

EUROPEAN BACKGROUND INFORMATION COMMUNITY

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY INFORMATION SERVICE

2100 M Street NW, Washington DC 20037 Telephone (202) 872-8350

New York Office: 1 Dag Hammerskjöld Plaza, New York NY 10017 Telephone (212) 371-3804

BACKGROUND NOTE

No. 37/1976

July 29, 1976

SOME DISENCHANTMENT WITH COMMUNITY BUT STRONG SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN UNION

Some disenchantment with the European Community, support for further European unification, and enthusiasm about direct elections for the European Parliament were among the attitudes of the European public indicated by a poll conducted in early summer.

The poll was the fifth half-yearly "Eurobarometer" survey of 9,000 people, aged 15 years and over, in the nine Community countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy, and the United Kingdom. The poll was made for the Commission of the European Communities.

Attitudes Toward the European Community

The poll showed a 10 point drop since the fall of 1975 in the number of people who thought the Common Market was "a good thing," but support was still high at 53 per cent. The pollsters attributed part of this decline to press reports on the "failure" of the April meeting of the European Council, the member countries' heads of state and foreign ministers, and predicted that the public's disenchantment would be temporary. The change in mood was apparent everywhere. The opinion makers, defined as the 15 per cent of the public who often talk politics and influence others, were as disappointed as the general public at the Community's slow progress.

Support for European Unification

Four people out of 10 felt that "the movement toward the unification of Europe should be speeded up" rather than "continue as at present" (33 per cent) or "slowed down" (11 per cent).

The plan to form a closer European Union had the backing of six people out of 10, but the proportion varied from a high of 70 per cent in Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands to lows of 34 per cent in the United Kingdom and 24 per cent in Denmark.

Elections to European Parliament

The election of members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage was endorsed by six people out of 10. With seven out of 10 people in favor, the Italians, the Dutch, and the Luxembourgers were the most enthusiastic about the elections. Even in the United Kingdom and Denmark, four out of 10 people questioned approved of direct elections.

People's Main Worries

Unemployment and rising prices were the worries most often named by the people surveyed. Five out of 10 people thought the government should tackle unemployment first, while four out of 10 people thought rising prices should be the first target.

Two other issues loomed large: protection of the environment from pollution and protection of consumers against false advertising and false product claims.

Interest in the Community

Public interest in the Community is low but steady. In 1976 as in 1973, just under two people out of 10 said that they "nearly always" took an interest in information on the Community in the press or on radio and television. Five out of 10 people read or listened "from time to time" and three out of 10 "never."

Opinion makers showed a greater interest in the Community than did the general public. More than three out of 10 opinion makers replied that they read or listened to information on the Community "nearly always" and more than five out of 10 "from time to time."

Interest ran highest in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Italy and Belgium were at the other end of the scale.