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Introducing the Eurobarometer

Eurobarometer public opinion surveys ("standard Eurobarometer surveys") have been conducted on behalf of the Directorate-General for Information, Communication, Culture, Audiovisual of the European Commission each Spring and Autumn since Autumn 1973. They have included Greece since Autumn 1980, Portugal and Spain since Autumn 1985, the former German Democratic Republic since Autumn 1990 and Austria, Finland and Sweden from Spring 1995 onwards.

An identical set of questions was asked of representative samples of the population aged fifteen years and over in each Member State. The regular sample in standard Eurobarometer surveys is 1000 people per country except Luxembourg (500) and the United Kingdom (1000 in Great Britain and 300 in Northern Ireland). In order to monitor the integration of the five new Länder into unified Germany and the European Union, 2000 persons have been sampled in Germany since Eurobarometer 34: 1000 in east Germany and 1000 in west Germany.

The present surveys are carried out by national institutes associated with the "INRA (Europe) European Coordination Office". This network of institutes involved was selected by tender. They are all members of the "European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research" (ESOMAR) and comply with its standards.

The figures given for the European Union as a whole, which are shown in this document, are weighted on the basis of the adult population in each country. In certain cases, the total percentage in a table does not always add up exactly to 100%, but a number very close to it (e.g. 99 or 101), because of rounding. When questions allow for several responses, percentages often add up to more than 100%. Percentages shown in the graphics may display a difference of 1% compared to the tables because of the way previously-rounded percentages are added.

In accordance with normal practice for this type of survey, the European Commission disclaims all responsibility for questions, results and commentaries. This report, which was drawn up by the Surveys and Public Opinion Research Unit of the Directorate-General for Information, Communication, Culture, Audiovisual, is an internal working document of the European Commission.

Types of surveys in the Eurobarometer series

The European Commission (Directorate General X) organises general public opinion, specific target group, as well as qualitative (group discussion, in-depth interview) surveys in all Member States and, occasionally, in third countries. There are five different types of polls available:

- Traditional Standard Eurobarometer with reports published twice a year
- Continuous Tracking Survey (CTS) which replaced the Monthly Telephone Monitoring, as of January 1996, with quarterly reports published in "Europinion"
- Telephone Flash EB, also used for special target group surveys (Top Decision Makers)
- Qualitative research ("focus groups"; in-depth interviews)
- Central and Eastern EB, an annual survey of general public opinion in 16 Central and Eastern European countries in cooperation with DG I and DG 1A

The face-to-face general public standard Eurobarometer polls, the telephone Flash EB polls and qualitative research serve primarily to carry out surveys for the different Directorates General and comparable special services of the Commission on their behalf and on their account.

Highlights

- The overall criteria for support for the Union remain constant, although in the past six months there has been a down turn of support for membership, 48% seeing their country's membership as a "good thing" compared to 54% in the Autumn of 1995. Only 15% consider membership a "bad thing".
- Forty-five percent see membership of the Union bringing their country benefits at the present time, and if there were a referendum tomorrow 65% would vote to remain in the Union, while 16% would vote to leave.
- Six in ten persons in the sample are married or living as married, 28% were single. Women continue to catch up with men in education, of those "still studying" 41% were men and 57% women. The average household size in the sample was 2.84 persons, with just on three in ten having children under 15 living at home.
- Eighty-one percent of EU citizens claim to be satisfied with their lives, although there are marked national variations.
- A European typology of attitudes suggests a large majority support an integrated social Europe, but a sizable 17% tend to be nationalist.
- Support for the single currency has increased by 6 percentage points since Autumn 1995, 53% are in favour, 33% are against. The remaining 14% are either "neither for nor against" or hold no opinion, a decrease of 6%. The general public remains uncertain as to the date for the introduction of the new currency, only 15% correct answers were recorded.
- There is growing awareness of the Intergovernmental Conference, a rise of 9% since the Autumn of 1995. Fighting drugs, crime and unemployment remain key priorities for EU Citizens.
- Fifty-five percent of EU citizens want the Union to take more joint action, only 13% feel that enlargement should be an option for the immediate future. Member States most open to enlargement are the Netherlands, Sweden, Greece, Spain, Italy and Finland. The reasons against enlargement are largely related to cost.
- European citizens are poorly informed about the European Union, be it about living, studying or working in another Member State or about general knowledge concerning the Union and its institutions. Even in the best informed country, Luxembourg, only 54% correct answers were recorded on a battery of factual questions; this dropped to a low 23% in the United Kingdom.
- Knowledge concerning Union budget spending is poor: 42% believe most of the Union expenditure is on administration (real figure approximately 5%), a further 21% think that agriculture accounts for most of the EC budget (real figure 51%).
- Attachment to one country is high, but just on a half recognized a need for a European citizenship as well as one's national citizenship.
- Awareness of the basic rights associated with the freedom of movement is high, although the specific details are little known. Other rights accorded under the treaties are less well known, in particular those associated with financial transactions and voting rights.
- Citizens feel they have little influence either on their national parliament or the EU institutions: 22% feel they have an influence at national level, 18% at EU level. There has also been a decline in the trust accorded these institutions in recent months.
- The greatest fears of citizens are associated with the spread of drugs and organised crime together with the problems relating to employment, the disappearance of certain industries and the transfer of jobs to lower cost countries.

Major News Items around the time of the Field Work January to May 1996

15th December 1995	The name of new single currency announced - the Euro
1st January	Italy assumes Presidency of the European Union The United Kingdom assumes Presidency of the Western European Union
8th January	Death of François Mitterand, President of the French Republic from 1981 to 1995
14th January	Jorge Sampaio elected President of Portugal
15th January	Andreas Papandreou resigns as Greek Prime Minister

- 27 January France carries out a sixth nuclear test in Polynesia.
- 29 January Renewed tensions between Greece and Turkey.
- The Foreign Ministers of the European Union resolve new TACIS programme of financial assistance to the countries of the ex-USSR, in excess of two billion ECU for the period 1996-1999.
- France: Jacques Chirac announces the conclusion of nuclear testing
- 3 February Evacuation by the Serbians, Croatians and Moslems from the areas not allotted to them by the Dayton Agreement.
- 7 February Poland: Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz takes the lead of a new coalition.
- 8 February Cease-fire declared in Mostar.
- Russian troops block all accesses in Grozny.
- 9 February IRA announces the end of the cease-fire which had been in force for seventeen months. Shortly after, a bomb explodes in Canary Wharf Central London causing two deaths.
- 16 February Italy: Dissolution of Parliament by President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro. Elections are fixed for 21 April.
- 19 February Spain: One million people demonstrate against the terrorism of ETA.
- 25 February Israel: Two terrorist attacks in Jerusalem and Ashkelon kill 26 and injure another 80 people.
- 26 February Morocco signs Treaty of Association with the European Union.
- 27 February Security Council suspends economic sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs.
- 3 March Spain: Victory for the Popular Party of Jose Maria Aznar (38.8%) over the Socialist Party of Felipe Gonzalez (37.5%).
- 3-4 March Israel: Terrorists attacks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv killing 32 people.

- 6 March Chechnya: Separatists take the control of several Grozny districts.
Turkey: Mesut Yilmaz, takes the lead of a coalition government.
- 7 March Austria: Chancellor renews coalition with Wolfgang Schüssel's conservatives.
- 15 March Sweden: Göran Persson succeeds Ingvar Carlsson as head of the Social-Democratic Party and of the Government.
- 20 March United Kingdom government announces the possible association between a new variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), a degenerative disease of the nervous system and the brain of cattle.
- 25 March France, the United Kingdom and the United States sign the treaty of Rarotonga, prohibiting nuclear arms in the region of the South Pacific.
- 27 March The European Commission issues an embargo on beef, veal and derivatives produced in the United Kingdom.
- 29 March Italy: Opening of the Intergovernmental Conference in Turin.
- 1 April The Ministers for Agriculture of the European Union agree to finance up to 70% of the cost of the slaughter of a quarter of the British national herd .
- 11 April Lebanon: The Israeli army begins operation "Grapes of Wrath" in response to the rocket attacks of the Hezbollah.
- 18 April Lebanon: Israeli raid on UN refugee camp kills 94 civilians.
- 19 April Rwanda: The last UN troops leave the country.
- 21 April Italy: Romano Prodi defeats Silvio Berlusconi in the general election.
- 23 April Chancellor Kohl's government presents austerity budget in the face of union opposition.
- 25 April U.S.A.: President Clinton and the Congress agree 1996 budget.
- 28 April Belgium: European Commission round table agrees to place employment at the centre of the European Union debate.
- 1 May U.S.A. refuses to sign a multilateral agreement on the liberalisation of telecommunications.
- 6 May European Community announces that the ban on gelatine, tallow and semen from the United Kingdom is to continue.

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Editorial

The Eurobarometer number 45 reports on the findings of two surveys conducted amongst the general public in the first half of 1996. The first, a survey entitled Eurobarometer 44.2 bis, also referred to as the "Mega" survey which will be used in the remainder of this report, was carried out between the 28th February and the 12th March 1996 interviewing some 65,000 persons in the 15 Member States. The second survey upon which this report is based is the Standard Eurobarometer 45.1, which interviewed some 16,300 persons in the period 12th April to 18th May 1996¹.

The Mega survey was exceptional in size, and was specially commissioned to provide a detailed description of the state of European public opinion on the eve of the Intergovernmental Conference and in preparation for the three priority action campaigns being prepared by the Commission concerning:

- the Intergovernmental Conference
- the introduction of the single currency
- the "Citizens First" information campaign

The sample size of 65,000 of the Mega survey has permitted unusually detailed regional analyses². Various separate national reports have been prepared from the data. In this report, however, we will be presenting only one variable, namely "support" for the Union at regional level. The main report will, as is usual in standard Eurobarometers, report on overall EU results and make cross national comparisons. In addition it will, when appropriate, comment on demographic and attitudinal differences.

Nineteen ninety-six has been a year of considerable interest both in International and European terms, as readers will see from the major news items reported over the period of fieldwork. At the international level we saw continuing unrest in the Middle East, an increase in tensions over Cyprus, the implementation of the Dayton Agreement and the United States preparing for its presidential election later in the year. In the European context, the beginning of the year saw the end of an era with the death of François Mitterand, and this was to be followed by a number of national elections in Member States and certain governmental changes. At the European Union level, there has been much discussion concerning the shape of the Union in the years to come. Clearly as the debate on the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) has intensified, public awareness has increased proportionately. The other major item on the 1996 European agenda concerns the introduction of the single currency, which is also moving to the forefront of the public opinion debate.

However, another unforeseen event which has preoccupied many, in many different ways, is the declaration by the United Kingdom government on the 20th March of the possible association between a new variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), a degenerative disease of the nervous system and the brain of cattle.

The ramifications of this announcement are numerous and have undoubtedly presented the greatest challenge to the Single Market since its inception. It has impacted on the progress of the IGC itself, the United Kingdom's policy of non-cooperation for example, on the whole Common Agriculture Policy of the Union, on the Union's budget, on employment in all areas of meat production and, finally, on the consumer and concerns over public health. Certainly public opinion has been focused on the functioning of the Union and its institutions.

¹ Detailed descriptions of the sampling methods and sample sizes are to be found in Annex C.

² The sample size allowed for reliable statistical analysis to the NUTS II Level (Nomenclature of Statistical Territorial Units).

As has been mentioned, the focus of this report should be seen in the context of preparation for the Intergovernmental Conference and the priority actions campaigns. We do, as is traditional, continue to monitor the various indicators which have tracked public opinion in the European Union over a number of years. In addition, we have, due to the unusually large sample size, been able to include a chapter which describes in detail both demographic and attitudinal aspects of the European public. In particular, we present a summary of additional analysis specifically carried out to establish a European typology of attitudes.

In the chapter entitled "Major issues on the political agenda" the evolution of attitudes towards the single currency is examined; in particular its acceptability and knowledge concerning its introduction. This is followed by a section on issues relating to the Intergovernmental Conference; awareness of the Conference, the perceived policy objectives for the Union in the next ten years, support for various policy initiatives and the question of subsidiarity; which issues should be decided at Union level and which should be left to national governments.

Chapters Four and Five examine two areas of particular importance. On the one hand, the question of enlargement, awareness and support for future enlargement and, on the other, the issue of employment. The latter features regularly as one of the major concerns amongst European Union citizens and policy makers alike. The chapter discusses the level of importance of employment and its converse unemployment, anxieties concerning the job market and, finally, the level at which decisions should be taken - national or European.

The final two chapters address issues concerning citizens directly and highlights the theme of the major information campaign "Citizens First" which was officially launched on the 26th November³. Firstly we attempt to establish how well informed people are about the Union, in particular concerning citizens' rights relating to freedom of movement and to more general knowledge aspects of the Union.

In the concluding chapter we examine attitudes towards citizenship, citizens' rights and then go on to discuss how people perceive their role in the democratic process - do they have any influence on governments' actions and how trustworthy do they consider them to be? Finally, we analyse the main concerns of citizens concerning "the building of Europe" as reflected in one of the information campaign themes.

Further information on the published documents may be found on:
Internet:Europa server: <http://europa.eu.int>

³ The Citizens First campaign has a World Wide Web site on the Europa server (<http://citizens.eu.int>). In addition there are dedicated telephone lines in all Member States in order to answer citizens' questions.

REPORT