

EUROBAROMETER 69

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2008

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CYPRUS

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

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

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

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EUROBAROMETER 69.2 – CYPRUS

(Areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Life in Cyprus

Eurobarometer 69.2 is the eighth study of the Eurobarometer series to be conducted in Cyprus since its accession to the European Union. Cyprus entered the European Union with the Cypriot problem unsolved and with the *acquis communautaire* applied only in the areas under the control of the government of the Republic of Cyprus.

The study was conducted between 31 March and 24 April, a period shortly after the 2008 presidential elections (in February) and the accession of Cyprus to the Eurozone (in January).

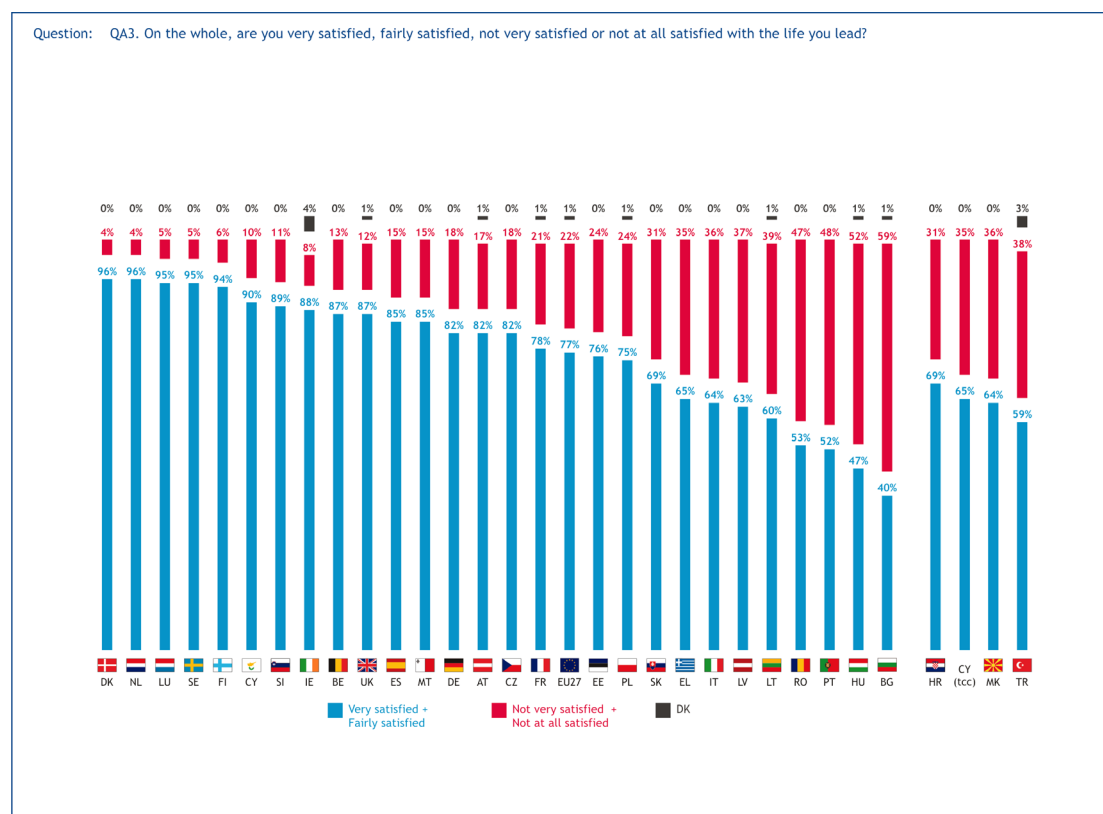
The main political events dominating local media during this period was the 21 March Agreement between the two community leaders and the start of operation of the working groups and technical committees on the Cyprus issue, the opening of the Ledra street crossing in Nicosia, the appointment and contacts of the interim UNSG's Special Representative in Cyprus and the visit by the Turkish Army Chief of Staff and the Head of the Turkish Land Forces to the areas outside the control of the Republic.

Furthermore, the media extensively covered the concern over the prolonged drought and decisions on water conservation measures, the wave of Saharan dust in the atmosphere, as well as the rising price of oil, petroleum products and basic consumer goods coupled with slower growth rates in the Cypriot and European economies.

Also in the news during this period was the debate for alternative energy sources particularly the supply of natural gas to Cyprus, and the frequent arrests of illegal immigrants and immigration issues in general. The media also reflected the political crisis in Turkey with the indictment of the governing party to the Supreme Constitutional Court, the visits of EU Member State officials to the non-government-controlled areas, the debate over reforms to the social security system in many European states, riots in Tibet and the incidents during the Olympic flame relay, as well as the debate for the ratification of the EU Reform Treaty by EU Member States. To a lesser extent, the media were concerned with the elections in Serbia, the decision by the University of Cyprus to admit students on the basis of international examinations, and the union crisis at Cyprus Airways.

Citizens are satisfied with their life:

- The vast majority of citizens (90%) feel satisfied with their lives.
- The level of satisfaction of citizens has increased by 5% from the levels recorded in the last Eurobarometer six months ago, in autumn 2007.
- A marginal increase in the percentage of citizens who say they are very satisfied is recorded (1%).



Questioned with regard to their purchasing power, 67% of Cypriots believe that it has decreased in the past five years. Just 14% believe that their purchasing power has increased and 18% that it has remained the same.

58% of citizens state that they have trouble paying all of their bills at the end of the month. Out of that, 31% tend to agree that they have trouble, and 27% agree absolutely.

- From the last time this question was asked (Eurobarometer 65.1, spring 2006), the percentage of those that do not believe that they have trouble has decreased by 6%, while the percentage of those that believe the contrary has increased by 15%.

A large number of citizens do not expect changes to their personal situation in the next twelve months:

- Regarding life in general, 47% of citizens expect that it will remain the same, 36% that it will improve and 10% that it will get worse. A significant increase is recorded in the percentage of those who expect an improvement of their personal situation compared to the results of autumn 2007 (13%).
- Concerning the economic situation of their household, 52% do not expect any changes, 16% expect that it will improve and 30% that it will get worse.
- In terms of their personal employment situation, six out of ten (61%) expect stability. 15% expect an improvement and 7% that it will get worse.

- Over time, the short-term expectations of citizens regarding their personal issues record minor changes. The increase in the number of those who expect an improvement of life in general could be connected to the expectations formed after the election of a new government.

However, when asked if the lives of young people will become easier, harder or remain the same compared to the lives of people of their generation, 65% of respondents said "harder", an indication of the overall evaluation of the condition of the international economy.

A negative climate prevails with regard to the economic development of the country and the employment situation:

- The majority of citizens expect that the economy of the country (48%) as well as the employment situation (42%, autumn 2007 43%) will worsen in the next twelve months. Only 16% believe that the economy will improve and 30% believe that it will remain the same. (The climate is, nonetheless, slightly more optimistic compared to the autumn 2007 Eurobarometer).

The two main issues which concern Cypriots today remain the rise in prices (28%) and crime (35%). A large percentage (36%) answered that they are concerned about another (not specified) problem.

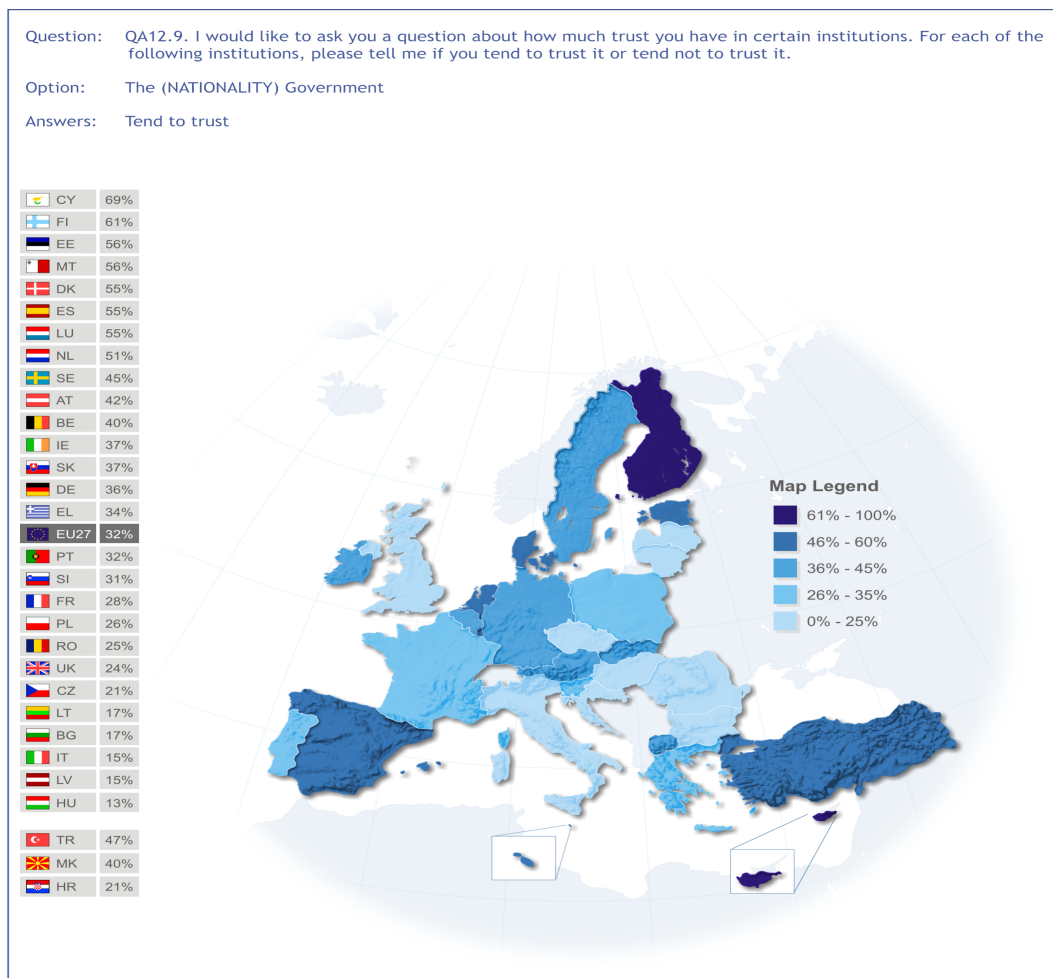
- Public opinion is predictably influenced by issues that dominate current events during the survey. During the collection of data, the media mainly focused on the rise in prices for petroleum products and basic consumer goods as well as news on the influx of a large number of illegal immigrants, which may have affected public opinion. Despite this, the rise in prices, the main problem for Europeans in general, is the second most important problem cited locally.

50% of Cypriots believe that things in general are moving in the right direction in Cyprus.

- Only 22% responded that things are moving in the wrong direction. The percentage of those that answered positively has increased by 28% since autumn 2007 (22%).
- The self-employed (62%) 29-39 year olds (53%) and those aged 55 and over (51%), record the highest level of belief that things are moving in the right direction.

A significant increase in the level of trust by Cypriot citizens in the Cypriot Government and Parliament is recorded:

- The trust of citizens towards the Cypriot Government has increased to 69% when compared to the autumn 2007 (49%) and spring 2007 (64%) Eurobarometers, while trust towards the Cypriot Parliament also increased to 69% (autumn 2007 49%, spring 2007 67%).



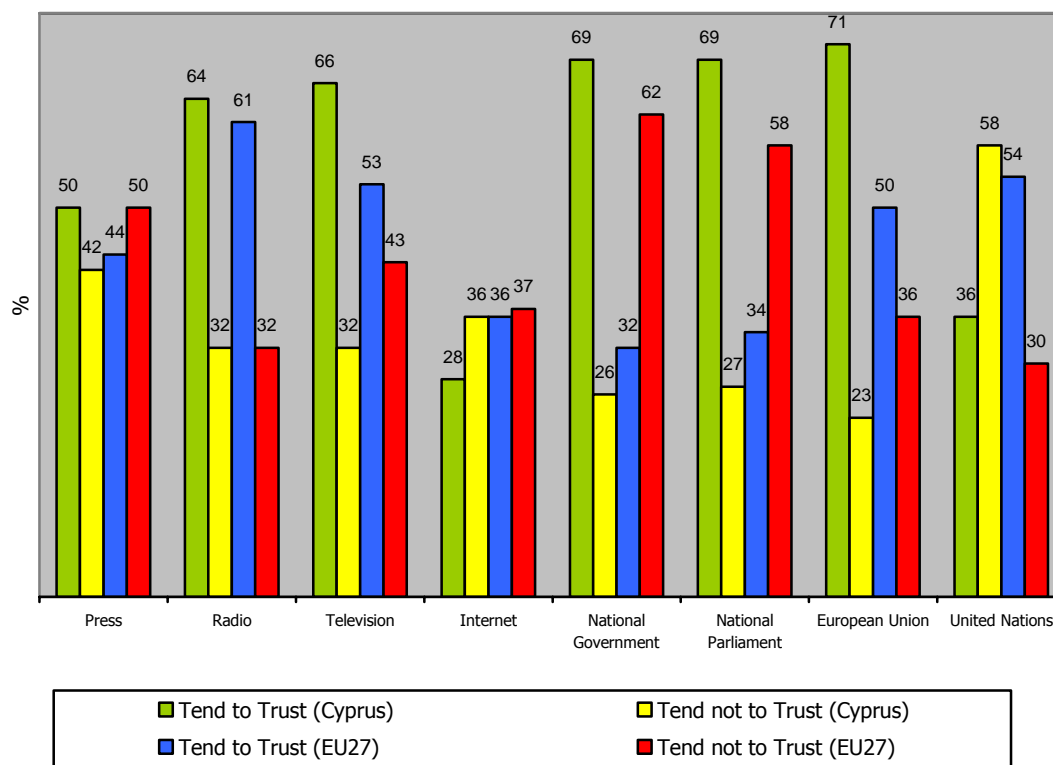
Only 35% of respondents find public administration in Cyprus transparent. Out of that, only 4% find it to be very transparent while 55% do not find it transparent. In the EU27, 68% of citizens do not find public administration in their country to be transparent, while the highest negative percentage is recorded in Latvia with 85% and the highest positive percentage in Sweden with 65%.

Citizens are divided as to their trust towards newspapers. 50% trust them, 42% tend not to trust them (in the EU27 the corresponding percentages are 44% and 50%). 66% of Cypriots trust television, higher than the 53% recorded for the EU27. 28% trust the internet (36% for the EU27), 36% tend not to trust it, while a significant (though lower than the 41% recorded in the autumn) 36% did not answer.

Citizens continue to have a high level of trust towards the European Union:

- The majority of citizens (71%) trust the European Union (a significant increase compared to the 55% recorded in the autumn). The level of trust towards the EU in Cyprus is significantly higher than the average for the European Union as a whole (50%).

Trust in institutions



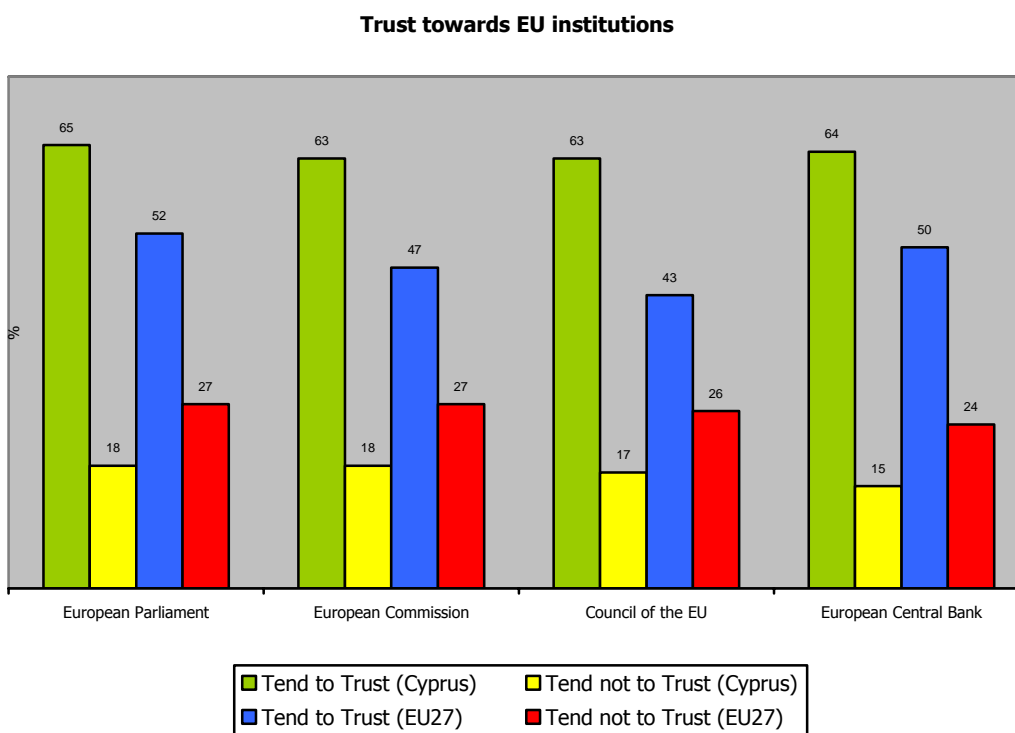
33% (autumn 2007, 17%) of Cypriots trust political parties while 63% do not trust them. The lowest level of trust towards parties is detected in the 15-24 age group, with 73% responding negatively. The highest recorded level of trust towards national political parties for an EU member state is recorded in Denmark with 50%, while the EU27 average is at just 18%.

The majority of citizens residing in areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus trust the Cypriot legal system, the police and the army. 75% trust the National Guard, 62% trust the police and 59% trust the justice and the Cypriot legal system. These percentages show marginal differentiation from the levels recorded in the autumn of 2007.

B. Europeans and European Union

The majority of citizens trust the basic institutions of the European Union:

- Trust towards the European Union is expressed by 65% of citizens, towards the European Commission by 63%, towards the Council of the European Union by 63% and towards the European Central Bank by 64%. All these percentages recorded increases compared to the levels recorded in the autumn of 2007 and remain much higher than the EU27 averages.



Almost half (48%) of the citizens residing in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus state that European Union institutions are transparent.

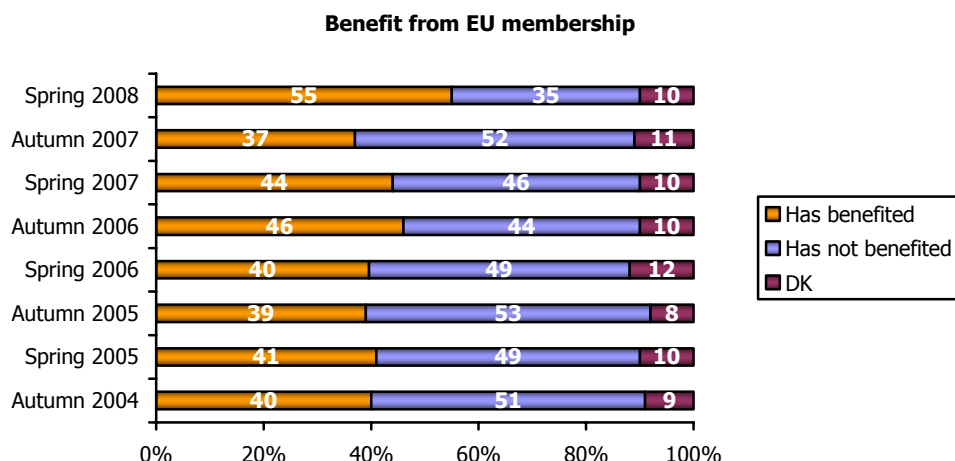
- Cyprus ranks second in the EU27 in the level of perception of transparency, with the EU average at 26% and Slovenia ranking first with 50% of its citizens expressing the belief that EU institutions are transparent.

Almost half the citizens residing in the areas under the control of the Republic consider membership of Cyprus of the European Union to be positive. 52% of the respondents believe that EU membership is a good thing, 32% neither good nor bad, while 15% believe that it is bad.

- The percentage of those with a positive opinion has increased by 12% in comparison to the last Eurobarometer. This may be attributed to the immediate effect of the smooth transition in the adoption of the Euro by Cyprus since the beginning of the current year.
- Cyprus records the thirteenth lowest percentage of a positive outlook on its membership of the European Union, which coincides with the EU average.

A significant increase of 18% is recorded in the percentage of those who believe that, overall, Cyprus has benefited from its membership of the EU:

- 55% of citizens believe that Cyprus has benefited from its membership of the European Union. This percentage is one point higher than the EU27 average (54%), and has increased by 18 points since the autumn of 2007. The percentage of respondents that believe the contrary is at 35%, a decrease of 17% from the 52% recorded in the autumn.



More than half of the citizens (58%) say that they have a positive image of the European Union:

- The percentage of those with a positive image is higher than the percentage of those that believe that Cyprus' membership is 'a good thing' (52%) and that, overall, the country has benefited from its membership (55%). This discrepancy in evaluating the European Union was also recorded in previous Eurobarometer surveys.
- The positive image of the EU is stronger amongst Cypriots compared with the average for the EU27 Member States (48%). It is also noteworthy that Cyprus ranks fifth (14th in the spring and autumn of 2007) in the recorded levels of positive image for the European Union.

For the majority of respondents (75%), the EU means freedom to travel, study and work anywhere within the EU. This is followed by peace (47%) and democracy (46%). For the EU27 as a whole, the EU means freedom to travel, study and work anywhere within the EU (49%), followed by the Euro (35%). It is worth mentioning that the common currency ranks sixth in the answers provided by Cypriots, despite its recent adoption by Cyprus.

48% (+25% since the autumn of 2007) of the sample believe that their voice counts in the EU, 17% higher than the EU27 average.

- It is significant that the highest percentage is recorded in Denmark with 50%, the only percentage higher than that recorded in Cyprus.
- Many more Cypriots (64%) believe that the voice of Cyprus counts in the EU, the 14th highest value recorded, with an EU average of 61% and the highest value recorded in Sweden (86%). 52% believe that the interests of Cyprus are taken into account by the EU (EU27 average 46%).

Almost half of Cypriots (48%) feel that their voice is heard by Members of the European Parliament and 42% that it is heard by the European Commission.

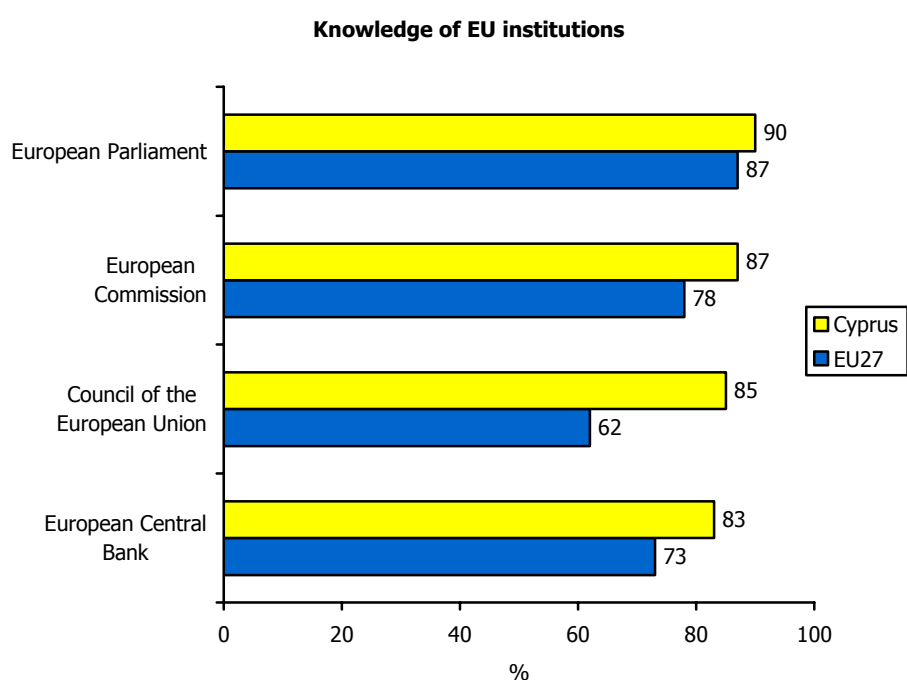
- These are the highest values recorded for the EU27, with the second and third highest values recorded in Malta (42%) and Spain (40%) respectively.
- At the same time, however, 84% of Cypriots believe that the EU imposes its views on Cyprus. This is the highest value recorded in the EU27, with the average at 60%.

More than half the residents in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus state that they understand how the European Union works:

- With 65% of citizens (an increase of 10 points since the autumn of 2007) stating that they understand how the EU works, Cyprus ranks first amongst Member States with the highest recorded levels of perceived understanding of the way the EU works. This 'confidence' can be attributed to the sustained exposure received by EU institutions and decision processes ahead of Cyprus' accession to the Eurozone.

The majority of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus have heard of the institutions of the European Union:

- The absolute majority of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus have heard of the European Parliament (90%), the European Commission (87%), the Council of the European Union (85%) and the European Central Bank (83%).



When asked if they have recently read in the newspapers or heard on the radio or television or seen on the internet anything in relation to the Presidency of the Council of the European Union by Slovenia or France, Cypriots, as well as European citizens in general, report that they are uninformed.

- Only 27% of the sample answered that they know about the Slovenian Presidency and 29% about the forthcoming French Presidency. The corresponding percentages for the EU27 are 20% and 27% respectively.

The majority of citizens (47%) believe that things in the EU are moving in the right direction. This percentage has increased by 12% since the spring of 2007, and is higher than the EU27 average (42%).

- Those aged 55 and above (50%) and people with a higher level of education (53%) are more positive. An important fact is that almost one in four respondents (24%) did not answer.

Cypriot citizens are in favour of a monetary union with a common currency - the Euro. 59% of Cypriots are in favour of a monetary union while 37% are against. The corresponding percentages in the EU27 are 60% in favour and 33% against. The highest percentage is recorded in Slovenia with 90% in favour and the lowest in the United Kingdom with 26% in favour.

94% of citizens are in favour of a common defence and security policy among EU Member States (EU27 76%) and 86% are in favour of a common foreign policy (EU27 68%). These are the highest recorded values in the EU27 and show a small increase compared to the results of the autumn 2007 Eurobarometer of 4% and 5% respectively.

90% of citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus believe that decisions in the fields of scientific and technological research should be made jointly within the EU.

- 85% for the energy sector, 84% for support for regions facing economic difficulties and 80% for fighting terrorism maintain that decisions should be made jointly with the European Union.
- On all the topics on which they were questioned, more Cypriots answered in favour of decisions made jointly within the EU than the EU27 average.

The main priority of the European Union and its institutions in the future, according to the opinion expressed by Cypriots, should be the fight against crime (34%).

- This is followed by environmental issues (33%) and European foreign policy (33%).
- The main priorities set by EU citizens as a whole are the fight against crime and environmental issues (33%) as well as immigration issues (32%), while 30% consider energy issues a priority.

The majority of Cypriots have a positive outlook on the future of the European Union. 71% of the sample answered that they are optimistic with regard to the future of the European Union, compared to 63% for the total of respondents for the EU27. Of them, 17% answered that they are very optimistic and 54% that they are fairly optimistic. 21% of the sample appear pessimistic (EU27 28%) with just 5% stating that they are very pessimistic.

When asked about their level of optimism with regard to the economic situation of the European Union in the coming twelve months, only 20% (increase of 6% since the autumn of 2007) of Cypriots expect that it will improve, while 20% expect that it will be worse and 30% (a decrease of 5% since the autumn of 2007) expect that it will remain the same. A significant 30% did not answer.

64% (an increase of 7%) of Cypriot citizens are in favour of further enlargement of the European Union, with 23% (a decrease of 1%) against.

- In the EU27, the issue of European Union enlargement is received positively by 47% of the respondents (39% against).
- Cypriots generally are in favour of the accession of specific countries to the European Union.
- Despite their general opposition to Turkey's accession to the EU (85% are against it), Cypriots are divided whether it should be admitted once it complies with all the conditions set by the EU (48% are for, 49% are against).

24% of Cypriots believe that globalisation represents a good opportunity for Cypriot companies in relation to the opening-up of markets, while 62% believe that globalisation represents a threat to employment and companies in Cyprus.

- 35% believe that globalisation means increased competition for Cypriot companies, and 27% believe that it means foreign investments in Cyprus.
- 42% agree that the European Union helps to protect us from the negative effects of globalisation while 35% disagree. It is important to note that almost one in four (24%) did not answer.
- However, the majority of Cypriots (52%) agree that the EU enables European citizens to better benefit from the positive effects of globalisation. Cyprus ranks eleventh amongst the 27 Member States in the percentage of citizens who agree.