

# EUROBAROMETER 71

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## SPRING 2009

### NATIONAL RAPPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY DENMARK

The survey was requested and coordinated by Directorate-General Communication

The report was produced by the European Commission Representation in Denmark.

The document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission.  
The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the author.

## Executive Summary

This report represents the findings of the Eurobarometer survey conducted in the period from 12 June to 2 July 2009.

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

### **Danes' satisfaction with life and expectations for the future**

#### **- Continuing high level of satisfaction with life in general**

Overall, it is evident that the Danes are still very content with their lives. The share of well contented Danes has actually gone up several percentage points since the last survey in December 2008. Thus, Denmark has reclaimed its top position and is, once again, the country in Europe whose inhabitants are the most content with their lives in general.

The level of satisfaction registers equally in terms of age groups and gender, even though house persons and the unemployed tend to be less satisfied than the other groups. Yet, even in these groups, only a small number are dissatisfied with their lives.

#### **- Nevertheless, the financial crisis plays a part**

Views on the economic situation are still positive, although the current situation is perceived as somewhat influenced by the crisis. For example, Danes are rather worried about the world economic situation.

At the same time, Danes show some optimism with regard to their national economy and even more optimism when it comes to their own household's economic situation. All in all, the tendency displayed in previous reports is again confirmed: the Danes are pessimistic when it comes to matters that are more remote, yet optimistic when it comes to matters close to home.

#### **- Employment is the focus**

The most evident effect of the financial crisis in Danes' minds is their focus on employment. 48% feel that the employment situation in Denmark is bad, and 40% feel it is likely to deteriorate within the next 12 months.

Thus, it is a paradox that a substantially smaller number of people feel that their own personal job situation is or will be a problem within the next 12 months. As seen in previous reports, a trend of worrying more about other people than one's self can be observed amongst Danish respondents.

#### **- The most important concerns right now**

Both with regard to Denmark's collective problems and citizens' individual concerns, economy is ranked high on the list. The economic situation and unemployment is regarded as major collective problems as well as major individual problems. However, the share regarding these issues mainly as collective problems rather than individual problems is larger.

The most significant difference between Danes and EU citizens in general is that the environment is their main focus of attention whereas inflation is the main focus of EU citizens in general.

## The Danes' attitude to the EU

### - **More than average enthusiasm for the EU**

The data describe an overall positive attitude to the EU among the Danish poll compared to the EU average. The majority of Danes appreciate their country's EU membership, and, furthermore, this majority is greater than the EU average. Thus, Danish respondents are generally more content with their country's EU membership than respondents in the EU as a whole. Nevertheless, the Danes are in a seventh place and thus not among the most contented respondents in the EU. However, Danes have a more positive view of their country's membership than Swedes and Finns.

Danes have more trust in the European institutions than EU citizens on average. More than one in two Danes trusts each of the bodies cited, whereas less than 50% of the overall EU poll trusts them.

Danes' confidence in the EU goes so far that a majority even believes that decisions within a number of areas ought to be made at EU level rather than at national level.

### - **Confidence in the EU with regard to globalisation**

When it comes to the economy, Danes' confidence in the EU is quite substantial compared to the EU average. They tend to have more faith in the EU as an agent in providing opportunities for using the positive potential of globalisation and safeguarding them from the negative ones. In this respect, most Danes see globalisation not as a threat but as an opportunity.

In spite of their confidence in the economic potential of the EU, most Danes do not consider the EU to be the most appropriate forum for handling the consequences of the financial and economic crises, and, instead, point to the global G20 cooperation.

### - **Financial crisis – and confidence in own national economy**

To a large extent, Danes are conscious of the fact that their national economy has not been unscathed during this crisis. In fact, more so than average EU respondents, they feel that the crisis is affecting their economy to a larger extent.

Nevertheless, a trace of confidence in the Danes' national economy can be detected because more than 50% of them feel that it is doing better than the American, the Indian, the Russian and the Brazilian economies. The degree of confidence in the Danish economy is also reflected in the fact that almost 70% perceive the Danish financial situation as good.

### - **Areas of focus differ from the rest of the EU**

It is evident that the Danes stand out from other Europeans by having other issues in focus. While Europeans in general tend to point to traditional financial issues like solving the problems caused by the financial crisis, the Danes tend to focus on education, energy and the environment.

Also, when it comes to deciding what should be the main priorities of the European integration process to further strengthen the future EU, the Danes are singled out by focusing less on the economic issues and more on the environment and the fight against changes to our climate.

## Predictions for 2030

- **General optimism**

On more general questions, the Danes are optimistic with regard to the development of the EU. 77% of the Danes are very or rather optimistic when it comes to the future of the EU. Only 20% think that life in 20 years' time will be harder for EU citizens.

- **Specific pessimism**

When specifically looking at the correlation between the ways that Danes think the world will look in 20 years' time and how they would like it to look, there are, however, substantial differences. Even though the Danes' focus on the environment is again manifested in that 69% want a future society where the environment is given greater weight than the economy, only 42% believe this will actually be the case in 2030. 83% want the equal representation of men and women in politics, although only 41% believe this will be achieved by 2030. While the majority of respondents want more leisure time than work in the future, fewer think that this will actually be the case.

- **Tendency towards optimism despite everything**

Expectations and wishes clearly stand apart when it comes to solidarity and tolerance in the society of the future, as well as the possibility of spending more time with the family and equal opportunities on the job market and in politics. However, with regard to these specific issues, more than every second Dane believes that the future will be as they wish for. This is yet another sign of optimism.

## Evaluation of the social system today and tomorrow

- **The majority: faith in the social welfare system**

Overall, Danes seem to have more confidence in the public social welfare system than EU citizens as a whole. Most people do not fear having to pay for the care of their parents and most regard it as likely that they will be receiving the care they need themselves.

Even though the majority of European citizens share these beliefs, the majority is somewhat larger in Denmark. When it comes to pensions, a similar situation is observed as a somewhat larger percentage of Danes feel secure in this aspect compared to respondents in the EU as a whole.

- **Minority: scepticism towards public services**

Nevertheless, some scepticism is to be seen among the Danes. Even though the majority of respondents are confident when it comes to public services, there is a relatively large minority who do not share this sentiment.

One in every five Danes expects to have to pay for the care of their parents themselves and 29% do not feel confident that they will receive the help they need themselves. Furthermore, 47% believe that, in 2030, the social welfare system will be too expensive for Danish society. These

minorities are quite significant when it is borne in mind that trust and support are imperative for a social welfare system like the Danish one to function.

- **Employment**

Similarly, insecurity can be observed among respondents when they are asked directly about employment which is the area upon which the financial and economic crises have made the strongest impact in Danes' minds. 65% believe that finding a job in Denmark today is difficult. Nevertheless, this insecurity does not appear to be sustained because only a few believe it will continue to be a problem in 2030.