, in fact, have any negative impact on Danes' views on EU membership.

- ***Denmark benefits from its membership***

The benefits gained through Danish membership of the EU are clear to the Danes. No less than 75% believe we have benefited from our membership, which puts the Danes at the very top, together with the Irish. In this respect, there has been a dramatic increase as compared with the same time last year.

- ***The EU's image is mainly positive or neutral among Danes***

Most Danes have a positive or neutral view on the EU's image, although it is more negative than the perception of the average EU citizen.

- ***The EU means peace and freedom to travel – but also bureaucracy***

In line with the EU's positive image, the EU means peace and freedom to travel and work everywhere in Europe in the opinion of many Danes. Democracy, economic wealth and increased influence in the world are also associated with the EU. However, some Danes also associate the EU with bureaucracy.

Once again only a small proportion of those polled mentions unemployment and loss of cultural identity.

- ***High degree of awareness of the EU institutions***

The Danes have extensive awareness of the EU institutions. The largest proportion is made up of those who have heard about the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice and the European Commission. The Danes think the institutions play an important role in the EU, and most of them express confidence in the institutions, primarily the European Court of Justice.

- ***The Danes' actual knowledge of the EU is above the EU25 average, but there is room for improvement***

EU citizens were polled on their actual knowledge about a number of selected EU matters. Although the Danes' knowledge about these matters is above the EU25 average, there is still room for improvement.

In 2004, the European Union was enlarged to include an additional ten member states. Given the continued debate about new applicant countries, the number of member states is a key parameter in terms of measuring the Danes' knowledge about the EU. The majority of Danes are able to answer correctly that the EU no longer consists of only fifteen member states.

The EU's administrative budgets are the subject of ongoing debate, and in the Eurobarometer survey the Danes polled expressed growing concern for the increasing cost of the EU. Half of the Danes answer correctly that administration is not the largest item in the EU budget.

- ***Fifty per cent of Danes believe they understand how the EU works***

Fifty per cent of Danes believe they understand how the EU works, which is above the EU25 average. The number of men who claim to understand how the EU works is clearly higher than the number of women who say so.

Danes and the media

- ***Massive consumers of news***

-

When seen across the EU25, the Danes stand out as massive consumers of news, primarily TV news.

News consumption has an impact on the extent to which the Danes believe they have a good knowledge about the EU. The more news they consume, the more the Danes believe they know about the EU.

- ***Sources of EU information***

Conventional news media such as television, newspapers and radio are the most frequently used sources of information about the EU. Television is by far the top scorer. The Danes also acquire knowledge from discussions and talks with friends, family and colleagues and via the Internet.

- ***Young people use the Internet to find information about the EU – older people read newspapers***

Young people generally use the Internet as a source of EU information. The use of the Internet as a source of information falls with increasing age. Conversely, older people use daily newspapers as a source of information to a greater extent than younger people.

Information media such as brochures and folders are mainly used by people who are already favourable to the EU: people who believe membership is a good thing and that Denmark has benefited from its membership.

- ***There is about the right amount of talk about the EU in the news media – and the talk is neutral***

It has often been pointed out that debate on the EU is not given sufficient media coverage, not only in Denmark but also in other member states. However, most Danes believe that the coverage of EU matters is adequate on television, radio and in the press, though many people feel there is insufficient coverage of the EU in the three media. Most people consider EU coverage to be neutral.

Danes and energy

- ***The energy of the future must be decided at the European level***

In the opinion of the Danes, decisions about the energy of the future must be made at the European level. A little more than half of the Danes polled see the EU as a key player in decision-making about the energy of the future. The number of Danes who want decisions to be made at the European level exceeds the EU25 average.

The Danes' positive views on decision-making about energy at the European level has grown since the same time last year. This trend is probably influenced by the media's focus on increasing oil prices and the potential lack of energy in the future. In this connection, the Danes see the EU as a stronger player than the individual member states acting on their own.

- ***The Danes prefer to change their energy patterns – rather than paying more***

With high energy prices and international calls for reductions in CO2 emissions, the focus is on what industry, agriculture and individual citizens can do to reduce energy consumption. Faced with a choice between paying more and changing their energy patterns, the Danes would rather change their consumption patterns.

- ***More information means reduced energy consumption***

The Danes do not want stricter control but more information from the authorities to enable them to reduce their energy consumption.

- ***The Danes are favourable to renewable energy***

The Danes are more willing to pay more for renewables than citizens in the rest of the European Union. These results are in line with the high priority the Danes give to protecting the environment as compared with the EU25 average.