

EUROBAROMETER 71

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GREECE

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This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission.
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Introduction

Between the 12th of June and the 8th of July 2009, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe, carried out wave 71.3 of the EUROBAROMETER, upon request of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for Communication, "Research and Political Analysis".

The EUROBAROMETER 71.3 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 71.3 has also been conducted in the three candidate countries (Croatia, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and in the Turkish Cypriot Community¹. In these countries, the survey covers the national population of citizens and the population of citizens of all the European Union Member States that are residents in these countries and have a sufficient command of the national languages 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 was drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and to population density.

The Greek sample consists of 1000 residents, which provides a safe consideration that the research results and assumptions are representative of the Greek national public opinion to a great degree.

All interviews were conducted in person in people's residences and in the appropriate national language.

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

Dissatisfaction and deep concern about employment and the state of Greek economy

Although Greek respondents appear to be dissatisfied with the life they lead (EL: 56% - EU27: 22%), a significant proportion of the Greek public opinion still expresses content regarding their life (EL: 44% - EU27: 77%). It is noted that the positive rate (i.e. content), when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey (Autumn 2008 – EB70.1: 53%), records a decrease of nine percentage units.

9 out of 10 Greek citizens express dissatisfaction about the economic situation in their country (EL: 90% - EU27: 78%). The Greek negative rate (i.e. dissatisfaction) is amongst the highest of the entire survey.

The same deep concern applies to the employment situation in Greece, as Greek respondents find it to be in a dire state (EL: 94% - EU27: 85%). The Greek negative rate is amongst the highest recorded in the entire survey. It is noted that **9 out of 10 Greek respondents believe that it is difficult to find a good job in Greece, even if someone has high qualifications** (EL: 91% - EU27: 80%).

Spanish (81%), Portuguese (81%), Irish (79%), Italian and Greek citizens (78%) **are the most disappointed by the state of the European economy** (EU27: 68%).

Still, **Greek citizens feel that there is greater economic stability on account of their country being a member of the Eurozone** (EL: 56% - EU27: 49%).

¹ Cyprus as a whole is one of the 27 European Union Member States. However, the "acquis communautaire" is suspended in the part of the country that is not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. For practical reasons, only the interviews conducted in the part of the country controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are recorded in the category "CY" and included in the EU27 average. The interviews conducted in the part of the country not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are recorded in the category "CY(tcc)" [tcc: Turkish Cypriot Community]."

Regarding the **world economy**, Greek citizens reach the highest negative rate in the survey as they consider it to be in a bad state (EL: 89% - EU27: 77%).

Lastly, a majority of Greek citizens (84%) judge **the environmental situation in their country** negatively **stating that it is in a bad condition**. The Greek rate of dissatisfaction is the highest (negative) recorded in the entire survey (EU27: 52%). It is noted that a significant proportion of the European sample does not share the same opinion, appearing, on the contrary, to be satisfied with the environmental situation in their respective countries (44%), while the Greek sample records the lowest satisfaction rate in the survey (16%).

Worrying forecasts for the next twelve months

The majority of the Greek sample predicts worse economic developments (EL: 48% - EU27: 34%) as well as a deterioration in the employment situation (EL: 52% - EU27: 44%) in Greece for the forthcoming year. In both cases, the Greek *negative* rates are among the highest in the entire survey. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of the Greek sample (41% & 39% respectively) does not foresee any change (neither positive or negative) in the upcoming year concerning the economic and employment situations in Greece (EU27: 36% & EU27: 32% respectively).

No change is foreseen by Greek respondents regarding the **economic situation in the European Union** (EL: 47% - EU27: 38%) **as well as at world level** (EL: 44% - EU27: 36%). Nevertheless, many express concern about a **deterioration of both** European (EL: 38% - EU27: 28%) and world economy (EL: 43% - EU27: 30%).

Nevertheless, Greek respondents do not foresee any change (neither positive or negative) in the coming year concerning the financial situation of their household (EL: 59% - EU27: 58%), their personal job situation (EL: 76% - EU27: 59%), and their life in general (EL: 59% - EU27: 56%).

Many Greek respondents admit that, due to the current situation of their household, they face serious difficulties in making any plans for the future, and, as such, they are forced to live day by day (EL: 47% - EU27: 35%). Nevertheless, **the majority has the capability to make future plans regarding their household**, either within a six-month period (EL: 30% - EU27: 29%) or better still, they have a long-term perspective of what the state of their household will be in during the next one to two years (EL: 22% - EU27: 31%).

Regardless of whether Greek respondents are actually looking for a job, they insist that job security remains a top priority in their job search (EL: 54% - EU27: 47%), at least when compared to a good salary (EL: 36% - EU27: 25%). It is noted that only 1 out of 10 Greek citizens cares whether the job to be found is interesting to him/her (EL: 10% - EU27: 25%).

Economy and unemployment are the most important issues that Greece faces

The overall economic situation of the country (51%), as well as unemployment (40%) are defined as the most important issues that Greece faces. No major changes are ascertained, when compared to the previous Eurobarometer surveys, besides the issue of immigration that seems to currently raise concern as the Greek respondents list it within the top five issues that raise concerns for Greece. Especially regarding the issue of immigration (16%), the Greek current *negative* rate is the 3rd highest recorded in the entire survey, following those of Malta (49%) and the United Kingdom (25%), while the EU27 average is limited to considerably lower levels (9%).

Regarding the issues that Greek citizens are facing at a personal level, the primary concerns are rising prices / inflation (46%) and the overall economic situation (42%) - (EU27: 38% & 26% respectively).

Greek citizens and European citizens alike, express concern that developments in their countries are moving in the wrong direction (EL: 73% - EU27: 50%). The Greek negative rate (i.e. wrong direction) is the fourth highest recorded in the entire survey, following those of Latvia (78%), Croatia (77%) and Hungary (75%). Similarly, 1 out of 2 Greek citizens finds that

things, during the period that the survey was conducted, **are also progressing in the wrong direction at EU level** (EL: 49% - EU27: 35%). The Greek negative rate is the second highest recorded in the entire survey following that of France (51%).

As a vast majority of Greek as well as European respondents believe that the national economy is influenced by the global economic situation (EL: 90% - EU27: 85%), it is positive that they both **express their trust in the European Union finding that it has the sufficient power and tools to defend its economic interests in the global economy** (EL: 72% - EU27: 66%).

Therefore, they also believe that **the European Union can take effective actions against the effects of the financial and economic crisis** as it is at the top of the list as being the most capable to face the current economic crisis (EL: 38% - EU27: 21%), at least when compared to the International Monetary Fund (EL: 19% - EU27: 14%), the United States (EL: 12% - EU27: 16%), the G20 (EL: 11% - EU27: 20%) or even the government of their country (EL: 8% - EU27: 12%).

Lastly, in order for the European Union to be able **to help people overcome the effects of the financial and economic crisis**, Greek citizens believe that it should take measures towards the support for the unemployed (EL: 40% - EU27: 27%), as well as support for SMEs and small business (EL: 39% - EU27: 37%).

Uncertainty and discontent about the Greek social welfare system

7 out of 10 Greek citizens are uncertain about the future of their pensions (70%), while the EU27 average is limited to 57%. Still, 28% of Greek respondents feel confident about their future retirement (EU27: 39%).

8 out of 10 Greek citizens, in contrast with most other European citizens, express their discontent with the way the social welfare system works in their country, as they find that it does not provide enough coverage (EL: 81% - EU27: 42%). The Greek negative rate is the second highest recorded in the entire survey, following that of Latvia (88%). The European public opinion takes the opposite stand (EU27: 48% - EL: 14%) expressing satisfaction regarding the national social welfare system. Nevertheless, Greek citizens appear to be optimistic about the future, as they believe that, by the year 2030, their national social welfare system will provide wide coverage (EL: 51% - EU27: 36%). Even so, many are in disagreement with this prediction (EL: 48% - EU27: 46%).

As a result, **a majority of Greek citizens do not believe that their national social welfare system could ever serve as a model for other countries** (EL: 83% - EU27: 40%). On the other hand, European citizens appear more confident about the efficiency of their respective national social welfare systems as they believe that they could easily serve as an example of best practice for other Member States (EU27: 46% - EL: 12%). However, both Greek and other European citizens agree that **their national social welfare system is too expensive** for the society (EL: 74% - EU27: 54%) and that it will remain expensive, at least until the year 2030 (EL: 74% - EU27: 57%).

European Union gets confidence vote

Increasing distrust in the national government, parliament and political parties

Of all the institutions presented in the current survey, **only the European Union wins a trust vote from Greek respondents** (EL: 55% - EU27: 47%).

75% of Greek and 63% of European citizens appear not to trust their national governments. However, it is noted that the current Greek negative rate (i.e. distrust) is the 5th highest of the entire survey sample, following those of Latvia (88%), Croatia (84%), Hungary (80%) and Bulgaria (77%).

Seven out of ten Greek citizens state they do not trust their national Parliament (EL: 67% - EU27: 61%).

A high rate of distrust is recorded by Greek respondents who take a **negative standpoint vis-à-vis political parties** (EL: 85% - EU27: 76%). The Greek negative rate is the 5th highest of the entire survey following those of Latvia (93%), Croatia (91%), Lithuania (86%) and Slovenia (86%).

A majority of Greek citizens expresses feelings of **distrust toward their country's legal system** (EL: 56% - EU27: 47%). Nevertheless, a significant proportion of Greek public opinion seems to trust the country's legal system (EL: 44% - EU27: 48%).

Continuous distrust in the United Nations is depicted in the rate recorded by Greek respondents, which is the highest (negative) in the entire survey (EL: 68% - EU27: 31%).

The image of the European Union remains positive

The European Union continues to evoke a positive image for many Greek respondents (EL: 45% - EU27: 45%). It is noted that 36% of Greek and of European citizens take a neutral stance (*"neither positive nor negative"*). Nevertheless, Greek respondents point to the positive aspects of the European Union when asked what it means to them personally. More specifically, Greek citizens mainly identify the European Union with the *freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union* (EL: 49% - EU27: 42%), with the *maintenance of peace* (EL: 40% - EU27: 25%) and with the *single currency, the euro* (EL: 45% - EU27: 33%). However, 31% (EU27: 13%) of the Greek sample relates the European Union to the problem of *unemployment*.

In contrast with most European citizens who believe that the **voice of their countries** counts in the European Union (EU27: 61% - EL: 37%), Greek citizens do not share this feeling (EL: 62% - EU27: 30%).

Although Greek citizens appear to be satisfied by Greece's participation in the European Union, they still find that **the interests of their country are not taken into account in the European Union** (EL: 67% - EU27: 41%).

The most important elements that make up the **European identity**, according to the Greek sample, are the common European geography (EL: 47% - EU27: 25%), as well as the democratic values (EL: 33% - EU27: 41%) that characterize the European spirit.

The most important characteristics required in order for someone to be considered as European are to feel European (EL: 54% - EU27: 41%), to be born in Europe (EL: 43% - EU27: 39%), as well as to share European cultural traditions (EL: 37% - EU27: 31%).

Positive assessment of Greece's participation in the European Union

A significant proportion of the Greek public opinion approves Greece's membership of the European Union (EL: 45% - EU27: 53%), although the current rate (i.e. approval) is amongst the lowest recorded in the entire survey, whereas 40% of Greek and 28% of European citizens take a neutral position (*"neither positive nor negative"*).

Moreover, **Greek citizens believe that Greece has benefited from its EU membership** (EL: 64% - EU27: 56%).

Greek public opinion is in favour of a European Monetary Union with one single currency, the Euro (EL: 62% - EU27: 61%).

It should be noted, that in the current survey, the highest rate ever reached in the framework of the Standard Eurobarometer surveys is recorded in regard to those taking a **negative standpoint on the prospect of future EU enlargement**, i.e. more countries joining the European Union in the forthcoming years (against / EL: 57% - EU27: 46%).

Regarding European integration, Greek citizens, recording the highest rate observed in the entire survey (57%), believe that **the speed of building Europe should not be faster in one group of countries than in the others** (EU27: 42%). Nevertheless, 40% of Greek public opinion, as well as 39% of European public opinion, disagrees with this position.

As European integration has been the focus of many EU initiatives in recent years. The aspects that should be emphasized by the European institutions in the coming years, in order to strengthen the European Union in the future, are considered to be solidarity with poorer regions (EL: 34% - EU27: 22%), general economic affairs (EL: 34% - EU27: 32%), the environment (EL: 27% - EU27: 20%), immigration (EL: 26% - EU27: 24%), as well as social and health issues (EL: 25% - EU27: 26%).

Greek citizens support more decision-making at European level

According to Greek public opinion, the **issues for which more decision-making should take place at European level** include the following:

- ☉ Cooperation in the field of research and innovation, 82% (EU27: 78%)
- ☉ Securing energy supplying, 80% (EU27: 76%)
- ☉ Promoting democracy and peace in the world, 79% (EU27: 81%)
- ☉ Fighting terrorism, 77% (EU27: 81%)
- ☉ Protecting the environment, 75% (EU27: 77%)
- ☉ Fighting organised crime, 74% (EU27: 78%)
- ☉ Protecting social rights, 71% (EU27: 64%)
- ☉ Ensuring economic growth, 70% (EU27: 70%)
- ☉ Equal treatment of men and women, 69% (EU27: 72%)
- ☉ Ensuring food safety, 67% (EU27: 70%)
- ☉ Managing major health issues, 66% (EU27: 72%)
- ☉ Supporting agriculture, 66% (EU27: 64%)
- ☉ Fighting unemployment, 65% (EU27: 60%)

Optimism about the future of the European Union, but not of the future of its citizens

Generally, **Greek as well as the other European citizens appear to be optimistic about the future of the European Union** (EL: 54% - EU27: 64%). Especially for the year 2030, they predict that the European Union will be a leading diplomatic power in the world (EL: 66% - EU27: 56%), will go far beyond the limits of the European continent (EL: 56% - EU27: 43%), and will have, with the euro, a more powerful currency than the dollar (EL: 66% - EU27: 56%).

Nevertheless, they think that, **in 2030, the lives of European citizens will be more difficult than those that they lead today** (EL: 51% - EU27: 32%). More specifically, Greek respondents believe that, in 2030, people will have less time to devote to family life (EL: 65% - EU27: 44%), while more importance will be given to work (EL: 64% - EU27: 46%) and less to leisure 14% - EU27: 19%).

These pessimistic predictions of Greek respondents do not correspond to their expectations, as they would prefer that, in 2030, European citizens were part of a society that values more the protection of the environment (EL: 49% - EU27: 40%), the sense of solidarity (EL: 78% - EU27: 58%) as well as that of personal freedom (EL: 50% - EU27: 35%), to leisure (EL: 44% - EU27: 33%), and, most importantly, to more time for family life (EL: 92% - EU27: 78%).

Fortunately, Greek citizens consider that, **in 2030, women's salaries will be equal to those of men's for the same level of skills and experience** (EL: 73% - EU27: 59%), **as well as that there will be an equal proportion of women and men within all political institutions** (EL: 62% - EU27: 49%). This is not only an attitude, but also an expectation of the sample (equal salaries, EL: 94% - EU27: 83%) – (equal proportions within institutions EL: 89% - EU27: 77%).

Negative standpoint toward globalisation

Greek respondents believe that **globalisation represents a threat to employment and companies in Greece** (EL: 72% - EU27: 42%). Nevertheless, although they are few, some Greek respondents believe that globalisation, and as a consequence the opening up of markets, represents a good opportunity for Greek companies (EL: 25% - EU27: 42%).

In contrast to most European citizens, Greek citizens do not find globalisation to be an opportunity for economic growth (EL: 65%). The Greek negative rate is the highest recorded in the entire survey and diverges completely from the respective EU27 average that is limited to 27%, as most European respondents seem to be more positive towards globalisation as they believe that it prepares the ground for economic growth (EL: 34% - EU27: 59%).

The affirmation that **globalisation increases social inequalities** is put forward both by Greek and other European citizens (EL: 81% - EU27: 62%).

Greek citizens do not find that the European Union helps to protect European citizens from the negative effects of globalisation (EL: 66% - EU27: 36%), whereas European citizens disagree with this position as they find that the European Union manages to protect its citizens from the undesired consequences of globalisation (EL: 32% - EU27: 47%).

In general, Greek, as well as other European, citizens judge that **globalisation requires common global rules ('worldwide governance')** - (EL: 62% - EU27: 73%).

Human rights and Immigration

Greek citizens, as well as the rest of European citizens, believe that the **main priorities for the European Union's foreign policy, regarding human rights issues**, should be the fight against human trafficking (EL: 54% - EU27: 33%), children's rights (EL: 49% - EU27: 36%), economic and social rights (EL: 45% - EU27: 33%), as well as women's rights (EL: 30% - EU27: 20%), freedom of speech (EL: 29% - EU27: 30%) and the fight against torture (EL: 23% - EU27: 18%).

Dissatisfaction is expressed by the majority of Greek public opinion regarding the measures that the European Union is currently taking to promote and defend human rights in the world, as they are considered to be limited (EL: 61% - EU27: 48%). However, this discontent might have resulted due to the lack of information that is ascertained, as seven out of ten Greek citizens, as well as European, admit that **they do not feel informed** (EL: 71% - EU27: 70%) regarding the actions and measures taken by the European Union in order to protect human rights around the world.

The citizens of Malta and Greece, in contrast with most European citizens, disagree with the notion that people from other ethnic groups enrich the cultural life of their country (MT: 82% - EL: 61% - EU27: 30%), while European public opinion believes that the incorporation of other ethnic groups contributes to the cultural life of a country (EU27: 54% - EL: 28%).

Eight out of ten Greek citizens believe that the presence of people from other ethnic groups is a cause of insecurity (EL: 78%). The Greek negative rate (i.e. insecurity) is the second highest recorded in the entire survey, following that of the citizens of Cyprus (82%), while the EU27 average is only 45%.

Similarly, **eight out of ten Greek citizens believe that the presence of people from other ethnic groups increases unemployment in Greece** (81%). In this case, as well, the Greek negative rate is the second highest recorded in the entire survey, following that of the citizens of Cyprus (90%), with the EU27 average reaching a much lower level (EU27: 49%).

Greek citizens, in contrast with most European citizens, **do not believe that their country needs immigrants to work in certain sectors of their economy** (EL: 53% - EU27: 37%).

Lastly, the respondents of the current survey **do not believe that immigrants contribute more in taxes than they benefit from health and welfare services** (EL: 70% - EU27: 51%).