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Direction générale de la Communication
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EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2009

Pre-electoral survey - First wave
Analytical summary

Population: EU 18+ (Austria 16+)
Coverage: EU27 (27, 218 European citizens on the electoral register)
Fieldwork: 4 May - 15 May

This pre-electoral survey was carried out by TNS Opinion within the framework of the contract with the European Parliament as part of the invitation to tender for the "Electoral evening".

In comparison to traditional EB/EP surveys also carried out by TNS Opinion for the Eurobarometer, the methodology differs: respondents aged 15 years and above have more face to face interviews for the EB/EP; respondents aged 18 years and above[1] are interviewed by telephone in most countries, and face to face in countries where telephone coverage is not adequate for the pre-electoral survey.

Therefore, the comparative results should be analysed bearing in mind these differences in methodology. However they allow us to identify the trends over a year and a half of the survey. The reader is advised to consult the note "First results" for the details of the results of the survey and its developments.

Due to legal restrictions, the results related to Italy and Luxembourg will not be published.

What are the main lessons which can be revealed in this survey?

⇒ **An awareness which seems to be growing:** at the beginning of May, when the survey was carried out, we note a clear increase in the intention to vote compared to the EB/EP survey of January/February, but there is no guarantee that the turnout rate will be equivalent to that of 2004: 45.47%.

⇒ **Better awareness of the date:** presently, almost half of Europeans cite June 2009 as the election date.

[1] 16 years and above in Austria

⇒ **Interest in the elections** is also increasing: more than half of Europeans claim to be interested in the next European elections.

⇒ **Image of the EP:** more than half of Europeans have a positive image of the Institution; this proportion is increasing since January-February 2009.

⇒ **Campaign themes:** again, unemployment and economic growth are the main issues which Europeans wish to see prioritised during this campaign. On the other hand, inflation and purchasing power which was in 3rd place during the previous two surveys is now in 5th place.

I. Awareness of the elections

a) A noticeably increasing level of engagement

- **At the beginning of May, on a scale of 1 to 10,** the proportion of citizens who seem sure to vote is **49%: 43% at level 10 (completely sure) on the scale and 6% at level 9** (very strong probability). In three months, these figures have risen considerably.

  In fact, at the beginning of the year, while at the time it was not possible to speak of participation rates, but simply of the probability of voting, these figures stood at the following: 34% of which 28% were at level 10 and 6% at level 9 of the scale.

- As we have already stated on many occasions, **one should not assume that the turnout rate could increase to 49% at the elections in June.** That said, this awareness is clearly on the increase and certain elements indicate that **the final participation rate could approach that of 2004.**

b) Better awareness of the date

- **15 months ago, only 4% of Europeans were able to say that the elections would take place in June 2009. Today that number is 49%.**

- As the survey was being carried out - from 4 to 15 May -, **official electoral campaigns had only started in some countries.** Therefore, today, the awareness of the date should be at an even higher level.

c) Growing interest

- Today, **53% of Europeans say they are interested** in the elections **as opposed to 46% who claim the opposite.** At the beginning of January, 44% said they were interested and 53% said they were not.

d) An important minority believes itself to be well informed about the elections

- Presently, **41%** of Europeans say they are **very well or quite well informed** about the European elections, as opposed to **57%** who said they were **quite or very badly informed.**

II. Image of the EP

In the area related to subjective awareness, the difference in methodology between the two types of survey should be equally borne in mind when analysing developments. The image of the Parliament has improved in a year (EB70).

a) Image

- **38%** of people interviewed have a **positive image** of the EP as opposed to 34% a year ago.

- **40%** of people interviewed have a **neutral image** of the EP as opposed to 43% a year ago.

- **20%** of people interviewed have a **negative image** of the EP. This figure was 17% a year ago.

III. Campaign themes

The priorities of the people interviewed about campaign themes seem to have undergone some changes in the light of the economic and social context.

- Thus, during the **two surveys EB70 (autumn 2008) and EB71.1 (January-February 2009),** the **top three** were **unemployment, economic growth** and **inflation and purchasing power.** These led the other themes by a significant margin.

  Yet, in this survey, the two main themes remain the same, but the order has changed considerably.

- In fact, **unemployment largely retains the lead** with 57% as opposed to 49% in autumn 2008 (EB70). **Economic growth comes second** with 45% as opposed to 51% a year ago. There was an inversion in the order of the two main themes since autumn 2008.

- **On the other hand,** inflation and purchasing power **is now in 5th place** and underwent a considerable change in percentage points: 29% today as opposed to 47% a year ago (3rd place).

There could be **two reasons for this development.** On the one hand, it could be that citizens have actually felt the decrease in inflation. On the other hand, this preoccupation could be less important in their eyes compared to the fear of losing employment and the continued decrease in economic growth which is directly related.

- In **third place** in this survey is **insecurity** with 32% as opposed to 33% in autumn 2008. In fourth, the future of pensions with 31% as opposed to 33% around six months ago.

- **Other themes** related to **global fears** are **once again left behind.** Thus, the fight against climate change and terrorism are tied at 24%. Immigration comes in 8th place with 22%, followed by agriculture with 18%.

- Finally, the themes related to the **Institutions** and **Values of the EU** range from 10% to 18%.

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