



## Latest Eurobarometer survey (July-August): Economic situation is EU citizens' top concern in light of the coronavirus pandemic

Brussels, 23 October 2020

In a troubled period marked by the coronavirus pandemic, trust in the EU remains stable and Europeans trust the EU to make the right decisions in response to the pandemic in the future. In the new [Standard Eurobarometer](#) survey released today, European citizens identify the **economic situation**, the state of Member States' **public finances** and **immigration** as the three top concerns at EU level. The economic situation is also the main concern at national level, followed by health and unemployment.

In the new Eurobarometer conducted in July and August, concern about the economic situation is reflected in the perception of the current state of the economy. **64% of Europeans think that the situation is 'bad'** and 42% of Europeans think that their country's economy will recover from the adverse effects of the coronavirus outbreak 'in 2023 or later'.

Europeans are divided (45% 'satisfied' vs 44% 'not satisfied') regarding the measures taken by the EU to fight the pandemic. However, **62%** say they **trust the EU to make the right decisions** in the future, and **60%** remain **optimistic about the future** of the EU.

### 1. Trust and image of the EU

**Trust in the European Union has remained stable** since autumn 2019 at 43%, despite variations of public perceptions during the pandemic. Trust in national governments and parliaments has increased (40%, +6 percentage points and 36%, +2 respectively).

In 15 Member States, a majority of respondents says they trust the EU, with the highest levels observed in Ireland (73%), Denmark (63%) and Lithuania (59%). The lowest levels of trust in the EU are observed in Italy (28%), France (30%) and Greece (32%).

The proportion of respondents with a **positive image of the EU is the same as that with a neutral image (40%)**. 19% of respondents have a negative image of the EU (-1 percentage points).

In 13 EU Member States, a majority of respondents has a positive image of the EU, with the highest proportions observed in Ireland (71%), Poland and Portugal (both 55%). In 13 other Member States, the EU conjures up a predominantly neutral image for respondents, with the highest proportions observed in Malta (56%), Spain, Latvia and Slovenia (all 48%).

### 2. Main concerns at EU and national level

Citizens mentioned the **economic situation as the most pressing issue facing the EU** - over one-third (35%) of all respondents, a strong increase of 16 percentage points since autumn 2019, and rise from third to first concern. Concern about the economic situation has not been this high since spring 2014.

Europeans are also increasingly concerned about the **state of Member States' public finances** (23%, +6 percentage points, the highest level since spring 2015), which moves from fifth to second place on a par with **immigration** (23%, -13 percentage points), the latter now being at the lowest level since autumn 2014.

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, **health** (22%, new item) is the fourth most mentioned concern at EU level. The issue of the **environment and climate change** has lost ground, down 8 percentage points to 20%, followed by **unemployment** (17%, +5 percentage points).

Similarly, the **economic situation** (33%, +17 percentage points) **has overtaken health as the**

**most important issue at national level**, rising from seventh to first position. Although in second position, health has had a notable increase in mentions since autumn 2019 (31%, +9 percentage points), taking it to its highest ever level over the past six years.

**Unemployment** has also increased considerably in importance (28%, +8 percentage points), followed by rising prices/**inflation**/cost of living (18%, -2 percentage points), the **environment** and **climate change** (14%, -6 percentage points) and **government debt** (12%, +4 percentage points). Mentions of **immigration** (11%, -5 percentage points), are at their lowest level for the past six years.

### 3. The current economic situation

Since autumn 2019, the proportion of Europeans who think that the current situation of their national economy is 'good' (34%, -13 percentage points) has declined considerably, while the **proportion of respondents who judge this situation to be 'bad' has increased sharply** (64%, +14 percentage points).

At national level, a majority of respondents in 10 countries says that the national economic situation is good (down from 15 in autumn 2019). The proportion of respondents who say the situation of their national economy is good ranges from 83% in Luxembourg to 9% in Greece.

### 4. The coronavirus pandemic and public opinion in the EU

Europeans are **divided on the measures taken by the EU institutions to fight the coronavirus outbreak** (45% 'satisfied' vs 44% 'not satisfied'). However, **a majority of respondents in 19 Member States is satisfied with the measures taken by the European Union institutions to fight the coronavirus pandemic**. The highest positive figures are found in Ireland (71%); Hungary, Romania and Poland (all 60%). In seven countries, a majority of respondents is 'not satisfied', especially in Luxembourg (63%), Italy (58%), Greece and Czechia (both 55%) and Spain (52%). In Austria, equal proportions of respondents are satisfied, and not satisfied (both 47%).

However, **more than six Europeans in ten trust the EU to make the right decisions** in the future (62%). The most frequently mentioned priorities for the EU's response to the coronavirus pandemic are: establish a strategy for facing a similar crisis in the future and develop financial means to find a treatment or vaccine (each 37%). 30% think that developing a European health policy should be a priority.

Europeans' personal experiences of **confinement measures** were very diverse. Overall, close to three Europeans in ten say that it was fairly easy to cope with (31%), while a quarter say it was fairly difficult to cope with (25%). Finally, 30% say that it was 'both easy and difficult to cope with'.

### 5. Key policy areas

Asked about the objectives of the European **Green Deal**, Europeans continue identifying '**developing renewable energy**' and '**fighting against plastic waste** and leading on the issue of **single-use of plastic**' as the **top priorities**. More than one third think the top priority should be supporting EU farmers (38%) or promoting the circular economy (36%). Just over three in ten think reducing energy consumption (31%) should be the top priority.

**Support for the Economic and Monetary Union and for the euro remains high**, with 75% of respondents in the Euro area in favour of the EU's single currency. In the EU27 as a whole, support for the euro has increased to 67% (+5).

### 6. EU citizenship and European democracy

**A majority** of people in 26 EU Member States (except Italy) and 70% across the EU **feel that they are citizens of the EU**. At a national level the highest scores are observed in Ireland and Luxembourg (both 89%), Poland (83%), Slovakia and Germany (both 82%), Lithuania (81%), Hungary, Portugal and Denmark (all 80%).

**A majority of Europeans** (53%) say they are **satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU**. The proportion of respondents who are 'not satisfied' has increased, by 3 percentage points since

autumn 2019 to 43%.

## 7. Optimism for the future of the EU

Finally, in this troubled period, **60%** of Europeans say they **are optimistic about the future of the EU**. The highest scores for optimism are observed in Ireland (81%), Lithuania and Poland (both 75%) and Croatia (74%). The lowest levels of optimism are seen in Greece (44%) and Italy (49%), where pessimism outweighs optimism, and France, where opinion is evenly divided (49% vs 49%).

### Background

The 'Summer 2020 – Standard Eurobarometer' (EB 93) was conducted face-to-face and exceptionally completed with online interviews between 9 July and 26 August 2020, across the 27 EU Member States, in the United Kingdom and in the candidate countries<sup>[1]</sup>. 26,681 interviews were conducted in the 27 Member States.

### For More Information

[Standard Eurobarometer 93](#)

[1] The 27 European Union (EU) Member States, United Kingdom, five candidate countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey) and the Turkish Cypriot Community in the part of the country that is not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus.

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