Special Eurobarometer 370

European Commission

EUROBAROMETER

Social Climate

SUMMARY

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Special Eurobarometer 370 / Wave EB75.4 – TNS opinion & social

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Social Climate

SUMMARY

Conducted by TNS Opinion & Social at the request of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment

Survey co-ordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This summary presents the results of the third Eurobarometer survey on social climate[1], collecting the views of around 1,000 people[2] in each country of the European Union.

The first wave of this special Eurobarometer was conducted two years ago, eight months after the start of the financial and economic crisis. By June 2010, when the second wave was conducted, signs of economic improvement had been reported in some Member States, but the overall position was still one of difficulty. The results from this year's survey show that the impact of the 2008 financial and economic crisis is still being felt, with various EU Member States giving cause for speculation. The social climate survey covers 15 aspects and asks respondents to assess, for each of these aspects, the current situation, how the situation has evolved over the past five years and how they expect it to change over the coming year, forming a set of 45 variables.

In this summary we analyse a mean index score, measured from +10 to -10, where +10 corresponds to the highest possible degree of satisfaction and -10 corresponds to the lowest. This index score is compared to that seen in last year's survey and indicates the balance of opinion in each country. Scored in this manner, QB1 and QB2 represent the respondents' level of satisfaction with the current situation[3].

For questions QB3 and QB4[4], the survey measured expectations for the coming twelve months and how things have changed over the last five years. Here, a better-worse index is used, and we analyse the proportion answering *better* (QB3)/*improved* (QB4), minus the proportion answering *worse* (QB3)/*got worse* (QB4): this index can potentially range from -100 to +100.

[1] This is the summary of the full report which presents a more thorough analysis of the results, including detailed country-by-country and socio-demographic analyses (respondents' gender, age, education, occupation and difficulties in paying bills).

[2] 1,000 interviews in each Member States except in Malta, Cyprus and Luxembourg (500), the UK (1,300) and Germany (1,500).

[3] The indexes for the current situation (QB1 and QB2) are calculated at individual level and based on weighted data. In this calculation the answer categories were given a weight between 1 and 4: "very satisfied" / "very good" = 4, "fairly satisfied" / "rather good" = 3, "not very satisfied" / "rather bad" = 2 and "not at all satisfied" / "very bad" = 1. The answer category "don't know" was not taken into account. The new scale ranging between 1 and 4 was converted into a scale from -10 to +10.

[4] The better-worse index was created by calculating the difference in percentage points between the two extreme answer categories of QB3 ("better" - "worse") and QB4 ("improved" - "got worse"). This produces an index on a scale from -100 to +100. Please note that the neutral answer categories and the "don't know" responses were not taken into account when calculating this index. The overall results (in %), on the basis of which both indexes were created, are annexed to the main report.

KEY FINDINGS

- Most respondents are satisfied with their current personal situation, with high scores from Nordic and Benelux states, the UK and Ireland. The countries recording the least satisfaction with the current personal situation are Greece, Eastern and Baltic countries, Hungary and Portugal.

- The highest level of satisfaction with the current personal situation can be observed for the residential area, where all the countries gave positive scores.

- Results regarding the general situation are, on the whole, much lower than those observed in relation to the personal situation.

- The geographical pattern for the general situation is generally the same as for the personal situation.

- The mood relating to the economic situation is negative, in respect of both the current situation and the five-year comparison, in the majority of Member States.

- The general employment situation is viewed less positively than the economic situation. However,, there has been an improvement in respondents' perception since last year for all three dimensions: current situation, five-year comparison and expectations for the coming 12 months.

- There are no countries in which respondents feel that the cost of living is better than it was five years ago.

- As in the previous report, the way public administration is run is the aspect of the general situation which received the least negative responses.

- Questions related to social protection and inclusion received less negative answers than the general situation questions, but more negative than questions about the personal situation.

- The pension situation now as compared to five years ago and expectations for the next 12 months are perceived negatively in 26 out of 27 Member States (except in Cyprus and Estonia respectively).

- With regard to people from different cultural and religious backgrounds or nationalities, the geographic pattern observed is different from that described elsewhere in this report: with positive perceptions amongst citizens from Slovakia, Bulgaria and Latvia and less positive perceptions amongst citizens from Denmark, Belgium and France.

1. PERSONAL SITUATION

The table below presents the indexes (current situation, situation compared with five years ago, expectations for the coming twelve months) for the four dimensions tackled in this chapter.

Figure 1: Personal situation - Score cards (index table, showing the evolutions) – EU27[5]

Personal situation	Evaluation of the current situation		Situation compared with 5 years ago		Expectations for the coming 12 months	
EU27	EB75.4	EB75.4-EB73.5	EB75.4	EB75.4-EB73.5	EB75.4	EB75.4-EB73.5
General life situation	3,5	+0,4	-2	+3	+12	+3
Residential area	4,4	+0,2	+2	-2	+6	+2
Personal job situation	1,7	+0,2	-4	+2	+9	+4
Household financial situation	1,5	+0,4	-17	+1	+1	+4

The current situation index is measured on a scale from -10 to +10.
The better-worse indexes are measured on a scale from -100 to +100.

1.1 General life situation

The index of 3.5 (a + 0.4 point increase since last year) at EU level indicates that most respondents are satisfied with their current situation. However, when comparing the situation with five years ago (-2), respondents feel that their situation has worsened, although this index has increased by 3 points since the previous wave. EU citizens are optimistic in their short-term expectations (+12), even more optimistic than last year (an increase of 3 points).

The Nordic and Benelux States, the UK and Ireland take up the first eight places on the list for the current situation. Striking improvements in perceptions of the near future were registered in Lithuania and Romania (+24 and +22 respectively)

[5] This table analyses questions QB1, QB3.1 and QB4.1 for 'General life situation'; QB2.1, QB3.2 and QB4.2 for 'Residential area'; QB2.12, QB3.13 and QB4.13 for 'Personal job situation'; QB2.13, QB3.14 and QB4.14 for 'Household financial situation'.

1.2 Residential area

An EU27 average score of 4.4 for the current evaluation of the residential area is recorded, with a +0.2 increase on last year's result. The better/worse index is slightly more positive for the five-year comparison, with an average score of +2; this represents a negative evolution of -2 points from the last wave of analysis. For twelve-month expectations, a positive score of +6 is recorded on average, this being an improvement of +2 from the last report.

At national level, Romania has recorded the greatest increase in optimism since last year, +12, and Hungary the highest level of pessimism, -17.

1.3 Personal job situation

As seen in the analysis of last year's survey, the EU27 average scores for this question are mixed: 1.7 for the current situation, a better/worse score of -4 for the five-year comparison and a score of +9 on the better/worse index relating to twelve-month expectations. But compared with the results in last year's report, the scores for all three dimensions recorded positive evolutions: +0.2 for the current situation, +2 for the five-year comparison and +4 for twelve-month expectations.

The overall EU score of +9 for short-term expectations is influenced by high scores from certain Member States, like the Nordic countries, Benelux, Austria, Germany and Estonia.

1.4 Household financial situation

The average index for the evaluation of the current household financial situation is 1.5, which represents an increase of +0.4 since the last wave in June 2010. The average score of -17 for the five-year comparison also shows a slight improvement since last year, by +1 point. As seen in last year's survey, the negative indexes recorded in a majority of Member States for the five-year comparison show that respondents are less satisfied with the current financial situation of their household. When asked to consider the situation over the forthcoming twelve months, again, as seen in all the items above, Europeans are more optimistic about the future than about their past and current situation. The score of +1 was recorded for the better-worse index, representing an increase of +4 points since last year.

2. GENERAL SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

The topics covered in this chapter are the following: economic situation, employment situation, the cost of living, affordability of energy, affordability of housing and the way in which public administration is run.

Figure 3: General situation - Score cards (index table, showing the evolutions) – EU27[6]

General situation in the country EU27	Evaluation of the current situation		Situation compared with 5 years ago		Expectations for the coming 12 months	
	EB75.4	EB75.4-EB73.5	EB75.4	EB75.4-EB73.5	EB75.4	EB75.4-EB73.5
Economic situation	-2,9	+0,7	-56	+13	-16	+3
Employment situation	-3,5	+0,5	-52	+16	-12	+9
Cost of living	-3,4	-0,7	-77	-8	-50	-3
Affordability of energy	-2,6	-0,6	-65	-9	-44	-7
Affordability of housing	-3,3	-0,6	-60	-8	-33	-6
The way public administration is run	-1,4	-0,1	-31	-3	-15	-

The current situation index is measured on a scale from -10 to +10.
The better-worse indexes are measured on a scale from -100 to +100.

2.1 Economic situation

For the economic situation, average figures are low, particularly in comparison with the previous sets of questions. The EU27 score for the current situation is -2.9, the better/worse index for the five-year comparison is -56 and the expectation for the next twelve months is that things will get worse
(-16). However, these results are all better than in the previous survey, which in turn recorded positive evolutions for all three situations since May 2009.

Sweden and Germany are the only two countries which recorded positive indexes for the current situation for each of the three dimensions analysed.

[6] This table analyses questions QB2.11, QB3.12 and QB4.12 for 'Economic situation'; QB2.14, QB3.15 and QB4.15 for 'Employment situation'; QB2.5, QB3.6 and QB4.6 for 'Cost of living'; QB2.8, QB3.9 and QB4.9 for 'Affordability of energy'; QB2.9, QB3.10 and QB4.10 for 'Affordability of housing'; QB2.10, QB3.11 and QB4.11 for 'The way public administration is run'.

2.2 Employment situation

For the current employment situation the average score is also low (-3.5 at EU level). In the five-year comparison, the overall results suggest that respondents think things have got worse (-52). Similarly, respondents expect the situation to worsen in the next twelve months (–12). However, these scores show an improvement on the last survey wave (by +0.5 point for the current situation, +16 for the five-year comparison and +9 for twelve-month expectations).

Very few Member States recorded a positive index for the current situation: Austria 2, the Netherlands 1.6, Luxembourg 1.5, and Sweden and Germany 0.6. Finland returned a neutral score of 0.

2.3 Cost of living

The overall score for the current situation at EU level is -3.4, with an average of -77 on the better-worse index for the situation now compared to five years ago and -50 for the expectations for the coming twelve months. Compared to last year’s results, the current situation score is down by -0.7, the five-year comparison by -8 and the twelve-month expectations by -3.

Overall, there are no countries in which respondents feel that the situation is better now than it was five years ago.

2.4 Affordability of energy

The index for the evaluation of the current situation stands at -2.6, a -0.6 point decrease on last year’s figure. The five-year comparison produced a better/worse index of -65, indicating a clear impression that affordability has deteriorated. Expectations for the next twelve months show that people have little confidence in the likelihood of improvement, with a better/worse index of -44. Both better/worse index scores are lower than in the previous survey (by -9 and -7 points respectively).

The UK (-1.8), France (-1.4) and Belgium (-1) are among the countries which are less satisfied with the affordability of energy than they were last year.

2.5 Affordability of housing

The overall EU score for the current situation is -3.3, representing a decrease on last year's score of -0.6 point. The situation now compared to five years ago is seen in a negative light, the score of -60 representing a decrease of -8 points since last year. Optimism for the forthcoming twelve months is also low, with a score of -33, down -6 points on last year.

In the twelve-month forecast, only one country recorded a positive better-worse index (Estonia +4).

2.6 The way the public administration is run

Of all the items tested in this chapter, the way public administration is run received the least negative responses for the current situation (-1.4). A score of -31 was recorded for the five-year comparison and -15 for twelve-month expectations. These figures have evolved downwards slightly in the case of the current situation responses and the five-year comparison (by -0.1 and -3 points respectively). For the short-term future, the score remained the same.

The stable result at EU level for twelve-month expectations hides several individual evolutions, both positive and negative, ranging from evolutions of +17 in Denmark and +15 in Romania to -23 in Hungary and -13 in Portugal and the Czech Republic.

3. SOCIAL PROTECTION AND INCLUSION

The topics covered are in this chapter are: provision of health care, provision of pensions, unemployment benefits, relations between people from different cultural backgrounds and the way inequalities and poverty are addressed.

Figure 5: Social protection and inclusion - Score cards (index table, showing the evolutions) – EU27[7]

Social protection and inclusion EU27	Evaluation of the current situation		Situation compared with 5 years ago		Expectations for the coming 12 months	
	EB75.4	EB75.4-EB73.5	EB75.4	EB75.4-EB73.5	EB75.4	EB75.4-EB73.5
Health care provision	1,2	-0,1	-33	-4	-18	+1
Provision of pensions	-1,5	-0,3	-47	-5	-30	+4
Unemployment benefits	-1,2	+0,2	-37	-	-24	+8
Relations between people from different cultural backgrounds	0,1	-0,2	-23	-2	-11	+1
The way inequalities and poverty are addressed	-2,5	-0,3	-36	-4	-20	-

The current situation index is measured on a scale from -10 to +10.
The better-worse indexes are measured on a scale from -100 to +100.

3.1 Health care provision

The EU27 index for the evaluation of the current situation is positive, 1.2, with a slight decrease since last year (-0.1). For the five-year comparison, the EU27 average is -33 (a -4 decrease on last year results). Optimism for the next twelve months is also low (-18, a rise of +1 point above the score from the previous survey).

3.2 Provision of pensions

The EU average is -1.5, representing a decrease of -0.3 on last year's results. The EU average for the five-year comparison is also very low, -47, which represents a decrease of -5 since last year. When respondents were asked about their expectations for the next twelve months, the overall index was -30. However, this year's result is higher than the figure obtained in the previous wave by +4 points.

[7] This table analyses questions QB2.2, QB3.3 and QB4.3 for 'Health care provision'; QB2.3, QB3.4 and QB4.4 for 'Provision of pensions'; QB2.4, QB3.5 and QB4.5 for 'unemployment benefits'; QB2.6, QB3.7 and QB4.7 for 'relations between people from different cultural backgrounds'; QB2.7, QB3.8 and QB4.8 for 'The way inequalities and poverty are addressed'.

The situation now as compared to five years ago is perceived negatively by 26 out of 27 Member States (all except Cyprus), as are expectations for the next twelve months (except in Estonia).

3.3 Unemployment benefits

The EU index of -1.2 for the evaluation of the current situation represents an increase of +0.2 index points on last year. The better/worse index for the five-year comparison has remained stable since last year (-37) and the twelve-month forecast has recorded an increase of + 8 points since 2010, reaching a score of -24.

12 Member States have reported improvements in the current situation since last year. Evolutions for the twelve-month forecast are positive in the majority of countries, in particular in Germany and Lithuania (both +31).

3.4 Relations between people from different cultural backgrounds

The EU mood is marginally positive, the score of 0.1 representing a change of -0.2 from last year's survey. However, it is generally considered that things have got worse in the last five years, with a better/worse index score of -23 (-2 points lower than in the last survey wave). When asked whether things would improve over the next twelve months, respondents also returned a negative score (-11), but up +1 on the 2010 survey.

Slight positive evolutions were recorded in Italy (+0.6), Ireland and Malta (both +0.5) for the current situation. But Greece (-27) and Cyprus (-24) both record very negative evolutions for the five-year comparison.

3.5 The way inequalities and poverty are addressed

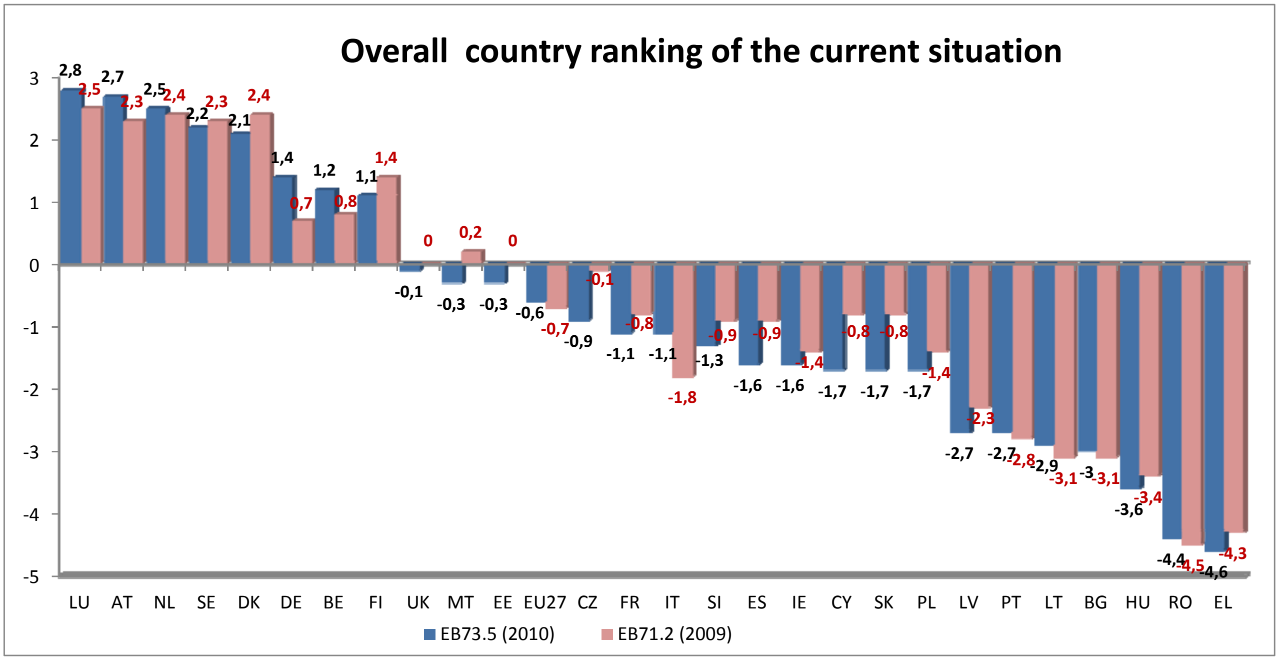
The EU27 index is -2.5 for the current situation, a decrease of -0.3 on last year's data. Both the five-year comparison (-36, a decrease of -4 points) and the twelve-month forecast (-20, stable since last year) indicate that Europeans believe that matters are currently bad, worse than before and set to get worse still.

When asked to compare today's situation with five years ago, every Member State reports a negative score on the better/worse index. Optimism for the year ahead is low, although many Member States again report an improvement on last year: Lithuania (+17), Denmark (+16), Romania (+14) and Germany (+12).

THREE AGGREGATE MEASURES OF THE SOCIAL CLIMATE

The overall score for the current situation is negative (-0.6), but has improved slightly since last year (+0.1). The results presented below show the overall score for the current situation recorded in each Member State.

Figure 8: Overall country ranking of the current situation (individual level)



The current situation index is measured on a scale from -10 to +10.
The better-worse indexes are measured on a scale from -100 to +100.

As was found in last year's survey, there is a marked geographical pattern here: all the countries that top the ranking are from the North or the West of the European Union. The first country to break this trend is Malta, in 10th position. At the other end of the scale, the pattern is also clear: the nine countries at the bottom are all from the South or the East of the EU. The results of Baltic States are almost the same as last year, with Estonia in 11th position, Latvia in 21st position and Lithuania in 23rd.

Things have got better in Germany, Italy (both +0.7), Austria and Belgium (+0.4 both), Luxembourg (+0.3), Lithuania (+0.2), the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Bulgaria (all four +0.1); they have got markedly worse in Cyprus and Slovakia (-0.9), the Czech Republic (-0.8) and Spain (-0.7).

CONCLUSIONS

Respondents' levels of satisfaction with their **personal situation** are relatively high across the European Union. As we have seen in the previous two waves, citizens in many Member States seem to be reasonably content with their personal situation, especially in the Nordic countries, Benelux, Austria, Germany, and the UK and Malta, in some cases. The Member States which recorded low scores for the current situation this year are the same as in the last two years: Eastern countries (especially Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania), two of the three Baltic States (Latvia and Lithuania), and Greece and Portugal. Generally speaking, this geographical pattern appears throughout the whole survey. In terms of evolutions, Europeans seem to perceive the impact of an improvement of the situation on their lives since June 2010: 11 of the 12 indexes analysed in the first section record positive increases on last year (with Lithuania and Romania recording high positive evolutions for twelve-month expectations for each single item analysed in this chapter and also throughout the report).

Evolutions since June 2010 for the **general situation** can be analysed for the six dimensions addressed in this section as follows: in a first group, the economic and employment situations are seen in a less negative light than in June 2010, with positive evolutions for all three dimensions. Cost of living and the affordability of energy and housing constitute a second group with significant negative evolutions since June 2010. Finally, the way public administration is run is distinct from the others: this dimension has remained stable since the previous survey conducted last year. Even if they are still negative when evaluating the general situation of their country, Europeans seem to feel that the economy is recovering, but that daily life is more expensive than it was last year.

The results for **social protection and inclusion** differ somewhat from those for personal and general situations, in terms of the groups of countries leading the ranking for the current situation index. On this occasion, the Nordic countries have been overtaken by Benelux and Austria, and sometimes only rank in the middle of this scale, especially in respect of relations between people from different cultural and religious backgrounds or nationalities. The other end of the scale looks more familiar, however, with Eastern countries (Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary), Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Greece almost always at the bottom of the scale. Perceptions regarding social protection and inclusion are quite contrasted: almost always negative, the indices for the current situation and the five-year comparison have decreased since the previous survey, whereas optimism that things will improve in the next twelve months has increased. Europeans are still struggling with serious difficulties, but their expectations for the near future are improving.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

EUROBAROMETER

European Commission

SPECIAL EUROBAROMETER 370

“Social Climate”

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Between the 4th of June and the 19th of June 2011, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between TNS plc and TNS opinion, carried out the wave 75.4 of the EUROBAROMETER, on request of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for Communication, “Research and Speechwriting”.

The SPECIAL EUROBAROMETER 370 is part of wave 75.4 and covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union Member States, resident in each of the Member States and aged 15 years and over. The basic sample design applied in all states is a multi-stage, random (probability) one. In each country, a number of sampling points was drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and to population density.

In order to do so, the sampling points were drawn systematically from each of the "administrative regional units", after stratification by individual unit and type of area. They thus represent the whole territory of the countries surveyed according to the EUROSTAT NUTS II (or equivalent) and according to the distribution of the resident population of the respective nationalities in terms of metropolitan, urban and rural areas. In each of the selected sampling points, a starting address was drawn, at random. Further addresses (every Nth address) were selected by standard "random route" procedures, from the initial address. In each household, the respondent was drawn, at random (following the "closest birthday rule"). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people's homes and in the appropriate national language. As far as the data capture is concerned, CAPI (*Computer Assisted Personal Interview)* was used in those countries where this technique was available.

ABBR.	COUNTRIES	INSTITUTES	N° INTERVIEWS	FIELDWORK DATES		POPULATION 15+
BE	Belgium	TNS Dimarso	1.025	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	8.939.546
BG	Bulgaria	TNS BBSS	1.002	04/06/2011	13/06/2011	6.537.510
CZ	Czech Rep.	TNS Aisa	1.019	04/06/2011	16/06/2011	9.012.443
DK	Denmark	TNS Gallup DK	1.012	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	4.561.264
DE	Germany	TNS Infratest	1.572	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	64.409.146
EE	Estonia	Emor	1.001	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	945.733
IE	Ireland	Ipsos MRBI	1.016	04/06/2011	17/06/2011	3.522.000
EL	Greece	TNS ICAP	1.000	04/06/2011	17/06/2011	8.693.566
ES	Spain	TNS Demoscopia	1.004	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	39.035.867
FR	France	TNS Sofres	1.068	07/06/2011	19/06/2011	47.756.439
IT	Italy	TNS Infratest	1.044	04/06/2011	18/06/2011	51.862.391
CY	Rep. of Cyprus	Synovate	504	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	660.400
LV	Latvia	TNS Latvia	1.019	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	1.447.866
LT	Lithuania	TNS Gallup Lithuania	1.026	04/06/2011	16/06/2011	2.829.740
LU	Luxembourg	TNS ILReS	507	04/06/2011	17/06/2011	404.907
HU	Hungary	TNS Hungary	1.004	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	8.320.614
MT	Malta	MISCO	500	04/06/2011	18/06/2011	335.476
NL	Netherlands	TNS NIPO	1.001	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	13.371.980
AT	Austria	Österreichisches Gallup-Institut	1.005	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	7.009.827
PL	Poland	TNS OBOP	1.000	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	32.413.735
PT	Portugal	TNS EUROTESTE	1.048	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	8.080.915
RO	Romania	TNS CSOP	1.075	04/06/2011	15/06/2011	18.246.731
SI	Slovenia	RM PLUS	1.019	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	1.759.701
SK	Slovakia	TNS Slovakia	1.000	04/06/2011	17/06/2011	4.549.955
FI	Finland	TNS Gallup Oy	1.008	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	4.440.004
SE	Sweden	TNS GALLUP	1.019	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	7.791.240
UK	United Kingdom	TNS UK	1.342	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	51.848.010
TOTAL EU27			**26.840**	**04/06/2011**	**19/06/2011**	**408.787.006**

For each country a comparison between the sample and the universe was carried out. The Universe description was derived from Eurostat population data or from national statistics offices. For all countries surveyed, a national weighting procedure, using marginal and intercellular weighting, was carried out based on this Universe description. In all countries, gender, age, region and size of locality were introduced in the iteration procedure. For international weighting (i.e. EU averages), TNS Opinion & Social applies the official population figures as provided by EUROSTAT or national statistic offices. The total population figures for input in this post-weighting procedure are listed above.

Readers are reminded that survey results are estimations, the accuracy of which, everything being equal, rests upon the sample size and upon the observed percentage. With samples of about 1,000 interviews, the real percentages vary within the following confidence limits:

Observed percentages	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
Confidence limits	± 1.9 points	± 2.5 points	± 2.7 points	± 3.0 points	± 3.1 points