

EUROBAROMETER 68

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY NETHERLANDS

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Dutch context

Dutch citizens are among the *most satisfied* citizens of the European Union when it comes to their daily life. Where satisfaction with their daily life is concerned they top the list, together with the Scandinavians.

Also where the national economy, the national employment and the national social security system are concerned Dutch citizens are very *positive* compared to the average European. Only Belgian and Luxemburg citizens are *more positive* about their social security system.

According to the Dutch, crime and healthcare are currently the two most important issues in the Netherlands. For the average EU-citizen, these two subjects are considerably less important. Within Europe citizens are primarily concerned about unemployment and price rises.

Compared to the spring, terrorism and the economic situation have become less important for Dutch citizens. However, taxes, price increases and healthcare are subjects that have gained importance.

A majority of the Dutch expect no changes in the next twelve months concerning their life in general, the economic situation, the financial situation in the household, employment and their situation at work.

Compared to the average European the Dutch have a lot of confidence in the national political parties. The same can be said of the trust in the government and parliament.

The European Union: knowledge, attitude and meaning

More than half of the Dutch are of the opinion that they are well-informed about the way in which the European Union works. Where knowledge about the way in which the European Union works is concerned, the Dutch seem to be better informed than the average EU-citizen.

A majority of Dutch residents know that the European Union does not consist of 15 member states and also a majority know that the presidency of the European Union changes every 6 months. Lastly, half of the Dutch are informed of the fact that the eurozone does *not* consist of 12 countries.

The image that the Dutch have of the European Union is slightly less positive than that of the average European. Where the euro is concerned, people in the Netherlands are more positive than the European average. It is striking that the inhabitants of the Benelux as a whole say they are advocates of the euro more often than average.

Where a common foreign policy, a common security and defence policy and a further enlargement of the European Union are concerned, the Dutch are of the same opinion as the average European. A broad majority of Dutch and EU-citizens say they are in favour of a common foreign and defence policy of the member states. In regard to the enlargement of the European Union, slightly less than half of Dutch and EU-citizens are in favour. In the Netherlands, also slightly less than half of the population are against a further enlargement.

Approximately half of the Dutch think that, within the European Union, the interests of the Netherlands are not well represented. This is approximately the same as the European average. Half of the Dutch are of the opinion that the European Union plays a positive role in the economic situation in the country. Within Europe people are less positive about this role of the European Union. According to the Dutch, the European Union is not highly influential in the field of housing and pensions. Approximately two-thirds of the Dutch are of the opinion that the role of the European Union in these fields can be qualified as neutral.

A slight majority of the Dutch are of the opinion that the decisions in the field of economics have to be taken within the European Union. In Europe as well, a very slight majority are of the opinion that the decision-making process should be in the hands of the European Union. According to two-thirds of the Dutch, the decisions concerning the fight against inflation should be taken at European level. The European average is considerably lower in this field. Approximately half of EU-citizens are of the opinion that the decisions in the field of the fight against inflation should be taken within the European Union.

On the subject of environment protection, everyone in Europe seems to agree. A broad majority of both Dutch and EU-citizens say that decision-making in this field should lie with the European Union.

Europe in the news

Two-thirds of the Dutch are of the opinion that Dutch television reports *too little* on the European Union. Also a majority of the Dutch think that there is not enough attention paid to the European Union on the radio. Almost half of the Dutch think that *just enough* attention is paid to the European Union in the written press.

Of all EU-citizens, the Dutch most often say that the news reports on the European Union are *too negative*. Also, where radio and the written press are concerned, the Dutch, compared to the average European, are often of the opinion that news reports on the European Union are *too negative*. Only in the United Kingdom, more inhabitants think that news reports on the European Union are *too negative*.