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NATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY MALTA

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Life satisfaction

Compared to 85% in the previous survey, 80% of Maltese interviewees say they are satisfied with the life they lead while 20% (15% in the previous survey) are not satisfied.

On balance, Maltese respondents expect an improvement in the quality of their life during the next twelve months. Nevertheless, the share of respondents who expect their life to improve in the short term fell sharply from 40% in spring 2005 to 29% in autumn 2005.

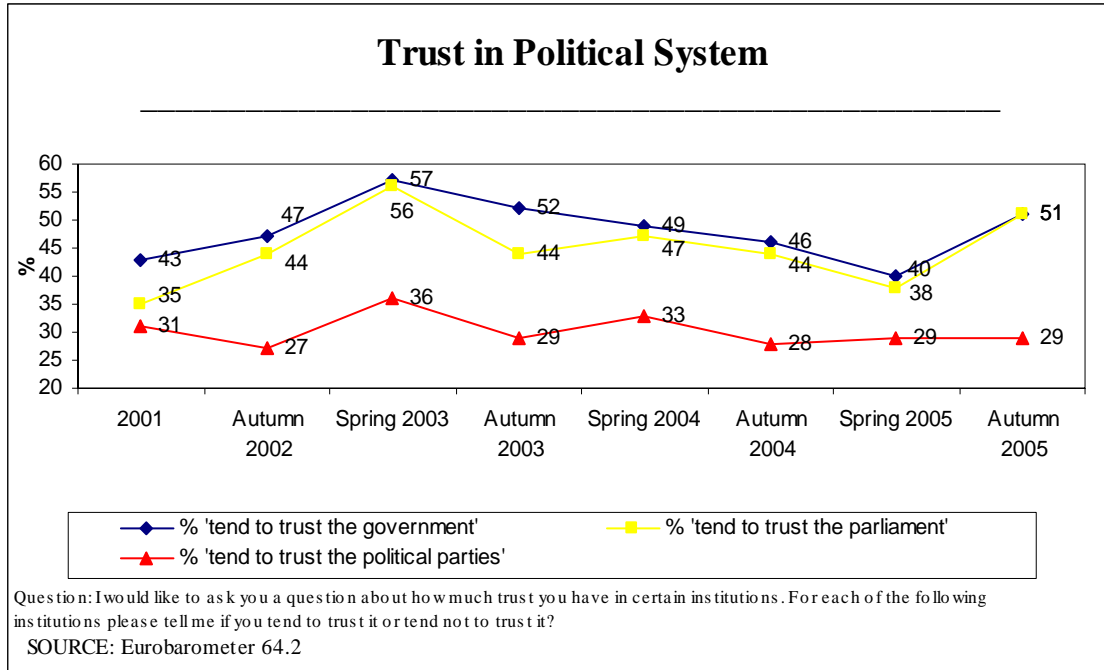
The downturn in expectations for the next twelve months was underpinned by apprehension regarding economic and financial developments in the short run. The survey was held shortly after the Government had expressed its intent to substantially increase fuel and electricity rates in response to the surge in international oil prices. In addition, concern over Malta's competitiveness in international markets, in part fuelled by the closures of a number of manufacturing firms and hotel establishments, has grown considerably over the last year

Trust in national institutions

Compared to the previous survey, a higher percentage of the Maltese population expressed trust in the press, radio and TV. 46% of respondents (34% in the previous survey) said that they trust the press while 39% (54%) said that they tend not to trust the press. 15% gave no answer. 79% and 81% of Maltese respondents trust the police and the army respectively. The survey confirmed that trust in the army was unaffected by the incidents at the Safi detention centre in January 2005.

An increase in trust in the Maltese government was recorded for the first time since spring 2003. Trust in the government rose by 11% over the previous survey result, to 51% (40%). Trust in the Maltese Parliament also increased substantially in comparison with the previous survey. 51% (38%) of respondents tend to trust Parliament while 37% (48%) tend not to trust it.

According to 54% of Maltese respondents (52%), big commercial companies in Malta are trustworthy. The Maltese tend to trust big companies to a larger extent than is the case in other EU member countries.



Most important issues facing Malta

The Maltese identified the economic situation, the increase in the cost of living and illegal immigration as the most pressing issues facing the country. 71% of respondents believe that the illegal immigration issue should be tackled jointly with the EU. In contrast, a relatively small proportion cited housing problems as their primary concern. When compared to the 25 EU member countries overall, Malta’s respondents placed more emphasis on the economic situation, but expressed less concern on the issue of criminal activity. 54% of Maltese respondents identified the need to combat rising prices as the single most important objective for the country in the long run.

Level of decision

Respondents were also asked on whether a number of policy decisions should be made by the Maltese government or made jointly within the European Union. 71% of respondents believe that the illegal immigration issue warrants cooperation between the Maltese government and the EU. 66% and 50% of respondents believe that the protection of the environment and the unemployment problem, respectively, should be tackled jointly within the European Union. On the other hand, 65% said the Government should tackle health and social welfare issues independently of the European Union.

Feelings on EU

When asked about their identity in the near future, 28% of Maltese respondents (34% in previous survey) see themselves as Maltese only whilst 68% (57%) see themselves as

Maltese first but also European. 96% (95%) are proud to be Maltese whilst 4% (4%) are not. 70% (65%) are proud to be European whilst 26% (30%) are not proud to be European.

42% and 36% of Maltese interviewees said the EU elicits from them feelings of hope and trust, respectively. 14% of Maltese respondents say they mistrust the EU, which compared favorably with the 20% of survey participants who recounted this feeling in the 25 EU countries as a whole. In the EU 25 countries, on average, almost a quarter of respondents say they feel indifferent about the EU project, whereas only 9% expressed disinterest in the EU.

Role of the individual in EU affairs

Respondents were asked whether they thought their voice counted in the EU. 46% (56% in the previous survey) of Maltese respondents said that their voice counts in the EU whilst 39% (31%) feel that they have no voice in the EU.

90% of Maltese interviewees agreed that more efforts should be made by the Maltese government to further involve citizens in European affairs. An almost equal amount of participants expect their local government to step up efforts to bring the people closer to the EU. 73% admitted they do not feel very involved in EU affairs at present. 50% expressed a wish to be more involved in European affairs, but said they did not know how to go about it.

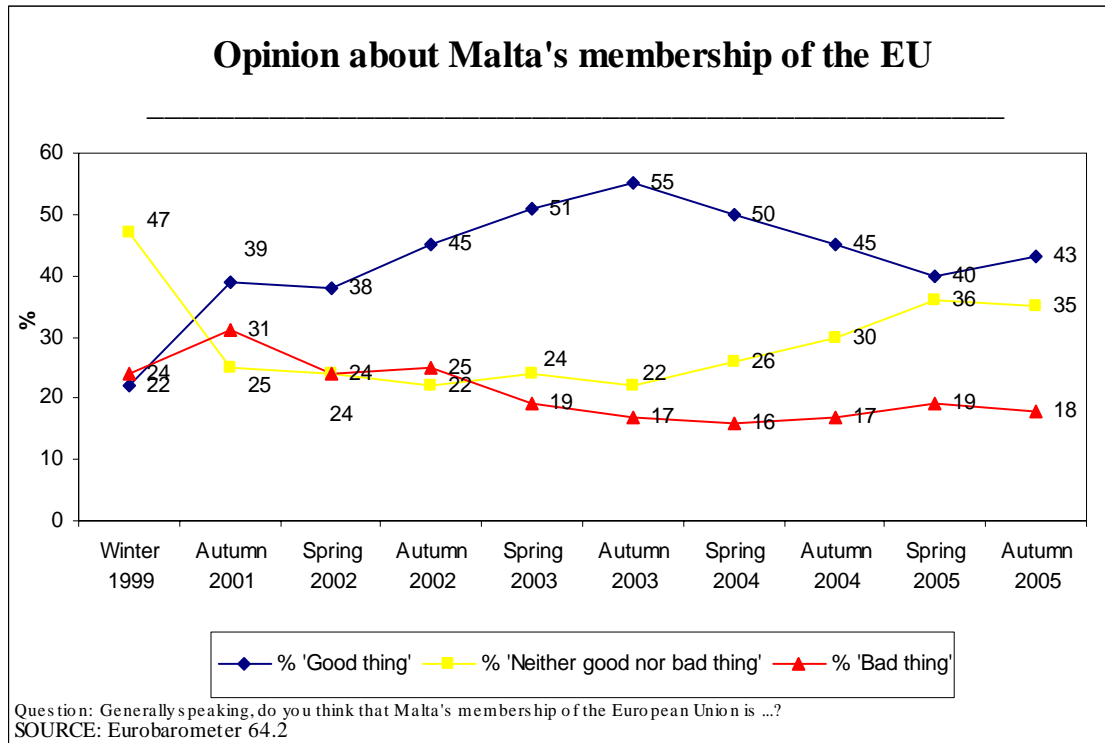
Support for EU membership

The slide in support for membership of the European Union amongst Maltese respondents appears to have halted in this autumn survey. 43% (40%) of Maltese respondents said that membership of the European Union is a good thing. 18% (19%) of respondents said that Malta's EU membership of the EU is a bad thing whilst 35% (36%) said that it is neither good nor bad. The reconstruction of an important part of Malta's road infrastructure, partly funded by the EU, and the greater sensitivity shown by the EU to Malta's problem with illegal immigration may have contributed to improving public sentiment on Malta's membership.

Males tend to be more supportive of Malta's EU membership than females. 49% of males support Malta's EU membership, 32% believe membership had a neutral effect and 17% say membership was a bad thing. On the other hand, 38% of female interviewees believe membership was a good thing, 37% are convinced it has been neither a good nor a bad thing, and 19% are convinced it has been a negative development.

A classification of respondents by age group shows that those supporting membership outweigh those against in all age categories. Support for membership is highest in the 40-

54 and 55+ age groups. On the other hand, 42% of those aged between 15 and 24 years say membership has been neither good nor bad.



Benefit from EU membership

When asked to take everything into account, 55% (53%) of Maltese respondents said that, on balance, Malta has benefited from being a member of the European Union. As in the previous survey, 30% of respondents said that Malta did not benefit from being a member of European Union.

Survey participants say that the EU has had a good effect on the country's security and the overall standard of living. On the other hand, they do not think the EU has had a positive influence on the country's exports, industry and the general employment situation. The latter mainly reflects the coincidence of membership and harsher international competition in the country's main export markets over the last two years.

Confidence in EU Institutions

When asked about how much they trust the European Institutions, 60% of Maltese respondents (59%) said they tend to trust the European Commission whilst 18% (21%) tend not to. 63% of Maltese respondents (58% in previous survey) said they tend to trust the European Parliament while 19% (24%) do not .

Knowledge about EU institutions and policies

35% of respondents (41%) feel they understand how the EU works while 52% (41%) do not. However, the Maltese respondents were more confident of their knowledge on EU affairs than their average European counterparts.

Respondents' actual level of information about the EU was measured through a series of questions on basic facts concerning the history, structures and symbols of the Union. Maltese respondents performed very positively when compared to the participants in all the 25 member countries. A majority of Maltese respondents were able to identify the veracity, or otherwise, of the statements about aspect of the EU cited in the interview.

EU budget

When asked on which item the EU spends most of its budget, administrative and personnel expenditure was the most frequently mentioned item by the Maltese. 21% of Maltese respondents mentioned this item, but the perception that such costs absorb most of the EU budget is even stronger in the EU as a whole (31%). On the other hand, the Maltese appear to understate the share of the EU budget that goes on agriculture, with only 9% mentioning this item.

Political Union and the European Constitution

Currently 65% (61%) of Maltese respondents are in favour of the development of a European political union while 22% (25%) are against. 60% (50%) of Maltese respondents support a constitution for the European Union whilst 16% (20%) are against it.

Views of the Maltese public about the European Constitution are generally more positive than in the rest of the European Union. 70% (64% in previous survey) of Maltese respondents agree that if all member states adopt the Treaty, the running of the European Union will be more democratic. 69% (65%) of Maltese say that its adoption will also make the running of the EU more efficient.

Support for Future Enlargement

Future enlargement of the European Union is supported by 57% (63%) of Maltese respondents while 21% (19%) are against it. The Maltese also take a more positive stance regarding further enlargement than in the EU as a whole. Turkey is the country least supported by Maltese respondents, with 39% (43%) in favour of its membership and 40% (39%) against. 21% of Maltese respondents (18%) were undecided. Despite this, Maltese respondents were 15 percentage points less negative than the European average. 55% of all European respondents are against Turkey entering the European Union.