

EUROBAROMETER 71

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2009

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MALTA

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INTRODUCTION

The report covers the results from Wave 71 of the Standard Eurobarometer. The fieldwork was carried out between 12 June 2009 and 29 June 2009 just after the European Parliament elections which were held in the 27 member states of the European Union. The report covers a number of topics which reflect the current state of affairs in Europe. These include socio-economic indicator questions, the general perception on the European Union, globalisation, values, human rights, identity, the European Union and the future, and the national social security system.

1. STATE OF OPINION

The majority of Maltese (82 per cent) are satisfied with their life, whilst 77 per cent of the Europeans are also satisfied with their life. The level of education and age are major factors that influence life satisfaction among the Maltese.

Respondents in Malta have better expectations for the next 12 months than the rest of the European Union. The Maltese have better expectations on life in general, the national economic situation, the national employment situation, the economic situation in Europe and in the world. The Maltese are less optimistic about their present job situation.

Almost half of the Maltese respondents (49 per cent) rank immigration as the first major issue Malta is facing at the moment. This percentage is significantly higher than the EU27 average – a difference of 40 percentage points. Rising prices and inflation ranked second, mentioned by 40 per cent of the Maltese respondents. On the other hand, Europeans in general are more concerned about unemployment (49 per cent) and the economic situation (42 per cent).

In general, Europeans have a negative opinion on the direction national developments are taking whereas the Maltese are slightly more positive (34 per cent compared to 27 per cent of the EU27 average). However the local perspective fairs negatively when measured up to a year ago where 56 per cent of the participants felt that things were moving in the right direction in Malta.

2. THE EUROPEAN UNION

More than half of the Maltese interviewed (57 per cent) are in favour of the fact that Malta joined the European Union. Over the last six months, the outlook towards the EU improved, resulting in an increase of 11 percentage points (from 46 per cent to 57 per cent). Moreover 67 per cent of the participants feel that Malta has benefitted from being a member of the European Union.

51 per cent of the Maltese have a positive opinion on the European Union, whereas 31 per cent have a neutral opinion (neither a positive nor a negative image) of the EU. For the majority of the Maltese, the European Union means freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU (51 per cent), having a stronger say in the world (36 per cent) and adopting the Euro (30 per cent).

In this survey, Europeans were asked whether they tend to trust or not a number of European entities: the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Central bank. Maltese citizens tend to have more trust in these entities. The European Parliament is the institution that enjoys most trust among Maltese as well as the Europeans in general.

3. THE EU, THE WORL AND GLOBALISATION

The Maltese feel that globalisation is more of an opportunity for economic growth and does not necessarily lead to social inequalities. The general view within the EU is somewhat different. The perception is that globalisation requires common global rules and leads to social inequalities. Furthermore, the Maltese are of the opinion that globalisation represents a good opportunity for Maltese companies through to the opening-up of markets. The Maltese participants also believe that the European Union helps to protect European citizens from the negative effects of globalisation and also enables European citizens to benefit from the positive effects of globalisation.

Another analysis shows that according to the Maltese participants, supporting the unemployed (45 per cent) and investment in education, training and research (28 per cent) should be given priority to help people overcome the effects of the financial and economic crises. The EU27 average gives more importance to providing support to SMEs and small businesses (37 per cent).

4. VALUES OF EUROPEANS

The respondents were asked to indicate aspects that the society should put more emphasis upon in order to face major global challenges. The Maltese placed the environment as top priority (43 per cent – 7 percentage points higher than the EU27 average), whilst social equality and solidarity was given more importance by the average EU27 (45 per cent -9 percentage points higher than Malta).

5. HUMAN RIGHTS

The Maltese emphasised that the three major issues that should be given priority by the European Union's foreign policy to safeguard human rights are children's rights (58 per cent), human trafficking (44 per cent) and women's rights (32 per cent). The EU27 average pointed out the same top three priorities.

6. IDENTITY

Europeans identified two important elements that make up a European Identity. Half of the Maltese respondents (50 per cent) feel that democratic values are the most important followed by a high level of social protection (31 per cent). The average EU27 citizen also thinks that democratic values are important (31 per cent), together with geography (25 per cent).

7. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE FUTURE

The participants of this survey were asked how they imagined themselves in twenty years' time. The number of Maltese respondents who imagine life to be more difficult in 2030 (40 per cent) outweighs the number of respondents who think that it will become easier (25 per cent). Moreover the Maltese think that, in 2030, Europeans will live in a society where more importance is given to the economy rather than the environment, solidarity instead of individualism, work as opposed to leisure and order instead of individual freedom.

8. THE SOCIAL SYSTEM

Almost three out of five respondents (59 per cent) are positive that in the future they are going to be provided with the appropriate help and long-term care if they need it. According to the majority of the Maltese, the social welfare system provides enough coverage (54 per cent) and it can also serve as a model for other countries (36 per cent). On a negative note, the majority of the participants (62 per cent) consider the social system too expensive for Maltese society.