

EUROBAROMETER 65.2

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2006

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GREECE

This survey was requested and coordinated by Directorate-General Communication.

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

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 author's.

INTRODUCTION

Between March 27th and May 1st 2006, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe, carried out wave 65.2 of the Eurobarometer, on request of the European Commission, Directorate-General Press and Communication, Opinion Polls.

The Eurobarometer 65.2 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 65.2 has also been conducted in the two acceding countries (Bulgaria and Romania), as well as in the two candidate countries (Croatia and Turkey) and in the Turkish Cypriot Community.

In these countries, the survey covers the national population of citizens of the respective nationalities and the population of citizens of all the European Union Member States that are residents in those countries and have a sufficient command of one of the respective national language(s) to answer the questionnaire. The basic sample design applied in all states is a multi-stage, random (probability) one. In each country, a number of sampling points were 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, to a great and secure degree, seeks to ensure that the research results and assumptions are representative of the very same Greek national public opinion.

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

All survey percentages have been rounded; from 0.1 to 0.4 down and from 0.5 to 0.9 up to the nearest unit of the decimal system.

PERSONAL SITUATION AND EXPECTATIONS

Once again, as seen in the previous Eurobarometer surveys, the same contradiction is observed in Greek public opinion, i.e. that although Greeks appear to be fairly satisfied with their daily life, at the same time, they claim that their personal situation has deteriorated in the last five years. It would appear that Greeks are more pessimistic and dissatisfied than the average European citizen.

Although Greeks are fairly satisfied with their daily life, they are less so than the average European citizen.

Greek respondents (56%) claim to be *fairly satisfied* with the life they lead (EU25: 60%). The rate of Greeks displaying satisfaction (67% - total: "very satisfied, 11% + fairly satisfied, 56%") is one of the lowest recorded in the survey sample, while the EU25 average (81% - total: "very satisfied, 21% + fairly satisfied, 60%") is significantly higher.

Very disappointed as they consider that their personal situation has deteriorated.

One out of two Greeks (52%) considers that his/her personal situation has become worse over the last five years. Greeks are among the most dissatisfied Europeans as their rate is the highest recorded in the current survey. In addition, Greeks believe that their personal situation will remain the same in the next five years, as no change (either positive or negative) is expected. (EL: 38% - EU25: 40%).

Uncertainty and pessimism regarding expectations for the upcoming year.

Expectations remain low for the next twelve months, as pessimism is observed in the position of Greek citizens regarding their country's economic situation and the employment situation. More specifically, the majority of the Greek sample expects that the economic situation will get worse (EL: 57% - EU25: 35% / EB64.2: 63% - EB63.4: 59%) as will the employment situation (EL: 59% - EU25: 38% / EB64.2: 64% - EB63.4: 63%) over the forthcoming year. It should be noted that although both rates are negative, they have, however, dropped when compared to the figures recorded in the two previous EB surveys (EB64.2 & EB63.4). Nevertheless, a significant proportion of the Greek sample (31%) does not foresee any change (either positive or negative) in the coming year concerning the economic and employment situation in Greece (EU25: 38% & EU25: 36% respectively).

Greek economy is in a bad state; European economy is in a good one.

Nine out of ten Greeks express their dissatisfaction about the state of their national economy, characterizing it as "bad" (EL: 89% - EU25: 56%). The percentage of Greeks holding this view is one of the highest recorded in the current survey. On the other hand, the majority of Greeks appear to be satisfied with the European economy, finding that it performs better than the Greek economy (EL: 64% - EU25: 53%). Moreover, 46% of the Greek sample predicts a deterioration of the Greek economy in the next five years (EU25: 31%), while they appear optimistic about the European economy, believing that it will improve in the immediate future (EL: 57% - EU25: 54%).

Furthermore, a vast majority of Greek citizens find that the situation of the Greek economy (EL: 89% - EU25: 43%), as well as of employment (EL: 90% - EU25: 54%) and social welfare (EL: 85% - EU25: 36%), is worse when compared to the average of the other countries in the European Union.

It is worth noting that

- Despite the overall pessimism, six out of ten Greek citizens still claim to be satisfied with their quality of life (EL: 64% - EU25: 77%) and believe that it will further improve in the next five years (EL: 51% - EU25: 50%).
- Eight out of ten Greeks (EL: 78% - EU: 59%) have positive views with the idea of reform.

IMPORTANT ISSUES THAT GREECE IS FACED WITH

Unemployment remains the issue of major concern.

As in the previous Eurobarometer surveys (e.g. EB59.1, EB60.1, EB61.0, EB62.0, EB63.4, EB64.2), the most important issue that Greece faces is unemployment (EL: 68% - EU25: 49%). Therefore, the majority of the Greek poll believes that the European Union should set as a top priority the fight against unemployment (EL: 68% - EU25: 43%), as well as the fight against poverty and social exclusion (EL: 56% - EU25: 43%).

A majority of Greek public opinion expresses concern about the country's economic situation (EL: 43% - EU25: 23%) and rising prices / inflation (EL: 32% - EU25: 13%). Concern about crime is expressed by 17% of the Greeks interviewed (EU25: 24%), while one out of ten is worried about the health system (EL: 10% - EU25: 18%).

Negative role of the European Union on important issues.

Greek public opinion finds the role of the European Union to be negative when it comes to issues of major importance to Greek citizens, such as rising prices / inflation (EL: 62% - EU25: 44%), the fight against unemployment (EL: 48% - EU25: 35%), pensions (EL: 48% - EU25: 27%), taxation (EL: 43% - EU25: 34%) and the current economic situation (EL: 46% - EU25: 29%). On the other hand, Greeks believe that the European Union plays a positive role in defence and foreign affairs (EL: 55% - EU25: 52%), the fight against terrorism (EL: 49% - EU25: 58%) and in the protection of the environment (EL: 48% - EU25: 51%).

GREECE'S EU MEMBERSHIP

Greece has benefited from being a member of the European Union.

The majority of Greeks (53%) believe that Greece's participation in the European Union has had a positive impact (EU25: 55%), which is a view of great significance, particularly given that it is the 25th anniversary of Greece's accession to the European Union. The opposite view is shared by 13% of Greek citizens (EU25: 13%), whereas 33% of Greeks take a neutral position ("*neither positive nor negative*") - (EU25: 28%). This is why the majority of Greek citizens (72%) believe that Greece has benefited from its participation in the European Union. The percentage of Greeks holding this view is one of the highest in the current survey, expressing Greeks' satisfaction, while the EU25 average is significantly lower, reaching 54%.

Very attached to Greece but not very attached to the EU.

Although Greeks hold a positive view concerning their country's participation in the European Union and consider their country as having greatly benefited from being a member of the European Union, they still generally feel more attached to their own country rather than to the European Union.

Greeks, more than any other European citizens, feel very attached to their city / village (EL: 96% - EU25: 86%), to their region (EL: 97% - EU25: 87%), as well as to their country (EL: 98% - EU25: 90%). It is noted, that in all three cases, the Greek rates recorded are the highest in the entire survey.

On the other hand, the percentage of Greeks displaying attachment to the European Union is one of the lowest recorded in the current survey. More specifically, no attachment whatsoever is expressed by six out of ten Greeks (63%), while 37% appear to identify with the European Union. European public opinion differs from Greek opinion in that European citizens, on average, appear to feel more attached to the European Union (50%). Nevertheless, a great proportion of the European sample does not feel the same way (47%).

TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

Six out of ten Greek citizens trust the European Union. The Greek percentage (63%) is among the highest in the entire survey following those of Hungary (70%) and Romania (68%), while the EU25 average of those displaying trust towards the European Union is significantly lower (EU25: 48%).

A majority of Greek citizens appear to be aware of EU institutions and bodies.

(European Parliament EL: 92% - EU25: 89% / European Commission EL: 88% - EU25: 81% / Council of Ministers of the European Union EL: 83% - EU25: 64% / Court of Justice of the European Communities EL: 83% - EU25: 69% / European Central Bank EL & EU25: 73%).

Sense of trust in EU institutions and bodies.

Greek respondents express a sense of trust in EU institutions and bodies, recording high rates: (European Parliament EL: 63% - EU25: 52% / European Commission EL: 61% - EU25: 47% / Council of Ministers of the European Union EL: 61% - EU25: 43% / Court of Justice of the European Communities EL: 67% - EU25: 52% / European Central Bank EL: 58% - EU25: 49%).

Moreover, they believe, more than the average European citizen does, that all the EU institutions play an important role in the life of the European Union (European Parliament EL: 88% - EU25: 76% / European Commission EL: 88% - EU25: 70% / Council of Ministers of the European Union EL: 86% - EU25: 60% / Court of Justice of the European Communities EL: 89% - EU25: 68% / European Central Bank EL: 87% - EU25: 71%).

56% of Greek citizens appear to trust their national Parliament (EU25: 38%). Distrust in this institution is expressed by 44% of Greek respondents, as well as by a majority of European citizens (EU25: 54%).

Despite the latest scandals unearthed, 55% of Greeks continue to trust their system of justice (EU25: 48%). A significant proportion of Greek (44%) as well as European (47%), citizens tend not to trust their national system of justice.

57% of Greek and 59% of European citizens tend to not trust their national Government. However, the proportion of Greek citizens (43%) that **express trust in the Greek Government (EU25: 35%)** is significant.

A tendency of strong distrust towards the United Nations is recorded, expressed by six out of ten Greek citizens (EL: 63% - EU25: 32%). However, European citizens on average hold the opposite view, expressing their trust in the international organization (EU25: 54%). The percentage of Greeks who express trust in the United Nations is limited to 36%. It is worth noting that the Greek figure for those tending to distrust the United Nations is the highest recorded in the entire survey.

A high percentage of distrust is recorded both by Greek and European citizens (75% & 72% respectively) **vis-à-vis political parties.**

EUROPEAN FLAG

Positive symbolic significance of the European flag.

In most Greek citizens' opinion (78%), the European flag represents something good (EU25: 71%), whereas 21% of respondents take the opposite view (EU25: 15%).

It is particularly noteworthy that the majority of Greeks (64%) believe that the European flag should fly next to the Greek flag in front of all public buildings (EU25: 55%). The percentage of Greeks supporting this point-of-view is one of the highest recorded in the current survey.

Nine out of ten Greek and European respondents claim they are acquainted with the European flag (92%). However, 56% of Greek citizens do not identify with the European flag (EU25: 39%). Nevertheless, a significant proportion of the Greek sample (43%), as well as the majority of the EU poll (51%), appears to have difficulty in identifying with the European flag.

THE IMAGE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Taking into consideration the previous Eurobarometer surveys, it is observed that **the European Union continues to evoke a positive image for the majority of Greeks** (EL: 53% - EU25: 50%).

The EU mostly means 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 the EU means to them personally. More specifically, Greeks mainly identify the EU with the *freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union* (EL: 60% - EU25: 50%), with the *single currency, the euro* (EL: 56% - EU25: 39%) and with the *maintenance of peace* (EL: 45% - EU25: 33%). However, 35% (EU25: 18%) of the Greek sample relates the European Union to the problem of *unemployment*.

One out of two Greeks (EL: 52% - EU25: 42%) expects that his/her country will be more influential in the European Union in the future (EB62.0: 58%).

Six out of ten Greek respondents (60%) do not believe that the interests of Greece are well taken into account by the European Union, whereas 39% of the Greek poll claims the contrary. The corresponding European averages are 46% and 38% respectively.

Greek (66%) and European (54%) citizens do not believe that their personal view counts in the European Union, while 33% of Greek and 36% of European respondents hold the contrary belief.

The fact that his/her country is a member of the European Union makes a Greek feel safer, a view expressed by 71% of the Greek poll (EU25: 47%), reaching the second highest percentage recorded in the 25 Member States, just after Cyprus (72%). In addition, Greeks feel more stable politically (EL: 66% - EU25: 41%) and economically (EL: 54% - EU25: 45%) because of their country's membership of the European Union.

A majority of Greeks not only believe that the European Union will play a more significant role in their daily life within the next five years (55%), but they also want it to do so (60%). It is noted that in both cases the Greek sample records one of the highest percentages in the current survey, while the European averages are significantly lower (41% and 46% respectively).

Lastly, Greek (54%) and European (56%) citizens expect that the international role of the European Union, compared to the role it played five years ago, is becoming more important.

LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION

Greeks do not feel they know a lot, but their level of knowledge is judged to be fairly good.

Greek respondents feel that they do not know much about the European Union, its policies and institutions. Shown on a scale (from 1: “know nothing” to 10: “know a lot”) the Greek poll records a figure of 75% (EU25: 69%) placing its sense of knowledge between levels 1 and 5, with a “knowledge” index reaching 4,3 (EU25: 4,5). It is noted that the highest rate is placed at level 5 (EL: 22% - EU25: 21%).

Nevertheless, Greek citizens’ level of knowledge on issues related to the European Union is judged to be fairly good, as a majority answer most of the questions in a quiz on the European Union correctly.

[Average score for correct answers – EL: 57% - EU25: 45%]

- Six out of ten Greek respondents are aware of the fact that the European Union has been enlarged and no longer comprises 15 Member States (EL: 63% among the highest rates recorded – EU25: 50%).
- Eight out of ten Greeks know (81%) that Members of the European Parliament are elected directly by the citizens of the European Union. The Greek rate is the second highest of the survey, following that of Malta (82%), while the EU25 average is just 52%.
- However, Greeks mistakenly believe that most of the European budget is spent on administrative and personnel costs, as a majority claim that such costs absorb the biggest part of the European budget (EL: 52% - EU25: 41%).

INFORMATION SOURCES ON THE EU

Television remains the most widely used EU-related informational source.

In line with the results of previous Eurobarometer surveys, eight out of ten Greeks (83%) opt for television as their main source of information about the European Union, its policies and its institutions (EU25: 70%).

Other information sources preferred by Greek respondents include:

- Discussions with persons in their close circle (family, friends and colleagues) in 37% appear to be a significant means of acquiring relevant information (EU25: 22%).
- Daily newspapers, recording a rate of 21% (EU25: 41%), as well as radio (EL: 18% - EU25: 31%) are also significant information sources for Greek respondents. However, when comparing these rates to the European averages, it can be seen that Greek citizens record the lowest rate of those expressing their preference for reading the daily newspapers and one of the lowest percentages of those listening to the radio in order to get information on the European Union.

- Lastly, the preference rate for the Internet is very low, as only 5 in 100 Greek respondents use it as a means of information on European Union activities. It is noted that the Greek rate of preference for the Internet is the lowest in the entire survey sample (EL: 5% - EU25: 23%).

Greeks watch the news on television on a daily basis.

Greek and European citizens choose television as their main information source, as they claim (65% and 66% respectively) to watch the news on a daily basis. It is worth noting that Greeks present the highest percentages of the total sample, claiming that not only do they never read the news in daily newspapers (EL: 37% - EU25: 18%), but they also never listen to the news on the radio (EL: 41% - EU25: 20%).

Objective but limited coverage of the EU by the Greek media.

The majority of both the Greek and European polls evaluate the information presented by the media on the European Union to be objective (television EL: 53% - EU25: 53%, radio EL: 60% - EU25: 48% and Press EL: 58% - EU25: 49%). It is observed that the Greek percentages relating to the objective presentation of the European Union by the mass media have increased when compared to those recorded in the two previous EB surveys (EB64.2 & EB63.4).

With regards to the Greek mass media making reference to the European Union, it is observed that the press, more than television and radio, meets the information needs of the Greek citizens. Nevertheless, the EU 25 mass media seems to refer more often to issues related to the European Union than the Greek media, thus responding better to EU25 citizens' needs to be informed.

While television constitutes the main source of information on the EU for Greek citizens, it is still inadequate and, talks *too little* about the European Union, according to 48% of Greek respondents (EU25: 35%), recording the second highest (negative) percentage in the total survey sample. The average European poll appears to differ, considering that television talks sufficiently about the EU (EU25: 50%). Regarding radio, Greek respondents (46%) find that it does not make reference to the European Union as much as it should.

Concerning the press, one in two Greek citizens (50%), as well as European citizens (51%), seems satisfied, saying that the press talks *about the right amount* about the EU. The current Greek rate figure has increased by 10 percentage points from that recorded in the previous EB survey (40%) (EB64.2). Nevertheless, the percentage of Greeks wanting more press coverage on the European Union is the second highest negative result in the entire survey (35%), while the EU25 average stating that the press does not provide sufficient coverage is 23%.

Lastly, when it comes to radio, 46% of Greeks (the highest negative rating in the survey) believe that coverage of the EU is not adequate, while an equally significant proportion of the sample does not share this opinion, stating that they are satisfied with the information / news received.

BUILDING THE EUROPEAN UNION

Greeks greatly fear a transfer of jobs to other EU Member States.

The main concerns about Europe's future within the structure of the European Union include a transfer of jobs to other Member States where production costs are lower (EL: 82% - EU25: 72%), as well as more difficulties being created for Greek farmers as a result of European integration (EL: 77% - EU25: 61%).

Other fears about the enlargement of the European Union, expressed by Greek respondents, refer to the following: EU Member States might be called upon to pay more to the European Union (EL: 67% - EU25: 63%); drug trafficking, as well as international organized crime, might increase (EL: 59% - EU25: 60%); Greek citizens might lose social benefits (EL: 59% - EU25: 50%); an economic crisis might occur (EL: 53% - EU25: 47%); and, lastly, smaller Member States could lose their influence (EL: 50% - EU25: 40%).

Greek citizens (49%) do not believe that the rate at which the European Union is developing should be more rapid in one group of countries than in others (EU25: 43%). Nevertheless, an almost equal proportion (46%) of the Greek sample disagrees with this view (EU25: 38%).

YES to further EU enlargement, although not as enthusiastically as in the past.

Greeks support EU enlargement, as they explicitly opt for the prospect of further enlargement with more countries joining the European Union in the forthcoming years (EL: 56% - EU25: 45%), whereas 42% of Greek respondents are opposed (EU25: 42%). It is noted that the pro-enlargement rate has dropped from 74% recorded in the previous Eurobarometer survey (EB64.2) to 56% in the current survey, and, as a result, the anti-enlargement rate has increased from 24% (EB64.2) to 42% in the current survey. Therefore, it is observed that although Greeks still continue to support the prospect of a new EU enlargement, they do not share the same enthusiasm as in the past.

SUPPORT FOR EU POLICIES

YES to the Euro

One in two Greek citizens (51%) appears to be in favour of a European Monetary Union with a single currency (euro), although a significant proportion of the Greek sample (48%) is against. Nevertheless, a change of attitude is observed. In the two previous EB surveys, disappointment with using the euro was apparent (against, EB63.4: 49% & EB64.2: 46%), while, in the current survey, the 'pro' rate has slightly increased, representing the majority of the Greek poll. The EU25 average percentages are 59% in favour of the euro and 34% against. It should be noted that the percentage of Greek respondents who are against the euro is the second highest after that of the United Kingdom (63%).

In favour of common EU policies.

82% of Greek respondents are in favour of a common defence and security policy within the European Union (EU25: 75%).

77% of Greeks support the development of a common foreign policy among the EU Member States vis-à-vis other countries (EU25: 67%), while 22% of respondents oppose such a development (EU25: 21%).

Greek (96%) and European (80%) citizens agree that the European Union's foreign policy should be independent of the United States' foreign policy. The Greek rate displaying support for an independent EU foreign policy is the highest recorded in the current survey.

Generally speaking, Greeks appear to be supportive of the creation of EU common policies and believe that the European Union should have its own Foreign Minister who can be the spokesperson for a common EU position (EL: 77% - EU25: 65%). Moreover, they strongly believe, more than any other European citizens, that the European Union should have a common immigration policy towards people from countries outside of the European Union (EL: 87% - EU25: 75%).

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

YES to an EU Constitution

Six out of ten Greek citizens (62%), as well as European citizens (61%), express the wish for a Constitution of the European Union, while 35% of Greek and 22% of European citizens express the opposite viewpoint. Greek and European citizens consider that adopting a treaty to establish a Constitution for Europe will make the functioning of the European Union more democratic (EL: 65% - EU25: 62%), more efficient (EL: 65% - EU25: 62%) and more transparent (EL: 59% - EU25: 56%). Moreover, they believe that if all Member States adopt the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, the European Union will be stronger in the world (EL: 70% - EU25: 68%), more competitive economically (EL: 69% - EU25: 62%), as well as more socially-minded (EL: 61% - EU25: 54%).

Greeks and Europeans suggest a renegotiation of the European Constitution.

The majority of the Greek poll, as well as that of the European Union overall, (EL: 57% - EU25: 47%) clearly states that the European Constitution should be renegotiated, since France and the Netherlands voted against it. However, 18% of the Greek sample and 23% of the EU25 sample believe that EU Member States should continue the ratification process of the European Union regardless of the negative results of the referenda in France and the Netherlands. Lastly, 21% of the Greek sample considers that the European Constitution should be dropped (EU25: 13%).