

# European Citizenship (2004 Edition)

Part 1: Summary of desk research

Conducted for the Institute for Citizenship



August 2004

# Introduction

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## Background

This report summarises the findings from desk research conducted for the Institute for Citizenship by the MORI Social Research Institute into public attitudes towards Europe, building on a similar exercise by MORI in August 2001. This piece of work will inform a series of seminars being organised by the Institute entitled *A Vision of Europe – Discussions on the Future of Europe*. It will also inform proposed polling by the Institute among the general public.

In conducting this project, MORI searched literature and internet sources for public opinion data on general attitudes to Europe, and European Union institutions, as well as on some specific policy questions. The following sources were used:

- MORI's own archive of data;
- the European Union's *Eurobarometer*\* surveys (that are based on c.1,000 interviews in each of the fifteen member states, carried out between 2 and 5 times per year, and using a face-to-face methodology). This report uses data from *Eurobarometer* 59 (Spring 2003), *Eurobarometer* 60 (Autumn 2003) and *Eurobarometer* 61 (Spring 2004); and
- the websites of other polling companies (ICM, NOP, Gallup and The Pew Research Centre).

This report is divided into three main sections:

- **General attitudes towards European citizenship**, which covers:
  - interest in European affairs;
  - feelings of belonging and identity with Europe.
- **Attitudes towards European institutions**, covering:
  - awareness and knowledge of EU institutions and legislation;
  - satisfaction, trust and efficacy ratings for the EU.
- **Attitudes to specific European citizenship issues**, including:

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\* *Eurobarometer* figures cited in this report are based on data collected from the fifteen EU Member States before expansion in 2004

- EU integration;
- EU enlargement;
- the European constitution;
- EU foreign and defence policies;
- media coverage of the EU.

Throughout this summary, the sources used by MORI have been provided in brackets after each finding. All MORI data is based on the population of Great Britain, unless otherwise stated. Eurobarometer data is based on the United Kingdom population (including Northern Ireland).

The desk research sought to provide data at a national level across Europe enabling comparison of opinion in Britain with other European Union countries (although this has not always been possible).

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# Main Findings

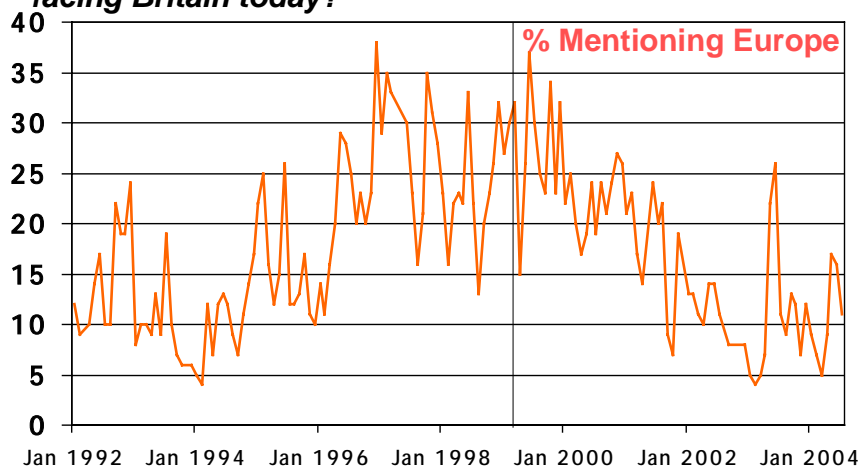
## A] General attitudes towards European citizenship

### 1) Interest in European affairs

- Issues related to European affairs are not considered to be among the most important facing Britain today. On a monthly basis, MORI asks the general public to list what they consider to be the most important issues facing the country. Europe consistently ranks outside the top five. During the run up to the 2004 European Parliament elections, Europe was considered to be the 6th most important issue (mentioned by 17% of the public), after Defence/Foreign Affairs (47%), the NHS (34%), Race Relations/Immigration (30%), Education (25%) and Crime (21%). (Source: MORI Political Monitor)

### Changing public priorities

**Q What do you see as the main/other important issues facing Britain today?**



Base: c. 1,000 British adults 18+

Source: MORI

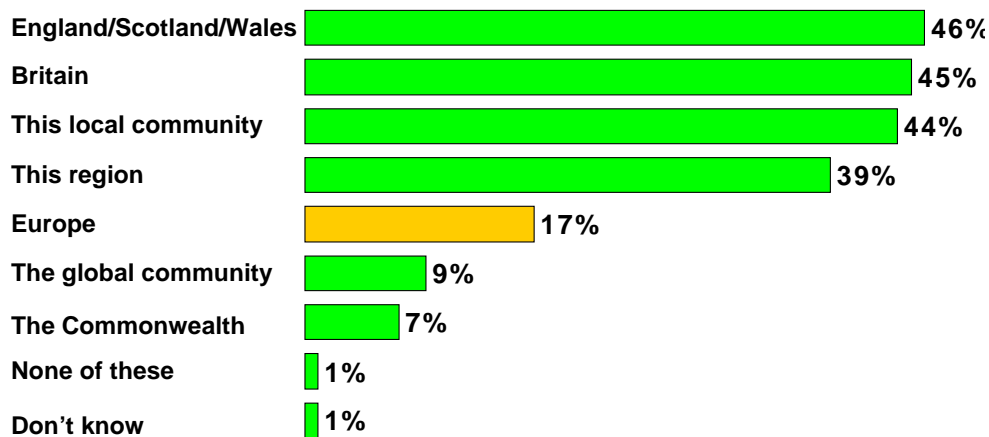
- The proportion of the British public mentioning Europe as an issue relates closely to media coverage, and the salience of Europe in May 2004 was higher than in previous months largely due to awareness of the European Parliament elections on June 10<sup>th</sup>. However, during the previous European Parliament Elections in June 1999, Europe was seen as the most important issue facing Britain (mentioned by 37% of people).

## 2) Feelings of belonging and identity with Europe

- Research conducted by MORI for the *Financial Times* last year found that the British public still identify much more with their own country than they do with Europe, with fewer than one in five (17%) saying that they most identify with Europe. (Source: MORI/FT April 2003)

### Low identity with Europe

**Q Which two or three of these, if any, would you most identify with?**



Base: 2,075 British adults 16+, 10-15 April 2003.

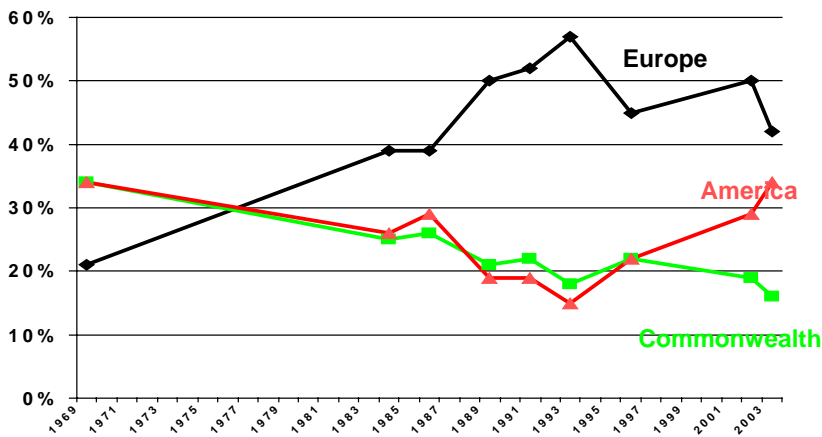
Source: MORI

- The British are also likely to say that they feel more ‘attached’ to their own country than they do to Europe, with over twice as many saying that they are attached to England/Scotland/Wales (88%) than they are to Europe (42%). Indeed, more say they ‘do not feel attached’ to Europe (56%), than say they feel attached. (Source: Eurobarometer 60)
- In fact, the British feel less attached to Europe than do residents of any other EU country, with the exception of people in the Netherlands (29% feel attached). The average EU15 countries is 58%, rising to 77% in Luxemburg. (Source: Eurobarometer 60). There has been little change since 2000 in the level of British ‘attachment’ to Europe, when the 42% said that they felt attached to Europe (the EU15 average was 59%).
- Low attachment reflects the fact that British people are unlikely to say they ‘feel’ European. Indicating very little change since 2000, six in ten (62%) Britons say that ‘in the near future’ they see themselves as ‘British only’, with 28% (up 1% since 2000) saying they feel ‘British and European’. The proportions saying they feel ‘European’ (3%) and ‘European and British’ (5%) are low. The UK still has the strongest sense of exclusive national identity, with the Finns following closely behind (57% saying they feel Finnish only). The EU15 average is 40%. (Source: Eurobarometer 60)

- The proportion of UK residents saying that they feel proud to be European is slightly higher (47%) than it was in 2000, when 44% said that they felt either ‘very or ‘fairly’ proud. Furthermore, fewer people in the UK now say they feel that they are ‘not very proud’ or ‘not at all proud’ to be European (40%), than in 2000 (44%). Citizens of the UK, however, still take less pride in being European compared with their EU15 neighbours (average is 61%). (Source: Eurobarometer 60)
- Nevertheless, British people do consider Europe to be more important than either America or the Commonwealth, although the perceived importance of Europe has decreased over recent years as the perceived importance of the United States has increased. (Source: MORI)

### But Europe is seen as more important than America or the Commonwealth

**Q Which of these - Europe, the Commonwealth or America - is the most important to Britain?**



Base: c1,000 British adults, excludes 'don't knows'

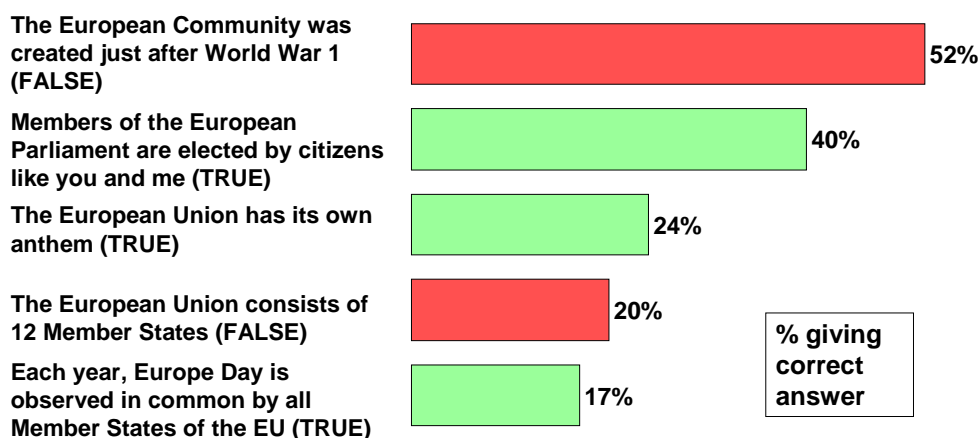
Source: MORI

## B] Attitudes towards European institutions

### 1) Awareness and knowledge of European institutions

- Nearly all UK citizens say they have heard of the European Parliament (87%) and most have heard of the European Commission (80%), the Court of Justice of the European Union (65%) and the European Central Bank (58%). Fewer than half of the UK population have heard of the Council of Ministers of the EU (40%), the European Ombudsman (39%), the European Court of Auditors (19%), the Committee of the Regions of the EU (16%) and the Economic and Social Committee of the EU (25%). Furthermore, awareness of these EU institutions tends to be lower than in other European countries (*Source: Eurobarometer 60*)
- One in five Britons say that they know ‘quite a lot’ (18%) or a ‘great deal’ (2%) about the European Union, its policies, its institutions and bodies, which is the same as in 2000. Although this is less than the average among the EU15 countries (27%), the data suggests UK citizens feel more knowledgeable than the Irish (19%), Spanish (18%) or the Portuguese (15%). (*Source: Eurobarometer 60*)
- Using a slightly different scale, recent MORI research for *The Electoral Commission/Hansard Society* shows almost a quarter (24%) of UK residents claim to know a fair amount about the European Union. This is much lower than claimed knowledge about local councils (38%) and the Westminster Parliament (33%). (*Source: MORI/Electoral Commission, December 2003*)
- Actual knowledge about the European Union among British adults appears to be limited. In a quiz on the Autumn 2002 Eurobarometer, in only one question out of five did a majority of UK adults answer correctly. (*Source: Eurobarometer 58*)
- The quiz results placed the United Kingdom fourteenth out of fifteen member states (31% average correct answers), with only The Netherlands knowing less (29%).

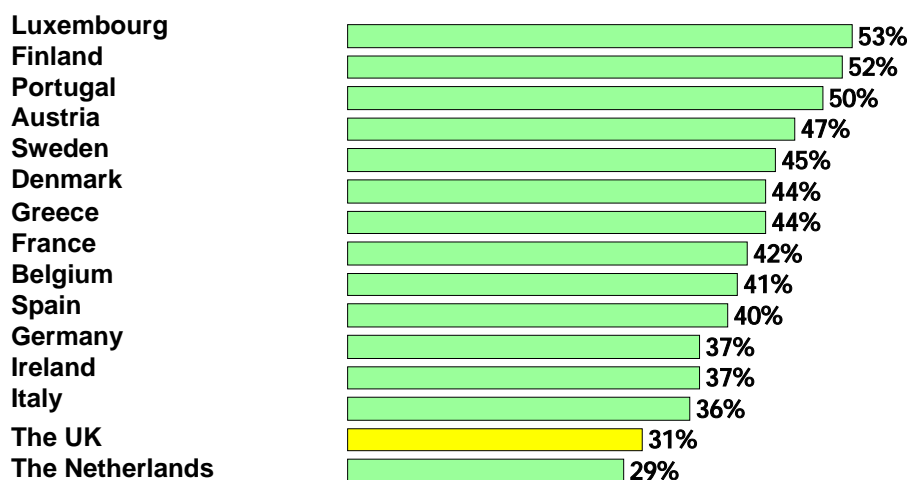
## People's knowledge of the European Union – True or False Quiz results (UK)



Base: c. 1,000 UK adults

Source: Eurobarometer 58I

## Quiz results - average % by correct answers (by country)



Base: Eurobarometer Spring 2003

Source: MORI

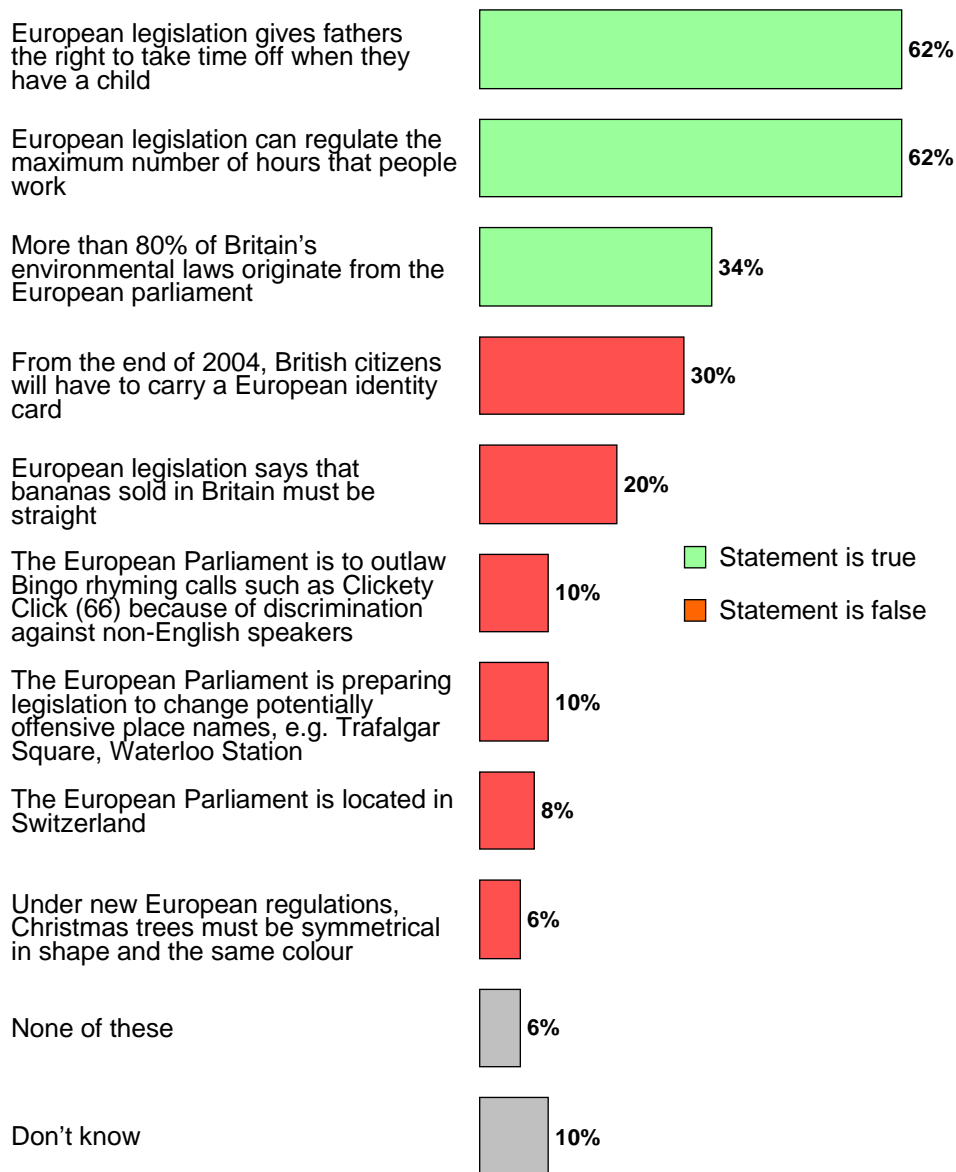
## 2) Awareness and knowledge of EU legislation

- Despite a seemingly limited knowledge of EU institutions and bodies, the UK public do not fare quite so badly when asked about some aspects of EU legislation. As shown in the following chart, when asked to decide whether a number of statements relating to European legislation are true or false, seven in ten (71%) answer at least six out of nine questions correctly, and 10% of the public answer all nine correctly.
- Almost two-thirds are correct in saying that European legislation gives fathers the right to take time off when they have a child and that it can

regulate the maximum number of hours that people work (both 62%). Just a third, however, agree with the true statement that 80% of Britain's environmental laws originate from the European Parliament. A similar proportion (30%) also think that from the end of 2004 British citizens will have to carry a European identity card. This is, in fact, false. (Source: MORI/Weber-Shandwick, Jan 2004)

## Euro Myths – True or False

**Q I would like you to look through the statements below and say which statements you think are true.**



Base: 2,020 UK respondents 18+, interviewed face to face, 15-20 Jan 2004

Source: MORI

### 3) Satisfaction with European Union membership

- MORI consistently finds in its research that the more informed people are about an institution, the more favourably disposed they tend to be towards that institution. This also applies in the European context.
- Three in ten UK citizens say they believe Britain's membership of the European Union is a good thing (29%) and that Britain has benefited from being a member (30%). These are the lowest scores for any EU country (EU15 average is 48% and 47%, respectively). The proportion saying 'don't know' for both these ratings are high in the UK – 13% (vs EU15 average of 8%) and 23% (vs. EU15 average of 18%), respectively. (*Source: Eurobarometer 61*)
- The recent *Pew Global Attitudes Project* in February 2004 also shows that Britons (44%) are less likely to have a favourable opinion of the European Union than adults in France (69%) or Germany (58%). (*Source: The Pew Research Center, March 2004*)
- MORI's latest research on membership of the European Union, conducted in June 2003, shows that the majority of the British public would vote to stay in the EU (54% of those expressing an opinion). This is similar to findings from May 2001 (53%), though down from the 62% recorded in June 2000 and down from the 1975 referendum result when 67% voted to stay in the EEC. (*Source: MORI*). A more recent ICM survey indicates that 58% of those expressing an opinion would vote to stay in the EU (*Source: ICM April 2004*)
- Three in ten (30%) of the UK public, are either 'very' or 'fairly satisfied' with the way democracy works in the Europe Union, with 42% dissatisfied. Over a quarter (27%) say they 'don't know', the highest figure in the EU. This represents a slight decline in satisfaction with democracy in Europe since 2000. Although satisfaction with EU democracy in the UK is lower than the average across the fifteen member states (42%), several other countries express greater levels of dissatisfaction. (*Source: Eurobarometer 60*)
- When asked if they agree that the European Parliament protects their interests, a quarter (24%) of the UK public 'totally' or 'tend to' agree, while 45% disagree. This balance of opinion is slightly less favourable than the prevailing view across the Union (35% on average agreeing, with 41% disagreeing). (*Source: Eurobarometer 60*)

#### 4) Trust

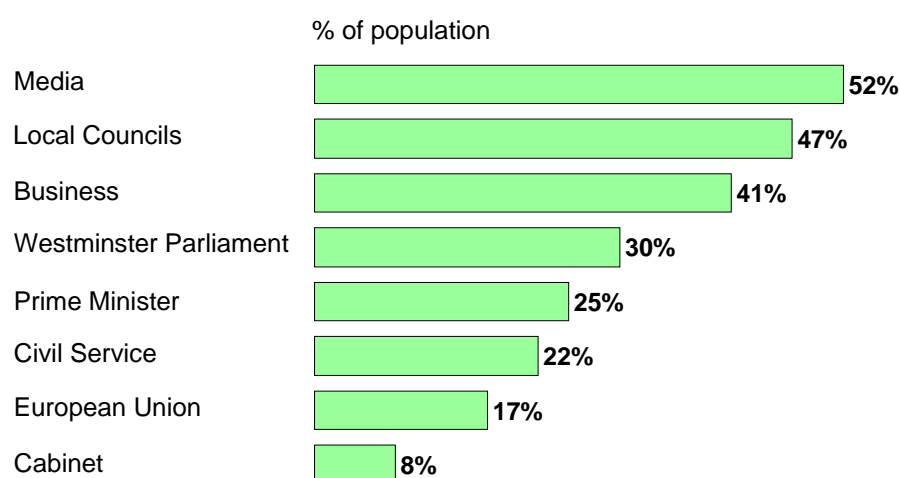
- There is a great deal of concern currently about low levels of trust in politicians and political institutions in the UK. MORI's annual "veracity" survey, for instance, shows that politicians generally, Government Ministers and journalists continue to be the least trusted professionals. To some degree, low levels of trust in political institutions reflect low engagement generally – in a wider context, Britons trust their national Parliament less than do citizens of any other EU15 country (*Eurobarometer 61*), and therefore low trust ratings, by the British, of European institutions should be viewed in this context. One in four UK adults say they 'tend to trust' the UK Parliament and 61% say they 'tend not to trust it'. The EU15 average for each countries' own parliament is 35% and 54%, respectively. At the same time, only one in five (21%) of UK adults think that corrupt political leaders is a very big problem in the UK, compared to 43% of Germans, 50% of the French and 61% of Italians saying this about their own countries.
- One in five (19%) UK adults say that they 'tend to trust' the European Union; almost three times as many (55%) say that they 'tend not to trust' the EU, while 26% don't know. The EU15 average is 41% tend to trust. (*Source: Eurobarometer 61*)
- In terms of the individual EU institutions and bodies, three in ten (30%) say that they trust the European Parliament. Forty-four percent say that they 'tend not to trust' it, while a quarter 'don't know'. Again, this represents the lowest trust rating of any EU15 country (average=54% trust), though Britons are also most likely not to give an opinion, reflecting their low levels of knowledge. (*Source: Eurobarometer 61*)
- Trust in the European Commission is lower still, with a quarter (26%) saying that they 'tend to trust' it and 39% saying that they 'tend not to trust' it, representing very little change in this regard since 2001. The EU15 average is 47% tend to trust. (*Source: Eurobarometer 61*)
- In fact, on balance, British people are distrustful of all of the different EU institutions with more saying that they 'tend not to trust' than trust each of the EU bodies. (*Source: Eurobarometer 60*)

## 5) Efficacy

- Low awareness, knowledge and satisfaction ratings of the European Union are not just symptoms of low levels of interest in European affairs. The British also think that the European Union has little impact on their lives. As the following chart illustrates, when presented with a list of eight different institutions, the European Union is seen as having most impact on people's lives by just 17% of UK adults – placing it seventh in the list, and much lower than either local councils (47%) or the Westminster Parliament (30%). (Source: MORI/Electoral Commission, Dec 2003)

### Efficacy

From this list, which two or three of the following do you believe have most impact on people's everyday lives? You can select up to three options



Base: 1,064 UK adults, 18+

Source: MORI

- Similarly, a minority of British people (12%) think that the activities and decisions of the European Parliament have 'a great effect' on people like themselves. Almost half (48%), however, acknowledge 'some effect', while a quarter (26%) do not think that the activities of the European Parliament impact on their lives at all. These figures are roughly in line with EU15 averages, if somewhat more negative. (Source: Eurobarometer 59)

## C] Attitudes to specific European citizenship issues

### 1) The advancement of European integration

- Just over a quarter of the UK public (27%) say that they are ‘for’ the development towards a European political union, with a similar proportion saying that they ‘don’t know’. The remaining half (48%) say that they are ‘against’ this development. Although the UK is behind Finland (49%) and Sweden (51%) in terms of opposing this development, on balance, Britons are much less favourable than the EU15 average (53% ‘for’). (Source: *Eurobarometer 60*)

### 2) EU Enlargement

- Just under a third of the UK public (31%) say that they support the enlargement of the European Union to include new countries. This compares with an EU15 average of 42% and is second lowest above only German support for enlargement (28%). (Source: *Eurobarometer 61*) The UK and Germany are the two greatest net contributors to the EU.
- This may also reflect the fact that the UK public feels less informed about the enlargement of the European Union. Fewer than one in six say that they feel ‘well informed’ (14%) or ‘very well informed’ (2%). Of the other EU 15 member states, only the Italians feel less well informed (15%). (Source: *Eurobarometer 59*)
- When asked in January 2004 to name which countries were to join the European Union in 2004, over half of British residents (55%) answered that they ‘don’t know’. Poland was the only new Member State to be recognised by a significant proportion (25%). (Source: *MORI/Weber-Shandwick, Jan 2004*)
- While the *Eurobarometer* surveys do not ask citizens of Europe what they understand European integration to mean, a recent MORI study sought to explore what European enlargement means to the British public. Just under half (47%) think that it will ‘lead to a huge influx of immigrants into Britain from the new member states’ (top mention). Over a third (36%) think that ‘enlargement is too ambitious and will end up costing Britain a lot of money’. A similar proportion, however, agree that enlargement ‘will mean that I can travel more easily and explore new destinations’. (Source: *MORI/Weber-Shandwick, Jan 2004*)

### 3) European constitution

- Two in five favour a European constitution. Under half (42%) of the UK public say that they are ‘for’ it, representing the second lowest level of support for a European constitution after Denmark (37%). It is worth noting, however, that the proportion of the UK public ‘against’ a constitution (24%) is by no means the highest in Europe; rather the UK records the highest proportion (34%) of ‘don’t knows’ on this matter. This suggests that

there is scope for the Government to win a European constitution referendum under the right circumstances. (*Source: Eurobarometer 61*)

- However, recent ICM research shows that only one quarter (25%) of the British public believe that Britain should sign up to the new EU constitution, with over half (55%) thinking it should not (in this survey 29% say ‘don’t know’). The majority of the public (51%) also think that Britain will *not* have to withdraw from the EU in the event of a ‘no’ vote in the referendum, even if this argument is used by the Prime Minister. Furthermore, two thirds (65%) think that in the event of a no vote in the referendum, the Government should not be allowed to hold a second referendum. (*Source: ICM April 2004*)

#### **4) Common foreign and defence policies**

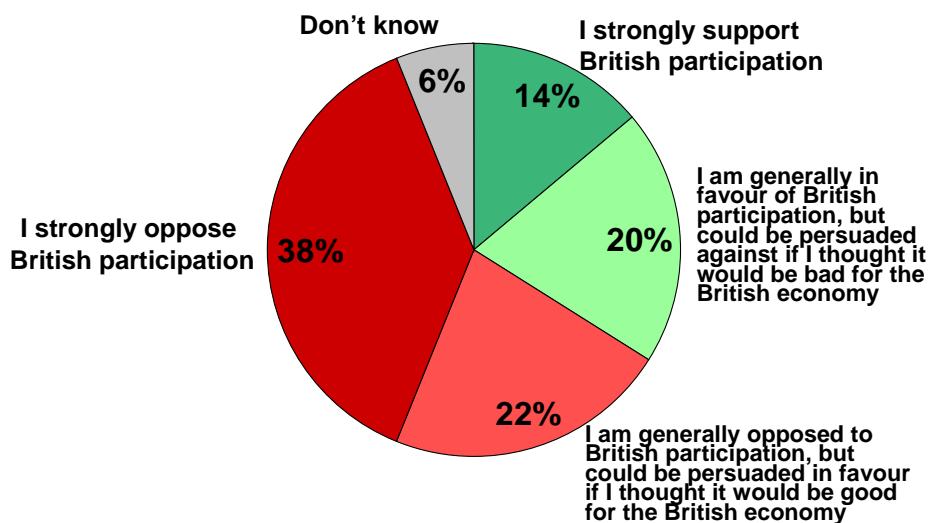
- UK opinion regarding a common European foreign policy is split. Four in ten (39%) Britons say that they are ‘for’ having one common foreign policy among the Member States of the European Union; while the very same proportion are ‘against’. On balance, the UK is the only EU15 Member State that is not positive overall about this idea. (EU15 average is 65% support) (*Source: Eurobarometer 61*)
- Support for a common defence and security policy among the Member States of the European Union is slightly higher (52%), though again this is the lowest level of support among the EU15 member states. (EU average is 72%) (*Source: Eurobarometer 61*)
- This does not necessarily mean that the UK public thinks that foreign policy should be based on an exclusively national agenda. A majority of the UK public (58%) agrees that decisions regarding foreign policy towards countries outside the European Union should be made jointly within the EU, as opposed to a third (32%) who feel that such decisions should be made at a national level. (EU15 average is 72% made jointly with the EU) (*Source: Eurobarometer 60*)
- However, Britons are much more likely than the French, and somewhat more likely than the Germans to think that ‘the relationship between the U.S. and Western Europe should remain as close as it has been’ (40%, 21% and 36%, respectively). Britons are also much less keen for the European Union to become as powerful as the U.S. Only half of the British public (50%) say this would be a good thing, compared with 70% of Germans and 90% of the French. (*Source: The Pew Research Center, March 2004*)

## 5) The single currency

- In February 2004, by a margin of about two to one, the British public said they would vote against joining the single currency (60% against to 28% in favour). There is only a slight swing in favour of membership if "the Government were to strongly urge membership". In September 2001, a quarter of the public said they would vote in favour (25%) and over half said they would vote against (55%), with one in six not giving no opinion either way (17%). (*Source: MORI*)
- As well as asking about how people say they would vote in a referendum, MORI regularly asks about the strength of attitudes towards the Euro. The latest research, carried out in September 2003, shows that around two in five people (42%) could be persuaded in favour or against membership of the Euro depending on how it would affect the British economy. In other words, they say they generally support or oppose British participation in the Euro, but might be persuaded to change their minds if they felt it was good or bad for the British economy. (*Source: MORI*)

### British Participation in the euro?

**Q Which of the following best describes your own view of British participation in the single currency?**



Base: 1,976 British adults, 18+, 11-16 September 2003 Source: MORI/FT

Source: MORI

- It is clear, however, that at present the economic case for Euro membership has not persuaded British citizens. In December 2003, 23% of Britons agreed that the EU is a success and that Britain will be more prosperous and secure if we join the Euro and give more powers to the EU. More than double that figure, however, (67%) said that they feel that Europe is failing and that Britain will be more prosperous and secure if we keep the pound and take powers back from the EU. (*Source: ICM European Union Survey, December 2003*)
- Over the last few years, Britain's Captains of Industry have also become more sceptical about Euro membership. In 2001, 59% of Captains said they

supported the principle of Britain participating in a single European currency and 36% opposed. By 2003, attitudes had become more evenly divided (47% support and 48% opposed). (Source: MORI)

## 6) Media coverage of the European Union

- In terms of media coverage of the EU, just over a third of UK citizens (35%) say they think that the British media provide about ‘the right amount’ of coverage about the European Union, with 17% saying that they talk ‘too much’ about the EU and 34% agreeing that they talk ‘too little’ about it. However, with the exception of the Spanish, and despite generally low awareness and knowledge of the EU, the British are most likely to consider that their national press give *too much* coverage to the European Union. (Source: Eurobarometer 60)
- Looking at the nature of media coverage given to the European Union, just over a third of UK people (35%) think that their own media represent the subject ‘objectively’ (EU15 average = 41%). Those who do not consider coverage to be objective are more likely to think that the European Union is portrayed ‘too negatively’ (27%) than ‘too positively’ (12%). The EU15 average scores are 12% (too negatively) and 23% (too positively). (Source: Eurobarometer 60)