



The 2004 Eurobarometer survey finds that one in two Europeans feels they are badly informed about the environment but believe that environmental protection associations and scientists are the most trustworthy sources of information on the subject. Most Europeans argue that policy makers should give as much attention to environmental issues as to economic and social factors. Key environmental concerns for Europeans are water pollution, man-made disasters, climate change and air pollution.

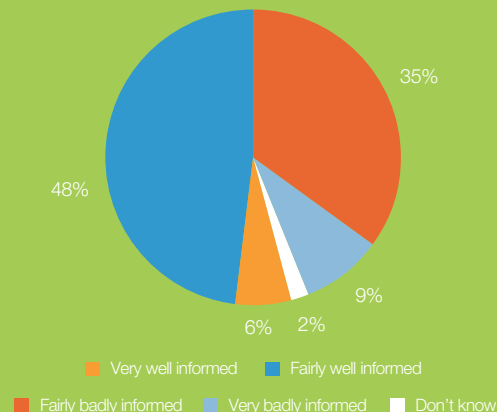
The Eurobarometer survey, commissioned by DG Environment and published in April 2005, was carried out from 27th October to 29th November 2004. Approximately 1,000 interviews were conducted in each of the 25 EU Member States. This included the EU's old member states as well as the 10 new Member States. A striking conclusion was that nine out of ten of those surveyed felt that environmental policies are as important as economic and social policies in influencing quality of life.

The objective of the survey was to explore the following five aspects of European citizens' attitudes towards the environment:

- Perception of the environment;
- Information on the environment;
- Importance of the environment in the political decision-making process;
- Solutions to environmental problems; and
- Individual efforts to protect the environment.

Of particular relevance to the environmental communication field is how well informed Europeans feel about environmental issues. One in two European citizens claimed that they are badly informed, whilst just under half considered themselves to be fairly well informed, and some very well informed (as per the pie-chart opposite).

In general, how informed do you feel about environmental issues?



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>> The countries in which respondents felt most informed were Denmark, Cyprus, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden. Those that felt the least informed were Lithuania and Portugal. Respondents felt they lacked information relating to the health impacts of chemicals used in everyday products, and the use of genetically modified organisms in farming. Loss in biodiversity, agricultural pollution and depletion of natural resources were ranked in third position.

### Who do Europeans trust for their environmental information?

Most put their trust in environmental associations and scientists, compared to other sources such as television, consumer associations, newspapers, and green political parties for example. Those least trusted were companies, trade unions and the radio. In comparison to a previous survey carried out in 2002, these results show that trust in television and newspapers as sources of environmental information have increased whereas consumer association and teachers at school or universities are less trusted sources of environmental information.

Interestingly, more than half the respondents wanted to know more about environmental solutions, with only a minority wanting to know more about environmental problems. When asked about the most effective ways of solving environmental problems, 44% of respondents felt

that increasing general environmental awareness was a positive way forward. This was ranked almost as highly as making regulations stricter (46%) and better enforcement of environmental legislation (45%). Respondents in the former 15 Member States were more convinced of the effectiveness of environmental awareness than those in the New Member States.

For more information on these findings, a summary of the survey and the full report are available at:  
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/barometer/index.htm>  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

The EECN is DG Environment's support structure for the European Environmental Communication Networks. Currently these include the Green Spiders Network and The Network of Urban Forums for Sustainable Development.

The website can be accessed here:  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/networks/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/networks/index_en.htm)

Another key finding from the survey was that when people are asked about the environment they think of pollution in towns and cities and protecting nature. In terms of identifying main environmental issues, most people demonstrated that water pollution, man made disasters, climate change and air pollution were their main concerns.

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