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Dutch context

The results of this survey show that, compared with other Europeans, Dutch citizens score *above* average in terms of their satisfaction with a number of essential *personal* and *national* issues.

An overwhelming *majority* of Dutch citizens surveyed are highly satisfied with the life they are leading (95% satisfaction) and with external matters such as the national economy (90%), the European economy (75%) and with employment in the Netherlands (85%). A *majority* of the Dutch are, furthermore, satisfied with the system of social security (72%) and the environmental situation in their own country (68%).

The satisfaction score on all these points is higher than the European average. On employment in their country, satisfaction is even three times as high as the European average. Dutch satisfaction with their economy is twice as high as the European average.

Expectations of the Dutch about their own medium-term future are more or less similar to the European average. On other matters surveyed (*personal* financial situation, *national* economy and *personal* and *national* employment situation), the Dutch are (again) *more optimistic* than the average European as far as the near future is concerned. Again, the Dutch were more *positive* about their expectations for national employment (increase 45 percentage points higher than the EU25 average) and the national economy (increase 30, percentage points higher than the European average).

A *majority* of the Dutch citizens have trust in their national legal system (60%) and the national parliament (53%), as opposed to a *minority* of the average EU citizens (46% and 33%). Trust in the national government and the political parties in the Netherlands scores 48% and 37% respectively. This is an *above average* score compared with the European average. The EU25 scores are 30% and 17% respectively.

A *majority* of the Dutch people surveyed have trust in the national media, radio scoring 71% as the most reliable, and the Internet 47% as the least reliable of the four media covered by the survey (press, radio, television and the Internet). The trust of the Dutch in all the forms of media cited is higher than the average EU25 score

From a list of topical issues, the Dutch regard the 'economic situation' and 'health care' as the *most* important. This is similar to the previous survey. The average European considers 'unemployment' by far the most important issue, followed by the 'economic situation' and 'crime'.

European citizens were asked to give their opinion on a number of value statements. An inventory of the responses to statements such as 'the government interferes too much with people's daily lives' (57% NL versus 62% EU25 *agree*) and 'citizens should participate more actively in national politics' (81% in both cases) shows that the Dutch values are (more or less) similar to those of the average citizen in the European Union.

Statements relating to tolerance show more significant differences: ‘there is too much tolerance nowadays, criminals should be punished more severely’ (82% NL versus 85% EU25 *agree*), ‘we need more justice, even if it is at the expense of freedom for the individual’ (46% NL versus 64% EU25), ‘cannabis for personal consumption should be legalised in Europe’ (49% NL versus 26% EU25), ‘same-sex marriages should be allowed in Europe’ (82% NL versus 44% EU25), ‘the adoption of children by same-sex couples should be allowed in Europe’ (69% NL versus 32% EU25).

The differences in the responses to the other statements were also significant: ‘immigrants make a large contribution to our country’ (53% NL versus 40% EU25 *agree*), ‘the place of religion is too prominent in our society’ (31% NL versus 46% EU25), ‘leisure requires more attention than work’ (40% NL versus 48% EU25) and ‘free competition is the best guarantee for economic prosperity’ (61% NL versus 64% EU25).

The European Union: knowledge and trust

A narrow *majority* of the Dutch indicate that they understand how the European Union works (52%) as against a *minority* of average European citizens (43%).

The awareness of the various European institutions among the Dutch is *above average* with respect to the European Parliament (96% NL versus 90% EU25 *awareness*), the European Commission (88% NL versus 82% EU25), the European Central Bank (88% NL versus 72% EU25), the Court of Justice of the European Communities (75% NL versus 70% EU25), the Council of the European Union – Council of Ministers (73% NL versus 63% EU25) and the European Court of Auditors (59% NL versus 47% EU25).

The European institutions whose awareness among the Dutch respondents is *below average* are the European Ombudsman (33% NL versus 40% EU25 *awareness*), the European Economic and Social Committee (26% NL versus 36% EU25) and the Committee of the Regions (10% NL versus 28% EU25).

The responses to a number of knowledge questions show that about one-third of the people surveyed (32% NL versus 35% EU25) believe that the European Union still has 15 Member States and that half of them *do* know that the European Parliament is elected directly by the citizens of the European Union. 65% of Dutch citizens (versus 47% of EU citizens) know that the European Union is chaired every six months by a different Member State.

44% of Dutch citizens indicate that they have trust in the European Union. This trust corresponds with the EU25 average (45%).

Trust in the European institutions ‘European Parliament’, ‘European Commission’ and ‘European Central Bank’ scores 71%, 54% and 58% respectively among Dutch citizens. Compared with the European figure, this is *above average*. The trust of the Dutch in these institutions has grown compared with the three earlier surveys. This represents an upward trend since the spring of 2005.

Nearly one-third of the Dutch still believe that the European Union spends most of its budget on ‘administrative and personnel costs and buildings’ (31%). This *incorrect* assessment is consistent with the previous surveys.

Significance of Europe in the Netherlands

87% of Dutch citizens surveyed are proud to be Dutch and 55% proud to be European. A significant *majority* (72%) of the Dutch feel that it is right that the Netherlands is a member of the European Union, against 53% of average European citizens.

In the Netherlands, 62% believe that the Netherlands benefits from its membership of the European Union (versus 54% of the EU25 average). 55% of the Dutch believe that, all things considered, their opinion counts in Europe.

The image of the European Union among the Dutch population is positive. 40% have a *positive* perception, a drop compared to the previous survey (45% *positive*) then. The EU25 average is higher and is 46% *positive*.

Over one in four Dutch citizens feel involved in European affairs (27%), while among EU citizens the average figure is 19%.

Role of the European Union

Apart from the harmful consequences for Dutch agriculture, the Dutch believe that EU membership has a predominantly positive effect on national issues such as ‘the economy’, ‘security’, ‘standard of living’, ‘employment in the Netherlands’ and ‘the influence of the Netherlands in the world’.

In the case of ‘Dutch agriculture’ and ‘the influence of one’s own country in the world’, the Dutch are slightly *less positive* about the effects of the country’s EU membership compared with the average European citizen.

Half of all Dutch citizens believe that the common market has helped to improve the competitiveness of their country.

The benefits of membership of the European Union perceived by the Dutch on a *personal* level are limited, at least if one considers how the *majority* of the Dutch perceive it. The Dutch were asked to select from a list of seven options the issues they considered to be a possible result of the European Union, two are perceived by a *majority* of the citizens as issues that benefit them *personally*. These two are the ‘lifting of border controls’ and ‘working or studying in another EU country’. The common currency, ‘the euro’, is perceived as an issue that benefits them *personally* by one-third of the Dutch.

A *majority* of the Dutch believe that globalisation offers opportunities for Dutch businesses (57% NL versus 40% EU25 see opportunities). 81% of Dutch citizens believe that

globalisation has a positive effect on 'scientific and technical progress' and 64% that it has a positive effect on 'economic growth' in the Netherlands. As to measures taken by the EU to address the adverse effects of globalisation, 48% of the Dutch say they have trust in them. This is significantly higher than a year ago when the figure was only 38%. The EU25 average is 41% compared with 33% a year ago.

On the issues of 'environment', 'tackling social inequality', 'combating unemployment', 'health care' and 'tackling discrimination', the European Union is *ahead* of the United States of America according to a *majority* of the Dutch. On the issue of 'scientific research', the European Union lags *behind* the US according to the Dutch.

European Union economic policy should give priority to investing in 'education' and 'research and innovation'.

The Dutch would like to see issues such as 'combating terrorism', 'support to regions with economic problems', 'protecting the environment', 'scientific and technological research', 'competition', 'fighting crime', 'energy policy', 'agriculture and fisheries', 'defence and Foreign Affairs' and 'immigration' organised at a *European* level. Matters such as 'consumer protection', 'combating unemployment', 'taxes', 'health and social security', 'educational systems' and 'pensions' should preferably be addressed at *national* level.

Common policy and the European Constitution

To what extent are the Dutch and the average EU citizen in favour of a political union, a European Monetary Union and a common foreign policy and a common defence and security policy?

The results show that half of all the Dutch citizens questioned are *in favour* of a *political union* (50% NL versus 54% EU25 in favour) and nearly three-quarters in *favour* of a European Monetary Union with a single currency, the euro (73% NL versus 60% EU25). It also emerged that about seven out of ten of those surveyed are in *favour* of a common foreign policy (68% NL, EU25 idem) and that 78% of the Dutch are in *favour* of a common defence and security policy (versus 75% EU25).

Two out of five (40%) Dutch citizens believe that 'the fight against poverty and social exclusion' should be a matter of priority in the European Union. This is followed by 'maintaining peace and security in Europe' (33%) and 'bringing the EU closer to the EU citizens' (32%).

As to the future of the European Union, the Dutch believe that 'providing equal living conditions for all EU citizens' is the *most useful* issue for the future of Europe (59%). The EU25 average also puts this at the top of the list, albeit less prominently (55%). The second point the Dutch select from the list is 'a common constitution' (36% NL versus 30% EU25). Despite the 'No' vote at the referendum, a significant section of the Dutch population appreciates the benefits of a European Constitution.

59% of the Dutch are in *favour* of a European Constitution. This corresponds with the figures in the last survey six months ago. The EU25 average is *slightly higher* at 63%. A *large majority* of the Dutch agree that a European Constitution would strengthen Europe's position in the world (75% NL versus 68% EU25). 67% of the Dutch believe that a European Constitution would lead to greater efficiency in the work of the European Union and 63% expects that the Constitution will have a positive effect on democracy in the European Union.

Following the Dutch and French 'No', 65% of Dutch citizens would prefer the European Constitution to be *re-negotiated*. 16% are in favour of *rejecting* the European Constitution and 14% want to *continue the ratification process of the European Constitution*. For EU citizens in general, the percentages are as follows: 48% would prefer the European Constitution to be *re-negotiated*, 13% want to see the European Constitution *rejected*, and 23% want to *continue the ratification process*. 16% of EU citizens say they 'don't know'.

61% of EU citizens do, however, believe that a European Constitution is needed for the European institutions to work better. In the Netherlands, opinions are divided on this matter. 48% believe it *is* needed for the European Union to work well while 46% believe there is *no* need for it.

Values of European citizens

A list of eleven statements reflecting different values was made. The differences and similarities between the opinions of various nationalities on these values were compared.

A comparison of the highest and lowest 'agree' percentages on these eleven statements on topical themes show that the value that most people in the European Union share is that 'citizens should be more actively involved in national politics' (a difference of 21 percentage points between the highest value in Greece and the lowest value in Spain and a *majority* in all countries *agreeing* with the statement).

This is followed by the issue that we 'should be less tolerant of criminal behaviour and that more severe punishments should be handed out' with a difference of 26 percentage points (highest percentage in Cyprus and lowest percentage in Denmark. Again we see that a *majority* in all countries *agrees* with the statement).

Issues where the values of the European citizens differ considerably (by more than 50 percentage points) appear to be linked to statements about homosexuals (and lesbians), immigrants and religion.

The statement that 'same-sex marriages should be allowed all over the EU' reveals a difference in opinion of 69 percentage points (highest score in the Netherlands and lowest in Latvia), while the matter of 'allowing same-sex couples all over Europe to adopt children' also appears to be an issue that divides opinions across Europe (difference of 62 percentage points, with the highest score in the Netherlands and the lowest in Poland).

The statement that ‘immigrants make a large contribution to the country’ is also a point on which the citizens of Europe do *not* appear to agree: a difference of 67 percentage points between the highest value in Sweden and the lowest value in Slovakia.

The figures also show that the statement ‘religion in society is *too prominent* in our society’ is much more relevant in one country than in another.

Issues that matter most to the ‘average European’ with respect to values are ‘peace’ (52%) and ‘respect for human life’ (43%). Opinions differ most on ‘democracy’ and ‘tolerance’.

According to the Dutch, the value shared most by the citizens of the European Union is their perspective of justice, by means of ‘legislation’ (42%). European agreement is also found in ‘human rights’ (41%) and ‘democracy’ (39%). In Europe as a whole, ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ come first with 38%, followed by ‘peace’ (36%).

Half of Dutch citizens believe that the values of European citizens are *close* together while 46% say that the values are *far* apart. In short, opinions in the Netherlands on this issue *differ* considerably. In Europe as a whole, people are less explicit and 11% say they ‘don’t know’. Another 48% believe rather that the values are *close to each other* than *apart*.

Further enlargement of the European Union

A *minority* of the Dutch are in favour of further enlargement of the European Union (45% NL versus 46% EU25 in favour). A year ago, this figure among the Dutch was slightly *higher* (48%).

There is less support for the enlargement of the European Union ‘at different speeds’. In the Netherlands, 41% are *in favour* of this versus 40% of the average EU citizen.

A *majority* of the Dutch and the Europeans are *in favour* of the entry of Switzerland, Norway and Iceland into the European Union. More than half of the Dutch citizens (57%) and half of the European citizens (50%) are *in favour* of Croatia joining the EU.

Countries people are *least* in favour of entering the EU are Turkey (36% NL versus 28% EU25 *in favour*), Albania (37% NL versus 32% EU25), Serbia (38% NL versus 37% EU25) and the Ukraine (36% NL versus 41% EU25).

As to Turkey’s membership of the European Union, a *narrow majority* of Dutch (57%) and EU citizens (56%) believe that, because of its geographical position, Turkey is very much part of Europe. A *majority* of 55% of the Dutch population and 61% of the EU citizens do, however, believe that the cultural differences between Turkey and the current Member States of the European Union are *too large* for Turkey to become a member of the EU.

A possible advantage of Turkey's entry for the current members that Turkey with a large young population would be able to reverse the ageing process is subscribed to by a *minority* of citizens (28% NL versus 29% EU25 agree).

The statement that the European Union would be safer if Turkey were to join is subscribed to by (over) one-third of respondents (37% NL versus 33% EU25 agree). Rather than making it a safer place, people are more inclined to believe that Turkey's entry into the European Union would result in a wave of immigration to the more prosperous countries within the EU (59% NL versus 66% EU25).

A large *majority* of the Dutch and citizens of the European Union believe that Turkey's entry to the EU should be contingent upon its human rights situation (96% NL versus 85% EU25 agree) and that it should work hard on improving the country's economic situation (84% NL versus 77% EU25 agree).

Conclusions

Positive

The great *majority* of the Dutch are happy with the life they lead and as such are among the *most satisfied* citizens of the European Union. Together with the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands heads the list on this issue.

Dutch satisfaction is also *higher* than average in areas such as the national economy, the European economy, the national social security system, national developments with respect to the environment and the national employment situation. This latter point, in particular, is perceived as highly *positive* by the Dutch. The difference with the EU25 average is no less than 58 percentage points. People's expectations of the employment situation in the medium term are *even more* positive: over two-thirds of the Dutch expect the employment situation in the Netherlands to improve in the coming year (versus 23% of the European average).

As to their *own* financial situation between now and a year's time, the Dutch are *slightly more optimistic* than the average European citizen. The same applies to their *personal* employment situation.

When asked about their trust in the various (social) institutions, the Dutch score *above* average *across-the-board* on trust compared to the European average. The difference in trust in political parties and the national parliament is particularly notable (20 percentage points).

As to statements on values, the Dutch score *above* average on the *positive* statements such as 'immigrants make a large contribution to our country', 'cannabis for personal consumption should be legalised in Europe', 'same-sex marriages should be allowed in Europe', and 'the adoption of children by same-sex couples should be allowed in Europe'.

Where values are concerned, the Dutch score *below* average on the *negative* statements ‘government interferes too much with people’s daily lives’, ‘we need more justice even if this means less freedom for the individual’ (with Denmark, the Netherlands score lowest on this point), ‘the place of religion in our society is too prominent’ and ‘there is too much tolerance today, criminals should be punished more severely’. On this point, the difference between the Netherlands and the EU25 average is *almost negligible*.

Responses to the statement that ‘citizens should be more actively involved in national politics’ are equally *positive* all across Europe.

More than half of the Dutch citizens surveyed indicate that they know how the European Union works.

Dutch citizens’ trust in the European Union is equal to that of the average European citizen. People’s trust in the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Central Bank is *above* average and has *risen* compared to recent surveys.

A *large majority* of the Dutch are proud of being ‘Dutch’ and a *narrow majority* say they are proud to be ‘European’.

A *large majority* of the Dutch people feel that the membership of the European Union is a good thing and that it *mainly* brings benefits. A *majority* of the Dutch also believe that their votes count in Europe. On this point, the Dutch are much more *positive* than the average European citizen.

To return to the benefits of membership of the European Union for the Netherlands: according to a *majority* of the Dutch citizens these benefits can be found in essential matters such as the national economy, national security, the standard of living, the influence of the Netherlands in the world and the employment situation in their country.

A *majority* of the Dutch are also of the opinion that increased competition in a number of sectors (including transport, telecom services, the banking sector and the insurance sector) resulting from the common market has a predominantly *positive* effect.

As far as *personal* benefits of Dutch membership of the European Union are concerned, the list is limited to issues such as ‘lifting of border controls’ and ‘the positive effect on educational and career opportunities in another European country’.

As in Europe as a whole, the Dutch figures in favour of the results of the measures taken to tackle the adverse effects of globalisation are much more *positive* than a year ago.

Compared with the United States, the European Union is *ahead* in areas such as ‘protecting the environment’, ‘tackling social inequality’, ‘combating unemployment’, ‘health care’, ‘tackling discrimination’ and (to a lesser degree) ‘education’.

As far as ‘education’ is concerned, the Dutch believe that ‘improving education and professional training’ should be a priority of EU policy. This is followed by ‘investing in research and innovation’.

Other issues relating to policy: the level at which decisions should be made (at European or national level) differs considerably depending on the issue. The Dutch would like to see issues such as ‘fighting terrorism’, ‘support to economically disadvantaged regions’, ‘protection of the environment’, ‘scientific and technological research’, ‘competition’, ‘fighting crime’, ‘energy’, ‘agriculture and fisheries’ and decisions on ‘defence and foreign affairs’ addressed at a European level.

More than three-quarters of the Dutch think *positively* about a common defence and security policy. Almost three-quarters are *in favour of* a European Monetary Union. Public support among the average EU citizens for a Monetary Union is much *lower*. A *majority* of the Dutch and of the average European citizens are in favour of a common foreign policy. Half of Dutch citizens are in favour of a political union. The European average is slightly *higher*.

Actions which the European Union should prioritise are, according to the Dutch, ‘tackling poverty and social exclusion’, ‘maintaining peace and security in Europe’, ‘bringing the Union closer to the European citizen’, ‘environmental protection’ and ‘fighting terrorism’.

A *majority* of the Dutch supports the initiative for a European Constitution. A *majority* believes that a European Constitution would have a *positive* effect on ‘the position of Europe in the world’, ‘the efficiency of the European institutions’, ‘the democratic process of the European Union’, ‘the competitiveness of the European Union’, and it will also lead to ‘a more transparent European Union’. Half of the Dutch population also believes that a European Constitution will make Europe as a whole ‘more socially minded’.

Overall, a *minority* of Dutch and EU citizens are in favour of the further enlargement of the European Union at the moment (45% NL versus 46% EU25 in favour). Countries which would, on second thoughts, be welcomed as new member states by a *majority* are Norway, Switzerland and Iceland. For the possible accession of Croatia, there is a support level of 57% amongst Dutch citizens, a narrow *majority*. Half of European people would welcome Croatia as a new member state (50%).

According to a *majority* of the Dutch and European citizens, Turkey is said to be a logical part of Europe because of its geographical location (57% NL versus 56% EU25 agree).

Negative

Dutch respondents agree slightly *less* with the statement that ‘free competition is the best guarantee for economic prosperity’ than the EU25 average.

As far as knowledge about the various European institutions is concerned, it appears that Dutch citizens’ knowledge about institutions such as the European Ombudsman, the Economic and Social Committee of the European Union and the Committee of the Regions is less than the European average.

Despite the fact that Dutch citizens’ trust in the European Union is around the EU25 average, this trust has *dropped slightly* compared with last spring’s survey.

Similar to last year’s result, the Dutch still do not know how the European Union spends its budget. The perceived share of ‘administrative and personnel costs and buildings’ in the budget is grossly overestimated.

The Dutch perception of the image of the EU is *below* average compared with the average EU citizen. The image of the European Union has *dropped slightly* in the Netherlands compared with the last survey.

People’s involvement with European matters is another issue for which the results in the Netherlands have *dropped* compared to a year ago. The same applies to the EU25-average.

There are many important national issues that have a *positive* effect thanks to Dutch membership of the European Union, according to the Dutch citizens. But only a *minority* of the Dutch regard the influence of Dutch membership on the country’s agriculture as a positive *effect*.

As far as the *personal* benefits of Dutch membership of the European Union are concerned, almost two-thirds see no *positive* effects whatsoever resulting from the ‘common currency, the euro’. Neither do half of the Dutch citizens perceive *any personal benefits* resulting from ‘the rights of an EU citizen’.

Half of the Dutch population believes that Europe lags *behind* the United States in the area of ‘scientific research’.

Matters that people prefer to see organised at national level rather than at European level include ‘consumer protection’, ‘combating unemployment’, ‘taxes’, ‘educational systems’, ‘health and social security’ and ‘pensions’.

Although support among the Dutch for a common defence and security policy is relatively *large*, it has *dropped slightly* compared with 2005.

In line with previous surveys, the Dutch results on the European Constitution show that although there is a *majority* that supports the European Constitution, a *minority* of the Dutch

are in favour of continuing the ratification process. Dutch citizens believe that the European Constitution should be re-negotiated

There is *no majority* in the Netherlands that believes that a European Constitution is *needed* for the functioning of the European institutions. Among EU citizens in general, however, there is a *majority* in favour of this issue.

Opinions in Europe are sharply divided on the issue of 'European values'. In the Netherlands, opinions also differ on values shared by the European citizens. One half of the population believes that the values of the various member states are *far apart*. The other half, though, believes that these values are *close together*. The values shared most across Europe are, according to Dutch opinion, values in areas such as 'legislation', 'human rights' and 'democracy'.

As stated before, a *minority* of the Dutch and European citizens support the further enlargement of the European Union at the moment (45% NL and 46% EU in favour). Despite the fact that, on second thoughts, a *majority* welcomes Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and (less convincingly) Croatia as new member states, a *minority* feel positive about the accession of Bulgaria, Romania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Turkey and the Ukraine.

Notwithstanding the fact that Turkey seems, for a *majority* of the Dutch and European public, part of Europe logically because of its geographical location, a *majority* of the same public also feels that the cultural differences between Turkey and the current Member States of the European Union are too big to allow the accession of Turkey (55% NL and 61% EU25 agree). The argument stating that Turkey is part of the European Union seen from a historic perspective does *not* seem to find support amongst a *majority* of citizens (35% NL versus 40% EU25 agree).

In order to join the European Union in ten years' time, Turkey will have to systematically respect human rights (96% NL versus 85% EU25 agree) and improve the state of its economy significantly (84% NL versus 77% EU25 agree).

The thought that the accession of Turkey to the European Union will increase the risk of immigrants coming to the more developed European countries is a common thought amongst a *majority* of both Dutch people and the European citizens (59% NL versus 66% EU25 agree).

The assumptions that the accession of Turkey is good for the security in the region and will have a positive effect on an ageing European population, are both *only* supported by a *minority* of the public (respectively 37% NL versus 33% EU25 agree and 28% NL versus 29% EU25 agree).