

EUROBAROMETER 70

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2008

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DENMARK

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

This report has been prepared for the European Commission's Representation in Denmark.

The interpretations and attitudes expressed in the report represent the author's viewpoints alone.

Executive Summary

This report represents the findings of the Eurobarometer survey conducted in the period from 6 October to 2 November 2008.

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

The Danes' Satisfaction and Expectations

- **Positive evaluation of the proximate situation and a less positive evaluation of the European and international situation**

The international financial crisis has not had any substantial effect on the Danes' evaluation of the present situation in Denmark, which is still quite positive.

A majority of Danes feel that the employment situation, the economic situation, their quality of life and the environmental situation in Denmark is better than the average of the European Union countries. However, the number of Danes who see the economic situation and the employment situation as worse has shown a tendency to increase a bit compared to the EU average, indicating that there is some awareness of the consequences of the financial crisis.

The less positive evaluation of the situation seems to be more dominant the further away from the Danes themselves. Whereas the Danes view their personal economic situation positively, they are to a larger extent sceptical when it comes to the economy on a national, EU and international level.

- **Satisfied Danes, yet even more satisfied Swedes and Dutch**

The Danes are no longer the most satisfied in Europe. This is, however, not due to a decline in the share of satisfied Danes, as this figure has stayed constant at 96% since the spring of 2008. Rather, the peoples of the Netherlands and Sweden have become more satisfied.

- **Expectations for the economy – private optimism, general pessimism**

Whereas the Danes look quite optimistically on next year when it comes to their life in general and their private household, they are less optimistic when it comes to the general employment situation and the economic situation in Denmark and in the world.

However, the Danes tend to be more optimistic than the average European citizen, especially when it comes to their private situation.

- **Every other Dane looks positively on development in Denmark and the EU**

The number of Danes who feel that things are going the right way in Denmark is practically the same as the number of people who feel things are going the wrong way. This applies to the EU in general, as well as Denmark.

Yet, there has been a drop in the share of people who feel that the EU is moving in the right direction. At this point, the number of Danes believing that the EU is moving in the wrong direction is higher than in the EU in general.

- **Increasing focus on the economy**

The economic situation has moved from tenth place to the top of the list of issues that Danes believe are the most important in Denmark right now. The media focus on the international financial crisis, as well as the bank bankruptcies in Denmark, seems to have had a large impact on the Danes' perception of the economy as an urgent problem. However, healthcare is still perceived as an almost equally important issue, and immigration is also found high on the list.

The Danes' priorities stand out from those of other EU citizens in that they focus less on unemployment and inflation. Moreover, European citizens only to a very small degree share the Danes' concerns when it comes to healthcare.

While inflation has moved down the list of problems that Denmark is facing, it is still at the top of the list when it comes to private problems. The same applies to the average responses of the rest of Europe, yet the rest of Europe seems far more worried about inflation than the Danes are.

The Danes' attitude to the EU

- **Positive attitude to EU membership**

Over 60 % of Danes feel that Denmark's membership of the EU is a good thing. Even more feel that their country has benefited from its membership. On both aspects, the Danes are more positive towards their country's EU membership than European citizens as a whole, and are only topped by 6 other countries on the list of most positive countries.

Thus, it is a paradox that less than half of Danes find the image of the EU positive, yet many still associate the EU with positive things like freedom of movement, peace and a stronger say in the world. Nevertheless, many associate the EU with bureaucracy and feel that the EU is imposing its views on Denmark.

- **EU's decision-making authority on collective issues**

The Danes strongly feel that decisions in the traditional welfare functions like pensions, tax and healthcare ought to be kept under national control. Those issues that, by their nature, know no borders like the fight against terrorism, energy and the protection of the environment, ought to be managed by the EU, according to Danes. Their support for European decision-making on defence and foreign affairs issues is substantial, but a bit lower than in the EU in general.

- **Wish for an increased speed in the building of Europe**

The Danes do not perceive the speed of the building of Europe as particularly fast or slow. Nevertheless, they would like to see it speed up compared to its present pace. A large part of the Danes interviewed are in favour of a joint defence and security policy in the EU, although less than half are in favour of further enlargement.

To strengthen the Union, most Danes still feel that the EU should focus on issues like the environment, fighting crime and immigration.

- **Danish trust in Danish and European institutions**

The Danes have great trust in a number of Danish and European institutions. Their trust is most pronounced when it comes to the Danish legal system, the UN and the Danish parliament, the

Folketinget. Only 47 % have trust in the EU. However, the Danes show more trust in the individual EU institutions than the average EU27 citizen.

- **The presidency of the EU**

The Danes' awareness of the present presidency is far higher than of the coming and the former. This is probably due to the fact that France, which had the presidency at the time of the interview, is a larger and better known country in Denmark than both Slovenia, which had the presidency before France and the Czech Republic which has just taken it over.

- **Globalisation and the EU**

Overall, the Danes have a positive opinion of globalisation and the EU's role in it. 73 % state that they feel globalisation equals opportunities and that Denmark is better able to benefit from these opportunities because of its membership of the EU. On this question, the Danes are quite a bit more positive than European citizens in general. Both Danes and other Europeans are, however, divided when it comes to the question of whether the EU is protecting us from the negative effects of globalisation.

- **The EU budget**

The items that the Danes want on top of the EU's budget spending priorities are different from the ones they feel are currently given the highest priority. Many Danes state that the budget is being used on agriculture and administration and would prefer that it be used on climate and environmental issues, as well as economic growth. In giving such high priority to climate issues, the Danes stand out from European public opinion in general.

The Caucasus crisis

A large share of Danes knew of the conflict between Georgia and Russia to some extent. Yet, less than half of them knew exactly what the crisis concerned.

The Danes differ from other European citizens in that a large share of them believe that the USA played an important role in solving the conflict.

60 % of Danes feel that the conflict may influence the energy supply to the EU, which corresponds to the average European view on this issue.

The Iron Curtain

Many Danes feel that both the EU and Denmark have benefited from the fall of the Iron Curtain. The EU has benefited the most and individual Danes the least.

As for the enlargement of the EU from 15 to 27 countries, opinions are divided. Even though just over half of both Danes and Europeans feel that the enlargement has strengthened the EU, a substantial minority of 40% are of the opposite opinion.

Approximately half of the Danes feel that there are too many areas where the EU has the decision-making authority, whereas only one in five feels there are too few of such areas.