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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DENMARK

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Executive Summary

This report represents the findings of the Eurobarometer survey conducted in the period from 24 October to 17 November 2009.

The report sheds light on the Danes' attitudes to the situation in Denmark as well as their attitudes to and relation with the EU.

Despite the fact that the situation in Denmark is generally stable, the international financial crisis has had an impact on the Danish economy. In general, Denmark is perceived to be experiencing a recession of an as of yet unknown size and duration. So far, a consequence of this recession has been an increase in the number of layoffs. Thus, unemployment in Denmark is on the rise, yet it is still at a fairly low level. Also, the housing market has been affected by financial developments and an increasing number of people are finding it hard selling their real estate.

The Danes' Satisfaction and Expectations

The Danes are the most content with their lives

The Danes continue to be well content with their lives, as 98 % say they are very content or rather content and practically no one says they are discontented. This picture confirms the findings from previous studies and thus, satisfaction has not dropped despite the financial crisis.

Global pessimism, personal optimism

Despite the fact that the financial crisis has not had that much influence on the individual Dane's overall satisfaction, the Danes' evaluation of the present and future situation in Denmark is, however, somewhat tainted by the crisis. The Danes are rather worried about the global economy, even though they are fairly optimistic with regard to the Danish economy, and even more so with regard to their household economy. Like in previous studies, there is a tendency to be pessimistic when it comes to matters remote, yet optimistic when it comes to matters close to home.

Increased focus on crime

Crime has taken first priority as the one major problem which Danish society is facing, whereas the financial situation is regarded as the biggest issue on the personal level. In the EU as a whole, unemployment is the greatest worry on a society level, whereas increasing prices/inflation takes top priority on the personal agenda.

The Danes' attitude to the EU

More than average enthusiasm for the EU

Compared to the EU average, the Danish population show an overall positive attitude to the EU. The Danes tend to appreciate their country's membership of the European Union and show more trust in the European institutions than EU citizens on average. The Danes are satisfied in the way democracy works in Denmark and fairly satisfied with the workings of democracy in the EU. Paradoxically, more than one in two Danes at the same time states they have no understanding of how the EU works.

The EU is characterised by financial strength and political influence. The Danes' ideas for areas which may help strengthen the EU in future are the fight against crime, environmental issues, as well as the fight against climate change.

Confidence in bodies and authorities

In general, the majority of Danes have confidence in the various bodies and authorities in society from the media to elected politicians and international players.

The Danes' confidence is stable compared to one year ago, with the exception of the military which has suffered a drop of 20 percentage points and the political parties which are down by 8 percentage points.

The most significant difference between the Danes and the collective EU is related to the national parliament, as the Danes have a higher level of confidence in the Folketinget than the average European has in his or her national parliament.

European integration and democracy

There are pronounced differences when comparing what Danes and Europeans in general feel ought to be given priority in the European bodies as a substantially larger proportion of the Danish population feel that the fight against crime, as well as the fight for the environment and against climate change, are important in order to strengthen the EU in the future.

The Europeans' satisfaction with the democracy in their own country is quite close to their satisfaction of how democracy is working in the EU, yet the number of Europeans who are downright dissatisfied with the way democracy works in the EU is smaller than the share who have a similar view on democracy in the own country. Among Danes, the degree of satisfaction with Danish democracy is very high, and at a higher level than the Danes' satisfaction with democracy in the EU. However, the latter figure is still above the EU27 average.

Globalisation is an opportunity for Danish businesses

To a large extent, the Danes do not see globalisation as threatening, but more as an opportunity for Danish companies and the Danish economy, and the Danes, in general, enjoy a high degree of self-confidence when it comes to their national economy.

Compared to the total European population, the Danes stand out as they focus on other issues, both when it comes to economy and integration. The Danes have a relatively stronger focus on the environment and protection of the climate compared to the average EU citizen.

The financial and economic crises

The crisis has peaked

Most Danes feel that the financial crisis has peaked, yet a significant share feel that the worst is yet to come. Opinions are more divided as to who will best succeed in overcoming the consequences of the crisis putting the USA in the lead followed by the G20 and the EU.

Disagreement as to the influence of the Euro on the crisis

The Danes do not feel that membership of the Euro-zone would necessarily have helped Denmark better through the crisis. Yet at the same time, the Danes have a positive attitude towards a strengthening of economic and financial cooperation in the EU.

Furthermore, the Danes feel that investments should be made in education, support for small- and medium-sized businesses, as well as energy and the environment, to overcome the consequences of the crisis.

Values

Safety, solidarity and flexibility

Overall, these findings demonstrate which values are important to the Danes and how they would like parts of society changed or not. Safety, solidarity and flexibility are 'pro words' in Danish society. Peace, human rights and democracy are the most important values for Danes, and these values are incidentally the same values which they feel are represented by the EU.

The Danes and the EU agree that free competition is the best guarantee for economic prosperity. The largest difference between the Danes and the EU as a whole is the priority given to the protection of the environment despite the potential negative influence on the economic growth, where the Danes' environmental profile in a European context is again accentuated.

The Danes, like EU respondents in general, want a society with less focus on money and material goods and, at the same time, more focus on the development of new technology.

Innovation

Innovation crucial for a positive development

Overall, the Danes see innovation as a necessity in order to see a positive development of their society. Moreover, the EU is regarded as being ahead of the USA when it comes to the protection of the environment, the health care system as well as the fight against social inequality. The Danes perceive the USA as being in the forefront or on the same level as the EU with regard to entrepreneurship, innovation technology and scientific research.

When the Danes are asked to state where decisions ought to be made, the Danish opinion in 12 of 20 cases is that decisions ought to be made together within the EU. The Danes feel that matters which are tangible and close to citizens' lives should be handled by the national government. This includes pensions, tax issues, the education system, the fight against unemployment and immigration. When it comes to defence and foreign affairs, the fight against crime, the protection of the environment and the fight against terrorism, the Danes seem to agree that these efforts should be made in joint cooperation within the EU.

The priorities of the European Union

The majority: Give priority to restoration of the economy

Overall, there is agreement between the Danes' and the collective EU's priorities. The findings show that the Danes, like EU27 respondents as a whole, want the EU to focus on the restoration of the economy. Secondly, the Danes want the EU to combat climate change.

Education of improved quality and a stronger system for supervising the financial markets and the financial institutions need to be given priority in the restoration process of the economy.

The combat against climate change should be handled by reducing CO₂ emissions from transport and electricity, as well as by developing environmentally friendly industries, services and technologies.

The Danes' suggestion for creating progress on the civil rights area is making it easier for young people to live and work in other EU countries.

As for solutions for how the EU may contribute to stability in the world, the Danes primarily focus on furthering the development of the world's poor countries.

Attitudes to the EU's cooperation with the rest of the world

The EU and the UN working together for human rights and democracy

The Danes have been asked about their attitudes to the EU and other actors in the global arena. Whereas they think that the EU ought to limit climate changes and poverty, they see peacekeeping and the fight against terrorism as the most important roles of the UN. From a Danish standpoint, climate change is listed as number nine on the list of important tasks for the UN, which is interesting considering the very recent COP 15 in Denmark.

The UN is regarded as the organisation which best contributes to finding solutions in relation to global treats and challenges. Increased cooperation between the EU and the UN would benefit the peace keeping process, as well as democracy, with climate change in fifth place.