

EUROBAROMETER 66

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2006

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CYPRUS

(Areas under the control of the
Government of the Republic of Cyprus)

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

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

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EUROBAROMETER 66.1 – CYPRUS

(Areas under the control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus)

Executive Summary

Eurobarometer 66.1 is the fifth survey of the Eurobarometer series conducted in Cyprus since its accession to the European Union. Cyprus joined the European Union with the Cyprus problem remaining unsolved and the *acquis communautaire* being implemented only in the areas under the control of the government of the Republic of Cyprus.

The survey was conducted between 6 September and 1 October 2006 in the period after the end of the war in Lebanon, which Cypriots witnessed mainly through the humanitarian bridge-building role which the Republic undertook. The main events which dominated the media during this period concerned Turkey's accession course and the fulfillment of its obligations towards the EU, the run-up to the election of a new Archbishop of the Church of Cyprus, the resignations of two ministers of the government, internal political party processes, the continuation of the work of the Committee investigating the August 2005 plane crash, issues which concerned the two communities on the island, the build up of the nuclear programme of Iran and the continuing violence in Iraq.

A. Life in Cyprus

Citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus are satisfied with their life:

- The overwhelming majority of citizens (88%) are satisfied with the life they lead.
- The level of satisfaction has increased by 3% from the level recorded in the spring of 2006 and autumn 2005.

Most citizens do not expect changes with regard to their personal situation in the coming 12 months:

- Most expect that life in general will remain the same (50%), whereas 28% of the sample expects that it will improve and 11% that it will deteriorate.
- Over half of the respondents (55%) do not expect a change in the financial situation of their household, whereas 16% expect that it will improve and 26% expect that it will deteriorate.
- Six out of ten citizens expect stability in their personal employment situation. Some 12% believe that their personal employment situation will improve in the near future, whereas 13% expect that it will deteriorate.
- Over time, short-term expectations regarding personal issues remain unchanged.

Expectations as to the evolution of the national economy and of employment conditions are dominated by pessimism:

- Over half of Cypriot citizens (54%) expect that both the economic situation of their country and employment conditions will deteriorate within the next 12 months. Only 11% maintain that the economy will improve. Public opinion is less optimistic than in the spring 2006 Eurobarometer but more optimistic in comparison with the autumn 2005 Eurobarometer.

At present, the two major problems worrying citizens remain crime (42%) and inflation (39%).

There has been a considerable fall in the level of trust shown by citizens towards the Government:

- Compared with the last Eurobarometer survey in spring 2006, citizens' trust in their national Government has decreased from 56% to 53%.
- In contrast, trust in the House of Representatives has increased by 7 percentage points to 51% from spring 2006 when it stood at 44%. However, it still remains lower than the figure recorded one year ago in the autumn 2005 Eurobarometer (58%). The recent parliamentary elections (May 06) could account for this upward shift.
- Trust in the legal system has also increased to 60% since spring 2006 (53%, autumn 2005, 59%).
- The phenomenon of low levels of trust in political parties recorded in previous waves persists with 24%, down from the 27% recorded in spring 2006. It is still higher than the EU25 average of 17%.
- Citizens' trust in the Church stands at 58%, in trades unions at 37% and in consumer associations at 64%.

Public opinion is divided in terms of its trust in the press (46% in favour and 44% against); a much higher 61% trusts television (much higher than the EU25 average of 53%). 23% trust the internet (lower than in the EU25 where the figure stands at 34%).

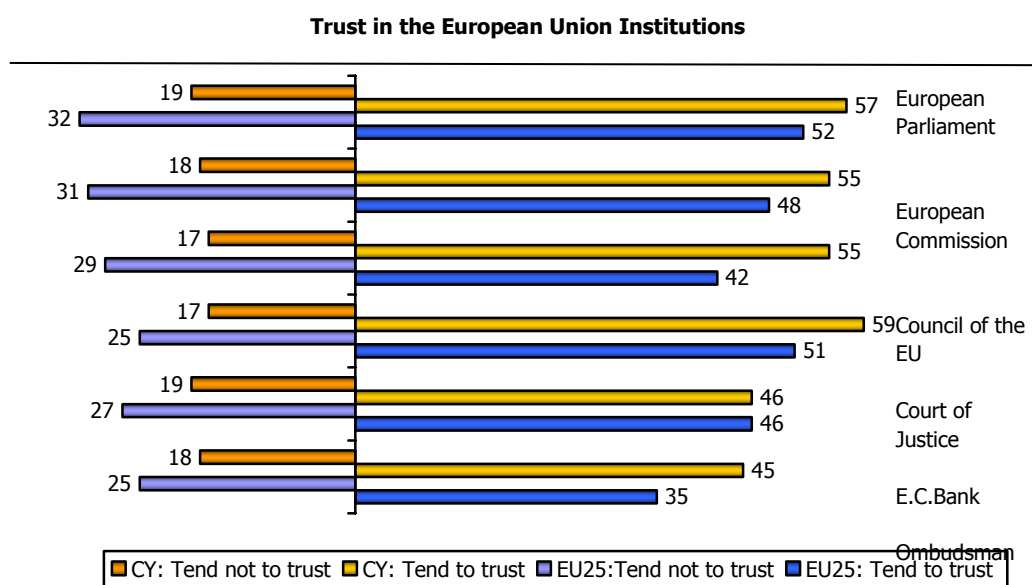
Citizens continue to show a high level of trust in the European Union:

- The majority of citizens trust the European Union (57%, down from 61% in the spring), whereas only a relatively low percentage trusts the United Nations (27%).
- The percentage of citizens who trust the United Nations is the lowest recorded in any of the member states surveyed.

B. Europeans and the European Union

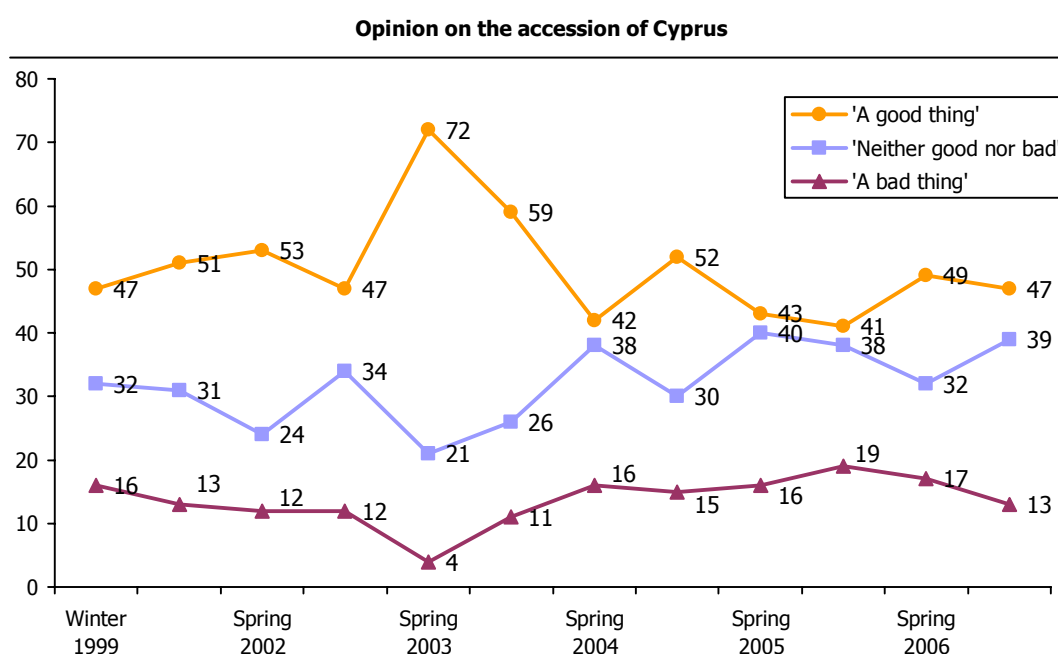
The majority of citizens trust the main institutions of the European Union:

- Trust in the European Parliament is expressed by 57% of Cypriots; trust in the European Commission by 55%; trust in the Council of the European Union also by 55%; trust in the Court of Justice of the European Communities by 59%; trust in the European Central Bank by 46% and trust in the Ombudsman by 45%.



Half of the citizens residing in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus view Cyprus's membership of the European Union positively. The majority (47%) consider it a positive thing, 13% a negative thing, while a considerable 39% see it as neither positive nor negative.

- The incidence of positive opinions shows an increase compared with the Eurobarometer waves of the previous year, but it is slightly down compared with the spring figure.
- Cyprus, however, is among the seven countries with the lowest incidence of positive opinion regarding EU membership.



Over time, the percentage of citizens who believe that Cyprus has benefited from accession to the EU remains stable:

- 46% of citizens believe that Cyprus has benefited from its accession to the European Union. This percentage remains among the lowest among all Member States (54%) but it is the highest recorded in Cyprus - with an increase of 6 percentage points since the last survey. It has also overtaken the negative view (44%, down from the spring survey's 49%).

More than half of the citizens (56%) state that they have a positive image of the European Union:

- The percentage of citizens with a positive image of the European Union exceeds the percentage of citizens who believe that Cyprus's participation is a good thing (47%). Similar results were observed in previous Eurobarometer waves.

Somewhat more than half of citizens state that they understand the way the European Union works:

- With 58% of citizens (up 4% since spring 2006) stating that they know how the European Union works, Cyprus is among the top ten countries in terms of the incidence of citizens who claim to know how the Union operates.

Most of the citizens are aware of the institutions of the European Union:

- An absolute majority of citizens have heard of the European Parliament (86%), the European Commission (80%), the Council of the European Union (79%) and the Court of Justice of the European Communities (83%). A significant percentage is also aware of the European Central Bank (64%). All institutions have attracted an increase in awareness. Only awareness of the Ombudsman remains relatively low at 53%.

Citizens in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus describe their knowledge with regards to the European Union as being average. The same holds true for the total population of all Member States:

- On a ten-point scale (1 being the lowest grade and 10 being the highest) the average rating of knowledge of Cypriot citizens reaches 4,2, whereas the respective European average is logged at 4,5.
- A considerable percentage of citizens seek information about the European Union (64%: 8% frequently, 39% sometimes and 25% rarely).

Citizens believe that the main priority of the European Union should be the fight against poverty and social exclusion (54%, up 5%). Since the last survey, maintaining peace and security in Europe showed an increase of 14 percentage points at 49%. The main priorities set by citizens in Cyprus coincide with those set by European citizens as a whole.

66% of citizens are in favour of the further enlargement of the European Union with only 18% against.

- Of the countries included in a potential enlargement, Switzerland received the highest support with 88% in favour (and 3% against), Norway 84% (2% against), Iceland 78% (7% against), Ukraine 71% (15% against), Serbia 65% (19% against), Montenegro 61% (21% against), Croatia 60% (22% against), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 57% (26% against), Bosnia Herzegovina 56% (24% against), Albania 33% (47% against) and Turkey 19% in favour with 74% against.