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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NETHERLANDS

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1 Summary and conclusions

Dutch context

Where their daily lives are concerned, Dutch citizens invariably belong to the most satisfied citizens of the EU. The Netherlands lead this list, together with Denmark, Luxemburg and Sweden with regard to this point. With regard to their quality of life, employment and the economy, the Dutch have the impression that their homeland functions better than the average EU country. Like the average EU citizen, the Dutch have the feeling that energy prices in their country are no better than in the average EU country.

Most Dutch people do not expect that their life in general will change drastically over the next year. Those who expect a change mainly predict an improvement. The percentage of Dutch people who are pessimistic in their expectations regarding the economic situation in the Netherlands has increased substantially. Almost half (44%) of the Dutch population expect a deterioration of the economic situation (compared to 24% six months ago).

After a substantial decrease in the confidence in the national government in the autumn of 2007, this confidence has now stabilised. Dutch people still feel more confident about their national government than the average EU citizen. Trust in the media is also greater in the Netherlands than in Europe in general. However, trust in the internet has fallen in the last six months.

Issues about which Dutch people are concerned most are crime and health care, and, to a slightly lesser degree, education and the economy. However, Europeans as a whole are more concerned about rising prices /inflation and unemployment. The latter issue is one of the least important subjects for Dutch people.

The European Union

The number of Dutch people who think they know how the European Union functions has grown steadily in the past year (from 48% in the spring of 2007 to 61%). The average EU citizen states that he/she knows less about how the European Union functions (44%) than Dutch citizens.

A small majority of inhabitants of the Netherlands know that the European Union does not just consist of fifteen member states and a small majority also know that the presidency of the European Union changes every six months. Only three out of ten Dutch people know that the Euro zone does not consist of twelve countries. The Dutch score slightly better than the average EU-citizen with regard to these three knowledge questions.

Trust in the European Union is above average in the Netherlands compared to the confidence the average European has. Six out of ten Dutch people state that they have confidence in the EU, compared with 50% of Europeans as a whole. The confidence of the Dutch in the European Central Bank, the European Parliament and the European Commission has shown

an upward trend since the autumn of 2005. The European Central Bank enjoys the greatest confidence: 79% of the Dutch trust this European institution.

The greatest support for the membership of the EU can be found in the Netherlands. Seventy-five percent of the Dutch population think that the membership is a good thing. Half of Europeans in general have the same opinion. For the Dutch, the European Union implies a greater influence in the world, the Euro and freedom to travel, work and study everywhere in the EU. The association with bureaucracy has decreased strongly in the Netherlands.

The Dutch are divided about the entry of the three candidate members states Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic Macedonia and Turkey. A small majority (60%) of the Dutch are positive about the entry of the state of Croatia. Four out of ten Dutch people are positive about the entry of Turkey.

Like the average European, Dutch people think that the European Union should give priority to fighting crime and environmental issues. The number of Dutch people who think that the EU should give priority to immigration issues has grown compared to one year ago. Immigration issues have climbed from the sixth to the third position in one year on the list of priorities of the Netherlands.

The level on which the decision-making should take place (European or national level), greatly differs per issue and is fairly constant compared to one year ago. For example, Dutch people think that issues in the field of combating terrorism, supporting economically less privileged areas and environmental protection should preferably be handled jointly at European level. However, the Dutch think that social issues, the educational system and pensions should preferably be handled at national level.