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Public opinion in Luxembourg on the European Union in general, enlargement and the sources of EU information

Executive Summary

Survey carried out for the European Commission’s Representation in LUXEMBOURG

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May 28, 2002
Respondents in Luxembourg feel that they have very little involvement in the debate about enlargement

The euro is now accepted as part of the accord

Even though people in Luxembourg show high levels of recognition of the names of the candidate countries, they do not think that they are sufficiently well informed about the implications of enlargement and feel excluded from the political debate surrounding it.

The euro has become, in the space of a few months, the most important advantage of EU membership.

These are the two of the most important findings that can be found in the special Eurobarometer edition of Spring 2002. This survey provides a window into the opinions of EU citizens about the quality of information on the EU, on enlargement and on socio-political aspects of the Union.

The survey was carried out during a period crucial to the building of Europe: the Convention designed to prepare the future of Europe is beginning its work, EU enlargement is in the process of being started up and, for some months already, the single currency has been a concrete reality for citizens in the Eurozone. This report covers the state of public opinion in Luxembourg in particular.

The euro is an undeniable benefit of EU membership

Respondents were asked about the positive and negative aspects of the EU. In answer to the question about the most positive aspects, Luxembourg residents spontaneously cited the single currency and its advantages. This response was supplied far more often than the ability to travel freely, a stronger unified Europe, peace and security in Europe or enlargement.

With respect to the negative aspects of the EU, insecurity was mentioned at the top of the list, followed by illegal immigration, inflation, difficulties with the euro and fears of an increase in unemployment. For almost 21% of people surveyed in Luxembourg, the EU has no negative aspects.

Turkey, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria are the best candidate countries

Turkey, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria are the countries that are best known by respondents in Luxembourg. The three countries about which they would like to hear more are Turkey, Malta and Cyprus. The three reasons most frequently given for wanting to know more about these countries are tourism, culture and the economy.

Very few of those surveyed expressed a desire to live, work or study in any of the candidate countries or to have any contact with them. Over 75% of the sample did not seem to have any interest in doing so. There was also very little interest in business contacts with these countries.
Only 30.6% of people in Luxembourg felt that they were well or very well informed about enlargement. However, this result is considerably higher than the corresponding EU average of 13%.

Like respondents in other member states, they felt that they had very little involvement in the political debate about enlargement. Only 13.2% of those surveyed in Luxembourg felt involved in this debate, as against 11.6% across the EU as a whole.

The majority of residents of the Grand Duchy (58.3%) prefer that the EU be enlarged to include only some of the candidate countries. The equivalent proportion across the EU (44.4%) is lower.

One in five people is in favour of enlargement to include all candidate countries. This result is almost identical to the EU average of 21.3%.

**Little personal impact, but beneficial effects on the economy**

The majority of people in the Grand Duchy (72.6%) are of the opinion that enlargement will not cause major changes to their personal standard of living. However, 14.5% fear that the entry of new countries into the EU will have an unfavourable impact, as a result of an increase in organised crime, an influx of people from the candidate countries looking for work, unemployment, drug trafficking and illegal immigration. Tourism and business are seen as the primary beneficiaries of enlargement (respectively 61.5% and 55.9%).

The main benefits accruing from enlargement are seen to be the strengthening of the economic and political situation in the EU and the unification of the continent. Forty seven percent of respondents are of the opinion that the benefits flowing out of enlargement will be greater than the disadvantages, compared to 37% who believe the contrary.

Overall, the proportion of people surveyed who felt that the EU would work better as a result of enlargement is slightly lower than the proportion who felt the opposite (42.9% against 43.5%).

According to 81.2% of Luxembourg respondents, enlargement will help citizens of other member states to move to Luxembourg. Seventy four percent thought that it would lead to a larger variety of products in shops. Fifty eight percent of respondents felt that business would benefit from enlargement, against 34.4% who felt that it would not.

**Maintain the current speed of the enlargement process**

The majority of residents of the Grand Duchy (52%) felt that the current speed of the enlargement process was correct. This level was similar to the level across the EU as a whole (48.4%).

Nineteen percent of those surveyed in Luxembourg would prefer the process to slow down. This is higher than the proportion of those who would prefer it to be speeded up (14.5%).

Almost 50% of the residents of the Grand Duchy, as in other EU member states, foresee that there will be high levels of immigration from the new member states after enlargement.
However, a large proportion of respondents also feel that that the movement of people will be relatively limited (41.2%), relative to an EU average on this question of 30.1%.

Out of the 48.5% who think that immigration will show a significant increase, 27.4% see this as a positive phenomenon (EU average 18.8%) and 63.8% see this as negative (EU average 69.8%).

**The information services of the EU are not well known**

The information sources about the EU that are most useful for people in Luxembourg are, in decreasing order, television, daily newspapers, the radio, the Internet, and discussions with friends and family. This result is also reflected across the EU as a whole.

In Luxembourg, a third of respondents knew of the information services of the EU, but two thirds had no idea of their existence. At the EU level, there are lower levels of knowledge about these services: nearly 80% of those polled had never heard of them.

Over 80% of those polled in Luxembourg said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the information obtained, against 18.7% who declared themselves either not very satisfied or not satisfied at all.

**Interest in the politics of the EU varies according to the subject**

Luxembourg residents wish to receive more information on a number of subjects: EU policies on the fight against crime (72.4%), their rights as citizens of the EU (65%), food safety (66.9%), EU policy on reducing unemployment (66.2%), the protection of the environment (67.3%) and the general aims and objectives of the EU (59.2%).

More than two thirds think that politicians from other member states should discuss the problems shared by all citizens of the EU on the local media in Luxembourg.

The majority (58.7%) also demonstrates interest in the opinions of citizens of other member states on the subject of the future of Europe, against 51% who are not interested in this subject.

**The Internet is used more often in Luxembourg than in the other member states**

Luxembourg residents use the Internet (48.4%) more frequently than the average across the EU (36.3%), even though one in two respondents does not use it.

In Luxembourg, respondents are also most likely (36.4%) to say that they would be ready to engage in discussion with EU policy makers if they could do so via the Internet.

**Primary information role for the EU institutions and government**

The third stage of the survey concerned relations between the people of Luxembourg and the European Union. It analysed crucial questions linked to the priorities, the aims and the decisions taken by the European institutions.
The inhabitants of the Grand Duchy are strongly attached to their country (90%), to their town (84.9%) and to their region (83%). Their attachment to the EU is equally obvious, because 69% of them feel close to the EU compared to an average of only 39.6% across all member states.

When asked who should responsible for communication about the EU, the residents of Luxembourg are clear about the primary role that they wish the EU institutions (47%) and the national government (46.5%) to play in this respect. These are followed by the regular media and by the Members of the European Parliament (28.1%) and local authorities (23.6%).

When asked about the effectiveness of the actions of the EU, respondents in Luxembourg gave pride of place, with 92%, to the single currency. In addition, over 80% felt that the EU was effective in maintaining peace and security in Europe, in sustaining economic growth and in guaranteeing human rights and respect for democratic principles in Europe. A large majority also thought that the EU was effective in securing political and diplomatic importance for itself on the world stage (72%).

Respondents are more sceptical when questioned about the effectiveness of social action by the EU, such as the fight against social exclusion and poverty and against unemployment (58.6% and 57.3% positive responses respectively, relative to 37.5% and 37.1% negative responses). Reform of the EU institutions and their functions is placed at the bottom of the list of priorities.

More agreement, less opposition

The majority of those surveyed in Luxembourg (51.6%) are in favour of the direction taken by the EU. This opinion is shared by only 39% of citizens across the EU. The proportion that thinks that the EU is going in the wrong direction are rather low (7.2%), and lower than the corresponding EU average (10.9%).

Generally speaking, people in Luxembourg are very favourable to their membership of the EU. On the ten-point favorability scale, nearly a quarter (22.4%) of them expressed the maximum possible level of approval of membership, relative to only 7.5% of respondents across the EU as a whole.

Further, 81.6% of respondents in Luxembourg think that membership of the EU helps to defend national interests. This opinion is shared by only 62.2% of respondents across the EU as a whole. This response level puts Luxembourg at the top of the league, ahead of Ireland (76.7%) and Greece (74.6%). Negative opinion on this topic comprises only 7.2% of responses in Luxembourg, against an EU average of 15.3%.

Finally, 54% of inhabitants of the Grand Duchy think that decision taken by the EU are good for their country. Only 6.3% are convinced of the contrary and a third say that it depends.
The majority feel that they have very little influence on EU decision-making

In Luxembourg, six out of ten people feel that they have very little personal influence on decisions taken by the EU, while 27.7% think that they have no influence at all. Only 9.7% think that they have very much influence.

The three bodies that are felt to have the greatest influence on decision making in the EU are, in order, the European Commission (72.4%), the European Parliament (70.8%) and the national governments (69.2%).

According to respondents in Luxembourg, the three countries that have the greatest influence in the EU are Germany (83.4%), France (80.4%) and the UK (45.6%). This opinion is shared by EU citizens as a whole. The residents of the Grand Duchy put their country in fourth place after these three.