



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

INFORMATION NOTE

Subject: Points from Eurobarometer 56 concerning the future of the European Union

This note is in addition to an initial summary of Eurobarometer 56, and is concerned with matters directly linked to the future of the EU¹.

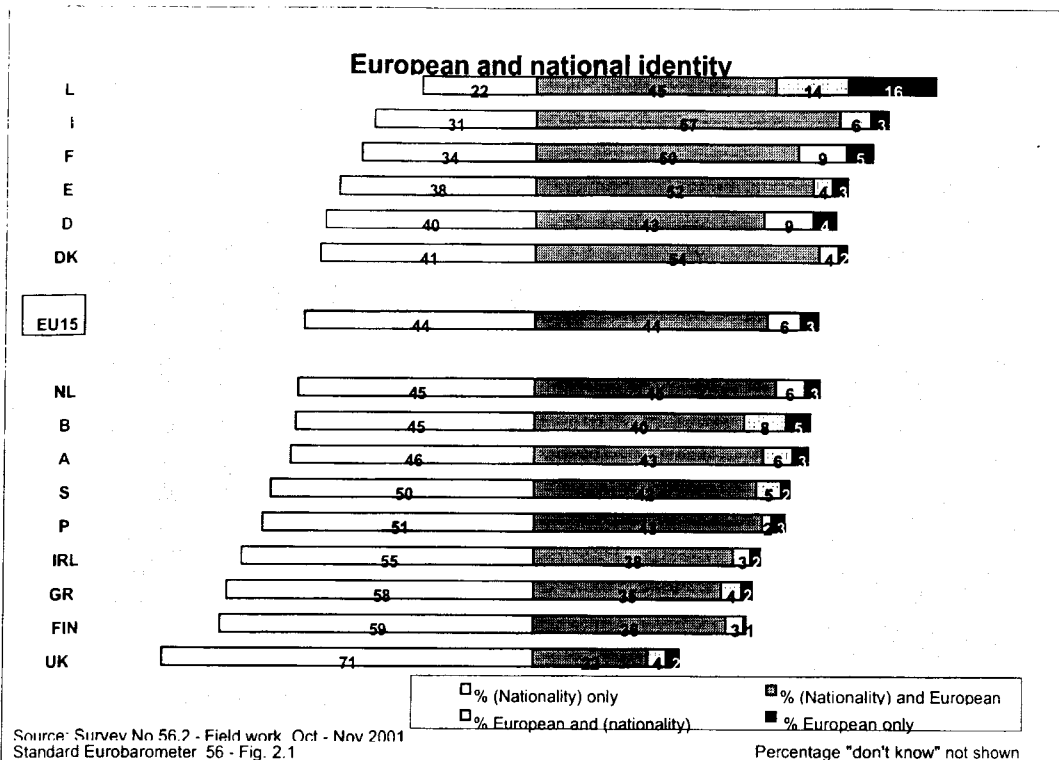
It is important to note that the data set out below were collected in October and November 2001, at a time when there was a good deal of (post-11 September) anxiety and prior to the introduction of the euro coins and notes. The Eurobarometer covers the 15 Member States. A special survey relating to the candidate countries was published in December 2001. It can be accessed on the Europa website².

1. A EUROPEAN IDENTITY WHICH IS NOT IN CONFLICT WITH NATIONAL IDENTITIES

In the near future, 54% of EU citizens see themselves as European to some degree (compared with 44% who continue to see themselves in terms of their nationality only), which is much the same as the average over recent years. Feeling European is strongly correlated to the age of completion of formal education. There are marked disparities between Member States, with Europeanness being a stronger element in the founding Member States, compared with 71% of UK citizens, who see themselves only as British.

¹ http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb56/eb56highlights_en.pdf
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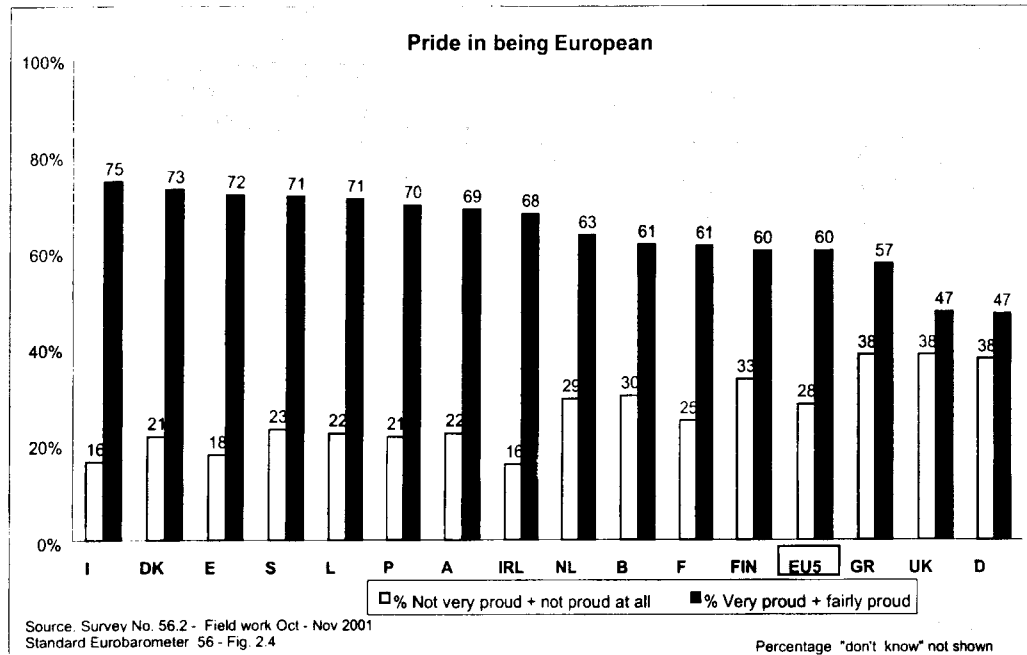
² http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/cceb_en.htm



Having said that, this study does not yet measure the impact of the arrival of the euro. According to a Flash survey done at the end of January³, 64% of people in the euro zone are completely or somewhat in agreement with the statement that "by using euros instead of (national currency), we feel a bit more European than before".

According to this autumn's Eurobarometer, **60% of EU citizens are very or quite proud of being European**, with a majority in each of the 15 Member States. It should perhaps be borne in mind, though, that 84% of respondents said they were proud of their own nationality.

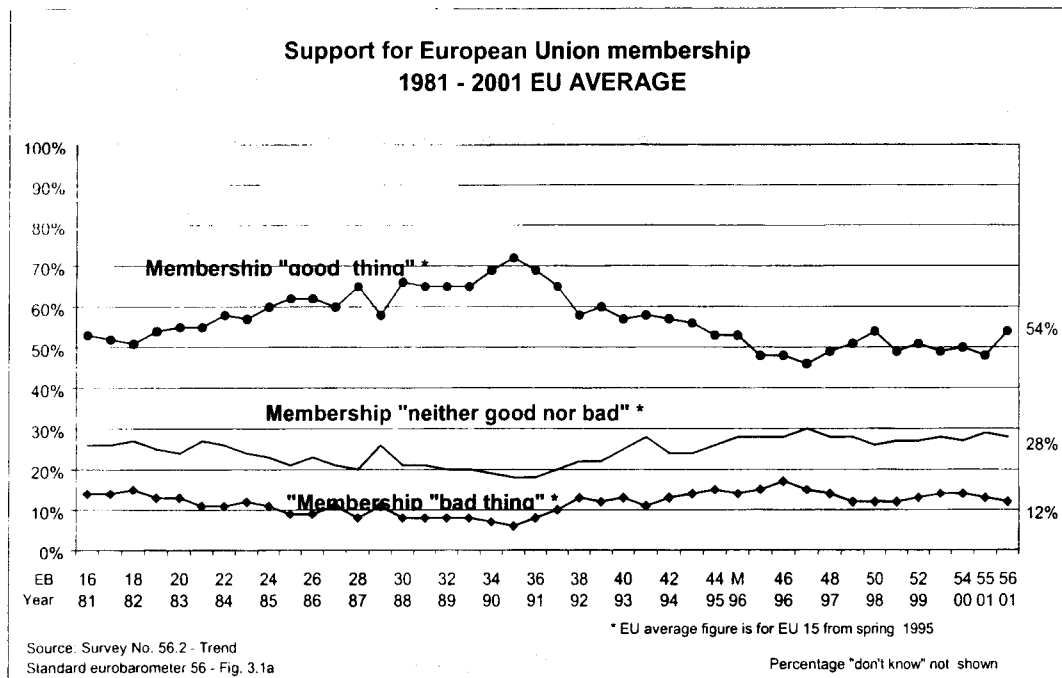
³ http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/flash/fl121_en.pdf



2. A MAJORITY IN FAVOUR OF "MORE EUROPE"

➤ A generally positive attitude

As was pointed out in conjunction with the initial results published in December 2001, **54% of EU citizens think their country's membership of the EU is a good thing** (as against only 12% who think it a bad thing, and 28% who think it neither good nor bad). As a result, support for membership of the EU has returned to the level it used to have before the Santer Commission resigned, although it is still far short of the record level of 1991 (when there were 71% who thought it a good thing). Opposition seems strongest in the United Kingdom and in the most recent Member States (Austria, Finland and Sweden).



By the same token, 52% think that their country has benefited from being a member of the EU, compared with 28% who do not.

Another encouraging sign is that 53% of the population trusts the EU, compared with 32% who do not. For the purposes of comparison, the respective figures are 48% and 44% for national governments.

➤ The desire for faster European integration

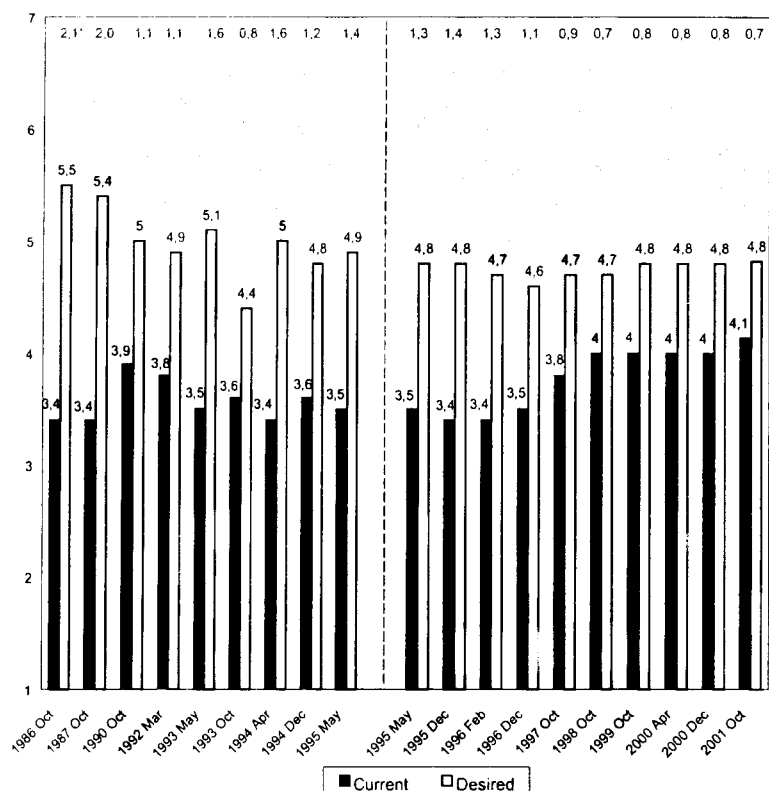
The "Eurodynamometer" is one of the "trend" questions which is regularly put to citizens of the EU. Respondents are asked to gauge the speed of European integration on a scale of 1 to 7, and then to indicate which speed is closest to what they would like. There seems to have some speeding-up; at any rate, the perceived speed now averages out at 4.1, which is the highest level recorded since the question was introduced in 1986. The desired speed averages out at 4.8, a figure which has remained virtually unchanged over recent years.

What this shows is that **the people of Europe would, on average, like Europe to integrate faster than is currently the case**, but that the gap between perceived speed and desired speed is tending to narrow.

The "Euro-Dynamometer" - Europe's Progress (EU12/EU15 average on 7-point scale - trend)



Europe's Progress Perceived current speed, desired speed (EU15)



Source: Survey no. 56.2 - Fieldwork Oct - Nov 2001
Standard Eurobarometer 56 - Fig. 3.5a

* Scale-value difference "desired" minus "current"

51% of Europeans think that the EU will be playing a more important role in their everyday lives in five years' time, and 45% hope that this will be the case (32% want roughly the same role, and 13% a less important role).

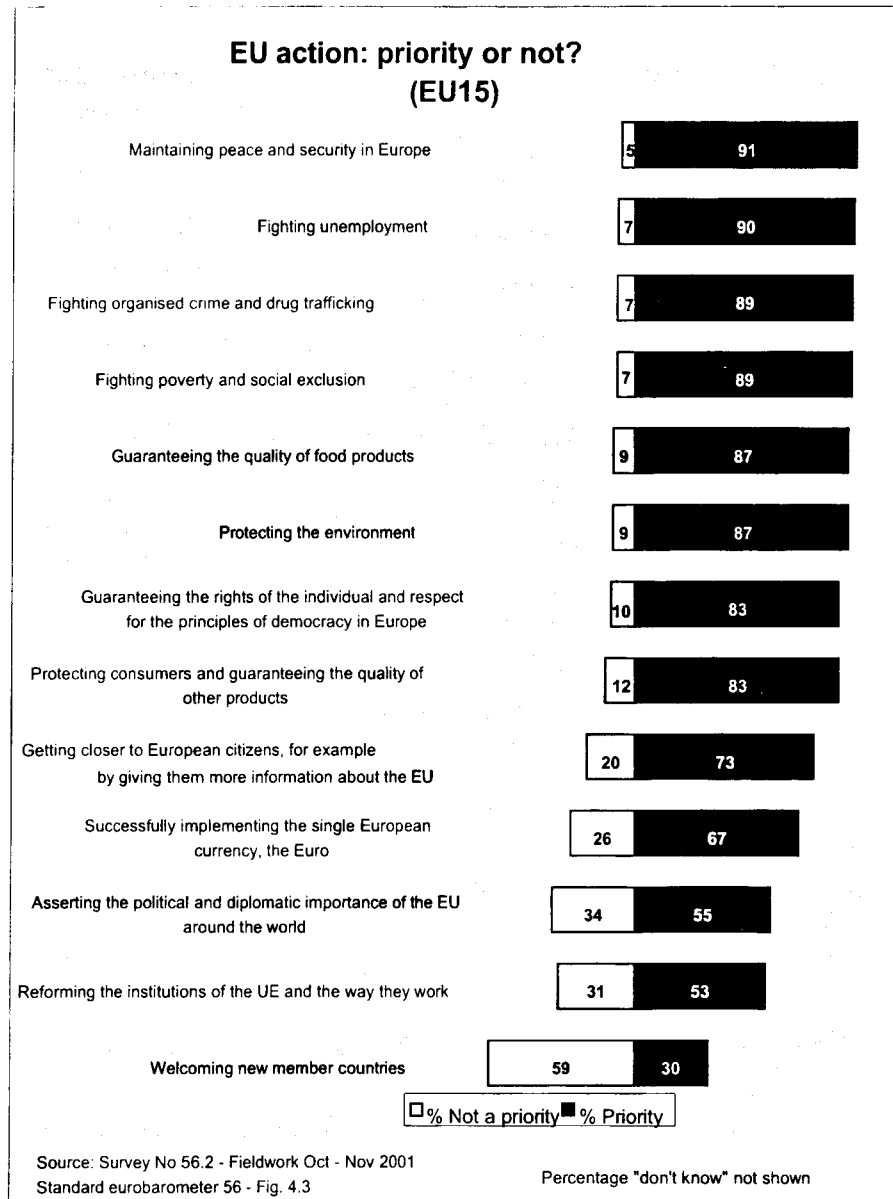
➤ The EU's priorities: a need for protection

Support for the EU's main policies is particularly high: Even before it really came into circulation, the euro had an approval rating of 61% (68% in the countries of the euro zone). The EU's common foreign policy (66%) and its common defence and security policy (73%) received very broad support in principle, and there was a majority in favour of enlargement (51%).

For the past few years, the Eurobarometer has regularly been asking respondents what should be the **EU's priorities**. Replies are markedly stable, underlining the extent to which **security-linked themes**, in the broad sense of the term, tend to

predominate. Nine out of ten people mention peace in Europe, tackling unemployment, combating organised crime and drug-trafficking, addressing poverty and social exclusion, and the quality of foodstuffs as priority policy sectors.

On the other side of the coin, welcoming new Member States tends to be further from people's immediate concerns, and is regarded as a priority by only 30% of respondents.

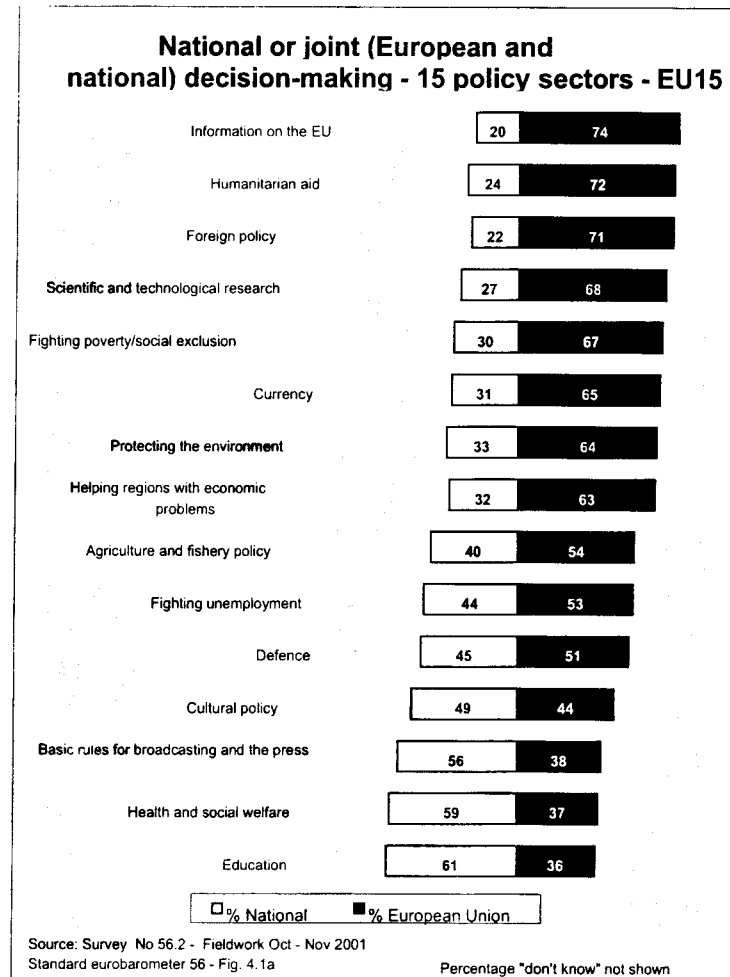


3. INSTITUTIONS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

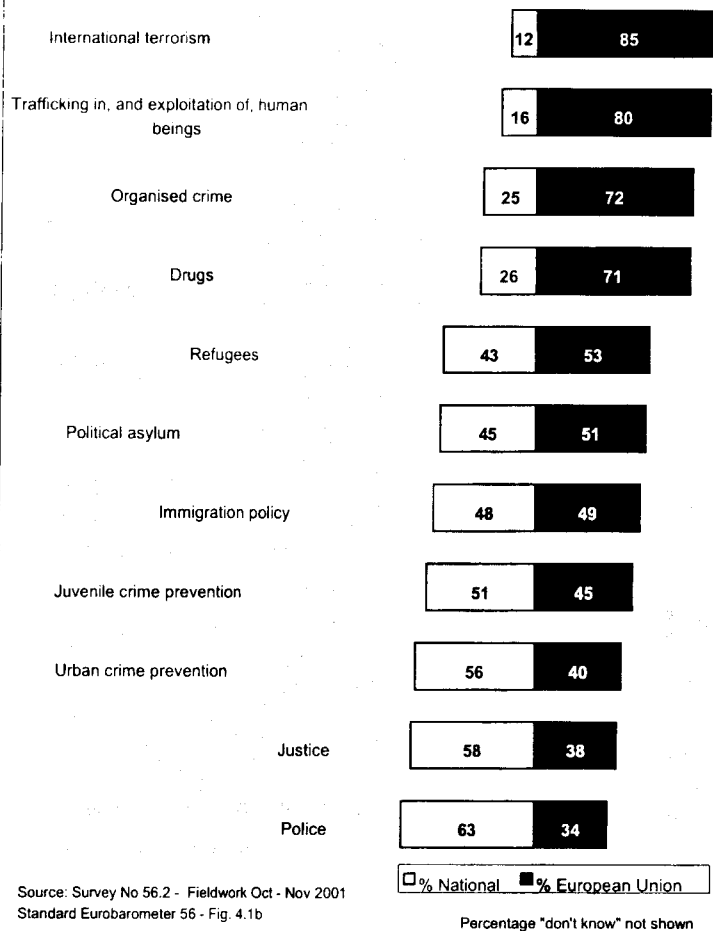
➤ National or European decision-making

As regards the level at which decisions should be taken, 26 themes were put to the test. There was a majority in favour of decisions being made by national

governments on eight of the themes (particularly clearly in terms of policing, education, health and social security and justice). On the other hand, joint decision-making within the EU was desired by a majority as far as the other 18 themes were concerned (including international terrorism, foreign policy, organised crime and drug trafficking, research, poverty and social exclusion and the environment).



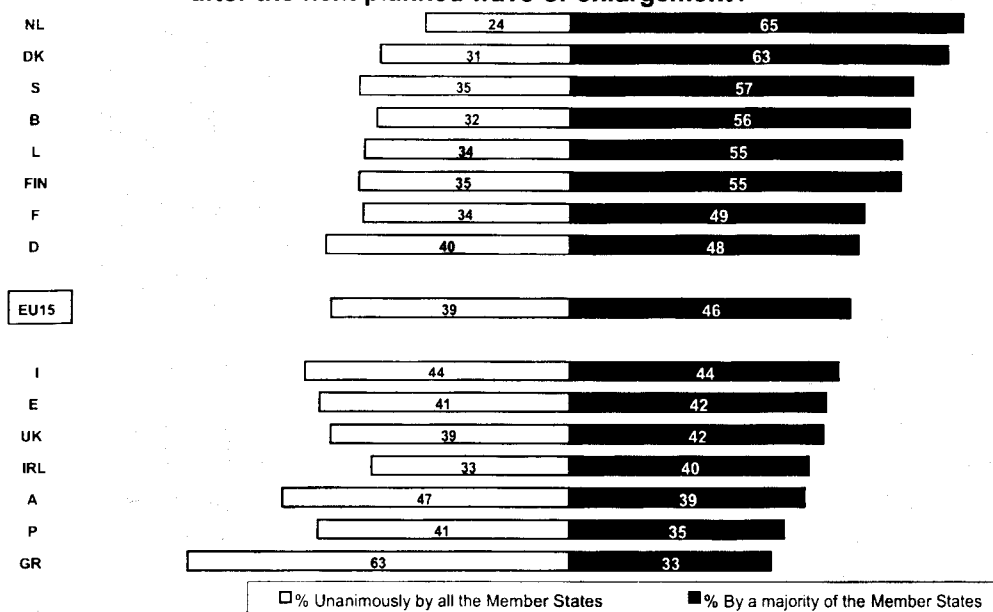
Decision-making in the wake of the Amsterdam Treaty (EU15)



➤ Unanimity or majority

Questioned as to how decisions should be taken in the post-enlargement EU, 46% thought that there should be majority voting on the part of the Member States, while 39% favoured unanimity. This question is admittedly somewhat simplistic, and reveals wide differences of approach from country to country.

How should European Union decisions be taken after the next planned wave of enlargement?



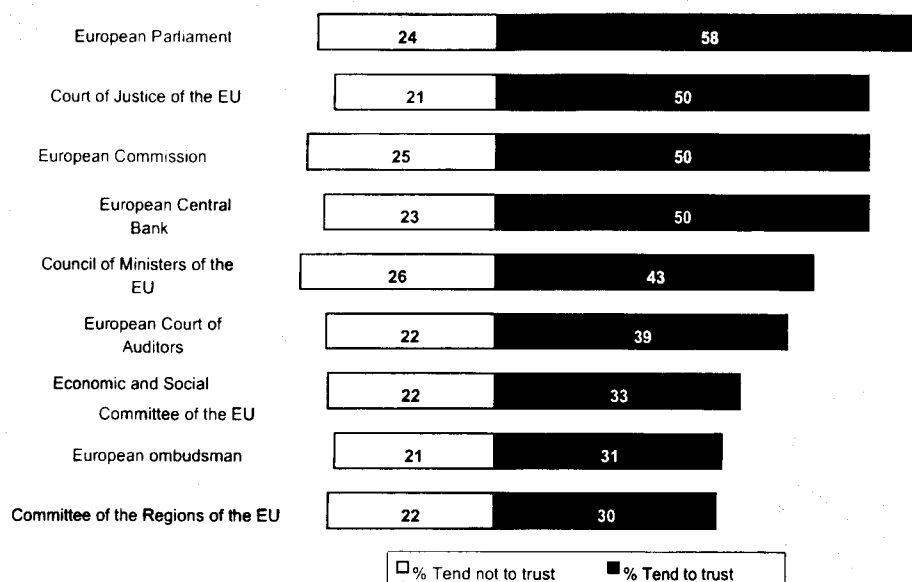
Source: Survey No 56.2 - Fieldwork Oct - Nov 2001
Standard Eurobarometer - Fig. 6.7

Percentage "don't know" not shown

➤ Most people trust the institutions

58% of respondents (as against 24%) trust the European Parliament, while 50% have the same feeling about the Commission and the Court of Justice, and 43% trust the Council.

Confidence in the EU institutions and bodies (EU15)



Source: Survey No 56.2 - Fieldwork Oct - Nov 2001
Standard Eurobarometer 56 - Fig. 3.8a

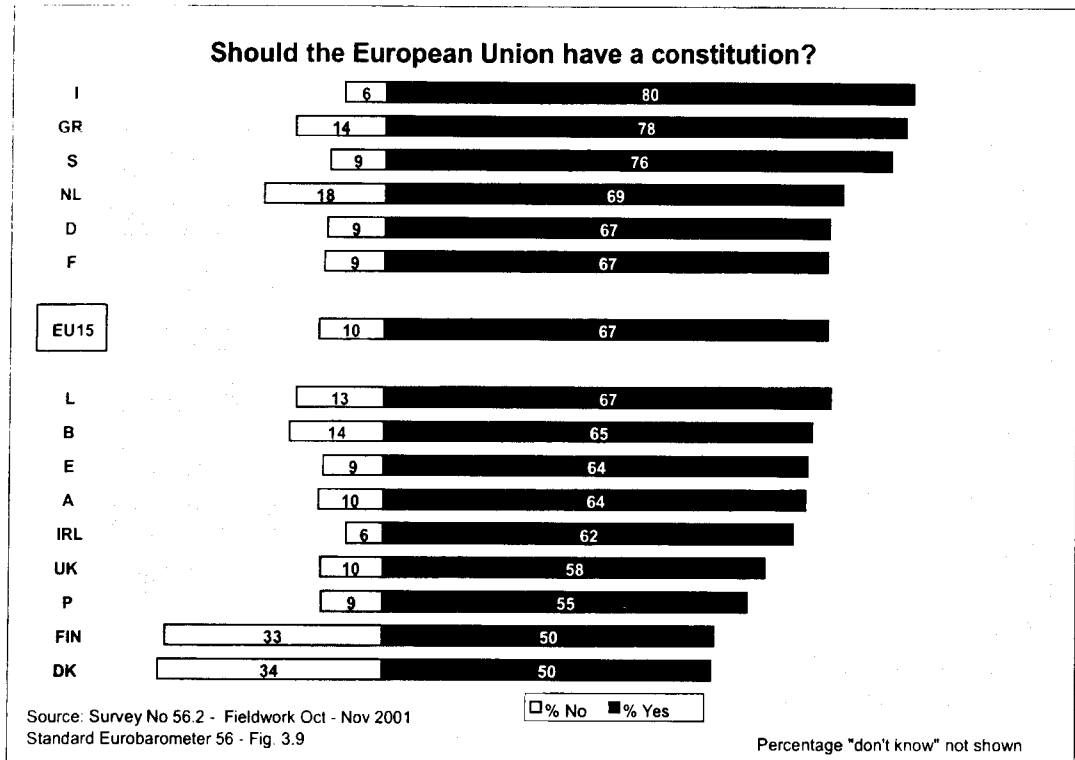
Percentage "don't know" not shown

➤ Lukewarm about democracy in the EU

These figures do not mean that people in Europe are satisfied about the way the EU works. Whereas 59% say they are very or quite satisfied as to how democracy works in their own countries, only 44% have the same view about democracy in the EU (compared with 38% who are quite or completely dissatisfied). Four years ago, the trend was the other way around (35% satisfied and 44% dissatisfied).

➤ Two in three in favour of an EU Constitution

Two-thirds of the population think that the EU should have a constitution of its own. Only one in ten reject the idea outright, but almost a quarter of people have no opinion.



How can we combine the general desire for a more active and effective EU with people's growing democratic expectations? This is one of the challenges that reform of the institutions will have to take up.