
GERMAN VOTERS MOST PRO-EUROPEAN AND PRO-MIGRANT

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German voters have emerged as among the most pro-European and migrant-friendly ones in a new survey, but most Europeans want to keep out refugees.

Some 70 percent of Germans said EU membership was a good thing for their country in a poll by British firm YouGov out on Monday (13 May).

The figure was the same in Poland. Spain (65 percent), Hungary (64 percent), and Italy (57 percent) also polled highly despite the anti-EU rhetoric of ruling parties in Warsaw, Budapest, and Rome.

But support was just 55 percent in Belgium and Sweden, falling to 51 percent in France - the lowest in the eight countries in the survey.

In overall figures, immigration came out as voters' top concern (35 percent), followed by climate change (29 percent), security (23 percent), economic inequality (18 percent), and national debt (18 percent).

The anti-EU rhetoric of increasingly popular nationalist parties such as the AfD in Germany, the National Rally in France, Italy's League, Hungary's Fidesz, and the Sweden Democrats is closely bound up with anti-migrant sentiment.

Figures show that migrant arrivals to Europe have fallen drastically since 2015.

But just three percent of respondents said "all is well" on the migration front and just 14 percent said the EU had done a good job in handling the challenge.

The majority of people (53 percent) in Italy, where most irregular migrants arrive, said it should not accept any more.

The figure was the same in Poland, even though it took in hardly any of them.

It was also high in Sweden (51 percent), which took in the most migrants per capita in recent years.

But it was the lowest in Germany (34 percent), which took in the most migrants in total.

It was on the lower side in Spain (42 percent), where numbers of irregular arrivals are on the rise, and in Hungary (49 percent), which has one of the most xenophobic governments in the EU.

German and French voters also bucked the trend by saying that climate change was a bigger worry than migrants, in figures which showed the limits of the appeal of nationalist-populist discourse.

Meanwhile, a national poll in Italy by Ipsos for the Corriere della Sera newspaper indicated that the anti-migrant League was losing support to the 5 Star Movement (5MS), which has placed more focus on economic equality.

Some 31 percent of Italians still backed the League in May, compared to 37 percent in April, while 25 percent backed 5MS, compared to 22 percent last month.

The wider YouGov poll looked at the EU's most populous countries, excluding the UK, which aims to leave the bloc by 31 October.

But separate polling in Britain by Opinium for The Observer newspaper said that the Brexit party led by anti-EU MEP Nigel Farage was on course to win 34 percent of votes in the European Parliament (EP) election in May.

The number was larger than those of the two largest parties - the Conservatives (11 percent) and Labour (21 percent) - combined.

The EP election in Britain was a kind of "second referendum" on EU membership, education minister Damian Hinds told the BBC on Sunday.

"For some people this is the ultimate protest vote opportunity. Actually, ironically this is, in a sense, for some people, this is the second referendum," he said, in comments, which combined with the Opinium survey, bode ill for those who wished to remain in Europe.

Kaynak/Source: