

# EUROBAROMETER 68

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## AUTUMN 2007

### NATIONAL REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### MALTA

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

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

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22 per cent of the Maltese population state that they are very satisfied with the life they lead, while 61 per cent are fairly satisfied. 12 per cent of respondents claimed that they are not very satisfied while 4 per cent said that they are not at all satisfied.

When asked about their expectations for the next twelve months about life in general, 34 per cent of Maltese respondents said that they expect things to improve while 12 per cent expect their life to get worse in the coming year. 38 per cent of respondents stated they expect their life to remain the same while 16 per cent do not know. When compared to the results of 6 months ago, Maltese respondents have generally maintained the same level of life expectations.

When asked about their expectations for the next twelve months in relation to the economic situation in Malta, 35 per cent of respondents stated that they expect the economic situation to improve, an increase of 5 percentage points over the previous survey and an increase of 10 points over autumn 2006. On the other hand, 20 per cent expect the Maltese economy to get worse, a decrease of 6 percentage points from six months ago.

When asked about their personal job situation, 18 per cent of Maltese respondents answered positively in this survey. However, this is 4 percentage points less optimistic than the figure recorded for the 27 EU Member States. 41 per cent of Maltese respondents said that their personal job situation will remain the same over the next 12 months. The corresponding figure for the 27 EU Member States stands at 61 per cent.

Survey respondents were asked if, at the present time, they would say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction in Malta. 48 per cent said that things are going in the right direction while 29 per cent said that things are going in the wrong direction. 18 per cent of Maltese respondents said that things are neither going in the right direction nor in the wrong direction. 5 per cent could not give an answer.

The question relating to which issues are the most important facing Malta reveals that rising prices/inflation was ranked first in priority with 41 per cent of Maltese respondents putting it as a top priority concern for Malta. This percentage represents an increase of 7 percentage points over the previous survey and a high increase of 13 points over a year ago. The immigration issue received a percentage of 40 and falls into second place in the ranking of Maltese concerns. Immigration as an issue went up by 10 percentage points in comparison to the previous survey.

Although unemployment as a concern went down by 8 percentage points, it is still one of the top three concerns of the Maltese people with a response rate of 17 per cent. Other high concerns for the Maltese public are the economic situation (15 per cent), crime (14 per cent), housing (11 per cent) and the state of the environment (11 per cent).

The absolute majority of the Maltese people have trust in all four main EU institutions. Trust in the European Parliament stands at a high rate of 63 per cent even if it represents a decrease of 5 percentage points from 6 months ago. Compared to the rest of the EU, it is 7 percentage points higher than the EU average of 56 per cent. Only 17 per cent of the Maltese public people tend not to trust the European Parliament.

Trust in the European Commission amongst the Maltese respondents decreased by 8 points over the previous survey of six months ago reaching the level of 60 per cent. This remains substantially higher than the EU average of 51 per cent. Only 16 per cent of the Maltese public tends not to trust the European Commission.

42 per cent of Maltese respondents tend to trust the Maltese parliament, a decrease of 6 percentage points over the previous survey. 44 per cent tend not to trust the Maltese parliament while 14 per cent said that they do not know. A slightly higher positive percentage was recorded for respondents who tend to trust the Maltese Government as an institution. In fact 45 per cent answered positively, a decrease of 6 percentage points over the previous 6 months. 43 per cent answered negatively representing a 7 point increase over the spring survey.

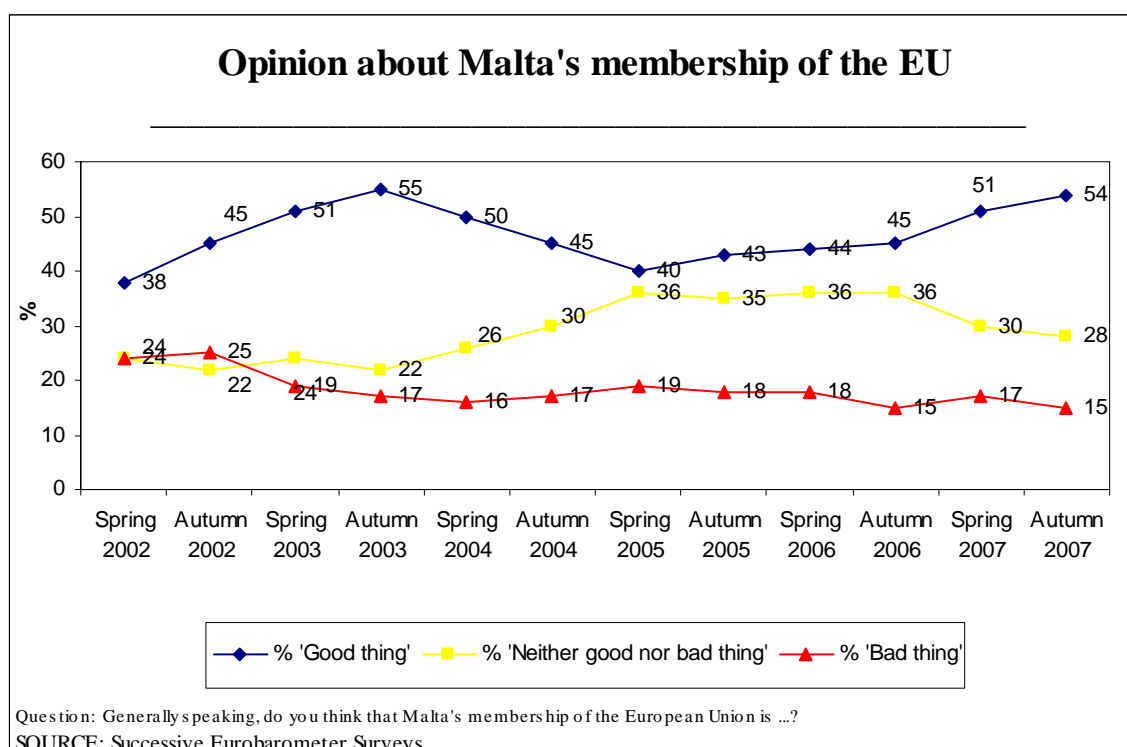
According to this survey, the most trusted institutions amongst the Maltese public are the army and the police with a level of trust standing at 74 per cent and 71 per cent respectively. On the other hand, the most mistrusted institutions in Malta are the political parties which are trusted by 29 per cent of Maltese respondents. 56 per cent do not trust Maltese political parties while 15 per cent remained neutral. In the European Union Member States, political parties are trusted by 20 per cent of the public.

When asked about their trust in trade unions, 38 per cent of Maltese respondents answered positively. On the other hand, 43 per cent tend not to trust Maltese trade unions while 19 per cent of respondents could not give an answer. In the 27 Member States of the EU, the average trust level in trade unions stands at 39 per cent.

Survey respondents were asked if, overall, people in Malta are well informed or not about European political affairs. 61 per cent are not informed enough about the EU while 34 per cent are well informed. Of these, 3 per cent are very well informed, 31 per cent are fairly well informed, 46 per cent are not very well informed while 15 per cent say that they are not at all informed about European political matters.

When asked about what they think about the image of the European Union, 54 per cent of Maltese respondents stated that the image of the EU is positive. This represents an increase of 8 percentage points over the survey held a year ago. The negative response in this survey is 15 per cent, while 27 per cent gave a neutral answer. In the EU as a whole, 52 per cent said that EU has a positive image, 14 per cent attributed a negative image while 34 per cent gave a neutral answer.

The level of knowledge of the institutions of the European Union amongst the Maltese public were measured by this survey with respondents being asked about their awareness of individual EU institutions. The most well known EU institution among the Maltese is the European Parliament with 93 per cent of respondents saying they have heard of it. This percentage is slightly higher than the EU average of 89 per cent. The European Commission (89 per cent) and the Council of the European Union (81 per cent) are next in line in terms of awareness amongst the Maltese public. 68 per cent of Maltese respondents have heard of the European Central Bank, 63 per cent have heard of the European Court of Justice while 54 per cent have heard of the European Ombudsman. The least well known institutions amongst the Maltese public are the Committee of the Regions of the European Union (36 per cent), the Economic and Social Committee of the European Union (43 per cent) and the European Court of Auditors (42 per cent).

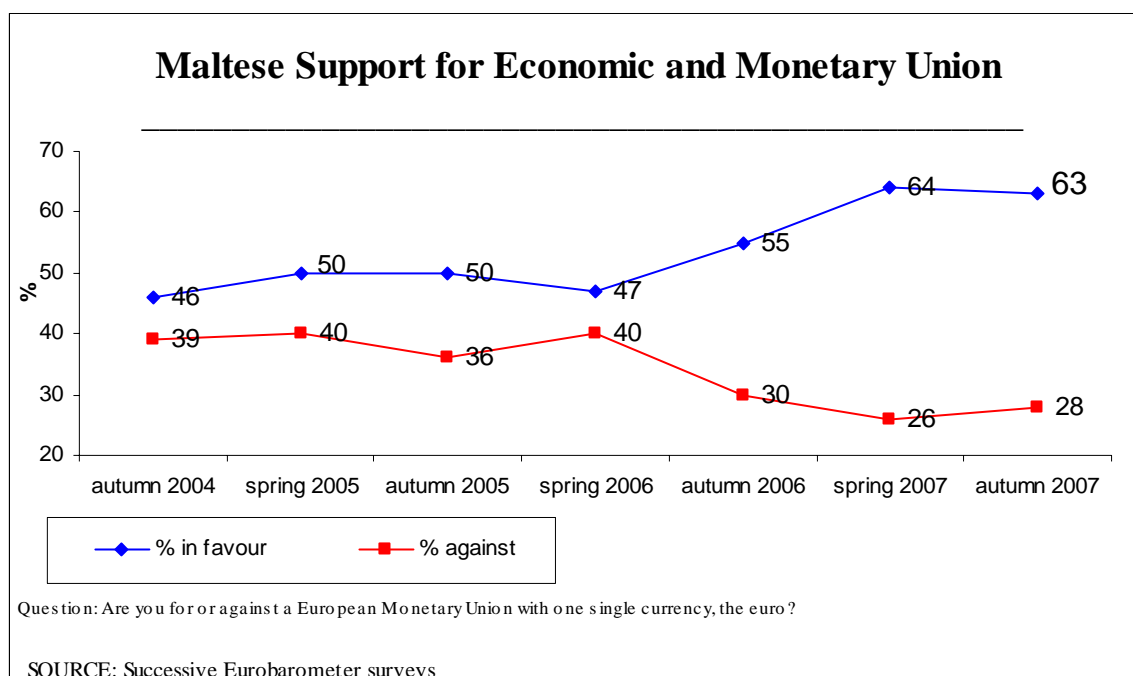


Allocation of responsibility for policy-making in various areas is a crucial aspect of European integration. The results from this survey demonstrate the belief amongst EU citizens that many policy decisions are best made jointly within the EU, rather than by national governments alone. Citizens show increasing support in the capacity and

suitability of the EU to act on a wide range of issues. It is now the case that for 11 out of the 19 items tested on this question, an absolute majority of respondents across EU Member States answer that decisions should be made jointly at EU level.

When asked if they very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the European Union, Maltese respondents were, in their majority, positive in their answers. 66 per cent gave a positive answer while 22 per cent gave a negative answer.

Generally speaking, the Maltese appear to have remained in favour of Malta’s membership of the EU with 54 per cent saying it is a good thing. This represents an increase of 3 percentage points over the previous survey and 9 points more than a year ago. On the other hand, respondents who think that it is a bad thing stand at 15 per cent, 2 points less than in the previous survey. 28 per cent of Maltese respondents expressed a neutral opinion.



When asked about their opinion on the single currency, 63 per cent of Maltese respondents said that they are in favour while 28 per cent expressed a negative opinion.

When asked whether they think Malta has benefited from being an EU member state taking everything into account, 64 per cent responded positively, 24 per cent answered negatively while 12 per cent said that they do not know.

When asked if their voice as citizens counts in the European Union, 47% of Maltese respondents said that they tend to agree, 39% said they tend to disagree, while 14% don't know. When asked if Malta's voice counts in the European Union, 72% of Maltese respondents said that they tend to agree, 23% said they tend to disagree, while 5% did not give an answer.

When asked if Malta will become more influential in the European Union in the future, 54% of Maltese respondents said that they tend to agree, while 23% said that they tend to disagree. 23% did not know.

Survey respondents were also asked about their level of trust in the media. The highest level of trust recorded was for radio stations. 49 per cent of Maltese respondents said they trusted radio stations (6 points less than the previous survey) while, on the other hand, 34 per cent tend not to trust radio as a source of information. The EU average stands 10 points higher at 59 per cent.

48 per cent of Maltese respondents said that they tend to trust television, a decrease of 8 percentage points over the previous survey six months ago. 38 per cent tend not to trust it. In the 27 EU Member States, trust in television also stands at 48 per cent.

Concerning the press, 38 per cent of Maltese respondents said that they tend to trust it, a decrease of 5 points over the previous survey. 43 per cent of Maltese respondents tend not to trust the press. In the 27 EU Member States, trust in the press stands 9 points higher at 47 per cent.

When asked about the role played by the European Union in a number of policy areas, Maltese respondents gave generally positive answers in comparison with respondents in other member states.