

EUROBAROMETER 70

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUSTRIA

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The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

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THE EUROBAROMETER SURVEY EB 70

For the autumn 2008 Eurobarometer survey (EB 70) 1,003 citizens (age \geq 15 years) living in Austria and having a sufficient command of the German language were polled in October 2008 by the "Austrian Gallup Institute Karmasin Market Research". The random sample of those polled was selected in accordance with Austria's electoral districts. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people's homes.

For the complete Eurobarometer archive see:

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/standard_en.htm

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF EB DATA

In this national report for Austria, the results are statistically estimated means within respective 95%-confidence intervals that determine the accuracy of estimations for the whole country. This needs to be borne in mind in respect to comparisons with previous EB values. A difference of approx. \geq 6 percentage points (pp), i.e. a range of approx. ± 3 pp, determines significant trends (see the detailed confidence intervals for the sample $n=1,000$ respondents, cf. "Technical Specifications EB 70").

GENERAL MOOD AND ATTITUDES IN AUSTRIA

As regards the economic situation and the democratic institutions in the country, the Austrians seem to do very well. Their confidence in national institutions is relatively high, compared to the EU average levels: For example, 76% trust the justice system (EU: 48%).

The Austrians' biggest concern is inflation, i.e. 61% (EU: 37%). However, more than 80% of the population, i.e. 84% in autumn 2008, are still of

the opinion that the quality of life in their country is better than in other Member States (EU: 50%).

Also unchanged is Austrians' positive attitude towards their economic situation, which they judge to be clearly above the EU average. 72% say the economy in their country is better than in other parts of Europe (EU: 36%). 73% are of that opinion as far as their national job market is concerned (EU: 31%).

However, the Austrians apparently do not see any relationship between the fairly positive economic situation in their country and the European Union, the enlargement, and the fall of the Iron Curtain (see below).

AUSTRIA'S MOOD REGARDING EU MEMBERSHIP

It is noteworthy that, in the eyes of 47% (+11 Pp) of Austrians, their country has benefited from EU membership. In comparison to 36% in the spring 2008 survey, this shows a significantly more positive trend over the last year. Even so, the Austrians' positive attitude to the EU still lies below the European average data: In the EU27, 56% think that their country has benefited from EU membership.

Concerning the key question of the biannual Eurobarometer survey, i.e. "Do you think that Austria's membership of the European Union is a good thing or a bad thing", only 39% (+3 Pp) think positively and 21% (-5 Pp) negatively. For 38% (+2 Pp), Austria's EU membership is "neither a good, nor a bad thing". Here, the European average data are much better: 53% "good thing", 15% "bad thing", and 27% "neither a good, nor a bad thing".

Over the longer term, Austrians' EU attitude has constantly exceeded the EU average by a range of 10-15 percentage points, as far as these

questions on EU membership being a good/bad thing and whether their country has benefited from EU membership are concerned.

The most frequently mentioned reasons are the following: 49% say that "the country's voice does not count in the EU" (EU: 31%). Moreover, the Austrians feel that, personally, their voice does not count in the European Union (66%). And, more than 60%, i.e. 61% in autumn 2008, are still not of the opinion that "Austria's interests are well taken into account in the EU" (EU: 43%).

In Austria, a stable majority says that the European Union is mostly associated with the Euro (58%) and the freedom of movement (50%), but also with "being a waste of money", "more crime" (45% each) and "bureaucracy" (36%).

This EU scepticism tallies with the values regarding trust in the EU, which are clearly below the European average: according to the EB70 survey, 42% of Austrians tend to trust the EU and 48% tend not to trust it. The corresponding EU average results show that 47% of citizens tend to trust it while 41% do not.

However, it is noteworthy that trust in the EU institutions slightly improved amongst respondents.

EU ENLARGEMENT

Many Austrian companies have benefited considerably from the fall of the Iron Curtain and EU enlargement towards the East. A fact that remains unchanged, according to the Eurobarometer surveys, is that Austrians are still very strongly opposed to further enlargements. In the autumn 2008 survey, only 25% (-2 Pp) were in favour of new Member States in future years and 63% (+4 Pp) were definitely against it. In the EU27, there is

still a slight majority in favour of further enlargements (44% in favour, 43% against).

COMMON POLICY DESPITE CRITICAL ATTITUDE
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On a positive note from the European point of view, Austrians are definitely in favour of common decisions in certain areas, although the population has been rather critical of the EU over the years. For example, there is an increasing percentage (74%) of Austrians who support the Economic and Monetary Union with the Euro (EU: 61%).

Austrians are clearly on favour of a common foreign policy too. More than 60% support common decisions in matters of security and defence policies.

Furthermore, the majority of Austrians prefer EU measures (as opposed to national decision-making) in fields such as research, environmental protection, fighting terrorism and fighting crime.