

# EUROBAROMETER 69

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## SPRING 2008

### NATIONAL REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### MALTA

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

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When asked about the life they lead in general, 85 per cent (+ 2) of Maltese respondents said that they are satisfied. This is 8 points higher than the EU average. 15 per cent of Maltese respondents (-1) said that they are not satisfied with the life they lead.

Rather dramatic downward trends are observed for nearly all aspects particularly regarding expectations for the national economy. Respondents in three Member States, namely Malta, Cyprus and the Czech Republic, have systematically higher expectations than in autumn 2007. These are also the only three countries which register higher expectations for the national economic situation in this present wave.

When asked about their expectations for the next twelve months, 40 per cent (+ 6) of Maltese respondents said that they expect their life in general to get better, while 13 per cent (+ 1) expect it to get worse. 39 per cent of Maltese respondents (+ 1) said that their life in general will remain the same in the next twelve months.

Concerning the state of the Maltese economy, 40 per cent (+ 5) of Maltese respondents said that the economic situation in Malta will get better in the next 12 months while 17 per cent (- 3) said that it will get worse. This compares favourably with EU averages whereby 24 per cent of the population said they expect their economic situation to improve with 26 per cent expecting it to get worse. 24 per cent of Maltese respondents (- 4) said that the economic situation in Malta will remain the same in the next twelve months.

20 per cent (- 3) of Maltese respondents said that their household financial situation will get better over the next 12 months while 14 per cent (- 1) said that they expect it to get worse. 62 per cent of Maltese respondents (+10) expect their household financial situation to remain the same.

When asked about their expectations for the next twelve months regarding the employment situation, 43 per cent (+10) of Maltese respondents said that the situation in Malta will get better while 16 per cent (- 3) said that it will get worse. 27 per cent of Maltese respondents (- 5) said that the employment situation in Malta will remain the same in the next twelve months.

Concerning their personal job situation, only 16 per cent (- 2) of Maltese respondents said that they expect it to get better over the next 12 months while 5 per cent (- 3) expect it to get worse. An absolute

majority (67 per cent) of Maltese respondents said that their personal job will remain the same over the same period. This represents a 26 percentage point increase from autumn 2007.

When asked about the economic situation in the European Union, 33 per cent (+ 3) of Maltese respondents said that they expect it to get better over the next 12 months while 10 per cent (+ 1) said that it will get worse. 19 per cent (-6) of Maltese respondents believe the economic situation in the European Union will remain the same in the next twelve months.

An important aspect behind the negative short-term economic expectations on a European level appears to be concern over rising prices and inflation. For the first time, this is the most frequently mentioned national concern (37 per cent) across the EU. It is also the main concern for Maltese citizens.

When asked about the most important issues facing Malta at the moment, rising prices and inflation came first with immigration in second place. 40 per cent (- 1) of Maltese respondents referred to the issue of rising prices and inflation while 29 per cent (- 11) of them said that immigration was an important issue facing them at the moment. The figure for immigration tends to decrease in spring surveys only to rise again significantly in surveys carried out in autumn.

Other high scores were recorded for environment and energy issues indicating that such awareness is on the rise in Malta. 21 per cent (+10) of Maltese respondents felt that protecting the environment was the most important issue for them while 18 per cent (+ 13) referred to energy related issues as a top concern.

The most well known EU institution among the Maltese is the European Parliament with 94 per cent of respondents saying they have heard of it. This percentage is higher than the EU average of 87 per cent. The European Commission with 86 per cent (-3) and the Council of the European Union with 78 per cent (-3) are next in popularity amongst the Maltese public. 72 per cent (+4) of Maltese respondents say they have heard of the European Central Bank

Respondents were also asked about whether they understand how the European Union works. 47 per cent (+10) of Maltese respondents say they understand how the European Union works, whereas 37 per cent (-3) say they do not understand it.

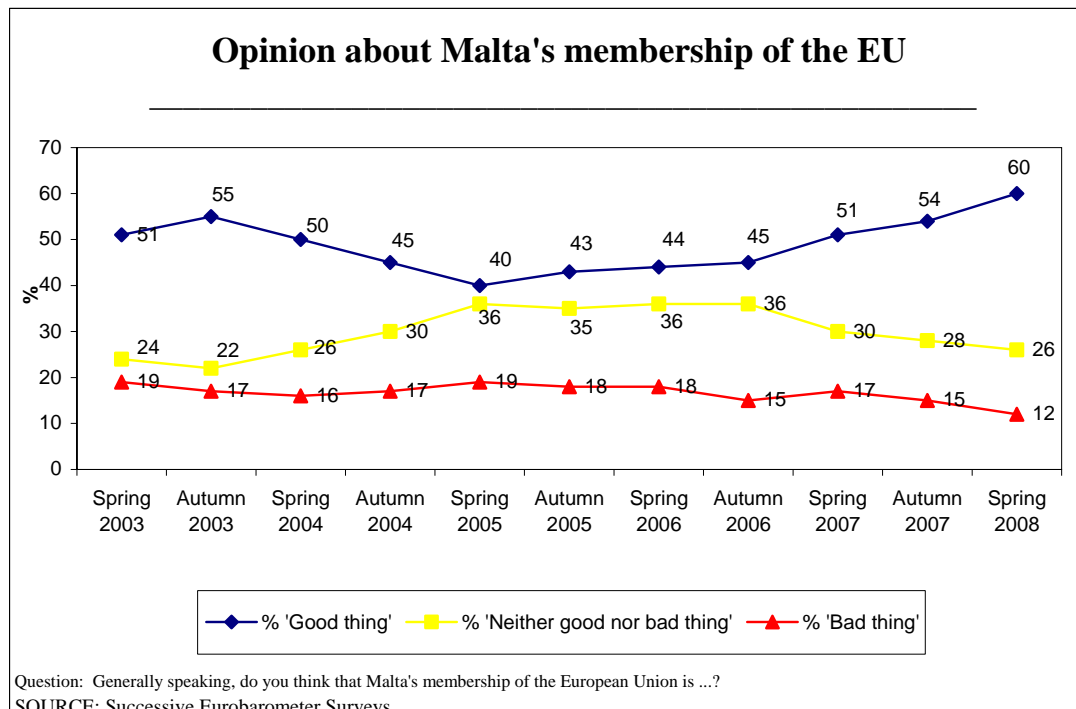
Respondents were also asked about their opinion on the role played by individual institutions in the life of the European Union. When asked about the European Parliament's role in the life of the European Union, 87 per cent (-1) of Maltese respondents said that they believe it plays an important role while 1 per cent (-2) answered to the contrary.

In relation to the European Commission, 81 per cent (-4) of Maltese respondents believe it plays an important role in the life of the EU while 2 per cent (-1) do not think so. 68 per cent of EU respondents believe that the European Commission plays an important role with 10 per cent tending to disagree

Asked whether they think that the European Union currently consists of fifteen Member States, 13 per cent (-9) of Maltese respondents replied that this is true, while 65 per cent (+5) believe that this statement is false. 22 per cent could not give an answer.

Asked if they knew that every six months a different Member State becomes the President of the Council of the European Union, 45 per cent (-2) of Maltese respondents replied that this was true, while 14 per cent (-2) said this was false. 41 per cent did not answer this question.

Maltese respondents together with Polish, Romanian and Estonian respondents, are among the most likely to think that things are going to the right direction both in their country and in the EU. Asked whether things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction in their country, 56 per cent (+8) of the Maltese think that things are going in the right direction. However, 17 per cent (-12) think that things are going in the wrong direction. 23 per cent (+5) of Maltese respondents say that things are going neither in the right nor in the wrong direction.

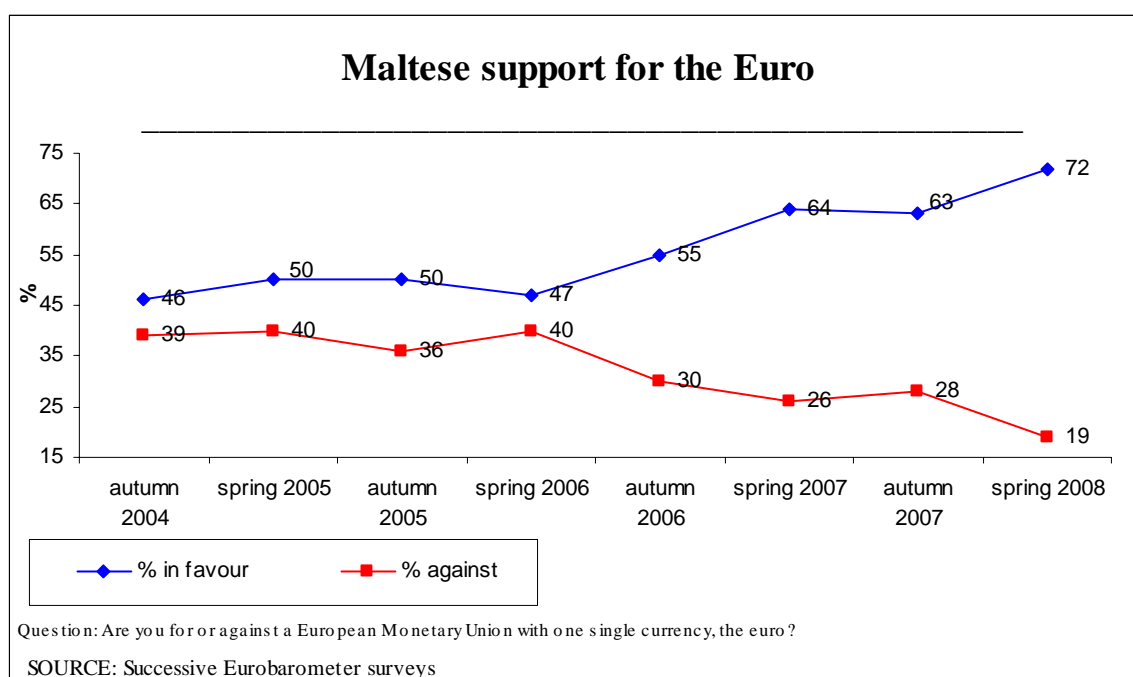


54 per cent (+6) of Maltese respondents also say that, in general, things are going in the right direction in the European Union whereas 10 per cent (-4) of Maltese citizens believe that things are going in the wrong direction. 19 per cent of both Maltese respondents and EU respondents claim that things are

neither going in the right direction nor in the wrong direction in the European Union. 17 per cent of the Maltese could not give an answer.

Unlike for the broader concept of the EU's image, positive views on membership of the EU are on decline at a European level. This, however, does not apply to Maltese respondents. Malta is one of only three countries where positive changes in opinions regarding EU membership are found.

When asked about their country's membership of the European Union, 60 per cent (+6) of Maltese respondents believe that it is a good thing, whereas 12 per cent (-3) say it is a bad thing. Across the EU, 52 per cent think membership of their country in the European Union is a good thing while 14 per cent think it is a bad thing. 26 per cent (-2) of Maltese respondents believe that Malta's membership is neither good nor bad.



Respondents were also asked their opinion about the euro. Asked whether they are for or against a European Monetary Union with one single currency, the euro, 72 per cent (+9) of Maltese respondents answered positively while 19 per cent (-9) said they are against.

69 per cent (+5) of Maltese respondents think that their country has on balance benefited from being a member of the European Union. 16 per cent (-8) think that, overall, Malta has not benefited from this membership.

When asked whether they feel safer with Malta being a member of the EU, 64 per cent (+2) of Maltese respondents say that they tend to agree whereas 29 per cent (-1) say they tend to disagree.

45 per cent (-2) of Maltese respondents say that they think their voice counts in the EU whereas 30 per cent (-9) do not think so. Across the EU, 31 per cent of EU respondents say they feel their voice counts in the EU while 57 per cent tend not to think so.

When asked whether they feel Malta's voice counts in the EU, 66 per cent (-6) of Maltese respondents say they feel their country's voice does count in the EU whereas 20 per cent (-3) claim that they do not think so. 61 per cent of European respondents say they feel their country's voice counts in the EU while 29 per cent tend not to think so.

58 per cent (-8) of Maltese respondents say they believe that their country's interests are well taken into account in the EU while 23 per cent (-6) claim the contrary. 46 per cent of EU respondents say they feel their country's interests are well taken account in the EU while 39 per cent tend to disagree.

Malta is one of the countries in which the national Government enjoys the strongest confidence levels. This also applies to Cyprus, Finland and Estonia. The highest levels of confidence in national Parliaments are observed in the three Nordic countries namely Denmark, Finland and Sweden.

The most positive changes in trust in the EU are recorded in Malta and Cyprus, as well as in Slovakia and Finland. Trust levels decline most of all in Austria, Hungary and Greece.

It appears that increases in trust levels in the EU are to some extent linked to increases in trust levels of national institutions. The highest increases in confidence in all three institutions are registered in Cyprus. Notable positive changes are also seen in Malta, Spain and Ireland.

56 per cent (+11) of Maltese respondents say they tend to trust the Government whereas 34 per cent (-9) say they tend not to trust it. Amongst European respondents, 32 per cent tend to trust their country's government while 62 per cent do not.

In relation to the national Parliament, 54 per cent (+12) of Maltese respondents say they tend to trust it while 30 per cent (-14) say they tend not to. 34 per cent of Europeans tend to trust their country's Parliament while 58 per cent say they do not. 16 per cent of Maltese respondents would not answer this question.

Respondents were also questioned about their trust in political parties. 35 per cent (+6) of Maltese respondents say they tend to trust them whereas 48 per cent (-8) say they tend not to trust them. This

measures well in comparison to the EU average where 18 per cent of respondents say that they tend to trust political parties while 76 per cent do not.

While 52 per cent (+5) of Maltese respondents tend to trust Malta's legal system, 36 per cent (-7) do not. 46 per cent of European citizens tend to trust their country's legal system while 48 per cent do not. On the other hand, 78 per cent (+7) of Maltese respondents tend to trust the police while 17 per cent (-6) tend not to. Across the EU, 63 per cent of Europeans tend to trust the police while 32 per cent do not. The army is trusted by 77 per cent (+3) of Maltese respondents with 11 per cent (-5) saying they do not trust it.

65 per cent (+9) of Maltese respondents say they tend to trust the European Union whereas 21 per cent (-6) do not. 50 per cent of European respondents tend to trust the EU while 36 per cent tend not to trust it. 14 per cent of Maltese respondents would not give an answer. Concerning the United Nations, 65 per cent (+5) of Maltese respondents tend to trust it while 14 per cent (-5) tend not to.

When asked if they trusted the European Commission, 58 per cent (-2) of Maltese respondents answered positively while 12 per cent (-4) said they tend not to trust it.

61 per cent (-2) of Maltese respondents tend to trust the European Parliament whereas 13 per cent (-4) replied negatively. Slightly more than 1 in 4 Maltese respondents did not provide an answer to this question.

Maltese respondents were also asked about their trust levels in relation to other EU institutions. 55 per cent (-2) said they trust the Council of the European Union while 12 per cent (-3) tend not to trust it.

Maltese respondents were also asked about the trust they place in various media. Concerning the press, 42 per cent (+4) of Maltese respondents say they tend to trust it while 41 per cent (-2) do not. 53 per cent (+4) of Maltese respondents tend to trust radio while 32 per cent (-2) do not. Television as a medium is trusted by 55 per cent (+7) of Maltese respondents whereas 33 per cent (-5) do not. In relation to the internet, 44 per cent (+4) of Maltese citizens tend to trust it while 21 per cent (-1) do not.