
SURVEY: EU CITIZENS WANT MORE SOCIAL EQUALITY, BUT NOT MORE EUROPE

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Social equality is seen as the most important priority today and an essential building block for the future of Europe, although Europeans oppose creating an EU economic government, according to an EU-wide opinion poll.

A special Eurobarometer on the future of Europe, published on Thursday (22 December), shows Europeans are still more concerned about the consequences of the economic crisis than anything else.

Unemployment is seen as the main challenge for almost half Europeans (45%), followed by social inequalities (36%).

Meanwhile, migration issues (36%), terrorism and security (31%) come third and fourth in the list of concerns.

In light of this, a majority of respondents said more attention should be given to social equality and solidarity (46%), compared to other topics such as protecting the environment (31%) or progress and innovation (28%).

No appetite for Europe

But Europeans are less enthusiastic when it comes to giving a bigger role to EU institutions in managing the economy.

Only one in five said having an economic government for the EU would be helpful for the future of Europe.

Instead, most Europeans (53%) mentioned comparable living standards across the EU as more helpful for the future of Europe.

Although 68% of Europeans favoured more decision-making at European level to stimulate investment and job creation, the European approach was more welcome in other areas such as fighting terrorism (80%), promoting democracy and peace (80%), or protecting the environment (77%).

The Nordic countries and Austria are the less supportive countries of a European approach in investment and job creation.

Despite German feet-dragging in pooling financial resources at EU level, a large majority of

Germans (67%) support more Europe to boost employment and investment in the economy, more than in countries like Poland (65%) which benefit the most from EU funds.

JUNCKER AND DRAGHI FAIL TO WIN SUPPORT FOR EUROZONE REFORM

The piecemeal approach orchestrated by Jean-Claude Juncker and Mario Draghi to address the root causes of the euro zone debt crisis and complete the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) has not yielded any positive results so far, EurActiv.com has learned.

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Good for me, bad for all

Another Eurobarometer survey, also released on Thursday (22 December), indicated that Europeans are more pessimistic about their national economies than their personal situation.

While 56% of respondents judged the economic situation in other countries negatively, 69% believe the financial situation at home is totally good.

At the same time, 45% of respondents considered that the impact of the economic crisis on the job market will deteriorate further, while 42% responded that a turning point has already been reached.

Views about the future are rather pessimistic. More than half of Europeans (56%) think life for today's children will be more difficult than for their own generation.

BRUSSELS MAKES TIMID FISCAL PUSH TO REVERSE AUSTERITY, COUNTER POPULIST WAVE

The European Commission stepped up its efforts to leave austerity behind on Wednesday (16 November) by advocating for the first time a timid expansionary fiscal policy for the eurozone and forgiving Spain and Portugal for breaching EU budget rules.

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Positive views about the EU

Regarding their feelings about the EU, a majority hold a positive view of the European project (69%), in line with their opinions about Germany (70%) and France (69%).

Moreover, a large group (66%) agree the EU is a place of stability in a troubled world.

Given the growing opposition in some member states to deepening the EU, countries like France advocated a two-speed Europe so the most pro-EU capitals could move forward in the process.

However, Europeans remain divided over this solution. While 47% of respondents said that countries in favour of intensifying common European policies in key areas should do so without having to wait for the others, 41% disagree with this option.

LE PEN CALLS FOR EXIT REFERENDUMS ACROSS THE EU

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen called Tuesday (21 June) on all European Union members to follow Britain's example in holding a referendum on remaining in the bloc.

BACKGROUND

The special Eurobarometer survey was carried out between 24 September and 3 October 2016. Interviews took place in the 28 Member States of the European Union. This is the sixth report of the Future of Europe series.

The survey was conducted a few months after the referendum on United Kingdoms membership of the European Union, where the majority voted to leave the European Union.

Kaynak/Source: