

European citizens see immigration as top challenge for EU to tackle

Spring 2015 Standard Eurobarometer

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USPA NEWS - More European citizens say they have a positive image of the European Union, according to the last Spring Standard Eurobarometer published last week. In this document, the trust in the EU has gone up since last November. European people see immigration as the major challenge facing the EU currently.

Asking EU citizens about their main concerns, immigration is now at the top of the most frequently cited topics at EU level. With 38% (+14 points) it is now way ahead of the economic situation (27%, -6 points), unemployment (24%, -5 points) and the Member States public finances (23%, -2 points). It is the number one most frequently cited concern in 20 Member States reaching peaks in Malta (65%) and Germany (55%). Concern for terrorism at EU level has also increased significantly since November 2014 (17%, +6 points).

As in the previous survey of November 2014, there is a strong endorsement by citizens of the priority topics set by the European Commission under President Juncker. On investment within the EU, 59% of Europeans agree public money should be used to stimulate private sector investment at EU level. On energy, 72% of Europeans are in favour of a common energy policy among EU Member States. Most Europeans regard the single market (the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU) as the most positive achievement of the EU (57%), almost at par with peace among the Member States (55%).

Regarding the issue of migration, 73% of Europeans say they are in favour of a common European policy on migration. Most Europeans (51%) are positive about migration of people from other EU Member States. However, 56% are negative about immigration of people from outside the EU. Finally, citizens remain optimistic about the future of the EU. 58% (+2 points) of Europeans say they are optimistic while 36% (-1 point) say they are pessimistic.

The number of Europeans who say they have a positive image of the EU has risen from 39% last November to 41% in May 2015, while 38% have a neutral image and only 19% a negative image (down from 22% in November and 25% in June 2014). Moreover, the number of Europeans who say they trust the European Union has also gone up to 40% (up by 3 percentage points since November 2014 and 9 percentage points since the 2014 European Parliament elections). The average level of trust in national governments has also risen slightly to 31% (+2 points). The number of citizens who say that their voice counts in the EU has reached 42% (+2 points), sustaining the 10-year peak observed after the European elections in 2014.

On the economy, the expectations of Europeans for the national economic situation remain rather stable, with more than one in four of them (26%, +4 points) being optimistic about the next twelve months while 48% expect the situation to remain the same. Pessimistic expectations decrease sharply and reach 21% (-7 points). The number of Europeans who think that the impact of the crisis on jobs has already reached its peak (48%, +4 points) is now clearly more important than those who think "the worst is still to come" (42%, -4 points). The positive stance on the euro remains stable (57% in the EU overall, 69% in the euro area). Support for the single currency has increased in 14 Member States.

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