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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DENMARK

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of the Eurobarometer survey conducted between 2 April and 4 May 2008.

The report illustrates the Danes' attitude towards the current situation in Denmark as well as their attitude in relation to the European Union.

The Danes' Level of Satisfaction and Expectations

- Positive evaluation of the current situation

Unemployment in Denmark is still at a historic low and the economy is strong. This affects the Danes' evaluation of the situation in Denmark and in the EU.

The majority of Danes feel that the employment situation, the economy and the quality of life in Denmark are better than the EU average.

However, the media's focus on increasing prices of consumer goods seems to have rubbed off on the Danes, as a majority of them state that living expenses and energy prices in Denmark are higher than in other EU countries.

- Satisfied Danes

Low unemployment and a strong economy in Denmark coincide with the Danes' satisfaction with life. Denmark is the country in Europe with the highest percentage of the population satisfied with their own life (96 %).

- Expectations for the coming year: optimism as well as pessimism

On a personal level, the Danes expect the coming year to be better than or similar to the current year, rather than worse. Thus, optimism is rather significant.

At national and EU levels, however, the focus on the overheating of the economy seems to have made an impact on the Danes. An increasing number of Danes believe that the economic situation in Denmark and in the EU will deteriorate in the coming 12 months.

- One in two Danes regard the development of Denmark and the EU positively

One in two Danes thinks that things are going in the right direction in Denmark and in the EU. Nevertheless, relatively large parts of the population have a rather pessimistic outlook on the development.

Compared to previous surveys, an increasing share of the population feels that things are going in the wrong direction. This development is not surprising when taking into consideration the fact that the Danes have lower expectations for the economy and the employment situation at national level. In spite of the negative development trend, Denmark is still one of the countries in the EU with the highest number of citizens who feel that things are going in the right direction in Denmark and in the EU.

- **Greater focus on inflation as the number one priority issue**

Inflation is mentioned as the most important issue which Denmark is facing at the moment to a greater extent than in the previous survey (18% compared to 7 % in autumn 2007). The greater focus on inflation is fuelled by the debate on increasing prices of consumer goods.

Nevertheless, most Danes still feel that the health system is the most important issue which Denmark is currently facing. Crime and protection of the environment are similarly high on the Danes' agenda.

On a number of issues, the Danes' priorities differ markedly from the priorities of the average EU27 citizen. Whereas the health system, crime and protection of the environment are given the highest priority in Denmark, inflation, unemployment and the economic situation are highest on the EU27 citizens' list of priorities. These differences in focus coincide with the very strong employment figures and the persistent strong Danish economy.

The Danes' View on the EU

- **Attitude to Denmark's membership of the EU**

A very significant majority – only surpassed by Ireland – of Danes feel that Denmark has benefited from its membership of the EU, and, similarly, a significant majority think that Denmark's membership of the EU is a good thing. This puts Denmark among the countries in the EU27 with the highest share of positive citizens.

The primary reason given by Danes, who feel that Denmark has benefited from its EU membership, is that membership of the EU improves relations between Denmark and other countries. Those Danes that feel that Denmark has not benefited from EU membership state, as the primary reason, that Danes have very little influence on the decisions made at EU-level.

- **EU decision-making competence in collective areas**

In a number of policy areas, the view of the Danes on when the national government should make decisions and when decisions are best made at EU level differs from the view of the average EU27 citizen. Furthermore, there is a correlation between those areas where a marked majority of Danes feel that decisions should be taken by the national government and those areas where Member States currently make the decisions. This applies to, pensions, social care, taxes, education, health care and finance policy, for example. Conversely, several policy areas where Danes feel that it is best for the EU to make decisions (e.g. competition, terrorism, environmental protection) are areas where, indeed, the EU has an important influence.

- **A large majority in favour of joint defence and security policies**

3 in 4 Danes are in favour of joint defence and security policies between the Member States of the EU. Moreover, a majority of Danes are in favour of joint defence and security policies among the Member States of the EU. Similarly, a majority of Danes are in favour of joint foreign policies with the other EU countries.

Overall, there seems to be an increasingly positive attitude towards joint defence and security policies as well as a common foreign policy among the EU Member States.

- **A steady majority in favour of European Monetary Union**

51 percent of Danes are in favour of European Monetary Union with a single currency, whereas 45 percent are against it. The Danes' attitude on this point has not changed markedly compared to previous surveys, even though inflation has become an issue of concern among 2.5 times as many people than previously.

- **A small majority in favour of further enlargement of the EU**

54 percent of Danes are in favour of further enlargement of the EU. This share is higher than the EU27 average. 6 in 10 Danes feel that Turkey may become a member of the EU once they comply with the conditions set by the EU.

As for the Western Balkan countries, between 47 and 61 percent of Danes are in favour of the accession of these countries to the EU. A majority of Danes think it will help stabilise the Eastern part of Europe if the countries of the Western Balkans are admitted into the EU. This is regarded as one of the reasons for the relatively large number of Danes in favour of the accession of these countries to the EU.

- **Danish trust in Danish and European bodies**

The Danes show a lot of trust in a number of Danish and European bodies. The highest degree of trust is in the Danish legal system, the UN and the national parliament ("the Folketinget"). In general, the Danes have more faith in the individual bodies than the average EU27 citizen.

The three primary reasons for the Danes to trust the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union are that they believe that:

- The decisions made by these bodies are made in a democratic manner
- The bodies are best placed to decide on issues concerning the European Union as a whole
- The bodies defend the interests of all European citizens

The primary reasons for the Danes to trust the European Central Bank are that they:

- Feel that the European Central Bank defends a stable currency, the Euro, which has a stabilising effect on the European economy
- Believe that the European Central Bank protects Europe against financial turmoil
- Are in favour of the Euro

A relatively large number of Danes have a lack of or a low level of knowledge of institutions such as the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Central Bank. A similar picture emerges for the other EU27 citizens.