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Summary

This report is a presentation of the findings of the Eurobarometer survey conducted in the period from 11 October to 15 November 2005.

The survey has been carried out within the political context of the European Union, which, in recent months, has felt the repercussions of the results of the referenda in the Netherlands and France, which, in turn, have influenced the debate and the political agenda concerning the EU in Denmark.

The European Union and the Danes

Majority pro the Constitutional Treaty

A majority of Danes is in favour of the Constitutional Treaty: 48 % of Danes say they are in favour of the treaty, whereas 37 % say they are against it. A relatively large group of Danes (15 %) still remain undecided on this matter.

Shortly after the Dutch and the French referenda, several polls showed that the Danes' attitude to the treaty changed in just a matter of days from support to rejection. This turbulence seems to have subsided as the data show increased support between the autumn of 2004 to now. Yet, if anything, the Dutch and French rejection demonstrated that the Danes' support could change in a fairly short space of time.

The treaty ought to be renegotiated

The Danes are mostly in favour of the treaty being renegotiated. A little under than one-third of Danes feel that the treaty ought to be discarded. Only 11 % of Danes feel that the ratification process ought to continue in spite of the Dutch and French rejection.

A yes to the treaty will strengthen the European Union's cooperation globally

67 % of Danes feel that the European Union's cooperation will be strengthened globally if all member countries approve the treaty. Also, Danes feel that, in the event of approval, this cooperation would be economically more competitive (57 %), more efficient (53 %), and also more democratic (51 %).

The Danes are divided on the question of a European political union

The Danes are still divided in their attitudes to the development of a European, political union with 43 % in favour and 46 % against. In the spring of 2005, a slight majority supported the development of a political union, whereas today, a slight majority opposes it.

Greater scepticism in Denmark than in the rest of Europe regarding enlargement of the European Union

The enlargement of the EU to include new member countries has also been a part of the EU debate. The Danes are still more sceptical towards including new countries in the EU than European Union citizens on average. 48 % of Danes are against an enlargement, whereas 46 % of Danes are in favour of including new countries in the EU.

The Danes are most positive towards including Norway and Iceland

The Danes tend to be more positive towards an enlargement of the EU when they are asked about specific countries. The Danes are most positive towards including their Nordic neighbours, Norway and Iceland. On the other hand, the Danes are the most sceptical towards including Turkey and Albania.

Denmark has benefited from its EU membership

69 % of Danes feel that, for the most part, Denmark has benefited from its membership. Compared to the spring of 2005, there has been no significant development in regard to this question.

Overall, EU membership is regarded as a positive thing

The Danes consider that Denmark's membership of the EU is a good thing (56 %).

A small decline in the assessment of Denmark's membership

The share of Danes who consider EU membership a good thing has declined somewhat since the spring of 2005 when the Eurobarometer showed that 59 % of Danes thought that membership was a good thing.

These findings point to the Danes being divided and naturally susceptible to changes and developments on the political agenda of the European Union.

More men than women regard Denmark's EU membership positively

Significantly more men than women regard Denmark's EU membership positively. 61 % men consider membership to be a good thing compared to 50 % of women. The Danish findings show that the tendency for Danish women to be more Euro sceptic than Danish men is still valid.

The Danes have confidence in the European Commission and the European Parliament.

A majority (51 %) of Danes say they have confidence in the European Commission. 58 % say they tend to trust the European Parliament. Thus, the turbulence regarding the Constitutional Treaty has not significantly changed the Danes' trust in these two central institutions of the EU.

A majority of Danes feel they have a say in the EU

50 % of Danes agree that their voice counts in the EU while 45 % disagree. Thus, it seems that the concern of whether small countries have an influence and are able to maintain it, is to no significant degree reducing the Danes' experience of having a say in the EU.

The Danes experience having more knowledge about the EU than the average EU citizen

47 % of Danes agree with the statement: 'I understand how the European Union works' compared to the 41 % average in the EU25 as a whole. However, a small majority of 49 % disagree with the statement.

The Danes' Quality of Life and Expectations of the Future

The Danes express a general contentment with their lives

The Danish economy is good; employment is high and many Danes experience having more money to spend. The Danes also express a pronounced satisfaction with their lives in general and an optimistic view of the future. Responding to the question about overall contentment with their lives, nearly all Danes, 96 %, state they are "very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" with their lives.

Optimistic view of both private and national economy

Some expect an improvement both in their private finances and in the national economy, as well as a continuing, positive development in the employment figures. The majority of Danes expect an unaltered situation on all three parameters, yet taking into consideration the high point of departure – this may also be seen as a sign of the Danes' optimism.

Increased trust in the employment situation

Unemployment is at present a lesser concern of the Danes, compared to previously, probably due to the present, high employment rate. At the same time last year, unemployment was the issue most worrying the Danes, whereas concern about employment in Denmark has now dropped to fourth place.

Terror and crime are occupying the Danes

Today, Danes regard terrorism and crime as two major problems in society. Danes express greater concern regarding terrorism than the average EU citizen. This indicates that they feel that terrorism and possible acts of terror have moved closer to home.

The EU - a central actor in the fight against terrorism and crime

The Danes feel that terrorism and crime are issues that should be fought on a joint, European level. Thus, the Danes consider the European Union to be a central actor in solving some of the problems that occupy them here and now. This is interesting in that Denmark, due to its opt-outs, is neither part of the European Union's defence cooperation nor of the justice and immigration policy.

Decisions regarding health, education and pension need to be made in Denmark

On more personal areas like health and social care, education, and pension issues, in particular, Danes want decisions to be made at national level.

The Danes and the Pensions of the Future

The majority of Danes feels secure about the pensions of the future – yet a substantial minority doesn't.

For a long period of time, the pensions of the future have been the subject of much debate in Denmark. Themes like gradual postponement of the retirement age and a society dominated by elderly have been characteristics of the debate. Even though a majority of Danes feels secure when thinking about the pensions of the future (55 %), a substantial minority of 42 % does not feel secure in relation to their future perspectives.

The elderly feel more secure about the pensions of the future

The elderly part of the population feel more secure of the pensions of the future than the younger, which is no surprise, as large pension reforms primarily will be expected to take effect in the longer perspective, i.e. they will primarily apply to the younger generations.

The age of retirement is to be maintained – yet tendency to acceptance of an increased age of retirement

Even though most people wish to maintain the current age of retirement and increase their own pension contribution, there is, at the same time, an increasing acceptance among the population of the necessity of an increase in the age of retirement and/or a gradual change in the early retirement scheme over a period of time.

These tendencies are probably the result of the debate about the means of financing the welfare society of the future, which became more intense during the autumn months at the same time as attention was being given to the work of the Danish Welfare Commission.

The Danes' Attitudes to Energy Consumption and Agricultural Policy

Spontaneous willingness to pay more for energy from renewable sources

The Eurobarometer indicates a larger willingness among Danes to (potentially) pay more for renewable, environmentally-friendly energy sources compared to EU citizens in general. A total of 57 % of Danes say they would (potentially) pay more.

Focus on wind power

The Danes regard wind power as the best alternative to imported energy sources.

Low endorsement of nuclear energy

Among the Danes, the lowest approval rate is for the development of nuclear energy, which is in keeping with the general, historical scepticism regarding nuclear energy in Denmark.

The Danes want environmental consciousness in the EU's agricultural policy

That the Danes are increasingly conscious of the environment is also reflected in their expectations regarding the EU's agricultural policy.

More than average EU citizens, the Danes want to prioritise environmental protection, animal welfare and food safety. This is in line with tendencies in the EU's agricultural policy, where subsidies are to some extent made dependent on the farm in question maintaining certain environmental standards.

Agriculture and administration are regarded as the heaviest items on the European Union budget

45 % point to agriculture as the area weighing heaviest on the European Union budget, whereas 24 % think that administration is the heaviest item.