



Standard Eurobarometer



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INTRODUCTION

Conducted on behalf of the European Commission, the Eurobarometer 65 public opinion poll surveyed 1020 people aged 15 years and over in France between March 30th and April 24th, 2006. Interviews were carried out face-to-face in people's homes by TNS Sofres.

1. A GLOOMY CLIMATE OF OPINION

- Though 85% of the French say they are satisfied with the life they lead (+4 percentage points compared with the previous survey carried out last autumn), expectations for the next twelve months remain fairly pessimistic: 50% of the French expect the economic situation of their country to worsen and 47% feel that unemployment will increase.
- 43% (-3) of the French feel that their personal situation will improve in the next five years and 38% (+6) that it will remain the same, while 17% (-2) expect it to worsen.
- Unemployment is still a key concern: when asked to name the two main issues facing their country, 65% of the French pick out unemployment, at a rate 16 percentage points higher than the EU-25 average (after unemployment comes crime at 28%, the economic situation at 27% and inflation at 18%). In addition, 85% of the French say that they fear the transfer of jobs to other Member States with lower production costs and this is the highest level of fear in the whole of the EU. 73% of the French fear more difficulties for their farmers and 70% fear that France will pay more and more to the European Union.
- Only 11% think that the European Union is performing better than the American and Japanese economies, while 22% and 45% feel that it is performing better than the Chinese and the Indian ones respectively. To improve European economic performance, 74% advocate an improvement of education and vocational training, 62% emphasise incentives for the start-up of new businesses and 46% suggest investment in research and development.
- Only 31% (+3) of French people trust the French Parliament, 20% (-3) trust the French government (a lower score than in any other EU Member State) and 10% (+1) political parties.

2. THE EU TODAY

- Trust in the European Union is stable at 41% (=). Almost one French person in two (48%, +2) has a good image of the EU; just under one in five (19%, -5) has a negative image. More

than half of the people interviewed in France (49%, +3) think that European Union membership is a good thing for their country. For 32% (-4) of the French, it is neither good nor bad, while it is a bad thing for only 17% (+ 2). Since most indicators in this respect have improved significantly at EU level, French public opinion is slightly below the EU-25 average.

- Furthermore, 50% of the French (-1) consider that their country has benefited from being a member of the European Union, while 40% (+2) think the opposite and 10% (-1) do not know. The gap between the first two categories has never been so small (10 points) in recent years.
- The role of the EU is perceived as positive in the fields of the fight against terrorism (59%), protection of the environment (56%) and foreign policy and defence (50%). By contrast, the French see the EU's role as a negative one when it comes to inflation (57%) and unemployment (53%).
- When asked what Europe means to them personally, 53% answer "freedom to travel, work and study in a foreign country", 49% "the euro", 43% "peace" and 42% "cultural diversity".
- 58% say that they are attached to Europe, as against 41% saying the opposite. Nearly 4 respondents out of 5 see the European flag as a good symbol for Europe.
- In spite of a decrease by 6 points, 70% of the French are in favour of the common currency, 26% (+5) are opposed to it, while 4% do not know.
- A large majority of the French population have heard of the European Parliament (94%), the European Commission (89%), the European Central Bank (71%) and the Council of Ministers (68%). 49% (+1) trust the European Parliament, followed by the European Commission (44%, =), the Court of Justice (41%, =) and the European Central Bank (38%, +3).

3. INFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

- One French person in two (49%) gives correct answers in the "knowledge test" on the European Union, which is a little higher than the EU-25 average (45%). However, only 43% of respondents know that Members of the European Parliament are chosen directly by citizens. And 34% (+8) of the French continue to believe that administrative costs constitute the largest part of the EU budget, while in fact they represent less than 6%.
- To get information about the EU, respondents mainly use television (70%), newspapers (37%), and radio (32%). The Internet is used by 31% of respondents, as compared to only 8% in October 2001, with use being particularly common among the under-40s.

- 47% of the French think that French television talks too little about the EU, 7% think that it talks too much and 39% say that it is about right. 35% of French respondents see French radio as talking too little about the EU, 3% say that it is too much and 35% say that it is just the right amount. The press is seen as the best media source for conveying European information: 46% of the French feel that national press coverage of the EU is about right and only 4% that there is too much coverage.

4. THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- 50% of the French hope that in five years' time, the European Union will play a more important role in their daily lives than is the case today. 11% would like it to play a less important role and 30% the same role.
- “Combating unemployment” and “fighting against poverty and exclusion” (both 58%) are the priorities that the French would most like the European Union to deal with. The other priorities are “preserving peace in Europe” (25%) and “protecting the environment” (24%).
- In spite of a slight decrease, support both for a common security and defence policy (80%, -3) and for a common foreign policy (65%, -6) remains at a very high level.
- Support among the French for further enlargement of the EU remains one of the lowest in Europe with 31% (=) in favour and 62% (+2) opposed. Only Austrians, Germans and Luxembourgers are more opposed to enlargement than the French.
- One year after the “no” victory in the constitutional treaty referendum, 62% (-6) of the French support the idea of a European Constitution, 27% are against and 12% do not know. 69% (=) think that the Constitution should be renegotiated, 14% (-2) that it should be abandoned and only 10% (-5) that Member States should continue with ratification.
- Just over half of French respondents (53%, =) are against “the speed of building Europe being faster in one group than in other countries”, whereas 31% (+1) are in favour of it (16% do not know).