

EUROBAROMETER 70

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2008

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GREECE

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

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Introduction

Between the 6th of October and the 6th of November 2008, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe, carried out STANDARD EUROBAROMETER 70, on request of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for Communication, "Research and Political Analysis".

The STANDARD EUROBAROMETER 70 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 STANDARD EUROBAROMETER 70 has also been conducted in the three candidate countries (Croatia, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹) as well as in the Turkish Cypriot Community². In these countries, the survey covers the national population of citizens and the population of citizens of all the European Union Member States that are residents 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 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.

Dissatisfaction and deep concern about the state of Greek, European and world economy, as well as the situation of employment and environment in Greece

9 out of 10 Greek citizens express dissatisfaction about the economic situation in their country (EL: 90% - EU27: 69%). Both Greek and European dissatisfaction rates record an increase when compared to the Eurobarometer survey carried out in autumn 2007 (EB 68.1 - EL: 76%, EU27: 49%).

The same deep concern applies to the employment situation in Greece, as 9 out of 10 Greek respondents find it to be in a bad state (EL: 92% - EU27: 69%). The Greek negative rate is the 3rd highest in the entire survey following the ones of Portugal (95%) and Hungary (93%).

¹ 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.

² 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/.

Portuguese (83%), Italian (82%) and Greek citizens (75%) are the most disappointed by the state of the European economy (EU27: 58%). It is worth noting that during autumn 2007 (EB survey 68.1) both Greek and European respondents expressed feelings of satisfaction concerning the state of the European economy (EB68.1/EL: 64% - EU27: 58%). Still, **6 out of 10 Greek citizens feel that there is greater economic stability because their country is a member of the Eurozone** (EL: 59% - EU27: 48%).

Regarding the **world economy**, Greek citizens reach the highest negative rate in the survey as they find it to be in a bad state (EL: 89% - EU27: 71%).

Lastly, Greek citizens in their majority (76%) judge **the environmental situation in their country** negatively **stating that it is in a bad condition**. The Greek rate of dissatisfaction is the highest (negative) recorded in the entire survey (EU27: 51%). It is noted that a significant proportion of the European sample does not share the same opinion, appearing on the contrary to be satisfied with the situation of environment in their respective countries (45%), while the Greek sample records the lowest satisfaction rate in the survey (24%).

Worrying forecasts for the next twelve months

The majority of the Greek sample predicts worse economic developments (EL: 66% - EU27: 51%) as well as a deterioration in the employment situation (EL: 64% - EU27: 53%) in Greece for the forthcoming year. In both cases, the Greek *negative* rates are among the highest in the entire survey.

The pessimistic forecasts made by Greek citizens are not limited to the situation that prevails in their country as **they predict worse developments within the next twelve months for the economic situation in the European Union** (EL: 55% - EU27: 41%) as well as at world level (EL: 64% - EU27: 49%). Concern about a deterioration of the environmental situation in Greece is also expressed by the Greek respondents (EL: 52% - EU27: 27%).

Nevertheless, Greek respondents do not foresee any change (either positive or negative) in the upcoming year concerning the financial situation of their household (EL: 54% - EU27: 52%), their personal job situation (EL: 71% - EU27: 58%), and their life in general (EL: 50% - EU27: 51%).

Greek and European citizens (64% and 51% respectively) find that their **purchasing power**, with regards to the things that their household can afford in daily life, has deteriorated when compared to the level of five years ago. It is noted that the Greek rate (i.e. deterioration) is among the highest in the entire survey (Cyprus 78%, Belgium 65%, France 65%, Germany 65%, Portugal 64% and Greece 64%).

Additionally, **Greek respondents admit to have difficulties paying all their bills at the end of the month (EL: 63% - EU27: 46%).** Still, 37% of Greek and 51% of European citizens do not seem to face similar financial difficulties.

This overall dissatisfaction with the current economic situation further corroborates the traced strong pessimism as **eight out of ten Greek citizens believe that the life of those who are children today will be more difficult** than the life of those from their own generation (EL: 83% - EU27: 62%). It is noted that the Greek negative rate is the highest in the entire survey.

Malaise for the situation that exists in Greece

The Greek public opinion projects a particularly negative portrait of the general situation that prevails in the country. The Greek interviewees' responses show the deep and widespread dissatisfaction with the living conditions including public services.

More specifically, Greek citizens in their majority express their strong dissatisfaction for the cost of living (EL: 93% - EU27: 78%), the affordability of energy (EL: 93% - EU27: 69%), the pensions (EL: 91% - EU27: 58%), the way inequalities and poverty are addressed in Greece (EL: 89% - EU27: 67%), the unemployment benefits (EL: 89% - EU27: 51%), the way public administration runs in Greece (EL: 89% - EU27: 55%), the affordability of housing (EL: 88% - EU27: 73%), the health care provision in the country (EL: 78% - EU27: 43%) and the relations in the respondents' community between people from different cultural or religious backgrounds or nationalities (EL: 59% - EU27: 45%).

Despite the overall dissatisfaction expressed by the Greek sample for all the critical issues that immediately influence the respondents' everyday life, still 1 out of 2 Greek citizens (53%) appears to be satisfied with the life he/she leads (EU27: 76%). However, it is noted that the Greek rate (i.e. satisfaction) records a decrease of twelve percentage units when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey (Spring 2008) – (EB69.2: 65%).

Greece at the bottom end of the European Union as Greek citizens perceive the situation in their country to be worse than in the average of the European Union countries

Greek citizens believe that their country is the tailight of the European Union, as they rate the situation in a series of domains presented in the current survey to be worse than in other European Union Member States.

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

- The cost of living in Greece (EL: 91% - EU27: 67%)
- Energy prices in Greece (EL: 90% - EU27: 67%)
- The employment situation in Greece (EL: 88% - EU27: 59%)
- The situation of the Greek economy (EL: 88% - EU27: 55%)
- The situation of the environment in Greece (EL: 67% - EU27: 41%)
- The quality of life in Greece (EL: 61% - EU27: 44%)

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

Seven out of ten Greek citizens express their concern that developments in their country are moving toward the wrong direction (EL: 69% - EU27: 49%). It is worth noting that a significant proportion of the Greek public opinion (for the first time in the frames of the Eurobarometer surveys) finds that things, at the time the survey was conducted, **progress wrongly on EU level as well** (EL: 42% - EU27: 34%). Nevertheless, 37% of the Greek sample are satisfied with the way things are developing in the European Union (EU27: 35%).

Economy, inflation and unemployment are the most important issues that Greece faces

	Spring 2008	Autumn 2008
Economy	EL: 40% - EU27: 20%	EL: 51% - EU27: 37%
Inflation	EL: 33% - EU27: 37%	EL: 40% - EU27: 37%
Unemployment	EL: 40% - EU27: 24%	EL: 35% - EU27: 26%

The Greek rates that define the overall economic situation of the country (51%), as well as inflation (40%) as the most important issues that Greece faces, compared to the ones of the previous Eurobarometer survey (spring 2008), record an increase (see table). The same observation applies to the European average rates recorded. Especially for the issue of economy, the Greek current *negative* rate is the 2nd highest following the one of the Netherlands (64%), while the EU27 average is limited to lower levels (37%).

It is noted that the current survey was carried out between October and November 2008, coinciding with the break out of the world financial crisis when fears of a domino effect, meaning Greece entering into a period of economic recession and as a consequence the increase of inflation as well as unemployment, were high in the Greek mass media agenda and a central topic of debate.

Regarding the issues that Greek citizens are facing at a personal level, the primary concerns are the rising of prices / inflation (59%) and the overall economic situation (43%) - (EU27: 50% & 23% respectively).

European Union gets confidence vote

Increasing distrust in the national government, parliament, political parties, regional/local public authorities and legal system

- 🇪🇺 **The European Union wins trust vote by six out of ten Greek citizens** (EL: 58% - EU27: 47%). Trust is further expressed toward the European bodies, i.e. European Parliament (EL: 59% - EU27: 51%), European Commission (EL: 56% - EU27: 47%), Council of the European Union (EL: 56% - EU27: 42%), European Central Bank (EL: 51% - EU27: 48%).
- 🇪🇺 **77% of Greek and 61% of European citizens seem not to trust their national governments.** It is noted that the current Greek negative rate (i.e. distrust) is the 3rd highest of the entire survey sample, following the ones of Latvia (79%) and the Czech Republic (78%). Compared to the one of the previous Eurobarometer survey it records an increase of eleven percentage units (spring 2008 - EB69.2: 66%).
- 🇪🇺 **Seven out of ten Greek citizens state not to trust their national Parliament** (EL: 68% - EU27: 58%). When compared to the previous Eurobarometer surveys a continuous increase of the Greek negative rate (i.e. distrust) is observed.
- 🇪🇺 High rate of distrust is recorded by the Greek respondents who take a **negative standpoint vis-à-vis political parties** (EL: 86% - EU27: 75%). The Greek negative rate is the 4th highest of the entire survey following the ones of Latvia (91%), Portugal (89%), Croatia (86%) and Bulgaria (86%).
- 🇪🇺 A majority of Greek citizens expresses feelings of **distrust toward the regional or local public authorities** (EL: 66% - EU27: 44%) **as well as the legal system of the country** (EL: 56% - EU27: 47%).
- 🇪🇺 **Distrust in NATO and the United Nations** is depicted in the rates recorded by Greek respondents, which are the highest (negative) in the entire survey - NATO (CY: 77% - EL: 74% - EU27: 38%) - UN (EL: 63% - EU27: 35%).

Preference for equal division of decision-making powers between the Greek government and the European Union

The survey makes reference to a number of areas in which Greek respondents are asked to express their opinion on whether decisions 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 10 out of 20 areas.

According to the Greek public opinion, the **issues for which decision-making powers should be the exclusive competence of the Greek government include the following:**

- 🇪🇺 Transport, 69% (EU27: 48%)
- 🇪🇺 Taxation, 66% (EU27: 66%)
- 🇪🇺 Health, 64% (EU27: 64%) and social welfare, 54% (EU27: 65%)
- 🇪🇺 Educational system, 63% (EU27: 64%)
- 🇪🇺 Pensions, 62% (EU27: 70%)
- 🇪🇺 Agriculture and fishery, 54% (EU27: 45%)
- 🇪🇺 Economy, 52% (EU27: 45%)
- 🇪🇺 Fighting unemployment, 51% (EU27: 57%)
- 🇪🇺 Immigration, 51% (EU27: 36%)

It is noted however, that in many of the abovementioned areas a significant proportion of the Greek sample prefers joint decision-making (i.e. national government jointly with the European Union (i.e. social welfare, economy, educational system, pensions, agriculture and fishery, economy, unemployment, immigration)).

Preference for joint decision-making between the Greek government and the European Union is expressed for the following areas:

- 🇪🇺 Scientific and technological research, 86% (EU27: 72%)
- 🇪🇺 Fight against terrorism, 77% (EU27: 79%)
- 🇪🇺 Support for regions facing economic difficulties, 77% (EU27: 62%)
- 🇪🇺 Protection of the environment, 75% (EU27: 67%)
- 🇪🇺 Energy, 75% (EU27: 63%)
- 🇪🇺 Defence and foreign affairs, 59% (EU27: 64%)
- 🇪🇺 Fighting inflation, 55% (EU27: 54%) and Competition, 57% (EU27: 57%)
- 🇪🇺 Consumer protection, 51% (EU27: 48%)

It is noted that in some of the abovementioned areas a significant proportion of the Greek sample prefers independent decision-making by the national government rather than jointly with the European Union (i.e. defence and foreign affairs, inflation, competition, consumer protection).

Regarding the fight against crime, 50% of the Greek public opinion prefers decisions to be taken by the national government and 50% jointly with the European Union, being in agreement with the EU27 public opinion (jointly / EU27: 59%).

Positive assessment of Greece's participation in the European Union

A significant proportion of the Greek public opinion approves Greece's membership in the European Union (EL: 45% - EU27: 53%), although the current rate (i.e. approval) 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 something bad, is shared by 12% of Greek citizens (EU27: 15%), whereas 43% of Greek and 27% of European citizens take a neutral position (*"neither positive nor negative"*).

In any case, **seven out of ten Greek citizens believe that Greece has benefited from its participation in the European Union** (EL: 70% - EU27: 56%).

Pro-European attitude although not as enthusiastic as in the past

The European Union continues to evoke a positive image for many Greek respondents (EL: 41% - EU27: 45%), although the Greek rate (i.e. positive) records a significant decrease when compared to previous Eurobarometer surveys. It is noted that 45% of Greek and 36% of European citizens take a neutral position (*"neither positive nor negative"*). Nevertheless, Greek respondents point to the positive aspects of the European Union when asked what it means to them personally. More specifically, Greek citizens mainly identify the European Union with the *freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union* (EL: 57% - EU27: 44%), with the *maintenance of peace* (EL: 44% - EU27: 27%) and with the *single currency, the euro* (EL: 44% - EU27: 34%). However, 31% (EU27: 11%) of the Greek sample relates the European Union to the problem of *unemployment*.

The Greek public opinion is in favour of a European Monetary Union with one single currency, the Euro (58%). The Greek rate (i.e. in favour) records an increase of seven percentage units when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey (spring 2008). However, the use of the Euro has caused disappointment among a significant proportion of the Greek sample, as 42% takes a negative standpoint towards the European Monetary Union. The EU27 average percentages are 61% in favour of the Euro and 32% 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: 81% - EU27: 75%) as well as a common foreign policy among the Member States of the European Union, toward other countries (EL: 79% - EU27: 68%).

Although one out of two Greek citizens remains supportive of a future EU enlargement, at the same time one of two respondents takes a negative standpoint on this prospect, i.e. more countries joining the European Union in the forthcoming years (For / EL: 49% - EU27: 44%) – (Against / EL: 50% - EU27: 43%). It is noted that the current pro-enlargement rate is the lowest recorded in the frames of the Eurobarometer surveys. Nevertheless, **Greek citizens positively judge the fact that the EU enlarged in 2004, from fifteen to twenty-five countries as they find that it has strengthened the European Union** (EL: 53% - EU27: 48%). Still, 44% of the Greek respondents do not share the same opinion as they believe that the last enlargement has weakened the European Union (EU27: 36%).

Ignorance concerning the EU budget

Ignorance concerning the budget of the European Union is displayed as 43% of the Greek public opinion declares to have never heard of it, whereas 39% of the Greek sample seems to have heard of it but is not very familiar with it (EU27: 33% & 51% respectively). Few Greek citizens and even fewer European citizens are aware of the EU budget and in general have a knowledge on what is spent (e.g. on a wide range of different activities and investments, across all Member States and outside the European Union) - (EL: 17% - EU27: 10%). Nevertheless, Greek respondents attempt to give an answer regarding the areas on which they think most of the European Union budget is spent; that is *scientific research* (EL: 26% - EU27: 13%), *administrative and personnel costs* (EL: 24% - EU27: 18%), *economic growth* (EL: 23% - EU27: 17%), *energy issues* (EL: 23% - EU27: 13%) and *defence and security of the European Union* (EL: 22% - EU27: 18%).

Support for speeding up the construction of Europe

Greek citizens find that Europe is being built at a medium speed (Average / EL: 3,5 – EU27: 3,9) and would **prefer that the speed of building Europe was accelerated** (Average / EL: 5,7 – EU27: 4,8). It is noted that the Greek rate (33%) wishing the European integration process to reach the maximum possible speed is among the highest in the entire survey while the EU27 average is limited to 15%. Moreover, the majority of Greek respondents, reaching the 2nd highest rate of the survey (55%) after Finland (61%), believe that **the speed of building Europe should not be faster in one group of countries than in the others** (EU27: 42%).

Somewhat informed on the armed conflict between Russia and Georgia

Regarding the armed conflict that broke out in August 2008, between Russia and Georgia, nine out of ten Greek citizens declare to have heard about it by the Greek mass media, although only 45% of those who have heard of the conflict seem to be aware of the reasons that caused the tension in the region of South Ossetia (EU27: 36%), whereas 44% of the Greek respondents admit ignorance on what it was really about (EU27: 46%).

Greek citizens, more than any other European citizens, believe that the open conflict between the armed forces of Russia and Georgia in South Ossetia could have had an impact on the security of energy supply in the European Union (EL: 81% - EU27: 60%) and that the European Union played an important role in bringing the conflict to an end, at least in comparison to the USA, NATO, the United Nations and the OSCE (EL: 32% - EU27: 26%).