

EUROBAROMETER 69

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2008

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GREECE

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

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

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.

Introduction¹

Between 25 March and 4 May 2008, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and TNS opinion, carried out wave 69.2 of the EUROBAROMETER, at the request of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for Communication, "Research and Political Analysis".

The EUROBAROMETER 69.2 covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union Member States (EU27), residing in each of the Member States and aged 15 years and over. The EUROBAROMETER 69.2 has also been conducted in the three candidate countries (Croatia, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia²) as well as in the Turkish Cypriot Community³. In these countries, the survey covers the national population of citizens and the population of citizens of all the European Union Member States who are resident in these countries and have a sufficient command of the national languages to answer the questionnaire.

The basic sample design applied in all states is a multi-stage, random (probability) one. In each country, a number of sampling points were drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and to population density.

The Greek sample consists of 1000 Greek residents, which provides a safe consideration that the research results and assumptions are representative of the Greek national public opinion to a great degree.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people's homes and in the appropriate national language.

All survey percentages have been rounded; from 0.1 to 0.4 down and from 0.5 to 0.9 up to the nearest unit of the decimal system.

¹ This National Report was prepared by Mrs. Olga Stavropoulou-Salamouri for the EU Commission Representation in Greece.

² MK: Provisional code which does not prejudice in any way the definitive nomenclature for this country which will be agreed following the conclusion of negotiations currently taking place on this subject at the United Nations.

³ Cyprus as a whole is one of the 27 European Union Member States. However, the "acquis communautaire" is suspended in the part of the country that is not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. For practical reasons, only the interviews conducted in the part of the country controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are recorded in the category "CY" and included in the EU27 average. The interviews conducted in the part of the country not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are recorded in the category "CY(tcc)" /tcc: Turkish Cypriot Community/.

Dissatisfaction and deep concern about employment and the state of the Greek economy

- ⓐ **Although Greek citizens appear to be satisfied with the life they lead (EL: 65% - EU27: 77%), they still express concern about their purchasing power**, with regards to the things that their household can afford in everyday life, as they find that their present situation has deteriorated when compared to five years ago (EL: 65% - EU27: 52%).
- ⓐ Another unpleasant finding is that **Greek respondents admit to having difficulties paying all their bills at the end of the month (EL: 65% - EU27: 47%)**. The Greek negative rate is among the highest of the entire survey behind Turkey (84%), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (79%), Bulgaria (76%) and Portugal (71%). However, 35% of Greek and 50% of European citizens seem to not face similar financial difficulties.
- ⓐ **The majority of the Greek sample predicts worse economic developments (EL: 65% - EU27: 46%) as well as a deterioration in the employment situation (EL: 66% - EU27: 39%) in Greece for the forthcoming year**. The Greek negative rates, when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey, show a significant increase (EB68.1 – in Autumn 2008 both rates were limited to 42%).
Nevertheless, a significant proportion of the Greek sample does not foresee any change (either positive or negative) in the upcoming year concerning the financial situation of their household (EL: 45% - EU27: 50%), their personal job situation (EL: 78% - EU27: 61%) and their life in general (EL: 40% - EU27: 49%). It is noted that many respondents predict better days in the near future, with regards to their life in general (EL: 39% - EU27: 32%).
- ⓐ **No concern is expressed about the performance of the EU economy**, as Greek respondents do not predict any change, either positive or negative (EL: 43% - EU27: 38%). However, 36% of the Greeks interviewed seem more pessimistic as they believe the economic situation in the European Union will get worse within the next twelve months (EU27: 26%).
- ⓐ This overall dissatisfaction with the current economic situation further justifies the strong pessimism that has been highlighted, as **eight out of ten Greek citizens believe that the life of children today is more difficult** than the life of those from the respondents' generation (EL: 79% - EU27: 61%).

The situation in Greece is worse than the average of the European Union countries

Greek citizens believe that their country is in the backseat of the European Union, as they find the situation in several areas presented in the current survey to not be as good as that of other European Union Member States.

More specifically, the negative rates (i.e. *worse than the EU27 average*) recorded for each area presented in the current survey are:

- The employment situation in Greece (EL: 92% - EU27: 57%)
- The situation of the Greek economy (EL: 91% - EU27: 56%)
- The cost of living in Greece (EL: 91% - EU27: 72%)
- Energy prices in Greece (EL: 87% - EU27: 73%)
- The quality of life in Greece (EL: 52% - EU27: 48%)

It is noted that in most cases (areas) the Greek negative rate is among the highest recorded in the entire survey, while the EU27 average is significantly lower.

Primarily concerned about unemployment and the economic situation in Greece

As in the previous Eurobarometer surveys, unemployment (EL: 40% - EU27: 24%) as well as the overall economic situation of the country (EL: 40% - EU27: 20%) are the most important issues that Greece faces. It is noted that both Greek *negative* rates are among the highest of the entire survey, especially the rate for the economic situation which is the second highest behind the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (42%).

In addition, a significant proportion of the Greek public opinion expresses concern about rising prices / inflation (EL: 33% - EU27: 37%).

Regarding other issues that Greece is facing at the moment, some concern is expressed by the Greeks interviewed regarding pensions (EL: 21% - EU27: 12%), crime (EL: 14% - EU27: 20%), the health system (EL: 13% - EU27: 19%) and the educational system (EL: 11% - EU27: 8%).

Greek citizens trust the European Union while they express distrust towards their national government, parliament and mass media

- 📍 **Six out of ten Greek citizens tend to trust the European Union (EL: 59% - EU27: 50%).** Trust is further expressed toward the European bodies, although, when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey, a decrease of the trust rates recorded is observed: i.e. European Parliament (EL: 61% - EU27: 52% - EB68.1: 77%), European Commission (EL: 57% - EU27: 47% - EB68.1: 69%), Council of the European Union (EL: 59% - EU27: 43% - EB68.1: 68%) European Central Bank (EL: 51% - EU27: 50% - EB68.1: 53%).
- 📍 However, **Greek and European citizens seem to agree that there is a lack of transparency in the institutions of the European Union** (EL: 60% - total: "not transparent at all 21%" + "not very transparent 39%") - (EU27: 54% total: "not transparent at all 16%" + "not very transparent 38%").
- 📍 Even though **51% of Greek citizens tend to not trust their national Parliament** (EU27: 58%), a significant proportion of the sample, reaching 49%, expresses trust in the Greek Parliament (EU27: 34%).
- 📍 **66% of Greek and 62% of European citizens seem to not trust their national government.** It is noted that the current Greek negative rate (i.e. distrust), compared to the rate of the previous Eurobarometer survey, shows an increase of twelve percentage units (EB68.1: 54%).
- 📍 **Greek citizens, more than any other European citizen, find their national public administration to be seriously lacking transparency.** The Greek negative rate (86% - total: "not at all transparent 55%" + "not very transparent 31%") is the highest recorded in the survey with the EU27 average reaching high negative levels as well (68% total: "not at all transparent 22%" + "not very transparent 46%").
- 📍 **Greek citizens express feelings of distrust toward the Greek mass media (Television, Press, Radio and Internet). This is depicted in the distrust rates recorded by the Greek respondents, which are among the highest recorded in the entire survey.**

 - The highest rate of distrust in the entire survey sample is recorded by the Greek respondents who take a **negative standpoint vis-à-vis television** (EL: 72%), while the EU27 average is limited to lower levels (EU27: 43%).
 - **65% of Greek and 50% of European respondents express distrust toward the press.** The Greek rate of distrust is among the highest of the entire survey, behind the United Kingdom (78%) and Turkey (72%).
 - Likewise, **a high percentage of distrust toward the radio is recorded by Greek respondents (52%),** being the second highest of the entire survey sample, behind Turkey 64%, while the EU27 average is limited to 32%. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of the Greek public opinion expresses trust in the radio as a source of information (EL: 48% - EU27: 61%).
 - As in the previous Eurobarometer surveys, **strong distrust toward the Internet is recorded once again** (EL: 64% - EU27: 37%). It should be highlighted that the rates for Turkish, Bulgarian and Greek citizens who possess a computer (TR: 31% - BG: 35% - EL: 42%) and have an internet connection at home (TR: 22% - EL: 24% - BG: 29%) are the lowest of the entire survey, while both respective European rates are significantly higher (63% and 53%).

Greek citizens seem to prefer independent decision-making by the national government, rather than jointly with the European Union, for issues of concern

The survey makes reference to a number of areas in which Greek respondents are called upon to express their opinion on whether decision-making should be made independently by the national government or jointly with the European Union. Greek citizens express their preference for independent decision-making by the national government in 12 out of 20 areas. It is noted that, in previous Eurobarometer surveys, the Greeks interviewed expressed a preference in joint decision-making for most of the same areas presented in the survey.

According to Greek public opinion, the issues for which decision-making should fall under the competence of the Greek government include the following:

- 🇪🇺 Educational system, 76% (EU27: 66%)
- 🇪🇺 Pensions, 76% (EU27: 73%)
- 🇪🇺 Taxation, 74% (EU27: 68%)
- 🇪🇺 Transport, 72% (EU27: 48%)
- 🇪🇺 Health, 67% (EU27: 64%) *kai* social welfare, 63% (EU27: 67%)
- 🇪🇺 Agriculture and fishery, 63% (EU27: 44%)
- 🇪🇺 Fighting unemployment, 57% (EU27: 57%)
- 🇪🇺 Immigration, 56% (EU27: 38%)
- 🇪🇺 Fighting crime, 54% (EU27: 39%)
- 🇪🇺 Economy, 54% (EU27: 49%)
- 🇪🇺 Consumer protection, 53% (EU27: 46%)

Preference for joint decision-making (i.e. within the European Union) is expressed for the following areas:

- 🇪🇺 Scientific and technological research, 91% (EU27: 70%)
- 🇪🇺 Protection of the environment, 81% (EU27: 71%)
- 🇪🇺 Fight against terrorism, 77% (EU27: 79%)
- 🇪🇺 Energy, 77% (EU27: 61%)
- 🇪🇺 Support for regions facing economic difficulties, 72% (EU27: 62%)
- 🇪🇺 Defence and foreign affairs, 59% (EU27: 64%)
- 🇪🇺 Fighting inflation, 53% (EU27: 51%) & Competition, 53% (EU27: 55%)

Greece has benefited from being a member of the European Union

Although 47% of the Greek public opinion views Greece's membership in the European Union as positive (EU27: 52%), when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey (EB68.1 – Autumn 2008) a reduction of fifteen percentage units is observed (EB68.1: 62%). It should be mentioned that the current rate is the lowest recorded since November 1999 (Highest: 71% during February - March 2004). The opposite view, i.e. that Greece's membership in the European Union is bad, is shared by 11% of Greek citizens (EU27: 14%), whereas 42% of Greek and 29% of European citizens take a neutral position (*"neither positive nor negative"*) - (EB68.1/ EL: 30% - EU27: 25%).

In any case, **seven out of ten Greek citizens believe that Greece has benefited from its participation in the European Union** (EL: 73% - EU27: 54%), as they find that the European Union not only contributes to the maintenance of peace while reinforcing security (EL: 52% - EU27: 32%), but also plays a positive role in Greece's economic growth (EL: 44% - EU27: 30%).

Nevertheless, there are many who express an opposing opinion as they believe that the European Union has a negative effect on Greece's economic growth (EL: 44% - EU27: 26%) and they hold the EU responsible for the decrease of Greeks' standard of living (EL: 44% - EU27: 28%).

Greeks are in favour of EU common policies and are optimistic about the future of the European Union

Although 51% of the Greek public opinion is in favour of European Monetary Union, the use of the Euro has caused disappointment to an almost equal proportion of the Greek sample, as 49% takes a negative standpoint towards European Monetary Union with one single currency, the Euro. It is noted that the percentage of Greek respondents who are against the Euro is the 2nd highest, behind the United Kingdom (66%). The EU27 average percentages are 60% in favour of the Euro and 33% against.

Favouring EU common policies. Greek and European citizens are in favour of a common defense and security policy among European Union Member States (EL: 82% - EU27: 76%) as well as a common foreign policy among the Member States of the European Union, toward other countries (EL: 80% - EU27: 68%).





In general, **Greek respondents appear to be optimistic about the future of the European Union** (EL: 62% - EU27: 63%), while they believe that the European institutions should focus their efforts primarily on tackling environmental issues (EL: 38% - EU27: 33%) and social issues (EL: 30% - EU27: 24%), as well as enhancing solidarity with poorer regions (EL: 35% - EU27: 20%).

Although Greeks remain ardent supporters of future EU enlargement, they do not wish for Turkey, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo to become part of the European Union

In general, Greeks are in favour of a possible EU enlargement, as they explicitly support the prospect of more countries joining the European Union in the forthcoming years (EL: 62% - EU27: 47%).

More specifically, **Greek citizens seem to recognise the readiness of most countries presented in the framework of the survey, except for Turkey** (EL: 78% - EU27: 55%), **the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** (EL: 76%, highest negative rate recorded in the survey - EU27: 43%), **Albania** (EL: 68%, among the highest rates recorded in the survey - EU27: 51%) **and Kosovo** (EL: 58% - EU27: 50%).

The following table presents the rates recorded by the Greek and European citizens who are either in favour of or against the countries presented in the framework of the survey becoming part of the European Union in the future.

				
	IN FAVOUR		AGAINST	
Switzerland	89%	77%	11%	13%
Norway	88%	78%	12%	12%
Iceland	86%	71%	14%	16%
Serbia	67%	38%	33%	47%
Ukraine	64%	43%	36%	42%
Croatia	56%	52%	43%	34%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	56%	40%	44%	44%
Montenegro	54%	41%	46%	41%
Kosovo	42%	34%	58%	50%
Albania	32%	34%	68%	51%
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	24%	40%	76%	43%
Turkey	22%	31%	78%	55%