

**THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS**

**AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**

**QUALITATIVE STUDY**

**IN THE 25 MEMBER STATES**

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**THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS  
AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE  
QUALITATIVE STUDY AMONG CITIZENS  
IN THE 25 MEMBER STATES  
OVERALL REPORT**

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL COMMUNICATION**

**May 2006**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

- ❖ The European Commission – Directorate General Communication – has wished to have a **qualitative study carried out among citizens in the 25 Member States, on the subject of the future of Europe.**

This study is part of the Commission’s “plan D” aiming to listen more actively to citizens and to establish a dialogue with citizens.

Its main objectives are :

- To assess existing perceptions of and attitudes towards the European Union.
  - To explore perceptions of EU achievements and failures.
  - To analyse citizens’ expectations of the Union.
  - To analyse their attitudes regarding the functioning of the Union and its institutions
  - To evaluate more widely information needs and expectations regarding citizens’ involvement, in the light of the above mentioned themes.
- ❖ **Three target groups** were considered in each country :
    - **Average citizens:** men and women, aged between 25 and 65 years, from average socio-professional categories (self employed craftsmen/small shop owners, middle-level managers, (non managerial) office employees, manual workers).
    - **Young citizens** : men and women, aged between 18 and 24 years, not yet engaged in working life, most of them from the same social strata as in the preceding group.
    - **“Eurofragile” citizens** : men and women, aged between 25 and 65 years, most of them from the same social strata, expressing ambivalent attitudes towards the European Union in their answers to a few filter questions of the recruitment questionnaire.

The group discussions took place in February and March 2006.

- ❖ The following information can be found in Annexes :
  - The list of the partner institutes involved in each country.
  - The demographic composition of the groups.
  - The guide used by the moderators of the discussions as well as the recruitment questionnaire.
- ❖ **This document is the overall report of the study in the 25 Member States. It was produced by OPTEM as coordinating institute in charge of the Framework Contract Eurobarometer “Qualitative studies” (1).**

(1) Framework Contract managed by Directorate General Communication A/4.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- ❖ The main lessons that can be drawn from the analysis of the results of this study are the following.

### 1. A general climate marked by uncertainty and by some very deep worries

- ❖ This element of the general context is evidenced by the initial declarations of the participants in the group discussions.

- **In the “old” Member States**, the views about the future appear to be particularly dark in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal : pessimism is widespread in all groups.

A gloomy climate also prevails in Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy (yet with more hopes to be able to manage on a personal basis although the political, economic and social context is perceived very negatively), Sweden and Finland.

In the other countries, a mixture of hopes and fears can be observed : Spain, Greece, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Austria.

- **In the “new” Member States**, there are deeply rooted fears in Cyprus, and worries also prevail in Poland, Slovakia and Latvia.

There is a greater balance between optimism and pessimism – or different attitudes depending on the group – in Malta, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Estonia.

The Slovenes and Lithuanians, for most of them, display an attitude of moderate and reasoned optimism.

- A correlation between pessimism and “**eurofragility**” appears clearly in several countries: notably Luxembourg, Italy, Sweden, Slovakia and the three Baltic States.

- **Young citizens** are less worried about the future than their elders in some countries. It is the case in Belgium, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Latvia, and to a lesser degree also in Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and Lithuania.

Conversely, young citizens seem to be particularly pessimistic in the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and Austria.

- ❖ **The main reasons for concern are of a socio-economic nature.**

- Primarily **employment** – whether it has to do with fears of losing one’s job and a feeling of increasing job precariousness (among adult citizens in work), foreseen difficulty to find a job (or a job corresponding of one’s level of training and qualification), or impressions that work conditions are becoming tougher and tougher and pressure on employees greater and greater.

The impact of **globalisation**, or the opening of borders, are mentioned spontaneously at this stage in several of the older Member States, but also in some of the new ones (competition from low labour cost countries, or from workers coming from those countries, businesses being relocated, etc.).

- Weakening of the **social protection system**, including pension schemes.

This cause for fear is expressed by the participants in one or more groups in most of the old Member States and in one out of two of the new ones.



- The perspective of shrinking **purchasing power** and growing difficulty to lead a “normal” or “decent” life.

It is present to varying degrees in different groups – yet at least in one of them in two out of three Member States.

Besides the above mentioned reasons for fear, one can observe frequent worries regarding housing costs – and, correlatively, young people’s concerns about their ability to become autonomous and to found their own family.

- The more general idea of widening **social divide**, between the few who take advantage of current evolutions and the bulk of citizens who are likely to suffer from them ; in between, the middle class is bound to shrink or to be unable to develop.

❖ **There are also concerns regarding :**

- **Internal insecurity**, partly mixed in the respondents’ minds with immigration or the difficulty to assimilate immigrants – (it is mentioned at this stage in several countries), and also linked to world-wide insecurity (terrorism, rise of integrist groups).
- The hazy impressions that the **social fabric is crumbling**, national identity may become diluted, and behavioural norms and values are being gradually lost : petty crime increasing, lack of public spirit, unbridled individualism, traditions becoming lost, or otherwise erosion of a social fabric based on the family cell.
- Occasionally, also, the risk of **environmental threats** for the world’s future (natural or nuclear catastrophes, effects of climate change).

**2. Despite ambivalent attitudes, mainly positive perceptions and strong expectations towards the European Union**

❖ In most countries, the respondents’ **first spontaneous evocations about the European Union are positive.**

- In one way or the other, they mention the protective character of such a union as a factor of peace, stability and security, as well as capacity to be influent and strong on the world stage in face of the other major countries or groups of countries (the United States, the emerging Asian powers, Russia...).

The positive notions of unification and solidarity can be heard in their declarations: harmonisation processes in various fields, single currency as a factor of integration (although at the same time they often criticize inflationist effects of the euro), freedom of movement which is particularly highly valued in the new Member States, easier contacts and exchanges generally speaking, support to less affluent countries or regions ...

- Criticisms are voiced less on the principles of the EU than on the perceived gap between the positive concept of a protective and cohesive Union and the actual reality : feelings of social regression, inequalities remaining or even becoming greater (between citizens of the same country and between countries), dominant role of the “large” countries which the “small” ones resent, European regulations and norms being often regarded as unequal in the new Member States, deficiencies of the “bureaucratic” functioning of the Union more generally, are the

main components, together with failing spirit of unity and disagreements between Member States.

- It is worth noticing the particular weakness of positive perceptions and/or the abundance of criticism in several countries : the United Kingdom (a permanent feature in that country) but also such countries as France, Germany, or Austria.
- ❖ **For the future, perceptions of the impact of the European Union on one's own life in the ten years to come are partly linked with the general level of optimism or pessimism.**
- Countries where a degree of optimism prevails : Belgium, Italy, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Denmark, Malta, Slovenia, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia and Lithuania.
  - Countries with mixed feelings : Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Cyprus, Hungary and Latvia.
  - Countries where pessimism is widespread : France, Germany, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Austria and the Czech Republic.
- ❖ **That strong expectations remain towards the European Union can be clearly seen when asking the respondents about the Union's goals and the priority objectives which they would set for it.**

In this respect, one can observe **remarkably converging expectations** :

- Contributing to peace and encouraging mutual understanding between States.
- More unity and cohesion, and moving towards greater "harmonisation".
- Contributing to people's well-being through economic development aiming to create jobs and to offer an equalitarian and generous social protection system.
- Solidarity in favour of less developed countries or regions.
- The EU asserting itself and being competitive and influent on the world stage.
- Smoother, less "bureaucratic" and more efficient workings.

This confirms that **the (sometimes wide) perceived gap between ideal and reality does not cause citizens to question the essence of the European project.**

### **3. Faint and hazy knowledge of the action fields of the Union, but expectations in multiple areas.**

- ❖ The respondents were asked about **ten major fields of policy** : in each one they were invited to say what they knew about EU activities and also if they felt whether there should be more common European action or not.
- **The economy** : few people have a comprehensive and complete vision of the action of the European Union in this field, but they all know that it is important and are able to mention at least certain of its aspects.

There is no question that more common action in this area is desirable (while preserving each one's interests).

- **Social policy** : little is known about what the Union does in actual fact. Some respondents mention specific aspects or assume there are harmonisation plans.

The interviewed citizens, in their vast majority, declare that they would like to see more common European action in this area (where they observe or fear decreasing involvement of the national State) – on condition that it does not bring about social regression compared with the current system, or that time is left (or aids given) for the less advanced countries to adapt.

- **Consumer protection** ; this is one of the fields in which the policy of the European Union is most widely known and recognized.

The legitimacy of Community competence in this area appears obvious ; progress is hardly expected to come from elsewhere.

- **Education and culture** : there is a striking consensus to assess European action in the field of education as important : student exchange programmes, opportunities to study in other European countries, harmonisation process of the level of diplomas are very often quoted.

There is much less comments regarding the cultural field.

Wishes are clearly expressed to have the Union playing a greater role in the area of education – not in the sense of harmonising what should be left under the responsibility of each State, but in that of encouraging closer relations, sharing experiences and stimulating exchanges of views.

The same idea prevails as regards culture : intensifying exchanges and cooperation, supporting local initiatives – in the aim of preserving cultural diversity rather than “standardising” culture.

- **The environment** : European action in this field is widely recognized, although it is often deemed insufficient.

That it should be dealt with at a continental (or even global) level is a well understood condition for being effective, and an obvious reality for nearly everyone.

- **Agriculture** : citizens are aware of the importance of European policy in this field. Many of them mention different policy components, which they know and understand more or less clearly.

Criticism is often voiced. Yet, with few exceptions, they do not question the need for regulation and coordination at European level. In most countries the necessity and legitimacy of protection for farming activities is even widely recognized. Reforming the agricultural policy is often requested, yet not doing away with it.

- **Regional development** : this is a field of European action on which relatively few comments are expressed – yet partly as a result of misunderstanding of what is involved – the benefit of European aids which less developed countries obtain or have obtained is indeed widely known and acknowledged, but not necessarily as aiming at regional development.

Pursuing Community action in this area is regarded as legitimate and desirable – but the respondents consider that implementing it locally should be done in coordination with national authorities (this is where perceptions are ambiguous).

- **Technological research and innovation** : EU actions are assumed rather than really known (apart from a few success stories). Research and innovation is regarded as crucial for the future; it requires important resources to be mobilised and cooperations to be developed.

More Europe in this field also appears as a necessity.

- **Justice and security** : there is only faint and scattered knowledge of European action – including a degree of confusion with the external security and defence policy.

In the field of justice, references to the high legal “standards” of the European Union are positive ; some examples of cooperation or efforts to make judicial systems more compatible are mentioned.

Perceptions are a little clearer as regards security : development of cooperations to fight crime, traffics, or terrorism.

In the latter field, the usefulness of stronger European action is fully recognized ; as regards justice per se, people generally consider that it should remain primarily a national responsibility, but they show themselves to be open to fundamental principles to be asserted at a supranational level and to increase cooperation between Member States.

- **External policy** : in this field, the interviewed citizens’ prevailing tendency is to point at a deficit in terms of common action. For the most part, they blame the inability of Member States to stop “playing their own game” and to seek to reach common positions. They actually know very little of what has already been achieved.

In most countries there are very strong expectations of a really common EU external policy – including in the area of defence ; they perceive it largely as an “obligation” or a “priority”, while at the same time being quite aware of the great difficulties to be solved to reach that goal.

#### **4. Near-zero knowledge and understanding of the functioning of the Union, its institutions and their role.**

- ❖ The only institution (more or less) clearly identified is the European Parliament : not that much is known about it in actual fact, but its name suggests an identity and a role comparable to those of a national parliamentary assembly.

The Commission is sometimes (not always) known by name, but what it is and does remains nebulous – both as regards how Commissioners are nominated, its institutional role, its relations with the other institutions and how it works. Mentions are even made of “commissions” (in the plural) without any notion of what they may stand for.

The Council is practically completely unknown as an institution.

- ❖ **The institutional workings of the Union** and how decisions are taken is **a matter of nearly complete ignorance.**

## 5. Real expectations of information and citizen involvement

- ❖ Lastly, the respondents were asked about what could be done “so that your own voice would be better heard, your own opinions and demands better taken into account, and you would feel you are being better represented ...”. When invited to give their views on this subject, they tend to express **the wish to be better informed and more involved**.

Admittedly, such declarations should not be taken for granted – be it only by reference to the distance between citizens and politics in general, and their decreasing involvement in politics, including at a national level. But they do reflect a real need to know more and to understand better, which is expressed by a fairly large number of wishes or suggestions :

- Better information by the media.
- National politicians being expected to explain the EU, including MEPs whom the citizens have elected.
- Information from the Union’s authorities themselves, directly or via local relays (whose existence is nearly totally ignored).
- Participation in votes, for instance in referendums held on key issues.
- Organisation of debates and forums allowing exchanges of views, as well as surveys making citizens’ views and aspirations “known upstairs”.
- Debates or forums on the Internet – an idea rather frequently offered in several countries, which seems to gain popularity.

## 6. To sum up, quite widespread expectations and hopes that Europe will not reduce itself to being a single market and a mere free trade area, not even a Europe based on unrelated projects ; on the contrary, the citizens expect progress in European integration in many fields and wish to see Europe assert itself collectively on the world stage.

**One may think that the reluctances, the criticisms and the disillusionments that can be observed currently vis-à-vis the European Union stem less from a weakness of “demand” of Europe than from a perceived lack of visible political “offer”, involving an overall goal and a comprehensive political project that citizens would find attractive and stimulating.**

## **DETAILED RESULTS**

**CHAPTER I**

**GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**AND ITS FUTURE EVOLUTION**

## I.1 PERSONAL HOPES AND FEARS

- ❖ The participants were invited to talk about their hopes and fears regarding their private and professional life over the next ten years – before being informed that the focus of the study was the European Union and its future.
- ❖ In the feelings expressed, **the tone is mostly one of anxiety**. In all or almost all countries – albeit with varying intensity – **fears and uncertainties largely predominate** and are moreover articulated with greater precision and conviction than is the case for hopes, which are expressed in a much more hesitant and vague manner: this anxiety is focused on concrete perspectives, anchored in the objective reality of the present, whilst hopes are in the form of desires or personal wishes, and reflect the psychology of each respondent, as well as the tendency of their “temperament” towards confidence and optimism. In this case, a large number acknowledge that they are “pessimistic” for themselves and/or, more seriously, for their children.

- **Among the old Member States**, visions of the future are particularly gloomy in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal: pessimism is spread across all groups.

Gloom is also predominant in Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy (although here there are nonetheless more significant hopes of personally doing well in a political, economic and social context “of crisis” that is viewed as extremely negative), Sweden and Finland.

In other countries, hopes and fears are intermingled: Spain, Greece, Ireland, United Kingdom, Denmark and Austria.

- **In new Member States**, concerns are deeply rooted in Cyprus, and also predominate in Poland, Slovakia and Latvia.

Areas of optimism and pessimism are more balanced – or vary from group to group – in Malta, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Estonia.

Those respondents from Slovenia and Lithuania generally present an attitude of measured optimism tempered by realism.

- **A correlation between pessimism and “Eurofragility” is clearly apparent in a number of countries:** Luxembourg, Italy, Sweden, Slovakia, and the three Baltic States. In a few other countries, whilst the general tone of responses is not fundamentally different from that of average citizens, we nonetheless observe that “Eurofragile” citizens linger longer on their concerns regarding the future, express specific fears on a given subject, or are characterised by the total absence of optimists among them (whereas some are found in the other groups): this is for example the case in Germany and Belgium.

Elsewhere, at this stage no considerable difference is observed between this category of respondents and other adults; in some Member States, it is true, the latter also show themselves to be especially gloomy, or doubtless themselves reflect “Eurofragility” through having ambivalent opinions as regards the European Union.

- **In quite a large number of countries, young citizens generally show themselves to be less anxious about the future than their elders.** This is the case in Belgium, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Latvia, and to a lesser extent also in Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and Lithuania.



**On the contrary, they are especially pessimistic in a few others:** the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and Austria.

❖ **The principal causes for anxiety are of a socio-economic nature.**

- **First and foremost employment, in an economic situation that is perceived as lacking in dynamism and lastingly unstable** – whether this involves fears of participants losing their jobs and a growing feeling of precariousness (among professionally active adult citizens), the difficulty experienced in finding a job (or a job corresponding to their level of education and qualifications), or the impression that working conditions are becoming increasingly harsh and that pressure on employees is becoming ever greater.

The effects of globalisation, or of the opening up of borders (competition from countries with low labour costs, or due to workers coming from these countries, relocation, etc.) are spontaneously alluded to at this stage in a number of old Member States, as well as in some new Member States (Malta, Cyprus, and Latvia in particular) as phenomena that are already present or whose presence is feared in future.

In general, however, attitudes seem less univocal in new Member States than is the case for the old ones: alongside concerns, we also observe increased hopes for economic improvement in the long term.

- **The collapse of the system of social protection, which contributes to the sense of precariousness.**

- **The concerns regarding retirement plans are widespread and are expressed in a highly concrete manner:** this is less a question of general considerations as to the future of the system than of silent fears surrounding the age at which personal retirement can take place, the fear that their level is not sufficient to be able to live a decent or reasonably comfortable life, increasingly high amounts for contributions, and the feeling that what contributions are made or have been made to pension organisations will have largely been to no avail.

In this respect concerns are spontaneously expressed in a large number of countries – in the vast majority of old Member States and in some new Member States.

Depending on circumstances, they are present in all groups, or, in the majority of cases, in groups of adults – at least as many average citizens as persons categorised as “Eurofragile” – or more especially among the oldest of adults interviewed.

- **Specific fears are also apparent as regards the future of the health system** – in this case those of a gradual transition from the current public system to a private system, with an end to free treatment or at the least a reduction in reimbursement for health expenses; they are also particularly evident in the responses of those interviewed from Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia, Malta and Lithuania.
- **More generally, the notion of a disintegration of the social protection nets is prevalent** – although respondents do not always stipulate whether they are thinking in particular about retirement plans, health, unemployment benefit or other aspects.

**It comes to the mind of those in almost all Member States.** In a number of these, **there is explicit allusion to notions such as social breakdown, increase in gap between rich**

**and poor, a society deprived of solidarity, and the disappearance** (or non-emergence) **of the middle class.** It is firmly fixed in the minds of those in, e.g., France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Sweden, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, etc.

- **The prospect of a reduction in purchasing power and increasing difficulty in leading a “normal” or “decent” life is mentioned by a large number of citizens questioned.**

This notion is present to varying degrees in the groups; it is in any event present in two out of three Member States.

In addition to the areas of fears cited above, we also observe **frequent concerns regarding accommodation prices – which leads young respondents to question their capacity to become independent vis-à-vis their families and to form one of their own, or leads parents to express concerns for them in related thought patterns.**

It seems to us that this is a relatively new specific cause for concern, or at the least one that was not as clearly evident in previous studies dealing with this same theme of hopes and fears for the future. It is mentioned alongside considerations for increasing property prices – which are becoming prohibitive – and difficulty finding real estate, fears that the necessary means may be lacking to obtain a loan to buy a property and that it may not be possible to fully pay off current loans, and sometimes also a decrying of increasingly high property “taxes”, etc.

- ❖ **Besides these predominant concerns, a number of others are quite often expressed with respect to:**

- **Security:** internal and external, individual and collective.

The gloomy nature of economic perspectives brings with it **fears of social disintegration**, which would itself **lead to increased levels of offences and crime** (sometimes this is considered to be fostered by the opening of borders within Europe).

In a number of countries, the **increasing sense of insecurity is linked to problems vis-à-vis immigration and the integration of immigrants**; this is just as clear in Member States where immigration is a long-standing phenomenon such as the Netherlands as in those countries where it is a recent phenomenon such as Italy, Spain, Ireland and Cyprus. It is expressed alongside the idea that illegal immigrants destined to live on the margins of society are logically inclined to look for ways of survival in trafficking and illegal activities, that immigrants, whether legal or otherwise, have the effect of providing competition on the job market to the detriment of the employment of natives whilst facilitating a decrease in salary levels, and that persons from very different cultures are difficult to assimilate.

**International terrorism**, mainly perceived as Islamic in nature, is mentioned as a general threat (in particular in the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Malta, Slovenia, Poland, Latvia, etc.): this is a threat that is more or less strongly felt, or is put in perspective by the idea that their own country is less “in the line of fire” than others, or is more generally perceived as having an effect on world peace and stability.

- **The impression that there is a risk of breakdown of the social fabric, of a weakening in national identity and of the loss of references and values:** crime, incivility, unrestrained individualism, disappearance of traditions, and the disintegration of fundamental family structure. This line of thought is particularly apparent in the responses of German, Belgian, Italian, Irish, British, Swedish and Finnish respondents.

➤ **The risk posed to the world's future by environmental threats.**

Although this is a significant cause for concern, as we will see in the following chapters, it is mentioned relatively rarely at this initial stage of discussion, as it is “smothered” by concerns of a socio-economic nature and by their direct consequences.

A number of Swedish, Finnish, Belgian and Dutch respondents (most notably among young persons) refer to concerns of this type (climatic change, exhaustion of fish stocks, possibility of a nuclear disaster, etc.).

- ❖ **Hopes are not altogether absent. Nevertheless – at least in groups of adult respondents – they are expressed more in defensive terms of preservation of what has been acquired than in offensive terms of “conquest”:** maintaining rather than improving economic status, keeping one's job and working conditions, and the hope of keeping in good health, both for the respondents themselves and those close to them, etc.

**With respect to young people,** we have seen that (except for in a few countries) they are generally **more optimistic or less worried about the future.**

Their intentions are above all situated in the short and medium term: entering higher education for those that are still at secondary level, being able to choose to pursue studies in an area that suits them and guides them towards a professional future, finding a job, dealing with the transition into adult life, and starting a family.

A large number envisage living in a foreign country – either, for the most pessimistic, because they despair at being able to build their future in their own country where prospects are too gloomy, or, for the majority, to complete their education or apprenticeship, to acquire enriching experience there both on a personal and professional level, whilst benefiting from freedom to move around and even to reside elsewhere in Europe. The negative consequences of this are separation from one's family, friends and culture, and at times – among young citizens from new Member States – the fear that they will be lumbered with a status of “second-rate citizen”.

## I.2 SPONTANEOUS PERCEPTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- ❖ Participants were invited to list the mental associations, images and perceptions that first came to mind regarding the European Union.
- **Whilst the associations linked to the European Union are both positive and negative, we observe that positive dimensions come to the fore in the responses of those interviewed from the majority of countries.**

More specifically, **attitudes as regards the concept of the European Union broadly appear favourable even though criticism – sometimes strong – is sometimes expressed at the same time regarding the Union’s effects and results, which are judged to be insufficient or disappointing.** In other words, the ultimate goal of the Union is not generally called into question, and remains valued.

- The countries in which spontaneous inclinations are the most favourable are Spain, Ireland, Malta, Slovenia, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as, though perhaps to a lesser extent, Greece.

Positive attitudes are also predominant in Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Sweden, Finland and Slovakia; they are more counterbalanced by negative considerations in the Netherlands, Portugal, Denmark, Cyprus, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Estonia.

On the other hand, negative perceptions are the most frequent in four Member States: the United Kingdom – where this is not a new phenomenon – along with France, Germany and (less so) Austria – in the latter countries it is clear that the considerable prevailing gloom is directed towards the image of the Union.

- No marked difference is to be observed in the attitudes of the various groups within each country. However, we observe, logically enough, negative thoughts or specific questioning on the part of “Eurofragile” groups in some Member States. As regards the age criterion, young persons are unequivocally more positive in a few countries (in particular Italy, Greece, Poland, Czech Republic and Lithuania) – and never more negative.

- ❖ There is a **broad consensus regarding the following four positive aspects:**

- **The “protective” character of the union of States, a factor providing for peace, stability and security**, support to “small” or “underprivileged” countries, **improved capacity for competition** and influence on the international stage, especially when faced with other “blocks”, such as the United States, Asian countries and Russia.

At this stage, occasional mention is made of external policy being developed.

- **A more concrete manifestation of solidarity that is reflected in support and development aid to underprivileged countries or regions**, of which the tangible effects are observed in particular; repair and construction of infrastructures (roads, motorways, etc.), and various restoration work – this is a theme often raised in old Member States that have most benefited from cohesion policies, as well as in new Member States, where the effects are beginning to be felt.

- **The process of harmonisation between Member States**, in principle logical within a Union, and currently perceived as “in the process” of development, mainly for the following aspects:
  - **Economic:** levelling out and increase in standards of living, in the new Member States in particular – where at times and among other things a new availability of more varied consumer goods is referred to.
  - **Regulatory:** the establishment of standards and rules so as to afford consumers a higher level of protection (improvement in quality and monitoring standards, compulsory warranties, etc.).

In a much less frequent manner, reference is also made to the following areas:

- **Judicial:** bringing together of the various justice systems (laws and penalties incurred), the European Court of Justice, and promotion of the defence of Human Rights.
  - **Social:** there is a hope that “upwards” harmonisation will take place, rather than a kind of “social dumping ground” (in particular as regards the health system, pension plans, working conditions, etc.).
  - **Educational:** reference to the Socrates and Erasmus programmes, etc., and to equivalence of academic qualifications.
  - **Environmental:** development of standards and rules, implementation of efficient checks.
- **The single currency, the euro**, which constitutes the most visible symbol of “harmonisation” and stretching as far as a common policy – although its “inflation-boosting” effects are simultaneously decried. Reference is made to aspects of practicality (no currency exchange, ease of price comparison), beneficial economic impact (“unified European market”, stabilisation of national economies, convergence criteria, reduction in interest rates) and even a function of integration (sense of “Community belonging”).
  - **Free movement of persons and goods**, the Schengen Agreement (often explicitly referred to), and the abolition of borders. This is very often one of the first associations mentioned, itself generally leading to the citing of benefits both collective – single market, economic development, etc. – and individual – freedom to travel, study, work and live in all the countries of Europe, etc.
  - **The facilitation and encouragement of mutual exchanges, cooperation, experience and knowledge**, thanks in particular to the opening up of borders, facilitation of travel, and student exchange programmes (Erasmus, Socrates).

In this respect, sometimes explicit reference is made to the richness of cultural diversity in Europe (particularly in France and Italy), or to the gradual emergence of a European identity symbolised by the blue flag decorated with a circle of stars, the European passport, the European driving licence set to be introduced in the future, etc.

- **Enlargement**, referred to as such in newly acceding Member States and in Member States where the benefits of their own more or less recent accession are widely recognised (Spain, Portugal, and Ireland).

- ❖ **The aspects perceived as negative are equally numerous – but it is observed that they generally emerge after positive or neutral associations** (except in those countries where gloom is most rife or that are the most strongly opposed to the European Union, as mentioned above).

In this respect, it is interesting to note that some participants insist upon the fact that the media often spreads word of problematic or negative aspects of the European Union, following the old adage that *"one never speaks of trains that arrive on time."*

- ❖ **Negative aspects mainly involve the following:**

- **The economic and social situation**

**The social decline or regression is above all referred to in old Member States**, most notably founding members (France, Germany, and Belgium) where the threat of a “social dumping ground” is vigorously decried, along with that of a “levelling down effect” more or less associated with the notion of competition from new Member States and their workers, and more generally to the opening up of the world economy.

- **The persistence or worsening of inequalities is linked to this.** This feeling or fear of an increase in gaps between groups is as much attributed to globalisation – hegemony of large international groups – as to Europe, perceived as incapable of restraining it. A “social breakdown” of increasing proportions between rich and poor classes is observed or feared, with, in certain countries, an already expressed fear that the middle classes may disappear. Another aspect that is very widely deplored is the distance that remains or is even increasing between developed and underprivileged countries, within the Union itself, but also, for some, at world level.

- **Enlargement that is too extensive and too swift.** A large number of participants still seem to be shaken by the enlargement to 25 countries (France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal, Greece, Austria, etc.) and feel that it was poorly prepared and negotiated, including among the new Member States (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, etc.).

Future enlargement plans (notably as regards Turkey) give rise to fears that are especially visible in Austria, Greece and Cyprus.

- **Insufficient union and cohesion**

A large number of respondents evoke **divergence, conflicts of interest and self-centeredness**. This is a situation perceived as to be expected, inevitable and “logical” given the number of Member States, their objective differences and the divergence in their interests and opinions. However, whilst a certain fatalism is observed on this subject, it should also be pointed out that “union” continues to be perceived as a sort of path where there can be no turning back, an inescapable necessity in the face of other “great powers” (as we will see below in the section dedicated to the impact of the European Union in the next ten years).

Occasionally the insufficient degree of political integration is explicitly mentioned – or the failed attempts at institutional reform with the rejection of the draft European Constitution in two countries.

**Also singled out for criticism is the supremacy, and even imperialism, of the “strong” countries** – i.e., France, Germany, the United Kingdom – a notion that gives rise to a strong sense of **inequality** if not **injustice**: the “strong” hold too much sway to the detriment of the “small” countries, rarely listened to or lacking in influence, and also the disparity in compliance with Community regulations, the “unwillingness” and “**impunity**” of certain countries where others show, or are bound to show, greater compliance.

➤ **Silent fears of a loss of or reduction in national identity.**

This notion is closer to the realm of foreseen risks and defensive anxiety as it is not founded on any objective observations; the issue nonetheless appears to be more particularly sensitive in, e.g., Germany, the United Kingdom, Cyprus and Estonia.

In new Member States, a similar train of thought that is apparent involves the rejection of the “westernisation” of society through the flood of products from the West, often considered to be of lower quality than national products, but more “competitive” – in a way as symbols of the “dispossession” of the national economic heritage.

➤ **A Union that is bureaucratic and excessively obsessed with regulations.**

- **We observe a questioning of the sluggishness, heaviness and complexity of operation** of the European institutions, little known but regarded as relatively inefficient and, moreover, worsened by enlargement.
- Their actions are reflected in the form of excessive **bureaucracy and absurd or “nit-picking” regulations**. This is a frequent criticism that is expressed in the majority of groups, especially in the Nordic countries, in the United Kingdom and among new Member States. A further aspect of bureaucracy is singled out for criticism: the discouraging complexity of procedures and “paper trails” to be followed in order to obtain assistance from the Union, which consequently excludes some countries as yet unfamiliar with these procedures and/or individuals that are not or insufficiently informed and ill-prepared (small farmers, independent workers, etc.).
- **European standards are at times considered as having the effect of destroying “the weak”** (SMEs, small agricultural holdings). This involves a feeling that there is “inegalitarian” application of standards conceived for the “strong” countries and/or powerful producers (intensive agriculture), or that application is subject to pressure from lobbying groups (e.g., the sugar issue in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia); this is blamed for bringing about the disappearance of certain local production and handicrafts, together with a large number of small businesses and national factories.
- **Some also refer to wasting of funds**, here reference is made to the CAP, the destruction of agricultural products, farmers paid “for doing nothing”, etc.; as well as the “**injustice**” of contributions, while those interviewed from some countries – the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom – criticise the imbalance between the amount of their contribution and the insignificance of aid received; others, in particular among new Member States from Central Europe, decry the absence of joint European investments.

❖ **Also raised are the following:**

- **The adoption of the euro**, which, for some, particularly in new Member States, is feared to be a factor in price increases and a loss of reference points (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, etc.)
- More occasional **questioning of the quality of European political “personnel”**.
- **Disappointment expressed at the lack of direct democracy, the distance between Union and citizens, and the lack of information and communication.**



### I.3 PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS

- ❖ Participants were invited to share their opinions regarding the influence of the European Union on life in the ten years to come.

**Their thoughts** on this subject are broadly similar to those previously expressed. They **reflect both hopes and fears**, within a mood of more or less pronounced optimism or pessimism depending on the country and groups concerned, and first and foremost the capacity of the Union to raise national economies from stagnation and help them to progress, give fresh impetus to employment, and support a social policy that is able to afford high standards and quality of living to one and all.

- ❖ In greater detail, the following overview can be presented:
  - **Countries with a predominantly optimistic outlook**, where positive aspects are the most common; these are also the countries where understanding is most willingly expressed for the fact that the successful construction of Europe will necessarily take some time.
    - Belgium: the three groups – particularly young and average citizens – despite their anxiety surrounding employment, show a good degree of trust in the capacity of Europe to improve standards of living, to pursue a policy of mutual Community assistance and the harmonisation of the policies of 25 Member States; those within the “Eurofragile” group, however, show less willingness to commit.
    - Italy: in this country, in addition to the fact that the groups find it difficult to “think so far ahead” in the climate of total uncertainty in which they find themselves, Europe appears as the only credible resort faced with the fall of the nation-State; hopes are expressed that this will prove a driving force in emerging from the state of economic crisis, and that Europe will gain in influence on the international stage.
    - Spain: here we observe, against a background of aggravation of economic competition, the statement that membership of the Union is more than ever indispensable; here optimism seems to be as much affective as rational.
    - Greece: to the majority of participants, the European Union represents the only possible path (despite the presence of a few pessimistic “Eurofragile” citizens who fear “disintegration” and decry the no vote on the draft Constitution).
    - Ireland: this is one of the few countries where some participants openly welcome the accession of the ten new members, and express hopes that they experience growth similar to that which has been experienced by Ireland, this despite the potentially negative effects on national employment brought about by the “legal” entry of intra-Community migrants. In spite of the allusion to risks, we observe a fully intact sense of assurance and belonging.
    - Denmark: here we observe a majority of confident opinions on the positive influence of Europe (“*towards a higher common denominator*”), particularly as regards education, freedom of intra-Community exchanges, protection of the environment and the bolstering of the weight of the Union to such an extent that it is able to act as a “counterbalance” to the United States. The risk of a reduction in national identity and sovereignty alone is brought up by a few “Eurofragile” citizens as well as by some average citizens.

- Malta: the groups are optimistic on the whole, envisage still further progress in the area of infrastructure and the environment, hope for an improvement in social cover (principally health), increased weight on the international stage, and a reduction in bureaucracy. The few reservations expressed involve the risk of an increase in the gap between rich and poor, sometimes associated with the introduction of the euro (group of young citizens), and the potential unemployment problems faced by “nationals” for the benefit of migrants (among a few participants from the group of average citizens).
  - Slovenia: those citizens questioned are conscious that the times are changing and that the transition to a capitalist economy accentuates tensions within a society that is less protective than was previously the case, and they express concerns (with respect to employment, standards of living, the risk of price increases following the introduction of the euro, etc.). But at the same time they realistically perceive a necessary transition which they expect to have positive effects in the longer term; in addition, they do not generally speaking attribute to the European Union changes that are taking place on a wider scale, and they are open to an increase in exchanges of all kinds with their European neighbours.
  - A large number of former Eastern block countries: e.g., Poland and Slovakia, in which participants, in addition to strongly insisting upon the opening of borders and freedom of movement, hope for a stabilisation of their economies, an improvement in their standards of living – if not for themselves at least for their children – and curbing of corruption; Estonia and Lithuania where, in the same way, there are expectations of an increase in salary, improved working conditions, job creation and improved standards of living (despite fears of inflation due to the euro, above all in Lithuania). Freedom of movement is also highly valued.
- **Countries more divided between optimism and pessimism**, within a single group, between groups, or even as regards individuals themselves, non-committal.
- Luxembourg: average and young citizens – despite current obstacles – continue to believe that European integration is set to progress; “Eurofragile” citizens, without truly adopting a point of view on this subject, above all reiterate their fears of social decline.
  - The Netherlands: groups are more non-committal and have difficulty expressing an opinion. Nevertheless, they see more advantages for new members than for themselves – negative effect of low-cost salaries, weakening of Dutch influence – whilst remaining firmly attached to the role of Europe in maintaining economic stability and peace, some give examples of positive cooperation (on avian flu).
  - Sweden: the vision of the Swedish groups is somewhat pessimistic over the short and medium term (unemployment, relocation, insecurity, etc.); this is tempered by a rather “wait-and-see” mood in the longer term (Europe still “*building itself up*”), more through the adopting of a certain distance rather than true discouragement.

- Finland: the groups of young and average citizens rather tend to be optimistic, believing in the emergence of solidarity, relative equality of opportunities for all, the intensification of cultural and commercial exchanges, the multiplication of enriching experiences, and the creation of a “sense of EU belonging”. On the other hand, the group of “Eurofragile” citizens above all expresses fears and even anticipates a disintegration of Europe under the pressure of the “selfish interests” of the individual States. In addition, “Eurofragile” citizens, along with some average citizens, show themselves to be highly concerned by the increase in insecurity brought about by the confrontation between Europe and the Muslim world.
  - Cyprus: whilst visions of the future are not altogether bereft of positive aspects – protection and security, particularly as regards Turkey, improvement of employment law and better salaries, facilities and assistance for studies abroad (especially grants) – at the same time a large number of fears are expressed: increase in economic difficulties, increase in prices linked to the euro (suggestion of a referendum), increased sense of insecurity and increased crime levels, the terrorist threat, rising unemployment for the weakest citizens, the necessity of leaving the country to find work, loss of Cypriot identity, etc.
  - Hungary: participants also express considerable divergence of opinion. The youngest envisage numerous and favourable opportunities for progress – travel, studies and work abroad, fight against corruption, etc. – whereas the “Eurofragile” group remains dubious but does not lose hope, whilst the group of average citizens shows itself to be less optimistic.
  - Latvia: the groups of young and average citizens are more upbeat; they anticipate considerable progress in all respects – salaries, social guarantees, environment, projects supported by the European Union, harmonisation of prices, single currency, etc. On the other hand, the “Eurofragile” group concentrates negative and pessimistic visions: widespread inflation, influx of migrants, increase in crime levels, division of countries into those pro- and anti-Europe, departure of Latvian “brains” and workers abroad, etc.
- **Countries that are on the whole pessimistic**, where positive aspects are expressed by a minority or even a very small minority.
- France: participants anticipate an increase in the influence of the European Union constituting a menace for their country, they foresee more losses than advantages, which are henceforth directed towards newcomers (subsidies, jobs, increase in salaries for poor countries, etc.); the only positive flickers of light in the long term: new openings, reduction in unemployment, emergence of a “European power” facing the United States and Asia.
  - Germany: German groups are among the most pessimistic. They see almost nothing but negative effects and responses are dominated by “fears”: of a “social dumping ground”, “lax” directives (environment, nuclear, GMOs, etc.), increase in cost of living (VAT) and transformation of the landscape (fallow land, desertification).

- Portugal: in all groups, we witness feelings of disappointment with, above all among young citizens, a tendency in future towards a personal lack of investment with respect to Europe – perceptions of heightened unemployment, an invasion of Asian products, a widening of the gap between rich and poor, a multiplication of relocation programmes, ageing of the population, failure of the European social model and increased sense of insecurity. In this gloomy picture, only a few rare hopes emerge for a positive impact of harmonisation of living standards and social policy.
- United Kingdom: all groups criticise the “negative” and “increasing” weight of the European Union, a likely swelling in the British contribution for the support of “poor” countries without any form of compensation in return, a risk of weakened national sovereignty, etc. – classic themes for this country.
- Austria: groups on the whole show themselves to be more inclined towards pessimism, at times expressed in somewhat vehement tones. A large number of “negative” prospects are already directly felt by the participants and are perceived as likely to worsen still further: intense difficulties for the job market (increasing demands), reduction in salaries and increase in prices, multiple influxes associated with the opening of borders (workers accepting flexibility and low salaries, foreign students present in Austrian faculties to the detriment of young Austrians), explosion in road traffic with all the nuisance this entails, loss of sovereignty, etc. The positive points are alluded to in a much more discrete and dubious fashion.
- Czech Republic: groups from the Czech Republic, given their perception of the harsh present (Czech economy “in ruins”), not only show little optimism for the future, but also express strong feelings of frustration and powerlessness, a distinct resentment as much directed towards Europe – which has not kept its promises thus far – as towards national politicians – who are blamed for having poorly negotiated the accession.

#### I.4 PERCEPTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S GOALS

- ❖ Participants were subsequently asked to say a little about **the goals of the European Union**, as they perceived them.

**A remarkable and positive convergence of perceptions is observed in this respect, along with the maintaining of positive visions of the ultimate goal that the European Union is pursuing or ought to be pursuing.**

- **Peace and unity** are cited in almost all countries; they are often the first or among the first objectives cited, especially in old Member States (France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom, etc.).
- **Economic development** that is balanced and jointly spread, a reduction in inequalities and discrimination (between social groups and between countries); this is also an objective cited in all countries; economic growth is most often mentioned first in new Member States.

It should be noted that this economic growth may currently be perceived as benefiting “rich” countries that exploit the openings for “new markets” in the Member States recently having joined rather than the other way around (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, etc.): this explains the frequent insistence of some on recalling the European objective of **solidarity and assistance to lesser developed countries** (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, etc.).

- **Harmonisation** of regulations and standards, able to bring about a better quality of life, for all and in all countries, in particular in the areas of **social welfare** (employment, employment law, salaries, retirement plans, etc.), **education, health**, protection of the **environment, legislation** (consumer protection, quality criteria, monitoring), **the judicial system** (Human Rights, etc.), **tax** (standardisation of taxes and duties, etc.). In a few countries, explicit regrets are expressed that the harmonisation objective may have been jeopardised by the no vote on the draft Constitution, and there are hopes that a further attempt will be made in future.
  - **The construction of an economic union, competitive and carrying weight on the world market**, capable of standing up to challenging levels of competition from the United States and emerging blocks (above all Asia).
  - **Common foreign policy**, strong and credible due to its unity. This is a field in which a number of doubts are expressed, following recent and deep-seated disagreement and a lack of capacity to react in the face of crisis.
  - **A common security policy**, especially with respect to the fight against terrorism, crime, border control and immigration management. Sometimes the notion of a common defence policy is also touched upon, along with that of an EU army corps.
- ❖ **Here it is clearly apparent that the (at times considerable) gap perceived between ideals and reality does not call into question global adhesion to the European unification project.**

## **CHAPTER II**

### **PERCEPTIONS OF EU ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES**

## II.1 EU ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❖ For the most part, the achievements of the European Union make it a **major project**, valuable and always rewarding.
- ❖ The cited achievements largely include and develop positive spontaneous associations made in I.2. The following achievements are mentioned, by decreasing number of quotations.
  - **The freedom of movement of persons and goods, the opening of borders and markets:** cited practically unanimously (sometimes mentioning the “Schengen agreement”), associated nearly always with the ability to travel, study, trade throughout the EU area. Citizens in new Member States, in particular, always point it out and greatly value it notably from the point of view of “freedom” of movement whereas increased practicality (no currency exchange, no formalities, price comparison) is more readily highlighted in old Member States.
  - **Peace:** also represents a massively cited success.
  - **The single currency, the euro,** a guarantee of stability (control of national public deficits, interest rates) and facilitator of exchanges, including in new Member States that have not yet joined the eurozone and even if it is at the same time associated with an increase in price.
  - **EU aid to developing countries,** very frequently mentioned, often with the **acknowledgement of progress achieved** – rapid economic development and relative increase in standard of living (in reference to success stories cited in Ireland, Spain, the Baltic States, etc.).
  - **The defence of Human Rights, with reference to the European Court of Justice, the International Tribunal;** all these bodies, more or less well-known but attributed to Europe, appear to a number of participants as “supra-national” recourse endowed with broader and reassuring competence.
  - **Improved ability to compete on the world stage,** in particular vis-à-vis the United States and Asia, in economic as well as political terms, even if, in its current state, European power still appears too weak.
  - **The harmonisation of a certain number of norms, regulations** (quality of products, health monitoring, environmental standards, education system with the Bologna Agreement). Even if there still remains a lot to be done in a number of areas, progress is undeniably perceived.
  - **Cultural exchanges,** essentially Erasmus (sometimes reference is also made to the “European Capital of Culture”); this is a little contested achievement and largely cited in all groups, in numerous countries.
  - **The boosting of cooperation** (Airbus, European Space Agency, etc.), major technological projects.
  - **Enlargement to the East,** especially mentioned by respondents from new Member States but also by those from older ones that view it as the exercise of necessary solidarity.

## II.2 EU FAILURES

- ❖ Answers by respondents include for the most part evocations mentioned spontaneously in the previous chapter and are mostly the **negative aspect of a factor cited elsewhere as a success**.
- ❖ Among failures can be distinguished, **those that regard the very concept of the EU** – and that are typically mentioned in most countries (lack of integration, cohesion, weakness of the institution itself, of its role) – and those that rather regard the **discontent** of certain groups or countries that feel threatened or “disadvantaged”, not or poorly taken into consideration by Europe as it is today – inequality, discrimination, imbalance or resulting destabilisation, inequity and injustice, etc.
- ❖ **First, as regard the “hard core” of the EU’s failures: all that contests, even contradicts its basic “philosophy” and original momentum** (unity and solidarity, economic cooperation and prosperity).
  - **The lack of unity between the States, the lack of collective spirit, the prevalence of “selfish” interests**, represent the EU’s **major failure**, always cited, regardless of the type of group or country. To some it is such a contradiction with the Community’s ultimate goal that they predict or fear the “breaking up” of the EU. To others, it is part of the project’s “intrinsic” difficulty, it does not fundamentally question it, but simply indicates that it will require a lot more time.
  - **The persistence of inequalities between Member States**, as well as dissension or differences of opinion. Here it concerns the perception of blatant disparities, not reduced but even accentuated by Europe, between the economic level of the various countries. Whence, for a number of participants in new Member States, a feeling of unequal treatment (no true opening of the product and job markets throughout the European area), a lack of solidarity when it is not about the “colonisation” of “small” countries by “large” ones.
  - **The weakness of growth and economic and social decline**: perceived in old developed Member States, linked to the arrival of “low-salary workers” from new States or to relocations; but also in new Member States, often disappointed in their economic expectations (persistence of or increase in unemployment, closing of factories, bankruptcies of national and local companies attributed to Community regulations, etc.).
  - **Disparity in the respect for Community regulations and laws**. In the same way as the inequality between Member States, the feeling of **non-equity** is encountered – experienced, among others, in Nordic countries and certain new Member States in Eastern Europe – again the “laxness” of certain “large countries” is denounced (France, Germany, etc.) that are able to free themselves with impunity from regulations that apply to all or the very variable respect for European directives (notably with respect to the environment).
- ❖ Beyond these major failures, likely to undermine the Community project in its “essence”, a **series of criticisms are seen**, more or less contingent – “perverse” effects or state of incompleteness – and more or less broadly and intensely shared by groups and countries:
  - **Lack of control over clandestine immigration**, which creates, for many, an afflux de migrants harmful for employment and social expenditure in the host States. In addition and especially, immigration is often associated with a rise in crime and illegal trafficking. It is the “flip side of the coin” to the opening of borders, which is nevertheless welcome as a principle.



- **Excessive bureaucracy, “absurd” regulations**, already referred to in the previous chapter, are again cited here.
- **The absence of a common external policy, of a unitary position**: weakness of European influence, lack of initiative and intervention capacity.
- **Rejection of the Constitution**, often mentioned as a symptom of “dissension” and sometimes of the mutual mistrust of the States among themselves (Luxembourg, Spain, Hungary, Czech Republic).
- **Enlargement too great and too rapid**, with, often, fear for the future as regards the possible membership of Turkey.
- **Price inflation, linked to the euro**, “established” (eurozone countries) or feared (in new Member States).
- **Slowness of decisions, lack of reactivity**: administrative red tape (to obtain aid, among others), sluggishness of operation, the jungle of regulations.
- **The distance of the European Union compared to the citizens, the lack of specific communication**; the EU is neither visible nor audible, in addition to the fact that it can be “exploited” by national governments.
- **The absence of creation of a “European identity” able to attract people’s support**
- **Poorly monitored expenditure**: abuse of aid, poor use; here we find aspects already widely discussed in previous chapters: the wasting of funds (Common Agricultural Policy, among others), excessive salaries and expenses of Community personnel, etc.
- **Rise in racism, xenophobia** (Sweden, Spain, etc.) and a lack of mutual understanding between Member States.
- **Invasion of “Western” products to the detriment of national products**, the bankruptcy of certain sectors (agriculture) or companies notably among new Eastern European members.
- **Weakness of actions in the protection of the environment**; this is more about expectations of improvements in an already committed policy – doing more, doing better, monitoring more efficiently, etc. – than the observation of true failure.
- **Non-reform of agricultural policy**, especially expected by participants from new Member States and by those from the United Kingdom.
- **Weakening of national cultural identity, of regional characteristics**: fear of “dilution” into a general impoverished culture, itself under the influence of the United States.
- **Lack of competitiveness, drive with respect to science and technology**; image of Europe “lagging behind”, not having been able to anticipate or implement means towards a true common research policy.
- **Absence of a vision for the future, for the project**; vagueness of perspectives, absence of a “slogan” claimed and displayed.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **OBJECTIVES OF AN IDEAL EUROPEAN UNION**

### III.1 OBJECTIVES PERCEIVED AS PRIORITIES

#### ❖ **The ideal Europe is taking shape in a remarkably consensual way.**

Priority expectations describe it as both united and at peace, fraternal and interdependent, prosperous and generous, strong, efficient and influential. It is therefore a EU that:

- **Ensures the maintenance of peace and understanding between States**, which stimulates mutual exchanges, listening and respect;
- **Supports economic development and puts it at the service of a fair, egalitarian and generous social policy** (first and foremost, job offers, salaries, social security, health, retirement, etc.) and that tends towards “**upward**” **harmonisation** between all Member States;
- **Practises socio-economic solidarity** with the least developed Member States but also with Third World countries (Africa in particular);
- **Develops more unity, cohesion, concern for collective, for cooperation** with respect to, among others, education, the environment, research, new technologies, health, biotechnologies, renewable energy, etc., which motivates researchers and prevents brain drain;
- **Asserts itself collectively on the international stage**, economically as well as politically;
- **Combats its excess bureaucracy, improves the operation of its institutions;**
- **Protects individuals and promotes Human Rights.**

### III.2 PERCEIVED GAP BETWEEN REALITY AND IDEAL

- ❖ Generally a great gap is perceived between ideal and reality but, most often, it is judged with realism, with respect to the scope of the task, the long period required to achieve such integration, the relative “youth” of the EU (historically), especially following the very recent enlargement to ten supplementary States.
- ❖ A number of reasons are given for this gap:
  - “Inevitable” differences of interest, the difficulty to get along with 25 (especially during periods of economic hardship), “anti-Community” manoeuvres by some.
  - Great differences between Member States – economic and cultural – possibly reinforced by the inequality of European aid (notably agricultural), the attachment of “rich” countries to their privileges, to their dominating position, which allows them to “block” development.
  - The lack of efficient Community “governance”, slow administrative red tape, the lack of political determination, the lack of realism by decision-makers (too cut off from the “field”), changeover and too-short term of the Presidency, etc.
  - The complex European history, residual hostile feelings, national resistance or heaviness inherited from the past.
- ❖ Despite notable disappointments or frustrations, no renunciation of the project is observed, just as there are very few fantasies of splits, all the more so since States appear to be incapable of resolving their problems (especially economy and job-related). In this context, somehow and partially, Europe would substitute the failing national State.

Even if no major optimism is observed, even if a certain discouragement is expressed, there is nonetheless no true loss of confidence. It is fully confirmed that there is still a desire to believe and hope in Europe.

**CHAPTER IV**

**ACTION FIELDS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:**

**KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND EXPECTATIONS**

## IV.1 PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES REGARDING TEN MAJOR FIELDS OF EU POLICY

- ❖ Out of the ten areas explored quite a disparate level of information and knowledge of European action is observed.

### A. The economy

- The economy is **one of the major preoccupations of participants**, it is considered as decisive for employment conditions and the collective and individual standard of living. It is also one of the bases for the foundation of the EU. That being the case, the majority of participants consider themselves to be no experts and rather ill-informed. In this area, Europe is above all supposed to target the growth and harmonisation of the economic development of all Member States.

In founding countries, the dominating impression is that the European Union tends to introduce increasing “liberalisation”, the limit having been reached, for some, by the “Bolkestein” directive.

In new Member States, Europe is essentially assimilated to the “single market”, to the opening of borders.

It is, in general, the subject where most ambivalence is expressed (in particular among “Eurofragile” citizens groups):

- Both requests for support and freedom to undertake
  - Fear of “everything economical” and the need to be strong and competitive on a “globalised” market
  - The expectation of Community unity and the attachment to national sovereignty
- **Actions attributed to the EU**

**The principal actions** attributed to the EU in terms of economy are as follows:

- The single currency, monetary stability, the control of public debt. It was already seen that the euro is both valued and a factor of anxiety (leap into the unknown, inflation). Stability and debt control represent another opportunity for some participants to express criticism towards “large” countries and their failures.
- The opening of the single market (especially cited by recent members), access to new prospects, free competition; eagerly expected, it may be the subject of a certain disappointment in new Member States with the non-reciprocity of trade flows (“invasion” by products from Eastern Europe and “difficulty” to freely export to all countries in the EU).
- Aid programmes to economies in disadvantaged States, perceived as both necessary – especially in the least developed countries – and likely to lead to new handicaps for “developed” countries, subjected to “biased” intra-Community competition.
- Taxation and quotas for extra-community products, welcome and sometimes deemed to be insufficient.

- The Central European Bank, often associated to the lowering of interest rates, perceived as a regulating factor, albeit rather ill-known.
- Anti-cartel measures, ill-understood and for that matter rarely cited.

➤ **Priorities**

In the economic field **all measures likely to boost economic growth, to fairly regulate competition between Member States, to affirm the autonomy and power of the EU on the international market** are suggested as priorities. The following is particularly expected of Europe:

- The stimulation of development, job creation (without details on the means)
- The impartiality of aid to Member States (to Eastern European countries, among others)
- Equality in the capacity to produce and export
- The harmonisation of VAT, taxes and contributions from Member States (simultaneous feelings of paying “too much” in old Member States and not to “receive” enough in recent members)
- The harmonisation of social security, so as to avoid in particular relocations, the minimalist approach to welfare
- Better allocation of funds and improved control
- Energy independence (less frequently)

➤ **Desirable level of intervention**

In this respect, **opinions remain divided:**

- **European competence** is nearly always desired in reference to the “global” context, which requires the capacity to act as a “counterbalance” to other major economic powers.
- **However, a clear need to preserve the interests of everyone is felt**, strong resistance, debates, the expectation of partial initiative left to the States notably in the application of directives (for example, among others, a period of adjustment granted to newcomers).
- Questions and doubts are noted among some British respondents, in addition to the particular attachment of some to their “marginal” position within Europe.
- Lastly, let us report the desire for Europe not to be merely a space and purely economic project, as openly stated by some.

## B. Social policy

- **This is among the most sensitive areas**, on which **Europe is both eagerly expected** – along the lines of a clear improvement, an alignment with the “highest” standards (particularly, but not only, in new Member States) – **and feared** – fear of having to see the best “models” having to “align” on lesser ones (in old Member States primarily).
- **Actions attributed to the EU**

**Few actions are cited.** It appears that it is a field that has hardly been broached, that European initiatives in this area are insufficient, non-existent or sometimes even indirectly negative. The persistent disparity of social policies in the various States – some refer to “pits” – is primarily perceived as creating movements with various effects: encouragement to “relocate”, deterioration of working conditions due to the arrival of workers from new Member States, migrants “abusively” taking advantage of the social security in the host country, or also expatriation of the best professionals, etc.

Participants mention, with more or less precision, the following actions:

- The “probable” harmonisation movement of labour rights, a common “Social Charter”, the “catching up” of lesser developed countries; some already observe positive changes for that matter: equal rights, fight against discrimination (sex or age), improved working conditions, maternity leave, care and retirement schemes (Spain, Greece, Malta, Poland, Hungary, Baltic States, etc.)
- The introduction of working hours standards, towards a reduction (for example for truck drivers with obligation of recuperation period)
- Subsidies for job creation, training support (suggested chiefly by new Members)
- Aid to companies that employ the disabled
- Aid for the integration of immigrants, the unemployed, young people, etc.
- A European social security roadmap
- Aid funds for modernisation, for hospital equipment (Lithuanian participants are indignant in this respect that Europe recommends “second-hand” equipment to them)
- The “Bolkestein” directive (opening of services market, rather denounced, except in the Czech Republic)
- The Lisbon strategy, the Gothenburg agreement (rarely and without precision)

To be noted in this area as in others is that it is often suspected that European aid and subsidies are poorly used or diverted.



➤ **Priorities**

**It is in terms of social policy that Europe seems to hold the most hope**, in charge of a specific mission, notably removed from the (“ultra-liberal”) North American system.

Top priorities are the following:

- Harmonising social policies of Member States by adjusting to the best standards in terms of workers’ rights
- Promoting a generous healthcare system: access for everyone, free to the disadvantaged (even to everyone)
- Guarantee of retirement pensions (and a retirement age that is not too old)
- Protection of the unemployed, the poorest
- Housing aid (notably in Spain, Portugal, Eastern European countries)
- Promotion of equality and the protection of women, the disabled

➤ **Desired level of intervention**

To the large majority, **European “supervision” appears more efficient** – greater means, better protection, notably by relying on the example of more “advanced” States – **however**, it is **accompanied by two conditions**:

- Not to represent regression compared to the national system (France, Luxembourg, Sweden, etc.).
- Leave time to adjust – or provide specific aid – to countries that are most backward in that area.

### C. Consumer protection

- This is **one of the areas where EU policy is the most visible, where it is least challenged and where it is positively appreciated**, in particular as regards food products.
- **Actions attributed to the EU**

In terms of consumer protection, **Europe is credited with:**

- The implementation of standards and increased control of products in terms of quality (standards, “CE” or other certification labels), health compliance, compliance with safety standards (toys, among others, medicines, etc.).
- The harmonisation of labelling and its regulations implying greater precision (ingredients) and improved traceability (indication of origin).
- Extension of guarantee periods (one or two years depending on mentions).
- The fight against monopolies, dominating positions, understandings between large groups (example, among others, mobile telephony).
- The fight against counterfeiting.
- **But also:** the abuse of regulations, which penalise some regional products or small local industries.
- **And also:** a certain laxness, weakness vis-à-vis lobbying, notably on the issue of GMO (Germany).

Overall most participants agree to observe the **progress** resulting from EU actions: companies assuming more responsibilities, standardisation and improvement of quality, possible recourse for consumers.

- **Priorities**

For the most part this is about **improving what has already been done, to continue the initiated approach**, as follows:

- Harmonising consumer protection by conforming to the highest standard (in particular for food products, pharmacy, abusive contracts, excessive rates, among others in telecommunications, etc.), preventing the abuse of regulations.
- Accentuating, multiplying checks, increasing sanctions against offenders, where necessary.
- Accomplishing the same for services as for products.
- Intensifying the fight against counterfeiting.

➤ **Desired level of intervention**

This area appears **typically to be of EU competence**, perceived as more efficient, more credible, with a national relay, on the condition that it does not fall short of the country's regulations and that it leaves certain initiatives to the States – adopting more stringent norms, negotiating the application schedule, keeping sovereignty for certain laws, for example the smoking ban in public places, etc.

#### D. Education and culture

- ❖ There is a distinction between both fields. **Education is the subject of more comments and greater knowledge of EU actions** (or credited to the EU). **Culture, on the other hand, gets rather few comments.**

**But both areas are perceived as important**, likely to enrich the feeling of “EU belonging” and to nourish its “spirit”.

- ❖ **Education**

- **Actions attributed to the EU:** often cited without detailed content.

- Harmonisation of higher academic cycles.
- Erasmus, Socrates, student exchange programmes.
- Equivalence of diplomas (with sometimes reference to the Bologna Agreement).
- Development and support of training, professional qualifications.
- Financial aid, scholarships for the less well-off.
- Increase in the level of education, fight against illiteracy (Lithuania).
- **But also:** inequality of degree course and restricted intake, which may create imbalances (see the already cited example of the Austrian medical department “invaded” by German students, to the detriment of Austrians).

- **Priorities**

**The European Union** is expected to:

- Allow free (or subsidised) access to education for everyone.
- Provide grants, aid to student mobility.
- Better inform young pupils and students about study options provided by the EU.
- Support training, inter-State exchanges.
- Encourage and support the study of languages (“second European mother tongue”).
- Develop practical training, concrete, better adapted to the job market.
- Provide aid to professional training for adults, to the rehabilitation of the unemployed
- Guarantee better training as well as better remuneration to teachers (in Baltic States).

➤ **Desired level of intervention**

Overall, it is **twofold: support by the EU is required but closely linked to the States**, in tune with national specificities and needs.

In addition, **great attachment is observed to national competence** notably among participants in Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (“small” developed countries) and in the United Kingdom (even if some there suggest seeking inspiration in “better” European models).

❖ **Culture**

Appearing by nature as one of the last and most legitimate “private domains” among national States, **culture gets rather few comments**.

➤ **Actions attributed to the EU**

**Few, if any, EU actions are known in this area.** The following is cited, randomly:

- “Cultural exchanges” without further details.
- The European capital of Culture.
- Miscellaneous aid (theatre, cinema, museums, libraries, restoration of historical buildings, etc.).

➤ **Priorities**

Culture is not perceived as a priority as a direct action subject for the EU. But **it is expected and imagined that the EU will and should:**

- Intensify exchanges and cooperation between States.
- Encourage and support partnerships between cities, theatres, museums, etc.
- Provide various aid: for the protection of national and/or local cultural features, finance European cinema, young artists, cultural centres, libraries, etc.
- Better communicate in this area.

➤ **Desired level of intervention**

Nearly unanimously, close **cooperation between the EU and the States** is opted for. A certain preference is observed for the **pre-eminence of national competence** (in terms of management of EU funds and initiatives).

However, it must be stressed that the idea of the development of a form of European **cultural supra-nationality** – common roots, defence of specificities, notably in the face of the “Americanisation” of the world – rich with all the features and cultural identities of each Member State.

## E. The environment

- **This is a “sensitive” area, familiar** (daily life, health, etc.), in which **the EU appears to be eagerly expected, desired**, but perceived as not yet active and efficient or powerful enough to be truly and sufficiently coercive.

- **Actions attributed to the EU**

Each participant is able to refer to **several actions by the EU in this area**. The following are primarily cited:

- Directives on emissions (notably of cars – catalytic converter), waste (dioxin, pesticides, etc.).
- Decrease of pollution (air, water).
- Waste management, the promotion of recycling, the selective sorting of household waste (plastic, glass, etc.).
- Aid for the protection of natural parks.
- The encouragement and support of alternative energies.
- The signature of the Kyoto Protocol.
- Subsidies for equipment, the renovation of purification stations (new Member States), filtering devices for the industry.
- **But also:** sometimes the feeling that the EU is subject to the influence of the oil lobby, the lack of a common stance on nuclear technology, or that it provides little or no support to organic agriculture.
- Lastly, the discontent particularly in Austria and the Czech Republic must be noted about the exponential increase of their road traffic, linked to the opening of the borders and the intensification of trade, without reaction or aid from the EU (increased pollution, noise pollution, etc.).

- **Priorities**

They lean towards **the greater protection of the environment and increased strictness**. Europe should therefore focus first and foremost on:

- Increasing checks, more stringent, more frequent.
- Implementing more stringent standards (notably for air and water).
- Increasing and standardising sanctions.
- Making sure all countries respect the directives (some countries claim to be more respectful and “strict” than others – Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, etc. – and refuse to see their efforts ruined by more “negligent” Europeans).
- Promoting alternative energies, encouraging research in this area (subsidies).

- Settling the issue of nuclear technology (quest for a common stance, issue of power stations – Slovakian for example for Austrians – of waste).
- Strengthening its stances, consolidating its power, to exercise pressure on the States – the United States in particular – who have refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol (feeling of urgency in the face of global warming), ensuring the safeguarding of future generations.

➤ **Desired level of intervention**

There is no debate: the **level of action is necessarily European** and, eventually, global, a condition for being efficient. Sometimes a certain tolerance is accepted, a period of adjustment granted to new Member States in order to comply (link to economic constraints).

## F. Agriculture

- ❖ The topic of agriculture refers back to one of the most **controversial** European issues, the most contentious. It is indeed an area in which the EU is perceived as particularly **powerful and interventionist**.

It is therefore **here that great dissatisfaction, frustration, resentment or disappointment is expressed**.

### ➤ Actions attributed to the EU

**The actions evoked are often the subject of criticism – but positive aspects are also brought up:**

- Essentially **the “CAP”**, synonym for numerous mass subsidies with pernicious effects, their derivatives, their “aberrations”: overproduction, “scandalous” destruction of products, denounced in practically all countries, some being particularly fierce (United Kingdom, Sweden, Czech Republic).
- Poor management of funds, farmers “paid to do nothing”, “absurd” allocation systems.
- Excessive, abusive or unfair regulations.
- The effect attributed to the CAP, from bankruptcies of small producers to national productions declared to be “non-compliant”, the disappearance of local varieties (in new Eastern European States, among others).
- Misappropriated funds, fraudulent appropriations.
- Bureaucratic maze and complexity to obtain subsidies.
- **But also the acknowledgement of positive effects:**
  - Better value for money for agricultural products (Luxembourg, Spain, Malta).
  - Development of local agricultures (Ireland, Spain, Greece), modernisation, mechanisation (Greece, Malta, Hungary).
  - The protection of species, fishing and hunting quotas (Ireland, Hungary).

### ➤ Priorities

They are the subject of **broad agreement** and are organised **around a redefinition** of the **EU’s agricultural policy – but not its disappearance**.

- **Radically reforming the CAP**, rebalancing aid, conducting a **fairer and more egalitarian** agricultural policy; eradicating absurd phenomena like the destruction of excess and subsidies “to do nothing”; decreasing the weight of “strong” countries and old Member States, reducing their capacity to “block” reforms.
- **Aid to the least developed EU countries.**
- Supporting alternative domestic, local (organic) agriculture, aiding “small” producers.
- Systematising and multiplying quality, traceability checks.



- Reviewing the GMO issue.

➤ **Desired level of intervention**

The EU level is not in itself contested, as in fact **a need for coordination, regulation to a supra-national level is felt**, but currently respondents stress as a priority problems and harmful effects.

The majority of respondents are **expecting a rebalancing of the CAP in consultation with all the States** in such a way that each country is able to implement an adapted agriculture, which takes into account its level of development and local parameters (cultural traditions, climate features, specialities, etc.).

## G. Regional development

- There are relatively few comments on the role of the EU in this area.
- **Actions attributed to the EU**

**Few respondents have a precise idea. Overall, participants are aware, have heard about or assume active support by the EU to the least developed countries or areas – but they do not always identify it as regional development policy. When it is identified as such, the EU policy enjoys a positive image in this area** (decrease of inequalities, interdependent dimension). The following are evoked:

- Essentially aid to the creation, modernisation of infrastructures, roads, motorways, railway networks, roundabouts, bridges, etc.
- Funds for the poorest regions.
- Cooperation between European cities.
- The promotion of rural tourism.
- Urban redevelopment, industrial fallow land.

### ➤ **Priorities**

Participants wish **first and foremost** that the EU:

- Continues, intensifies aid to the regions;
- Better controls calls for tenders and the use of funds for successful results, and more closely follows up the implementation of actions;
- Defines more transparent awarding criteria;
- Allows to preserve regional diversity.

### ➤ **Desired level of intervention**

Overall, respondents favour **double competence** – that the European Union provides the aid on the initiative of the States, reputed to be better able to identify the regions concerned and their needs. Similarly, a **shared follow-up** is desired for the use of subsidies and achievements.

They thus describe – without knowing it – the existing mechanisms of the Structural Funds.

## H. Technological research and innovation

- ❖ Respondents view “technological research and innovation” as an area for the future, as a **major issue** – in the context of globalisation and competition with the United States and Asia – and **which therefore, by nature, requires broader cooperation and major means.**

- **Actions attributed to the EU**

**They are assumed to exist rather than being known in detail.** The following are cited, among others:

- A few successes: most routinely Airbus, sometimes the European Space Agency, the high-speed train, etc., more rarely biotechnology work, the Galileo programme, CERN, etc.
- Exchanges between researchers, the organisation of European teams.

- **Priorities**

They all go in the **same direction:**

- Increasing funds.
- Intensifying, supporting cooperation.
- Preventing the much-lamented “brain drain” (providing researchers with actual means, reassessing their salaries).
- Boosting and developing research notably in high technology such as IT, biotechnology, pharmacy (vaccines, medications), genetics, renewable energy.
- Creating an independent European Research Institute, in particular shielded from national lobbies and major commercial groups.

- **Desired level of intervention**

**The large majority** of respondents made up their minds **for an EU competence** taken into account the requirement of major means and the need for cooperation, likely to boost creativity and maximise opportunities for innovation, guaranteeing the legitimate split of benefits and repercussions.

## I. Justice and security

- ❖ These **two areas** are, according to participants, **at times separate, at times intermixed**. In addition, interference with external policy is noted (evocation, with respect to security, of “defence”, a “European army”).

### ❖ Justice

#### ➤ Actions attributed to the EU

**Evocations are weak but converge.** These essentially concern:

- The European Court of Justice, which as it happens enjoys a good reputation, appears like a beneficial recourse available to all Europeans.
- The European Court of Human Rights, associated to the European Union.
- The International Tribunal (crimes against humanity), also more or less perceived as a product of the EU.
- The penal code harmonisation project (more expressed in the form of a question than knowledge).
- The abolition of the death penalty in all EU countries (rarely mentioned).

#### ➤ Priorities

**The principal expectations** are as follows:

- The harmonisation of the civil and penal codes (for example harmonising the legal age for penal responsibility).
- Free legal aid and the improvement of the legal protection for the weakest (children, women, etc.).
- The simplification and speeding-up of procedures, in particular of extradition mechanisms.
- Sometimes: the extension of sentences (notably for corruption offences, among groups from new Member States).
- The establishment of common jurisprudence (rare).

#### ➤ Desired level of intervention

The idea that justice is **rather a national competence** is often seen, especially due to the harmonisation difficulties of “philosophically different” systems. But **an opening to a supra-national dimension** is also observed, notably in the hope of the improved guarantee of Human Rights and their defence (hence the highly valued image of European legal bodies).

## ❖ Security

As already pointed out, security is a **very sensitive subject**. It is therefore much more abundantly commented than justice. It involves both groups and individuals. To be noted that for participants in groups from certain countries, it may primarily evoke “border security” (Malta, Cyprus, Eastern European countries).

### ➤ Actions attributed to the EU

In the general climate of insecurity experienced, the **European Union is credited with a certain number of welcome actions:**

- Reinforced cooperation between police forces in Member States, the creation of Europol (cited quite frequently).
- The systematisation of the exchange of files, information.
- The improvement of extradition agreements (easier, quicker).
- Common actions against terrorism.

### ➤ Priorities

They are essentially focused on the **reinforcement of existing or initiated structures and actions:**

- Intensifying the fight against terrorism, organised crime.
- Further facilitating extradition procedures.
- Better regulating immigration, reinforcing extra-community border controls.
- More actively combating corruption (participants from Eastern countries primarily).
- Fighting cyber crime (on the Internet).
- Working on further adaptability, creating emergency intervention forces (in the event of disasters, for example).
- Creating a European intelligence agency (rarely mentioned).

### ➤ Desired level of intervention

**The vast majority** of respondents believe that **the European level is necessarily more efficient** and better meets the rise in feelings of “collective” and individual insecurity (“globalisation” of crime).

## J. External policy

- This is an area where among the majority of respondents **both a major deficit** (absence of Community stance) and **major EU expectations** (“speaking with a single voice”) are observed.

- **Actions attributed to the EU**

Generally, **it is felt that EU actions in this area:**

- Amount to nothing or something on the order of “cacophony”.
- Fall under the rule of “every man for himself”.

Only a few rare participants are aware of the existence of a High “Commissioner” for External Relations. Even more infrequently, the name of Mr. Solana is quoted.

- **Priorities**

For the most part, they clearly go towards the **creation and implementation of a common European external policy**, i.e.

- **First and foremost, presenting a common, united front:** being influential, credible on the international scene, in particular vis-à-vis the United States (notably in the Middle East conflict).
- Establishing a consensus to defend EU (economic and political) interests.
- Working on a common defence project; intensifying military cooperation.

- **Desired level of intervention**

Despite the clear awareness of the immense difficulties – heterogeneousness of interests, weight of national selfishness, one of the last “bastions” of national sovereignty – it is a **European level of intervention that appears to be eminently desirable to the great majority of respondents**. In addition the shared sentiment is expressed of a sort of “obligation” to the EU for fear of losing all weight and credibility.

There are, however, some respondents that are **concerned** about losing national sovereignty; these involve for example certain participants, among the oldest, in Ireland, Greece, the Czech Republic, and a few young ones (in France for example), who refuse to commit to a conflict that they would not have chosen.

**In the United Kingdom**, respondents prove to be more particularly **reticent**, as attached as they are to their “double” position despite a few supporters of a common foreign policy.

## IV.2 KEY EXPECTATIONS

- ❖ They cover, for the most part, “aims” already described in I.4 and subsequently in III. 1.
- ❖ **At the top of the list**, to summarise transversally across all countries and groups, the following is found:
  - **Economic development:** guaranteeing everyone (countries and individuals) a high standard of living, decrease in unemployment.
  - **Standardised, generous social policy:** healthcare system, protection of the unemployed and disadvantaged, retirement scheme.
  - **Support to and harmonisation of educational systems.**
  - **Efficient security policy, fight against terrorism.**
  - **Protection of the environment.**
  - **Common external policy.**
- ❖ **Clearly but less massively**, the following are also mentioned as priorities:
  - **Support to research and innovation.**
  - **Standardisation of laws and justice.**
  - **Cultural exchanges.**
  - **Consumer protection (more rarely).**

### IV.3 REACTIONS TO A SUMMARY PRESENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ULTIMATE GOAL

- ❖ Respondents were invited to express themselves on a brief presentation of major objectives of the European Union, formulated as follows:

#### *Major objectives of the European Union*

- *Balanced economic development*  
*This implies:*
    - *An efficient economy, boosted by competition in the single European market*
    - *But also economic activity controlled by precise regulations to avoid the law of the jungle (economic and social regulations, consumer protection, rules of respect for the environment, etc.)*
  - *The exercise of solidarity.*  
*This implies among others, aid policies to the poorest regions – whose development benefits other regions over time.*
  - *Cooperation development between Member States*
    - *To encourage exchanges between them and mutual understanding*
    - *To make them stronger collectively, vis-à-vis their global competition and adversaries*
  - *The reinforcement of European influence on the world stage, aimed at contributing to peace and stability*
- 
- ❖ **Most often, the text is very well received**, even sometimes enthusiastically. It is judged to be good, clear, synthetic, motivating. All goals are unquestionably desirable, coherent with expectations and the own views of participants. Overall, they “can make sense of it”.  
Among respondents a **good or very good adherence to tendencies appearing in** this text are observed, in particular on the “human” dimensions – notion of solidarity, fairness, rejection of the “law of the jungle”. A few participants from certain countries prove to be more particularly taken in by the presented text: in Sweden, Finland and in new Member States notably. These respondents, even if, as all others, they express doubts on the achievement of the marked out “design”, prove to be relatively more confident in the process already underway and feel that it is still “too soon to despair about Europe”.
  - ❖ **The principal reservations involve the credibility of the implementation of the tendencies** – many judge it to be utopian, on the order of “pious hope”, far removed from reality – or on some points – in particular cooperation between Member States, or European influence on the world stage.



- ❖ But, in the end, **this presentation represents a “desirable utopia” for respondents.** They are in favour of it, but they regret that for the Union and the text as they stand:
  - The objective of solidarity is still so poorly asserted, so ineffective, convinced as they are that the most “privileged” Member States will have the greatest difficulty giving up their benefits, their privileges, sharing their riches.
  - The “social” aspect is insufficiently developed and enhanced.
  - The text is silent about “means” to be implemented (even simple “general guidelines”) to achieve these goals.

**CHAPTER V**

**HOW THE EUROPEAN UNION WORKS:  
KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

## V.1 KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ATTITUDES WITH RESPECT TO IT

- ❖ The persons gathered in the groups were requested to state what they knew about the way the European Union works (“how decisions are prepared, made and implemented, by whom, according to which process, etc.”).

They were subsequently questioned on the role of the three principal institutions, the EU Council, the Commission and the European Parliament – before being asked whether they felt the EU functioning and its decision-making system were satisfactory.

The lack of knowledge of the EU’s institutional system appears great, often very great, sometimes even unfathomable.

### ➤ The institutions are poorly or very poorly identified

- The one with the best notoriety is the European Parliament – either because respondents have seen or heard something about it (recollection of having voted during European elections; much more infrequent identification of a few European MPs from their country, as in Ireland or Slovenia), or because, even if only the name is known, the latter simply suggests a body of the same nature as that of a national parliament.

It is known or guessed by assimilation, that the European Parliament votes or must vote on the “laws” or “directives” – some specify that these votes have to be by majority – but the degree of knowledge does not go beyond this. In a few countries, respondents share their impression that it is the EU's most important body (in Slovenia) or refer to the extension of its prerogatives (in Germany). In others, on the other hand, doubts or questions are expressed on the reality or scope of its powers (in Austria and Poland, among others). Here and there, in addition, comments are made on the quality and competence of European MPs.

- The Commission is often known by name; it is not always the case, however, and even less often cited spontaneously when participants in groups are initially questioned on the institutions – the differences here are quite great from one Member State to another.

The countries in which the Commission appears to be best identified as a Community institution, or in which its name is at least the most present in the mind include Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg (who house its headquarters), Italy, Ireland (where the name of the current Irish Commissioner is cited quite frequently or that of one of his predecessors), the three Nordic countries, Slovenia (the name of the Slovenian Commissioner is quite well-known; that of the President is also referred to, as a result of a recent visit), Poland, Hungary and Latvia. It is to be noted on the other hand that it is particularly absent from the mind in two major Member States, France and the United Kingdom.

The vagueness that prevails in this respect in numerous countries may be illustrated by the use of the term “commissions” (and sub-commissions) in the plural (for example by Cypriot or Hungarian respondents), by questions on the link between Commission and Commissioners, on the latter’s designation method (of which typically nothing is known), on the idea that they are their country’s representatives, etc.

As regards the role of the Commission, it is typically vague to very vague, sometimes the subject of mere conjecture.

In a few Member States, or at least in some of their groups, this role seems to be better known – or at least guessed: in Sweden and Finland (by comparison to the national political system, it is attributed a status comparable to that of a national government, which prepares decisions submitted for parliamentary approval); in young Belgian, Luxembourg (less clearly) and Portuguese groups, who appear to have school or university memories of a role of initiative or “proposal” (as well as sometimes the execution of decisions); in Austria where this function of initiative is also evoked (without generally putting a very precise content in it); in Hungary where some also know that it makes “proposals”.

In some countries, the Commission is primarily perceived as a “supervisory” or “control” body; as in Italy, Greece, Malta, Poland, Slovakia or Latvia; in these cases, there is a tendency to view it as the EU’s major body as for that matter in Germany (institution that “creates” the directives, regulatory body with an image of “untouchable” omnipotence) and among some Austrians who refer to it as the “EU’s driving force”.

Elsewhere, visions of what the Commission does and its responsibilities are very mediocre or nearly inexistent – including in some countries, cited previously, where its spontaneous notoriety is relatively great.

- The Council is practically unknown as an institution.

When the name is mentioned among respondents, some evoke vague recollections of summits of heads of government, with obvious confusion between European Council and EU Council: in Belgium, Spain, Finland (idea of a body that decides “major themes”), in Austria (where people wonder if it is not rather or also a meeting of foreign ministers), in Malta and Hungary. Slovenes refer to meetings of ministers (without knowing which ones). The British, due to its name, assume that it must be comparable to the “Councils” of local authorities in the United Kingdom, others assume vaguely that it could be a sort of EU government. Poles view it as an equivalent of the Senate in their country.

In some countries, ideas are put forward of an executive body that “shapes” proposals (Italy), that makes decisions submitted for the approval of the Parliament (Portugal), or to the contrary that approves laws voted by the latter (Belgium), or that makes final decisions (Denmark), of a form of European government (Slovakia), unless it is a purely advisory body (question asked by some Austrians).

In all cases or nearly all, perceptions are extremely confused, and hypothetical, if they are not downright and simply non-existent.

- A few references are made here and there to the Court of Justice, the Central Bank, the Court of Auditors (in Luxembourg), the European Court of Human Rights associated with a Community institution or a few decentralised organisations.

- **The institutional functioning of the Union and the decision-making process are practically unknown.**

**On the respective attributions of the various institutions, nothing more is known besides a few bits and pieces evoked above regarding the respective roles of some of them.**

**Hardly any references save for a few are recorded to the rotating EU presidency, to “majority” votes, to the weight, to the number of MPs or to the “number of votes” from the largest and more powerful countries compared to the smaller ones (in Finland, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Lithuania) – and, especially, admission of ignorance of the process perceived as complex and difficult to understand.**

- **Judgements requested from respondents on the functioning of the Union are therefore very rarely backed up by known facts.**

**Participants from several groups for that matter state right away that they are unable to voice a well-founded opinion: as is the case in France, Belgium, Italy, Ireland, Estonia, Spain and in Hungary with a slightly negative tendency, as well as in groups of Portuguese and Maltese adults, the “Eurofragile” Luxembourg group and that of young Poles.**

**Without having much clearer views, respondents from numerous other groups have rather negative impressions, with the concept of complexity, opaqueness, slowness of processes or low efficiency: as is the case in Germany, Luxembourg (desire for greater transparency), Greece (subjective impression not to be heard), the United Kingdom (deeply rooted feeling of inefficiency and negative image of European politicians), in Denmark (desire for transparency and proximity), in Sweden (bureaucratic system, difficult decisions in a Union with 25 members, possible blocking by a small number of countries), in Austria (opaqueness, poor efficiency), Poland (distance, bureaucracy), Hungary (complexity, incomprehensible administrative language), in the Czech Republic, Slovakia (low quality attributed to European and national politicians), in Latvia (excessive red tape, simplification required) and in Lithuania (institutions perceived as too numerous and too complex).**

**More favourable opinions prevail in a few countries or in certain of their groups: among young Portuguese (favouring a Parliament that represents citizens), young Finns (favourable to democratic majority votes and wishing for an extension of the qualified majority voting procedure), young Maltese (sensitive to the same democratic aspect), Cypriots (democratic basis for the system, representation of small as well as large countries, existence of respected procedures) and Slovenians (prone to trust a system that they perceive as inevitably complex and that they accept as such).**

**In several countries, the expression is found here of considerations on the weight of “large” Member States or the weakness of the influence of small ones: in addition to those previously cited, the Netherlands (among a few respondents who rise up against the system's French-German “domination”), Greece, Austria (where some believe that the founding countries have a greater number of Commissioners), Slovenia (moderately), Latvia. In new Member States, along the same lines, a request for the Union or the Commission to “supervise” old Member States as they are (Poland, Latvia, etc.) is also expressed by some.**

## V.2 REACTIONS TO A SUMMARY PRESENTATION OF THE WORKING PRINCIPLE OF THE UNION

### ❖ The following text was submitted to respondents:

#### *How the European Union works*

- *The European Union works according to the principle of shared sovereignty.*
- *The Member States agree to take common decisions and to adopt common legislation in certain policy areas – these decisions then apply for all countries in the same way.*
  - *In some cases these decisions are taken by a so-called qualified majority vote in the Council where the ministers of the various Member States meet – each country having a number of votes linked to the size of its population. They must also be approved voted by a vote in the European Parliament.*
  - *In other cases decision taking requires unanimity voting by Member States – which means that each one has a right to veto.*
- *In other areas, conversely, decisions remain the sole responsibility of each country, without any involvement of the European Union.*

### ❖ This text gives rise to the following reactions:

- **On the whole positive in France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Sweden, Cyprus, Slovenia, Hungary, Lithuania and (in a more reserved way) in Spain.**

#### **It serves to:**

- **Somewhat clarify notions that had thus far been very largely or even totally misunderstood – by providing a few institutional indications.**
- **Give substance to the idea that the EU is not, or less so than initially thought, a “hydra monster” seeking to interfere in all areas, as there are some left that fall under exclusive national competence (even if the notion of shared sovereignty remains in itself rather abstract); reflections along those lines were heard notably in Germany, Greece, Cyprus and Hungary.**
- **Also show that there are institutional procedures and that decisions are not made by totally anonymous officials in their “ivory tower”.**
- **Among these, stress the double qualified majority or unanimous decisions system. This subject gives rise to debates in all groups – the right of veto being a guarantee for a country that feels that a given subject affects its fundamental interests, but also being understood as a negative blocking factor; roughly, the citizens from these groups agree to adhere to the idea of majority vote except in some particularly sensitive areas (such as: accession of new Member States, external military commitment, etc.).**

**It is, however, not sufficient to fully inform and to bring full agreement, criticism and questions are expressed as to:**

- The respective areas of Community and national competences: concrete examples are necessary.
  - The respective areas of majority or unanimous decisions – same request for details on areas of application.
  - The reality of the application of these principles in practice.
- Mitigated or variable from one group to the other in Belgium, Portugal, Denmark, Malta, Poland and Slovakia.
- The positive components of reactions are overall the same as for the preceding countries.
  - Criticisms, doubts or requests for explanations are also of the same nature – certain concepts being more difficult to understand (shared sovereignty and even sometimes qualified majority).
  - Information provided on the number of votes on the Council linked to the size of the population in each Member State sometimes reinforces the feeling of ineffective influence of one’s own country: as is the case in Portugal and Malta.
  - The idea of shared sovereignty may also be of concern by suggesting, contrary to the desired goal, a loss of national sovereignty and autonomy: as is the case among some Maltese and Polish respondents as well as among Danish and Slovakian “Eurofragile” groups.
- Somewhat neutral in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Finland and the Czech Republic: abstract nature of the text, notions difficult to understand for some, insufficient details and examples to be able to take a stand, etc. The nature of questions asked is otherwise not substantially different from what is heard in other countries.
- On the whole negative in Italy, the United Kingdom, Austria, Estonia and Latvia.

More than elsewhere, the concepts in the text appear difficult to comprehend. As elsewhere, but more vividly, concrete examples are requested on the respective areas of application of Community and national responsibilities, majority or unanimous decisions, and the right of veto; the dominant feeling is that of being insufficiently informed on the functioning of the Union due to information that is too vague.

In Italy, discussions that are initiated within groups lead to a clear request for more Community responsibilities.

The opposite is observed in both the United Kingdom and the two Baltic States involved, where the text rather reinforces the reservations and concerns as regards the preservation of national sovereignty (this involves shared sovereignty in the first of these countries, and the number of votes linked to the size of the population in the two others) – these issues being greater disputed and more open to controversy in Austria (with considerations on the practical possibility for a Member State to oppose its veto and to maintain it in the face of dominant opposite positions – doubtless as with the recent debate on Turkey’s candidacy).

**CHAPTER VI**

**EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT**



- ❖ Lastly to conclude the meeting respondents were invited to reflect on what could be done to ensure that citizens are more widely listened to, taken into account and involved.

**This exercise, albeit unequally productive depending on the groups, has allowed the forming of an expression of expectations and suggestions on various levels.**

- **Requests for greater or better “downstream” information towards citizens.**

**The need to be better informed about an EU of which little is known is recognised everywhere – even if the desire to learn more is unequally strong; in some groups, the distance perceived with institutional Europe or the general scepticism with respect to policy, or the primary preoccupations of daily life result in it being expressed moderately (notably among Spanish, Greek, Irish, British, Swedish, Austrian, Polish, Czech and Latvian groups).**

**This information is expected to be provided:**

- **Through traditional media, cited in the majority of groups – in the first place television, the media likely to affect the maximum number of people.**

**Besides a few suggestions for broadcasting debates of the European Parliament, for information through or from debates between “experts” (capable of expressing themselves in a language accessible to the general public), or for “information campaigns” relying on short sequences devoted to various topics, the request for concrete and lively programmes is heard primarily, both informative and playful: reports on topics that show the life of people, illustrations of positive aspects about the European Union, games, quiz shows, competitions, talk shows, fictional series. The idea of interactive programmes, to which viewers can contribute, is added.**

**Ideas are less precise when it comes to the press, but are expressed in the same concrete and lively spirit. Free newspapers are cited in several countries as media that are not to be neglected – both due to their current significant distribution and their distribution sites, which makes them particularly accessible.**

**Radio is cited occasionally.**

**In several Member States the idea is expressed of the creation of a European TV channel or European newspaper printed in all languages (in France, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Slovakia, etc.).**

- **Through simple flyers or brochures distributed to all households or made available to the public in various locations – suggested more infrequently (expressed by German, Greek, Hungarian and Latvian respondents).**
- **Through means of information relying on new technologies.**

**The Internet (creation of user-friendly websites that can be easily used by citizens) is evoked in Luxembourg, Denmark, Slovakia, Lithuania – but as we will see later this is much more widely a means envisaged for its interactive nature, enabling citizens to express their views and not only to seek information.**

Occasionally also, we see reference to the possible use of mobile phones (questions and answers via text message) by young Belgian and Irish respondents, or possible downloading using MP3 technology (in Denmark).

- Through the implementation, extension, or actions making the public aware of the existence of information services on the European Union – services that do exist but with which very few are familiar – information relay centres, or freephone telephone numbers evoked by Maltese, Slovenian, Slovak, Estonian and Italian respondents.

Some also add the idea of mobile information centres, information “booths” set up successively in various sites in the territory, or of information days in turn targeting various segments of the population.

- Through education on the subject of Europe in school establishments, with the integration of European content into programmes – a proposal put forward, among others, by German, Belgian, Italian, Danish and Swedish respondents.
- Through the intervention of politicians.

Being able to have access to European MPs or to European Union “representatives” of one’s own country, being able to ask them questions and to require them, to explain and “report”, etc., is a demand often expressed (in France, Belgium, Italy, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and in most new Member States).

But national political authorities and officials are also expected to express themselves on Europe – without waffling and without turning the EU into a scapegoat – demand particularly formulated by the French, Swedes and Austrians ; the Maltese add the idea of the involvement of local elected officials (“less politicised”).

Behind these requests, there is not only the desire to be better informed, but also that of being able to put across personal questions or grievances – a desire that is for that matter much more widespread.

➤ **The request on the part of citizens to be listened to by officials and citizen involvement**

- Through public meetings, sites for discussions and debates, an idea already present in requests to be better informed by politicians.

French, German, Italian, Slovenian, Polish, Hungarian and Slovak respondents, among others, refer to this. Italians, Portuguese and Hungarians add the idea of meetings between Europeans exercising the same professions, which would enable them to exchange their experiences and points of view in order to ensure these are better expressed collectively.

- Through the organisation of “open door days”, visits to European institutions, meetings with EU officials in Brussels or Strasbourg – requested notably by German, Italian, Irish and Latvian respondents who suggest this be done either by drawing lots among citizens chosen to take part, or through the creation of community groups that could send representatives.
- Through the establishment of (physical) sites acting as “suggestion boxes” or “complaint offices”.

It is evoked by Spaniards, Cypriots, Slovenians and Latvians.

The request for a European ombudsman, or for easier access to their services to the few who are aware of their existence, is formulated in a similar line of thought, along with the request for means enabling the organisation of petitions (in Belgium, Spain, Ireland, etc.)

- Through the implementation, much more frequently cited, of said suggestion or grievance boxes or forums on the Internet, enabling citizens not only to ask their questions and receive answers, but also to debate and exchange their views.

This possibility is explicitly mentioned by citizens (notably young respondents in certain countries) in France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Finland, Austria, Poland, Estonia, etc.

- Through the regular consultation of citizens through surveys and polls – whose results could be published and made known to officials as well as the public.

It is evoked by French, Belgians, Dutch, Italians, Cypriots, Poles, Slovaks, Estonians, Latvians, etc.

- Through the organisation of referendums on essential matters.

This is a frequent request in numerous countries – France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Finland, Austria, Malta, Cyprus, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, etc.

More generally, the desired nature of a greater electoral participation of citizens is also mentioned in Spain, Poland, Hungary and Lithuania, etc.

Thus in all Member States those citizens questioned show in one way or another their demand for greater involvement in public debate on the European Union – whilst sometimes acknowledging their own “apathy” with respect to politics.

## ANNEXES

**ANNEX I**  
**PARTNER INSTITUTES**

Belgium	EADC – Yellow Window (Antwerp)
Czech Republic	MARECO (Prague)
Denmark	Ulveman Explorative (Copenhagen)
Germany	Echanges Marktforschung (Cologne)
Estonia	TNS EMOR (Tallinn)
Greece	FOCUS (Athens)
Spain	Escario Research (Madrid)
France	CSA (Paris)
Ireland	TNS – MRBI (Dublin)
Italy	Market Dynamics International (Milan)
Cyprus	Synovate – Cyprus (Nicosia)
Latvia	TNS Baltic Data House (Riga)
Lithuania	Baltic Surveys (Vilnius)
Luxembourg	Ilres (Luxembourg)
Hungary	Ad Hoc Plus Research (Budapest)
Malta	MISCO (Valletta)
Netherlands	PQR (Amsterdam)
Austria	Karmasin Motivforschung (Vienna)
Poland	BSM (Warsaw)
Portugal	TNS Euroteste (Lisbon)
Slovenia	RM Plus (Maribor)
Slovakia	Psymareco (Bratislava), in cooperation with MARECO
Finland	Marketing Radar (Helsinki)
Sweden	Kommunicera (Stockholm)
United Kingdom	Andrew Irving Associates (London)

**ANNEX II**

**DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION**

**OF THE GROUPS**

<b>DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF THE GROUPS BY SEX AND AGE</b>														
	<b>Average citizens</b>					<b>Eurofragile citizens</b>					<b>Young citizens</b>			
	M	W	25-34	35-49	50-65	M	W	25-34	35-49	50-65	M	W	18-20	21-24
Belgium	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	5
	Brussels, 21.02.06					Antwerp, 14.02.06					Antwerp, 16.02.06			
Czech Republic	5	4	3	3	3	4	5	3	3	3	5	5	5	5
	Prague, 15.02.06					Prague, 16.02.06					Prague, 15.02.06			
Denmark	4	5	1	5	3	5	5	5	2	3	4	6	3	7
	Copenhagen 20.02.06					Copenhagen, 21.02.06					Copenhagen, 20.02.06			
Germany	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	Cologne, 11.02.06					Cologne, 11.02.06					Cologne, 11.02.06			
Estonia	2	8	3	4	3	3	6	2	6	1	3	5	5	3
	Tallinn, 17.02.06					Tallinn, 15.02.06					Tallinn, 13.02.06			
Greece	4	4	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	1	4	4	4	4
	Athens, 16.02.06					Athens, 17.02.06					Athens, 16.02.06			
Spain	5	4	2	3	4	4	5	3	3	3	4	5	4	5
	Madrid, 14.02.06					Madrid, 16.02.06					Madrid, 15.02.06			
France	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	Paris, 15.02.06					Paris, 16.02.06					Paris, 17.02.06			
Ireland	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	Dublin, 15.02.06					Dublin, 13.02.06					Dublin, 13.02.06			
Italy	4	4	2	4	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	Milan, 20.02.06					Milan, 20.02.06					Milan, 14.02.06			
Cyprus	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	Nicosia, 16.02.06					Nicosia, 20.02.06					Nicosia, 17.02.06			
Latvia	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	3	5	4	4
	Riga, 20.02.06					Riga, 24.02.06					Riga, 21.02.06			
Lithuania	5	4	3	3	3	4	5	3	4	2	5	5	4	6
	Vilnius, 13.02.06					Vilnius, 15.02.06					Vilnius, 14.02.06			
Luxembourg	5	3	3	3	2	5	3	2	2	4	3	5	4	4
	Luxembourg, 15.02.06					Luxembourg, 16.02.06					Luxembourg, 21.02.06			
Hungary	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	Budapest, 15.02.06					Budapest, 16.02.06					Budapest, 15.02.06			
Malta	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	Valletta, 17.02.06					Valletta, 15.02.06					Valletta, 16.02.06			
Netherlands	4	3	1	4	2	3	4	2	2	3	3	3	4	2
	Amsterdam, 13.02.06					Amsterdam, 14.02.06					Amsterdam, 14.02.06			
Austria	4	4	3	3	2	5	5	3	4	3	5	4	4	5
	Vienna, 22.02.06					Vienna, 23.02.06					Vienna, 24.02.06			
Poland	5	3	3	3	2	4	4	4	2	2	4	4	6	2
	Warsaw, 09.02.06					Warsaw, 10.02.06					Warsaw, 09.02.06			
Portugal	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	Lisbon, 14.02.06					Lisbon, 17.02.06					Lisbon, 15.02.06			
Slovenia	4	5	4	2	3	4	4	2	4	2	5	4	4	5
	Maribor, 23.03.06					Maribor, 24.03.06					Maribor, 22.03.06			
Slovakia	4	4	2	3	3	4	4	2	3	3	4	4	4	4
	Bratislava, 14.02.06					Bratislava, 16.02.06					Bratislava, 15.02.06			
Finland	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	3	5	4	4
	Helsinki, 08.02.06					Helsinki, 09.02.06					Helsinki, 09.02.06			
Sweden	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	Stockholm, 22.02.06					Stockholm, 01.03.06					Stockholm, 02.03.06			
United Kingdom	4	4	3	4	1	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4
	London, 13.02.06					London, 16.02.06					London, 15.02.06			



**ANNEX III**

**DISCUSSION GUIDE. RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

## QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

### FINAL DISCUSSION GUIDE (02.02.2006)

#### INTRODUCTION

Hello, I am ....., from ....., the research agency in charge of the study which brings us here together today.

May I ask each of you to introduce him/herself with a few words: who you are, where you live, if you live alone or together with someone else, if you have children and how old they are, what you do for a living and/or what your spouse/partner does if you do not work yourself.

#### THEME I

**I.1** First of all, could you tell me how you consider your own situation thinking of future years – both what you may hope and fear for your own personal and professional life in the next 10 years?

**I.2** One of the factors likely to play a role in the future is the European Union and how it will develop. We will discuss this subject in detail later on; but to start with, please tell me what first comes to mind about the European Union, what it makes you think of, what it means to you.

**I.3** In the next 10 years, in what ways do you feel the European Union will more particularly have an impact on our life? In other words, what does it deal with that will directly or indirectly concern us – please tell me what you know in this respect, and what you think about it.

**I.4** Let us now focus on the goals that are pursued and what one aims to do with the European Union. According to you, what are these goals – how would you define them with a few sentences, and how do you feel about them?

## **THEME II**

**II.1** Let us now look at the European Union from another angle – its achievements and its failures. Firstly, what do you think the European Union has achieved successfully since its origin, and what makes you feel that way?

**II.2** Conversely, in which areas do you think it has failed – either because it has not, or not enough, dealt with them, or because it has not succeeded in reaching set objectives?

## **THEME III**

**III.1** Let us now try to think in terms of objectives of an ideal European Union, i.e. what it should aim to do by priority.  
May I first ask each of you to write down a few lines defining or describing the objectives which you would regard as absolute priorities; then we will compare your different views.

**III.2** Each one here has his/her own view of the ideal European Union; you agree on certain points and you disagree on some others, which is normal.  
But overall, what makes you feel that the European Union, such as it is in its present-day reality, does not fit or fits only partially with the ideal you have in mind?  
Which obstacles does it meet, what do you think prevents it from moving closer to this ideal? What should be done?

## THEME IV

**IV.1** I will now mention different policy areas. I would like to discuss each of them from three angles:

- What the European Union currently does in this area, based on what you know about it
- What it should aim to do by priority in the next 10 years
- If you feel there should be more common action at EU level in this area, or on the contrary more initiative left to each Member State, and why ?

- A The economy – the different facets of economic policy
- B Social policy – this may include employment, work legislation, social welfare, healthcare, etc
- C Consumer protection
- D Education and culture
- E The environment
- F Agriculture
- G Regional development
- H Technological research and innovation
- I Justice and security
- J External policy – i.e. political, economic and trade relations with other countries in the world, defence, etc.

**IV.2** If you now had to define 3 absolute priorities for the policies of the European Union in the next 10 years, what would these 3 priorities be?

**IV.3** The key objectives of the European Union can be presented in the following way. Please read this document, then you will tell me what you think about it.

### **The key objectives of the European Union**

- Balanced economic development  
This implies :
  - Economic efficiency, stimulated by competition in the single European market
  - But also clearly specified rules to prevent it from being the law of the jungle (economic and social regulations, consumer protection, rules protecting the environment, etc.)
- Implementing solidarity  
This involves notably aid policies for the poorer regions – whose development is eventually beneficial for the other regions
- Developing cooperation between Member States
  - To encourage mutual exchanges and mutual understanding
  - To make them collectively stronger, in order to cope with their international competitors and adversaries
- Strengthening European influence on the world stage, aiming to contribute to peace and stability

## **THEME V**

**V.1** Another question is how the European Union works : how decisions are prepared, taken and implemented, by whom, through which processes ...

How does this work, judging from what you know about it ?

**V.2** You have probably heard of the Council of the European Union, the Commission, the European Parliament ... According to you, what does each of these institutions stand for, what role does it have, how is it involved in decision making ?

**V.3** Based on your own impressions, is the way the European Union works and its decision making system satisfactory or is it not ? Thinking back of the ideal European Union that we discussed earlier, what should be changed in this respect in order to have decisions taken in a way that fits better with your own expectations?

**V.4** This document includes a presentation of the principle by which the European Union and its Members States work.

### **How the European Union works**

- The European Union works according to the principle of shared sovereignty
- The Member States agree to take common decisions and to adopt common legislation in certain policy areas – these decisions then apply for all countries in the same way
  - In some cases these decisions are taken by a so-called qualified majority vote in the Council where the ministers of the different Member States meet – each country having a number of votes related with the size of its population. They must also be approved by a vote in the European Parliament
  - In other cases decision taking requires unanimity voting by the Member States – which means that each one has a right to veto
- In other areas, conversely, decisions remain the sole responsibility of each country, without any involvement of the European Union

## **THEME VI**

Lastly, as a citizen of the European Union, what would you hope to be done so that your own voice would be better heard, your own opinions and demands better taken into account, and you would feel you are being better represented, etc?

Please tell me everything that may come to mind, anything you could imagine in this line of thought – without wondering whether it is feasible or not in practise : we are first trying to collect as many ideas as possible ; later on we will see how they could be implemented.

## RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1 When you consider the situation of our country today, do you feel:

- Very optimistic 1
- Rather optimistic 2
- Rather pessimistic 3
- Very pessimistic 4
- DK/NA 0

Q2 Overall, do you feel that our country's membership in the European Union brings about:

- Mainly advantages 1
- More advantages than disadvantages 2
- More disadvantages than advantages 3
- Mainly disadvantages 4
- DK/NA 0

Q3 When you think about the European Union generally, do you feel:

- Very confident 1
- Rather confident 2
- Rather distrustful 3
- Very distrustful 4
- DK/NA 0

Q4 Now, thinking of world peace and stability in the next 10 years, do you think the situation will be:

- A lot better than today 1
- Somewhat better 2
- Somewhat worse 3
- A lot worse than today 4
- DK/NA 0

Q5 Which of the following do you fear the most could happen in the next 10 years:

- A new world war 1
- A major collapse of the world economy 2
- The spread of terrorism 3
- DK/NA 0

ELIGIBLE RESPONDENTS : ANSWERS 2, 3 OR 0 TO QUESTION 2 AND 2, 3 OR 0 TO QUESTION 3.