

EUROBAROMETER 72

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
GREECE

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Introduction

Between the 23rd October and the 18th of November 2009, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between TNS plc and TNS Opinion, carried out wave 72.4 of the EUROBAROMETER, on request of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for Communication, "Research and Political Analysis".

The Standard Eurobarometer 72 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 Standard Eurobarometer 72 was also 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 who 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.

Deep concern about the state of the Greek economy, employment and the environment

9 out of 10 Greek citizens express dissatisfaction about the economic situation in their country (EL: 92% - EU27: 75%). The same deep concern applies to the **European economy** (EL: 78% - EU27: 62%), as well as the **world economy** (EL: 91% highest negative rate in the survey - EU27: 72%) as Greek respondents consider both to be in a bad state.

Serious worries are expressed about the employment situation in Greece, as Greek respondents find it to be in a dire state (EL: 94% - EU27: 85%). This Greek negative rate is amongst the highest recorded in the entire survey.

Lastly, a majority of Bulgarian (75%), Hungarian (75%) and Greek respondents (74%) judge **the environmental situation in their country** negatively **stating that it is in a bad state** (EU27: 53%). It is noted that a significant proportion of the overall European sample does not share the same opinion, appearing, on the contrary, to be satisfied with the environmental situation in their respective countries (EU27: 43%), while the Greek sample records the lowest satisfaction rate in the survey (26%).







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]."

Despite the general dissatisfaction, it is remarkable that 6 out of 10 Greek citizens express satisfaction regarding their daily life. It is important to mention that a change of Greek public opinion is observed, i.e. when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey (EB71.3), as Greek respondents appeared, in spring 2009, to be dissatisfied with the life they led (EB71.3: EL: 56% - EU27: 22%). Nevertheless, **even in the current survey, the Greek negative rate (i.e. discontent) remains high** (EL: 42% - EU27: 22%), although it records a decrease of 14 percentage units, when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey (Spring 2009 – □□71.3: 56%).

Deep concern is expressed regarding their purchasing power, i.e. the things that respondents' households can afford in their daily life, as Greek citizens find that their present situation has deteriorated when compared to that of five years ago (EL: 71% - EU27: 45%). The Greek rate (i.e. deterioration) is the highest negative recorded in the entire survey.

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: 46% - EU27: 35%). Nevertheless, **the majority has the capability to make future plans regarding their household,** either within a six-month period (EL: 36% - EU27: 32%) or better still, they have a long-term perspective of what the state of their household will be in over the next one or two years (EL: 17% - EU27: 28%).

The survey records **mainly forecasts of stagnation,** as Greek citizens do not foresee any change (either positive or negative) in the upcoming year concerning the general situation, i.e. they do not expect either a deterioration or an improvement in the current situation, in all the domains presented in the survey (see table that follows).

	BETTER		WORSE		SAME	
						
Economic situation	24%	28%	38%	31%	37%	37%
Employment situation	22%	22%	42%	40%	35%	34%
European economic situation	31%	30%	27%	21%	40%	38%
World economic situation	25%	29%	34%	24%	39%	36%
Household financial situation	24%	21%	22%	19%	53%	57%
Life in general	29%	26%	20%	15%	49%	56%
Personal job situation	20%	19%	14%	11%	58%	59%

The Greek rates predicting worse economic developments as well as a deterioration of the employment situation in Greece record a fall of ten percentage units when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey (EB71.3), as in spring 2009 both rates were higher (48% & 52% respectively). It is remarkable that all positive rates (i.e. expecting improvement) record an increase of at least twelve percentage units, when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey (spring 2009).

The overall dissatisfaction about the current economic situation further justifies the strong pessimism as **Greek respondents believe that the life of those who are children today will be more difficult** than the life of those from their own generation (EL: 77% - EU27: 61%).

Greeks believe that their country is in the backseat of the European Union, as they find the situation -in a series of domains presented in the current survey- to not be as good as that of

other European Union Member States. More specifically, the negative rates (i.e. *less good than EU27 average*) recorded for each domain presented in the current survey are: the situation of the Greek economy (EL: 94% - EU27: 59%), the employment situation in Greece (EL: 94% - EU27: 66%), the cost of living (EL: 91% - EU27: 67%), energy prices (EL: 88% - EU27: 66%), the state of the environment (EL: 70% - EU27: 42%) and the quality of life in Greece (EL: 69% - EU27: 45%).

Concern about economy and rising unemployment, as well as the evident need for essential reforms

The overall economic situation of the country (60%), as well as unemployment (46%) are cited as the most important issues that Greece faces. Regarding the issues that Greek citizens are facing at a personal level, the primary concerns are the overall economic situation (47%) and rising prices / inflation (43%) - (EU27: 26% & 38% respectively). Unemployment seems to be perceived as a threat for 1 out of 5 Greek and European citizen (19% and 20% respectively).

Greek citizens take a **positive standpoint toward reforms**, as 8 out of 10 believe that reforms that benefit future generations should be pursued even if that requires sacrifices for the present generation (EL: 78% - EU27: 71%). In general, the majority of the Greek public opinion believes that **Greece needs more reforms to face the future** (EL: 88% - EU27: 73%), as the reforms that have taken place so far in the country are insufficient to efficiently face the future (EL: 65% - EU27: 62%).

Some survey respondents (EL: 40% - EU27: 38%) find that the impact of the **economic crisis** on the job market has already reached its peak and things will recover little by little, while the majority of the Greek and European public opinion expresses serious concerns that the worst is still to come (EL: 57% - EU27: 54%).

Nevertheless, Greek citizens seem confident that **the European Union is best able to take effective measures against the effects of the financial and economic crisis** (EL: 44% - EU27: 22%), as it is ranked first in its ability to face the economic crisis, at least when compared to the government of their country (EL: 23% - EU27: 19%), followed by the United States (EL: 8% - EU27: 12%), the G20 (EL: 8% - EU27: 18%) and/or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (EL: 8% - EU27: 11%). The European single currency seems to have played an important role, as 6 out of 10 Greek citizens believe that the **Euro has mitigated the negative effects of the current financial and economic crisis** (EL: 58% - EU27: 41%).

The European Union continues to enjoy public confidence while Greek citizens take a negative standpoint vis-à-vis the national government, parliament and political parties

The research attempts to record Greek citizens' degree of confidence toward institutions and organisations of the Greek state, as well as of the international community.

The European Union evokes a trustworthy image, as 6 out of 10 Greek citizens (60%, among the highest in the entire survey) seem to trust the institutions of the European Union (EU27: 48%). Nevertheless, distrust in the institution is expressed by 38% of Greek and 40% of European respondents. In general, the **majority of the Greek public opinion continues to view the European Union positively** (EL: 56% - EU27: 48%), as it recognizes its positive aspects such as the single currency, the Euro (EL: 49% - EU27: 37%), the freedom to travel, to study and to work anywhere in European Union (EL: 48% - EU27: 46%) and the guarantee of peace (EL: 38% - EU27: 28%), without forgetting to point out those that are perceived as negative effects i.e. the problem of unemployment (EL: 20% - EU27: 14%) and the insufficiency of controls at the external frontiers (EL: 17% - EU27: 14%).

54% of Greek and 65% of European citizens appear to not trust their national governments. However, a significant percentage of the Greek public opinion seems to trust their national government (44%), while the EU27 average is limited to lower levels (29%). **Distrust is expressed in the national parliament** as well (EL: 52% - EU27: 63%), whereas 47% of Greek and 30% of European citizens tend to express their trust toward the institution. Moreover, **a high rate of distrust vis-à-vis the political parties** is recorded by the Greek and European respondents (EL: 81% - EU27: 79%).

Ongoing distrust in the United Nations (EL: 63% - EU27: 30%), as well as in NATO (EL: 74% - EU27: 33%), is depicted in the rates recorded by Greek respondents, which are among the highest (most negative) in the entire survey.

Regarding the Greek mass media, the majority of Greek public opinion tends only to trust the radio (EL: 53% - EU27: 58%), as the Greek press (EL: 59% - EU27: 52%) and television (EL: 70% - 46%) do not manage to have Greek trust. Furthermore, Greek respondents seem to be suspicious of the Internet (EL: 49% - EU27: 41%).

Lastly, the majority of Greek citizens expresses feelings of **trust in the army (EL: 69% - EU27: 64%), as well as the country's legal system (EL: 52% - EU27: 43%).** Nevertheless, a significant proportion of the Greek, as well as European, public opinion seems to distrust the country's legal system (EL: 46% - EU27: 51%).

Positive assessment of Greece's membership of the European Union

The majority of Greek respondents **approves Greece's EU membership** (EL: 61% - EU27: 53%), and believes that **the country has benefited from its membership** (EL: 71% - EU27: 57%). Still, they believe that the interests of their country (Greece) are not well-taken into account in the European Union (EL: 65% - EU27: 47%). The Greek negative rate (65%) is the 3rd highest recorded in the entire survey, following those of Latvia (77%) and Finland (66%).

Greek public opinion is in favour of a European Monetary Union with one single currency, the Euro (EL: 63% - EU27: 60%). However, the use of the Euro has caused disappointment among a significant proportion of the Greek sample, as 36% take a negative standpoint towards European Monetary Union (EU27: 33%).

Greek, as well as European, public opinion is divided with regard to the prospect **of future EU enlargement.** More specifically, half of the Greek sample appears to support the prospect of more countries joining the European Union in the coming years (EL: 49% - EU27: 46%), whereas the other half is opposed to this (EL: 48% - EU27: 43%). It is seen that the positive Greek rate has slightly increased, by seven points, when compared to the previous Eurobarometer survey that posed the same question (Spring 2009: 42%). In any case, Greek and European citizens agree that **the European Union has grown too rapidly** (EL: 79% - EU27: 61%). Lastly, it is encouraging to discover that both Greek and European respondents believe that what brings the citizens of the different countries together is more important than what separates them (EL: 77% - EU27: 75%).

Moreover, Greek and European citizens think that the **economic recovery should be the top priority of the European Union** for the years to come (EL: 86% - EU27: 69%). Other EU top priorities should include fighting climate change (EL: 47% - EU27: 44%), boosting growth in a sustainable way (EL: 38% - EU27: 45%), helping to create stability in the world (EL: 37% - EU27: 40%) and advancing citizens' rights (EL: 30% - EU27: 28%).

Negative standpoint toward globalisation

Although globalisation, for 6 out of 10 Greek citizens, means more foreign investment (EL: 62% - EU27: 59%), the majority of Greek public opinion still feels that **globalisation represents a threat to employment and companies in Greece** (EL: 63% - EU27: 42%). In general, respondents think that globalisation is **profitable only for large companies and not for citizens** (EL: 84% - EU27: 64%).

Nevertheless, Greek and European citizens find globalisation to be an opportunity for economic growth (EL: 50% - EU27: 61%), whereas a great proportion of the Greek public opinion, recording the highest negative rate in the entire survey, does not believe that globalisation sets the grounds for economic growth (EL: 47% - EU27: 26%); while the assertion that **globalisation increases social inequalities** is supported both by Greek and other European citizens (EL: 78% - EU27: 60%).

In any case, survey respondents believe that **the European Union has sufficient power and tools to defend its economic interests in the global economy** (EL: 70% - EU27: 61%).

However, the majority of Greek and European respondents find that globalisation enables people to be more open to external cultures (EL: 72% - EU27: 66%), although it seems to represent a threat to the Greek culture (EL: 62% - EU27: 41% i.e. national culture). The Greek negative rate is the second highest in the entire survey following that of Cyprus (66%).

In general, Greek as well as other European citizens judge that **globalisation requires common global rules ('worldwide governance')** - (EL: 77% - EU27: 74%).