

EUROBAROMETER 64

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2005

NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
GREECE

The survey was requested and coordinated by the Directorate General Press and Communication.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction. Between October 11th and November 15th 2005, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe, carried out wave 64.2 of the Eurobarometer, on request of the European Commission, Directorate-General Press and Communication, Opinion Polls.

The research 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 Eurobarometer 64.2 has also been conducted in two accession countries (Bulgaria and Romania) as well as in two candidate countries (Croatia and Turkey) and in the Turkish Cypriot Community. 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.

The Greek sample consists of 1000 Greek residents, which allows us, to a great and secure degree, to consider that the research results and assumptions are representative of Greek national public opinion.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people's homes and in their national language.

LIFE SATISFACTION AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE GREEK PUBLIC OPINION

Fairly satisfied with their daily life. 1 in 2 Greek citizens (EL: 51% - EU25: 59%) claims they are fairly satisfied with the life they lead. 14% of the Greek sample feel very satisfied with their daily life, which is lower than the European average (EU25: 21%). It should be noted that 1 in 4 Greek citizens (25%) is not very satisfied with his/her daily life (EU25: 16%), while 1 in 10 (10%) states they are completely dissatisfied (*not at all satisfied*) with their daily life (EU25: 4%).

Low quality life expectations for the next twelve months. Expectations remain low for the next twelve months, as pessimism is seen in the stance of Greek citizens regarding their country's economic situation and employment situation.

- The majority of the Greek sample (63%) predicts worse economic developments for Greece in the forthcoming year. Greek citizens appear - as in previous EB surveys - to be among the most pessimistic of the entire survey sample (EU25: 39%).
- A deterioration in the employment situation in Greece is foreseen by 64% of the Greek sample. This is the second highest negative percentage (Portugal: 67%) among the countries that took part in the survey (EU25: 40%).
- A majority of the Greeks interviewed do not expect any change (either positive or negative) in the coming year, when it comes both to the financial situation of their households (50%) and to their personal job situation (58%).
- 42% of Greeks (EU25: 29%) consider that their current personal situation has deteriorated when compared to that of five years ago. Still, 33% of Greeks (EU25: 41%) expect their personal situation to improve in the next five years, while 29% worry that it will get worse.
- Greek and European Union citizens as a whole agree that the level of quality of life in Europe is higher than that in the United States (EL: 53% - EU25: 51%), in Japan (EL: 52% - EU25: 46%), in China (EL: 83% - EU25: 74%) and in India (EL: 90% - EU25: 79%).

TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

Greek citizens express their trust in the European Union. The European Union in the current survey – as in previous ones (EB60.1, EB61.0, EB62.0 & EB63.4) – receives a high percentage of trust from Greek citizens (among the highest in the entire survey), thus confirming the trends in trust levels which a significant part of Greeks interviewed have shown in recent Eurobarometer surveys.

The majority of Greeks express trust in the army (EL: 76% - EU25: 68%), the police (EL: 65% - EU25: 65%), the European Union (EL: 62% - EU25: 45%), charitable or voluntary organizations (EL: 61% - EU25: 66%), the Greek legal system (EL: 59% - EU25: 47%), as well as the Greek Parliament (EL: 57% - EU25: 35%).

The majority of Greeks express distrust in the press (EL: 55% - EU25: 49%), the national government (EL: 56% - EU25: 62%), television (EL: 58% - EU25: 42%), the trades unions (EL: 54% - EU25: 48%), the United Nations (EL: 56% - EU25: 34%), big companies (EL: 73% - EU25: 57%) and political parties (EL: 77% - EU25: 76%).

IMPORTANT ISSUES THAT GREECE FACES

Unemployment remains the issue of major concern. As in previous Eurobarometer surveys (e.g. EB59.1, EB60.1, EB61.0, EB62.0 & EB63.4), the most important issue that Greece faces is unemployment (EL: 60% - EU25: 44%). A large proportion of the Greek poll expresses concern about the economic situation of their country (EL: 42% - EU25: 26%) and rising prices/inflation (EL: 36% - EU25: 17%). Concern about crime is expressed by 15% of Greeks interviewed (EU25: 24%), while 1 in 10 is worried about pensions (EL: 10% - EU25: 10%).

The majority of the Greek sample believes that **the European Union should set as its top priority the fight against unemployment** (EL: 61% - EU25: 43%), as well as the fight against poverty and social exclusion (EL: 52% - EU25: 44%).

LEVEL OF DECISION

There is preference for joint decision-making within the European Union in most sectors, currently examined, with the exception of taxation (EL: 59% - EU25: 70%), the educational system (EL: 54% - EU25: 67%) and pensions (EL: 54% - EU25: 74%) –which, according to the Greek poll, should be subject to Greek government decision-making.

The survey looks at a number of areas in which Greeks are called upon to express their opinion on whether decision-making should be made independently of the national government or jointly within the European Union. Greek respondents clearly express their preference for joint decision-making in the following areas:

- Scientific and technological research, 79% (EU25: 69%)
- Fight against terrorism, 73% (EU25: 78%)
- Protection of the environment, 71% (EU25: 66%)
- Energy policy, 70% (EU25: 59%)
- Support for regions facing economic difficulties, 68% (EU25: 57%)
- Fight against crime, 62% (EU25: 59%)
- Consumer protection, 62% (EU25: 48%)
- Defense and foreign affairs, 60% (EU25: 63%)
- Competition policy, 60% (EU25: 56%)
- Fight against unemployment, 57% (EU25: 39%)
- Agricultural and fishing policy, 57% (EU25: 51%)
- Immigration, 53% (EU25: 57%)
- Health and social welfare, 52% (EU25: 29%)

EU decides on European defence policy. A majority of the Greek poll believes that the European Union (62%), rather than the national government (31%), should make decisions concerning European defence policy. Only 3% -amongst the lowest percentages recorded in the survey, along with in the Republic of Cyprus (1%) and Finland (3%)- believe that NATO should make decisions concerning European defence policy.

SENSE OF IDENTITY

Greek and/or European. As in previous Eurobarometer surveys, Greek citizens identify mainly with their primary nationality, with 47% perceiving themselves to be solely Greek. Nevertheless, 46% of the Greek sample expresses a sense of dual identity, meaning that there is a significant number of Greek citizens who view themselves in the near future as being primarily Greek and secondarily European.

Mostly very proud to be Greek. Greeks (80%) and Turks (85%) – with the highest percentages in the survey – state they are very proud of their nationality (EU25: 46%). As far as European identity is concerned, they appear to be fairly proud of it (EL: 46%, EU25: 51%).

THE IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union conjures up a positive image for the majority of Greeks, as 1 in 10 Greeks (10%) claims to have a very positive image of the EU (EU25: 7%) and 41% a *fairly positive* image (EU25: 37%).

The EU means above all the 'freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union'. In general, Greek respondents point to the positive aspects of the European Union when asked what does the EU mean to them personally. More specifically, most Greeks identify the EU with the *freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union* (EL: 60% - EU25: 50%), with the *maintenance of peace* (EL: 42% - EU25: 32%) and with the *single currency, the euro* (EL: 38% - EU25: 38%). However, 33% (EU25: 20%) of the Greek sample relate the European Union to the problem of *unemployment*.

The survey attempts to identify the feelings that the European Union evokes in Greeks and it can be seen that **a feeling of hope is expressed by 1 in 2 Greek citizens (EL: 53% - EU25: 42%).**

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Greeks want the current speed of European integration to accelerate to a maximum. Greeks believe that European integration is progressing at a relatively medium pace. In a speed scale (from 1 '*standing still*' to 7 '*running as fast as possible*') the Greek poll is placed between points 3 and 4, with percentages of 27% and 28% respectively. It should be noted that a significant percentage (46%) believe that the speed of European integration should be accelerated in order to reach the maximum possible speed, placing its opinion at point 7 ('*running as fast as possible*') of the speed scale. The Greek sample achieves the highest percentage of the survey, while the EU25 average is only 14%.

Greeks most fear the transfer of jobs to other EU Member states. The vast majority of the Greek poll (EL: 85% - EU25: 73%) feels most concerned by the possibility that jobs will be transferred from Greece to other EU Member states with lower production costs. Concern is also expressed by 7 in 10 Greek respondents (EL: 72% - EU25: 65%) regarding the fear that European integration might cause more difficulties for Greek farmers.

Other fears regarding European integration, expressed by Greek respondents, refer to the following: EU Member states might be called upon to pay more taxes to the European Union

(EL: 67% - EU25: 65%); drug trafficking, as well as international organized crime might increase (EL: 60% - EU25: 65%); an economic crisis might occur (EL: 61% - EU25: 52%); smaller Member States could lose power (EL: 55% - EU25: 43%); Greek citizens might lose social benefits (EL: 53% - EU25: 53%); and, lastly, the possibility of the Greek language being used less within the EU (EL: 52% - EU25: 38%).

Greeks support an increase in the EU's budget. 59% of the Greek poll believes that the European Union should have greater financial means given its political objectives (EU25: 32%), while a lower percentage (23%) consider that the EU's political objectives do not justify an increase in the Union's budget (EU25: 49%). It should be noted that Greek and European citizens express opposing opinions.

INVOLVEMENT IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

7 in 10 Greek citizens (71%) do not believe that their voice counts [personal view] in the European Union (EU25: 59%).

83% of Greek and 72% of European citizens do not feel very involved in European affairs. Therefore, 71% of the Greek respondents – a significantly higher percentage than the EU25 average (47%) - wish to be more involved in European affairs, although they express ignorance regarding how they might achieve this.

The majority of Greeks clearly state that the European institutions (EL: 89% - EU25: 78%), the national government (EL: 91% - EU25: 81%), as well as local government (EL: 89% - EU25: 76%), should make more efforts to further involve EU citizens in European affairs.

USA AND EU INTERNATIONAL ROLE

EU positive role – USA negative role. A highly negative position is expressed by the majority of Greeks regarding the international role played by the United States, whereas a positive position is recorded regarding the international role played by the European Union on matters like peace, the fight against terrorism, world economic development, the fight against poverty and the protection of the environment. It should be noted that the "negative" percentages recorded by the Greek sample are in all cases the highest recorded in the entire survey sample. Greeks express their strong negative opinion regarding the international role that the United States play regarding peace in the world (EL: 90% - EU25: 53%; the fight against poverty in the world (EL: 83% - EU25: 51%); the fight against terrorism (EL: 83% - EU25: 40%); the protection of the environment (EL: 78% - EU25: 60%); and, the growth of the world economy (EL: 76% - EU25: 33%). On the contrary, Greek respondents view positively the role that the European Union plays in all the above issues: *peace in the world* (EL: 56% - EU25: 63%); *the protection of the environment* (EL: 55% - EU25: 61%); *the fight against terrorism* (EL: 53% - EU25: 61%); and, *the growth of the world economy* (EL: 45% - EU25: 49%). However, concerning *the fight against poverty in the world*, a positive role is attributed to the EU by 41% of Greeks (EU25: 49%).

GREECE'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Greece has benefited from being a member of the European Union. The majority of Greeks (EL: 54% - EU25: 50%) view positively their country's membership of the European Union. It is worth noting that two-thirds of Greek citizens (67%) consider that their country has benefited from being a member of the European Union (EU25: 52%).

Greek citizens point out the advantages and disadvantages of their country belonging to the European Union. More specifically, the advantages they perceive mainly refer to the country's security (EL: 78% - EU25: 67%), the services' sector (EL: 65% - EU25: 54%), their standard of living (EL: 61% - EU25: 53%), as well as Greece's exports (EL: 56% - EU25: 64%). On the other hand, the disadvantages that they see mainly relate to the employment situation (EL: 61% - EU25: 54%), agriculture (EL: 52% - EU25: 48%) and the industry sector in Greece (EL: 51% - EU25: 37%).

KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

Greek citizens' level of knowledge on special EU-related issues is characterized as fairly satisfactory. 61% of Greeks interviewed –among the highest percentages recorded in the entire survey– seem to know that the European Union consists of 25 Member States, whereas the European average is significantly lower (44%). Moreover, a majority of Greek citizens (74%), the second highest percentage of the survey after Malta (80%), are aware of the fact that Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of the European Union (EU25: 50%). It is worth mentioning that 33% of Greeks surveyed are not aware that the European Union has its own anthem answering, «I don't know» to that question in contrast to an EU25 average of 28%.

Television remains the most used EU-related information source. In line with the results of previous Eurobarometer surveys, television continues to be the most used source of information for the Greeks (EL: 79% - EU25: 66%) when they are interested in getting information on the European Union, its policies and institutions. A significant percentage of the Greek poll (30%) turns to discussions with relatives, friends and colleagues (EU25: 24%), while the daily newspapers constitute the third most important source to obtain relevant information (EL: 22%, EU25: 42%). 1 in 5 Greeks (20%) prefer the radio (EU25: 30%). It should be noted that only 9% of Greek respondents use the Internet as an EU information source (EU25: 22%).

Objective but limited presentation of the EU by Greek media. The majority of both Greek and European poll evaluates the information it receives from the media, when presenting the European Union, to be objective (television EL: 48% - EU25: 49%, radio EL: 49% - EU25: 47% and press EL: 49% - EU25: 47%). Television, although constituting for the Greek citizen the main source of information on the EU, talks *too little* about the European Union, according to 50% of Greek respondents, one of the highest percentages recorded in the entire survey sample. Average European public opinion appears to differ, considering that television talks *about the right amount* about the EU (EU25: 46%). Regarding the radio, Greek respondents (46%) find that it does not make reference to the European Union as much as it should. Lastly, when it comes to the press, 39% of Greeks surveyed do not consider the coverage of the EU to be adequate, while 40% of the Greek sample, as well as the majority of the European sample (49%), seem satisfied, saying that the press talks gives *about the right amount of coverage* to the EU.

Greek and European citizens choose television as the main information source, as they claim (61% and 66% respectively) to watch the news on a daily basis. It is worth noting that Greeks present the highest negative percentages of the total sample, saying that not only

they never read the news in daily newspapers (EL: 33% - EU25: 15%), but also that they never listen to the news on the radio (EL: 37% - EU25: 16%).

EU COMMON POLICIES

YES to the development of a European political union, as 68% view favourably such a development. The same is observed among European citizens, but with a lower percentage (55%) recorded.

'Pro' regarding common EU policies. In line with the results of previous Eurobarometer surveys [EB58.1, EB59.1, EB60.1, EB61.0, EB62.0 and EB63.4], the Greek population remains supportive of the formation of EU common policies. More specifically, the majority of the Greek sample takes a positive stand on the principles of a common European defence and security policy among the EU Member states [EL: 78% - EU25: 77%], and a common foreign policy among the EU Member states towards other countries [EL: 74% - EU25: 68%].

Apparent disappointment about using the euro. In previous Eurobarometer surveys, which included the same question, the majority of the Greek poll was in favour of a European Monetary Union with a single currency –with high percentages (EB62.0: 62%)–, while in the last (EB63.4: 49%), as well as in the current survey (EB64.2: 46%), the positive percentage – of those being in favour– has dropped significantly, while the negative – those against– has increased to 53%. It should be noted that the percentage of Greek respondents who are against the European Monetary Union with a single currency is the second highest in the EU25, along with that of Sweden, and after the United Kingdom (64%). The EU25 average percentages are 60% in favour and 34% against.

EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION

Yes to an EU Constitution. Greek citizens remain firm to their belief that the European Union should have a Constitution [EL: 68% - EU25: 63%].

Greek and European citizens consider that **the adoption of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe will make the running of the European Union more democratic (EL: 69% - EU25: 64%), more efficient (EL: 69% - EU25: 61%) and more transparent (EL: 61% - EU25: 56%).** Furthermore, a majority of Greek and European citizens (EL: 64% - EU25: 60%), believe that the European Constitution is necessary to ensure that the European institutions work properly.

Greek and European citizens believe that, if all Member States adopt the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, **the European Union will be stronger in the world (EL: 72% - EU25: 69%) and more competitive economically (EL: 70% - EU25: 64%), as well as more socially-minded (EL: 63% - EU25: 54%).**

Greeks and Europeans in general in favour of a renegotiation of the European Constitution. The majority of the Greek poll, as well as the European one, (EL & EU25: 49%) clearly state that the European Constitution should be renegotiated, since France and the Netherlands voted against it. However, 28% of the Greek sample and 22% of the European one believe that EU Member States should continue the ratification process of the European Union regardless of the negative vote in France and the Netherlands. Lastly, 13% of both the Greek and European samples suggest that the European Constitution should be dropped.

ENLARGEMENT OF THE EU

Greeks remain ardent supporters of enlargement, as they explicitly opt for the prospect of a new enlargement with more countries joining the European Union in the forthcoming years (EL: 74% - EU25: 49%).

Greek citizens would welcome countries like Switzerland (88%), Norway (86%) and Iceland (80%) becoming full members of the European Union? On the other hand, **Greeks, as well as the majority of European citizens, are negative regarding the possible accession of Turkey (EL: 79% - EU25: 55%) and Albania (EL: 61% - EU25: 50%)**. Regarding FYROM¹, 46% (EU25: 41%) of Greek respondents supports its future accession to the EU, while 52% (EU25: 42%) oppose it.

TURKEY'S ACCESSION TO THE EU

Greek – as well as European – citizens justify their view concerning the accession of Turkey, by not only identifying the negative effects of such an event, but also not citing any positive outcome resulting from Turkey joining the European Union.

- Greek citizens do not consider that Turkey partly belongs to Europe either due to its geography (EL: 57% - EU25: 35%), or to its history (84% - EU25: 45%).
- Although a vast majority of Turkish citizens (61%) believe that their country's accession to the European Union would strengthen security in this region, Greek respondents have an opposing view, as 68% disagree with this proposition (EU25: 48%).
- Greek citizens (74%) – with the highest negative percentage in the entire survey – do not think that Turkey's accession to the EU would favour the mutual comprehension of European and Muslim values (EU25: 47%).
- Almost 7 in 10 Greeks (EL: 73% - EU25: 55%) believe that the cultural differences between Turkey and the European Union Member States are too significant to allow for this accession. It is worth noting that respondents from the Turkish Cypriot community (64%), as well as the citizens of Turkey (46%), share the same view.
- 8 in 10 Greeks (EL: 80% - EU25: 63%) believe that Turkey's joining the EU could result in increased immigration in the more developed countries of the European Union. It is noted that 56% of Turkish citizens express the same view.
- Greek and European citizens seem to understand the main criteria that a country wishing to join the European Union must satisfy, as a majority consider – 95% and 83% respectively – that in order to join the European Union in about ten years' time, **Turkey will have to systematically respect human rights**. 69% of the Turkish poll also appears to agree with this view. Another significant condition regarding Turkey's accession would appear to be the economic situation of the country, as 9 in 10 Greeks (EL: 92% - EU25: 76%) consider that in order to join the European Union in about ten years' time, **Turkey will have to significantly improve the state of its economy**. 70% of Turkish citizens express the same view.

¹ The survey was conducted before the summit of EU leaders in Brussels on December 15-16 during which FYROM was granted candidate status.