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JACQUES DELORS INSTITUTE

THE EU, DESPITE EVERYTHING?
EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION IN THE FACE OF CRISIS (2005-2015)

Daniel Debomy

Foreword by Yves Bertoncini

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FOREWORD
EUROSCEPTICISM BUT NOT EUROPHOBIA
by Yves Bertoncini

For almost a decade now, the European Union has been facing a series of crises, both internal and external, which have had a deep impact on the way it is perceived by its citizens and Member States.

Controversies concerning the draft treaty establishing a constitution for Europe, conflicts related to the Eurozone crisis, and tensions resulting from the refugee crisis have not only fuelled an intense public debate in most EU Member States, but have also given rise to many impressionistic and alarmist comments that need to be put into perspective on the basis of sound data and robust and substantiated analyses.

This is the great merit of the Study conducted by Daniel Debomy, a renowned specialist in the analysis of European public opinion trends who, on the basis of the valuable Eurobarometer surveys, painstakingly stresses for which issues and to what extent EU citizens have been able to change their opinion on the EU over this “decade of crises”.

At least three highly enlightening major political lessons arise from the set of figures and analyses exposed in Daniel Debomy’s Study.

The first political lesson of this Study is that citizens’ perception of their country’s membership of the EU and the benefits it enjoys from this membership remained positive throughout the period, and was even more positive in 2015 than in 2005 in a significant proportion of Member States.

This statistical reality may seem counter-intuitive to those observers who too rapidly succumb to the confusion between "Euroscepticism" and "Europhobia"[1]. This Study underlines that the desire to continue being part of the EU is deeply rooted for a majority of citizens in all Member States, with the exeption of the British case, even though this does not of course rule out the expression of fierce criticism of the way the EU operates and takes decisions.

In this matter, this Study only confirms the observation already made in the Policy Paper that Daniel Debomy had devoted to the Eurozone[2]. This previous Policy paper had shed light on citizens' attachment to membership of the monetary union, which goes a long way in explaining why the Eurozone did not suffer the disastrous collapse that a good number of prophets of doom had predicted.

The second political lesson to be highlighted in Daniel Debomy's Study is that the EU's image and the level of trust that its citizens express in it were, however, subject to a sharp decline between 2005 and 2015 – losing 10 percentage points on average for the former and more than 10 points on average for the latter.

This considerable drop is the direct result of the crises which hit the EU over the last decade, but also of the divisions and excuses that have punctuated the EU's response to them. It conveys a "Euroscepticism" that has progressed even further as it has been fuelled by diametrically opposed motivations, meaning that in reality several types of Euroscepticism have gained currency. For instance, the EU has been perceived as a vehicle for austerity in countries receiving financial assistance such as Greece and Ireland, while being viewed as an organiser of excessive solidarity in countries such as Finland or Slovakia.

The EU lost on both counts and it will naturally take time to improve its image and win back its citizens' lost trust, especially as a comparable political dialectic once again seems to be under way to deal with the refugee crisis.

1. Yves Bertoncini and Nicole Koenig, "Euroscepticism or Europhobia: voice vs. exit?", *Policy Paper No. 121*, Jacques Delors Institute, November 2014.
2. See Daniel Debomy, "EU no, Euro yes? - European public opinions facing the crisis (2007-2012)", *Policy paper No. 90*, Jacques Delors Institute, March 2013.

Against this backdrop, the third political lesson that can be learned from Daniel Debomy's Study is found in his categorisation of the twenty-eight Member States according to the European sensitivity expressed by a majority of their citizens.

This categorisation is not only a reminder that Europeans are more than ever "united in diversity", and that each group continues to evolve in its own specific way within the "European Federation of Nation States" referred to by Jacques Delors, including on the basis of considerations that are more domestic than European in scale.

Such a classification also stresses that what has stood out in public debate on the EU in the last decade is not so much its democratic deficit, or the traditional split between Brussels and the people, which is often the Pavlovian response. Instead, this Study has pinpointed a divide between peoples of the EU, which must be acknowledged as European and national authorities work within a democratic framework. This political divide is just as important a challenge for the champions and practitioners of European construction.

It is therefore even more desirable that such a challenge may be met on the basis of an enlightened and precise assessment of the trends and current status of public opinions in all Member States.

This is one more reason to hope that European and national authorities and additionally all citizens involved in public debate on the EU, may consider and debate Daniel Debomy's Study, in order to formulate analyses and initiatives based on more solid political and democratic foundations.

Yves Bertoncini
Director of the Jacques Delors Institute

SUMMARY

This Study analyses the changes in citizens' attitudes with regard to the EU over the last decade which was punctuated by three periods of crisis: the political crisis resulting from the failure of the draft Constitution in 2005, the economic crisis from 2007 and the current development of a major migration crisis.

This Study is mainly based on data from the European Commission's Eurobarometer surveys, and in addition some points refer to surveys commissioned by the European Parliament.

At the start of the period, the "Eurofavour" measured by the indicators considered here continued its laboured resurgence which began following an all-time low in 1997. This trend was reversed after 2007, reaching another low point around 2011, before moving into a phase of partial recovery: while the acknowledgement of the justification and benefits of EU membership are at the same level at the start and end of the period considered, indicators on trust in the EU and its future, as well as its image, remain significantly impaired *(see Part 1, pages 11 to 21 and Annex 1, pages 73 to 79*.

Besides, it has been noted that these indicators suffered a decline between the spring and autumn of 2015 – while it is not possible at this time to state whether this is a temporary trend or the start of a new downturn.

As regards the impact of the successive crises, it can firstly be observed that the rejection of the draft Constitution did not have a significant and sustained effect on attitudes towards the EU – including in countries in which referenda were held.

The slump recorded after 2007 clearly runs alongside the economic crisis, and the upturn started with the slow recovery from the crisis (although there is

not a full correlation between the degree of economic optimism and opinions in favour of the EU).

The immigration issue has become a major concern in Europe at the end of 2015, even though citizens in different Member States reacted to varying degrees. This may be one reason for the new decline recorded over the last six months *(see Part 2, pages 22 to 48)*.

The in-depth study of the situation in Member States shows highly contrasting changes, resulting in the creation of five groups that make up a new European landscape: the most "Euro-defiant" group now includes both Member States traditionally marked by serious reservations with regard to the EU and other Member states which were once very much in favour but which have undergone particularly negative changes *(see Part 3, pages 49 to 68 and Annex 2, pages 80 to 109)*.

INTRODUCTION

"EU no, Euro yes? – European public opinions facing the crisis", published by the Jacques Delors Institute in March 2013, looked at the changes in public opinion over the five years since the onset of the financial and economic crisis in 2007.

This Study analyses these changes over a longer period, from 2005 to 2015, in which the European Union was faced with three crises of different types: a political crisis with the failure of the draft Constitution in 2005, the economic crisis from 2007 and the current development of a major migration crisis.

Its analysis is mainly based on the series of data from the European Commission's Standard Eurobarometer surveys – and in addition some points refer to the results of the Parlemeter surveys commissioned by the European Parliament in recent years (the items presented are taken from the former unless otherwise stated)[3].

It presents the general trends for several indicators between 2005 and 2015, and the impact on European public opinion of the crises which punctuated this period. It then goes on to consider the groups formed by the twenty-eight Member States, created by comparing country-specific data.

3. The results of the surveys on the European Union as a whole have naturally concerned an increasing number of Member States as it opened up to new countries. It can, however, be observed that with each new intake the extension of the scope considered in the studies had no significant effect on the average ratings of answers; the series to which we will refer here are therefore fully appropriate in terms of the comparisons presented in the Study.
Regardless of the period, the "EU averages" are calculated for all EU Member States at each survey wave (i.e. twenty-five Member States after 2004, twenty-seven from 2007, and twenty-eight since Croatia joined in 2013).

1. General trends in the public opinion indicators: overall, the situation is less positive in 2015 than in 2005 with a drop in trust and image

Several indicators have been considered for this analysis in order to assess how opinions have changed within the European Union.

1.1. EU membership and the benefits of membership: back to the levels recorded at the start of the period, following a drop during that decade

These indicators were systematically measured every six months in the Eurobarometer surveys until 2010-2011[4]. We examined these trends from 1985 to the end of their inclusion in the Commission's questionnaires in a previous document[5].

These questions were then used in the European Parliament's surveys, though not on a regular basis.

4. Poll questions: In general, do you think that the fact that (our country) is part of the European Union is: a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad? (Question asked in the Eurobarometer surveys until the spring of 2010). All things considered, do you think that (our country) has or has not benefited from EU membership? (Question asked in the Eurobarometer surveys until the spring of 2011).
5. Daniel Debomy, "Do Europeans still believe in the EU?", *Policy Paper No. 91*, Jacques Delors Institute, June 2012.

FIGURE 1 ► Membership of the EU

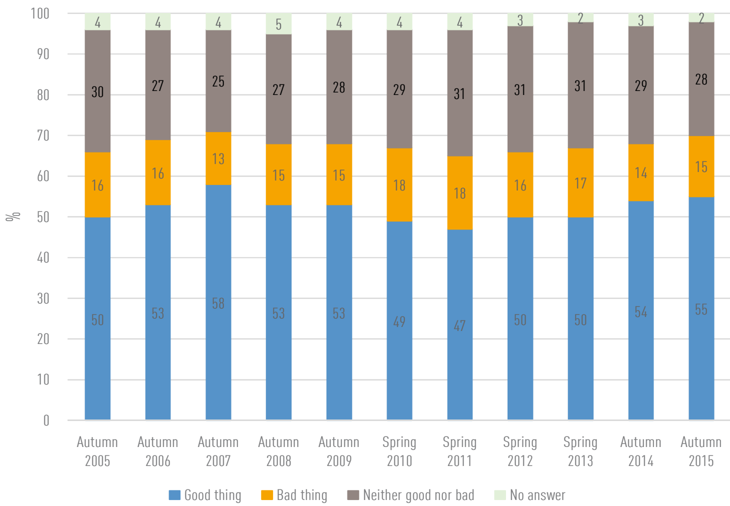
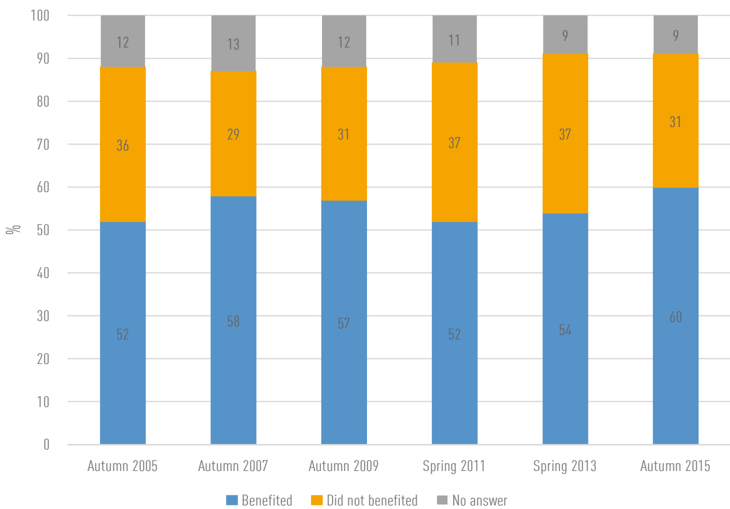


FIGURE 2 ► The benefits of EU membership



For these two indicators (*see Figures 1 and 2*), **the start of the period under consideration here is marked by an upward trend** (with the exception of a drop between the spring and autumn of 2005 which we will come back to later), **which can be set against the broader backdrop of the trends analysed since 1985.**

Between 1985 and 2015, five major periods can be defined:

– Period 1: a period of increasing "Eurofavour" between the spring of 1985 and that of 1991- the period in which the project to revive European construction was conceived and implemented by Jacques Delors.

Between these two dates, responses considering membership of the European Union as a good thing increased by 14 points to reach the record level of 71% (as against 7% of opinions considering it a bad thing and 17% deeming it neither good nor bad); opinions acknowledging benefits for their country rose 9 points to reach 59% (as against 25%).

– Period 2: a subsequent major decline, to record lows in the spring of 1997: a 25-point drop of the positive membership rating which fell from 71% to46% (as against 15% of citizens responding that they found membership to be a bad thing, and 30% neither good nor bad); a decline of 18 points with regard to the benefits for their country, falling from 59% to 41% (as against 36% of negative opinions).

It has been noted that the start of this period was the time of confused debate and controversies surrounding the Treaty of Maastricht, and that it was marked by specific events that cast doubts over the EU's ability to act in a unified and effective manner (the BSE crisis, conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, etc.), with in addition an economic downturn in the early years.

- Period 3: a difficult ascent with ups and downs recorded in both indicators, **until 2007**. The former recovered 12 points in the autumn of that year, rising from the very low rating of 1997: the membership indicator rose from 46% to 58% of positive opinions (as against 13% negative and 25% mixed views) – but remained far from the 1991 peak; while the benefits indicator rose by 18 points between the spring of 1997 and the spring of 2007, again reaching a level of 59% (as against 30%).

The 2005 starting point for the analyses presented in this document is in the latter years of this rise.

- Period 4: a new decline of the two Eurobarometer survey indicators**, coinciding with the economic and financial crisis**.

The membership indicator fell 9 points between its relative peak in the autumn of 2007 and the spring of 2010 - from 58% to 49% (as against 18% of negative opinions and 29% mixed views) in the last Eurobarometer survey – and by a further 2 points one year later (47% positive, against 18% negative and 31% mixed in the spring of 2011) in a Parlemeter survey.

The benefits indicator lost 7 points between the spring of 2007 and that of 2011: from 59% to 52% (as against 37%) – and dropped to an even lower rating (50%) in the autumn of 2010.

(The lack of other measurements of the benefits indicator in 2011 and 2012 means that it is not possible to ascertain whether these were the lowest points in its recent evolution).

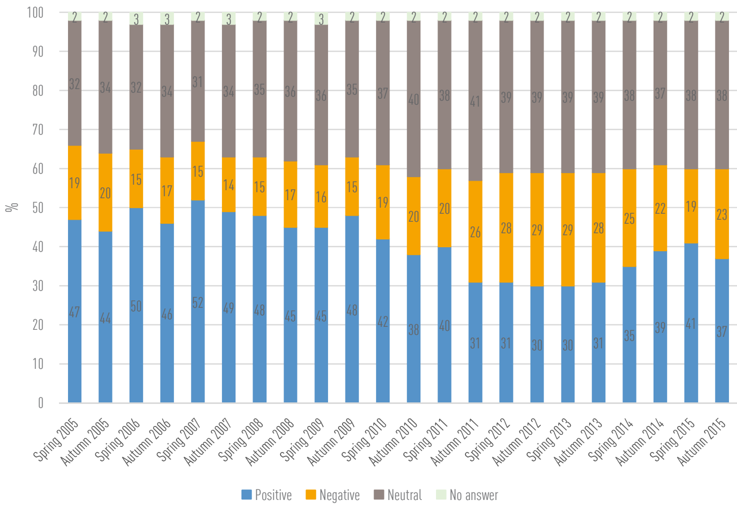
- Period 5: may be defined using the results of the European Parliament's surveys, **with an improvement since 2010-2011**.

In the autumn of 2015, 55% of opinions were in favour of membership of the EU (as against 15% negative and 28% mixed views), following a rise marked by several intermediary measurements: here they record almost exactly the same level as in 2005, and are a few points below the peak of 2007.

In the autumn of 2015, the number of citizens who considered that membership of the EU provided positive benefits was even greater than in the spring of 2005, and comparable with the measurement of 2007: 60% as against 31%.

1.2. The EU's image: a significant decline

FIGURE 3 ► Changes in EU's image: a significant decline[6]



Starting with a proportion of 47% positive answers in the spring of 2005, trends for this indicator fluctuated, peaking at 52% (as against 15%) in 2007, then dropping quite regularly and significantly until the autumn of 2012 and the spring of 2013 when positive opinions were more or less equal to negative opinions (30% as against 29%).

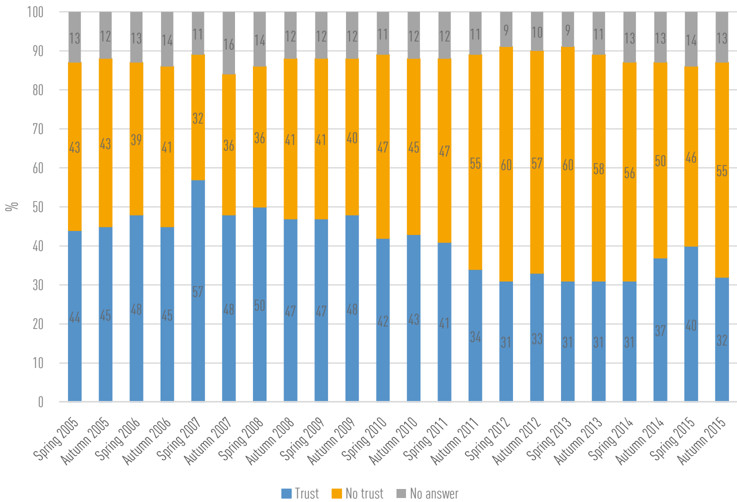
They partially recovered in the following survey waves to reach 41% (as against 19%) in the spring of 2015 – before falling 4 points over the last six months, to finish ten percentage points lower than at the start of the period under study.

6. Poll question: In general, is your image of the EU very positive, quite positive, neutral, quite negative or very negative?

1.3. Trust in the EU: a substantial drop

This is another indicator[7] for which data is available for the entire period under study.

FIGURE 4 ► The level of trust in the EU: a substantial drop



Between 2005 and 2015 (see Figure 4), we can see **an initial, irregular rise in the trust expressed**, from 44% in the spring of 2005 to 57% in the spring of 2007, **before plummeting almost 10 points** in the next eight years: in the spring of 2013, only 31% of citizens polled expressed their trust, as against a strong majority of 60% expressing distrust.

The figures started to recover subsequently until the spring of 2015 (closing the gap but not reaching the same peak, with 40% versus 46%) – this

7. Poll question: I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and certain institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. (Question asked about the European Union and national governments).

was followed by a major slump of 8 points in the autumn of 2015 (32% as against 55%).

Similar fluctuations also affected the level of trust that European citizens had in their national governments *(see Box 1)*.

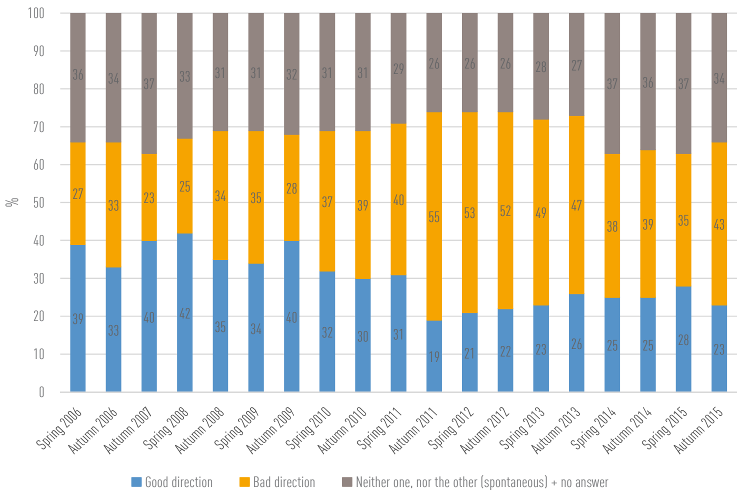
This trust is on average even lower than that expressed for the EU (27% in the autumn of 2015) – a recurring phenomenon observed in the Eurobarometer surveys – although the gap between the two tends to grow narrower over the years (15 points on average between 2005 and 2010, 7 points since), and situations vary from one Member State to another.

BOX 1 ► Who do citizens trust more: their national governments or the EU?

At the end of 2015, fourteen Member States expressed greater trust in the EU than in their national governments, including nine in which the gap is particularly considerable - Romania, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia. France is among these fourteen states and as a whole expressed particularly low levels of trust: 26% trust in the EU (as against 63%, and 11% non-responses); 19% trust in the national government (as against 76%, and 5% non-responses). National authorities inspire greater trust, or at least less distrust, in eight Member States - Luxembourg, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Austria, Finland and Malta. Trust in the EU and in national governments is on an equal footing in six Member States – Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Cyprus, Estonia, and the Czech Republic.

1.4. The right or wrong direction taken by the EU: a negative trend

FIGURE 5 ► The perception of the direction taken by the EU[8]



It can be noted here, as regards the idea that things are going in the right direction the EU (measured since 2006) *(see Figure 5)***:**

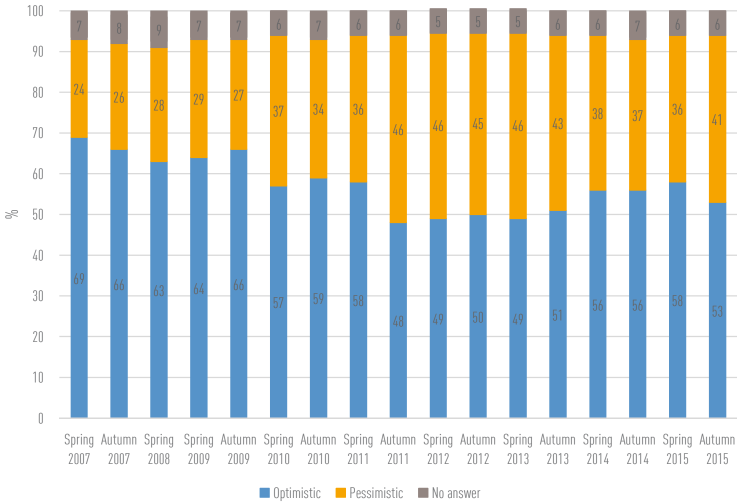
- An initial trend of a slight rise – the highest rating was reached in the spring of 2008
- A considerable drop (despite a jump in the autumn of 2009) until the autumn of 2011 in which widespread pessimism was recorded: good direction - 19%, bad direction - 55%
- A slow recovery until the spring of 2015 – while there are still fewer optimists than pessimists (28% versus 35%)
- A new slump in the last wave of the survey (4 points less for good direction opinions, 8 points more for negative impressions)
- **In total, the situation was less positive in 2015 than in 2006.**

8. Poll question: At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in the European Union?

1.5. Opinions on the future of the EU: less optimistic views

From 2007, the Eurobarometer surveys included a question[9] aimed at measuring the degree of optimism or pessimism as regards the EU's future (with the exception of the autumn 2008 wave).

FIGURE 6 ➤ Perceptions of the EU's future



The optimism expressed *(see Figure 6)*, reflecting a very large majority in the spring of 2007 (69% versus 24%), gradually dropped to the point where the number of optimists almost equalled the number of pessimists for five survey waves from the autumn of 2011 (48% versus 46% for this wave). It then recovered partially to reach 58% (versus 36%) in the spring of 2015 – prior to dropping 5 points in the autumn wave.

At the end of the period, despite the significant overall fall since 2007, a moderate majority remained optimistic.

9. Poll question: Would you say that you are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU?

This result contrasts with the much more gloomy ratings recorded for the previous indicators. Going beyond the current bleakness, this may reflect a desire to continue to believe in a better long-term future for the EU.

1.6. Contrasting trends

The trends of these six indicators show strong similarities.

The first four indicators, for which data is available from the spring of 2005, **show an improvement until the spring or autumn of 2007, and then record a downward trend.**

As regards opinions on the direction taken in the EU, the first measurement at the start of 2006 is followed by a slight rise resulting in a peak in the spring of 2008, and a subsequent downturn.

The first measurement of optimism with regard to the EU's future in the spring of 2007 is followed by a decline.

In the second phase, all the indicators recorded downward trends for several years. The lowest points were reached: in the spring of 2011 for opinions on membership of the EU and as early as the autumn of 2010 for the benefits indicator, in the autumn of 2011 for the direction taken within the EU and optimism for its future, in the spring of 2012 for trust in the EU and in the autumn of 2012 for citizens' image of the EU.

All indicators subsequently recovered from these low levels until 2015, but (at least for the latter four for which we have an unbroken series of measurements**) only until the spring. A new drop was recorded in the autumn**.

The overall analysis, however, is not the same for all the indicators when the respective levels at the start and end of the period are compared.

- For the positive answers with regard to membership of the EU, the recovery in the latter years of the period brought ratings back to the level of the spring of 2005, slightly below the relative peak of 2007. For the idea that membership benefits the country, the measurements are equivalent to this peak even at the end of the period, several points above the first reading in 2005.

- For the other indicators analysed, the contrary is true. The overall improvement of the latter years fell very short of reaching a similar level: the image rating is 10 points lower than that of 2005 and 15 points lower than in 2007. The drop in trust is 12 and 25 points lower respectively, compared to 2006, opinions on the direction taken within the EU lost 16 points, and 19 points in comparison to the peak at the start of 2008. Optimism in the future of the EU finished the period 16 points lower than at the start of 2007.

In short:

- The justification of EU membership (including the admission that it has had beneficial effects) **was no more called into question at the end of 2015 than it was ten years earlier.**

- However, citizens' image of the EU and the trust they place in it (in its institutions, the current direction of things and its future) **have significantly deteriorated in 2015 in comparison to the beginning of the period.**

2. The impact of crises on public opinions of the EU (2005-2015)

2.1. The failure of the draft Constitution: a limited, temporary impact

2.1.1. The impact of the failed draft Constitution on European public opinion

Four of the indicators allow us to assess the extent to which the failure of the draft Constitution following the negative outcomes of the French and Dutch referenda in 2005 had an impact on European citizens' attitudes with regard to the EU at the time (questions for which we have measurements taken in the spring survey wave – conducted in the field mostly prior to the referenda – and in the autumn wave).

Between the spring and autumn of 2005, the proportion of citizens who were in favour of their country's membership of the EU dropped by 4 points: from 54% (as against 15% of negative opinions and 27% neither good nor bad – the remaining 4% accounting for non-responses) to 50% (as against 16% and 30%).

Yet this proportion rose again as early as the next spring to 55%, **and continued to rise** to reach 57% in the spring of 2007 and 58% in the autumn (against 13% of negative opinions and 25% of neutral opinions).

Between the spring and autumn of 2005 the positive rating of the benefits enjoyed by the country fell by 3 points, from 55% (as against 33% of negative opinions - non-responses accounting for 12%) to 52% (versus 36%). **Yet it rose again at the next wave** to 54% (versus 33%), **to peak in 2007**: 59% (versus 30%) in the spring and 58% (versus 29%) in the autumn.

In the spring of 2005 the (very or fairly) **positive images of the EU reached 47%,** as against 19% negative opinions and 32% neutral opinions (with 2% of non-responses).

Admittedly, **they fell slightly six months later**, to 44% (as against 20%, and 34% neutral), **but made up more than lost ground from the spring of 2006**, with 50% of positive images (versus 15% negative, and 32% neutral).

The level of this indicator fluctuated in the following survey waves to reach 52% (versus 15% of negative and 31% neutral images) in the spring of 2007 (prior to declining).

Trust in the EU was rated at 44% in the spring of 2005 – 6 points lower than six months earlier – as against 43% for a lack of trust (and 13% of non-responses), **and remained practically unchanged** at 45% (versus 43%) **in the autumn of that year**. **It then rose to a peak** of 57% (versus 32%) **in the spring of 2007** (then subsequently fell significantly).

The attitudes in favour of the EU measured by these indicators marked a decline in 2005, but this was limited in scope and in time. The continued recovery observed (for the first two indicators since the low point of 1997) was not affected in any significant way. **The negative outcomes of the French and Dutch referenda therefore did not result in a deterioration in the average view of European citizens with regard to the EU.**

2.1.2. The impact of the failed draft Constitution in the Member States that held referenda on the question

The analysis of the fluctuations of these indicators surrounding the negative outcomes of the draft Constitution referenda held in France and the Netherlands does not invalidate the previous general findings.

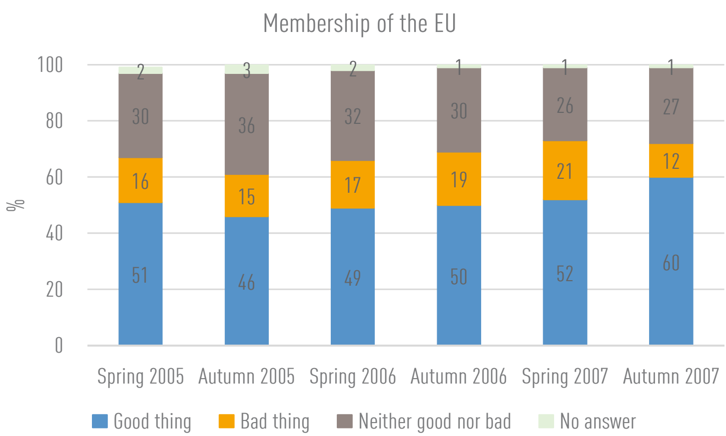
In France, the positive opinions on membership (*see Figure 7*) which accounted for 51% in the spring of 2005 (returning to approximately the same level of 50% sustained over several years, before falling to 44% and 43% at the end of 2003 and the start of 2004, then a jump to 56% in the autumn) lost 5 points in the first survey wave following the “no” vote, but then climbed back up three points in the following wave, continuing to rise to 60% in the autumn of 2007.

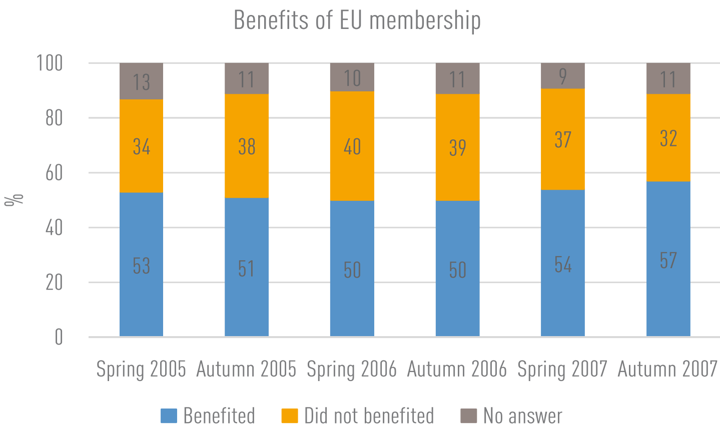
The positive rating of the benefits indicator only dropped by 2 points between the spring and autumn of 2005, from 53% to 51%, remaining above its average level (around 45% to 50%) of previous years. It then remained stable at 50% in 2006 and rose significantly in the next twelve months (57% in the autumn of 2007).

The positive image rating of the EU lost 4 points between the spring and autumn of 2005 (49%, versus 23%, and 27% of neutral images), but recovered 3 points in the next wave, then fluctuated upwards to 53% (versus 15%, and 31% of neutral images) in the autumn of 2007.

Trust in the EU, accounting for 39% (versus 50%) in the spring of 2005, rated 1 or 2 points more than in the following three survey waves, then rose sharply to reach 51% (versus 34%) in the autumn of 2007.

FIGURE 7 ► The indicators in France (2005-2007)




Benefits of EU membership
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Spring 2005
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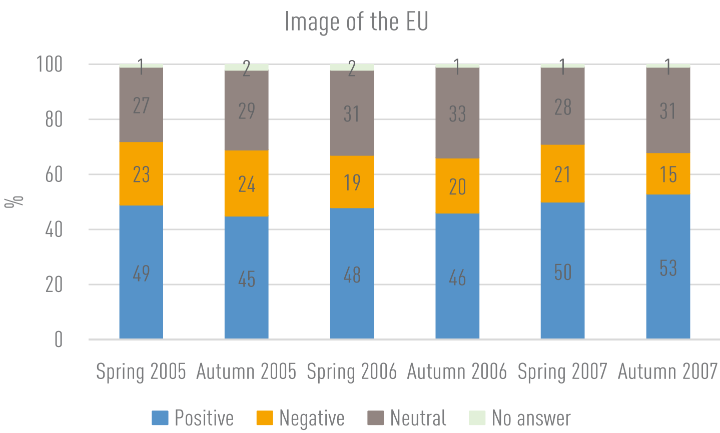
Image of the EU
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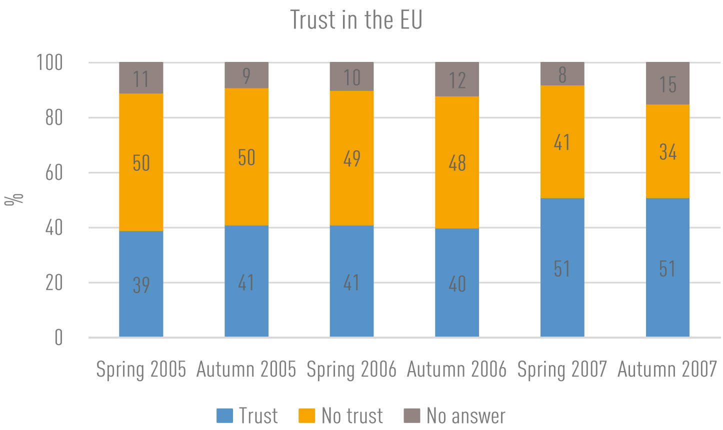
Neutral
No answer



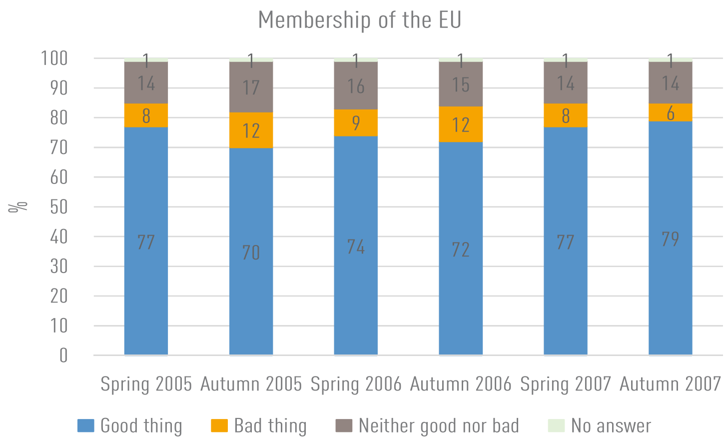
In the Netherlands, positive opinions on membership of the EU (*see Figure 8*) stalled considerably between the spring and autumn of 2005 (from 77% to 70%), while remaining at a high level altogether comparable with the levels of previous years. The rise recorded in the following wave (74%) continued until the autumn of 2007 (79%).

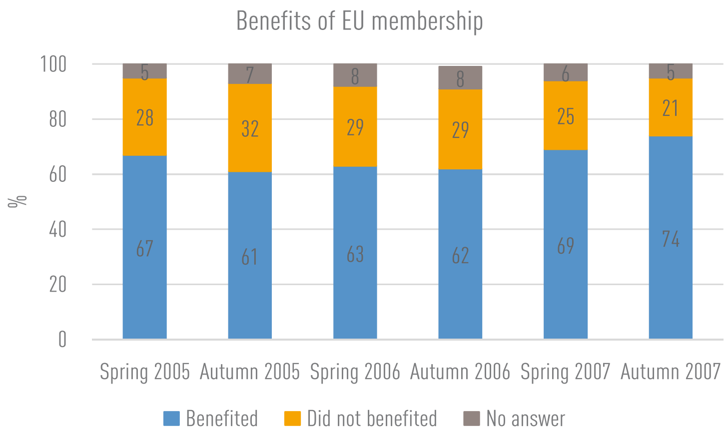
The same temporary drop affected the benefits indicator which lost 6 points between the spring and autumn of 2005 (67% to 61%), before rising sharply to 74% in the autumn of 2007. Even after the brief decline in 2005, the percentage of positive opinions remained close to the levels at the start of the 2000s (around 60% to 65% - with the exception of a brief drop, for both the benefits and membership indicators, at the end of 2003 and the start of 2004).

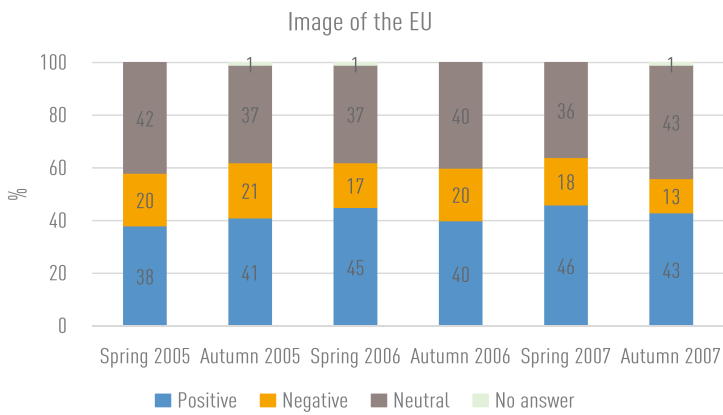
The positive images of the EU, at 38% (versus 20% of negative opinions and 42% neutral opinions) in the spring of 2005, rose by 3 points in the autumn and then fluctuated (without ever dropping below 40%) to reach 43% (versus 13% of negative images and 43% neutral opinions) at the end of 2007.

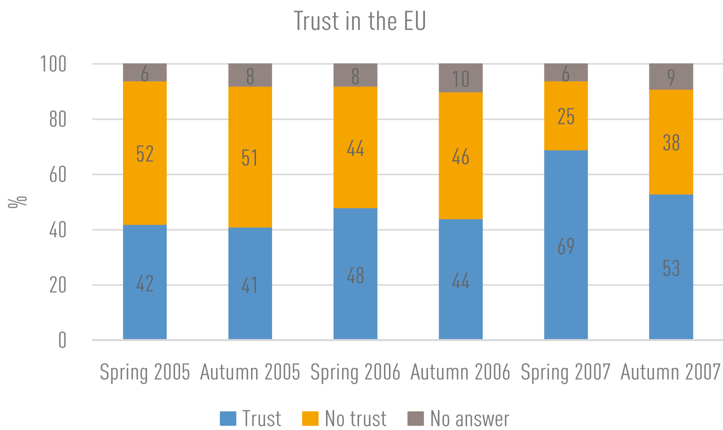
Trust in the EU, accounting for 42% (versus 52%) in the spring of 2005, faltered by 1 point six months later, and then rose sharply (peaking at 69% in the spring of 2007, and 53%, versus 38% in the autumn).

FIGURE 8 ► **The indicators in the Netherlands (2005-2007)**









In these two countries, as in the EU in general, the negative outcomes of the referenda had little effect on the level of "Eurofavour" or "Eurodisfavour".

It may appear contradictory that the positive attitudes with regard to the EU were rising when these negative outcomes were expressed, but this conclusion would ignore the sustained consequences of the considerable decline in the previous period, as attitudes on the EU started to deteriorate around the time of the Treaty of Maastricht.

Similar observations can be made for the two Member States that held referenda for the draft Constitution and obtained a positive outcome.

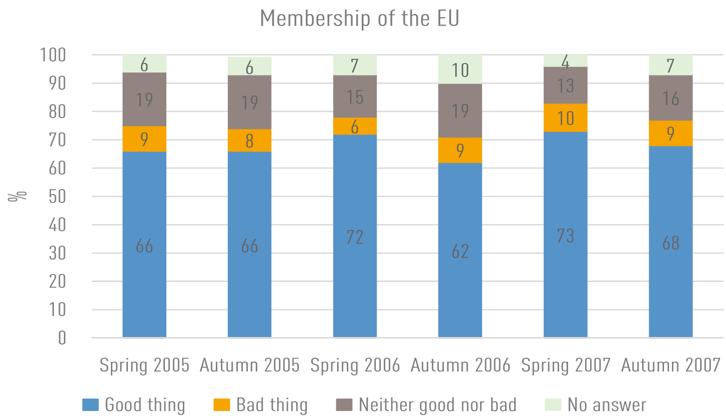
In Spain (*see Figure 9*)**,** membership of the EU, considered to be a good thing in the spring of 2005 by 66% of citizens polled (down 6 points from the previous wave, which had marked a slightly stronger yet temporary rise) was still at the same level in the autumn, before fluctuating to 73% in the spring of 2007.

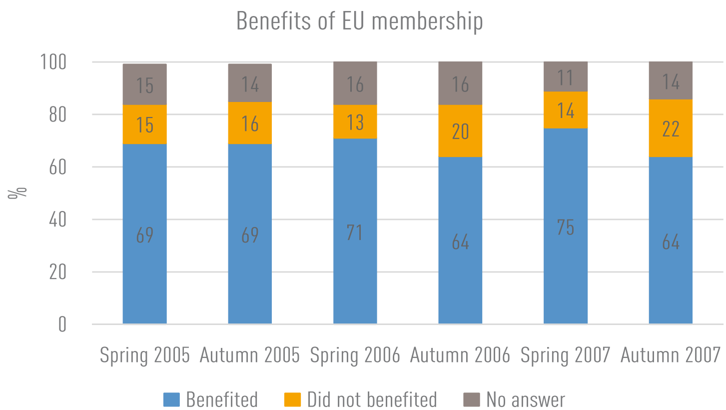
The positive rating of the benefits indicator also remained stable, at 69%, between the spring and the autumn, before developing in a similar manner and reaching 75% in the spring of 2007.

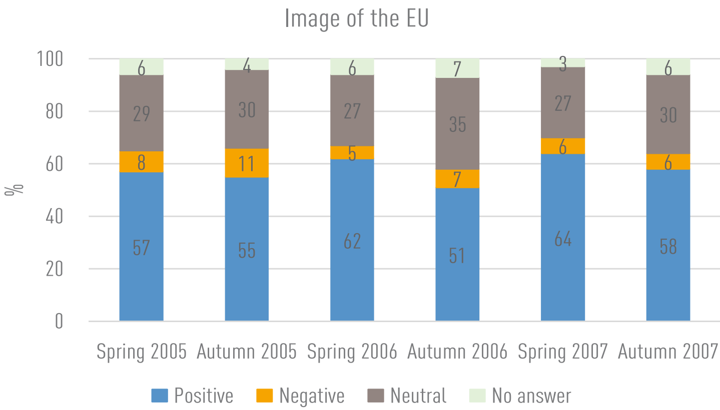
The image of the EU, positive for 57% of citizens (versus 8% of negative opinions and 29% neutral opinions) in the spring of 2005, dropped 2 points in the autumn but climbed back 7 points six months later. It then followed an irregular pattern until the autumn of 2007, reaching a level close to its initial rating (58%, versus 6%, and 30% of neutral images).

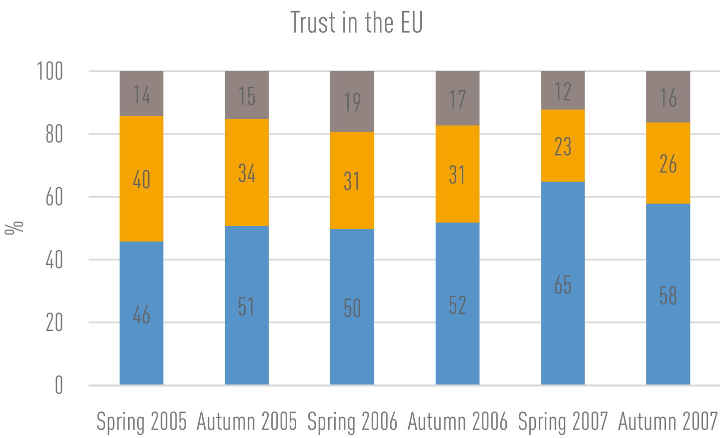
The trust expressed in the EU rose by 5 points in the autumn of 2005 compared to the level (46%, versus 40%) recorded in the spring and remained close to this level for three survey waves, rising sharply in the spring of 2007 (65%), then dropping in the autumn – all the time remaining well above its starting point (58%, versus 26%).

FIGURE 9 ► The indicators in Spain (2005-2007)









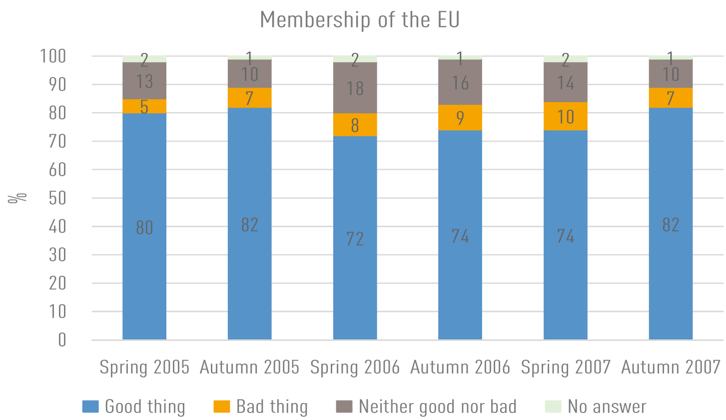
In Luxembourg, 80% of citizens polled were in favour of their country's membership of the EU in the spring of 2005 (like Spain, rating in decline following a temporary peak in the previous wave, but higher than a year earlier), and 82% in the autumn. In the following three survey waves this indicator dropped substantially (by 8 to 10 points) before climbing back to the same level in the autumn of 2007.

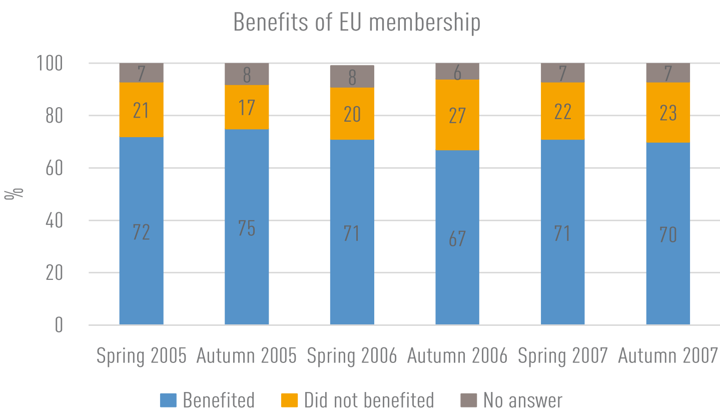
72% of citizens acknowledged benefits for the country in the spring of 2005, as against 75% six months later (the percentage stayed around the 70% mark for the following four waves).

The EU's image, positive for 58% (versus 11%, and 29% of neutral images) in the spring of 2005, lost 1 point in the autumn, then a further 5 points in the following two survey waves. It then climbed back 4 points before dropping another 3 points: 53% (versus 15%, and 30% of neutral opinions) in the autumn of 2007.

Trust in the EU, which was expressed by 54% of citizens polled (versus 36%) in the spring of 2005, rose by 2 points in the autumn, and then fluctuated before reaching a level close to its initial rating in the autumn of 2007 (54%, versus 33%).

FIGURE 10 ► **The indicators in Luxembourg (2005-2007)**




Benefits of EU membership
100
80
60
40
20
0
%
7 8 8 6 7 7
21 17 20 27 22 23
72 75 71 67 71 70
Spring 2005 Autumn 2005 Spring 2006 Autumn 2006 Spring 2007 Autumn 2007
Benefited
Did not benefited
No answer

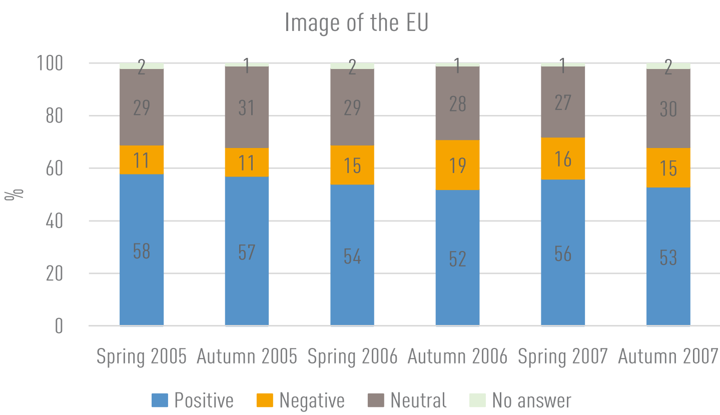
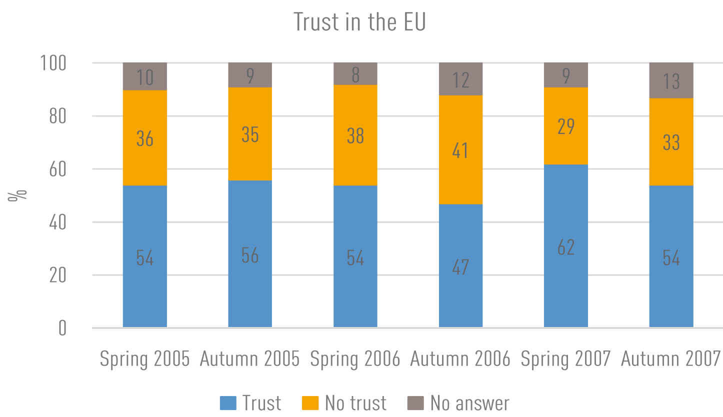


Image of the EU
100
80
60
40
20
0
%
2 1 2 1 1 2
29 31 29 28 27 30
11 11 15 19 16 15
58 57 54 52 56 53
Spring 2005 Autumn 2005 Spring 2006 Autumn 2006 Spring 2007 Autumn 2007
Positive
Negative
Neutral
No answer



In these two countries, it is not possible either to highlight a negative impact on public opinion caused by the negative referendum outcomes in France and the Netherlands or the failure to take into account the positive outcomes of their own referenda.

2.2. European public opinion and the economic and financial crisis: following the decline related to the crisis, a lengthy, partial and uncertain recovery

The opinion indicators related to the EU reached a positive peak in 2007 (in the spring of this year for the indicators measuring the perception of benefits from membership of the EU, the EU's image and the trust it inspires, in the autumn as regards membership being considered more a good thing than a bad thing, and in the spring of 2008 for positive opinions on the current direction taken by the EU).

All the indicators declined at this point (as well as the optimism expressed for the EU's future, measured from 2007): at least until the spring of 2011 for EU membership and the autumn of 2010 for related benefits (indicators for which later measurements are irregular and do not allow us to pinpoint the date of the low point with certainty); until the autumn of 2011 for the direction taken by the EU and the optimism in its future; until the autumn of 2012 or the spring of 2013 for the EU's image and the trust placed in it.

From this low point in 2011-2012, all indicators then recovered (though only partially for some which give a more direct reflection of a feeling of trust in the EU, its direction and future) **until 2015 – available data (for four indicators) however demonstrate a new decline in the autumn of 2015.**

The start of the decline and the beginnings of the recovery are in correlation with the onset of the crisis and its gradual resolution.

2.2.1. General attitudes towards the EU and perceptions of the economic situation: a clear link

A question on **expectations with regard to the improvement or deterioration of the country's economic situation** was asked in the Eurobarometer surveys, with data provided for the entire period under study. This question was put to those polled in the same manner **with regard to their own country and with regard to the EU**[10] (see Table 1)**.**

10. Poll question: "What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same, when it comes to the economic situation in (our country)?" Same question for: "The economic situation in the EU".

TABLE 1 ► Expectations when it comes to the economic situation and impact of the crisis

SPRING 2015	EXPECTATIONS FOR THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS WHEN IT COMES TO THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE EU				EXPECTATIONS FOR THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS WHEN IT COMES TO THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY				IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON JOBS		
	BETTER	WORSE	THE SAME	DON'T KNOW	BETTER	WORSE	THE SAME	NO ANSWER	HAS ALREADY REACHED ITS PEAK	THE WORSE IS STILL TO COME	DON'T KNOW
Ireland	34	12	41	13	51	8	38	3	75	21	4
Lithuania	26	11	53	10	25	17	55	3	40	52	8
Romania	41	12	35	12	32	24	39	5	48	42	10
Malta	24	12	38	26	43	5	40	12	57	29	14
Poland	16	17	50	17	24	20	45	11	46	29	25
Luxembourg	20	44	29	7	23	23	50	4	31	64	5
Belgium	11	39	43	7	18	29	49	4	38	58	4
Netherlands	20	24	39	7	40	16	42	2	70	28	2
Denmark	16	32	42	10	25	18	54	3	70	25	5
Estonia	18	27	33	22	23	21	46	10	37	48	15
Sweden	10	48	31	11	9	48	40	3	41	53	6
Finland	21	24	47	8	26	25	45	4	41	56	3
Portugal	18	19	49	14	16	30	43	11	54	37	9
Spain	28	8	52	12	32	13	47	8	55	40	5
Slovakia	20	24	48	8	21	24	50	5	43	47	10

Latvia	17	23	46	14	17	20	58	5	33	56	11
Hungary	18	25	49	8	19	22	56	3	49	45	6
Bulgaria	26	10	40	24	17	22	50	11	37	39	24
Croatia	30	23	39	8	30	24	44	2	59	36	5
Germany	9	46	39	6	10	39	48	3	33	51	16
United Kingdom	18	30	38	14	31	23	41	5	40	51	9
Czech republic	12	34	44	10	21	22	53	4	54	40	6
Austria	14	51	30	5	18	39	40	3	42	54	4
France	21	20	45	14	23	23	48	6	30	63	7
Italy	32	16	39	13	31	24	38	7	57	35	8
Slovenia	16	27	51	6	16	33	48	3	38	57	5
Greece	10	39	47	4	9	70	21	0	28	70	2
Cyprus	16	19	46	19	27	24	45	4	38	57	5
EU AVERAGE	20	26	42	12	24	26	44	6	44	46	10

With regard to their own country:

- **2007 marked a decline in the prevailing pessimism of previous years**, citizens who expected an improvement or deterioration were in roughly equal proportions in the spring of 2007 - 28% versus 27% respectively, 38% selecting the option “the same” (and 7% of non-responses).

- **This indicator slumped suddenly in 2008** (in the autumn, 15% of optimists versus 51% of pessimists), **and then picked up** to reach a level in the spring of 2011 at which there were only slightly fewer optimistic opinions than pessimistic (23% versus 28%). **This was followed by sharp drop** in the autumn (16% versus 44%).

- **Then followed an irregular recovery**, arriving at a situation in the spring of 2015 in which there were slightly more optimistic opinions than pessimistic ones (26% versus 21%).

- **In the autumn of 2015, this rise stopped**, optimism fell 2 points (24%) and pessimism rose by 5 (26%).

A study of the responses to the same question in reference to the European Union highlights observations that are similar in part.

Starting at a situation in which there were clearly more optimistic opinions than pessimistic opinions in the spring of 2007 (28% versus 16%, 38% selecting the option “the same” - and 18% non-responses), **a sharp deterioration occurred until the autumn of 2008** (16% versus 41%), **followed by a rise over the next twelve months** (30% versus 21% in the autumn of 2009)**, a new drop until the autumn of 2012** (16% as against 39%), then **an improvement until the spring of 2014** (24% versus 18%). **Lastly, there were ups and downs in the last three survey waves – the last, in the autumn of 2015, marking a 4-point drop in optimism compared to the previous wave** (20%) and a 7-point rise in pessimism (26%).

A question more directly linked to the crisis (asked since 2009) provides a useful addition to these observations[11].

From the spring of 2009 to the spring of 2011, the number of citizens who thought that the employment situation would continue to deteriorate ("the worst is still to come") **fell regularly**, from 61% (as against 28% of optimists) to 47% (versus 43%) (the remaining percentage is made up of non-responses accounting for around a tenth of those polled).

In the autumn of 2011, however, the proportion of pessimists jumped by more than 20 points (68% versus 23%). **It then fell** regularly and significantly **until the spring of 2014**, when pessimistic opinions were slightly less numerous than optimistic attitudes for the first time since the introduction of this question (44% for pessimists, 47% for optimists)

In the last waves of the survey, limited fluctuations were recorded, but the wave of autumn 2015 marked a deterioration of 4 points compared to that of the spring (46% of pessimists versus 42% of optimists).

2.2.2. Observations based on these results: an only partial correlation

As with indicators reflecting general attitudes towards the EU, **these indicators measuring optimism and pessimism with regard to the economic situation, which had (partially) recovered on the whole between the low point in 2011-2012 and the spring of 2015, have been subject to a decline over the last six months**.

It is clear that there is a link between "Eurofavour" or "Eurogloom" and economic optimism and pessimism – the opposite would actually be surprising.

However, it can be observed that the trends of both do not run strictly parallel; economic indicators seem to evolve with less continuity over the

11. Poll question: "Some analysts say that the impact of the economic crisis on the job market has already reached its peak and things will recover little by little. Others, on the contrary, say that the worst is still to come. Which of the two statements is closer to your opinion?"

years under study and were subject to more fluctuations in line with developments of the crisis and the successive attempts to find solutions.

We can also add **a few observations gleaned from the comparison of the respective gaps between the two types of indicators between the spring and autumn of 2015 in the different Member States**.

While, in most cases, the countries in which the decline in economic optimism was particularly sharp are also those in which there has been a marked deterioration in general attitudes towards the EU, there are some exceptions.

For example, a fairly marked decline in Belgian economic optimism did not result in an equally strong rise in "Eurogloom", and the same can be said for Portugal and Sweden in particular. Conversely, the sharp rise in "Euro-reticent" attitudes in the Czech Republic was not accompanied by a considerable deterioration in economic expectations.

Furthermore, we can state the case of a few Member States in which the economic indicators hardly declined or not at all over the last six months, but where the decline in positive attitudes towards the EU is close to the European average, such as Ireland, Malta and Romania – while the opposite is true for Italy, etc.

The correlation between the two types of phenomena is therefore not absolute. While the new decline in "Eurofavour" in the autumn of 2015 is most certainly related to fears of a worsening economic situation, other factors are obviously in play.

Possible factors include the increasing concerns with regard to immigration and inconsistencies between Member States in this respect (a phenomenon that should be monitored in future survey waves).

2.2.3. Attitudes towards the euro: consolidated support for the single currency post-crisis

In the 2013 publication "EU no, Euro yes?"[12], we noted that the single currency still received support from a majority in the EU, and even from a significant majority in the euro zone countries, despite the prevailing "Eurogloom" of the time. **While this support had fallen since the onset of the crisis in the spring of 2007, it declined to a lesser extent** than public opinion indicators analysed elsewhere.

Support for the euro, measured by a question concerning the EMU and the single currency[13]**, has risen since 2013.**

From 63% (versus 31%, with 6% non-responses) **in the spring of 2007, support for the euro** in the EU as a whole **faded slightly** (to 60% or 61%) **in the following five survey waves, then fell more sharply from the spring of 2010** to as low as 51% (versus 42%) in the spring of 2013**.**

This rating gradually improved until the spring of 2015 in which it reached 57% (versus 36%), **and remained more or less the same in the autumn: 56%** (versus 37%)

In the euro zone alone, 68% of respondents showed their support for the single currency at the end of 2015 – very close to its pre-crisis level in the spring of 2007 (70%).

12. Daniel Debomy, "EU no, Euro yes? – European public opinions facing the crisis (2007-2012)", *Policy paper No. 90*, Jacques Delors Institute, March 2013.
13. Poll question: "What is your position on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it. (Among the statements is: an economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro)".

2.3. European public opinion and the migration crisis: very rapidly mounting concerns

2.3.1. The recent emergence of immigration as a "major issue" for the EU

The Eurobarometer surveys include a question in which citizens polled are asked to rate **the two most important issues**, out of a list of thirteen provided, **facing the European Union**[14].

TABLE 2 ► **Issues from which the two most important facing the EU and the country at the moment are selected**

ISSUE MENTIONED	THE EU	THE COUNTRY
Insecurity	8	10
Economic situation	21	19
Rising prices/Inflation/Cost of living	7	14
Taxation	3	8
Unemployment	17	36
Terrorism	25	11
Housing	n.d.	8
EU's influence in the world	6	n.d.
The state of Member States' public finances	17	n.d.
Government debt	n.d.	10
Immigration	58	36
Health and social security	n.d.	14
The education system	n.d.	8
Pensions	3	10
The environment	5	n.d.
Energy supply	3	n.d.
Climate change	6	n.d.
The environment, climate and energy issues	n.d.	6
Other	2	3

14. Poll question: "What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU/our country at the moment?".

None	1	0
No answer	4	1

In the autumn of 2015, immigration is by far the first issue given (by 58% of respondents), ahead of terrorism (25%), then the economic situation (21%), unemployment (17%) and the state of Member State's public finances (17%).

The other issues proposed in the list are each mentioned by less than 10% of citizens polled: crime (8%), rising prices/inflation/cost of living (7%), climate change (6%), the EU's influence in the world (6%), the environment (5%), taxation (3%), pensions (3%), energy supply (3%).

The concerns with regard to immigration in recent years have risen spectacularly: between 8% and 10% from the autumn of 2011 to the spring of 2013 (two previous measurements gave higher ratings: 14% in the autumn of 2010 and 20% six months later), 16% in the autumn of 2013, 21% in the spring of 2014, 24% in the autumn, 38% in the spring of 2015, then 58% in the latest survey wave.

The same can be noted for terrorism, albeit at lower proportions: 4% in the two waves of 2012 (following a gradual drop from the higher level of 15% in the autumn of 2010), between 6% and 7% in the following three waves, then 11% at the end of 2014, 17% at the start of 2015, and 25% in the autumn.

(It must be noted that more than three quarters of the latest survey wave was conducted in the field prior to the Paris terror attacks).

For the most part, the ratings of the other issues fell between the spring of 2012 and the autumn of 2015: the economic situation from 54% to 21%, unemployment from 32% to 17%, the state of Member State's public finances from 34% to 17%, rising prices from 15% (then 16%) to 7%. Out of these more frequent responses, only crime is the exception to the rule (slight increase from 6% to 8%).

Naturally, **this does not mean that the predominant economic concerns have declined** (or not as much as these percentages seem to indicate): taking into account the restricted number of possible answers (only two), as new concerns mount, others must mechanically fall in this question.

2.3.2. Immigration is also cited as an important issue for citizens' countries, though this is less the case for their personal lives

The same question is put to the citizens polled with regard to the **most important issues facing their countries** – to be selected from a partly different list.

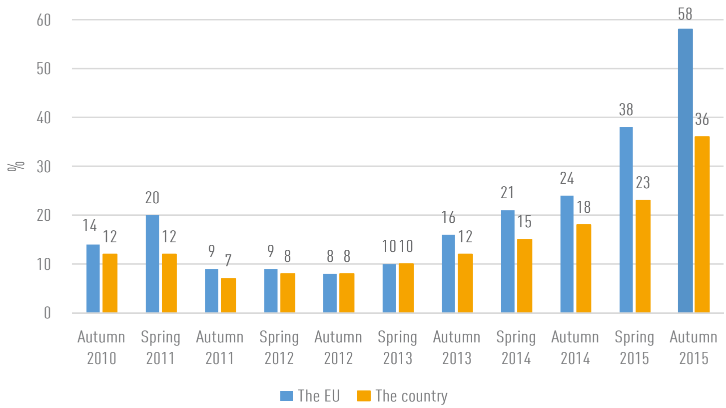
Immigration is once again the most selected issue (36%), but is put on an equal footing with unemployment, followed by the economic situation (19%), health and social security (14%), rising prices/inflation/cost of living (14%), terrorism (11%), pensions (10%), government debt (10%), crime (10%), then by housing, taxation and the education system (all three at 8%), and the environment, climate and energy issues (6%).

The lower incidence of answers concerning immigration (and terrorism) is due to the fact that, according to the country of the citizen, the impact of these issues is experienced more or less directly, while it is believed that they may affect (other Member States of) the EU (to a greater extent).

The increase in immigration responses over the same period (see Figure 13) **does, however, follow the same trend as that observed for the same question concerning the EU**: after two measurements at 12% in the autumn of 2010 and in the spring of 2011, immigration accounted for 7% in the autumn of 2011, 8% in the spring and autumn of 2012, and rose successively to 10%, 12%, 15%, 18%, 23%, and lastly 36%.

(For country-specific concerns, it must be noted that the Eurobarometer data covers the entire decade. From around 15% in 2005, the immigration issue rose to 21% in the autumn of 2006, before falling to 9% from the end of 2008 to the beginning of 2010).

FIGURE 11 ➤ Trends in the selection of immigration from the issues facing the EU and countries



The incidence of the terrorism issue also rose – from 2% at the start of 2012 to 11% (it was previously between 10% and 15% from 2005 to 2007, then fell, rising no higher than 7% until 2011).

Here again, the incidence of the other issues declined, at least in part due to the same mechanical effect – particularly for unemployment (from 46% to 36%), the economic situation (from 35% to 19%), rising prices (from 24% to 14%), and government debt (from 19% to 10%) – or fluctuated by the end of the period around the same level as that recorded at the start of the period.

Let us note that **when the citizens polled are asked a similar question on the main issues they are currently facing in their personal lives, the predominant answers concern social and economic concerns with a direct effect on the household**: rising prices/inflation/cost of living first and foremost (27%), followed by the household's financial situation (16%), health and social security (15%), unemployment (14%), pensions (14%), taxation (13%), the country's economic situation (10%), etc.

Immigration, while on the rise (starting at 3% at the start of 2012) **is only selected by 9%** (and terrorism by 4%): **it may not be regarded as a direct**

issue in the places people live while being considered a major issue on a national and European level.

The European Parliament included a related question in its Parlemeter survey, but one that cannot be compared directly as it asked the citizens polled to select up to three major challenges from a slightly different list, in terms of the challenges facing "the EU and its Member States" in order to face the future[15]. **This question was asked in the autumn of 2015**, but at a date (September) prior to that of the autumn wave of the Eurobarometer survey **and had already been asked in June 2013.**

In the same manner, the extremely sharp increase, since this date, of the immigration issue can be observed, rising from an incidence of 14% to 47% - putting it just behind unemployment (49%) and ahead of social inequalities (29%), public debt of Member States (29%), access to jobs for young people (27%), ageing of the population (23%), insufficient growth (14%), etc.

Terrorism also has a much higher incidence in the poll: 26%, up from 11%.

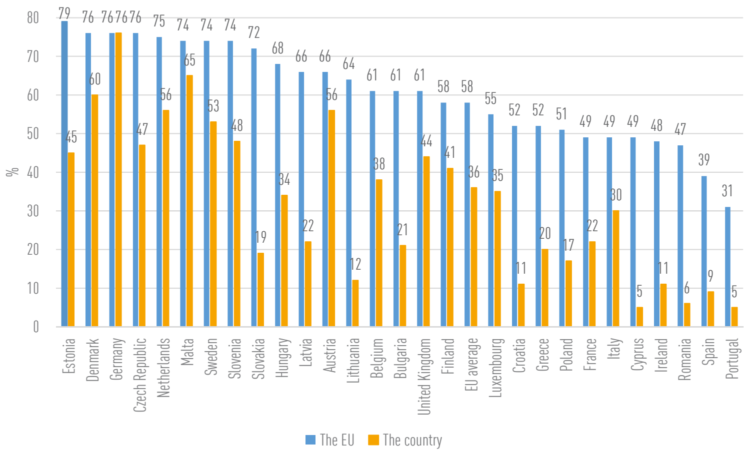
Conversely, the incidence of the other challenges fell, while remaining at a level similar to that of their earlier levels – a sign that these issues are still well and truly present.

2.3.3. Concerns to a greater or lesser extent according to Member States

There is an indication of the **perceived importance, in the different Member States, of the immigration issue** in the responses given to the Eurobarometer questions (mentioned above) concerning the EU and the polled citizens' countries. This difference in perceived importance can be summed up by placing Member States into categories according to the ratings of these responses in relation to the European average.

15. Poll question: "In your opinion, what are the main challenges facing the EU and its Member States in order to face the future? Firstly? And secondly? And thirdly?

FIGURE 12 ► **Selecting immigration from the issues facing the EU and its Member States**



- An importance greater than (or at least equal to) the average for the EU and for the country

This category includes first and foremost countries in which the rating for the EU is significantly higher than the average (more than 70% or not far below this percentage): countries directly exposed to the influx of migrants to their borders or countries called on or particularly fearful of being called on to become host countries.

This is the case of Malta, highly sensitive to the issue on a national level (65%), and of Slovenia and Germany (very high level of concern on a national scale, 76%), Austria, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Estonia.

In the United Kingdom, the rating concerning the EU is slightly higher than the average, that concerning the country is considerably higher; in Belgium both ratings are slightly above average.

In Finland, the rating for the EU is equal to the European average, the country rating is higher.

In Hungary, the EU rating is much higher than the average and the national rating is close to average.

It may be a surprise that Greece does not come under this category – probably because the burden of economic worries diminishes the rating for immigration in questions for which only two responses are possible.

- **An importance greater than the average for the EU, but not for the country.**

This is the case of Slovakia (very high rating of over 70% for the EU, but much lower rating for the country), Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria.

- **An importance lower than the average for the EU and for the country.**

This is the case for the other Member States.

The ratings for the EU (and for countries) are particularly low for Portugal (31%) and Spain (39%).

Ratings are close to the European average for Luxembourg.

Elsewhere, the level of concern expressed for the EU is around the 50% mark, that for the country ranging from less than 10% (Romania, Cyprus) to a percentage around 10% (Ireland, Croatia), 20% (Poland, Greece, France) or 30% (Italy).

Citizens' concerns with regard to migration issues, overall on the rise, differ significantly from one Member State to another. It would require a more in-depth analysis in another framework in order to study the attitudes towards this issue and to monitor the development of a phenomenon likely to add to the factors of heterogeneity that already exist within the EU (discussed in the last section of this paper).

3. The state of public opinion on the EU: major divergences between Member States

The European averages analysed above cover highly contrasting realities between Member States.

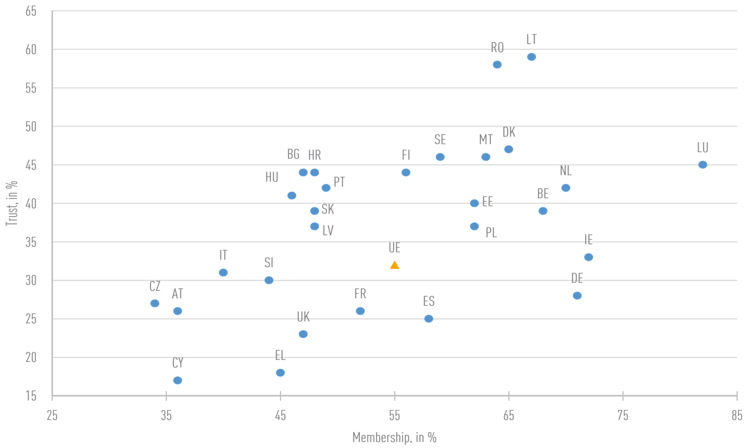
Figure 13 gives an indication of the various Member States' positions according to the positive ratings in opinions on membership of the EU (on the abscissa) and with regard to trust in the EU (on the ordinate) in 2015.

According to these indicators, one can distinguish five basic groups of countries.

For each one, the comments that follow take into account the results of the responses to these two base questions as well as the other opinion indicators analyzed beforehand as well as several indicators of economic optimism.

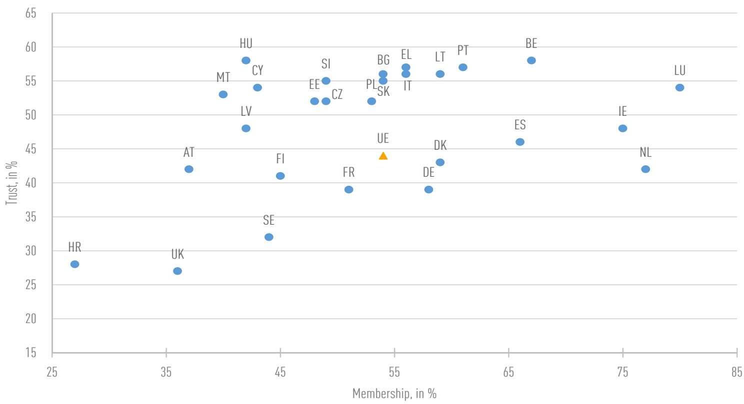
The observations presented with regard to trends refer to the years 2005 and 2015, unless otherwise stated. As a peak of positive attitudes was observed in 2007, certain comparisons refer to the year 2007.

FIGURE 13 ► **EU membership and trust in the EU in the Member States in 2015**



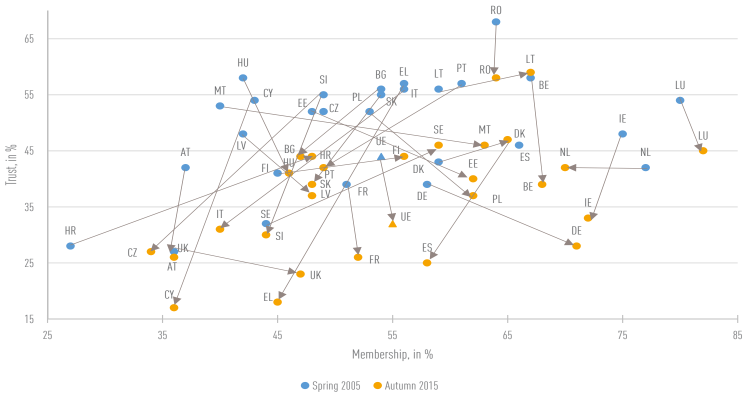
Below is the equivalent figure for 2005.

FIGURE 14 ► **EU membership and trust in the EU in the Member States in 2005**



A comparison of the two maps demonstrates a drift in general attitudes towards the EU, the significant slump in these opinions in some Member States and the reconfiguration of the resulting European "landscape".

FIGURE 15 ➤ EU membership and trust in the EU in the Member States: 2005-2015 evolution



3.1. The "Euro-confident" category

Two countries can be qualified as such. These are two new member states where positive attitudes are traditionally seen: Lithuania and Romania.

The results on membership to the European Union are high, and these are the only countries where confidence expressed was (clearly) positive.

• **Lithuania** *(see Figure XVIII in Annex 2)*, with a positive membership rating of 67% (versus 7%) and a benefits rating of 85% (versus 11%), even slightly higher than in 2007, a positive image for 53% of citizens (versus 6%), and a particularly high confidence index: optimism for the EU's future - 67% of citizens (versus 28%), a clear relative majority believing the right direction is currently being taken (42% versus 19%), and high levels of trust (59% versus 25%).

Economic optimism is, however, moderate (and also in decline): 26%, versus 11%, believe in an improvement within the next year for the EU, the percentage corresponding to the country being 25%, versus 17%; and the idea of an improvement in the employment situation is only shared by 40% of citizens, as against 52%.

• **Romania** *(see Figure XXIV in Annex 2)***,** traditionally highly Europhile even before its entry into the Union, is marked by a membership rating that remains very high, at a level close to that of 2005 (with 64% of citizens, as against 8%, believing that their country's membership of the EU is positive, and 72%, versus 20%, considering that there are benefits for Romania) and a positive image shared by 57% of citizens (versus 9%).

The level of the confidence index, although not as high as eight years earlier, is the highest of all Member States: optimism for the EU's future for 73% of citizens (versus 21%); positive attitudes towards the current direction for 52% (versus 14%) and a high level of trust expressed (58%, versus 29%).

Economic optimism, slightly on the rise since 2007, is true, for the EU (41%, versus 12%), more so than for the country (32% versus 24%). Slightly more Romanians believe that the employment situation is set to improve than those who do not (48% versus 42%).

3.2. Reserved “Europhiles”

One can include in this group ten other countries characterized by a membership score higher than the European average (55%) and a confidence score that is below 50% but nevertheless above the (weak) average of 32%: the three Benelux countries, Denmark, Malta, Estonia, Poland, Sweden and Finland, as well as Ireland.

• **Luxembourg** *(see Figure XIX in Annex 2)***,** with the highest ratings (and rising slightly) of positive opinions on membership of the EU (82% versus 5%) and the benefits for the country (85% versus 11%), but a confidence index level only slightly higher than the average (and rather on the decline): optimism for the EU’s future is clear (60% versus 38%); but only a small minority of citizens believes that the EU is currently taking the right direction (15% versus 50%). The trust expressed in the EU is reserved (45% versus 46%) and in addition a relative majority has a positive image of the EU (45% versus 20%).

As regards the economic outlook for the next twelve months, only 20% of citizens believe that the situation will improve in the EU, as against 44%, slightly lower than the (already mediocre) responses given to the same question in 2007. For the country’s outlook, optimism (on the contrary on the rise) and pessimism are on an equal footing at 23% (the figure for those who foresee an unchanged situation is on the rise). Lastly, 64% of citizens polled believe that the “worst is still to come” in terms of employment (versus 31%).

• **Belgium** *(see Figure III in Annex 2)***,** with high positive ratings for the membership (68% versus 13%) and benefits (69% versus 25%) indicators, rather similar to those in 2005.

Optimism for the EU’s future is shared by a majority of Belgian citizens, but with less enthusiasm (56%, versus 41%); the current direction taken by the EU is only considered to be good by 22%, versus 48%; only a minority expresses trust (39% versus 54%). Belgium is one of the Member States in which the decline for these indicators is clearest in comparison to 2007.

The EU’s image is positive for a rather small relative majority of 39% versus 23%, (with an increasing number of neutral opinions).

Belgians' views of the economic situation are also quite gloomy: 11%, versus 39%, believe in an improved situation for the EU in the next year, and 18%, versus 29%, for their own country – also in decline compared to 2007, when opinions were almost equally shared between these two questions. Lastly 58% believe that the employment situation is set to deteriorate further, as against 38% who think the opposite – showing a state of public opinion in this regard that is more gloomy than the European average.

• **The Netherlands** *(see Figure XXI in Annex 2)*, where high positive ratings are traditionally recorded for the membership and benefits indicators: at the end of 2015, 70% versus 9% for the former, and 66% versus 27% for the latter – a slight drop compared to 2005.

Optimism for the EU's future is, as in Belgium, slightly above the average for Member States (58% versus 40%), the current direction is only considered good by 23%, versus 52% and the level of trust is 42% versus 46%, slightly higher than in Belgium.

Opinions on the EU's image are slightly more lukewarm than the European average (34% of positive attitudes versus 25% of negative).

Economically speaking, the Dutch are rather pessimistic about the EU's outlook for the year ahead (20% of optimists, 34% of pessimists – a decline on this point compared to 2007) – while on the contrary their outlook is much less gloomy for their country (40% versus 16% - relatively stable proportions); and a majority is optimistic about employment: an improvement is forecast by 70% of citizens, versus 28%.

• **Denmark** *(see Figure VIII in Annex 2)*, another country in which high positive ratings are traditionally recorded for questions on the European Union (but where, behind that, as in the Netherlands, there may be some serious reservations on many aspects): positive responses on EU membership by 65% of citizens, versus 12%, on the benefits for the country 75% versus 17% - percentages higher than the 2005 figures.

Responses on the EU's image are unenthusiastically positive (36% versus 18%).

While, as in other Member States, a clear majority believes in a positive future for the EU (65% versus 30%), the direction it is currently taking is only considered to be the right one by a small minority (21% versus 48%), and trust in the EU is only given by a relative majority (47% versus 41%). On the whole, the confidence index is slightly higher compared to 2005 (with in particular a drop in the last six months).

Like the Dutch, the Danish do not predict any economic improvement in the EU in the coming year (16% versus 32%, with a deterioration since 2007) but have a more positive outlook with regard to their own country (25% versus 18%, slightly on the rise), and 70% (versus 25%) of citizens believe that the employment situation will improve.

• **Malta** *(see Figure XX in Annex 2)***,** where 63% of citizens (versus 8%) believe that membership of the EU is a good thing, and 84% (versus 8%) acknowledge benefits for their country – these ratings have risen considerably since 2005, while the results of the confidence index have fallen – while remaining high: optimism for the future shared by 69% (versus 21%), impression of the right direction currently taken in the EU for a relative majority (36% versus 14%), and trust in the EU (expressed by 46% of citizens versus 31% - dropping since 2005); in addition a positive image for 43% of citizens, versus 10%.

24% of Maltese citizens, versus 12%, believe in an improvement of the EU's economic situation in the next twelve months, and there is clear optimism in this regard for their own country: 43% versus 5% - figure on the rise compared to 2007 (and in particular over the last six months). 57% of citizens, versus 29%, believe in an improvement in terms of employment.

• **Estonia** *(see Figure IX in Annex 2)***,** where 62% (versus 7%) of citizens have a positive perception (up compared to 2005) of their country's membership of the EU, and where 79% (versus 13%) acknowledge the benefits.

Optimism for the EU's future (with 56% of positive votes versus 37%) is expressed by a majority of citizens, of which only 18%, versus 30%, however consider that the EU is currently taking the right direction – with more than half of citizens not stating a position. Trust in the EU is moderately positive (40% versus 29%), as well as the EU's image in the country (36% versus 12%).

As regards the confidence index, a significant decline has been noted compared to 2005 (of which a substantial proportion occurred between the two last survey waves in 2015).

Estonians have a rather gloomy outlook in terms of a possible improvement in the EU's economic situation in the next year (18% optimists, 27% pessimists), are uncertain with regard to their country's economic prospects (23% versus 21%), and are doubtful of a recovery of employment (48%, versus 37%, believe that the "worst is still to come").

The deterioration of their economic outlook is stronger than that of the European average.

• **Poland** *(see Figure XXII in Annex 2)***,** where 62% of citizens (versus 8%) consider their country's membership of the EU to be positive, and 82% (versus 11%) acknowledge related benefits, is marked by a high level of positive ratings, with respectively 9 and 20 points more than in 2005 (while the country entered the EU, let it be reminded, with major apprehensions).

The EU's image is clearly positive (55% versus 7%).

Optimism for its future is high in Poland (70% versus 21%), while agreement that the EU is currently taking the right direction is more tepid (31% versus 23%), and the trust expressed – although much higher than the European average – is debatable (37% versus 39%). Overall, the confidence index has fallen in ten years but remains quite high.

On the economic front, the proportion of positive attitudes has decreased for the EU (now 16% of optimists, 17% of pessimists, and a high percentage of undecided citizens – a figure on the rise). These positive attitudes have dropped more moderately for the country, a clear relative majority believes in a recovery of the employment situation (46%, versus 29%).

• **Sweden** *(see Figure XXVIII in Annex 2)***,** with 59% (versus 17%) of citizens considering that EU membership is a good thing, and 58% (versus 35%) acknowledging benefits for their country.

These percentages have progressed in comparison to 2005 – as well as those concerning the question on the EU's image (positive for 39% of citizens, versus 25%) while the confidence index rose sharply (46% versus 42%), in comparison with 2005.

58% of citizens show optimism for the EU's future (versus 40%) but attitudes towards its current direction are much more severe (good for 20%, bad for 55%) and trust expressed is lukewarm (46% versus 42%).

On the economic front, the Swedish have one of the gloomiest outlooks for the next year within the EU (and the figures are in decline), both for the EU itself (10% of optimists, 48% of pessimists) or their country (9% versus 48%). A minority of citizens are optimistic about the employment situation (41% versus 53%).

• **Finland** *(see Figure X in Annex 2)*, with a positive membership rating of 56% (versus 15%) and opinion on related benefits at 63% (versus 30%) – both figures on the rise compared to 2005.

The EU's image is positive for 32% of citizens, versus 20%.

The indicators reflecting the level of trust and confidence have fallen. Opinions on the EU's future are split between optimism (for 57% - percentage slightly above the average) and pessimism (for 40%); attitudes towards the current direction are slightly less negative than in Sweden (good direction for 26%, bad for 47%); the level of trust expressed is roughly the same (44% versus 39%).

A sharp drop has been noted for these aspects in the last six months.

The economic outlook for the year ahead is assessed without enthusiasm: for the EU, 21% of citizens are optimistic while 24% are pessimistic; for the country, the figures are 26% and 25% respectively, with a high proportion of uncertainty . The assessment of employment prospects are around the same level as Finland's neighbouring country: optimism accounting for 41%, pessimism for 56%.

• **Ireland** *(see Figure XV in Annex 2)***,** with very high membership and benefits ratings (72% versus 9%; 82% versus 13% - though they have dropped by a few points since 2005) and a positive image for 54% of citizens versus 14% (a sharp drop compared to 2005, but still 17 points above the European average). Despite a strong optimism for the future (76% versus 20%, at the same level as in 2007) and a clearly more positive impression than the average in terms of the direction currently taken in the EU (42%, despite a slight drop, versus 22%), the level of trust expressed in the EU is mediocre (33% versus 52%), like the European average, and similarly suffered a very considerable decline (of around twenty points).

On the economic front, Irish citizens are rather optimistic with regard to the EU's outlook for the next year (34%, versus 12%) – and much more optimistic for their country (51%, versus 8%) – and for an improvement of the employment situation (75% are positive, versus 21%); for the former and above all for the latter, there is, unlike the average European situation, a strong increase compared to 2007; on the whole, the Irish see the economic future as rosy to the greatest extent.

3.3. "Circumspect Europeans"

Six countries fall within this group. The positive score on membership of the EU (between 45% and 50%, which nevertheless constitutes a relative majority) is below the EU average. Confidence scores are on the other hand above the average (though below 50% in most Member States.)

These are Portugal and five new Member States: Slovakia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Croatia and Hungary..

• **Portugal** *(see Figure XXIII in Annex 2)*, a country previously very pro-European, but which has suffered greatly during the crisis. Without denying that it has benefitted from its membership (65% versus 27% of citizens believe this), the Portuguese only have a moderately favourable opinion of EU membership today: 49% positive (down compared to 2005) as against 14% negative.

42% (versus 15%) of citizens claim to have a positive image of the EU.

57% of Portuguese polled (versus 39%) are optimistic about the EU's future, 26%, versus 35%, believe that it is currently taking the right direction – the proportions of positive opinions slightly on the decline since 2007; and the deterioration is much clearer for the trust expressed in the EU, which was given by 42% of citizens versus 48% in the last Eurobarometer survey wave.

The Portuguese have mixed views, and are very uncertain with regard to the EU's economic outlook for the next twelve months (18% of optimists and 19% pessimists, opinions relatively stable), while the figures are gloomier for their own country's outlook (16% versus 30%) despite a drop since 2007 of citizens who fear a deterioration. They have higher hopes of an improved employment situation (54% versus 37%).

• **Slovakia** *(see Figure XXV in Annex 2)***,** where positive opinions on EU membership are lower than the European average (48%, versus 13% - a level below that of 2005), unlike the ratings with regard to related benefits (73% versus 24% - a clear rise).

The image of the EU, considered in slightly more positive terms than negative (35% versus 24%), has declined sharply, as have the confidence index indicators: optimism for the EU's future at 51% versus 46% (rating slightly lower than the EU average); the current direction is only viewed as positive by 22% of citizens, versus 45%; and a minority expresses trust in the EU (39% versus 51%).

Slovaks' opinions are close to the gloomy European average (and have fallen in comparison to their 2005 opinions) in their views of the future development of the economic situation: for the EU, 20% believe that the situation will improve within a year, as against 24%. For their country, 21% see an improvement, as against 24%; and 43%, versus 47%, foresee an improvement on the employment front.

• **Latvia** *(see Figure XVII in Annex 2)*, slightly below the European average with regard to EU membership (48% of citizens are in favour, as against 12%) but their acknowledgement of the benefits for the country is above average (66% versus 26%). The positive ratings of these indicators are higher than in 2005.

32% of citizens claim to have a positive image of the EU, versus 17%.

Opinions based on the confidence index are, as in other countries, in decline compared to 2005, but rather less than the average for Member States: on the whole a majority of citizens is optimistic about the EU's future (51% versus 45%) although the current direction taken is viewed negatively more than positively (24% versus 34%); trust is expressed by 37% of citizens, as against 47%.

More or less in line with the European average (but with more uncertainty), Latvians are slightly more pessimistic than optimistic about the economic outlook of the year ahead, both for the EU (17% of positive opinions versus 23% of negative) and for their country (17% versus 20%). They also have gloomier attitudes towards the future developments of the employment situation, as 33% expect it to improve, as against a majority of 56% fearing the opposite.

• **Bulgaria** *(see Figure IV in Annex 2)***,** a Member State with reserved yet not opposed attitudes, with 47% of citizens in favour of membership versus 15%, and 47% positive about the resulting benefits for the country, versus 36% (and a higher proportion than the European average for non-responses) – these ratings have declined somewhat in comparison to 2005.

48% of Bulgarians versus 17% have a positive image of the EU.

57% versus 33% are optimistic about its future, and those who believe that it is currently taking the right direction are in much higher numbers than those who believe the opposite (41% versus 15%); 44% as against 35% express their trust in the EU. For these points, the positive opinions have lost some ground compared to 2005, but much less than for the European average (the ratings for Bulgaria are much higher than average today).

Bulgarians are reserved on the economic front: 26% versus 10% believe that the situation will improve in the EU in the next year, and 17% versus 22% with regard to their own country. 37% of citizens polled believe that the worst is behind us for the employment situation, while opinions to the contrary are around the same level (39%).

• **Croatia** *(see Figure V in Annex 2)***,** where EU membership is regarded as positive by 48% of citizens versus 16% - lower than the European average – and the benefits for the country are acknowledged by 64% versus 29% - slightly higher.

The EU's image is clearly positive: 51% versus 12%.

Much more than in the European average, Croats are hopeful for the EU's future (69% versus 29%); its current direction is viewed more positively than negatively (40% versus 30%) while trust and distrust expressed are on an almost equal footing (44% versus 46%).

In comparison to 2005 (when the country was not yet a Member State), there has been a noteworthy improvement in perceptions of the EU.

As regards the economic outlook for the year ahead, Croats, without being enthusiastic, are more optimistic than the European average, for the EU (30% versus 23%) and for their country (30% versus 24%) – these results have progressed since 2007; and 59% versus 36% believe that the employment situation is set to improve.

• **Hungary** *(see Figure XIV in Annex 2)***,** where attitudes towards the EU have fluctuated over the years. At the end of 2015, a considerable improvement in attitudes towards the EU has been noted in comparison to 2005 (when they could be said to be defiant) with regard to EU membership (positive for 46% of citizens polled, versus 15%) and to benefits for the country (now acknowledged by 61%, versus 32%).

The question on the EU's image received 39% of positive responses, versus 20% of negative responses.

Opinions on the EU's future are mixed (50% of optimists and 47% of pessimists), while only 25% consider that the current direction taken is good, versus 38%, and trust is expressed by 41% of citizens, as against 51%. Overall, for these questions Hungarians do not stand out considerably from the European average, even though they are more positive or negative with regard to certain points. In comparison with 2007, 2015 indicates a decline that is not as sharp as that for the average – despite a significant drop in the last six months.

Hungarians also take up an average position on the economic front: hope for an improvement in the next twelve months in the EU for 18% versus 25% (in decline), in the country for 19% versus 22% (on the rise), and mixed opinions on the improvement (49%) or deterioration (45%) of the employment situation.

3.4. "Eurodepressed" Europhiles

We see in Figure 15 the singular position of Germany, whose membership score is among the highest, but where confidence is quite low, well below the Community average.

• **In Germany** *(see Figure XII in Annex 2)***,** citizens clearly demonstrate their attachment to the EU (even much more than in 2005): a positive membership rating of 71% (versus 9%), and a benefits rating of 62% (versus 29%). Slightly more citizens have a positive image of the EU: 34% versus 27%.

On the contrary, major uncertainties have been recorded with regard to a positive future for the EU (46% - one of the lowest ratings among all Member States – as against 48%), citizens are very pessimistic about the current direction taken (good direction according to 18%, bad direction according to 56%), and only a small minority expressed its trust (28% versus 63%).

The confidence index is subject to one of the most significant declines in all countries studied in comparison to the 2005 and 2007 levels. A major proportion of this drop took place within the last six months.

On the economic front, the Germans are firmly pessimistic both for the EU (only 9% believe in an improvement in the coming year, versus 46%) and for their country (10% versus 39%); and 51% believe that the "worst is still to come" for employment (versus 33%).

3.5. The "Eurodefiant" category

Nine countries can be included in this group defined by a membership score below (or in one case, barely above) the European average and a confidence score which is also below average.

This group includes member states where reservations on the EU have long been pervasive, and previously positive ones where opinions towards the EU have sharply declined in the last few years: United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Austria but also Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Greece and Cyprus.

• **The United Kingdom** *(see Figure XXIX in Annex 2)***,** a traditionally highly Eurosceptic country, still appears much more reserved than the average (though less so, it seems, at the end of 2015 than in 2005); 47% versus 21% of citizens polled are in favour of EU membership, and 51% (versus 36%) believe that there have been benefits for the country.

The EU has a very mixed image in the UK: positive for 30% of citizens polled, negative for 31%.

Opinions on the EU's future are mixed (46% optimists, 44% pessimists); attitudes on its current direction are clearly negative (17% positive, versus 44%), and only a minority expressed their trust (23% versus 63%).

In terms of economic future, the twelve-month outlook is considered from a more gloomy than rosy perspective for the EU (18% versus 30%), while conversely the country's outlook is more positive (31% versus 23%). In terms of employment, 51% fear that the "worst is still to come" (versus 40%).

• **The Czech Republic** *(see Figure VII in Annex 2)* also stands out for its reluctance. At the end of 2015, it is the Member States with the least proportion of citizens in favour of EU membership, even though the outcome remains rather positive due to the low levels of negative responses (34% versus 24%), with many citizens choosing not to take up a position. The related benefits of membership, however, have a rating that is only slightly below the European average (60% versus 34%). The membership indicator has declined since 2005, while the benefits indicator is slightly on the rise.

Positive responses to the question on the EU's image (27% versus 31%) have also dropped significantly, as well as the confidence index: less than half of citizens polled (47% versus 51%) predict a positive future for the EU, only 20% think that it is taking the right direction at the moment (versus 52%), and only 27%, versus 63%, claim to have trust in the EU.

A significant portion of this decline was recorded in the last six months.

On the economic front, 12%, versus 34%, foresee an improvement of the economic situation in the next year for the EU (proportion in decline) and 21%, versus 22%, for their country (on the contrary, this proportion is more optimistic than in the past); while 54% versus 40% are hopeful of an improvement in the employment situation.

• **Austria** *(see Figure II in Annex 2)***,** where the overall opinion appears gloomy at the end of 2015**.**

Membership of the EU is only deemed a good thing by a very low relative majority of 36% of citizens polled, versus 29%; and the numbers of those who acknowledge the benefits for their country are scarcely greater than those who think the opposite: 47% versus 45% - these results have not changed significantly in comparison to 2005.

In decline, the EU's image is only positive for 23%, versus 41%.

There is also a noteworthy decline (including a drop in the last six months) in the indicators of the confidence index: optimism for the EU's future is expressed by a minority (40% versus 56%); the current direction is considered positive by only 13%, versus 56%, while the trust expressed in the EU is very mediocre, 26% versus 65%.

Positive opinions on the economic outlook are also in decline and pessimistic: only 14% of citizens polled, as against 51%, believe in an improvement in the next year on a European level, and 18%, versus 39%, on a national level. A majority expressed pessimism for the employment situation (only 42% foresee an improvement, versus 54%).

• **In Spain** *(see Figure XXVII in Annex 2)***,** despite a noteworthy drop in favourable attitudes, the positive ratings for EU membership and the related benefits for the country remain slightly higher than average: 58% (versus 13%) for membership, 63% (versus 29%) for the benefits.

This is also the case for Spanish citizens' view of the EU's future (60% claim to be optimistic, 33% pessimistic) and for the current direction taken (27% versus 37%), despite a sharp drop in this indicator as well. The trust expressed in the EU is below this average (25% of citizens express trust, versus 61%), a considerable drop compared with 2005 – and the same can be said for their image of the EU (33% positive versus 18% negative).

At the end of 2015, the Spanish are less pessimistic than optimistic in terms of the economic situation, while remaining uncertain: their responses are at a level relatively comparable with that of 2007 for the EU's outlook for the year ahead (better for 28% of citizens, as against 8%) and in their country (32% versus 13%); and a majority claims to be hopeful of an improvement in employment (55% versus 40%).

• **France** *(see Figure XI in Annex 2)***:** We know from many studies that the country is currently undergoing a period of prevailing gloom and introspection.

The membership index is quite stable in comparison to 2005 (with a slight improvement, though the figures had previously declined significantly since the time when many French citizens expressed their faith in the EU). The country is slightly below the European average for this index: 52% of positive opinions, versus 16%, on membership, 57% versus 34% on the benefits for the country.

The same goes for the question on the EU's image (35% of positive responses, 25% of negative responses).

Above all, the difference with the European average and the decline in comparison to 2007 is clearly visible for the indicators related to the future: a minority of citizens are optimistic about the EU's future (44% versus 52%); the rating of positive responses on the current direction taken is among the lowest (14% versus 57%) and we record a collapse in trust, now among the lowest in the EU, at 26% versus 63%.

On the economic front, the gloomy outlook of the French is more or less on an equal footing with the European average, and is slightly higher than in 2007 (when morale was already low): 21% foresee an improvement within a year for the EU, versus 20%; while for their country the corresponding percentages are 23% and 23% and in terms of employment the French rating is among the most pessimistic of all Member States (30% believe in an improvement, as against 63% who believe that the "worst is still to come").

• **Italy** *(see Figure XVI in Annex 2)***,** previously a highly Europhile country, where morale has slumped (even before the onset of the crisis): attitudes concerning EU membership (a good thing for 40% of citizens polled, a bad thing for 23%) and the benefits for the country (acknowledged by 44%, as against 47%) are among the most negative of all Member States – the decline previously started continued between 2005 and 2015 for these two indicators.

The Italians' image of the EU has deteriorated significantly, now at a mediocre level: positive for 38%, negative for 23%.

However, while it has also fallen, their vision of the EU's future is not worse than the European average (52% optimistic, 41% pessimistic); the current direction taken, while less positively viewed (24%) than negatively viewed (32%), is slightly less ill-considered than this average, while the same goes for the trust expressed (31% versus 52%).

Their anticipation of the economic situation over the next year shows that Italy has a less gloomy outlook than the average for Member States, with figures slightly up in comparison to 2007 (does this foresee a more general recovery?): 32% versus 16% think that the situation will improve in the EU and 31% versus 24% in the country; while a clear majority of 57% versus 35% is hopeful of an improved employment situation.

• **Slovenia** *(see Figure XXVI in Annex 2)***,** another disenchanted Member State in comparison to the years following its confident entry in the EU.

Membership of the EU is considered positive by 44% of citizens polled, versus 18% (a slight drop compared to 2005, a significant proportion of non-responses); the acknowledgement of benefits for the country, at 59% versus 35%, is close to the EU average while it was slightly higher in 2005.

The image that Slovenes have of the EU has deteriorated significantly, with 33% of positive responses as against 21% negative.

The indicator on the EU's future also shows a decline (though remains positive for the most part at 53% versus 45%), the current direction taken in the EU is considered good by 20% of citizens (versus 42%), and trust is only expressed by a small minority of 30% versus 61%. A sharp decline has been recorded for these aspects in the last six months.

As regards the economic indicators, also in decline in comparison to 2007 (and in particular between the last two survey waves), all show a gloomy outlook: only 16% of Slovenes are hopeful of an improvement in the next year for the EU (versus 27%), while 16% predict a recovery for the country (versus 33%). There is marked pessimism regarding employment: 38% foresee an improvement, as against 57% of citizens believing in a deterioration.

• **Greece** *(see Figure XIII in Annex 2)***,** hit particularly hard by the crisis (and in addition in the front line of the migration crisis) is bitter about its situation.

While Greece was formerly a very Europhile Member State, only a relative majority now deems the country's membership to be a good thing (45% versus 23%), although 56% (versus 41%) acknowledge the positive benefits for Greece.

These ratings are in decline in comparison to 2005, with a sharp drop recorded for the benefits indicator.

This is even more true for responses on the EU's image (now only positive for 22% of citizens polled, as against 38%), and for the indicators of the confidence index. Only 34% claim to be optimistic about the EU's future, versus 63%; 11% believe that it is currently taking the right direction, versus 69%; and only 18% express their trust in the EU, versus 81%.

Greece is one of the Member States for which the decline in positive responses is greatest in the last six months.

There is a high level of prevailing pessimism with regard to the economic situation (again a decline in comparison to 2007 when the outlook was already gloomy): 10%, versus 39%, believe in an improvement in the next year for the EU, and 9%, versus 70%, for their country; while only 28% of citizens polled are hopeful of an improvement in the employment situation, as against 70%.

• **Cyprus** *(see Figure VI in Annex 2)***,** where public opinions on the EU are even gloomier.

36% of citizens polled are positive about their country's membership of the EU (versus 30%); and only 34%, versus 62%, acknowledge any benefits – these indicators are in decline in relation to 2005, as is the EU's image (positive for 22%, negative for 41%).

There is also a significant drop in optimism for the EU's future (37% versus 58%), the feeling that it is currently taking the right direction (16% versus 44%) and the trust it inspires (17% versus 72%).

Cypriots are uncertain and wary about the economic future: 16% versus 19% claim to be optimistic about the EU's outlook for the year ahead, while 27% versus 24% are positive about the country's outlook (this is the result of a drop in the most sombre opinions); and only a small minority are optimistic about any improvement in employment (38% versus 57%).

A high level of disparity can be observed within the European Union, between Member States that differ greatly in terms of their citizens' opinions on the EU, their level of optimism or pessimism, and the trends for these points. In addition, it can be noted that Member States which are seemingly very different appear in the same category, regardless of whether these differences are due to their geographical location, date of entry into the EU, level of economic development and other criteria conventionally analysed.

CONCLUSION

The indicators used to assess the state of EU public opinion, which were on an upward trend in 2005, were only fleetingly affected by the political failure of the draft Constitution.

On the contrary, the figures were severely impacted by the economic and financial crisis as from 2007. They began to recover in 2011-2012. They stalled in the autumn of 2015 but it is not possible today to distinguish whether this development is temporary or sustained.

It has been observed, however, that this recovery was only partial. While the membership index, assessing opinions on a Member State's membership of the EU and the benefits it has enjoyed, returned more or less to its level prior to the economic and financial crisis, this is not the case for the more dynamic indicators of the confidence index, which only recovered some of its lost ground: in comparison to the pre-crisis period, opinions on the EU's future are in decline, there is pessimism surrounding the current direction taken and a deterioration in trust in the EU and its image.

The classification we made of the twenty-eight Member States, according to the position of their public opinion on the EU as a result of these two indices, lead us to conclude that there is a prevailing major disparity between the groups of countries that are highly divergent in this regard, as well as in terms of their economic optimism or pessimism.

In addition, it has been observed that a single category may include Member States which are seemingly very different, whether in terms of their geographical location, level of economic development or date of entry into the EU: the criteria conventionally used to assess these countries seem to be increasingly ineffective, in a more heterogeneous and complex EU.

While the views on the economic situation and outlook are an important factor of "Eurofavour" or "Eurodisfavour", other criteria naturally play their part.

We may ask ourselves about the impact of the new crisis that the EU is now facing: the migration crisis has become a major source of concern (with terrorism also causing growing fears). This is perhaps a cause of the recent decline in positive opinions observed since the spring of 2015, as well as being a factor that accentuates differences.

ANNEXES

The following figures represent, for the EU average and the 28 Member States, the evolution of the six indicators analysed in this Study between Spring 2005 and Autumn 2015; data on the future and the direction of the EU are not available from 2005 on and are consequently given from Spring 2007 on.

The questions asked are the following:

- **Membership of the EU:**
  "In general, do you think that the fact that (our country) is part of the European Union is: a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad?" For candidate countries in 2005 (Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania), the question was: "Generally speaking, do you think that (our country)'s membership of the EU would be...?"
- **Benefits of EU membership:**
  "All things considered, do you think that (our country) has or has not benefited from EU membership?"
  For candidate countries in 2005 (Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania), the question was: "Taking everything into account, would you say that (our country) would benefit or not from being a member of the EU?"
- **Image of the EU:**
  "In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?"
- **Trust in the EU:**
  "I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it" (Question asked, among others, for the European Union).
- **Future of the EU:**
  "Would you say that you are very optimistic, fairly optimistic, fairly pessimistic or very pessimistic about the future of the EU?"
- **Direction of the EU:**
  "At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in the EU?"

ANNEX 1
EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC OPINION VIS-À-VIS THE EU (2005/2007-2015)

TABLE I ► EU membership: perception in the 28 Member States (2005-2015)

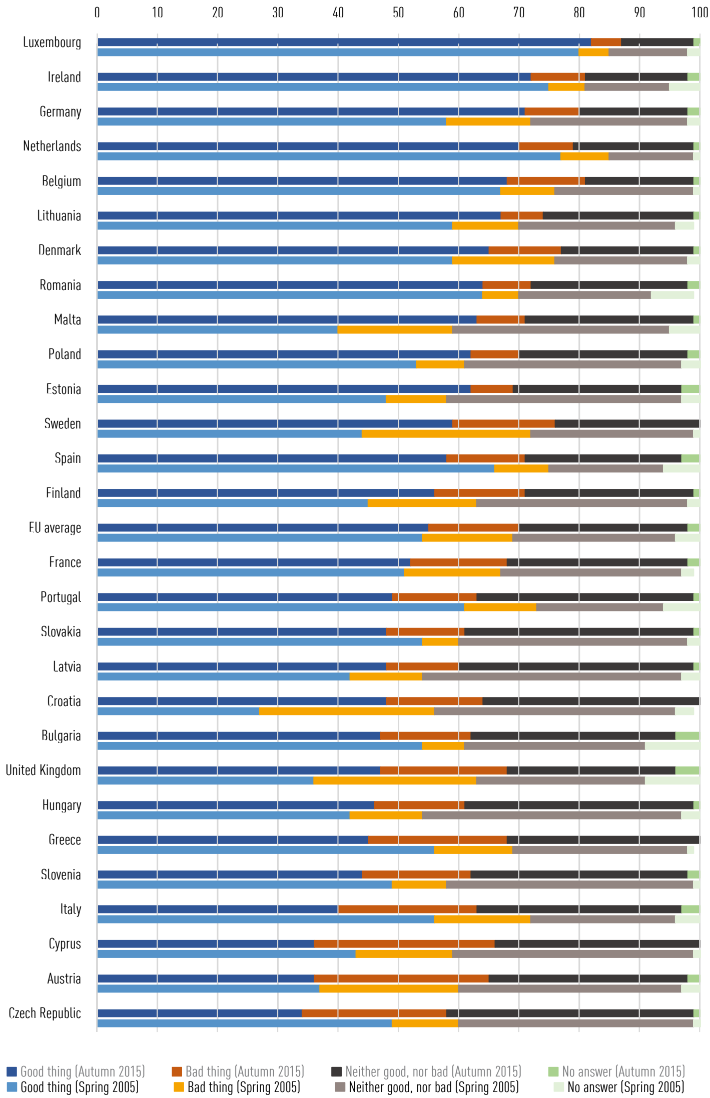


TABLE II ► Benefits of EU membership: perception in the 28 Member States (2005-2015)

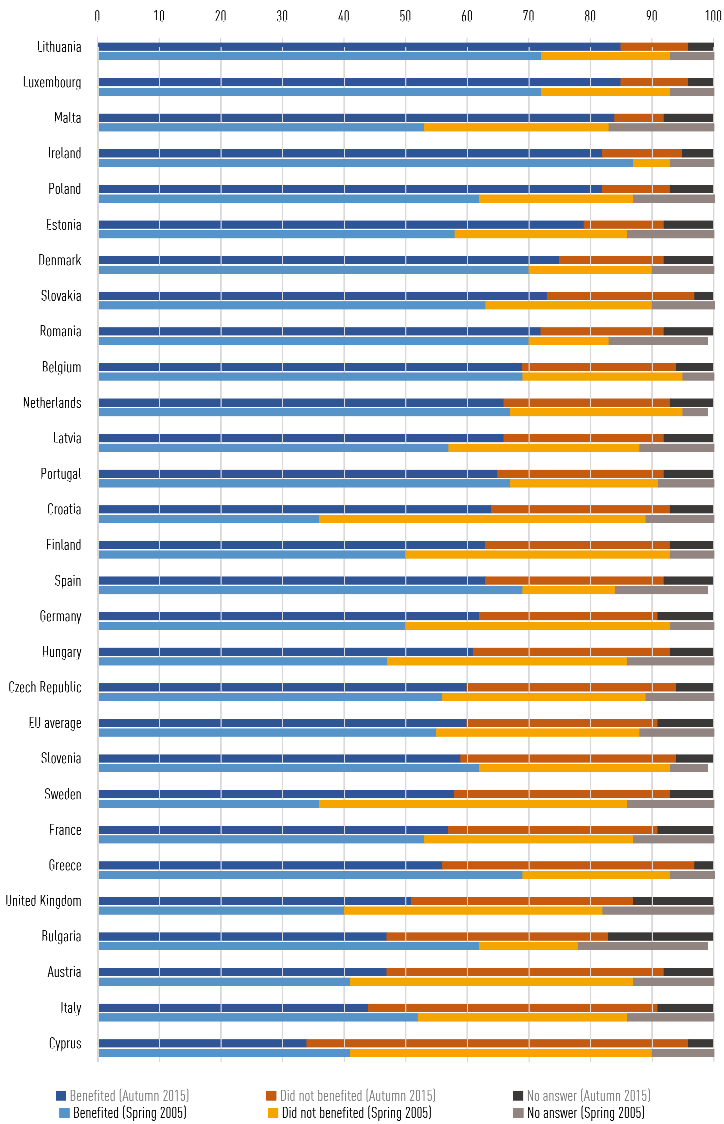


TABLE III ► Image of the EU: perception in the 28 Member States (2005-2015)

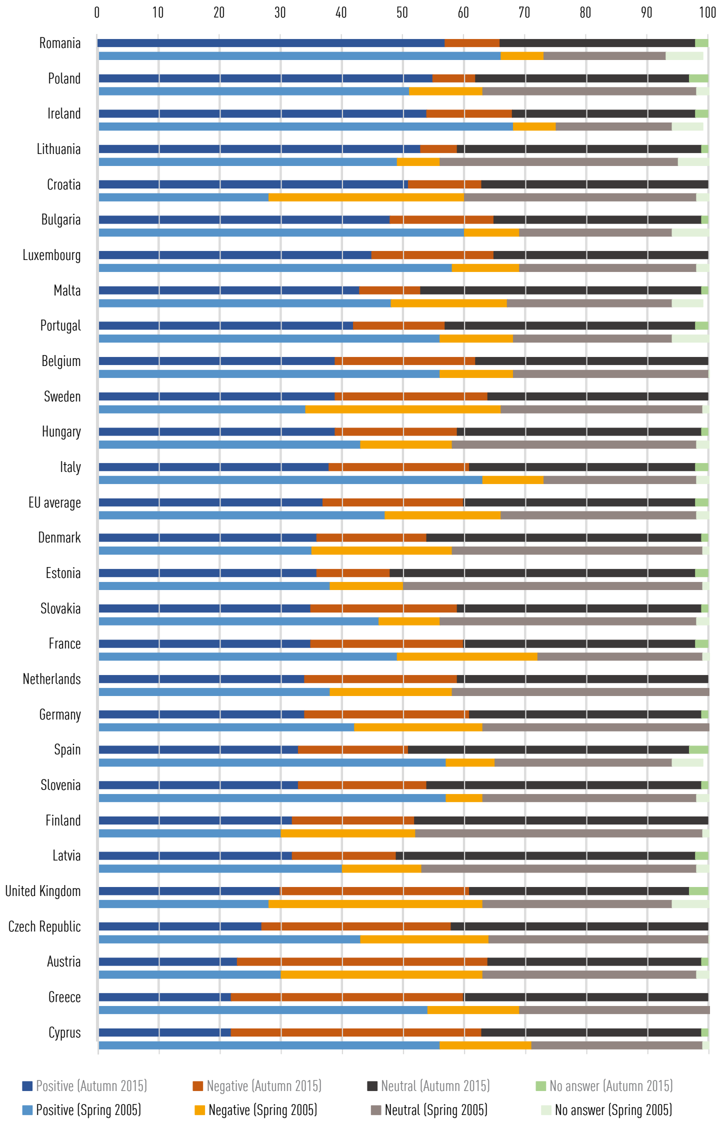


TABLE IV ► Trust in the EU: perception in the 28 Member States (2005-2015)

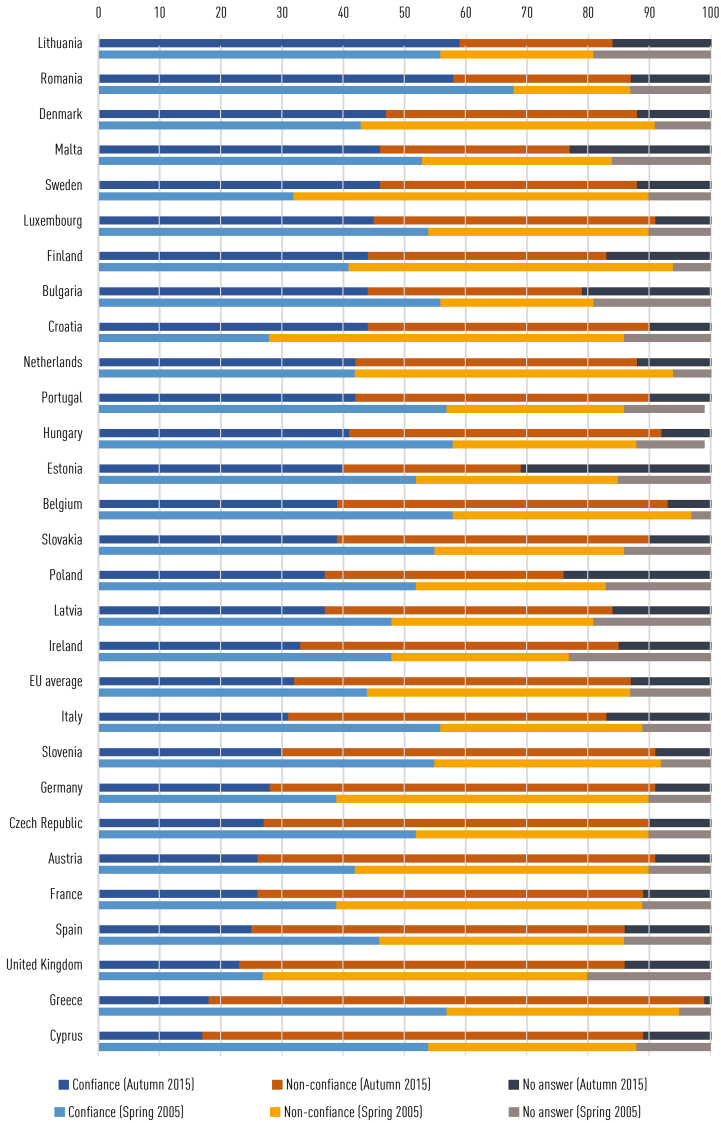


TABLE V ► Future of the EU: perception in the 28 Member States (2007-2015)

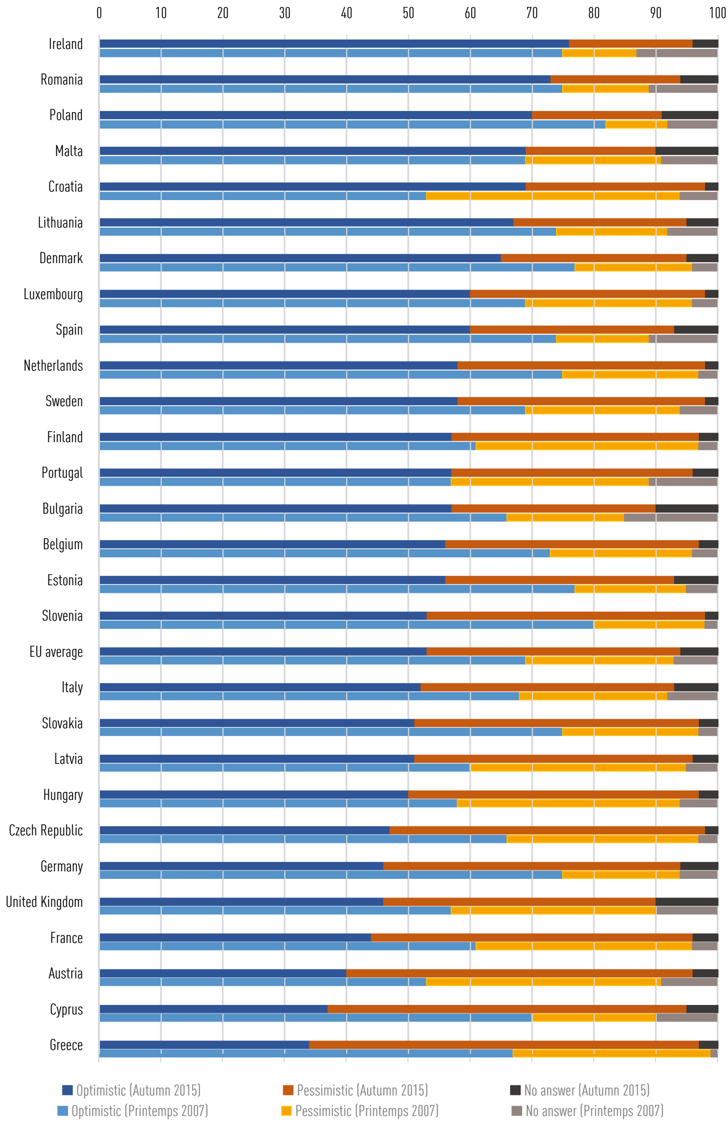
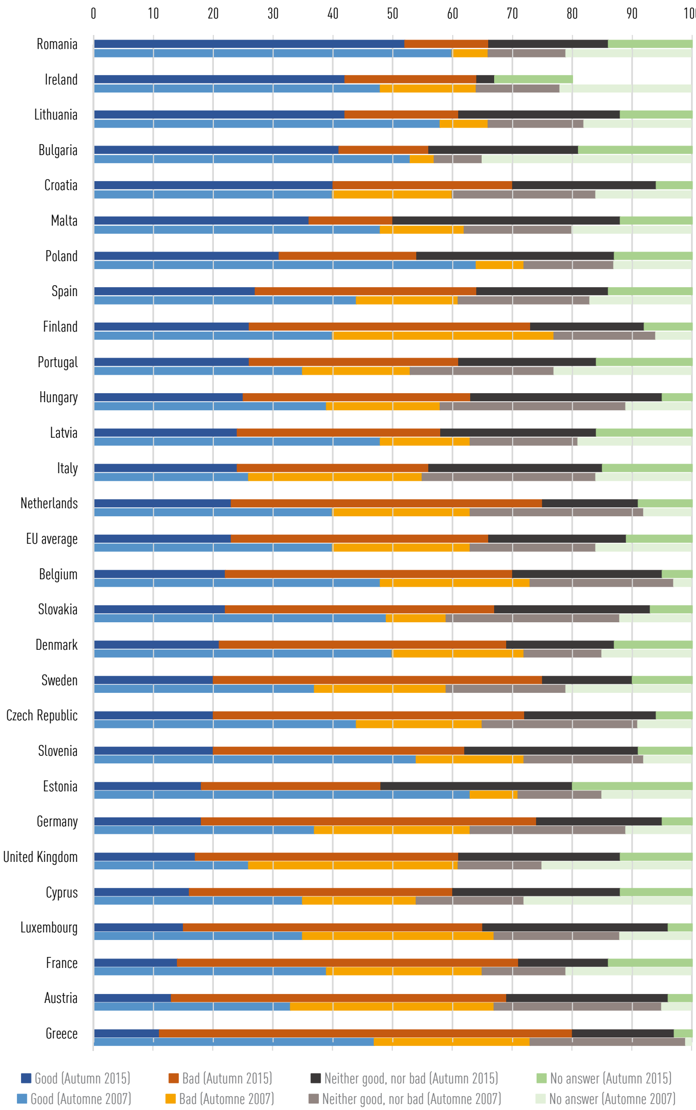


TABLE VI ► Current direction of the EU: perception in the 28 Member States (2007-2015)



ANNEX 2
PERCEPTION OF THE EU IN PUBLIC OPINION IN THE 28 MEMBER STATES

FIGURE I ➤ European public opinion and the EU (2005-2015)

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FIGURE III ➤ Belgian public opinion and the EU (2005-2015)

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FIGURE XXI ➤ Dutch public opinion and the EU (2005-2015)

FIGURE XXII ➤ Polish public opinion and the EU (2005-2015)

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Daniel Debomy is the founder and managing director of the opinion research institute OPTEM. For 25 years, together with his network of partners across Europe, he has carried out numerous qualitative studies on behalf of the European Commission and other organisations, aiming to understand the citizens' perceptions, attitudes and expectations vis-a-vis the European Union and EU policies, in the 27 Member States and beyond. He also lectures on EU-related issues at several schools and universities.

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THE EU, DESPITE EVERYTHING?

EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION IN THE FACE OF CRISIS (2005-2015)

Controversies concerning the draft treaty establishing a constitution for Europe, conflicts related to the Eurozone crisis, and tensions resulting from the refugee crisis have not only fuelled an intense public debate in most EU Member States, but have also given rise to many impressionistic and alarmist comments that need to be put into perspective on the basis of sound data and robust and substantiated analyses.

This is the great merit of the Study conducted by Daniel Debomy, a renowned specialist in the analysis of European public opinion trends who, on the basis of the valuable Eurobarometer surveys, painstakingly stresses for which issues and to what extent EU citizens have been able to change their opinion on the EU over this "decade of crises".

One of the first political lessons of this Study is that citizens' perception of their country's membership to the EU and the benefits it enjoys from this membership remained positive throughout the period, and was even more positive in 2015 than in 2005 in a significant proportion of Member States. The second political lesson is that the EU's image and the level of trust that its citizens express in it were, however, subject to a sharp decline between 2005 and 2015. The third political lesson is to stress that what has stood out in public debate on the EU in the last decade is not so much its democratic deficit, or the traditional split between Brussels and the people but much more a divide between peoples of the EU, which is just as important a challenge for the champions and practitioners of European construction.

This is one more reason to hope that European and national authorities and additionally all citizens involved in public debate on the EU may consider and debate Daniel Debomy's Study, in order to formulate analyses and initiatives based on more solid political and democratic foundations.

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