

How Europeans see themselves

Looking through the mirror with public opinion surveys



ECIS: 7



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Introduction

Since 1973, the European Commission has been measuring public opinion to inform itself about the views of European Union citizens and to share the obtained information with the general public through a plethora of sources, including more recently the electronic media.

Over the past 25 years, the Commission's public opinion surveys have collected information about nearly every aspect of European Union life. Although much of the work has focused on public support for and knowledge of the European Union, its policies and its institutions, the Eurobarometer surveys have also looked at how satisfied Europeans are with the life they lead, what their expectations of the future are and what their concerns are, to name but a few examples. The surveys have covered public opinion about issues as varied as modern biotechnology, the information society, the environment, poverty and the single market. Furthermore, the surveys have often focused on the opinion of young people, women or top managers.

The purpose of this brochure is to present readers with a selection of findings from these Commission surveys. As the title of the brochure implies, it provides readers with a picture of how Europeans see themselves by looking at a variety of subjects: citizens' values and life satisfaction at the end of the 20th century, European citizenship, public opinion towards the European Union, public support for the policies of the European Union, public opinion towards a number of issues that EU citizens worry about ... Particular categories – the young, women and top decision-makers – are the focus of the sixth chapter. The final chapter of the brochure looks towards the future by looking at people's expectations of the 21st century, people's perceived and desired role of the European Union in the 21st century and by reporting on the views of young Europeans who are, after all, Europe's future leaders.

Europeans at the end of the 20th century



*N*ow that we are entering the 21st century, it seems appropriate to firstly look at how satisfied the citizens of the European Union have been with their lives during the last quarter of the previous century. The Eurobarometer survey, which has been carried out twice a year in all Member States since 1973, provides this information. In this chapter, we also address the legacy of the 20th century. Last but not least, we look at the values of European citizens at the end of the second millennium.

Technical specifications

Eurobarometer surveys

Fieldwork: each spring and autumn since 1973.

Coverage: EU citizens aged 15 and over residing in any of the European Union Member States.

Sample size: 1 000 respondents per country except Luxembourg (500), the United Kingdom (1 000 in Great Britain and 300 in Northern Ireland) and Germany (1 000 in East Germany and 1 000 in West Germany).

Margin of error: ± 3.1 %.

Institute responsible for fieldwork: INRA (ECO).

Next to the *Eurobarometer*, the Commission also carries out ad hoc public opinion polls (usually over the telephone) under the name of the Flash Eurobarometer. Furthermore, a central and east European *Eurobarometer* has been carried out since 1990 and has recently been replaced by the applicant countries' *Eurobarometer* which measures public opinion towards the European Union in the countries that have applied to become part of the European Union. A continuous tracking survey (CTS) was fielded from January 1996 to December 1998. It succeeded the small pilot telephone 'Monthly monitoring' created in 1994. These results were regularly published in Euro opinion reports until the end of 1997. The Commission also carries out qualitative studies to study certain topics more in-depth or to prepare a general population survey.

Flash Eurobarometer surveys

Fieldwork: ad hoc if and when needed by a service of the Commission or other institutions/agencies of the EU.

Coverage: EU citizens aged 15 and over residing in any of the European Union Member States. Special target groups can also be investigated.

Sample size: Most of the time 1 000 respondents per country, with the exception of Germany where the sample has been set at 2 000 respondents.

Margin of error: ± 3.1 %.

Institute responsible for fieldwork: EOS Gallup Europe.

Continuous tracking surveys

Fieldwork: 6 days a week, 44 weeks a year from January 1996 until December 1998.

Coverage: EU citizens aged 15 and over residing in any of the European Union Member States.

Sample size: 800 respondents per country, with the exception of Germany where the sample has been set at 1 600 respondents.

Margin of error: ± 3.5 %.

Institute responsible for fieldwork: Euroquest MRB.

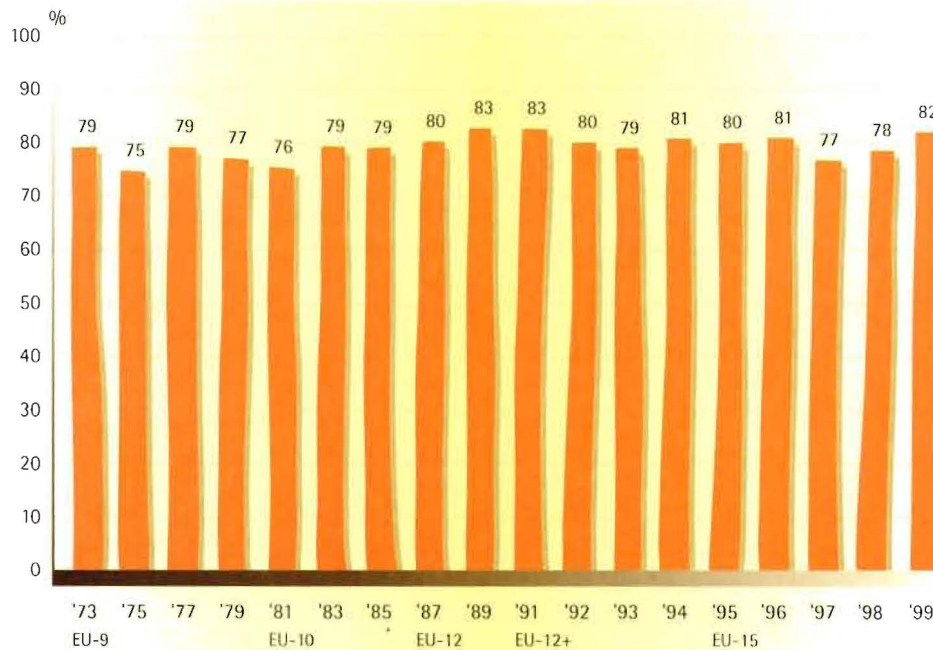
Life satisfaction

Over the years the survey has regularly asked European Union citizens how satisfied they are with their life in general. This life satisfaction question is a summary measure of how people feel about all things related to their lives, ranging from their personal happiness, their health, their family and their economic situation to their views about society in general.

During the last quarter of the 20th century, at least 75 % of EU citizens have indicated that they are happy with the life they lead

with the latest measurement showing that more than 8 in 10 people feel positive about their life. As Graph 1 shows, satisfaction levels are higher in periods of economic well-being and lower during more difficult times, such as in 1975 when people were feeling the economic effects of the oil crisis.

Graph 1: Life satisfaction 1973–99 EU average



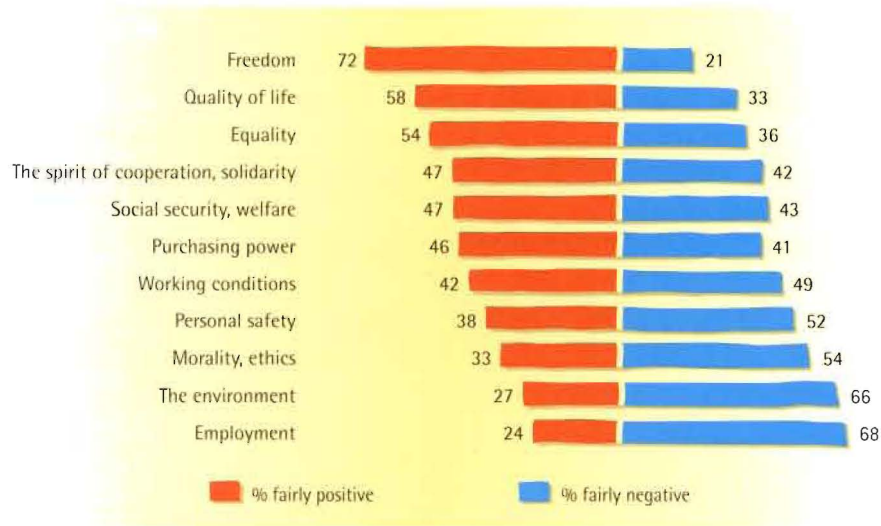
Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

The legacy of the 20th century

In the autumn of 1998, the *Eurobarometer* asked its respondents to rate the legacy of the 20th century for the following 11 areas: freedom, quality of life, equality, solidarity, social security and welfare, purchasing power, working conditions, personal safety, morality and ethics, the environment and employment (Graph 2) (1).

Nearly three in four EU citizens rate the legacy left in the area of freedom as (fairly) positive (72 %) (2). More than half of the public also feel positive about what younger generations will find in terms of quality of life (58 %) and equality (54 %). People are most pessimistic when it comes to employment (68 %) and the environment (66 %).

Graph 2: The legacy of the 20th century (EU-15)



Source: *Eurobarometer* 50.1 – Fieldwork: October–December 1998.

The values of Europeans

We often read or hear about how individualistic our society has become. Yet survey results indicate that Europeans are still very interested in their fellow citizens. More than 9 in 10 EU citizens feel that it is extremely or very important to help others and to value people for who they are (Graph 3). Furthermore, more than 8 in 10 Europeans

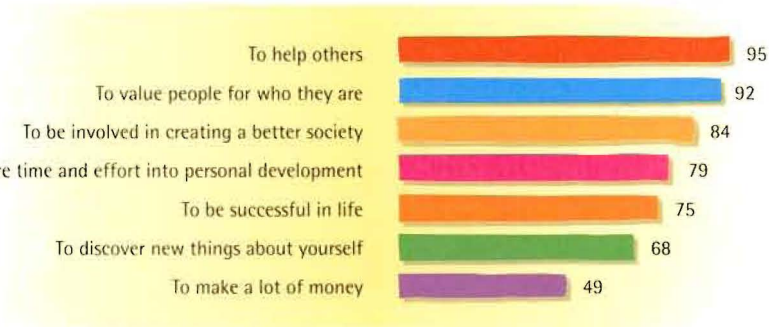
believe it is important to be involved in creating a better society. These societal values are strong in each of the 15 Member States.

So while these results may calm concerns about the extent to which individualism is affecting life at the end of the 20th century, EU citizens nonetheless seem to have a yearning for traditionalism (Graph 4). Nearly 7 in 10 want to live in a world in which peo-

(1) Respondents were asked the following question: 'In less than two years, we will be in the 21st century. How would you rate the legacy left to young people by older generations in the following areas?'

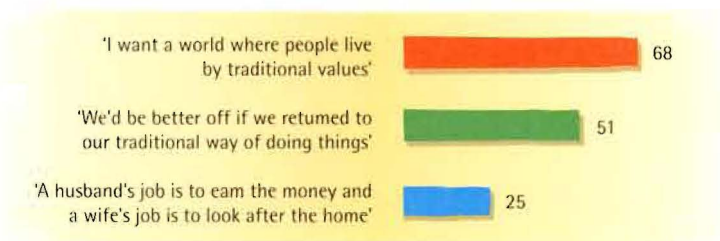
(2) Respondents could rate the legacy as 'fairly negative' or 'fairly positive'. As usual, they could also reply 'don't know'.

Graph 3: The values of Europeans % saying it is extremely or very important



Source: Continuous tracking survey 97.8. – Fieldwork : August-September 1997

Graph 4: The values of Europeans % strongly or tending to agree



Source: Continuous tracking survey 97.8. – Fieldwork : August-September 1997.

ple live by traditional values and just about half of the people feel that we'd be better off if we returned to our traditional ways of doing things. However, a longing for traditionalism does not necessarily mean that everything should go back to the way it used to be: only 25 % of Europeans agree that a husband's job is to earn the money and a wife's job is to look after the home. Traditional values are most prominent in Greece and least popular in the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden.

A clear sign of modern times is the value people attach to success and self-development. Three in four EU citizens regard being successful in life as important and half of the people feel this way about making a lot of money. Furthermore, we find that 79 % of

EU citizens feel it is important to put more time and effort into their own self-development and 68 % feel it is important to discover more things about themselves.

European citizenship



One of the main objectives of the European Union is to introduce European citizenship. The concept was first introduced by the Maastricht Treaty which states: 'Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union'. The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty clarifies the link between European and national citizenship. It states unequivocally that 'citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship'. Furthermore, the Amsterdam Treaty gives every citizen of the Union the right to write to any of the EU institutions in one of the 11 languages of the Treaties and receive an answer in the same language.

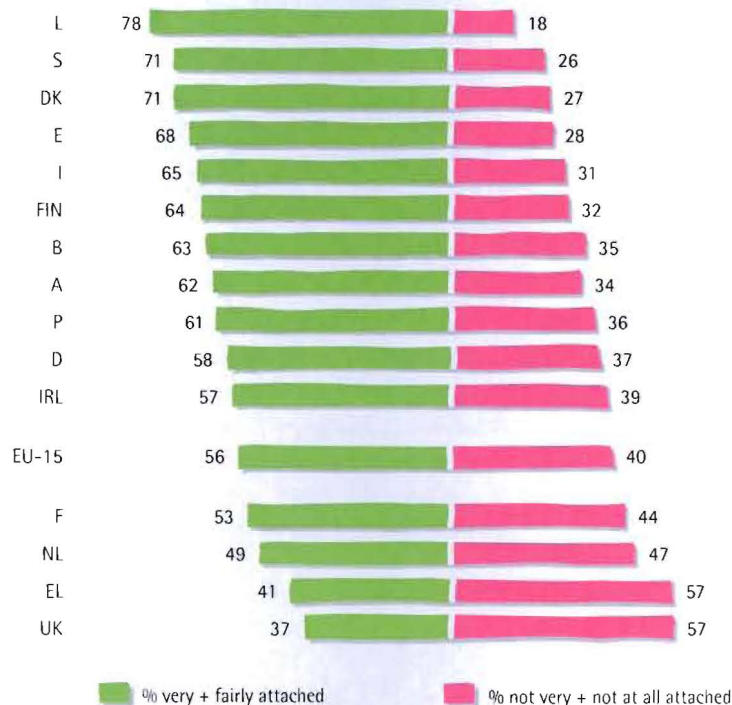
Do citizens feel attached to Europe?

In order for people to feel like European citizens, they should first and foremost feel some basic sense of geographic attachment to Europe. The spring 1999 *Eurobarometer* survey found that nearly 6 in 10 EU citizens feel very or fairly attached to Europe. People in Luxembourg (78 %) are most likely to feel very or fairly attached, followed by people in Sweden and Denmark (both 71 %) (Graph 5). People in the UK are least likely to feel attached (37 %), followed by people in Greece (41 %) and the Netherlands (49 %). More than half of the respondents living in the nine remaining Member States feel very or fairly attached to Europe.

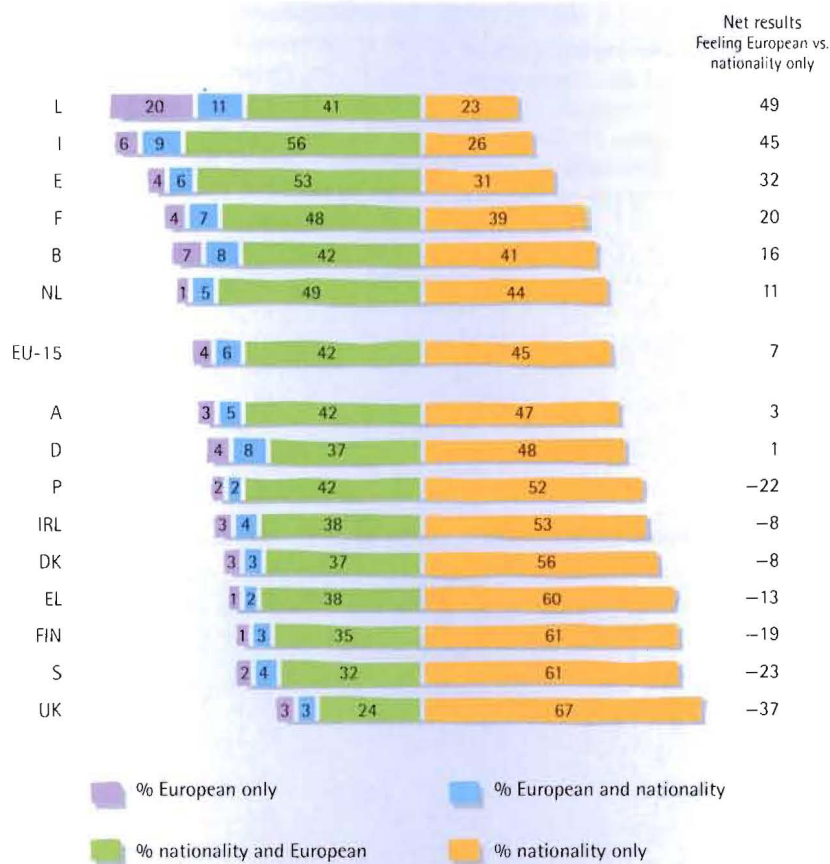
Is there a European identity among citizens?

Apart from a sense of geographical attachment, in the context of European citizenship it is also important that people feel psychologically attached to Europe. Although at the end of the 20th century one can still not speak of the existence of a truly European identity, the majority of EU citizens feel to some extent European. However, this is an issue where opinions differ greatly between countries (Graph 6).

Graph 5: Feeling attached to Europe



Graph 6: European and national identity



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

People in Luxembourg are most likely to feel European only (20 %). This is much higher than in any of the other countries and can be explained by the high proportion of citizens from other EU countries that reside in Luxembourg. Nonetheless, there are seven other countries where people who feel to some extent European are in the majority. These are, in rank order, Italy (71 %), Spain (63 %), France (59 %), Belgium (57 %), the Netherlands (55 %), Austria (50 %) and Germany (49 %). In the other EU countries, people who identify only with their own nationality are in the majority, although in Portugal (52 %) and Ireland (53 %) this

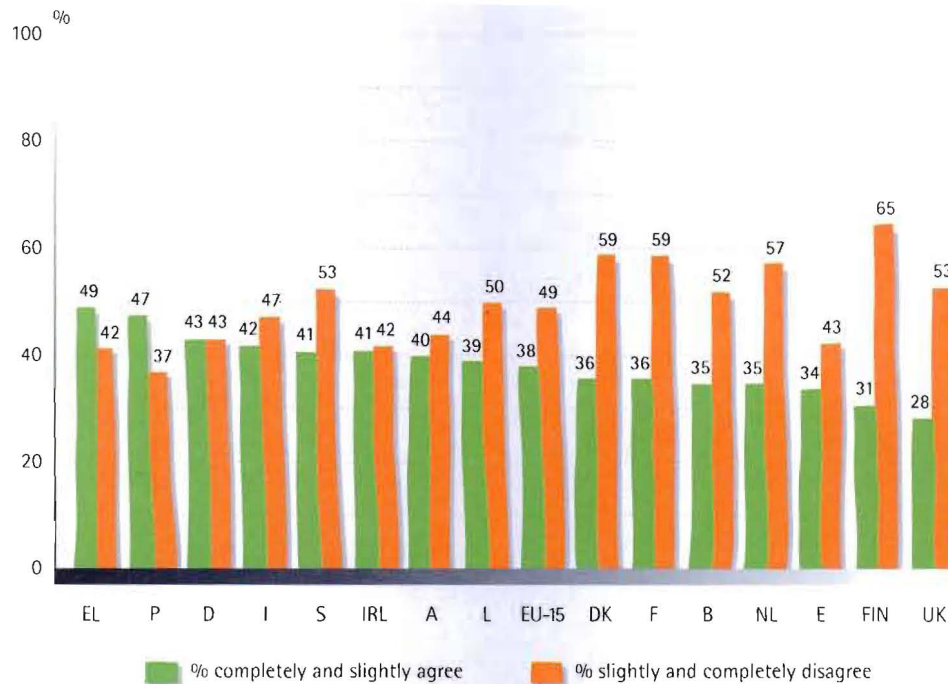
majority is very small. In the UK (67 %), Sweden, Finland (both 61 %), Greece (60 %) and, to a slightly lesser extent, Denmark (56 %) national identity is very strong.

Is there a shared European cultural identity?

The idea of citizenship also implies a shared cultural identity. 38 % of EU citizens agree that there is a shared European cultural identity and 49 % disagree⁽¹⁾ (Graph 7). However, there are large differences of opinion about this issue among the 15 Member States.

People in Greece (49 %) and Portugal (47 %) are most likely to believe in a shared European cultural identity, followed by people in Germany (43 %) and Italy (42 %). People in Finland (65 %), France and Denmark (both 59 %) are most likely to disagree. Although we find lower levels of agreement among nations where there are more Eurosceptic people, feeling European and believing in the existence of a shared European cultural identity do not go hand in hand.

Graph 7: There is a European cultural identity shared by all Europeans

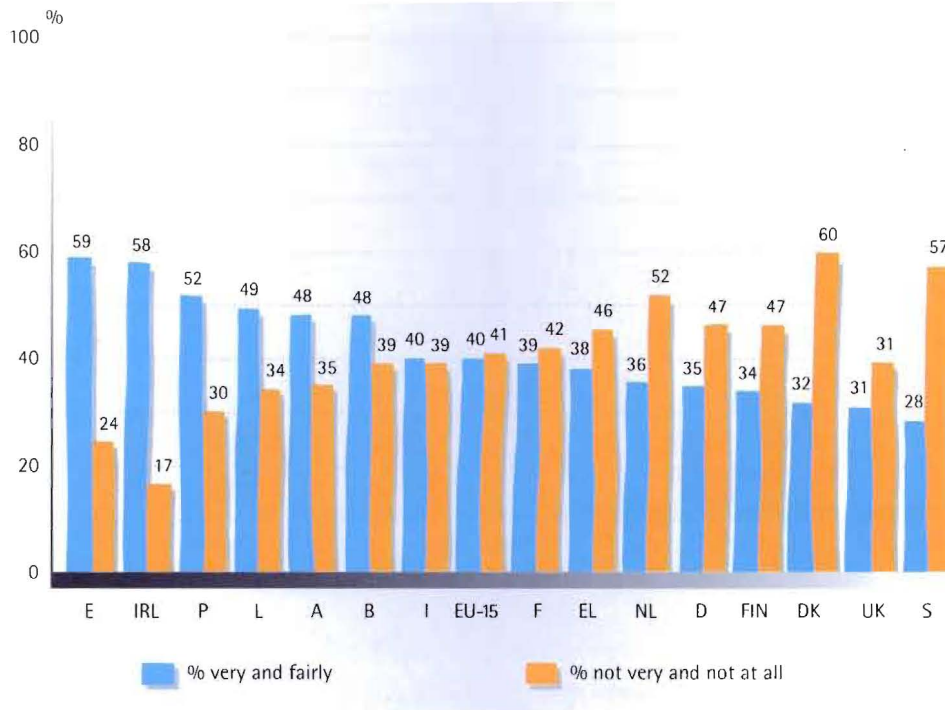


Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork October–November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

(1) People were offered five answer options: completely agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, completely disagree and don't know.

Graph 8: Satisfaction with the way democracy works in the European Union



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

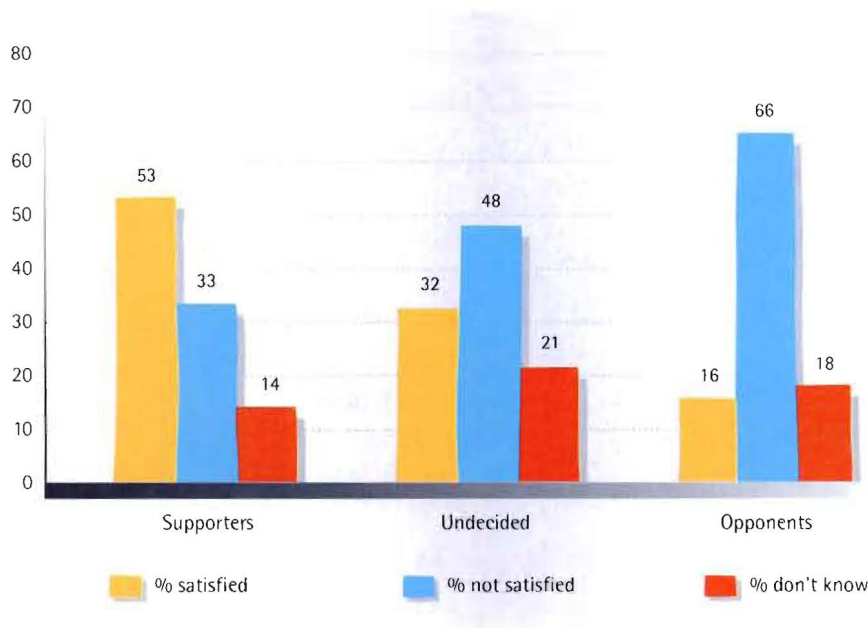
Satisfaction with the way democracy works in the European Union

Last but not least, people's acceptance of their European citizenship is dependent on satisfactory acceptance levels with the way democracy works in the European Union. On average, 4 in 10 EU citizens are satisfied with the way democracy works (Graph 8).

However, this average hides large differences in opinion among the citizens from the 15 Member States. In Spain and Ireland around 6 in 10 people are satisfied while in Denmark and Sweden around 6 in 10 people are not satisfied.

Graph 9: Satisfaction with EU democracy

Differences between supporters, people who are undecided and opponents of the EU



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October-November 1999.

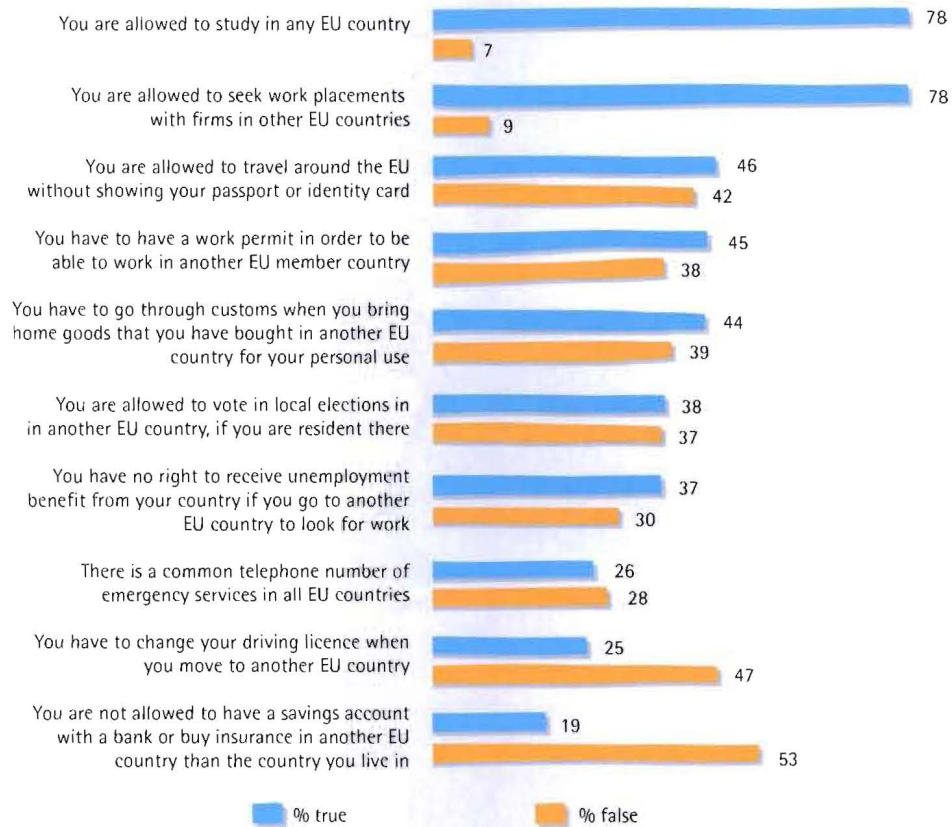
The resignation of the European Commission in March 1999 made a significant impact on how people feel about the way democracy works in the European Union. Following the Commission's resignation, satisfaction levels increased significantly. The spring 1999 *Eurobarometer* results indicate that 42 % of EU citizens were satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union, compared to only 35 % in the autumn of 1998.

People who regard their country's membership of the EU as a good thing (supporters) are significantly more likely to be satisfied than people who regard their country's membership as a bad thing (opponents) (Graph 9).

Knowledge of citizens' rights

For Europeans to start thinking of themselves as European citizens, it is also imperative that they are aware of the rights which European citizenship confers on them. In order to measure people's knowledge of their rights as European citizens, respondents to the autumn 1996 survey had a list of rights and obligations read out to them and were asked whether each of these was true or false (Graph 10).

Graph 10: Knowledge of citizens' rights

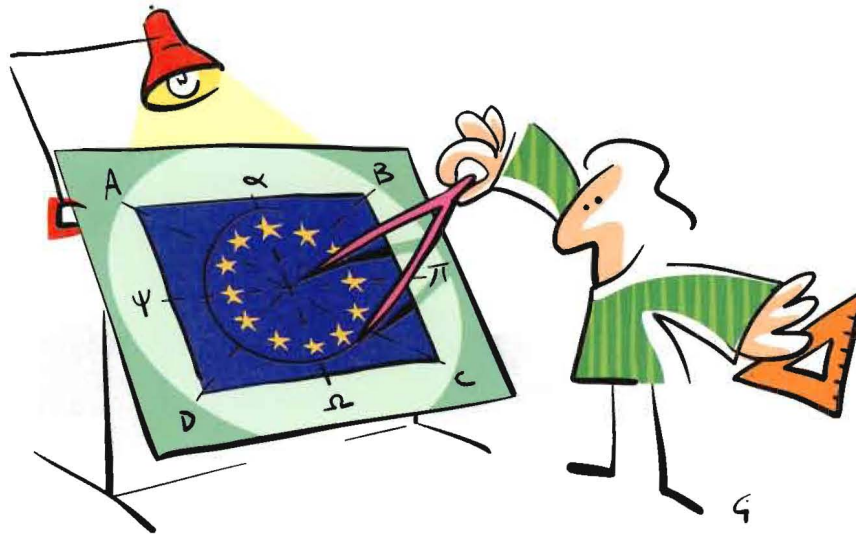


Source: Eurobarometer 46.0 – Fieldwork : October-November 1996

The large majority of citizens were aware that they have the right to study and seek work placements in other EU Member States. Many people also knew that it is not necessary to change driving licences when moving to another EU country and that one is allowed to have a savings account with a bank or buy insurance in another EU country.

People were uncertain about the other statements with equal numbers believing them to be true and false. To find out about your rights, contact Europe Direct: <http://europa.eu.int/europedirect>

The European Union



number of regularly asked questions from the Eurobarometer survey look at people's knowledge about and support for the European Union.

Knowledge and awareness

As Table 1 shows, most people feel they do not know much about the European Union, as self-perceived knowledge levels are quite

low (1). Only 26 % of EU citizens feel they know quite a lot to a great deal (i.e. those choosing the numbers 6 through 10 on the scale).

(1) Respondents to the autumn 1999 Eurobarometer survey were asked how much they know about the European Union, its policies and its institutions by selecting from a card a number – on a scale from 1 to 10 – which best represents their perceived knowledge about the European Union. The higher the number they select, the more they feel they know about the EU.

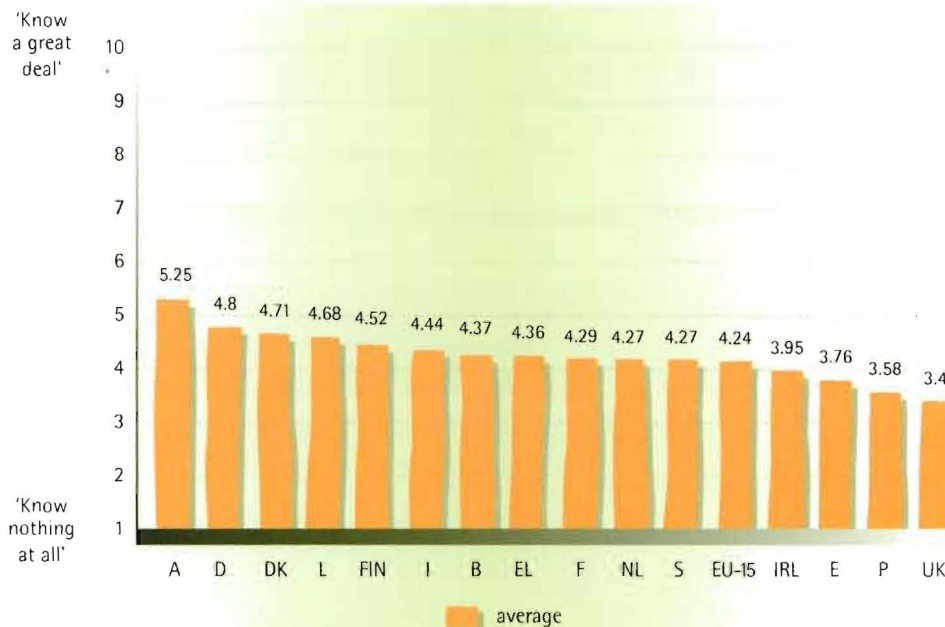
These are average results for the population of the 15 European Union Member States. In order to depict the large amount of variation that exists between the 15 countries, Graph 11 shows each country's average score (1). As can be seen, knowledge levels range from a low of 3.4 in the UK to a high of 5.25 in Austria.

The survey also measures people's awareness of nine of the European Union's institutions (Graph 12). The institutions included in the survey are the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Ministers, the Court of Justice, the European Ombudsman, the European Central Bank, the European Court of Auditors, the Committee of the Regions and the Social and Economic Committee.

Table 1: Self-perceived knowledge of EU affairs. Autumn 1999 (in %, EU-15)

Scale	%
1 (know nothing at all)	10
2	12
3	16
4	15
5	18
6	12
7	8
8	4
9	1
10 (know a great deal)	1
Don't know	2
Average score	4.24

Graph 11: Levels of perceived knowledge about the EU



Source: Eurobarometer 52 0 – Fieldwork, October–November 1999.

Average scores are based on a scale of 1–10

(1) The average scores, or means, show the central tendency of the responses and represent the sum of the responses for each of the 10 points on the scale times the value of each point divided by the total number of responses.

Graph 12: Have you ever heard of ...? (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

People are most likely to have heard of the European Parliament (91 %), followed by the European Commission (78 %) and the European Central Bank (69 %). People are least likely to have heard of the three youngest EU institutions – the Committee of the Regions (26 %) and the Social and Economic Committee (34 %) – and the European Ombudsman (31 %). The more

people feel they know about the EU, the more likely it is that they have heard of the EU institutions (Table 2).

Table 2: Awareness levels of the EU institutions by self-perceived knowledge about the European Union (in %)

Institution	High knowledge level	Average knowledge level	Low knowledge level
European Parliament	97	96	83
European Commission	93	87	64
European Central Bank	91	79	53
Council of Ministers	86	71	41
Court of Justice	84	72	45
Court of Auditors	76	55	28
Social and Economic Committee	67	42	19
Committee of the Regions	56	32	14
European Ombudsman	48	36	21

Support for European Union membership

The *Eurobarometer's* most popular indicator of EU support was introduced in 1973. It measures whether people think their country's membership to the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing or neither good nor bad (Graph 13).

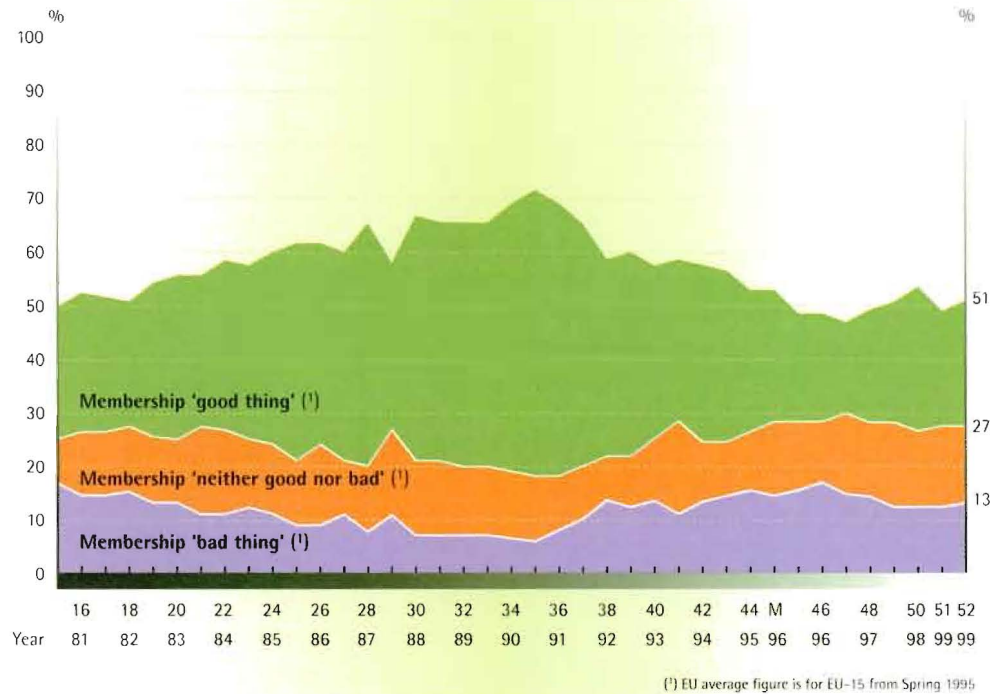
During the years that the Community consisted of nine countries, that is from 1973 to 1980, support fluctuated between a high of 63 %, measured in the autumn of 1975, and a low of 53 %, measured in the spring of 1976, the spring of 1978 and the autumn of 1980. Although support for EEC membership was obtained from more than half of the public during these early years, public opinion was still somewhat unstable as support levels jumped up and down from one measurement to the next without the occurrence of any significant events.

The next decade, during which the Community expanded to include Greece, Spain and Portugal (*), is marked by a far less volatile public opinion, with support for membership increasing from 50 % in 1981 to 65 % in 1987. In the spring of 1988, support dropped significantly to 58 %. This drop – possibly representing public anxiety concerning the reform of both the Community's financial system and the common agricultural policy, which was agreed in February 1988 – turned out to be only temporary. In the autumn of 1988, support levels rose to 66 % and until the end of the 1980s around two in three citizens supported their country's membership.

In the spring of 1991, support levels reached an all-time high of 72 %. The economic well-being of Europeans was high and unemployment levels were low during this period. Furthermore, people were looking forward to the advantages they would soon receive from the forthcoming European 'single market'. In Germany, the significant surge in support levels can in part be explained by the euphoria that existed following the country's reunification. Support was particularly widespread among the citizens of the former Democratic Republic of Germany who have been included in the *Eurobarometer* sample from 1990 onwards. Unfortunately, the sense of optimism caused by the reunification was short-lived and this affected people's perceptions of the European Community. In East Germany, support levels dropped from 87 % in the autumn of 1990 to 55 % in the autumn of 1992; in West Germany, they fell from 69 % to 57 % during this period.

(*) Greece joined in 1981; Spain and Portugal joined in 1986.

Graph 13: Support for European Union membership 1981–99 EU average



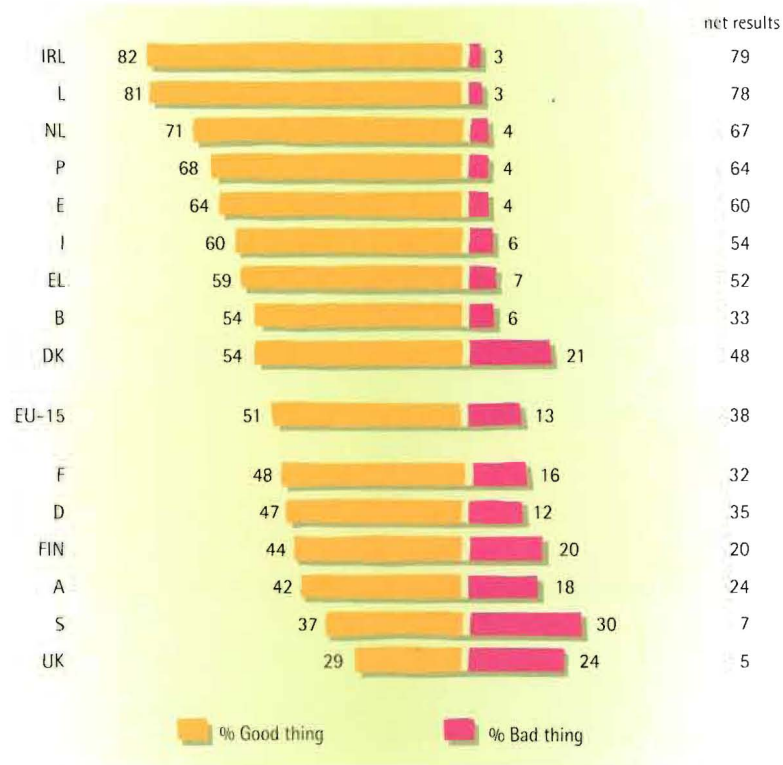
Source: Eurobarometer – Trends

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

The 1990s clearly represent the period when public support for the European Union was at its weakest. The Gulf War, the economic crisis and the high unemployment levels that followed, the debate on the Maastricht Treaty, the war in Yugoslavia, the inclusion of three relatively eurosceptic nations and the BSE crisis are but some of the reasons which help explain why support dropped from 72 % in 1991 to 46 % in the spring of 1997. The late 1990s have seen popularity levels slowly but consistently increase. In the spring of 1998, support levels rose to above 50 % for the first time since 1995 and the positive trend that started in the autumn of 1997 continued with 54 % of citizens saying that their country's membership to the European Union is a good thing. Following

the resignation of the European Commission in March 1999, support for EU membership fell to 49 % but this drop turned out to be temporary as support levels were back up to 51 % by autumn 1999 (Graph 14).

Graph 14: Support for European Union membership



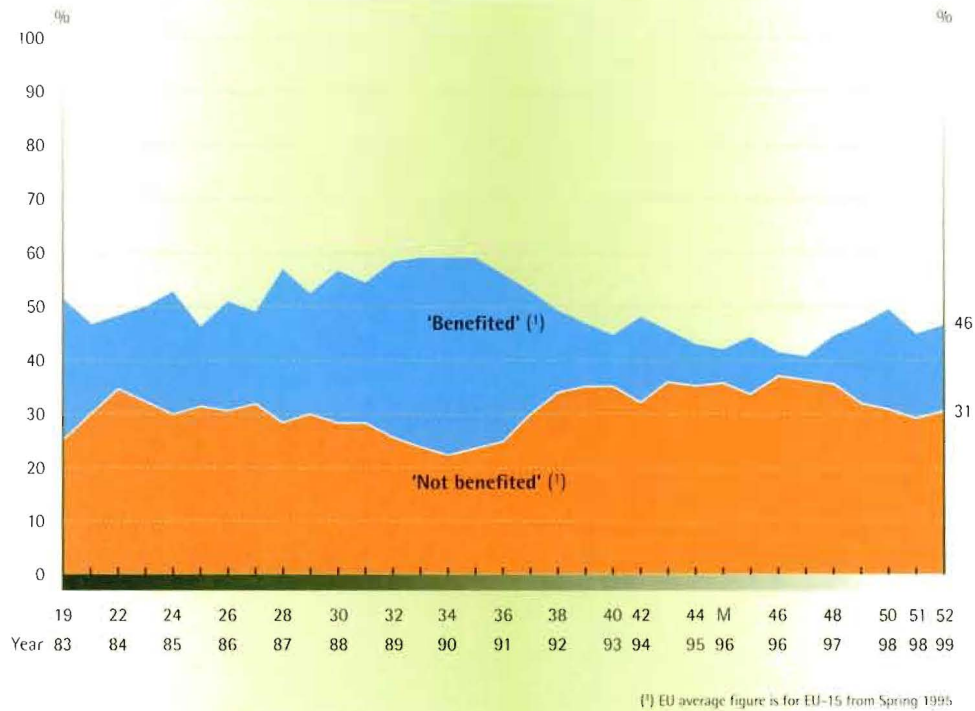
Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork : October-November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' and 'neither good nor bad' not shown.

Another long-standing question measures whether people feel their country has benefited from membership. Back in 1983, when the question was first asked, 52 % of the people living in the 10 Member States of the EEC believed their country had benefited, compared to 25 % who felt their country had not benefited. Nowadays, the public is more divided on this issue: on average, 46 % of the citizens from the 15

Member States feel their country has benefited while 31 % hold the view that their country has not benefited. At 23 %, the proportion of people who feel unable to make a judgment is the same in 1999 as it was in 1983 (Graph 15).

Graph 15: Benefit for European Union membership 1983–99 EU average



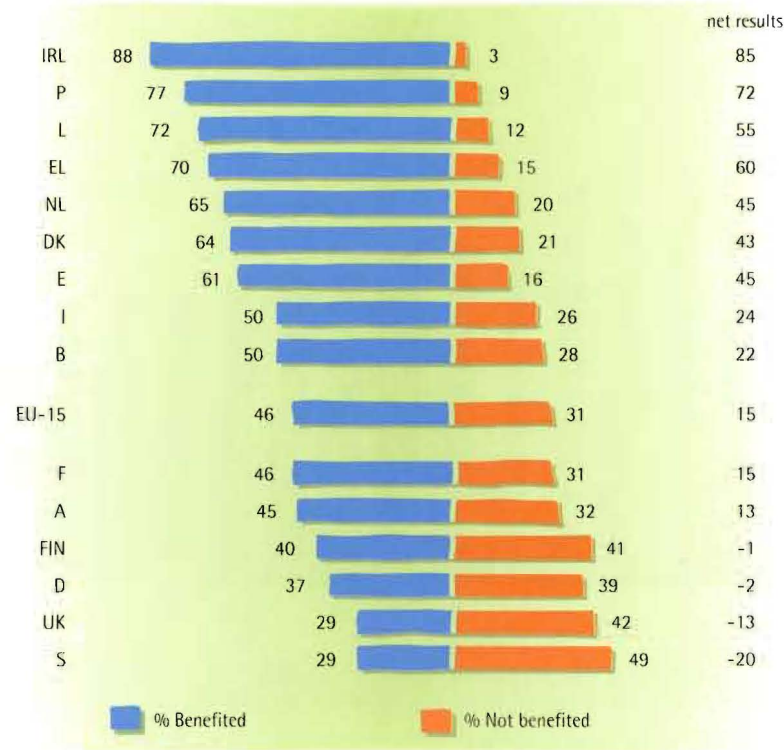
Source: Eurobarometer – Trend.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

People in Ireland are by far most likely to be of the opinion that their country has benefited (88 %), followed at a distance by people in Portugal (77 %) (Graph 16). At least half of the people in Luxembourg, Greece, the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, Italy and Belgium share this opinion. In Sweden and

the UK, less than 3 in 10 people feel that their country has benefited from EU membership.

Graph 16: Benefit from European Union membership



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork : October–November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

The process and speed of European integration

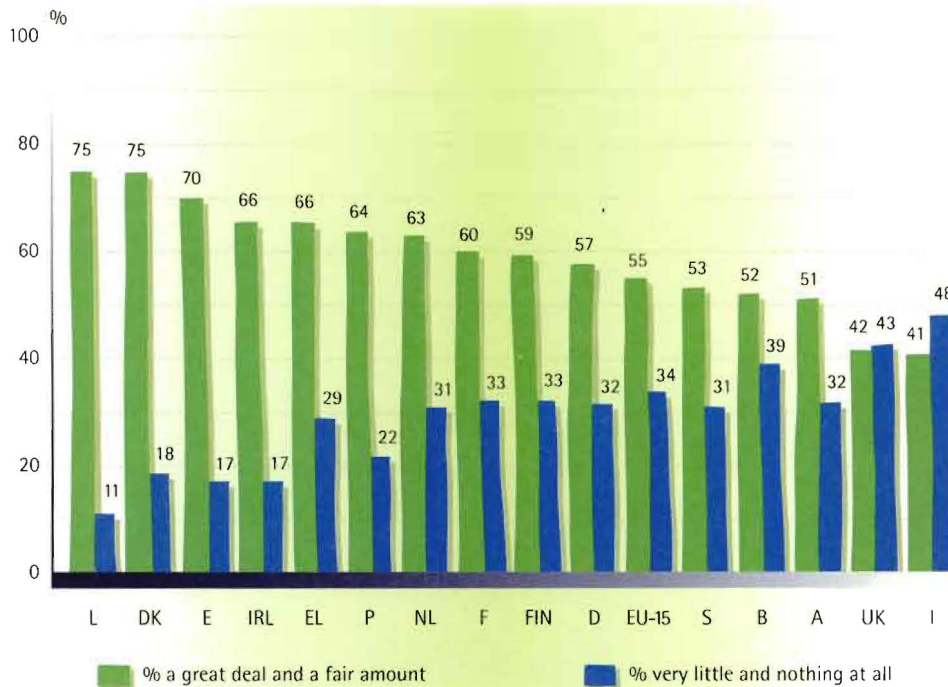
The autumn 1998 *Eurobarometer* included the following question:

'The process of European integration started 50 years ago. During this time, would you say that a great deal, a fair amount, very little or nothing at all has been achieved in terms of integration?'

On average, 11 % of Europeans believe a great deal has been achieved during the past 50 years and a further 43 % feel a fair amount has been achieved. Around a third of the European public feels that very little (29 %) or nothing at all (5 %) has been achieved.

At 75 %, people in Luxembourg and Denmark are most likely to feel that a great deal or a fair amount has been achieved in terms of European integration, followed by people in Spain (70 %), Ireland and Greece (both 66%). The only two countries where less than half of the people hold the view that a great deal or a fair amount has been achieved are Italy (41 %) and the UK (42 %). It is rather surprising to find the generally pro-European Italians at the bottom of the list, something which can probably be interpreted as their way of saying that not enough has been achieved during these past 50 years (Graph 17).

Graph 17: European integration: how much has been achieved during the past 50 years?



Source: Eurobarometer 50.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1998.

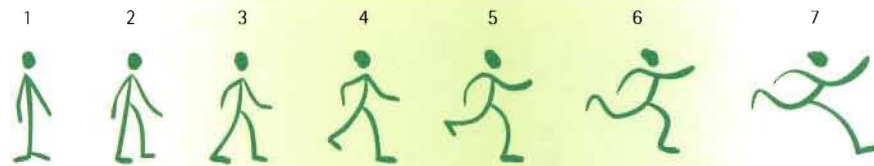
Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

There is clear disagreement between supporters and opponents of the European Union on this issue (Table 3).

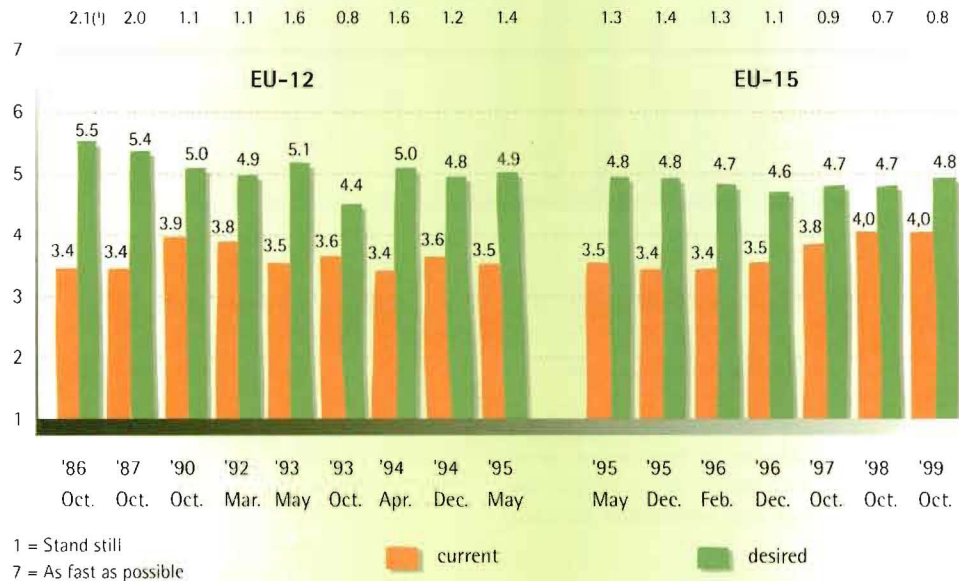
Table 3: Relationship between support for the European Union and attitudes to how much has been achieved during the past 50 years

Achievement during the past 50 years	Membership to the European Union is:		
	a good thing	neither good or bad	a bad thing
	%	%	%
Great deal/fair amount	68	44	34
Very little/nothing at all	25	43	56
Don't know	7	12	10
Total	100	99	100

Graph 18: The 'Euro-dynamometer' (EU-12/EU-15 average on seven point scale – trend)



Europe's progress Perceived current speed, desired speed (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer – Trend.

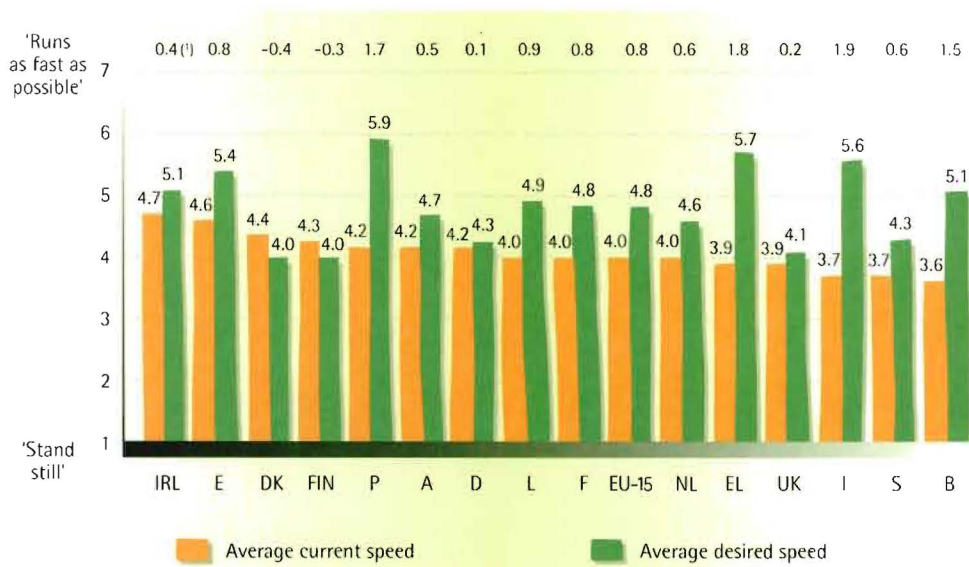
(¹) Scale-value difference: 'desired' minus 'current'.

Since 1986, the *Eurobarometer* has measured public opinion with regard to the speed of European integration.

As Graph 18 shows, the speed at which Europe is perceived to be built has increased since 1996 from an average score of 3.4 (on a scale of 1 to 7) to an average score of 4.0 (Graph 18). The desired speed, on the other hand, has remained more or less unchanged during the last few years. The gap between the perceived and desired speed has become considerably smaller since the question was first asked in 1986 (the latest measurement shows a net score difference of 0.8 compared to a difference of 2.1 in 1986).

The gap between the speed at which Europe is perceived to be progressing and the speed at which people desire it to progress varies significantly from country to country. In most countries people would like to see Europe built at a faster speed than what they perceive it to be with the largest positive net score found in Italy, Greece, Portugal and Belgium. In Denmark and Finland, there is a small negative net score between the perceived and desired speed (Graph 19).

Graph 19: The 'Euro-dynamometer'
 Europe's progress Perceived current speed, desired speed



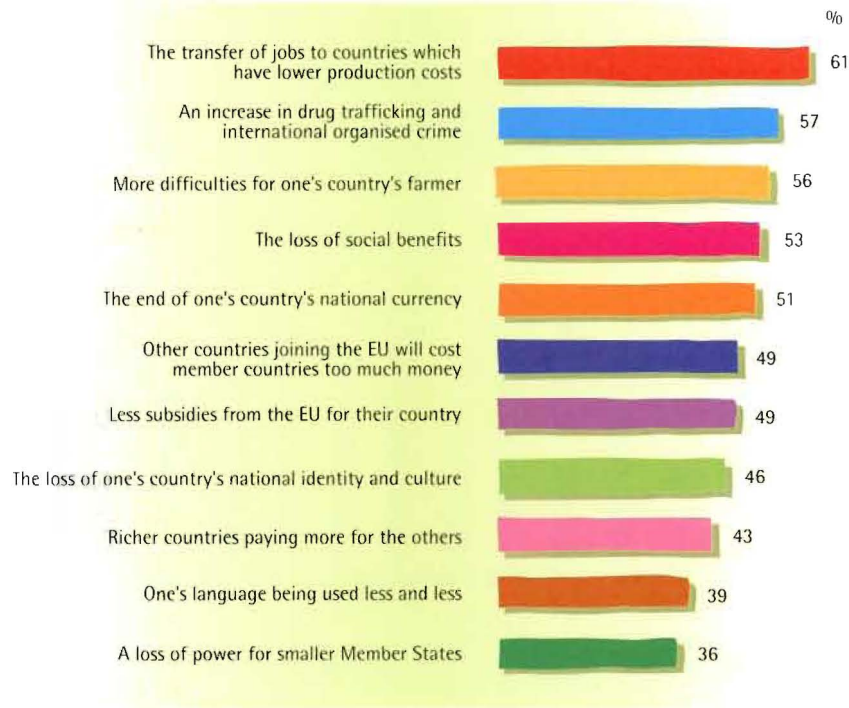
Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

(*) Scale-value difference 'desired' minus 'current'.

In the spring 1999 survey, respondents were shown a list of 11 things which people say they are afraid of and were asked for each

one to say if they, personally, were afraid of it or not (Graph 20).

Graph 20: Fears among European Union citizens (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer 51.0 – Fieldwork : March-April 1999.

The idea of jobs transferring to countries which have lower production costs is most likely to scare people in the context of closer unification (61 %), followed by an increase in drug trafficking and international organised crime (57 %). More than half of the public is also afraid that the farmers in their country will have more difficulties (56 %), that they will lose social benefits (53 %) and that they will lose their national currency (51 %).

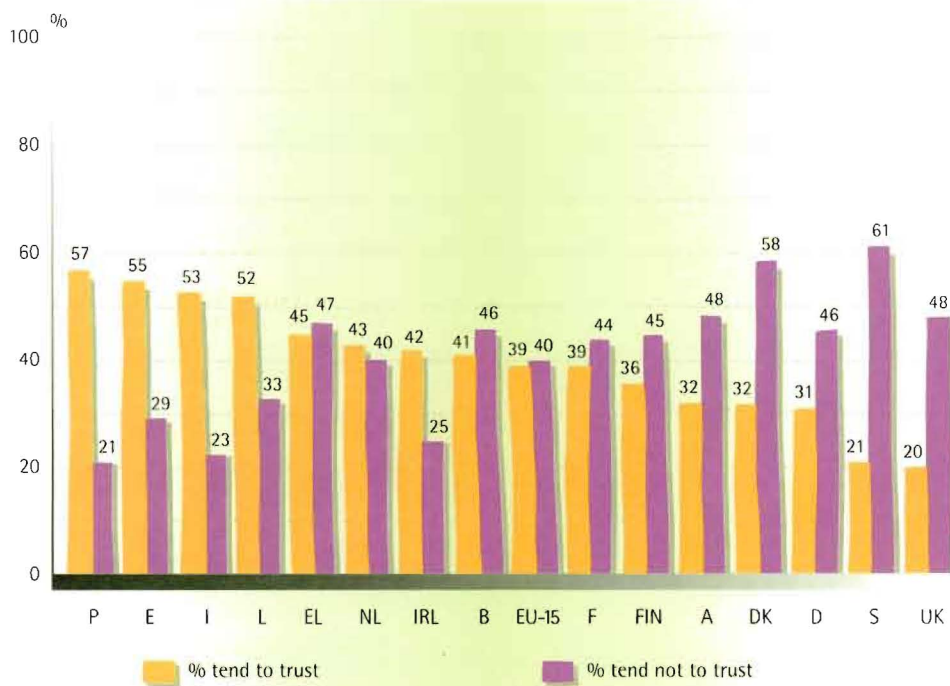
Trust in the European Union and its institutions

On average, 39 % of Europeans say they tend to trust the European Union, 40 % say they tend not to trust it and 21 % lack an opinion ⁽¹⁾. However, there are large variations between the Member States (Graph 21). More than half of the public in Portugal (57 %), Spain (55 %), Italy (53 %) and Luxembourg (52 %) trusts the European Union compared to less than a third of the public in the UK (20 %), Sweden (21 %), Germany (31 %), Denmark and Austria (both 32 %) ⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Eurobarometer 51.0 – Fieldwork: March-April 1999.

⁽²⁾ The proportion of people who tend not to trust the European Union is highest in Sweden (61 %) and Denmark (58 %). The proportion of don't know responses is highest in the UK and Ireland (both 32 %).

Graph 21: Trust in the European Union



Source: Eurobarometer 51.0 – Fieldwork: March–April 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

Whether people trust the European Union or not also depends on how they generally feel about their country's membership of the EU. Those who regard their country's membership as a good thing are significantly more

likely to say they tend to trust the European Union than those who regard their country's membership as a bad thing (Table 4).

Table 4: Trust in the European Union by support levels (in %)

	EU membership is a good thing	EU membership is neither good nor bad	EU membership is a bad thing
Tend to trust	57	26	11
Tend not to trust	27	50	74
Don't know	16	24	15
Total	100	100	100

Graph 22: Trust in EU institutions (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

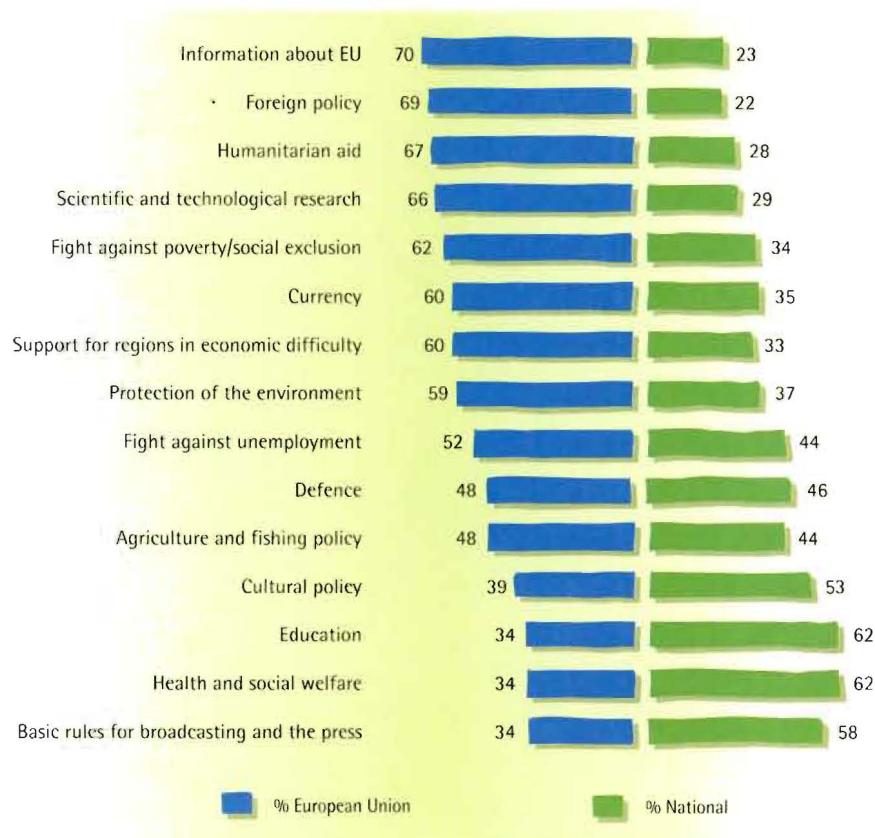
Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

Graph 22 shows the extent to which Europeans tend to trust and tend not to trust nine of the Union's institutions.

At 53 %, the European Parliament receives the most widespread trust, with the Court of Justice and the European Commission in second and third place, respectively (both 45 %). However, the Commission also receives the highest proportion of people who say they tend not to trust it (30 %) although this figure is lower than it was in the spring of 1999 (33 %).

Related to trust is the issue as to whether people support EU decision-making. The survey regularly includes a question that asks whether decisions should be taken at the national or EU level. It lists 25 policy areas over which the Union has, to varying degrees, decision-making competencies. In autumn 1999, on average, 53 % of people support joint EU decision-making in these areas and EU decision-making is favoured over national decision-making in 17 of the 25 areas.

Graph 23: National or joint EU decision-making (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

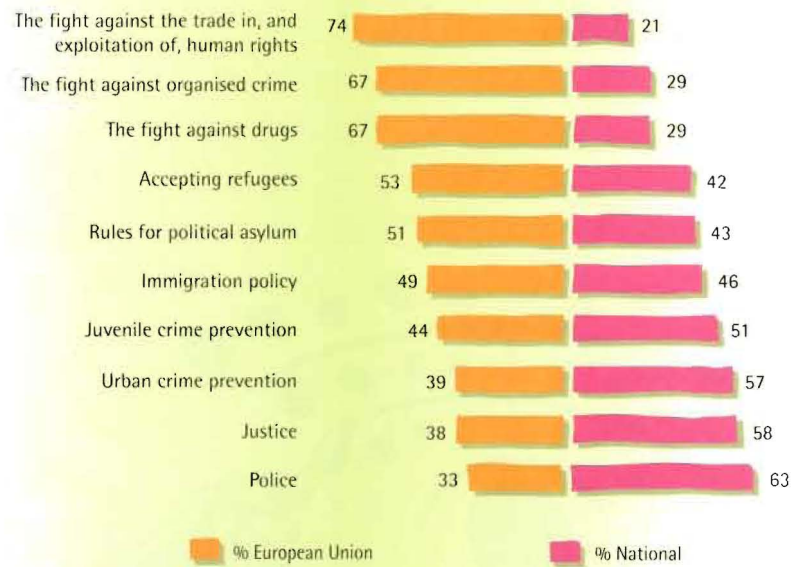
Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

Graph 23 shows people's support for EU decision-making with respect to the Maastricht Treaty policy areas.

As can be seen, people are most likely to be of the opinion that decisions concerning information about the EU, its policies and institutions should be taken jointly by the European Union. The next four areas where support for joint EU decision-making is most widespread are foreign policy, humanitarian aid, science and technological research and the fight against poverty and social exclusion. People are least likely to want EU decision-making for education, health and social policy and broadcasting rules for the media.

When it comes to the Amsterdam Treaty policy areas, we find that support for EU joint decision-making is most widespread for the fight against human trade and exploitation while people are most likely to support national decision-making in the areas of policing and justice (Graph 24).

Graph 24: National or joint decision-making after the Amsterdam Treaty (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork : October-November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

From these figures one can see that people follow the Union's subsidiarity principle. They support joint EU decision-making in areas that either transcend national borders or have a limited impact on their day-to-day

life but want the national governments to decide in areas that concern them, their families or their country more directly.

Policies of the EU at the end of the 20th century

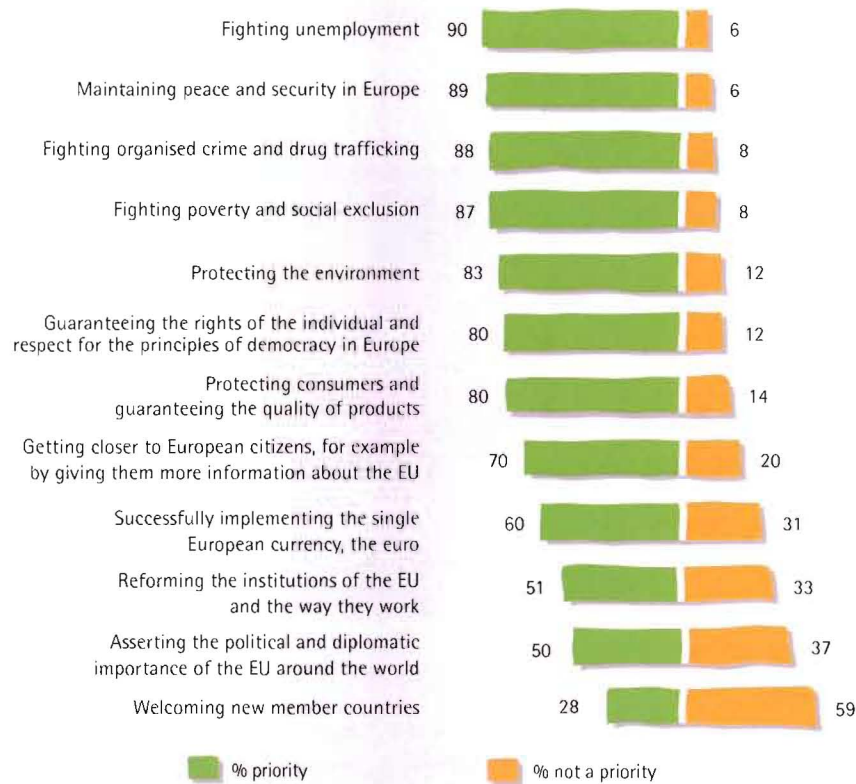


Support for the work of the EU

Does the public regard the current actions of the European Union as priorities? Nearly all EU citizens believe the fight against unemployment should be a priority for the European Union (Graph 25). The large majority of Europeans also believes that maintaining peace and security in Europe, fighting organised crime and drug trafficking and fighting poverty and social exclusion should be priority actions for the European Union. Graph 25 shows that EU citizens want the EU to improve or safeguard current

standards but that they are less likely to want any immediate changes to the status quo. Hence we find that the public is least likely to view enlargement as a priority.

Graph 25: EU actions: priority or not? (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

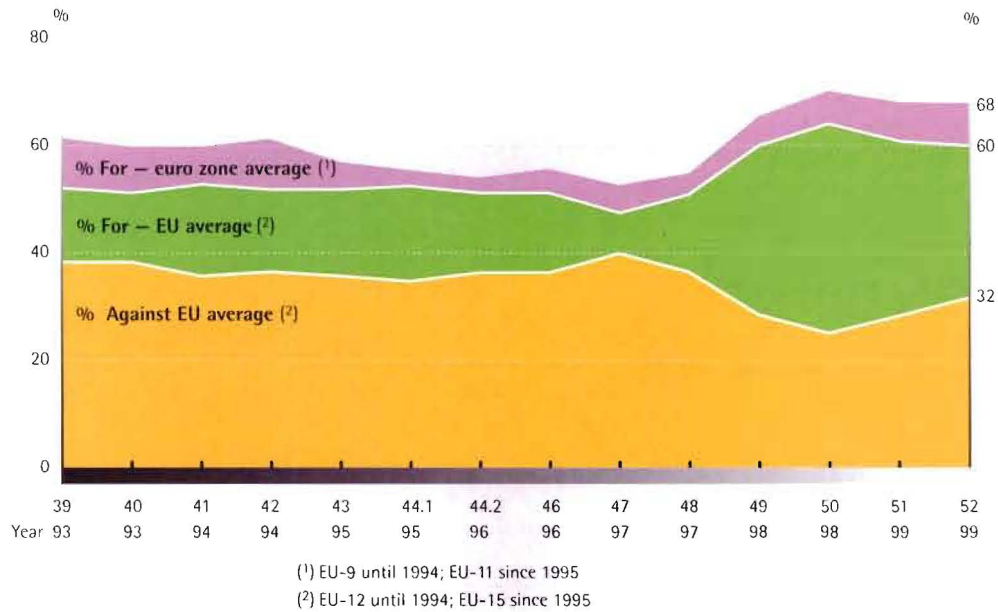
Support for the single currency

The *Eurobarometer* has measured public support for the single currency since 1993, when the Maastricht Treaty established that the euro would be introduced by 1 January 1999. While only around half of EU citizens were in favour of the single currency until 1997, support levels increased significantly in 1998. The 1999 results show a slight decrease in support which is to be expected now that pre-introduction enthusiasm has been replaced by the reality (Graph 26).

Nonetheless, people are still much more likely to be in favour of the euro than they were a few years ago (1).

(1) More information about the euro can be found at <http://europa.eu.int/euro/html/entry.html>

Graph 26: Support for the single currency 1993–99



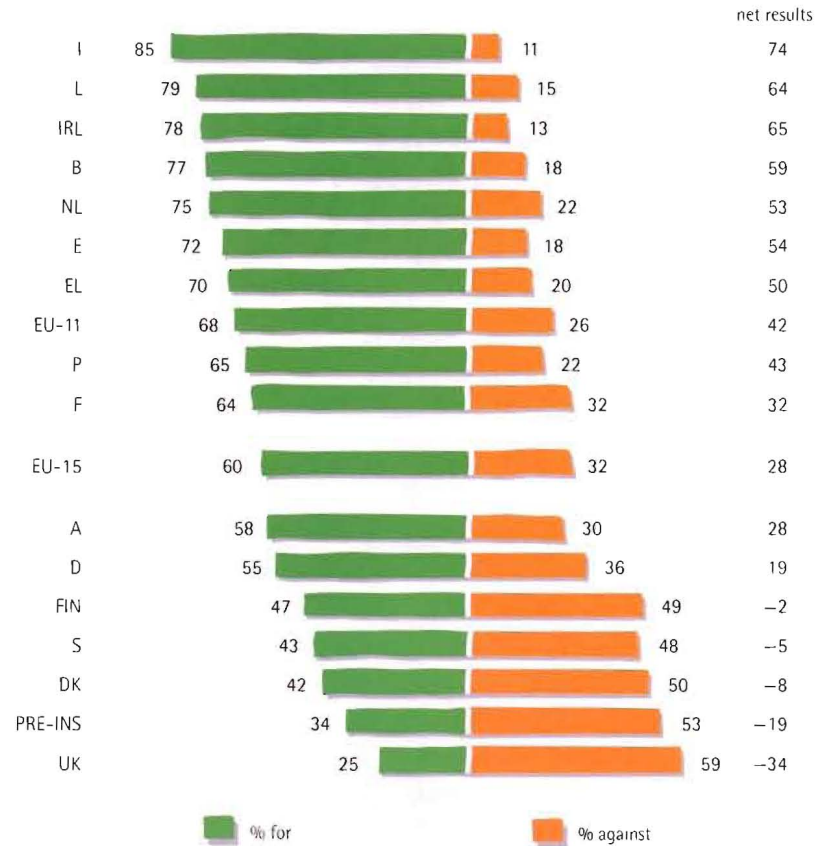
Source: Eurobarometer – Trend.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown

In 1999, the euro was being introduced in 11 countries, the 'EUR-11', namely Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. At that moment, the four countries outside the euro zone, known as the 'pre-in' countries were Denmark, Greece, Sweden and the United Kingdom. People in

the first group of countries tend to be more supportive of the single currency (68 %) than are people in the 'pre-in' countries (34 %) (Graph 27).

Graph 27: The euro: for or against?



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown

Among the 'pre-in' countries, people in Greece (70 %) continue to be more likely to support the euro than are people in the UK, Denmark and Sweden. In Sweden and Denmark, around 4 in 10 people support the euro and 5 in 10 people are against it. In the UK supporters of the euro (25 %) are greatly outnumbered by opponents (59 %).

Support for the single currency varies greatly depending on how interested and on how well informed people feel about the euro (Table 5).

Table 5: Support for the single currency

	% in favour of the euro	% against the euro	% don't know
People who feel very or fairly interested in the euro	75	20	5
People who feel very well/well informed about the euro	73	23	5
EU-15 average	60	32	8
People who feel not very/not at all well informed about the euro	51	38	11
People who feel not very or not at all interested about the euro	41	47	12

Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: Oct - Nov. 1999.

Support for the common foreign and security policy

The common foreign and security policy (CFSP) was established by the Maastricht Treaty and came into force on 1 November 1993. Following the Amsterdam Treaty, which came into force on 1 May 1999, a High Representative for the CFSP was appointed at the Cologne European Council in June 1999.

The Maastricht Treaty enables the European Union to make its voice heard on the international stage and express its position on armed conflicts, human rights and any other subject.

The Treaty also provides the Union with a common security policy that covers all matters relating to its security, including the gradual formulation of a common defence policy. This common defence policy could lead to a common defence.

Graph 28: Support for a common foreign and defence policy % in favour



Source: Eurobarometer — Trend.

As Graph 28 shows, public support for a common foreign policy has been obtained from over 6 in 10 EU citizens while around 7 in 10 people have supported a common defence policy.

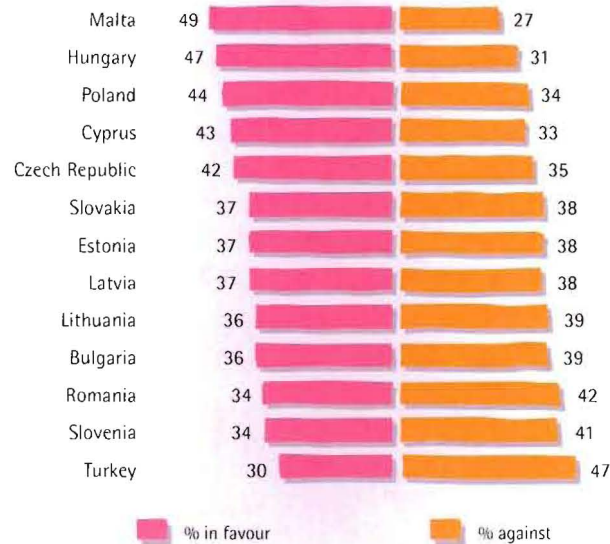
Support for enlargement

In December 1997, the process of enlarging the European Union to the south and the east was launched. Some 13 new countries have applied to join the EU (1). They should be in a position to join the Union as soon as they have demonstrated their ability to assume the obligations of membership.

As we have seen earlier, many EU citizens do not believe that enlargement should be an immediate priority for the European Union. Furthermore, public opinion on enlargement has not yet crystallised with many people still opting for the 'don't know' response when asked about their support for countries to become part of the European Union (Graph 29). Nonetheless, EU citizens feel more favourable about some of the 13 applicant countries joining the EU than they feel about some of the others.

(1) The 13 applicant countries are Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey. More information about enlargement can be found at: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/index.htm>

Graph 29: Support for enlargement (EU-15)



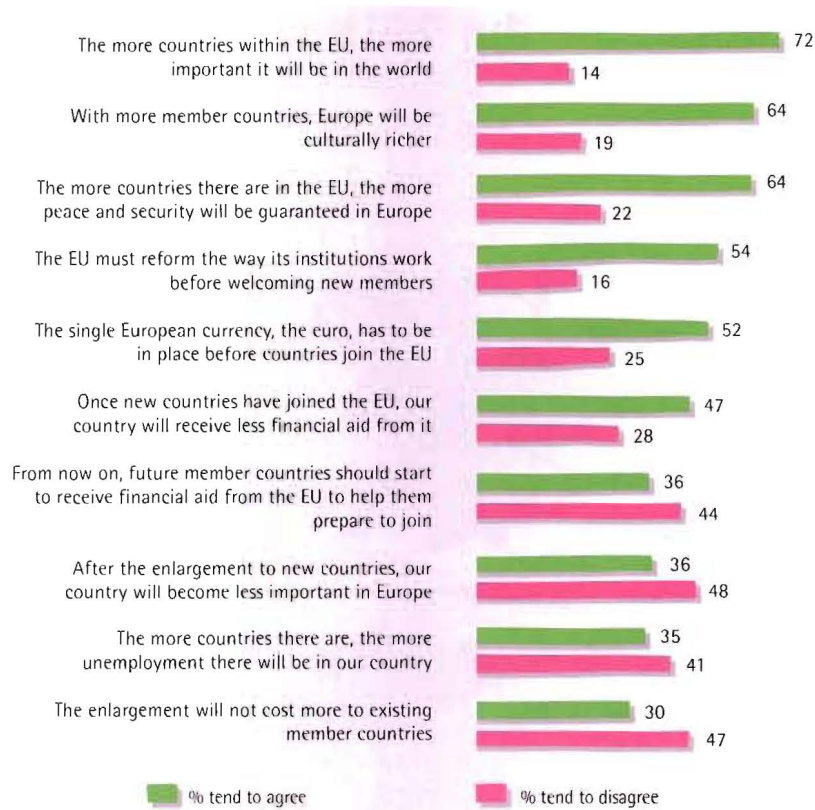
Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 – Fieldwork: October–November 1999.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown.

Although these results indicate that the public appears to be quite hesitant about new countries joining the EU, general attitudes about enlargement are in fact quite positive (Graph 30). Seventy-two per cent of EU citizens believe that an increase in the number of Member States will make the European Union a more important player on the world stage. Furthermore, 64 % believe that enlargement will increase the cultural

richness of the European Union and that more peace and security will be guaranteed in a larger European Union. (Only 36 % of people are of the opinion that their country will become less important as a result of enlargement.)

Graph 30: Attitudes towards enlargement of the EU (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer 50.0 – Fieldwork : October-November 1998.

However, people are less optimistic when it comes to the economic aspects of enlargement. Forty-seven per cent of EU citizens believe that their country will receive less financial aid from the European Union once new countries have joined. An equal proportion disagrees with the statement that 'enlargement will not cost more to existing member countries'. Nonetheless, quite a few citizens (36 %) show an altruistic side in agreeing that future member countries should start to receive financial aid from the EU to help them prepare to join. Another less optimistic finding is that a substantial minority of EU citizens (35 %) agree that 'the

more countries there are, the more unemployment there will be' in their country.

When it comes to preparing the European Union for enlargement, the majority of the public shares the view of the policy-makers. Fifty-four per cent and fifty-two per cent, respectively, agree that the EU must reform the way its institutions work and that the euro has to be in place before new members can join (1).

(1) Earlier, we already noted that reforming the European Union is seen as a priority by 51 % of Europeans and that successfully implementing the euro is seen as a priority by 60 % of Europeans.

European issues and priorities at the end of the 20th century



t the end of the 20th century what issues are most on people's minds, that is to say, what issues are people most likely to worry about?

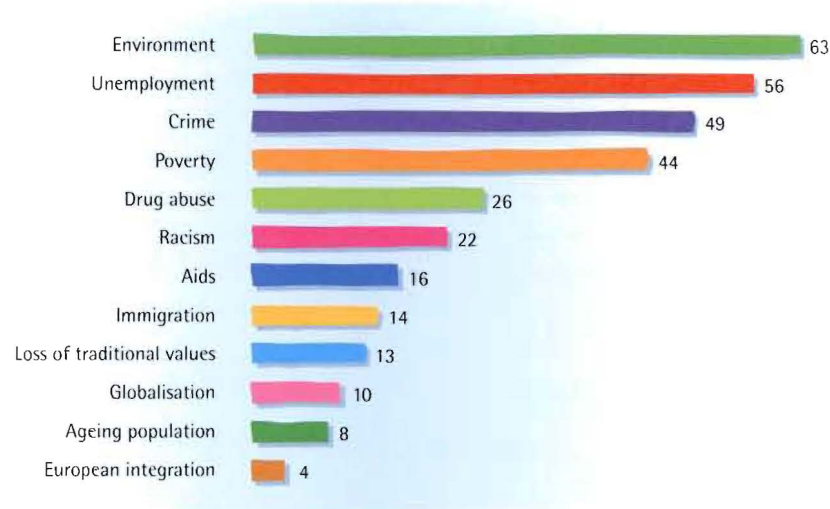
The worries of Europeans

In the spring of 1997, respondents were presented with a list of some of the big political and social issues of our time and asked them to indicate which ones they were most worried about (Graph 31).

Environment and unemployment are the most widespread concerns and hence it is not surprising that the public wants the EU to make the fight against both issues a priority, as we have shown in the previous chapter. Crime is the third most widespread concern with nearly half of all EU citizens

listing this as one of their main worries. At 44 %, poverty comes in fourth place. As we saw in the previous chapter, there is widespread support among EU citizens for prioritising EU actions both in fighting crime and fighting poverty. Around a quarter of Europeans say they are worried about drug abuse and more than 2 in 10 are worried about racism. The other issues shown in the graph worry less than 20 % of the EU population.

Graph 31: The worries of Europeans (in % for EU-15)



Source: *Young Europeans-Continuous tracking survey 47.1.* – Fieldwork : March-April 1997

Results to a question asking people which of these issues they were least worried shows that the ageing population comes in first place (39 %), European integration and globalisation come in shared second and third place (both 31 %) and the loss of traditional values comes in fourth place (29 %).

The environment

Since the environment is the issue that receives most widespread public concern, we begin by looking in more detail at the results of a spring 1999 Eurobarometer question about the environment. Respondents were asked the following question:

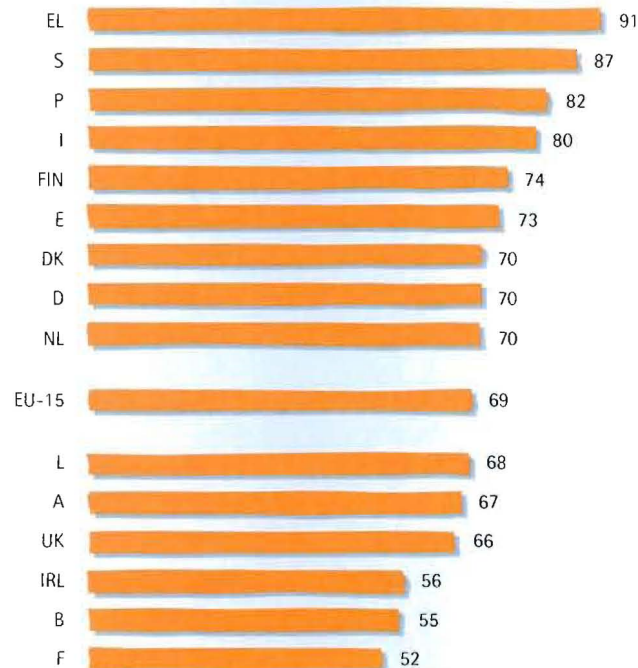
‘Some people are concerned about environmental protection and the fight against pollution. In your opinion, is it an immediate and urgent problem, more of a problem for the future or not really a problem?’

According to 69 % of EU citizens, environmental protection and the fight against pollution is an immediate and urgent problem compared to only 4 % who think it is not really a problem. 23 % see it as more of a

problem for the future and 3 % lack an opinion (Graph 32).

In all Member States more than half of the people regard environmental protection and the fight against pollution as an immediate and urgent problem. Nonetheless, public concern is clearly more widespread in some countries than it is in others. People in Greece (91 %) are most likely to voice strong concern, followed by people in Sweden (87 %) and Portugal (82 %). At 52 %, people in France are least likely to consider environmental protection and the fight against pollution an immediate and urgent problem. Belgium (55 %) and Ireland (56 %) are the only two other countries where less than 6 in 10 people voice strong concern.

Graph 32: **Environmental protection and the fight against pollution**
% saying it is an immediate and urgent problem



Source: Eurobarometer 51.1 — Fieldwork: April–May 1999.

The causes of unemployment and ways to fight it

As part of a special Flash *Eurobarometer* survey on the November 1997 Luxembourg Employment Summit, 16 113 randomly selected European Union citizens were surveyed about what they regard as the causes and solutions to unemployment in their country.

Graph 33 shows that the public is most likely to regard the behaviour of companies, i.e. downsizing and restructuring, as a cause of unemployment. Furthermore, nearly two in three EU citizens are of the view that unemployment is caused because people lack the training and qualifications that are required in today's labour market. As can be seen, the public voices dissatisfaction with the

employment policies of their respective country but is less likely to blame EU policies as a cause of unemployment. Globalisation is another widely regarded cause of unemployment.

Graph 33: The causes of unemployment (in % for EU-15)

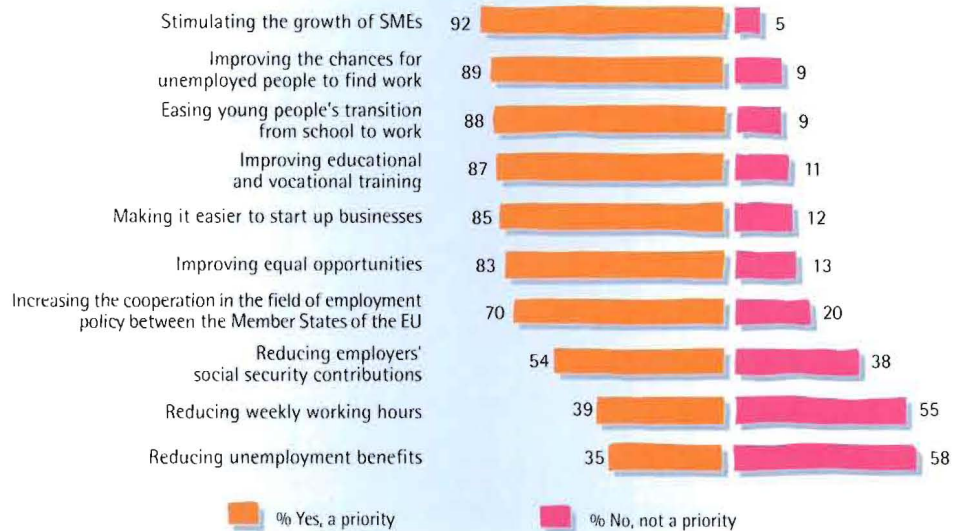


Source: Flash Eurobarometer 60 – Fieldwork : 24-26 November 1997.

People are most likely to regard stimulating the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises as a solution to unemployment (Graph 34). There is also widespread support for a number of other measures such as improving the chances for unemployed peo-

ple to find work, easing young people's transition from school to work and improving educational and vocational training.

Graph 34: Priorities for combating unemployment (EU-15)



Source: Flash Eurobarometer 60 – Fieldwork : 24-26 November 1997.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown

The public is least likely to consider reducing unemployment benefits and reducing week-

ly working hours as solutions to unemployment.

Racism and xenophobia

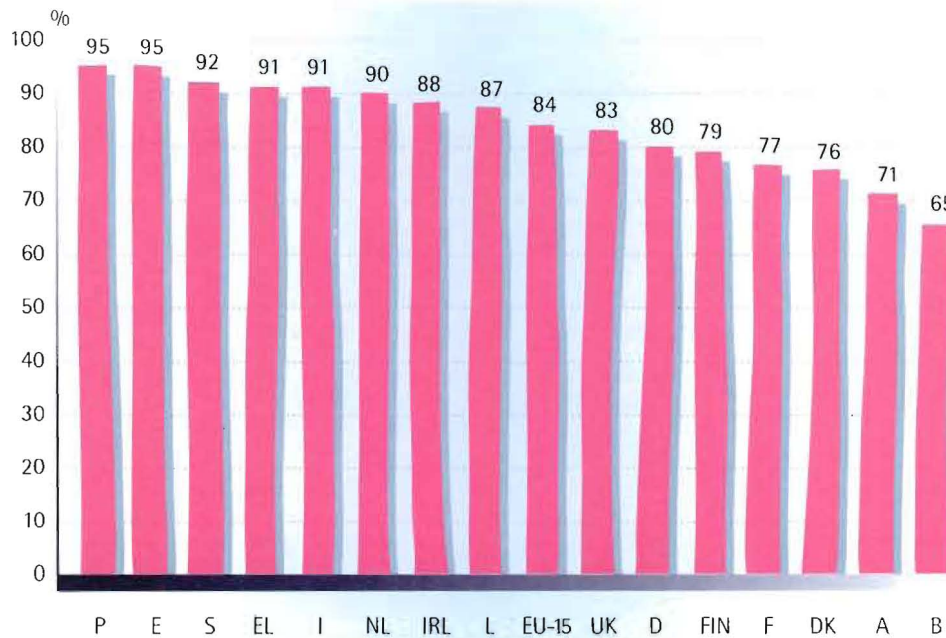
In spring 1997 nearly 8 in 10 EU citizens held the view that it is a good thing for any society to be made up of people from different races, religions and cultures (1).

Despite this positive finding, at the close of the 20th century, racism remains a serious problem in our society. The survey found that when respondents were asked to place themselves on a scale of 1 to 10, ranging from 'not at all racist' to 'very racist', 9 % classified themselves as 'very racist' (scores 7-10). A further 24 % fell in the 'quite racist' category (scores 4-6). This self-assessment is supported by people's attitudes towards foreigners or other minority groups. For instance, 41 % of respondents are of the

opinion that there are too many people from minority groups in terms of race, religion and culture living in their country.

The good news is that the public wants the European institutions to take a stronger role in the fight against racism (Graph 35). The majority of Europeans across the 15 Member States shares this view.

Graph 35: The European institutions should take a stronger role in the fight against racism (% tend to agree, by country)



Source: Eurobarometer 47.1 – Fieldwork March–April 1997.

(1) The report 'Racism and xenophobia in Europe' can be obtained from the European Commission and is available on the Internet at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/eb/fracism/racism_en.pdf

Domestic violence against women

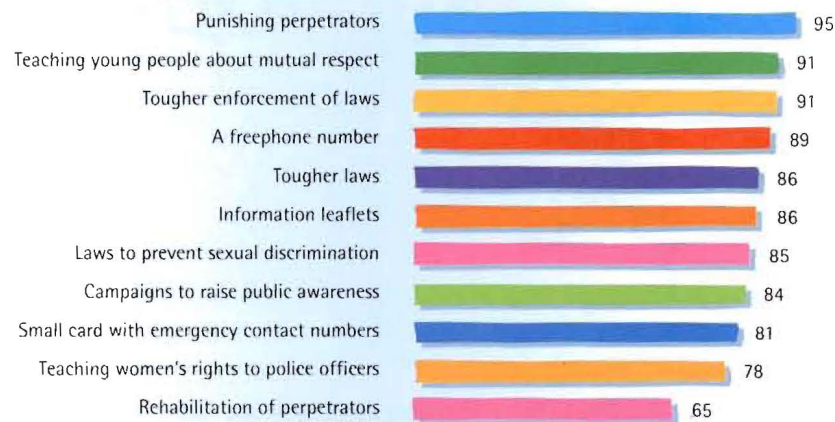
In 1999, the European Union conducted a European campaign to raise awareness on violence against women. The campaign aimed to promote increased awareness of violence against women among European citizens, with a particular emphasis on domestic violence. A survey made in spring 1999 to serve as the vehicle to gauge public opinion in preparation of the campaign, found that three in four EU citizens believe that violence against women is very or fairly common in their country.

According to 96 % of people, alcoholism is a cause of domestic violence against women and 94 % regard drug addiction as a cause. Unemployment was listed by 79 % of respondents while poverty and social exclusion was listed by 75 %.

When asked to say whether domestic violence against women is acceptable or unacceptable, nearly two in three people felt that it is unacceptable under all circumstances and always punishable by law.

Nearly all people interviewed believed that punishing perpetrators is a useful way of fighting domestic violence. Around 9 in 10 people said that teaching young people about mutual respect and tougher enforcement of existing laws are good ways of fighting the problems. Graph 36 depicts the extent to which the public supports other suggested methods.

Graph 36: **Ways of fighting domestic violence** (% saying method is useful, for EU-15)

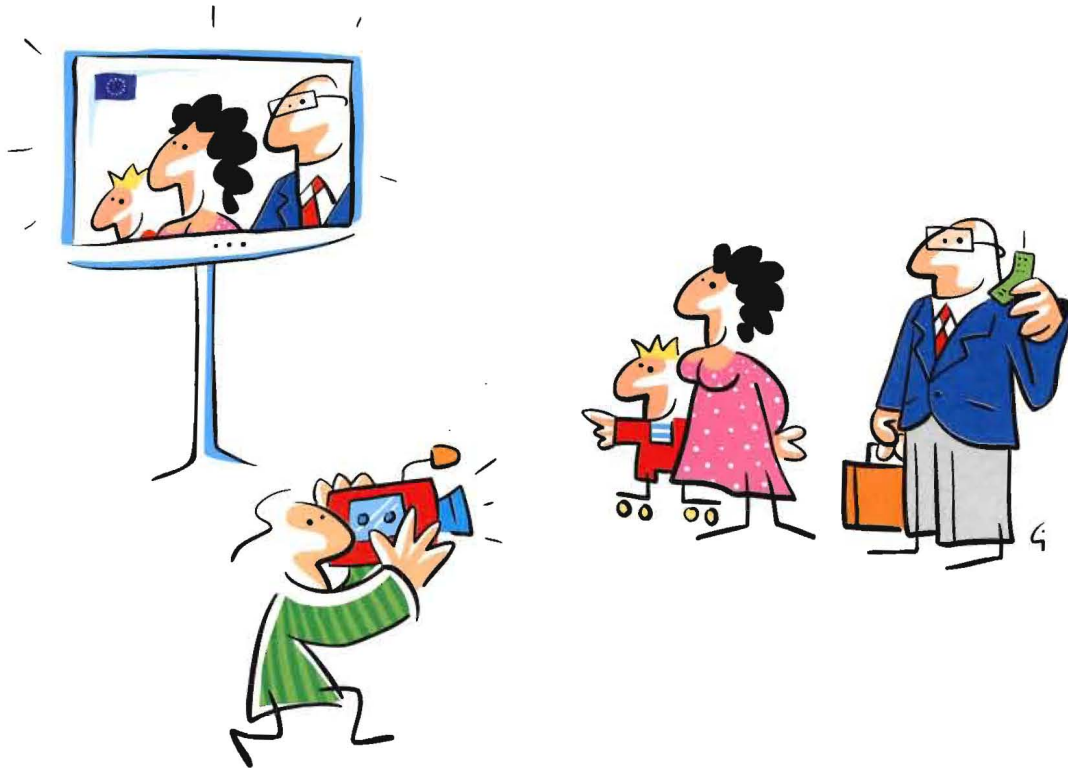


Source: *Eurobarometer 51.0.* – Fieldwork: March-May 1999.

There are, of course, many other issues occupying the minds of Europeans at the end of the 20th century and numerous European surveys have been carried out to obtain a

better understanding of how the public feels about these issues.

Shared opinions? Women, the younger generation, and leading professionals



Most of our analyses in this report have focused on the total population of EU citizens aged 15 and over. We have done so because the purpose of this brochure is to present an overview of public opinion on a wide range of issues and not to provide in-depth analyses on one specific topic which would have included looking at differences between various groups in the population. Nonetheless, it is also interesting to make a brief overview of the opinions towards the European Union of groups, such as women, the young and top decision-makers.

Women and the European Union

As one would expect, Europe's women do not all think alike when it comes to the European Union. In fact, in-depth analyses have shown that there are five groups within the female population, each group having a distinct set of views on the European Union (Graph 37).

- Sympathisers are women who want a strong and large European Union that decides policy issues. This group represents 25 % of the female population.
- Pragmatics have rationally decided that the European Union represents a positive development. However, as a result of her rationality, the pragmatic woman is less inclined than the sympathiser woman is to give the EU the same amount of decision-making power. This group represents 20 % of the female population.
- 'Middle-of-the-roaders' are ambivalent about the Union, supporting some issues and opposing others. They represent 14 % of the female population.
- The undecideds are fairly uninterested in the European Union and often lack an opinion on issues related to the Union. When

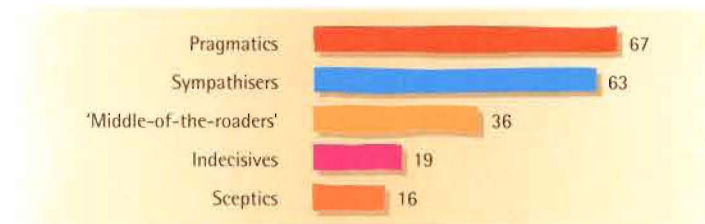
they do have an opinion, it tends to be fairly negative. This group represents 22 % of the female population.

- Sceptics regard the European Union as less positive than what they have known so far – the concept of independent nation States. The 19 % of women that belong to this group are the strongest opponents of the Union.

Graph 37 shows the extent to which women belonging to each of the five groups support their country's membership to the European Union. As can be seen, more than 6 in 10 women who are pragmatics or sympathisers believe their country's membership is a good thing, compared to less than 2 in 10 women who belong to the 'undecideds' or 'sceptics' group (1).

Graph 37: **Women and support for the European Union**

% of each group that regards her country's membership as a good thing



Source: *Eurobarometer 47.1* – Fieldwork: March–April 1997.

(1) More information about the in-depth analyses of women's views towards the European Union can be found in the following report: 'Women's attitudes to the European Union – A typology of public opinion among Europe's women'. The report can be found on the European Commission's web site at: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/eb/eb47/typology.html>

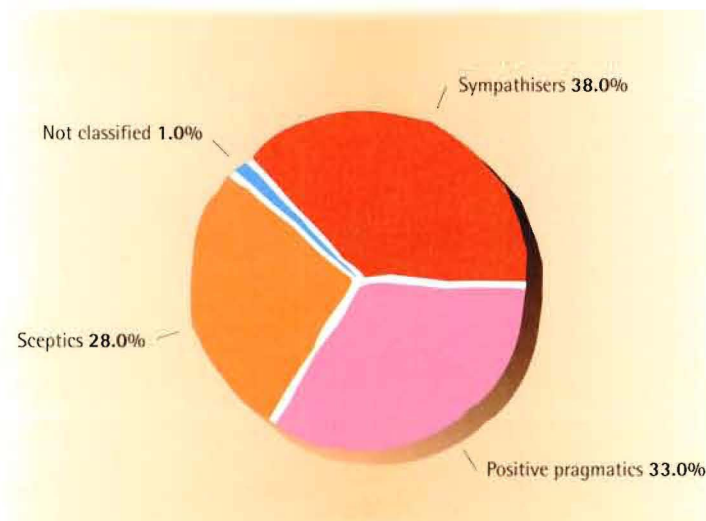
Young people and the European Union

Like women, Europe's young people also don't all think alike when it comes to the European Union. In-depth analyses show that EU citizens aged 15 to 29 can be placed into three distinct attitudinal groups depending on how they feel about the European Union (Graph 38).

- Sympathisers are young Europeans who want a powerful European Union that takes policy decisions. As dedicated supporters, they also know the most about the EU and are most interested in learning more. This group represents 38 % of EU citizens aged 15 to 29.
- Positive pragmatics are young Europeans who have rationally decided that the European Union represents a positive development. However, their rationality makes them less inclined than sympathisers to give the EU the same amount of decision-making power. This group represents 33 % of the young population.

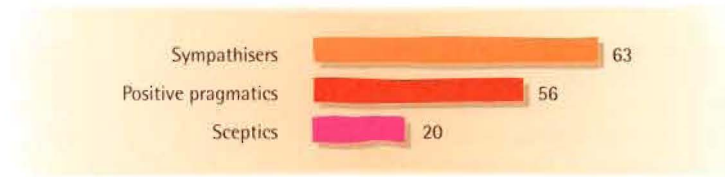
- Sceptics are young Europeans who hold largely negative feelings about the European Union. Of the three groups, they are also least interested in the EU. Their scepticism isn't limited to the European Union; they are also most pessimistic when it comes to their own country and their own personal life. Twenty-eight per cent of young Europeans belong to this group.

Graph 38: Young people and the European Union
Three distinct sets of attitudes



Source: Eurobarometer 47.1 – Fieldwork: March-April 1997.

Graph 39: **Young Europeans and support for the European Union**
% of each group that regards their country's membership as a good thing



Source: Eurobarometer 47.1. — Fieldwork : March-April 1997

Graph 39 shows the extent to which young people belonging to each of the three groups support their country's membership to the European Union. As can be seen, more than 6 in 10 young people who are sympathisers and more than half of the positive pragmatics believe their country's membership is a

good thing, compared to only 2 in 10 young Europeans who belong to the 'sceptics' group (1).

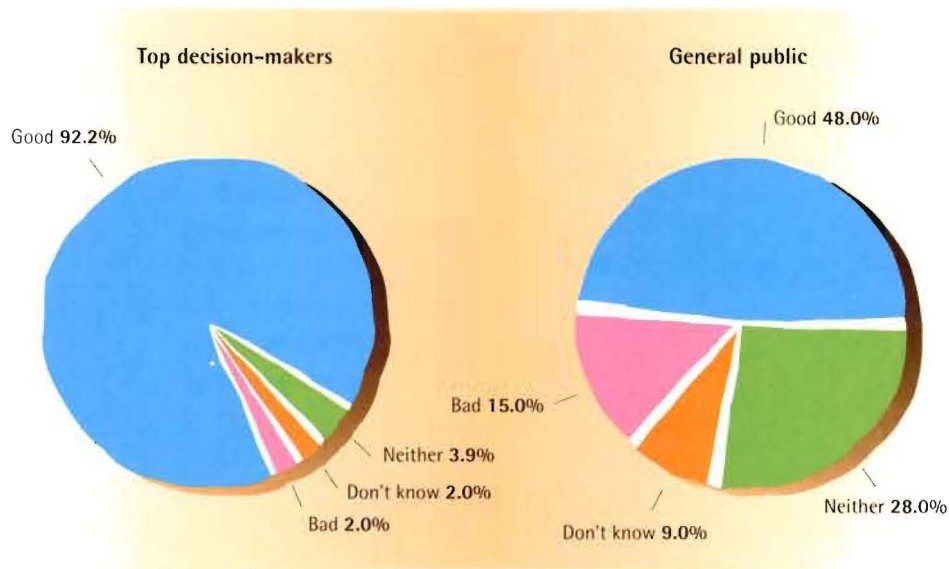
(1) More information about the in-depth analyses of young Europeans' views towards the European Union can be found in the following report: 'Young people's attitudes to the European Union — A typology of public opinion among young Europeans'. The report can be found on the European Commission's web site at: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/eb.html>

Top decision-makers and the European Union

In May 1996, a special survey was carried out among a sample of Europe's top decision-makers (TDM's). As Graph 40 shows, top decision-makers are considerably more likely than the general public is to support the European Union. They are also much more decisive, with only 4 % considering their

country's membership as neither good nor bad, compared to 28 % among the general public.

Graph 40: **Support for the European Union**
Membership to the European Union is ...



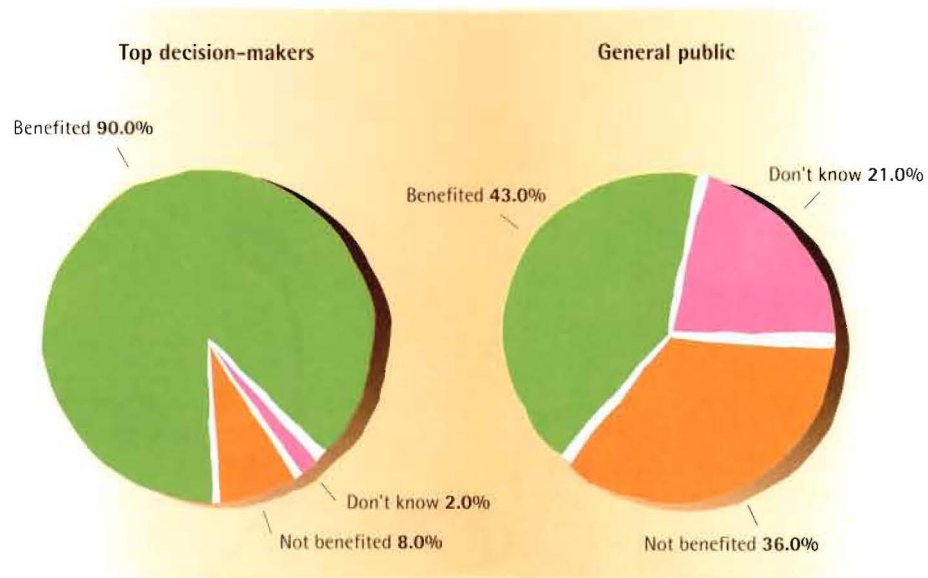
Source: Top decision-makers survey – Fieldwork: May 1996.

The sample consisted of the following five categories of TDM's: civil servants, elected politicians, business and labour leaders, media leaders, academic, cultural and religious leaders. The survey found very little variation in support levels for the European Union among these groups.

10 top decision-makers hold this view, compared to only 4 in 10 members of the general public (Graph 41).

In comparison to the general public, top decision-makers are also considerably more likely to believe that their country has benefited from EU membership. As many as 9 in

Graph 41: Perceived benefit of EU membership
% holding the view that their country has ...



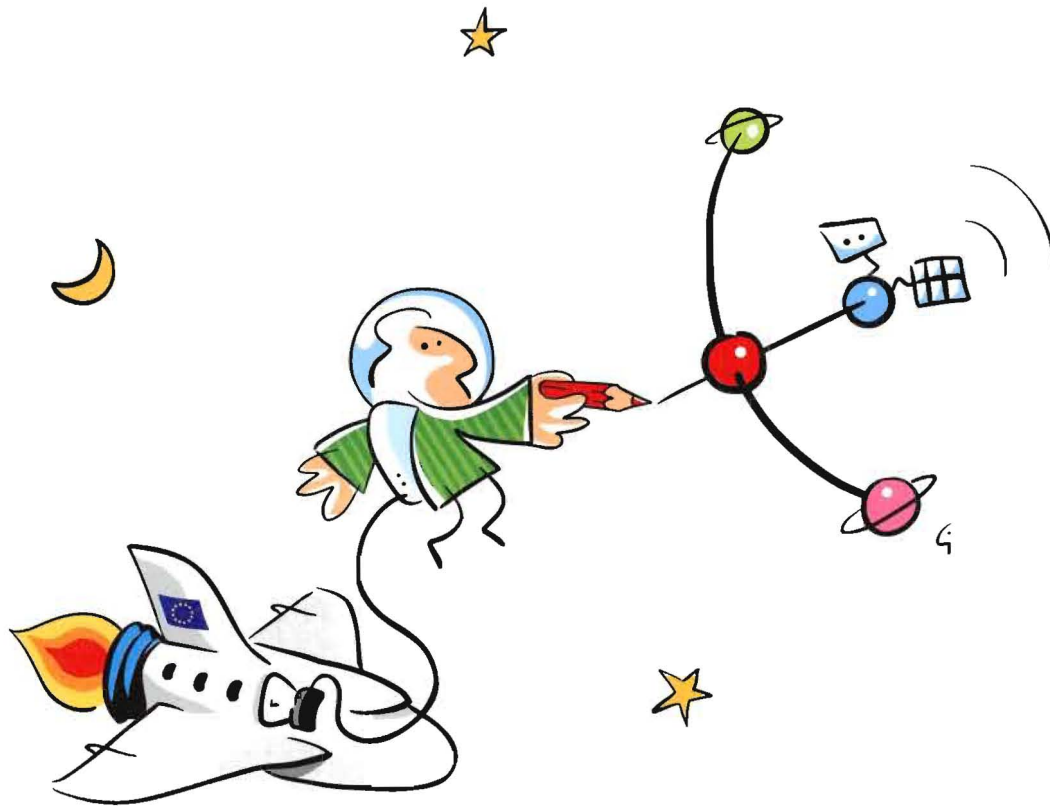
Source: Top decision-makers survey – Fieldwork: May 1996.

Looking again at the five categories of top decision-makers shows that civil servants are most likely to feel that their country has benefited from EU membership while media leaders are least likely to share this view.

However, all groups of top decision-makers are at least twice as likely as members of the general public to hold the view that EU membership is beneficial to their country (1).

(1) The report 'A view from the top' can be found at <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/polls.html>

Europeans and the future

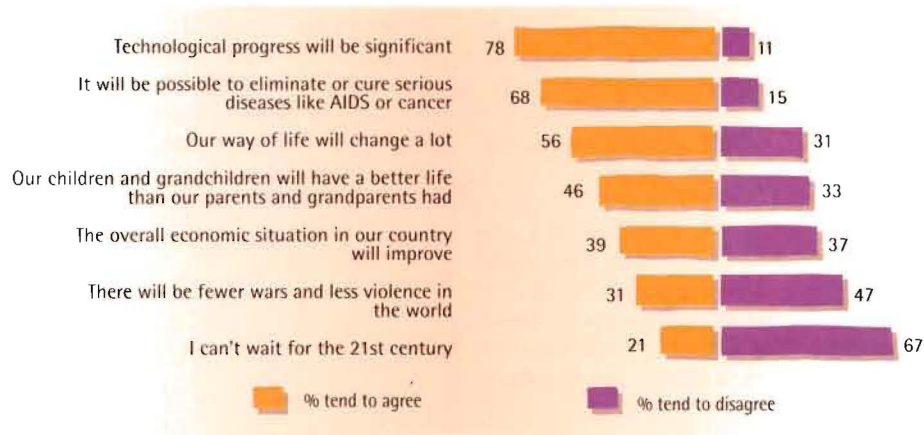


Expectations for the 21st century

The autumn 1997 *Eurobarometer* survey presented its respondents with a list of 11

statements about the 21st century (Graphs 42 and 43).

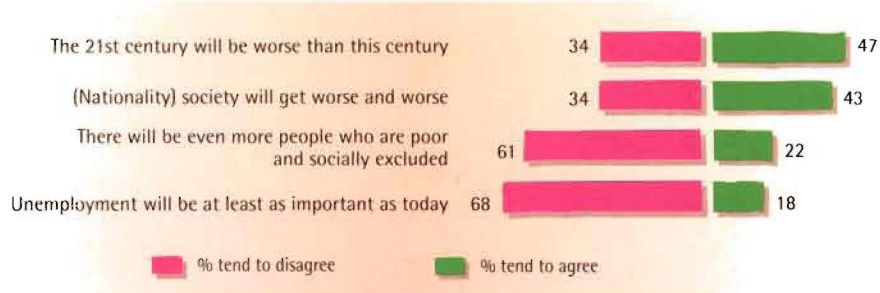
Graph 42: Feelings about the 21st century positively worded statements (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer 48 – Fieldwork : October–November 1997.

Percentage 'don't know' not shown

Graph 43: Feelings about the 21st century negatively worded statements (EU-15)



Source: Eurobarometer 48 – Fieldwork : October–November 1997

Percentage 'don't know' not shown

All in all, the future holds more good than bad for the majority of Europeans. Nearly half of EU citizens believe that their children and grandchildren will have a better life than they have had. Equally, half of the population disagrees that the next century will be worse and 4 in 10 people disagree that their country's society will get worse and worse.

In many respects, life will change a lot (56 % of respondents hold this view). Nearly 8 in 10 people believe the 21st century will be marked by significant technological change and nearly 7 in 10 believe that it will be pos-

sible to eliminate or cure serious diseases like AIDS or cancer.

When it comes to economic and political progress, Europeans are less optimistic about the future. Nearly 7 in 10 EU citizens believe that unemployment will be at least as important as it is today and 61 % feel that there will be even more poor and socially excluded people. Less than 4 in 10 people are of the view that the overall economic situation in their country will improve and only 3 in 10 people agree that there will be fewer wars and less violence in the world.

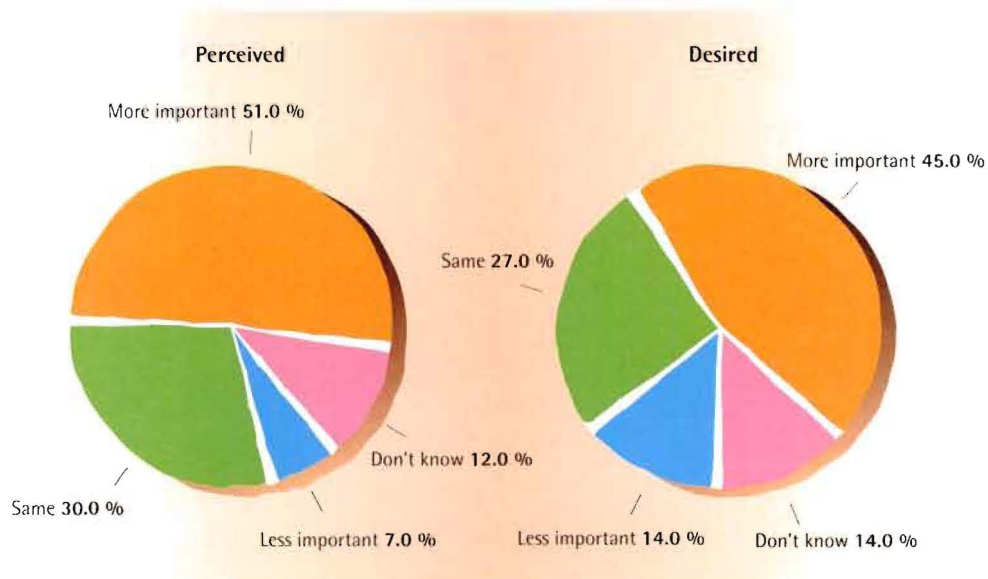
The European Union in the 21st century

As the left-hand pie in Graph 44 shows, 51 % of Europeans believe that in five years' time the European Union will play a more important role in their daily life, 30 % believe it will play the same role and only 7 % believe it will play a less important role.

Looking at the role people would like the European Union to play in their daily life in five years' time (the right-hand pie in the graph) shows that 45 % of Europeans desire a more important role, 27 % desire the same role, while only 14 % desire a less important role.

As one would expect people who support their country's EU membership (65 %) are significantly more likely to desire a more important role for the EU at the beginning of the next century than people who regard it as a bad thing (17 %). Of the latter group, 46 % would like the EU to play a less important role in five years' time.

Graph 44: The role of the European Union in the 21st century



Source: Eurobarometer 52.0 — Fieldwork: October–November 1999

Graph 45: **Young people and their attitudes**
(In % from most tolerant to least tolerant)



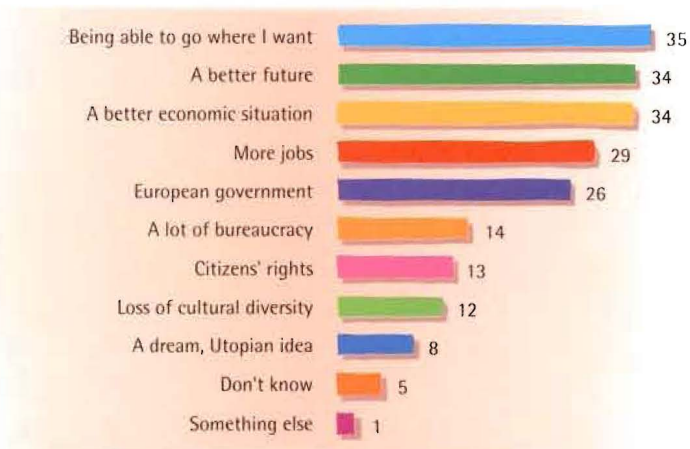
Source: *Young Europeans – Eurobarometer 47.2.* – Fieldwork : April-June 1997.

The future leaders – young Europeans

Earlier we reported that the large majority of young Europeans are in favour of the European Union. In the final section of this brochure we look at some concerns, priorities and views of young people. This information was collected from a spring 1997 *Eurobarometer* study which oversampled young people (1).

The survey measured young people's attitudes towards a range of social and moral issues which shows that young people are more tolerant and open-minded than older generations tend to be although they are by no means 'soft' under all circumstances (Graph 45).

Graph 46: **The meaning of the European Union**
% of young Europeans saying it



Source: *Young Europeans – Eurobarometer 47.2.* – Fieldwork : April-June 1997.

(1) In total, 9 400 young people aged 15 to 24 were interviewed.

The large majority of young people approve of premarital sex and more than half are against the death penalty. However, as can be seen, young people do believe in quite harsh forms of punishment for certain crimes.

The survey also found that around a third of the young population feels that their generation has a responsibility towards the elderly (34 %) and that 25 % feel that the presence of foreigners adds to their country's strength.

Employment is the issue that young people were most likely to choose when asked which areas the European Union should prioritise in the next five years (76 %). The environment (60 %) and research and development in new technologies (54 %) are other areas which the majority of young Europeans would like to see as EU priorities.

As regard to what the European Union means to young people, the results indicate that it represents the freedom to move within the 15 Member States, a better future and a better economic situation, as these were the most popular responses (Graph 46). Very few young people felt that the European Union represented negative elements like too much bureaucracy, loss of Europe's cultural diversity or the EU being unrealistic.

Other information on the European Union

Information in all the official languages of the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (europa.eu.int).

EUROPE *DIRECT* is a freephone service to help you find answers to your questions about the European Union and to provide information about your rights and opportunities as an EU citizen:

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Since 1973, the European Commission has been measuring public opinion to inform itself about the views of European Union citizens and to share the obtained information with the general public. The purpose of this brochure is to present a selection of findings from these surveys. It provides readers with a picture of how Europeans see themselves by looking at a variety of subjects: citizens' values and life satisfaction at the end of the

20th century, European citizenship, public opinion towards the European Union, public support for the policies of the European Union, public opinion towards a number of issues that EU citizens worry about, people's expectations of the 21st century, etc.

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