



## **Standard Eurobarometer 82**

### **PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION Autumn 2014**

# **NATIONAL REPORT**

## **MALTA**

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Directorate-General for Communication.

This report was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Malta.

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**Standard Eurobarometer 82 / Autumn 2014 – TNS Opinion & Social**

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## I. Introduction

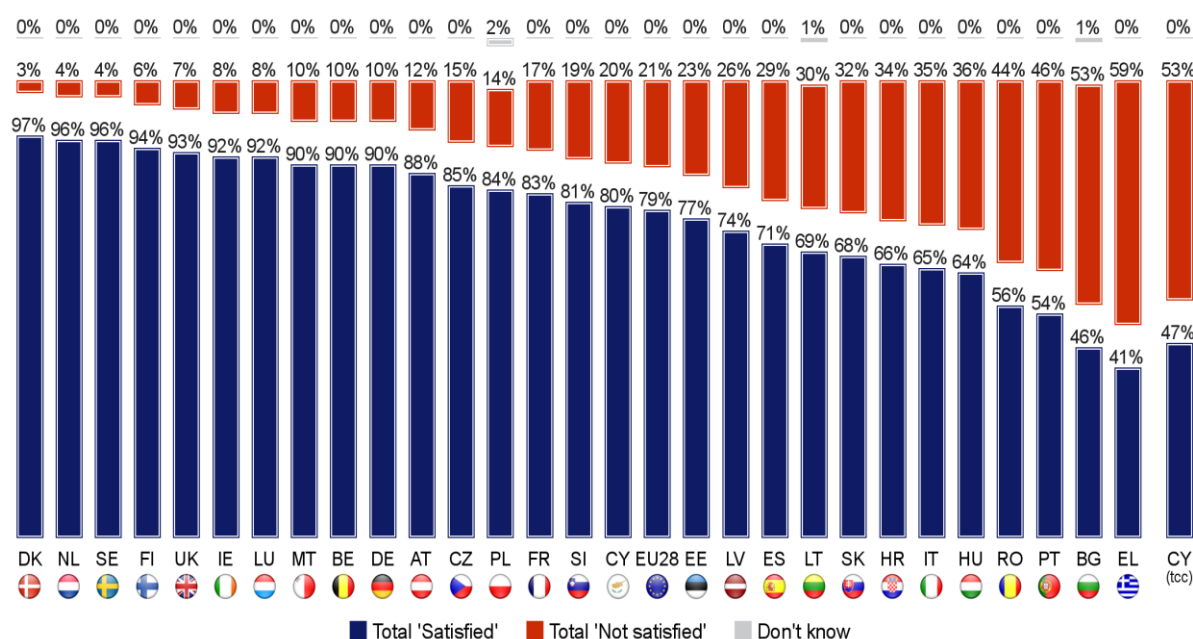
The national report outlines the main findings of Wave 82 of the Standard Eurobarometer. Fieldwork was conducted in November 2014. The elections for members of the European Parliament confirmed the level of public support for the governing party that it achieved in 2013 at the General Elections. The Maltese economy has continued to perform well, especially when compared to a number of other EU member states. The country's economic performance may have had some impact on the participants' responses.

The report covers a number of topics, namely the current personal and economic situation, issues faced by Malta and the EU, the Europe 2020 strategy, immigration, trust in institutions and personal attitudes towards the EU. This last section covers a number of areas, namely perceptions of the EU, internal migration, economic aspects, EU institutions and future developments.

## II. Current personal and economic situation

Respondents were asked how satisfied they are with the life they lead. Nine out of ten respondents claim that they are either very satisfied or fairly satisfied. This level of satisfaction is at the same level as emerged in previous editions of the Eurobarometer, and is around 10% higher than the average for the whole of the EU. Eight member states have reported a higher level of satisfaction than Malta. They are Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

D70. On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the life you lead?



The expectations of respondents in Malta about their life in general are also positive. Four out of ten respondents expect their life to get better over the next twelve months, compared to 8% expecting it to get worse and 48% expecting it to remain the same. The average percentage of respondents who expect their life to get better for the whole of the EU is 28%. It is only in the United Kingdom and Sweden that respondents have expressed a higher level of optimism about their personal life.

67% of respondents have said that they consider their personal job situation to be very good or rather good. 17% did not respond to this question since it did not apply to them, leaving 16% who claimed that their personal job situation is rather bad or very bad.

This relatively positive outlook on one's job was confirmed when respondents were asked about their expectations for the next twelve months with reference to their job situation. While 50% are not expecting any change, 26% expect it to become better and 6% expect it to become worse.

The economic feel-good factor also emerges in response to the question about the financial situation of the respondents' household. 81% described it to be very good or good, with 16% describing it as very bad or bad. The outlook is also positive, as 27% of respondents expect the financial situation of their household to improve and 7% expect it to get worse.

Respondents were also asked what they consider the two most important issues they are facing at the moment. The answers provided show a variety of concerns, indicating that in effect there is no one single issue that predominates.

The issue that received most mentions was rising prices, mentioned by 33% of respondents. This was followed by immigration (17%), the financial situation of their household (16%), the environment, climate and energy issues (16%), pensions (16%), the education system (13%) and the health and social security system (11%).

Different demographic segments express concern about different issues. Persons aged 18 to 24 years are more concerned about the education system and the environment, climate and energy issues, while persons aged 25 to 39 years are more concerned about inflation and the financial situation of their household.

Immigration causes more concern for respondents aged 25 years and over, and persons aged 40 years and over expressed more concern than average about the health and social security system. Pensions are mainly an issue just for those persons aged over 55 years.

The data for the whole of the EU shows that while rising prices is, like in Malta, also the main personal issue (mentioned by 30% of respondents), other concerns emerge. Across the EU, economic issues dominate the personal concerns of respondents.

As such, the financial situation of households is mentioned by 19% of respondents, unemployment by 19%, taxation by 17% and the economic situation by 14%. A lower level of concern was expressed about environment, climate and energy issues, while a higher level of concern was expressed about pensions than in Malta

### **III. Issues faced by Malta and the EU**

#### **1. Malta**

Immigration and economic issues appear to be the main issues facing Malta. 57% of respondents mentioned immigration as one of the two main issues facing Malta today. The individual economic issues mentioned were government debt (15%), rising prices (14%), unemployment (12%) and the economic situation (11%). Two other issues that received a significant number of mentions were health and social security (15%) and crime (10%).

This result contrasts heavily with the rest of the European Union, where 18% of respondents mentioned immigration as one of the two main problems facing their country. Moreover there were only three other countries, namely the United Kingdom (38%), Germany (37%) and Denmark (34%), which gave most mentions to this problem.

On the other hand, economic issues are what is causing most concern across the European Union, with the main item being unemployment. 45% of respondents mentioned unemployment as being one of the two most important issues facing their country at the moment.

It is worth noting that, in spite of the fact that economic issues appear to be of concern to respondents in Malta, 73% judge the current economic situation to be positive and 61% judge the employment situation to be positive. 39% expect the economic situation of Malta to get better in the coming twelve months, as opposed to 11% who expect it to become worse. The same result is achieved in relation to employment expectations.

56% of respondents claim that things are going in the right direction in Malta, while 14% believe that they are going in the wrong direction. 30% have said either that it is neither one nor the other, or that they do not have an opinion. Men, persons with a lower level of education and persons that have a more positive perception of the EU are more positive about the situation in Malta.

The situation in Malta again contrasts heavily with the situation across the EU, where an average of 26% of respondents claimed that things are moving in the right direction in their own country. Ireland was the only other member state where a majority of respondents (51%) believe that things are moving in the right direction.

## 2. European Union

Immigration is also considered by Maltese respondents to be one of the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment. It was mentioned by 46% of respondents. Economic issues also receive an important number of mentions, with the economic situation being mentioned by 23% of respondents, unemployment by 20% and the state of public finances of member states by 17%. Terrorism also featured highly as one of the two most important issues being faced by the EU, being mentioned by 17% of respondents.

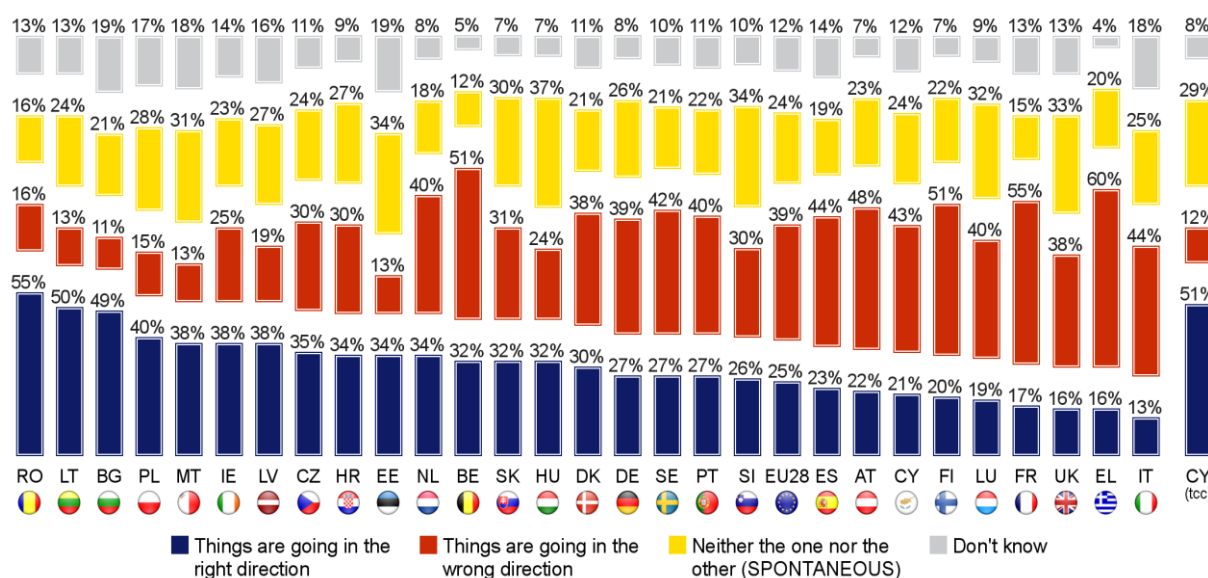
Across the EU, economic issues take priority over other issues. A third of respondents believe that the economic situation is one of the two most important issues facing the EU, 29% mentioned unemployment, while a fourth of respondents mentioned the state of public finances of member states. Immigration is seen to be a more important issue for the EU than for their own country, as it was mentioned by 24% of respondents.

On the other hand, terrorism was seen as being a less important problem across the EU than in Malta, as on average it was mentioned by 11% of respondents. Only Bulgaria gave a higher number of mentions (18%).

38% of respondents claim that things are moving in the right direction in the European Union, while 13% believe the opposite to be the case. 49% have said either that it is neither one nor the other, or that they do not have an opinion. There is not a clearly defined situation across the EU, with opinions differing quite significantly among the member states. On average, 25% of respondents claimed that things are moving in the right direction in the EU, while 39% claimed the opposite.

D73a.2. At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in...?

The European Union



## IV. Europe 2020

To exit the financial and economic crisis and to face global challenges, the EU has defined a strategy called Europe 2020, which puts forward different priorities and objectives. These priorities and objectives form an integral part of Government's own strategy. Thus respondents were asked to state how important they considered these initiatives.

The elements mentioned were increasing the support for research and development, enhancing the quality and appeal of the EU's higher education system, developing the e-economy, supporting an economy that uses less natural resources and emits less greenhouse gases, helping the industrial base to be more competitive, modernising labour markets, and helping the poor and socially excluded.

Table 1 below provides information on the percentage of respondents who consider each initiative as being very important in Malta and across the EU.

**Table 1: Percentage of respondents who consider each initiative as being very important.**

|   | Malta | European Union |
|---|-------|----------------|
| To increase the support for research and development and turn inventions into products                          | 72%   | 70%            |
| To enhance the quality and appeal of the EU's higher education system   | 92%   | 75%            |
| To develop the e-economy by strengthening ultra fast internet within the EU                                     | 71%   | 57%            |
| To support an economy that uses less natural resources and emits less greenhouse gases                          | 88%   | 79%            |
| To help the EU's industrial base to be more competitive by promoting entrepreneurship and developing new skills | 82%   | 74%            |
| To modernise labour markets with a view to raising employment levels  | 95%   | 81%            |
| To help the poor and socially excluded and enable them to play an active part in society                        | 92%   | 82%            |

Respondents were then read out a set of objectives to be reached by 2020 in the European Union. They were asked whether each objective was too ambitious, about right or too modest. Table 2 presents the results obtained for Malta and for the whole of the EU in terms of the percentage of respondents who believe that the 2020 objectives are about right.

**Table 2: Percentage of respondents who consider the 2020 objectives to be about right**

|  | Malta | European Union |
|--|-------|----------------|
| Three quarters of men and women between 20 and 64 years of age should have a job                                   | 65%   | 58%            |
| The share of funds invested in research and development should reach 3% of the wealth produced in the EU each year | 56%   | 53%            |
| To reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% by 2020 compared to 1990                                     | 65%   | 52%            |
| To increase energy efficiency in the EU by 20% by 2020   | 70%   | 58%            |
| The number of young people leaving school with no qualifications should fall to 10%                                | 63%   | 51%            |
| At least 40% of the people aged 30 to 34 should have a higher education degree or diploma                          | 49%   | 46%            |
| The number of Europeans living below the poverty line should be reduced by a quarter by 2020                       | 59%   | 49%            |
| To bring industry's contribution to the economy to 20% of GDP by 2020  | 53%   | 51%            |

Respondents were then asked to state whether, on the basis of these priorities, the EU is going in the right or in the wrong direction to exit the crisis and face new challenges. 71% of respondents in Malta stated that the EU is going in the right direction in this regard, while only 3% stated that it is going in the wrong direction and 19% stated that it is going neither in the right direction nor in the wrong direction.

The opinions in the whole of the twenty-eight EU member states are not so positive. In fact, 46% of respondents claimed that the EU is going in the right direction, while 24% claimed that it is going in the wrong direction and 22% claimed that it is going neither in the wrong nor in the right direction. The countries that have expressed a less positive opinion than the average for the EU are Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal and Slovakia. Respondents in Malta were those who were most positive.

## **V. Immigration**

Immigration has been highlighted as the main issue respondents in Malta are concerned about in relation to their country. This edition of the Eurobarometer asked respondents if immigration from other EU member states evokes a positive or a negative feeling in them. 53% of respondents claimed that it evokes either a very positive or a fairly positive feeling, while 43% claim that it evokes either a very negative or a fairly negative feeling.

On the other hand, immigration from countries outside the European Union evokes a very positive or a fairly positive feeling only among 21% of respondents. For 73% of respondents it evokes either a very negative feeling or a fairly negative feeling.

Respondents were then asked if additional measures should be taken to fight illegal immigration. Only 2% replied that there is no need for additional measures. The main expectation of respondents in Malta is that these additional measures should be taken at EU level. In fact, 34% claimed that it is preferable that these measures are taken at EU level, compared to 15% who expressed a preference for measures to be taken at a local level. 47% stated that these measures could be taken at both EU and a national level.

The opinions of respondents in Malta in relation to immigration from other EU member states are not much different to what emerged from the other EU member states. In twenty-eight EU member states, 52% of respondents claimed that immigration from other EU member states evoked a very positive or fairly positive feeling, while 41% claimed that it evoked a very negative or fairly negative feeling. The countries that displayed a level of negative feeling that was higher than the EU average were Belgium, the Czech Republic, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia, Latvia, Hungary and the United Kingdom.

In relation to immigration from outside the European Union, the opinions expressed by respondents in Malta did diverge from the opinions expressed in the whole of the EU. In the twenty-eight member states, 57% of respondents stated that immigration from outside the EU evokes a very negative or fairly negative feeling, while 35% stated that it evoked a very positive or fairly positive feeling. The countries that expressed a higher level of positive feeling towards immigration from outside the EU were Denmark, Ireland, Spain, Croatia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

In terms of whether there should be additional measures to fight illegal immigration from outside the EU, 13% of all respondents in the EU member states stated that there should not be additional measures. 26% of respondents claimed that it would be preferable that additional measures would be taken at an EU level, while 21% claimed that additional measures should be taken at a country level. 35% claimed that additional measures should be taken at both an EU level and at a national level.

In addition to Malta, the countries that have expressed a higher preference for additional measures to be taken at an EU level were Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.



## VI. Trust in institutions

Respondents were asked whether they tend to trust or not to trust a number of institutions. The most trusted institution is the Army, followed by the Police Force and the United Nations. Table 3 below provides information on the level of trust enjoyed by institutions in Malta and the average level of trust in these same institutions across the EU.

**Table 3: Percentage of respondents tending to trust each institution**

|                                      | Malta | European Union |
|--------------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| The written press                    | 32%   | 43%            |
| Radio                                | 42%   | 58%            |
| Television                           | 47%   | 50%            |
| The internet                         | 40%   | 36%            |
| Online social networks               | 24%   | 21%            |
| Judicial / Maltese legal system      | 39%   | 49%            |
| The police                           | 67%   | 68%            |
| The army                             | 72%   | 70%            |
| Political parties                    | 24%   | 14%            |
| Regional or local public authorities | 44%   | 43%            |
| The Maltese Government               | 56%   | 29%            |
| The National Parliament              | 51%   | 30%            |
| The European Union                   | 55%   | 37%            |
| The United Nations                   | 61%   | 48%            |

This level of trust in institutions can be compared with the level of satisfaction expressed by respondents in the way democracy works in Malta. 62% stated that they are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in Malta, while 34% claimed that they are not very satisfied or not at all satisfied. The data for the whole of the EU member states reflects a lower level of satisfaction, with 50% of respondents claiming to be very satisfied or fairly satisfied, while 48% claimed that they are not satisfied or not satisfied at all.

Respondents in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom expressed a higher level of satisfaction than Malta with the way democracy works in their country.

## VII. Personal attitudes towards the EU

### 1. Perceptions

A number of questions asked in the Eurobarometer survey indicate the perceptions of respondents in relation to the European Union. One such question was whether the EU conjures up for the respondent a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image.

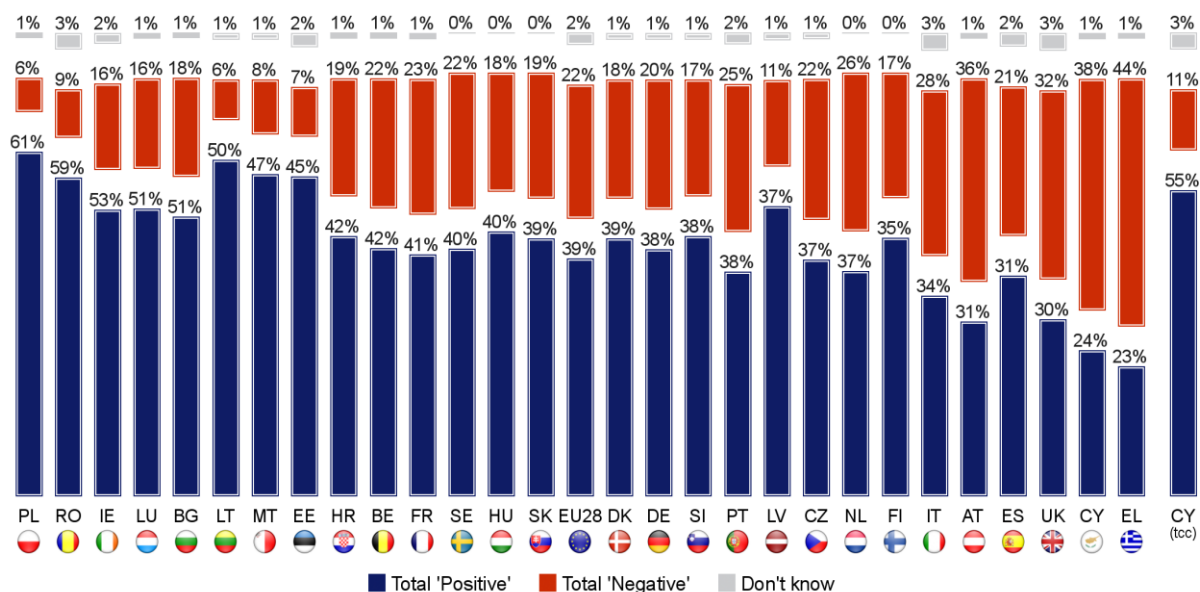
For 47% of respondents in Malta, the EU conjures up a very positive or fairly positive image, while for 8% it conjures up a very negative or fairly negative image and for 44% it conjures up a neutral image. There was an increase in the percentage who have a positive image of the EU since the previous edition of the Eurobarometer, where the percentage of respondents for whom the EU conjures up a positive image stood at 43%.

There are two demographic segments whose perceptions are more negative than the rest of the population. These are persons who were born between the end of the Second World War (1945) and Independence (1964) and persons who ended their full-time education at the end of their secondary education.

In the results for the twenty-eight EU member states the difference between those who have a positive image and those who have a negative image of the EU is not as marked as it is in Malta. 39% of respondents claimed to have a very positive or a fairly positive image of the EU and 22% claimed to have a very negative or fairly negative view of the EU. There was an improvement in the percentage who have a positive image of the EU since the previous wave of the Eurobarometer.



QA9. In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?



Respondents were also asked to state what the EU means to them personally. The two main items mentioned by respondents in Malta were the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU (mentioned by 57% of respondents) and a stronger say in the world (42%). Next came the euro (33%), peace (32%) and democracy (32%).

The results for the whole of the EU show a similar result for the principal element as to what the EU means to respondents personally. 50% of respondents mentioned the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU. The element that received most mentions next was the euro, mentioned by 39% of respondents. As expected, one notes important differences when one analyses the results by each member state, indicating that the EU does mean different things to different people.

Another question dealt with the European Union in relation to the rest of the world. Respondents in Malta generally believe that the EU's role in the world is an important one. In fact, 82% believe that the EU's voice counts in the world. 65% of respondents believe that Malta alone cannot cope with the negative effects of globalisation. 68% believe that the EU enables European citizens to better benefit from the positive effects of globalisation. Only 21% believe Malta could better face the future outside the EU.

In spite of these positive perceptions about the EU, 50% of respondents in Malta do not believe that the interests of Malta are well taken into account in the EU, as opposed to 40% who do. It is also worth noting that 52% claim to understand how the EU works, while 44% claim that they do not.

Respondents were also given a list of values and asked to select the three which they believe best represent the EU. Respondents in Malta gave most mentions to human rights (mentioned by 42% of respondents), democracy (36%) and peace (33%). The three values that received most mentions in the whole of the EU are the same, albeit in a different order. Peace received 40% of mentions, human rights received 36% of mentions, while democracy received 31% of mentions.

## 2. Internal migration

Apart from covering the subject of migration, the Eurobarometer also asked respondents about their opinion as to whether the right of EU citizens to live and to work in every EU member state is a good thing or a bad thing.

Respondents in Malta generally do not have an issue with such aspects. 73% of respondents consider the right of every EU citizen to live in every EU member state as a good thing, while 7% said that it is a bad thing and 19% said that it is neither good nor bad.

In addition, 70% of respondents in Malta consider the right of every EU citizen to work in every EU member state as a good thing, while 8% said that it is a bad thing and 20% said that it is neither good nor bad. It would appear that males consider these two rights to be a good thing to a lesser extent than females.

On these two questions, the opinions expressed by respondents in Malta are very much in line with the opinions expressed in the whole of the twenty-eight EU member states. In fact, the data for the whole of the EU shows that 72% of respondents believe that the right of every EU citizen to live in every EU member state is a good thing and 74% of respondents believe that the right to work in every EU member state is a good thing. The only two countries that displayed an opinion that diverges considerably from this overall trend are Belgium and the United Kingdom.

### 3. Economic aspects

Respondents were read out a set of statements on the EU and a number of aspects related to the economy. They were asked to state to what extent they agreed with such statements. Table 4 below presents information on the percentage of respondents in Malta and the percentage of respondents across the EU who agree with these statements. The data confirms once more the higher than average positive perceptions that respondents in Malta have about the EU.

**Table 4: Percentage of respondents expressing agreement**

|   | Malta | European Union |
|---|-------|----------------|
| The EU is creating the conditions for more jobs in Europe | 69%   | 47%            |
| The EU is responsible for austerity in Europe             | 66%   | 63%            |
| The EU makes doing business easier in Europe              | 83%   | 65%            |
| The EU generates too much red tape                        | 63%   | 72%            |
| The EU will emerge fairer from the crisis                 | 62%   | 38%            |
| The EU is making the financial sector pay its fair share  | 53%   | 33%            |
| The EU makes the cost of living cheaper in Europe         | 31%   | 24%            |
| The EU makes the quality of life better in Europe         | 78%   | 49%            |
| The EU helps tackle global threats and challenges         | 73%   | 59%            |
| The EU helps protect its citizens                         | 72%   | 57%            |
| The EU needs a clearer message                            | 81%   | 80%            |

### 4. EU institutions

The survey also sought to find out the level of awareness that respondents have of three key EU institutions – the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Central Bank. They were also asked whether they tend to trust or not to trust these institutions.

The level of awareness of these three institutions is very high in Malta, with 98% claiming that they have heard of the European Parliament, 93% claiming to have heard about the European Commission, and 88% claiming to have heard about the European Central Bank.

The level of trust enjoyed by these institutions in Malta is also fairly high, with 58% of respondents claiming that they tend to trust the European Parliament, 55% claiming that they tend to trust the European Commission, and 56% claiming that they trust the European Central Bank.

In terms of awareness, the level expressed across the whole of the EU is quite similar to that of Malta. 92% of respondents across the EU claimed that they are aware of the European Parliament, 85% claimed that they are aware of the European Commission, 84% claimed that they are aware of the European Central Bank. The United Kingdom was the country that displayed the lowest level of awareness of the three institutions, while Finland was the country that expressed the highest level of awareness.

In terms of trust in these three institutions, the level expressed across the whole of the EU is below the 50% level, and in all three cases the percentage of respondents that tend not to trust them is higher than the percentage of respondents that tend to trust them. In fact, 42% of respondents claimed to trust the European Parliament, while 43% claimed not to trust it. 38% claimed to trust the European Commission, while 42% claimed not to trust it. 34% claimed to trust the European Central Bank, while 46% claimed not to trust it.

The lowest level of trust in these institutions was displayed by respondents in Greece, while respondents in Lithuania displayed the highest level of trust in the European Parliament and the European Commission and respondents in Finland expressed the highest level of trust in the European Central Bank.

When one compares these results to the previous wave, one notes that there is no significant change with regard to awareness, while there is a slight improvement on the level of trust in these institutions.

## 5. Future developments

The survey asked for the opinions of respondents on aspects which may represent the future developments in the European Union. They are an economic and monetary union, a common foreign policy, further enlargement of the EU, a common defence and security policy, a free trade and investment agreement between the EU and the USA, a common European policy on migration, and a common energy policy among EU Member States.

Table 5 below provides information on the percentage of respondents who stated that they are in favour of such developments.

**Table 5: Percentage of respondents in favour**

|   | Malta | European Union |
|---|-------|----------------|
| A European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro | 77%   | 56%            |
| A common foreign policy of the 28 Member States of the EU                 | 54%   | 66%            |
| Further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years  | 63%   | 39%            |
| A common defence and security policy among EU Member States               | 76%   | 73%            |
| A free trade and investment agreement between the EU and the USA          | 75%   | 58%            |
| A common European policy on migration                                     | 82%   | 71%            |
| A common energy policy among EU Member States                             | 82%   | 73%            |

Respondents were asked to state whether they are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU. Respondents in Malta displayed the highest level of optimism about the future of the EU. 75% claimed to be very optimistic or fairly optimistic, while 17% claimed to be very pessimistic or fairly pessimistic.

The results for the whole of the EU show a slightly different picture, with 56% of respondents expressing themselves to be very optimistic or fairly optimistic about the future of the EU and 37% expressing themselves to be very pessimistic or fairly pessimistic. Greece, Italy and Cyprus were the only three countries which expressed a level of pessimism that was greater than the level of optimism.

QA22. Would you say that you are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU?

