

# THE EU AND PUBLIC OPINIONS: A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP?

Salvatore Signorelli

*Foreword by Julian Priestley*

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## FOREWORD

by Julian Priestley

**O**pinion polling is now a standard tool of governance almost everywhere. Although the institutions of the European Union had been behind the curve compared with Member States, the problems of legitimacy, compounded by the complexity of communicating in a Union of 27 Member States, has prompted first the Commission and then the Parliament, to use polling as a routine part of policy formation, both up- and downstream of decision-making—a means of both informing public opinion and being informed by it. With time the sophistication of the techniques employed and the range of tools available have been developed almost beyond recognition.

The instrument of choice has been Eurobarometer, and in this study for *Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute*, Salvatore Signorelli, a political scientist tells the history of European public opinion polling, including a fascinating vignette of the original promoters of the project. His experience in both the Commission and the European Parliament's 'Public Opinion Monitoring Unit' enables him to tell the story in full how the institutions came to embrace these methods.

For the history of the Union's relationship with public opinion has been a tortuous one, from the functionalist approach of the 1950s which kept citizens at arm's length from policy making almost as a matter of principle, to the Commission's 'plan D for democracy' in 2005, a near panic reaction to the upsets of the French and Dutch referendums on the constitutional treaty, which sought to address the problem of the information deficit and which sanctified the use of polling by Commission departments as an everyday accompaniment to their policy work. When one reads the lists produced by the author of policies which have gone through the mill of deliberative polling, opinion surveys, structured interviewing and focus groups one can only marvel at the scale and scope of the consultative exercise. And these policy based exercises are in addition to the annual reports on the state of public opinion, on general

attitudes to European construction, and on citizen's views about future perspectives. Signorelli cites the extraordinary Eurobarometer data base, accumulated over 38 years, of 150 annual reports with the involvement of 300,000 citizens.

So if the esteem in which the Union is held is in continuous decline, if fewer and fewer people reply positively to the question whether their country benefits from its membership of the Union, and if its institutions enjoy less trust, this is not for want of information about public attitudes, expectations and opinions. It is not to underestimate the potential usefulness of polling to say that the Union's problems of acceptance and legitimacy may well lie elsewhere.

The first problem identified forty years ago remains. The institutions of the Union are now better informed about the concerns of citizens but the citizens remain poorly informed about the Union. This is not for want of effort by the Commission, by its representations in Member States, by the Parliament with its vastly expanded communication activities and the efforts of its members. The Parliament is rightly proud of its exploitation of the new social media, and its burgeoning presence on internet in a variety of forms. But until a quality debate about choices for Europe's future takes centre stage throughout the Union not just episodically when referendums are organised or during the different instalments of the latest phase of the economic crisis but systematically day in and day out, then the information deficit will remain and the full potential of regular consultation and monitoring of public opinion will not be realised.

And here, in the absence of a truly European media, and with European public opinion remaining a concept that is at best only partly formed those that should be the protagonists in that permanent debate about European questions – the political parties – have their full part to play. And the occasion best suited to the widest consultation of all of public opinion is of course the election to the European Parliament, the definitive opinion poll, but one which needs to be the culmination of protracted and informed debate about the main issues and policies of European integration.

For there is a danger with excessive recourse to opinion polling. It is as Jacques Delors (cited by Signorelli) pointed out the risk that 'Public opinion polls

dictate policy'. Of course political leaders should have every information about the views of citizens, their attitudes to policies, their prejudices and expectations, but then the politicians not the focus groups should be the ones to decide. To subcontract decision-making to opinion polls would be the ultimate betrayal of the trust and responsibility of the political class.

At a time when Europe requires courageous leadership above all else, the moment calls for leaders to listen to public opinion, to possess accurate analysis of the views and expectations of citizens, but then to take the decisions in the general and long term interest, all the while explaining and informing tirelessly. Building Europe – which because it requires the pursuit of the long-term and the general interest was always going to be ‘a hard sell’ for the general public compared with facile euroscepticism – requires open, receptive and transparent leadership but it is the quality of the leadership itself which is indispensable.

*Sir Julian Priestley was Secretary General of the European Parliament from 1997 to 2007. He now writes and speaks about European questions. His latest book Europe's Parliament; People, Places and Politics (co-authored with Stephen Clark and with a preface by Jacques Delors) was published this year by John Harper Publishing.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**his study analyses the way in which Community institutions “relate” to the public opinion measured at European level. The idea is not to question whether European public opinion<sup>1</sup> exists – which is the subject of much debate and will probably continue to be until people “need” for it to exist so that they can use it to demand things<sup>2</sup> – but rather to report on what Community institutions are doing, and why they are doing it, namely by conducting transnational opinion surveys, in the 27 countries that make up today’s European Union.

In this context, our study focuses on:

1. Analysing the European public opinion survey instruments available to Community institutions and how they work;
2. Studying the role of various Community institutions in defining and guiding public opinion investigation instruments in the European Union (mainly the Eurobarometer-EB) and their way of reading the results;
3. Understanding the related political issues as much as possible, given the imperviousness of power, or rather, the difficulty in bridging the gap between the public and the upper echelon of decision-makers.

1. See Pierre Bourdieu, “L’opinion publique n’existe pas” (1973), in *Questions de sociologie*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1980, pp. 222-235; Philippe Champagne, *Faire l’opinion. Le nouveau jeu politique*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1990; Jürgen Habermas, *L’espace public*, Paris, Éditions Payot et Rivages, 1990; Dominique Reynié, *La fracture occidentale. Naissance d’une opinion européenne*, Paris, La Table-ronde, 2004 and “L’idée d’une ‘opinion européenne’”, in *Raisons politiques*, Presses de Sciences Po, 2005/3 – no. 19, pp. 99-117; Jean-Baptiste Legavre, “L’Opinion publique européenne” in Yves Déloye (dir.), *Dictionnaire des élections européennes*, Paris, Economica, 2005, pp. 491-494; Andy Smith, “L’espace public européen: une vue (trop) aérienne”, in *Critique internationale*, No. 2 – winter 1999, pp. 169-181; Philippe Aldrin, “L’Union européenne face à l’opinion. Constructions et usages politiques de l’opinion comme problème communautaire”, in *Savoir/Agir*, 7/2009, pp. 13-23.

2. Jean-Baptiste Legavre, *op. cit.*, p. 493. There is a consensus about the idea that public opinion, as a conceptual figure, is consubstantial to democracy. For the rest “to speak with precision of public opinion is a task not unlike coming to grips with the Holy Ghost”; Vladimir O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1961, p. 7. Quoted by Mathieu Brugidou, *L’opinion et ses publics. Une approche pragmatiste de l’opinion publique*, Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2008, p. 16. From the first page of the introduction of his well-known work on “the public sphere”, Jürgen Habermas affirms that it is impossible for scientific fields (first and foremost law, politics and sociology) to substitute the traditional category of “public opinion” with a precise definition. Because “Non-public opinions are widespread, while ‘the’ public opinion (in the singular) remains fictitious”, however, and this study shares the same consideration, “we must not reject the concept of public opinion in that it is a paradigm, since the constitutional reality of a social State should be included in the process in which the public sphere is created... It is in the perspective of this social-political evolution that we must therefore establish criteria to assess opinions from an empirical point of view, and to evaluate their more or less public nature”. Jürgen Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

Initial conclusions are as follows:

1. **EU political and institutional policy has created a unique decision-making context in which analysing what the public says in opinion polls is not merely a simple instrument to collect information but a source of legitimacy.**
2. **Although public opinion analysis by Community stakeholders can be included in the set of EU “governance tools”, the structure that is devoted to it is part of “supervision and support” administrations, particularly the one that defines communication policy.** For that reason, our arguments have **mainly centred on the European Commission** because, in its “historic” role as “the voice” of European integration<sup>3</sup>, it has become the legitimate institution to implement and manage an official system for public opinion analysis. **Although the European Parliament has actively supported the Commission in this role from the outset, the Commission is no longer almost solely responsible for opinion polls. The Parliament is beginning to take a direct interest in them and to allocate its own funds to them,** which is a result of changes to EU institutions over time.
3. **The Eurobarometer is an effective investigative instrument for the Community institutions, but also more generally the public.** The ambitious goal of its creators may be considered partially accomplished because the regular publication of Eurobarometer surveys has certainly helped give life to the “idea” that there is a European public opinion. **Opinion leaders are now taking the opinion of Europeans into consideration and thereby have a vast database they can use to determine its geography.** Despite the more or less general lack of interest of national stakeholders in “Brussels”, it is important to study **the Eurobarometer, since it has become an essential source for intellectuals and Community policymakers since its institutionalisation.**
4. The Eurobarometer remains a database, which was established with the methodological and intellectual support of researchers in social sciences, but also an instrument designed and used by political institutions. Because of its hybrid design, **the political commitment of the Eurobarometer does not automatically translate into total control of the instrument, but rather slight pressure, which is felt within EU political priorities.**

3. We are referring here to the Spokesperson's Service and accredited journalists at Berlaymont.



## INTRODUCTION

*“All power informs. All power is informed. Even if the powers of the institutions of the European Community were parsimoniously granted to them from the outset by their Member States, those who had been given the responsibility to conduct them – I’m thinking of men like Jean Monnet, the first President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, or Walter Hallstein, the first President of the European Economic Commission – from the beginning of their terms of office, sought to inform the public and keep themselves informed: inform the public, better referred to as “citizens” of an emerging “Community”, inform themselves of the needs and expectations of the populations.”*

Jacques-René Rabier<sup>4</sup>

From the late 1950s, there has been a press service in Brussels and an information service that commissioned the first opinion polls on the attitude of citizens with regard to European integration. These administrations’ role of supervision and support focused on establishing contacts with newspaper circles and what has been called “feedback”, in other words, opinion studies and media monitoring. The idea was to find ways to measure what was reported in the media, the reputation and even the success of actions or events launched by the European Communities.

4. Jacques-René Rabier, “Les origines de l’Eurobaromètre”, Catholic University of Louvain-la Neuve, Conference held in April 1992, quoted in Anna Melich, “Eurobarometer surveys and European integration” in Pierre Bréchon et Bruno Cautrès (dir.), *Les enquêtes Eurobaromètres. Analyse comparée des données socio-politiques*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1998 (Translation by Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute).

With the political changes initiated from the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, the context has changed because the European Union stakeholders no longer merely work on the basis of a “cold” customs union and market integration, but have become administrators of a regional democracy model. This is the result of a unique “multi-level governance” in which a framework has been established where public problems can be resolved. In addition to this new political revolution, European authorities have been given a new legitimacy and now find themselves forced to seek the citizens’ *consensus*: Europeans’ support has now become the absolute precondition of the policymaking process, which has thus far been conducted in diplomatic circles and negotiations of national administration officials<sup>5</sup>.

Parallel to these political developments that generated a unique decision-making context, what the public says in opinion polls has taken on new meaning: it is no longer a simple instrument to provide information, but a source of legitimacy for a bold political project. In line with the intention of the Eurobarometer’s creator, Jacques-René Rabier, the former Director-General of the Press and Information Directorate-General of the Commission, polls that were to be used to guide information policy more effectively and reveal the Europeans to each other, swiftly became an instrument to help define and evaluate policies. Increasingly, polls mainly conducted on behalf of the Commission, but also of the Parliament or other European institutions, not only serve as a tool to prepare policy (reading of input), but also as a tool to evaluate such policy (weighting of output).

In the pages that follow, we will seek to describe the way the Eurobarometer works and to discover if there are other “new” experiments able to measure European citizens’ opinion and focus on deliberative polling. This new type of opinion survey apparently combines the polling technique with deliberation thereby making it possible to measure an “optimum” public opinion<sup>6</sup>. Apparently, it is also able to provide a subsequent legitimising argument, which comes from a participatory approach of opinions in surveys, as opposed

5. Philippe Aldrin et Jean-Michel Utard, *La résistible politisation de la communication européenne. Genèse des controverses et luttes d’institutions autour d’un Livre blanc*, published in the *Archive ouverte en sciences de l’information et de la communication*, 2010, p. 10.

6. “At best, ordinary polls offer a snapshot of public opinion as it is, even when the public has little information, attention, or interest in the issue. Deliberative Polling, by contrast, is meant to offer a representation of what the public would think about an issue under good conditions”: James S. Fishkin, “Making Deliberative Democracy Practical: Public Consultation and Dispute Resolution”, *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution*, 2011, Columbus, p. 611.

to passive confirmation of closed questionnaires (*see infra* § 1.2.4.). Such questionnaires are easily associated with the idea of “permissive consensus” that characterised citizens’ tacit support for European integration<sup>7</sup>.

However, it should be added, to avoid misleading the reader, that, as in all analyses that exclusively concern certain aspects of a decision-making system, the “political role” that opinion surveys play in the Commission’s work should be assessed by considering the institutional context in which policies are shaped in Europe. If public opinion analysis is more popular than ever that does not mean it is the “primary source” of political inspiration for action the European Commission decides to take. This is far from being the case. On the contrary, it would be better to seek suggestions in the “political pressures” of the European Parliament and Council that can be used to determine solutions for public problems, because they are certainly more “immediate”.

Against this backdrop, our study focuses on:

1. Analysing the European public opinion survey instruments available to Community institutions and how they work;
2. Studying the role of various Community institutions in defining and guiding public opinion investigation instruments in the European Union (mainly the Eurobarometer-EB) and their way of reading their results;
3. Understanding the related political issues as much as possible, given the imperviousness of power, or rather, the difficulty in bridging the gap between the public and the upper echelon of decision-makers.

7. On this topic, see Henri Monceau, “The European Constitution and Deliberation”, *Study No. 45, Notre Europe*, Paris, 2005; Laurie Bousaguet, “Listening to Europe’s citizens. An assessment of the first experiments in participation organised at EU level”, *Policy Paper No. 44, Notre Europe*, Paris, 2011.

# 1. European public opinion analysis instruments

The creation of the Eurobarometer has granted Community institutions, and more generally speaking, national and European public authorities, an efficient public opinion analysis tool. Besides these predominantly quantitative data and the regular EB publications, Community institutions can make a conscious effort to read public opinions recorded in the *verbatim* of qualitative surveys, or innovative experiments such as deliberative polling.

## 1.1. The origins of the Eurobarometer: a brief overview

The idea of European public opinion is closely linked to the instrument, which is almost unanimously considered its “maker”: the Eurobarometer. As the only tool to measure public opinion regularly, it has become something of a European institution that has made its small contribution to research and the advancement of European integration policy<sup>8</sup>. The fact that the Eurobarometer has no competition (or almost none, as can be seen in the pages that follow) can be explained by the amount of costs and organization involved in transnational surveys, which are only mainly conducted for particularly powerful institutions, while national surveys are affordable for an organization, press agency, union or party<sup>9</sup>.

To learn about the origins of the Eurobarometer (hereinafter referred to as EB), we need to go back to the 1960s, and specifically 1963, with the publication of the first study in the review *Sondages* of the *Institut français de l'opinion publique* entitled “*L'opinion publique et l'Europe des Six*”. New surveys were conducted in 1970 and 1971, such as “*L'opinion des Européens sur les aspects régionaux et agricoles du Marché commun, l'unification politique de l'Europe et l'information du public*” in December 1971, and “*Europeans and European Unification*” in 1972, but there was no continuity from one survey to another.

8. Anna Melich, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

9. “... for the same reasons, it is more difficult and rare to measure the changes in opinion at international level”: Dominique Reynié, *La fracture occidentale*, *op. cit.*, p. 55 [Translation by *Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute*].

It was not a long-term project, but the outcome of a scientific experiment. This is when the need for a regular opinion monitoring mechanism became apparent and why in 1973, the Commission decided to create a six-monthly poll programme to monitor public opinion in its Member States **on a regular basis**.

### BOX 1 ► The creator of the Eurobarometer

**Jacques-René Rabier**, the man behind the Eurobarometer (EB) programme, was a senior official and involved in social sciences. His name remains inextricably linked to the Eurobarometer project. Rabier was born in Paris in 1919 and studied political economy and law at the Sorbonne University and the *École Libre des Sciences Politiques*. During the war, he frequented intellectual circles where the individualist philosophy of Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain was discussed. Introduced by the economist François Perroux to Mounier, he joined the editorial board of the review *Esprit*. In 1946, he started working for the Office of the General Commissioner of the Modernisation and Equipment Plan of France in Paris as a Special Assistant then Director of the Private Office of the General Commissioner, Jean Monnet. In 1952, Monnet, who had been for some months in Luxembourg as head of the ECSC High Authority, asked him to join his private office. Rabier then started working for the ECSC. Immediately he became responsible for writing a monthly report that helped parliamentary members and the public opinion learn more about the High Authority's activities. It was the first step towards a future information service. In 1958, he became the Press and Information Director-General of the High Authority, which would later become a joint Press and Information Service in the European Commission when the EEC was established in Brussels. Rabier held conferences, seminars and many workshops. Between 1970 and 1973, he headed the Press and Information Directorate-General of the sole executive authority, the Commission. In 1973, he retired and a senior official from one of the new Member States (Ireland) took over his job. He then became a special advisor to the Commission until 1986. In that position, he began working on the first EB public opinion studies in 1973. During his career, Rabier knew how to combine his talents of senior official and academic successfully. It was this combination that enabled him to come up with such an ambitious project, scientifically and politically, as the Eurobarometer<sup>10</sup>.

10. J.-R. Rabier wrote over 40 scientific articles and created various monographs. For a comprehensive bibliography, see Karlheinz Reif and Ronald Inglehart (eds), *Eurobarometer. The Dynamics of European Public Opinion. Essays in Honour of Jacques-René Rabier*, London, Mac Millan, 1991, pp. 385-387. For Rabier's biography, see the Short biography of Jacques-René Rabier on the [Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe](#) website.

“Euro” for Europe and “barometer” because a barometer measures the atmospheric pressure, is how Jean-René Rabier used to explain the origin of the name. Yet, the objective of the former Director-General of the Press and Information Service of the European Communities was first, to learn more about opinion in order to guide information policy and second, to help reveal Europeans to each other: in other words to learn about European public opinion and with this opinion share what citizens of a particular country thought about such topics. With this task and after initial test polling in the nine countries in 1973, the first Eurobarometer was established in spring 1974<sup>11</sup>.

The EB took a long time to design. After the war, the historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, who drew attention to the use of polls in history and political science, and the social psychologist Jean Stoetzel, a theorist and practitioner of polling surveys, had aroused Rabier’s curiosity about such new techniques and made him understand very quickly what systematic studies on opinions, attitudes and behaviours of Europeans could do for the emerging Community project<sup>12</sup>. Also, during the first stages of the Eurobarometer, Rabier benefited from the close collaboration of **Ronald Inglehart**. A political analyst at the University of Michigan, Inglehart had just developed his theory on changes in values in modern societies. These materialist/post-materialist topics would be an integral part of EB questionnaires until the mid-1990s. Rabier clearly thought that European institutions should remain informed about the attitudes and motivations underlying opinions and that public information needed field knowledge to adjust messages. This intuition made the EB a valuable tool in preparing, deciding and evaluating the Commission’s work.

Although this instrument is exclusively associated with the European Commission, its creation was supported by the European Parliament who had taken notice of the initial test surveys and who must have seen the development of European public opinion as a way to increase its influence in the Community space. In a well-known report by the commission in charge of information issues published in 1972, the Parliament, via its rapporteur, affirmed that “opinion surveys were a very important information sector”, and urged the Commission in the future to develop...” these opinion surveys to make them a

11. For an account of the early stages of the Eurobarometer, see Philippe Aldrin, “L’invention de l’opinion publique européenne. Genèse intellectuelle et politique de l’Eurobaromètre” in *Politix*, No. 89, 2010.

12. Anna Melich, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

regular systematic instrument”, and to disclose “comprehensive findings regularly” which would be published<sup>13</sup>. In doing so, there was a clear sign of cooperation of the two institutions when it came to information policy. But that is not all: Rabier had explicitly admitted during an interview in 2002 that he had taken part in the drafting of the report<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, in a passage of the report on the development of public opinion, we can see evidence of Rabier’s intellectual involvement: an overview of the cognitivist theory, shared by Rabier and Inglehart, which considers only people with a high level of information are interested in “Community affairs”. In other words: the more we know about developments in European integration, the more we are interested in them. On the contrary, the less informed we are, the more indifferent we are.

Although this cognitivist theory was only confirmed in 1975 when the opinion analysis department of the Commission decided to cross-check the responses on the level of information with those on support for the Community and its policies (EB 4), the report already stated that “... a certain number of opinion polls were conducted without there being any question of regular and systematic polls. However some preliminary conclusions can be made. In the Community, eight or nine of every ten people questioned knew that it existed, but as soon as questions are more specific, the percentage of exact responses drops drastically. Overall it can be noted that a “*European public opinion*” *does not exist yet* and there is close connection between levels of information and education. Indeed, polls reveal that the level of information – and interest in Europe – coincide with the level of education”. The consequence of such reasoning is that “[it can] reasonably be affirmed that information, in the strict sense, on the activity of the Communities could but generate the interest of European public opinion as general knowledge is acquired about European integration. It is only as part of this overall knowledge that daily activity of the Communities will gain recognition”<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, the Community should clearly seek to keep its citizens informed about its activities because that will determine public opinion support for European integration.

13. Report of the MEP, W. J. Schuijt, dated 7 February 1972 on the information policy of the European Communities, Doc. 246/71, p. 14.

14. Interviewed by Étienne Dechamp in February 2002, Rabier admitted his involvement in drafting the report. The interview can be found on the [Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe](#) website.

15. Report of the MEP W. J. Schuijt, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Rabier and Inghart designed a section in the Eurobarometer questionnaire in 1979 (EB 11) to test this assumption and, with the findings, published a study in which they speak for the first time of the idea of **cognitive mobilization**<sup>16</sup>. Discovered with the first opinion polls, proved by the Eurobarometer, it is around this idea of cognitive mobilization that an alliance would be forged when it comes to communication between the Commission and the Parliament and the involvement of the Parliament in the development of an opinion analysis instrument.

## BOX 2 ➤ The key features of the Eurobarometer<sup>17</sup>

- **Comparability:** An important feature of the EB is that it makes comparisons between countries. To do so, all the Member States use the same set of questions. Therefore translation is key. The size of the sample of respondents is the same in every country except for the small ones like Luxembourg, Malta and Cyprus. In addition to “spatial comparability”, comparability over time is a major asset of the EB. To make comparisons of opinions over time, there are questions that have been designed on the same bases from one survey to another (“Trends” questions, *see § 1.2.1*).
- **Transparency:** With the exception of “qualitative” surveys, which, as can be seen later, are not always published, the EBs are published regularly to feed public debate with the incredible amount of data they generate. Most EBs are disclosed just after they are conducted and a press release is drafted for each of them. However, the maximum embargo is a two years, after which all data are made available to the public via GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (*see § 1.2.1 and § 3.1*).
- **Unique database:** With its 38 years of existence and 300,000 persons questioned in 150 public reports every year, the EB is a unique database for observing public opinion.

The Eurobarometer is not the only major transnational survey conducted regularly, particularly in Europe. Starting in 1981, the **European Value Study** (formerly the European Value System Study Group) has conducted surveys every nine years on what Europeans think about life, family, work, religion, politics

16. “Europe Elects a Parliament: Cognitive Mobilization, Political Mobilization and Pro-European Attitudes as Influences on Voter Turnout”, in *Government and Opposition*, XIV, October 1979.

17. Cf. Renaud Soufflot de Magny and Christian Holst, “Eurobarometer: Organisation and Methodology”, Paper presented at the “Europäische Integration: Öffentliche Meinung, politische Einstellungen und politisches Verhalten” conference, University of Augsburg, June 2002.



and society<sup>18</sup>. However, the European Value Study cannot be compared to the EB for various reasons, the most important being:

- **the frequency of polls:** every six months for the EB versus every nine years for the EVS;
- **the countries concerned:** the EB only conducts its surveys in Member States or in candidate countries which are to become members whereas 47 countries participated in the last EVS poll;
- and **especially the missions they have been given:** the EB remains the only instrument for discovering and analysing public opinion that seeks to improve knowledge of the progress being made in European integration, although the issues addressed go beyond the opinion of European integration alone<sup>19</sup>.

Although at its inception, the Eurobarometer was an exclusive power of the Commission in that it was the Commission who drafted the technical specifications and decided how and when to use it, since 2007, with the creation of the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit of the Parliament, the EB works with a double-faced head of Janus, with one head turned towards the Commission and the other toward the Parliament. Therefore, it should be noted that today the EB is basically something of a trademark that can be used by the two institutions. As such, the framework-agreements with polling institutes are inter-institutional (Parliament/Commission) and enable the Parliament to commission its own surveys without going through the Commission, as was the case thus far. However it must be added that calls for tender continue to be drawn up by the Commission, which is in charge of assessing them (although there is always a representative of the European Parliament in the assessment committee), which is a logical consequence of the recent change. Once the call for tenders is attributed to a sub-contractor for the EB's special way of polling - Standard, Special, Flash or Qualitative (see *infra*) - the two institutions are free to use it if it does not exceed a virtual maximum ceiling, which is generally defined every four years. But, normally, the two services concerned, the "traditional" Unit for the Commission and the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit of the Parliament (see §2.3.), are limited depending on the budgets they are allocated - the two institutions have different budgets.

18. European Value Study: <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/evs/about-evs/>

19. Anna Melich, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

For the past seven years, this operational and methodological expertise has been provided by polling professionals from the TNS Opinion & Social Institute. They have taken over from the European Opinion Research Group (EORG), a consortium of market research and public opinion agencies including INRA (Europe) and *Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung Worldwide (GfK)*. This network was selected with a call for tenders and created via a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG)<sup>20</sup>. Prior to EB 31, surveys were conducted by national polling institutes, members of the European Omnibus Survey (EOS-Gallup Europe) and coordinated by *Fait et Opinions* (Paris).

All the organisations mentioned are part of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR). But, how are Eurobarometer surveys determined and what do they consist of<sup>21</sup>?

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### BOX 3 ➤ The current contracting party of the Eurobarometer<sup>22</sup>

**TNS Opinion & Social – International Coordination Centre** is a consortium created by TNS PLC and TNS Opinion. Taylor Nelson Sofres, one of the biggest market research and marketing information groups in the world, and the result of a merger of research firms founded in the 1960s, i.e. the American NFO and Intersearch, the British Taylor Nelson and AGB, the French Sofres and the Australian Frank Small Associates. Given the size of the Eurobarometer project, it is not a coincidence that the political and social sector of the group is located in Brussels.

ESOMAR was founded in 1948 to encourage market research in the world. With over 4,800 members from 120 countries it aims to promote the value of market research and opinion research on crucial topics related to the decision-making process. To add to this dialogue, ESOMAR creates and manages a specific programme of conferences, publications and communications. All its members must adhere to professional standards drawn up with the International Chamber of Commerce in the ICC/ESOMAR Code on Market and Social Research. Its statutes state that “The objects of the Society are: a) Internationally, to promote the development and use of marketing, social and opinion research... [...]; c) To encourage the highest technical standards and levels of professional conduct among its Members; d) To establish a code or codes of ethical practice and professional standards”.

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20. An EEIG is an association that brings together organisations from different European Union countries enabling them to create a company that is legally separate from the activities of groups that form it.

21. For an analysis of the quality of EB data, see Philippe Caillot and Bernard Denni, “*La qualité des données Eurobaromètres*”, in Pierre Bréchon and Bruno Cautrès (dir.), *op. cit.*, pp. 71-87.

22. TNS Opinion & Social – International Coordination Centre: <http://www.tnsglobal.com/market-research/social-political-research/index.aspx> and ESOMAR: <http://www.esomar.org/>

## 1.2. Deciphering European public opinion: quantitative polls

The quantitative Eurobarometer polls are based on a sample of people chosen from the general public to be surveyed in such a way as to ensure the widest representation possible.

### BOX 4 ➤ The principle of EB samples

Since October 1989 (EB 32), the sampling principle applied in the participating States has been a random selection (probability) in multiple stages; candidate countries have likewise been polled. In every country, different sampling points are drawn with a probability that is proportional to the size of the population (in order to cover the whole country) and its density<sup>23</sup>. Then, the sample is compared to a situation, whose description is based on EUROSTAT data or from national statistics institutes and subject to a weighting procedure on the basis of this environment. There is but one interview for every selected household. When it comes to specific targets, the sampling procedure is subject to change.

Every country has a polling institute that takes part in the survey and is responsible for conducting it at national level. All the findings produced by the different national institutes are then sent to the European Coordination Office (currently TNS Opinion & Social). The European Coordination Office drafts the questionnaires (always in coordination with the European Parliament and Commission), translates them, conducts the surveys in the field, compiles and analyses the responses in the 27 national surveys, weights the findings<sup>24</sup>, etc. Groupings, crosschecking and comparisons are made on the basis

23. "In order to do so, the sampling points were drawn systematically from each of the 'administrative regional units', after stratification by individual unit and type of area. They thus represent the whole territory of the countries surveyed according to the Eurostat NUTS II (or equivalent) and according to the distribution of the resident population of the respective nationalities in terms of metropolitan, urban and rural areas. In each of the selected sampling points, a starting address was drawn, at random. [...] In each household, the respondent was drawn, at random (following the 'closest birthday rule')"; Eurobarometer, "Technical specifications of Standard Eurobarometer 74" (autumn 2010).

24. For example, here is a list of polling institutes of every country that helped draft the Special EB included in the standard EB 74.3 coordinated by TNS Opinion & Social: Belgium - TNS Dimarso; Bulgaria - TNS; Czech Republic - TNS; Denmark - TNS Gallup; Germany - TNS Infratest; Estonia - Emor; Ireland - MRBI; Greece - TNS ICAP; Spain - TNS Demoscopia; France - TNS Sofres; Italy - TNS Infratest; Cyprus - Synovate; Latvia - TNS Latvia; Lithuania - TNS Gallup Lithuania; Luxembourg - TNS ILReS; Hungary - TNS Hungary; Malta - MISCO; Netherlands - TNS NIPO; Austria - Österreichisches Gallup-Institute; Poland - TNS OBOP; Portugal - TNS EUROTESTE; Romania - TNS CSOP; Slovenia - RM PLUS; Slovakia - TNS AISA SK; Finland - TNS Gallup Oy; Sweden - TNS GALLUP; United Kingdom - TNS UK.

of the responses, but also on socio-demographic features (age, sex, studies, Eurosceptics, Europhiles, etc.). **The issues are essentially “closed” so that responses can be codified.**

The “closed” questions are thus defined as such because they allow respondents to choose the response from a pre-established list. For example, the possible responses for the question “Are you a Eurosceptic?” would be: yes or no. Unlike open questions, where respondents are free to respond as they wish (wording, details, comments). Consequently, open-ended questions are not readily recoded, which is essential in quantitative polls. After a survey, a global analysis report is published on the Eurobarometer website<sup>25</sup> for all types of Eurobarometer polls.

In this regard, three types of quantitative surveys are conducted at European level: Standard EBs, Special EBs and Flash EBs.

### 1.2.1. Standard EBS: regular public opinion monitoring

The Standard Eurobarometer was created in 1973 and, as its name indicates, it is the main EB tool. It includes surveys made up of about 1,000 interviews per country (with the exception of Luxembourg, Malta and Cyprus which contain 500 interviews) conducted in spring and autumn in order to compare the findings over time (“**Trend**”).

Face-to-face interviews are conducted at home. As for data collection, the Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) system is used in all countries where possible. Initially, the questionnaires are drafted in English and French by TNS Opinion and then translated by the national polling institutes into the other official languages of the European Union. The questionnaires contain a minimum of 150 questions, many of which are organised “in sets”. Participating in a Eurobarometer requires major efforts on the part of the respondent (the interview takes more than an hour on average). Eurobarometer critics could therefore question the ability of respondents to have the same level of concentration throughout such a long interview, especially if they do not feel directly concerned by the issues in the questionnaire, which may easily be the case for

25. Eurobarometer: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

many. However, a shorter questionnaire is not possible without changing the ambitious objectives of a “barometer” of European public opinion. A partial solution to this problem was provided when additional “sets” for a six-monthly poll were established. That is why Eurobarometers are accompanied by a number that identifies the polling wave and a sub-number that indicates the additions.

#### BOX 5 ► Standard EB Plan<sup>26</sup>

Standard EBs are made using the same plan which includes:

- **Questions on general attitudes regarding life and the *lato sensu* society**, attributable to a post-materialist analysis of social, cultural and political change in industrial societies by Ronald Inglehart<sup>27</sup>;
- **Questions on European integration**, its institutions, its policies, etc.;
- **Questions on a particular theme related to social, economic or political current events** that normally are addressed in Special EBs conducted in the same wave and published separately (see § 1.2.2).
- **A socio-demographic description** with questions systematically placed at the end of the questionnaire.

**The regular repetition of the same questions over time - “Trends” questions - makes it possible to establish a map of opinions over time and is a major advantage of the Eurobarometer, which makes it a unique database.** The Standard EB no longer uses all the original “Trends” questions, but has introduced other ones<sup>28</sup>.

The Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (**GESIS**) in collaboration with the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES), has drawn up and updated in its continuity guide the list of main “Trends” questions for the Eurobarometer since its inception. GESIS scientists have defined “Trends” questions as those that have been asked at least five times. In addition, they have restricted the scope of definition by excluding questions on specific topics (cancer, nuclear energy, the environment, etc.) and they have indicated possible changes in the wording of the question.

<sup>26</sup>. See Philippe Caillot et Bernard Denni, *La qualité des données Eurobaromètres*, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

<sup>27</sup>. See Étienne Schweisguth, “Le post-matérialisme revisité : R. Inglehart persiste et signe”, in *Revue française de science politique*, 1997, No. 5, pp. 653-659.

<sup>28</sup>. For example, the “Unification” indicator was no longer used after the EB 44 (autumn 1995) because we no longer talk of “Unification” in Community institutions, but rather “building” a Europe respecting diversity. Anna Melich, op. cit., p. 29.

Even though it is disappointing for the researchers in social science who have to deal with serious problems in terms of scientific reliability of “Trends” questions when they have to be re-worded, over time, some indicators become irrelevant and have to be replaced. Some others have to be suspended or published at a later date (see § 3.2.). Also, other changes may be necessary to improve the wording. Consequently, for example, until 1982, it was asked: “Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has benefited more or less than other Common Market countries from being a member of the European Community since (date of accession)? It became difficult to compare countries so in 1983 the question was re-worded: “Taking everything into consideration, do you think that (your country) has benefited or not from being a member of the European Community?<sup>29</sup>

The following box shows the types of questions of the Standard EB, which confirms the composition of surveys on topics concerning general attitudes of citizens, European integration, its institutions and its policies as well as a socio-demographic description. **Each category on the list is divided into several sub-groups, with a total of 93 “Trends” categories:**

**BOX 6** ➤ **GESIS List of Trends**

GENERAL TOPICS	EU TOPICS	DEMOGRAPHICS
Cultural and National Identity	European Unification	Respondent
International Relations	European Institutions	Household
Living Conditions and Issues	European Single Market	Region
Media, Information, and Language	European Policies	
Political Attitudes		
Political Participation		
Political Parties		
Values and Religion		

Source: [www.gesis.org/en/eurobarometer-data-service/topics-trends/eb-trends-trend-files/list-of-trends/](http://www.gesis.org/en/eurobarometer-data-service/topics-trends/eb-trends-trend-files/list-of-trends/)

29. See Philippe Caillot et Bernard Denni, *La qualité des données Eurobaromètres*, op. cit., p. 85.

**As a result, for example, in the sub-group “Cultural and National Identity” we can find “Trends” categories:**

- Attitudes towards immigrants and out-groups;
- National/European pride;
- National vs. European identity;
- Regional identity;
- Trust in people from other countries.

In each “Trends” category, there are questions that correspond. For example for the category “Trust in people from other countries” category, the “Trends” question is: “I would like to ask you about how much you would trust (people from your own country as well as) people from different countries” (EB 6, 14, 17, 25), which is then re-worded: “I would like to ask you (a question) about how much trust you have in people from various countries” (EB 33, 35.0, 39.0, 41.1, 44.0, 46.0).

As may be seen, this question, although re-worded, is found in ten surveys from 1976 to 1996.

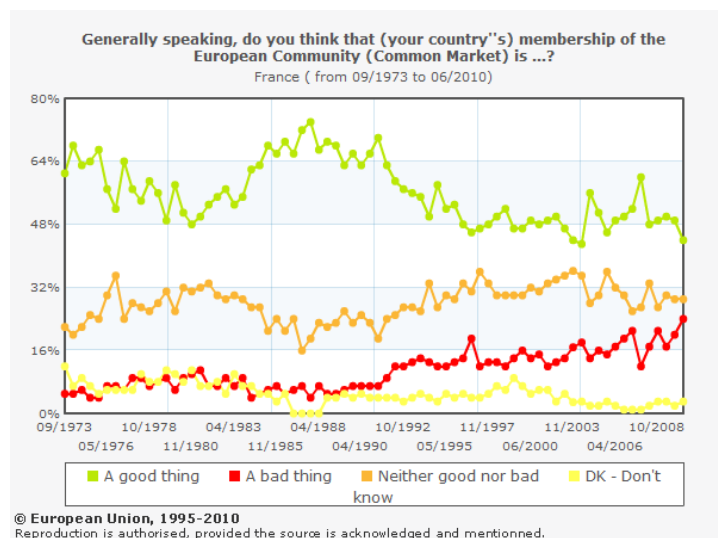
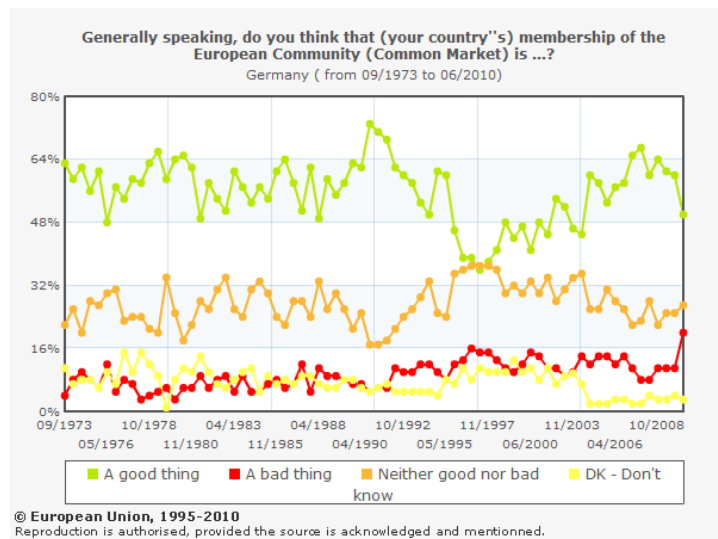
Among the questions asked, there are **“Trends-Trends” questions**. This name was chosen because they have been asked since the Eurobarometer programme began. These questions are important because they can be used to measure the opinion of European citizens over an extremely long timeline. They are therefore a valuable instrument for reading changes in Europeans’ attitudes about sensitive topics concerning the Community integration process. Therefore it is no surprise that, **among them, there are questions designed to measure support for the European Union**. One of the questions with identical wording from one survey wave to another (with the exception of the change in the name “European Community” to “European Union”) is: “Generally speaking, do you think that (your country’s) membership of the European Union is: a good thing – a bad thing – neither good nor bad?”.

The curves of responses given in Germany, France and the United Kingdom between 1973 and 2010<sup>30</sup> have provided an overview of the findings recorded in such surveys (see *Graph 1*):

30. Eurobarometer: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm). To read the graphs, refer to the date found alongside the name of the country (from September 1973 to June 2010).

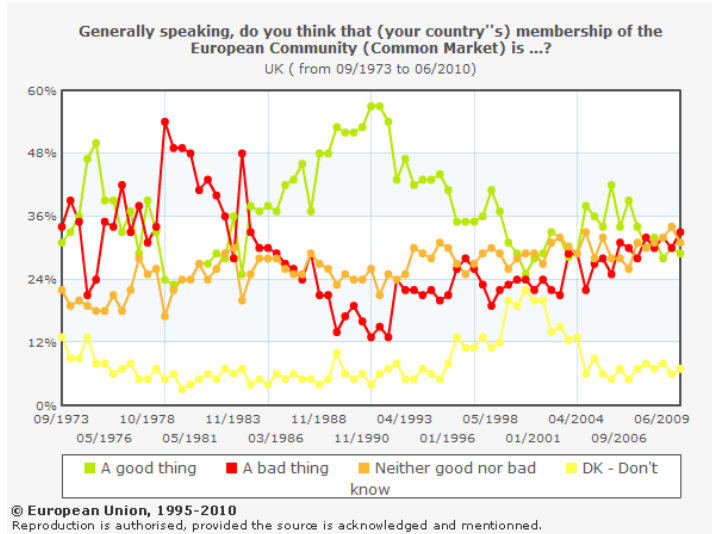
# THE EU AND PUBLIC OPINIONS: A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP?

**GRAPH 1** ➤ Membership of the EU in Germany, France and United Kingdom (1973-2010)





## THE EU AND PUBLIC OPINIONS: A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP?



Without going into an in-depth study of the changes in opinion curves, if those concerning the United Kingdom, with the well-known mistrust of its public opinion with regard to European integration, are not surprising, it is however significant that, at the same time the financial and economic crisis broke out, the “good thing” curve continued to drop in France and Germany, while the “bad thing” curve rose significantly. As can be seen later (*see §2.3. and §2.4.*), this has many consequences with regard to the political use of the Eurobarometer instrument.

The Eurobarometer interactive search system lists 55 “Trends” questions<sup>31</sup>. With this tool alone, it is possible to search by country or by group of countries in the entire database of “Trends” questions. This not only makes it possible to compare the findings of several countries, but also to analyse trends. Different display modes are available: graphs, pie charts, Excel tables or columns. It likewise makes it possible to consult survey findings on a map of the European Union, thereby facilitating comparisons of the data of each country.

31. Eurobarometer interactive search system: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/cf/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/cf/index_en.cfm)

### 1.2.2. Special EB: in-depth thematic surveys

The Special Eurobarometer reports are based on in-depth thematic studies (over 100 pages). Most of them are conducted for the various services of the Commission and a smaller number for other EU institutions. Such surveys are conducted face-to-face or by phone and incorporated into Standard EB polling waves<sup>32</sup>. The first surveys that could be included in the Special EB series date back to the period before the EB existed and are part of the first surveys implemented by the Directorate-General of the Press and Information Service of the European Communities headed by Jacques-René Rabier. Reading through the Special surveys is like reviewing policies conducted by the European Union. **Therefore, the steady increase in this type of poll reflects the increase in Community competences.** Although **between 1970**, the date of the first Flash EB (“Europeans and the Unification of Europe”), **and 2002 some 166 surveys were commissioned, 198 were commissioned between 2002 and 2011, in other words 20 per year on average, as opposed to a bit more than five per year during previous periods** (see Table 1). In nine years, 32 more surveys were commissioned than in over 32 years! Surveys were conducted on a wide range of topics including the environment, energy, cancer, AIDS, poverty, social exclusion, the family, employment, gender equality, social security, scientific research, information technologies, GMOs, the euro, financial services, languages, young people, globalisation, sexual tourism, the Internet and sports. The usefulness of some surveys is difficult to defend, as is the case for Special EB 271 (2006) on “Attitudes of European citizens towards the well-being of animals” or Special EB 330 (2010) on dental health. Not to be critical, it is natural to wonder whether it is a good idea to commission a costly transnational survey to find out more about dental health or the well-being of pets in Europe during a period when public budgets are being reduced.

However, special surveys on social climate after the economic crisis commissioned by the Directorate-General Employment seem particularly noteworthy. They cover 15 areas on personal situation, general condition of the country, social protection and inclusion. They ask respondents to evaluate, in each of the areas, the current situation, the development of the situation over the last five years and the changes they expect over the coming year. Three waves

32. For example: Special EB 295 “Attitudes of European Citizens towards the Environment” was included in Standard EB wave 68.2.

were completed: the first wave was done in 2009 (Special EB 315), the second one in 2010 (Special EB 349) and the third one in 2011 (Special EB 370). The results of the survey have shown that although the impact of the crisis is still being felt, a certain improvement was observed in 2011<sup>33</sup>.

In a 1998 publication, Andy Smith highlighted the differences in the number of research projects commissioned and produced a **list of categories of Directorates-General (DG) using Special EBs** (see Box 7) in which there are “non-users” and “occasional users”, “regular users” and “enthusiastic users”<sup>34</sup>:

**TABLE 1** ► List of Directorates-General using Special EBs from 1972 to 2011

USERS TYPE	1972-1996	1997-2011
“Non-users”	DG I (Foreign Affairs) DG III (Industrial Policy) DG IV (Competition) DG XIII (Telecommunications)	DG XVI (Regional Policy) DG IV (Competition)
“Occasional users”	DG II (Economy and Finance) DG VII (Transport) DG IV (Agriculture and Rural Development)	DG II (Economy and Finances <sup>35</sup> ) DG IV (Agriculture and Rural Development) DG VII (Transport) DG XI (Environment) DG XV (Internal Market) DG Internal Affairs DG I (Foreign Affairs/External Action) DG XXIII (Enterprise) DG Trade
“Regular users”	DG VIII (Development – Humanitarian Assistance) DG XVI (Regional Policy) DG XII (Research) DG XVII (Energy)	DG VIII (Development/EuropeAid) DG XI (Environment) DG XVII (Energy) DG XXII (Education, Youth and Culture) DG XII (Research) DG Information Society and Media
“Enthusiastic users”	DG X (Information – Communication) DG V (Employment, Social Affairs, Education)	DG V (Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) DG Health and Consumers

33. Special surveys on social climate: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_370\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_370_en.pdf)

34. Andy Smith, “The Commission and ‘the People’: The example of political use of Eurobarometers”, in Pierre Bréchon et Bruno Cautrès (dir.), *Les enquêtes...*, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

35. The Economy and Finances DG warrants separate discussion because it commissions Special EBs for each country adopting the euro or wishing to adopt it. It would therefore be in the enthusiastic user group, however, given the “automatic” nature of such commission we decided not to include it on the list.

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**TABLE 2** ➤ Special EBs commissioned by the different services of the Commission (1972-Sept. 2011)<sup>36</sup>

DG	DUTIES	1972-1984	1985-1996	1997-2009	2009-SEPT. 2011	TOTAL
II	Economy and finances	–	6	3	–	9
V	Employment, social affairs, education	6	8	24	10	48
VI	Agriculture	0.5	4	7	1	12.5
VII	Transport	–	7	1	1	9
VIII	Development	1	3	9	4	17
X	Information/Communication	7	0	10	6	23
XI	Environment	1	7	6	2	16
XII	Science/Research	2	42	9	2	55
XV	Internal market/Company law	2	7	4	–	13
XVI	Regional policy	1.5	2	–	–	3.5
XVII	Energy	1	9	8	2	20
–	Health and consumers	–	2	50	11	63
–	Internal affairs	–	–	8	2	10
–	External action	–	–	2	–	2
XXII	Education, youth and culture	–	–	10	1	11
XXIII	Enterprise	–	–	4	–	4
–	Commerce	–	–	1	1	2
–	Information society and media	–	–	6	4	10
–	Miscellaneous	1	1	25	1	28
<b>Total</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>Yearly average</b>		<b>1.9</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>9.2</b>

36. Until 1996 data, Table 1 was based on that of Andy Smith of 1998 [“The Commission and ‘the People’”. The example of political use of Eurobarometers”, in Pierre Bréchon et Bruno Cautrès (dir.), *Les enquêtes...*, op. cit., pp. 61-62], which he used to compile the list of “Research on the attitudes of Europeans in the Eurobarometer”, annex D of EB 45, 1996. With 1997 data and until September 2011, we used the list on the Special survey pages on the Eurobarometer website. It is important to note that the names given to the Commission DGs tend to change over time. That is why there is not complete consistency with the titles of the different DGs. It is also important to note that today, for transparency reasons with regard to citizens, the Directorates-General no longer have a roman numeral, however we have decided to keep them wherever possible to remain consistent with Andy Smith’s data. It is also important to note that the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs commissioned Special EBs for every country adopting the euro or wishing to do so. However, given the “automatic” nature of such commissions, we have decided not to use them in the table.

We have updated Andy Smith's list of categories, which ended in 1996, by adding the new services that have emerged since then and have noted that there are no longer "non-users", except for DG XVI (Regional Policy) and DG IV (Competition). But on the contrary, **all the Commission Directorates-General have increased their commissions of opinion surveys.**

That is likewise the case for the new DGs such as DG XXIV (Health and Consumers), which have been among the most active. That is why the DG X (Communication), with its 14 commissions is ranked slightly below the average and is therefore no longer part of the enthusiastic users group but that of regular users.

The "Special EBs" commissioned by the European Parliament should be mentioned separately. These surveys, which are called **Parlemeter** surveys, began in 2008 (Special EB 288; EB 68). Despite their cohabitation on a special survey website<sup>37</sup>, Parlemeters are conducted every six months and include "Trends" questions that are repeated in every survey (see §2.3.1.).

With regard to the European Union institutions, there has been one survey commissioned directly by the Committee of the Regions<sup>38</sup>, but it is not certain if the Committee of the Regions or the European Economic and Social Committee were not the source of questions asked in the Special EBs commissioned by the DG Commission.

### 1.2.3. EB Flash: rapid thematic surveys

The "Flash Eurobarometers", as their name implies, are ad hoc thematic opinion surveys conducted to produce rapid results. Where necessary, they focus on targeted groups and can be conducted by phone, at the respondent's home or at his or her workplace. Flash EBs usually concern all the European Union Member States, but occasionally, and depending on the topic they are dealing with, they concern a single country, which may be a candidate country or even a country of the European Economic Area or the United States (which is especially true for polls concerning companies).

37. Special EB: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_en.htm)

38. "The role and impact of local and regional authorities within the European Union. Opinions on the different levels of public authorities and awareness of the Committee of the Regions", Special EB 307/EB 70.1.

In all countries, the respondents are chosen from within the national population aged 15 years and over. In the case of Flash EBs on elections or a referendum, the age limit may be 18 years or older<sup>39</sup>.

The Flash EBs contain short questionnaires (5-10 minutes) carried out mainly by phone. They cover all the topics related to European society and mainly those with an economic connotation including the spirit of enterprise, citizenship, the economic crisis, the electronic revolution, the single currency, innovation and research. They began at the end of the 1980s and since that time, **339 reports have been published, with an average frequency of 15 reports per year.**

Until Flash EB 180, surveys were conducted by national polling institutes associated with EOS Gallup Europe. From 2003 to 2006, Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) assumed responsibility for the coordination and integrated production of data, and finally, in 2006, Gallup Europe took over.

Surveys are commissioned by European Commission services or other institutions.

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#### BOX 7 ► Topics often addressed by Flash EBs

- European elections and referenda related to the adoption of new treaties;
  - Citizens' rights;
  - Questions related to the internal market and consumers;
  - Single currency;
  - Enlargement;
  - Media and the information society (Internet);
  - Business world.
- 

<sup>39</sup> The main group of polls is represented by directors of small and medium-sized companies, representatives of specific professional groups, decision-makers, young people or other social sub-groups. According to the surveys, the size of the standard sample is 500 or 1,000 interviewees per country; they may reach 2,000 if it is required by the topic (use of Internet). Samples, for example for Standard and Special EBs, are designed randomly (probability); however, selection details (regional administrative units, quotas, etc.) for the population (15+) and young people are not published. When it comes to "directors", the sample is defined on the basis on the size of the company and the type of activity. Once the criterion is defined, the sample is selected randomly from the lists of qualified companies to be interviewed provided by [Dun & Bradstreet](#), the world leader in business information.

Reading through the Flash Eurobarometers is like reviewing a summary of sensitive topics of the Community machine. **This type of survey is a valuable instrument because it can focus rapidly on targeted groups and gauge whether policies and initiatives are accepted or rejected by the public concerned.** Community decision-makers have thus created an instrument to obtain immediate feedback on topics including Influenza H1N1 (Flash EB 287), regular waves on Europeans' perception of the economic crisis (Flash EB 276-286-288-289-311), the war in Iraq (Flash EB 151), etc.

#### 1.2.4. Sociological criticism of quantitative opinion polls

As explained above, quantitative polls include "closed" questions, which have been extremely criticised, mainly due to what Philippe Champagne has called the "effect of imposing questions"<sup>40</sup>.

The criticism is based on the fact that it is difficult when a culturally and socially different population is asked the same question to be sure that the question is understood unequivocally. Also, "closed" responses, in limiting the respondent's response to a simple choice between opinions that are previously defined by polling professionals, do not collect opinions, but more accurately, responses<sup>41</sup>. Moreover, this technique increases the risks inherent in all questionnaires, which is to collect more obvious responses than real ones, similar to responses given randomly or when gambling, without foreseeing the consequences. The possibility of putting into practice recoding work that is easily sold to the public who are interested in opinion polls – mainly the press and political world –, or the low non-response rate achieved with this method is offset by an underlying uncertainty about the meaning of the responses. This is because it is not always known, beyond the obvious wording, what questions respondents understood and to which they therefore responded<sup>42</sup>.

40. Philippe Champagne, *Faire l'Opinion*, op. cit., pp. 110-117.

41. In his criticism, Philippe Champagne goes even further and affirms that "the expertise of 'pollsters', which is indisputable, does not apply in a situation in which, according to solid scientific logic, it should be applied: they seek a maximum number of responses for each question, rather than collecting real opinions..., in order to speak of 'public opinion' and avoid disappointing their clients who are paying a lot of money for each question". He goes on to say that "that is why 'pollsters' are seeking to draft their questions so that anyone can respond... and thus considerably limit the non-response rate that they should have logically produced"; and he concludes that "if institutes almost exclusively use the closed-question technique particularly when it comes to so-called opinion questions, this technique considerably limits respondents' participation in the survey, who... may simply choose, without having to explain why, a response among ready-made responses which were produced by institutes", *ibid.*, p. 111.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

This critical approach is part of “sociological” criticism that contests the association of the idea of public opinion with the technique of opinion polling. Initiated by Pierre Bourdieu, a close friend of Champagne, this criticism denounces the social and political impact of opinion polls and the inevitable instrumentalisation of what is an “artefact” to make it reality (what citizens “really” think). The intention is to weaken the two premises that form the basis of the polling technique: universality and equality. According to the first premise, everyone understands in the same way and has an opinion on the problems addressed. Yet the sociology shows that competencies and interests are very unequal and are socially conditioned. The second premise suggests that it is possible to collect individual opinions, but opinions are different in nature and value. The place in the group, social status and other factors determine the varying weight of opinions when considering “collective behaviour”<sup>43</sup>. With this critical approach, the difficulty of substituting the traditional category of “public opinion” with a precise definition can be confirmed. It is paradoxical that it was sociologists’ seeking this definition that caused its dissolution, since it was too vast to address. This field, which is expressly centred on public opinion, applying empirical techniques, has disappeared: “sociology refuses to accept this logical consequence which forced it to abandon this type of category; because, today as in the past, this field continues to deal with public opinion”<sup>44</sup>.

In this context, a European Union in search of legitimacy became aware of the need for an enhanced culture of consultation and dialogue with citizens and consequently included reformed European governance based on “participation” in its founding principles<sup>45</sup>. This need for dialogue prompted the Commission to finance citizen consultation projects that, as can be seen later, can represent, although partially, a possible solution to such problems. In any case, the Eurobarometer, unlike opinion polls, also performs qualitative analysis that is based on open-ended questions.

43. Mathieu Brugidou, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

44. Jürgen Habermas, *The Public Sphere*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

45. Commission of European Communities, *European Governance: A White Paper*, COM (2001) 428 final, July 2001, p. 13. Along with participation, the Commission talked about openness, accountability, effectiveness and coherence.



### 1.3. Qualitative Studies: analysis of reactions, feelings and motivations

Qualitative studies (Qualitative EBs) are characterised by an in-depth analysis of motivations, feelings and reactions of certain social groups with regard to a particular topic or concept. They are used to explore perceptions of success or failure of a project or policy, understand a new problem more effectively, identify reasoning processes, test possible slogans or material and develop the results of a quantitative study. From their inception until 2008, qualitative studies were coordinated by OPTEM. Today, TNS Qual+ is responsible for conducting them.

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#### BOX 8 ► The contracting party of qualitative studies in the past

**OPTEM** has worked since its inception with some 20 Commission Directorates-General and Services, and for 12 years of that time as the contracting party of the Eurobarometer “Qualitative Studies” Framework-Agreement. OPTEM relied on the **European Qualitative Network**, initially formed in the Western European countries and then developed across the continent. They conducted over 100 studies, mainly for the Commission. Their main objectives were to:

- Analyse the image of Europe, the European Union, its institution and its policies;
  - Guide information and communication in this area as well as information channels;
  - Guide Community policies and action programmes;
  - Evaluate actions.
- 

Qualitative EBs use:

- **Specific techniques to collect information, from the field of psycho-sociology**, which promote in-depth expression of individuals or publics questioned, updating their preconscious references and their thought processes.
- **Rigorous content analysis techniques** to identify all the topics addressed, their internal articulations, as well as topics that were ignored, if applicable, on the basis of respondents’ discourse and how it was structured.

On these bases, such studies made it possible to explore extensively the motivations, opinions, attitudes of actual behaviour of individuals, going beyond

prepared discourse and obvious contradictions; to understand the way in which these motivations, opinions, attitudes or behaviour are formed and structured, depending on the different contexts, in the mind of the targeted public; to update the far-reaching expectations and to identify the effects that could change the direction of public approaches to a specific problem.

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### BOX 9 ► Qualitative survey techniques

The qualitative approach may be implemented with different information collection techniques, chosen in line with the objectives of the study.

#### **Focus group meetings**

These meetings last two hours on average and are moderated by social psychologists who are familiar with projective techniques and information-gathering techniques and are able to go beyond superficial reactions to reach genuine representation and opinion structuring systems. The full content of the meetings is recorded comprehensively on computers. Finally, directors of the study may monitor the meetings.

**Semi-structured and unstructured individual interviews** are particularly effective to:

- Update and understand systems of values, motivations, behaviours and individual itineraries;
- Reach high-level targets who are materially speaking difficult to question, for example decision-makers and opinion multipliers.

Interviews last one hour on average and are conducted by social psychologists using an interview guide. They follow a funnel technique: the interview begins with very broad guidelines and then proceeds with increasingly specific questions.

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With qualitative interview experience, social psychologists have to master technical tools to obtain authentic discourse from respondents. This means they have to listen attentively, identify gaps in discourse and attitudes of avoidance, re-word and re-ask, and instil trust in the respondent. These are the points that qualitative survey critics have focused on, and particularly whether this type of result includes authentic and objective opinions. Although it is difficult to doubt purely digital conclusions of a traditional opinion poll, it is certainly much easier to contest the conclusions of a survey that requires an expertise that is difficult to measure in absolute terms. Often, interviewers are considered to have a militant approach or to have been informed in advance by people whose interests converge with their conclusions. Therefore, analysis

reports with a good deal of verbatim allow for a larger margin for false results than the simple display of percentages.

**A consequence of their possible questioning is that Qualitative EBs, unlike quantitative polls, are not always published, and are rarely disclosed to the public.** Since the late 1980s, under the impetus of the Chief of staff of President Delors, Pascal Lamy, the Commission commissioned about 100 qualitative surveys<sup>46</sup>; however they only began being published **in 2001**<sup>47</sup>. **Thus far 23 surveys have been published, on average two per year.** The surveys cover a wide range of topics including the future of Europe, the Internet and children, the internal market, and consumers.

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#### BOX 10 ► The Qualitative EB Plan

##### Reports include:

- An introduction of several pages in which the **objectives and the methodology of the study are explained**;
  - **An in-depth presentation of results**;
  - **Recommendations** (suggestions) on action to be taken in the future (in studies drafted by OPTeM only, TNS Qual+ speaks of lessons to be learned).
- 

The fact that a chapter can be devoted to recommendations and lessons to be learned makes qualitative studies a “sensitive” instrument from the point of view of the political use of opinion analysis. Consequently, it is understandable that Community institutions encounter difficulties in authorising their publication every time. However, it is a major distinctive feature with regard to other surveys. In the final report of the Qualitative EB on “European Citizenship-Cross-Border Mobility”<sup>48</sup> (DG Justice and Home Affairs/2010) it states: “There are a number of issues highlighted by the report which represent clear opportunities for the European Commission to take action to improve EU citizens’

46. Daniel Debomy, “Do the Europeans still believe in the EU? Analysis of the attitudes and expectations of EU public opinions over the past quarter century”, Study No. 91, Notre Europe, June 2012.

47. “Perception of the European Union. Attitudes to and expectations of the European Union in the 15 Member States and in the 9 candidate countries”

48. Qualitative EB “European Citizenship-Cross-Border Mobility”:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/quali/5823\\_citizenship\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/quali/5823_citizenship_en.pdf)

experience of their right to intra-EU mobility. The following section identifies some of the key areas where we feel action would be of benefit... It is therefore recommended that guides be produced by Member States and/or the EU which provide information on the rights of EU citizens residing in other Member States than their own..." or "It is recommended that administrative procedures be streamlined and that citizens be provided with clear and reader-friendly information in printed form in different languages or that local authorities employ, or have access to, people who are able to speak the languages of other EU Member States."<sup>49</sup>

As this passage shows, qualitative surveys make it possible to go beyond a "surface" analysis, which stems from an observation of opinion expressed in numbers and percentages (quantitative survey method). The problem of the certainty of whether or not closed responses are understood is resolved through group dialogue (debate). The freedom to respond with one's own words to questions asked by the survey administrator, without feeling obliged to check a box that does not necessarily reflect our thoughts, makes it possible to move much closer to real understanding of respondents' opinions. In addition, this technique identifies information that could provide a number of solutions for improving and adjusting the purpose of action taken by services of the institution. However, it is actually with regard to these slight differences that these surveys can be refuted, which is something that could happen with every type of poll.

To conclude, we may wonder whether the type of Qualitative EB is moving, more than the others, from citizen participation towards a decision-making process and if so, it should be encouraged. The Focus Group meetings are an opportunity for participants to interact. They may thus associate and bounce ideas off each other and respond with regard to what the previous person said, and provide new elements to the qualitative study. The imperatives for public democracy in the words of Bernard Manin<sup>50</sup> pose the question of whether we should move in that direction or towards quantification and decoding.

49. *Idem.*

50. In his book, *Principes du gouvernement représentatif* (Paris, Champs-Flammarion, 1995, pp. 247-302), Bernard Manin affirms that following the 19th century "parliamentary government" and the "democracy of parties" that recently ended, it is now time for a new form of democracy reflected in the personalisation of election choices and the role of election choices in general; the instability of preferences (elections based on images); the freedom of public opinion, ensuing from its non-coincidence with electoral expression and the use of opinion polls; negotiations between governments and interest groups, debates in the media.

## 1.4. Deliberative Polling®

Deliberative Polling® is not used in the Eurobarometer, but rather an opinion study method that, when it comes to our study (and particularly at the European level), has been used in participatory experiments organized recently at Community level. The EU could benefit from experiments conducted and inspired by deliberative and participatory democracy because the European Union has been experiencing a crisis since the early 1990s with regard to its legitimacy. Difficulties with regard to the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the French and Dutch rejection of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and record rates of abstention in the 2004 European elections<sup>51</sup> have shown that the functionalist approach that enabled the founding fathers to begin European integration without engaging in public debate on their real objectives can no longer work nor is it desirable<sup>52</sup>. Therefore, the “permissive consensus”, which gives leaders the right to lead Europe without direct public sanctions as long as they ensure economic progress, has entered an irreversible crisis that is gradually destroying it<sup>53</sup>. The process of European unification, which was constantly carried out without the people’s involvement, is now at an impasse because it can no longer be pursued without changing the mode of administration that has prevailed thus far towards greater participation of the people<sup>54</sup>. As a result of this lack of legitimacy, European institutions, but especially the Commission, have begun to stress the need for “permanent dialogue” with citizens. With the Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate in 2005, the Commission therefore sought to stimulate communication and deliberation on EU activities by addressing the need to listen to civil society’s expectations. The objective of Plan D was to launch debate on the future of Europe with initiatives to enhance public debate, dialogue and participation. Deliberative Polling® conducted at European level was part of this (Action 6 “More Dialogue and Transparency”)<sup>55</sup>. However, it is important to add that, save a few person-

51. Abstention reached 54% in Spain, 57% in France and in Germany and 61% in Sweden.

52. Yves Bertoncini, *Europe : le temps des fils fondateurs*, Paris, Éditions Michalon, 2005.

53. Kalypso Nicolaidis, “Notre démocratie européenne”, in *Politique européenne*, No. 19-2006/2, Paris, L’Harmattan, pp. 45-71.

54. Jürgen Habermas, *On Europe’s Constitution*, Paris, Gallimard, 2012, p. 55. In this politically-charged militant essay that was recently published, the German philosopher warns us of the risks of Europe’s taking a “post democratic” path to resolve the debt problem in the euro zone. He believes that risks would stem from a reinforced inter-governmental collaboration that the European Council is in charge of establishing, and that could translate into a gradual loss of national parliaments’ control over budget laws, without being compensated at European level.

55. The Plan D proposed 13 Community initiatives and specific actions. The European Commission was to play a significant role in these initiatives in partnership with other European institutions and bodies. Actions included commissioners’ visits to Member States and national parliaments, support for citizens’ projects, an effort for more transparency in Council meetings, the creation of a network of European Goodwill Ambassadors to promote European debate and support for projects seeking to boost voter participation.

alities who are aware of these problems and eager to extend their use, such instruments are not very popular in Community institutions<sup>56</sup>.

Deliberative Polling® is a patented technique that was developed by the American professors James S. Fishkin (Stanford University) and Robert Luskin (Austin University) in the second half of the 1990s. They decided to go beyond what these two scientists defined as the three limitations to the perception of public opinion inherent in traditional opinion polls and move away from “conventional” polling<sup>57</sup>:

- The first limitation is due to the fact that the public is often not well informed<sup>58</sup>;
- The second limitation of public opinion lies in the observation that ordinary citizens often speak of public and political affairs to people with the same social background and who share their views; therefore most citizens rarely engage in debates involving different or opposing opinions;
- The third limitation is the extensively researched problem of “non-attitudes” or “phantom opinions” (in this regard professor Fishkin points out what happened with the “experiment” of the poll on the non-existent Public Affairs Act of 1975 conducted by George Bishop<sup>59</sup>).

These limitations to perception of public opinion should be considered as a problem of conception of democracy that gives deliberation an important instrumental role: the essential value of deliberation, according to Robert

56. Isabelle Durant (European Parliament, Vice President in charge of relations with civil society), Contribution to the seminar “Participative Democracy in the European Union” held in Paris in June 2010, quoted by Laurie Boussaguet, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

57. James S. Fishkin, Robert Luskin and Bernard Manin, *Où est ce qu'une bonne délibération*, remarks on 6 March 2006 in Paris as part of the three-year Socrates programme of the European Commission, the Deliberation in Democracy: towards Active Citizenship Training (DiDACT) project. Henri Monceau documented these remarks on the basis of a transcription by Caroline Valentiny. Supported by the Socrates programme of the European Commission, the DiDACT project is the fruit of cooperation of five organisations meeting in a Steering Committee: *Notre Europe* (Paris), the Centre for European Policy Studies (Brussels), Europeum (Prague), the Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe (Amsterdam) and the European University Institute (Florence).

58. With regard to this point, see the concept of “rational ignorance” of Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper, New York, 1957.

59. “George Bishop organised a poll on the Public Affairs Act of 1975 and collected a wide range of opinions on this subject. However it was fictitious: the legislation that he had asked to evaluate had never existed. Twenty years later, the *Washington Post* decided to celebrate the non-anniversary of the non-existent Public Affairs Act by conducting a new poll on this topic. And, again the findings were enlightening: half of the sample polled affirmed that President Clinton was planning on repealing the text while the other half believed that the Congress was going to do the same”. James Fishkin, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

Luskin, lies in the fact that it increases the authenticity of individual opinions and thereby contributes to forming better majorities. Basically, deliberation is an instrument individuals can use to form an “optimal” opinion, in other words an opinion they can form if they know everything they need to know about a topic<sup>60</sup>. Information and confrontation therefore come before opinion.

Tested over twenty times (at national level), this method consists in combining the polling technique with deliberations. In concrete terms: “a sample – randomly selected – representative of a given population is polled on a pre-defined theme. A sub-sample of the group that has participated in the poll then receives balanced and impartial information on that theme before participating in deliberation on the same theme. This deliberation, which generally lasts two to three days, consists in sharing points of view in small groups (some 20 participants maximum) and plenary meetings and giving experts the chance to enlighten debates or stakeholders (political, union, economic) to present their arguments in balanced confrontations. At the end of the deliberation, participants are polled again, using basically the same questionnaire used in the initial poll. It is therefore possible to collect a qualified opinion on the part of a population sample that is defined scientifically, but also identify and measure changes in opinion after the information and deliberation stages.

Although it is a relatively cumbersome technique to put into practice, deliberative polling has three advantages compared to other participatory or citizen consultation techniques:

- Unlike recruitment procedures involving a call for applications or selective polling (with criteria such as languages, education qualifications) or even self-selected or co-optive approaches, it makes it possible to select a sample that represents citizens scientifically and rigorously;
- It produces a qualitative and qualified result, making it possible to collect opinions that are not fixed (snapshot of opinions), but well-thought out on the basis of a wide range of contradictory arguments shared over time;

60. James S. Fishkin, Robert Luskin and Bernard Manin, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

- It does not seek consensual outcome and therefore makes it possible to avoid the main bias affecting the value of a deliberation, which is polarisation that creates a majority movement independently from individuals' real opinions"<sup>61</sup>.

At European level, this method has been used twice: first, from August to October 2007 as part of the "**Tomorrow's Europe**" project, organised by *Notre Europe* with the support of several institutions including the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee; several private sponsors including Allianz, Thalys, Open Society Institute among others; and 23 think tanks, research institutes and NGOs in 18 pays, who worked on the content. In addition, the project was supported by a sponsorship committee chaired by Jacques Delors and made up of Giuliano Amato, Simone Veil, Bill Emmott, Claudio Magris and other important European political and intellectual figures; a network of 30 researchers based all over the EU; and TNS Sofres, which was hired for polling and recruiting participants. The agenda of the "All Europe in One Room" project was to be carried out by 362 citizens from the 27 EU Member States working in Brussels in the European Parliament offices. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions, before and after discussions that at times led them to change opinions, for example with regard to EU enlargement or employer-employee relations (see *Graph 2*).

## GRAPH 2 ► The opinion before and after deliberation: some examples

**Q16j** – The EU is adding too many countries too fast

	BEFORE DELIBERATION	AFTER DELIBERATION
Strongly Disagree	10.4	10.8
Somewhat Disagree	15.5	17.0
Neither Agree or Disagree	28.2	19.3
Somewhat Agree	25.9	29.5
Strongly Agree	20.1	23.3

Question 16j of the "Tomorrow's Europe" deliberative poll (2007).

61. Final report of the "Tomorrow's Europe" project, *Notre Europe*, 29 February 2008.



## THE EU AND PUBLIC OPINIONS: A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP?

### Q16g – Adding more countries to the EU would help our economy

	BEFORE DELIBERATION	AFTER DELIBERATION
Strongly Disagree	10.8	11.5
Somewhat Disagree	21.3	23.1
Neither Agree or Disagree	27.2	28.2
Somewhat Agree	27.9	25.9
Strongly Agree	12.8	11.2

Question 16g of the “Tomorrow’s Europe” deliberative poll (2007).

### Q3e – Employers have the right to fire people if that is what they see as best for the business

	BEFORE DELIBERATION	AFTER DELIBERATION
Strongly Disagree	10.8	11.1
Somewhat Disagree	24.1	21.7
Neither Agree or Disagree	13.9	18.8
Somewhat Agree	33.7	34.8
Strongly Agree	17.3	13.7

Question 3e of the “Tomorrow’s Europe” deliberative poll (2007).

### Q3d – Employees have the right to job security

	BEFORE DELIBERATION	AFTER DELIBERATION
Strongly Disagree	4.1	5.7
Somewhat Disagree	9.1	8.0
Neither Agree or Disagree	11.9	12.5
Somewhat Agree	30.3	34.4
Strongly Agree	44.7	39.5

Question 3d of the “Tomorrow’s Europe” deliberative poll (2007).

The second project, “**Europolis**”<sup>62</sup>, in May 2009 (just prior to the European elections) was conducted under the auspices of the University of Sienna. Just like for Tomorrow’s Europe, the survey was conducted in three stages: poll – deliberation – post-deliberation poll. The respondents were 348 citizens from the 27 EU Member States. For three days with experts and elected officials, in small groups then in plenary sessions, they debated the decision-making process, the environment and immigration problems. This experience intended to show how much the social and political attitudes about the EU change after citizens are exposed to information and the impact political participation can have. For example, **before deliberation only 37% of participants considered that their countries membership of the EU was a “very good thing”. After deliberation the percentage rose to 52%. Also, before deliberation 46% felt it was their duty to vote in European elections. Afterwards that percentage was 56%.**

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**BOX 11** ➤ The other participatory experiments at European level<sup>63</sup>

- **Citizen consensus conferences (CCs).** They work on the basis of two principles: formation of a panel of laypeople who are to debate constructively with experts in the area concerned; and their consensual deliberation which produces a number of common recommendations (the idea of seeking consensus is what makes them different from other deliberative polling which is based on participants’ opinions taken individually). There have been four conferences held thus far: 1) As part of the RAISE<sup>64</sup> project in December 2005 on the “City of Tomorrow”; 2) “Meeting of Minds. European Citizen’s Deliberation on Brain Science” (MOM, held in January 2006); 3) “What roles for rural areas in tomorrow’s Europe? Regional and European perspectives from the European Citizens’ Panel<sup>65</sup>” (2007); 4) “Move Together” on transportation and urban development.
  - **European citizens’ consultations.** They are different from CCs in that they do not form a group of citizens beforehand and there are fewer experts during the debate.
  - **Networking of local spaces and sectoral activities.** As part of inter-zone cooperation efforts, particularly with regard to FARNET<sup>66</sup>, transnational seminars were organised, providing opportunities for citizens to meet and deliberate.
- 

62. Europolis project: <http://europolis-project.eu/>

63. With regard to the argument, see Laurie Boussaguet, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-13.

64. RAISE project: <http://www.raise-eu.org>

65. European Citizens’ Panel: [www.citizenspanel.org](http://www.citizenspanel.org)

66. FARNET network: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/node>

## 1.5. National polls of the 27 Member States

To conclude this review of public opinion instruments available to Community institutions, it is important to mention opinion polls conducted at national level, in other words, “traditional” opinion polls that are usually used in information forums (all opinion surveys that are not conducted as part of the Eurobarometer and the European Value Study).

These polls are commissioned exclusively in a Member State, by a national public institution or by a national private entity and mainly:

- Information bodies (newspapers, television stations, blogs, etc.);
- Parties/political movements.

Community institutions give special consideration to surveys on voting intentions during political elections in Member States or when they survey sensitive topics for the Union, for example **questions to measure support for the European Union**.

Particularly, in order to decipher “the” public opinions in Member States, the Commission counts on the **Media Analysis and Evaluation Unit** (COMM. A. 3), but especially on the **European Commission Representations** in the EU countries, which act as a liaison between the Brussels executive, national and local public institutions and the general public (see §2.2.2.).

## 2. The work of public opinion analysis within the institutions

The role of driving and designing EU communication policy, as we shall see in the second part of this study, belongs to the Commission, which, with its Spokespersons' Service and thousands of accredited journalists, is the only "voice" of the Union. The disproportion in relation to the European Parliament, in terms of the means attributed to public opinion analysis is therefore totally understandable. Not to mention that the Commission can count on the work of 11 civil servants, whereas the Parliament only has 6, with only two holding the AD (administrator) grade and none of whom have a scientific background in quantitative analysis. The same can be said for the budget of both institutions, which is ten times higher for the Commission. At the same time, it must be recognised that the Parliament is still in the early stages: it is no longer the case today, but up until 2007 it was obliged to commission its own surveys through the Commission. The Parliament is becoming increasingly independent and its weight in interinstitutional affairs is growing. The Parliament's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit and the COMM.A.2 unit of the Commission have recently started organising informal meetings to streamline their work and avoid spending needless energy. Institutionalisation of these meetings would perhaps be desirable with a view to better cooperation between both institutions. But the work of EU public opinion analysis is also a task for professionals from opinion poll institutes and researchers specialising in quantitative research. Both institutions in fact already work in close collaboration with them.

### 2.1. The change in political context and in objectives for the EU: the rise of public opinion

As mentioned in our introduction, from the late 1950s, there has been a press service in Brussels, and an information service that commissioned the first opinion polls on the attitude of citizens with regard to "European integration". The objective was to obtain information in order to measure what was reported in the media, the reputation or even the success of actions or events launched by the European Communities.

During the Presidency of Jacques Delors (1985-1995), the European Commission significantly increased its powers of decision and of action and we witnessed the move from an Economic Community to a European Union, which, this time, implied or even better strived ideally towards a “union of peoples”. The European authorities were henceforth obliged to seek the citizens’ *consensus*: Europeans’ support would now be the absolute prerequisite of a policymaking process, which, thus far had been conducted in diplomatic circles and negotiations of national administration officials<sup>67</sup>. The European project was changing in appearance, as it also concerned the launch and the development of inter-governmental cooperation in foreign policy, security and judicial proceedings and of monetary union.

It is enough to look at the events that have recently shaken the foundations of the now-completed monetary union, to understand to what extent the birth of the euro involved a far greater level of political union than what a large number of pundits, politicians, academics or simple citizens could ever have imagined. Within a monetary union, the decisions made “within and for” some of its Member States inevitably have direct and sometimes significant repercussions on the other Member States. Only those wearing blinkers could fail to see that a political union already exists, even though the institutional architecture does not guarantee a decision-making process that is entirely compatible with its needs<sup>68</sup>.

In parallel to this political evolution leading to a unique decision-making context, in which analysing what the public says in opinion polls takes on a new meaning: it is no longer a simple instrument to provide information, but a source of legitimacy for a bold political project. Used initially to guide information policy more effectively, opinion polls swiftly became an instrument to help define and evaluate policies.

<sup>67</sup> Philippe Aldrin and Jean-Michel Utard, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>68</sup> In a conference held on 8 July 2011, in Poros (Greece), Lorenzo Bini Smaghi, then Member of the Executive Board of the ECB declared that: “The fact is, the people of the different Member States have not fully understood that we already have a political union. Furthermore, the institutional framework does not provide a decision-making process that is fully compatible with such a political union... The euro’s political dimension... results from the interconnectedness of the financial markets and the transmission of real, monetary and financial impulses within the area. As a result, governments and citizens throughout the monetary union should not only be concerned about what happens in their respective countries, but also in the other countries, because the latter can have a direct impact on their lives.” Lorenzo Bini Smaghi, *European democracies and decision-making in time of crisis*, Speech given at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy.

Brussels needs to communicate differently, by taking its new weight into account: information policy has turned into communication policy. This politicisation of the European Commission goes hand in hand with that of its communication and the growing interest of the College of Commissioners in opinion polls with the growing awareness of the Eurobarometer, in the work related to their position. This is confirmed in the words of its creator Jacques-René Rabier: "... the creation and the development of a "Community" with a political purpose has always required and will always require a certain consensus among citizens on the objectives to be reached. Let us be clear, institutional information is not and cannot be neutral: it transmits a message and it contributes to creating legitimacy. This must be done in a democratic manner, i.e. in (technical and financial) transparency aimed at stimulating debate rather than imposing an orthodoxy, a "single mindset" as we would say today"<sup>69</sup>.

"The Delors spirit" contributed significantly to bringing about the weight of public opinion captured in the surveys. The Delors cabinet understood the scope and the usefulness of knowing the mood of citizens in the Member States and served as an example to other European decision-makers. The Forward Studies Unit, created under the aegis of President Delors, was and still is based on data provided by the Eurobarometer<sup>70</sup>.

In parallel to this politicisation of the communication policy, was the increase in technical and financial means devoted to analysing public opinion. Since 1993, with the communication of Commissioner Joao de Deus Pinheiro on "the new approach for public opinion monitoring and analysis" (28 July), survey instruments have multiplied. While the very first opinion polls carried out by the Commission at Community level were the result of the work of novices, a consequence of the unprecedented nature of the project (notwithstanding the fact that academics who were "pioneers" in quantitative research and survey techniques had been involved in the operation), today they represent the conclusion of a complex mechanism that has proven its worth. Needless to say

69. Jacques-René Rabier, "Euro-baromètre : un enfant qui a bien grandi" in Pierre Bréchon et Bruno Cautrès (dir.), *op. cit.*, p. 18 (Translation by *Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute*).

70. Anna Melich, *op. cit.*, p. 30. The Forward Studies Unit, created in 1989, was a "small think tank" made up of representatives from the European Union placed under the direct authority of Jacques Delors. Its main tasks consisted in monitoring and assessing European integration. Today, it has been replaced by the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA). BEPA continues the mission of the Forward Studies Unit and particularly generates analysis on long-term prospects and structural trends, in conjunction with an external network of research institutes specialised in long-term forecasting and planning. BEPA is structured around three teams: political, economic and societal.

that in 1953, when the “common information” services became organised, the techniques used in public opinion surveys were in their infancy. They represented an unknown world of scientific research and debate on these themes was almost non-existent. And this was especially the case for Europe.

Not long before that, an American journalist, G.H. Gallup, had founded the first ever survey institute called the American Institute of Public Opinion, with a view to the presidential elections. Therefore it is not surprising that Jacques-René Rabier, on setting up the Eurobarometer, only had the telephone at his disposal (from a technological point of view), and therefore little or no empirical methodology. He had no computer, no computer programs, no fax, no trained researchers, no research courses in social sciences in the European universities (with the exception of the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt) and no marketing courses<sup>71</sup>. Many things have changed since then, as we will see.

## 2.2. The European Commission: “driving force” of public opinion analysis in the EU

The European Commission, having housed the Joint Press and Information Service of the European Communities since its creation, which since then has become a fully-fledged sector of its administration, (the Directorate-General for Information, and today the Directorate-General for Communication), traditionally played a role of initiator, coordinator and manager of EU communication in the European institutional affairs, placing its human and financial resources at the service of European policies and of its “partners” (mainly the European Parliament)<sup>72</sup>. In addition, the fact of housing the Spokespersons’ Service, which, as its name indicates, consists in the (de facto) authorisation of speaking on behalf of Europe and therefore of all the Union’s stakeholders and

71. Cf., Anna Melich, *op. cit.*, p. 24. The Institute of Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*), of Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main was founded in 1923 by the patron Felix Weil, a pupil of the Marxist philosopher Karl Korsch. The Institute is associated with the famous Frankfurt School, a school of neo-Marxist interdisciplinary social theory. In 1930, the growing influence of Hitler prompted the Institutes’s founders to establish a branch in Geneva and to move its resources to the Netherlands. In 1933, the entire Institute was moved to Switzerland and the following year to New York. In New York, it was associated with Columbia University, and its journal *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* was renamed *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*. It was during this period that the Frankfurt School began to emerge. The Institute returned to Germany in 1951.

72. Philippe Aldrin and Jean-Michel Utard, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

institutions, has strengthened its dominant position<sup>73</sup>. This prominence is also reflected in the system used for public opinion analysis.

#### BOX 12 ► Coordination of the information and communication services over time

- 1955 – The High Authority decided to establish an independent **Press and Information Service** (at the time there was only a section of the “secretariat”).
- 1958 – After the signature of the Treaties of Rome and the institution of two new Communities (EEC, EURATOM), the three executives decided to merge their services at administrative level (legal, statistical, informational), giving rise to the **Joint Press and Information Service**. Each executive, however, wished to have its own spokesperson.
- 1967 – The second half of the 1960s was marked by several important events: the creation of a single Council and a single Commission, the “empty chair” crisis, completion of the Customs Union, the end of the transition period of the Common Market, etc. In 1967, in order to anticipate these changes, the Press and Information Service became the **Directorate-General for Press and Information (DG X)**. In addition, we witnessed the “merger” of the spokespersons whose new service would be directly linked to the President of the Commission.
- 1977 – Integration of the spokespersons’ service directly within DG X, which became the **Spokesman’s Group and Directorate-General for Information**.
- 1985 – One of the first decisions of the Delors Commission, established in September, was to engage in the study of a new structure for the Spokesman’s Group. The service would become autonomous, be placed under the authority of the President and change its name to **Spokesman’s Service**.
- 1991 – Decentralisation of the information and communication systems granting each DG the responsibility of information activities concerning its field of expertise. To do this, the Commission planned a new definition for the role of DG X, aimed at strategic coordination. After joining a Cultural and Audiovisual Affairs Directorate, it became the **Directorate-General for Audiovisual, Information, Communication and Culture**.
- 1999 – When the Prodi Commission took office, it was decided to create the **Press and Communication Service** in charge of media relations, Representations in the Member States and other related issues. A **Directorate-General for Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EAC)**, resulting from the merger of part of DG X with the Directorate-General for Education, Training and Youth (DG XXII), was also created. The EAC would henceforth be in charge of information policy concerning the general public and DG X was dismantled.

<sup>73</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 4. And yet, the proposals in the *White Paper on a European Communication Policy* (COM (2006) 35 final) aimed at replacing habits with functional provisions in order to very formally make the communication policy a common policy, would raise opposition of the European Parliament and the Council and would be abandoned.



- 2001** – Information policy concerning the general public was once again the responsibility of the Press and Communication Service, which once again became the **Directorate-General for Press and Communication** working under the President's authority (Prodi's goal was always to ensure that the Commission spoke with a single voice, through the Spokesperson, who acted under the President's authority).
- 2006** – A new communication strategy under the Barroso Commission started to take shape. Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate was launched in 2005. In 2006, the **White Paper on a European Communication Policy** was written. In order to better reflect the new strategy, DG X became **DG Communication (COMM)**.

The Directorate-General Communication Unit that is in charge of public opinion analysis is the **Research and Speechwriting Unit**. It is part of Service A (communication actions) and is defined in the organisation chart **COMM.A.2**. Currently headed by **Ian Barber**, this unit breaks down as follows<sup>74</sup>:

- **COMM.A.2.001/Eurobarometer** (Head of Sector: David Voidies), with:
  - 2 information and communication officers - opinion polls officers;
  - 1 information assistant - opinion polls assistant;
  - 1 member of commission staff - webmaster;
  - 1 financial assistant - verification;
  - 1 information and communication assistant - statistical analysis (Eurobarometer).
- **COMM.A.2.002/Speechwriters network**
  - 1 policy analyst - speechwriter;
  - 1 speechwriter.

**The main mission of the COMM.A.2.001 Unit is to observe the evolution of public opinion concerning major issues affecting the EU. It controls the Eurobarometer instruments<sup>75</sup> (Standard, Flash, Special, Qualitative) and coordinates the surveys financed by the other Services/DG that use the Eurobarometer framework contract<sup>76</sup>. Surveys that are directly commissioned,**

<sup>74</sup>. Research and Speechwriting Unit of the DG Communication in the European Commission (update on 28 September 2012): [http://ec.europa.eu/staffdir/plsql/gsys\\_www.branchorgid?pLang=EN&pOrgId=231254&pDisplayAll=1](http://ec.europa.eu/staffdir/plsql/gsys_www.branchorgid?pLang=EN&pOrgId=231254&pDisplayAll=1)

<sup>75</sup>. For analysis of how Eurobarometer operates and the history of its creation, please refer to the first part of the study.

<sup>76</sup>. To understand the difference between the Commission's services that are regular users, occasional users and non-users, see Box 5.

financed and managed by the Research and Speechwriting Unit represent less than one tenth of the total number of surveys.

In its work of public opinion analysis, the European Commission is not only interested in transnational opinion polls, but also gathers results from opinion polls that are likely to concern issues of European integration carried out at local or national level and is not limited to analysing polls at EU27 level. However, according to EU officials, the balance of both levels of analysis tilts sharply in favour of data from surveys carried out at Community level, particularly with regard to those carried out by the Eurobarometer.

### 2.2.1. A role of interface in drafting Eurobarometer surveys

The work undertaken by DG COMM's public opinion analysis service is that of **intermediation** between the contracting party (the institute materially carrying out the survey) and the client. The latter can represent, as we have just seen, another Commission Directorate-General, or at different times and under certain conditions, national governments or other institutions such as universities or foundations (Dublin Foundation, London School of Economics, etc.).

### BOX 13 ► Conditions for use of the Eurobarometer by external clients

External clients may use the Eurobarometer as long as it is not for commercial purposes. The questions they ask must also be compatible with the investigative interests of the instrument. In addition, external clients must abide by the rules determined by the Commission:

- Participation is subject to approval by the Commission.
- All participants are subject to the same conditions regarding price.
- All participants must accept the specified deadlines and must share their results with the Commission.

An example of collaboration between the Unit in charge of managing the Eurobarometer and an external participant, in this case from the world of research in political science, is the work relating to the European elections of 1989 and 1994 carried out by Cees van der Eijk and Mark N. Franklin for Michigan University<sup>77</sup>. Nevertheless, due to the growing demand of the Commission's internal services (*see first part*), the level of external collaboration has significantly diminished recently<sup>78</sup>.

The Commission's public opinion analysis service, in keeping with its role of interface, drafts the questionnaires in conjunction with the client and the contracting party. The design of the questionnaire must naturally take the client's needs and requests into account. For this purpose, meetings are organised with the three parties for each wave of surveys. The relative clout of the three partners varies substantially from one survey to another depending on the client's knowledge of opinion polls and the political sensitivity of the topic under investigation. In some cases, external experts are called on.

As proof of the spirit of consultation underpinning the work of drafting the survey during these meetings, an initial exchange of questionnaires takes place. The aim of the Commission's Eurobarometer Unit is to ensure that the questions are not biased or too complex to be understood by the interviewees. In addition to deep understanding of the engineering of opinion polls, this task requires extraordinary diplomatic skills as clients are seldom prepared to change their requests. In this particular role, Commission officials often find themselves in the position of defending the contracting party from the client's requirements. Once the questionnaire has been drafted, the Research and

<sup>77</sup>. Cees van der Eijk and Mark N. Franklin (eds), *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*, University of Michigan Press, 1996.

<sup>78</sup>. Renaud Soufflot de Magny and Christian Holst, *Eurobarometer: Organisation and Methodology*, *op. cit.*

Speechwriting Unit is in charge of quality control. Next, its officers analyse and summarise the results of the studies and are responsible for publishing them on the Eurobarometer website.

The work can be carried out in close collaboration with the other institutions, but it is especially the case with the European Parliament. The COMM.A.2. officials also organise conferences with universities and survey institutes in order to increase interest in public opinion. In fact, since 2008, they have regularly received a group of experts capable of introducing external input, especially from the academic world, into the political analysis of the EBs.

To conclude, the work of the Commission on the Eurobarometer, in addition to the analytical and synoptical aspect, mainly involves coordinating and streamlining requests from different Directorates-General or from outside, in order to avoid duplication, and irrelevant (effectiveness and efficiency) or biased surveys.

### 2.2.2. The “national” level of public opinion analysis at the Commission

To decipher public opinions in the Member States, the Commission counts on the **Media Analysis and Evaluation Unit** (COMM. A. 3), but especially on the **European Commission Representations** in the EU countries, which act as a liaison between the Brussels executive, national and local public institutions and the general public.

The role of the Representations in this mission is paramount, especially when it comes to the reading of national surveys, i.e. surveys exclusively commissioned in a Member State, by a national public institution or a national private entity (mainly newspapers or political parties/movements).

The approach of the Representations within this framework is extremely **heterogeneous** and greatly depends on the “sensitivity” of the official in charge of issues related to opinion polls (generally a political analyst). In this way, there may be Representations in which the official in charge of reading the national political context has the background of public opinion analysis (or is interested in it); it can therefore be presumed that their office would be extremely active in this connection. Alternatively, it can happen that this same position is

occupied by an official who considers that other instruments capable of informing the decision-makers in Brussels should be mainly used: this peripheral office would then be less focused on opinion polls. However, and despite certain elements dependent on the human context of each Representation, actions exist that may be defined as “joint”.

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**BOX 14** ➤ **Actions carried out by Commission Representations concerning national surveys**

- **The role of monitoring:** when a national survey is likely to raise the interest of the Commission, the Representation has the duty to transmit it to the Unit in charge of monitoring public opinion or, as the case might be, directly to the Commissioner’s cabinet, always accompanied by a short comment;
  - **The role of alerting:** if the Representation sees signs that may interpret a state of national opinion concerning debate on Europe that is going in a “different” direction to that desired by the Commission, it is obliged to alert the latter. For example, it can be stated that at the time of the French “refusal” of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, the Representation in Paris had alerted Brussels on the real possibility of victory for the “No” in the referendum<sup>79</sup>;
  - **The national press review:** drafted by a contracting party outside the Commission, it is enhanced by the political considerations of officials from the Representation and sent to Brussels. It is impossible to say to what extent this instrument is used by the Commissioners or the various Directorates-General interested in taking the temperature of opinion in the country. It may be assumed that, without a specific reminder, the press review arrives in the cabinets with difficulty.
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In any case, it is necessary to recall that the principles and the instruments guiding the work of the Representations are the same for all countries, but that their practice differs from one State to another depending on the profile of the people in charge.

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<sup>79</sup>. We obtained this piece of information from an interview with an official who was working at the Commission Representation in Paris at that time.

## 2.3. The work of public opinion analysis at the European Parliament

In 2007, the European Parliament entered the picture, devoting an administrative unit to opinion analysis, independent of the Commission called the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit. This development could be perceived as confirmation of the Parliament's criticism directed at the Commission's communication policy since the French and Dutch "No" to the Constitutional Treaty and the low voter turnout in European elections. A development that underscores the new role that the representative institution plays in a perspective of long-term institutional evolution. From the outset, the Parliament has supported the Commission's position on communication. Suffice it to say that it was a Parliament debate in 1972 that determined the general principles in favour of greater powers for the Commission in this field and especially the implementation of a continuous study of European public opinion (Eurobarometer). But over the course of the various Treaties the Community changed, and the role of the Parliament along with it. Today, one only has to read technical documentation on the communication policy published on its website to understand that, behind the unified approach presented in the media, things are really very different. For example, "the EP has repeatedly made detailed proposals for improving the relationship between the EU and its citizens", *which have only partially been followed up by the Commission*. The members of the European Parliament have ended up adopting a very critical attitude towards the Commission's initiatives<sup>80</sup>.

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### BOX 15 ► Cooperation over time between the European Parliament and the Commission in the field of communication policy

- 1960** – The Parliamentary Assembly took the initiative of launching several debates on the problems of information (**Schuijt Report**, DOC 89/1960) in order to become associated with general discussions on information policy.
- 1972** – **Parliament Report**, rapporteur **Wilhelmus Schuijt**, in favour of increasing budgets allocated to information and the implementation of a **continuous study of European public opinion**.

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80. Technical documentation on the communication policy of the European Parliament: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU\\_4.17.7.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_4.17.7.pdf), the italics are ours.

- 1977-79** – With a special budget, the theme of the direct election of the Parliament would remain the priority of information programmes. This would result in reinforced collaboration between the Commission and the European Parliament by introducing consultation and cooperation procedures.
- 1993** – The adoption of the Maastricht Treaty and the debate surrounding it brought to light several shortcomings concerning citizens' information. In order to remedy them, a group of experts, chaired by Willy De Clercq, was appointed by the Commission to establish a new strategy that would take account of the needs and concerns of European citizens. At the same time, the Parliament also focused on the issue of information policy (**Oostlander Report**). All of these contributions would be taken up by the Commission in the communication from Commissioner Joao de Deus Pinhero, *The Commission's Information and Communication Policy: A New Approach*. A **new approach to public opinion monitoring** would also be determined, through which more survey instruments were planned.
- 1995** – **Pex Report** by the Parliament, which established closer collaboration with the Commission in the fields of audiovisual, publications, opinion studies, etc.
- 2000** – Signature of a framework agreement between the Parliament and the Commission in order to strengthen their relations.

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With the creation of the **Public Opinion Monitoring Unit**, the European Parliament administration created its own public opinion analysis service, spearheaded by a former Presidency spokesman, Jacques Nancy. This unit is part of the Directorate-General for Communication, Direction C (Relations with citizens). It accounts for almost half of the total staff of the Commission's COMM.A.2 and includes: 1 Administrator of AD grade (the only one if we exclude the Head of Unit, Jacques Nancy); 2 "temporary" assistants; 2 "contractual" assistants and 2 secretaries<sup>81</sup>.

The budget allocated to the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit is much lower than that of COMM.A.2, representing approximately one tenth. This is understandable given the fact that this unit has only benefited from its own budget line for a few years. In this regard, this unit often needs to work with the Commission's "traditional" unit to launch its own waves of EBs because, as

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81. The European Civil Service was initially divided into the hierarchical categories A, B, C, D, category A corresponding to the highest-ranking positions. An extra category ALI was added for linguists. The 2004 reform replaced this system with a 16-grade division and two groups of categories: that of administrators (AD) between grades 5 and 16 and the category of assistant (AST) between grades 1 and 11. Each grade is divided into five levels, except grade 16, which has just two levels. The "temporary" and "contractual" positions do not benefit from permanent contracts.

each wave consists of approximately 60 questions, the institution never needs more than 20 or 30 questions. **It should be noted that each question of an international and biannual study costs around €13,000 and therefore a wave of EBs costs the institutions approximately €780,000.** In addition, to coordinate better and thus help avoid squandering money, both institutions periodically organise interinstitutional meetings.

### 2.3.1. An information tool

The representative dimension of the elected members of the European Parliament and their relative “closeness” to voters inevitably makes the work of public opinion analysis more original than that of the European Commission. The differentiation of communication strategies, essential to the political make-up of the Assembly, eliminates all possibility of having a single approach to public opinion – which on the contrary, is specific to each political family – and thus defines another sphere of action of the administrative unit assigned to its analysis. The objective of the European Parliament’s Public Opinion Monitoring Unit is not only to provide a picture of public opinion to citizens and members of Parliament, but also to produce tools to help decision-making for the institutional communication strategy, by favouring therefore, the aspect of policy evaluation (weighting of output) rather than that of policy preparation (reading of input).

The unit works on creating surveys on specific themes linked to the institution’s legislative activity. On this basis, the Eurobarometer tool is used by taking account of institutional constraints that stem from the operation of any representative assembly, and therefore, in relation to the legislative activities and reports adopted. **Seeking a balance between the “legislative” jargon and the writing of the questionnaire is the main function of the Unit’s work.**

Confirming the purely administrative nature, based on the Unit’s weighting of output, is the production of **biannual surveys known as “Parlemeter” whose goal is to measure citizens’ ideas of the institution.** The “Parlemeter” analyses citizens’ perceptions with “Trends” questions that are repeated in each survey:



- **Perception of the European Parliament**
  - Media recall and level of subjective information about the European Parliament
  - Knowledge of how the European Parliament functions
- **The Image of the European Parliament and Expectations vis-à-vis the Institution**
  - The image of the European Parliament
  - The expected role of the European Parliament
- **The European Parliament Today and Tomorrow: Policies and Values**
  - Values to defend (by the institution)
  - Policy priorities (that the institution should pursue)

From the fourth “Parlemeter”, the progressive numeration system of the Commission was abandoned to give way to the heading “European Parliament Eurobarometer”. The intention here is obvious: to stand out from its Eurobarometer matrix for this type of survey. However, this is put into practice within the limits stemming from history and the operation of the instrument. It is therefore more an “institutional marketing” action that is inscribable within the interinstitutional dialectic, than the mark of real originality in relation to the Eurobarometer. In addition to these “Trend” questions, which, in fact were already present in the EB Standard surveys, are survey topics that wish to subsequently mark the institution’s emancipation from the Commission: The Europeans and the Crisis (2010/EB 74.1), The European Union and Energy (2011/EB 74.3) or 100th Anniversary of Women’s Day: Fighting Against Gender Discriminations in the EU (2011/EB 75.1).

The European Parliament’s work of public opinion analysis therefore focuses almost exclusively on producing the institution’s communication policies. Just like the Commission, it has no ambition to guide the work of the MEPs, as they listen directly to the citizens who voted for them.

### 2.3.2. The “national” level of public opinion analysis at the European Parliament

The civil servants of the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit are also in charge of writing a weekly press review on the state of national public opinion and

of sending it to the various sections of Parliament. To do this, the civil servants endeavour to follow “national production” of opinion polls in the Member States and make a selection according to the specific interests of their institution. We are not in a position to know with certainty what impact this instrument has on the work of the Parliament.

## 2.4. The role of the other institutions

### 2.4.1. European Council

EU Heads of State and Government are highly concerned about their public opinion, whom they address almost systematically after European Council meetings, through press conferences. Many of them also regularly consult their national parliament before and after these meetings. They also examine the EBs on a frequent basis, and especially the national opinion polls reported by the media of the various countries.

The European Council therefore pays a lot of attention to opinion polls, but it does so mainly from the point of view of “national public opinion”. It is important to note that the composition and the historic role of this institution in the institutional architecture of the EU could not warrant the contrary. For proof of this, it is sufficient to measure the difficulty with which European leaders, in these times of crisis, find or have found the courage to contradict the results of opinion polls carried out in their country (among their electorate). We are referring, for example, to the difficulty with which Angela Merkel accepted to have Germany make an even greater effort in the Greek crisis given the evident dissatisfaction expressed by its citizens in the polls. On this subject, in an interview dated 26 August 2011 for the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, Jacques Delors complained that “public opinion polls dictate laws”, recalling on the other hand that “Helmut Kohl brought Germany into the euro area with 60% of Germany opposed to giving up the Deutsche Mark”. For representatives of national governments, the key to understanding European public opinion is fragmented by the various public spheres of their country and it is only with great difficulty or as a last resort that they manage to overcome them. It is for this reason that it is difficult to fully include this institution in our thinking without changing the “Community” nature of it.

In particular, concerning the President of the European Council, it can be argued that he is interested in the results of opinion polls at European level. He does not commission opinion polls, in particular because he does not have the financial and human resources to do so. He considers that he presides an institution and chairs meetings in which national public opinion is presented by Heads of State and Government. The President of the European Council nevertheless regularly consults and examines opinion polls produced by other stakeholders. As if to underscore his interest in following these opinions, Herman Van Rompuy prefaced the last edition of the *Atlas of European Values*<sup>82</sup>.

#### 2.4.2. The Council of the European Union

The analysis relative to the European Council is also valid for the Council of the European Union. However, it should also be mentioned that the technical level of the work of this institution partly suppresses the need to resort to public opinion as all the activities of the Council are in fact prepared or coordinated by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), made up of permanent representatives and their assistants from the Member States, in Brussels. The work of this Committee is prepared by over 150 committees and working groups made up of delegates from the Member States. These senior officials are inevitably less concerned by evolutions in public opinion or at least, they are not directly concerned.

#### 2.4.3. The European Central Bank (ECB)

The main mission of the ECB, the central bank in charge of the single European currency, consists in maintaining price stability within the euro area and, consequently, preserving the purchasing power of the euro. For this reason, its main characteristic is political independence: neither the ECB, nor the national central banks (NCBs), nor whatever member of their decision-making bodies can seek or take instructions from EU institutions or bodies, from any government of a Member State or from any other body. This is also the case for the dictates of public opinion. In the course of its activity, this institution therefore is not involved in listening to the public, but rather in focusing on the objectives set by its mission. However, in order to preserve its legitimacy, the ECB must

82. Loek Halman, Inge Sieben and Marga van Zundert, *Atlas of European Values*, Brill, Leiden, November 2011.

be responsible vis-à-vis democratic institutions and the citizens, in its action as part of its responsibilities. To this end, the ECB regularly presents reports on its activities and acts with utmost transparency. To our knowledge, it does not commission opinion polls regularly.

#### **2.4.4. Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**

As previously described, there has only been one survey commissioned directly by the Committee of the Regions<sup>83</sup> and none by the EESC.

However, given the consultative nature of the Committees, it is not certain if they were not the source of questions asked in the Special EBs commissioned by the Directorates-General of the Commission. In any case, it is important to note that the European Commission tends to consider that the making of the Eurobarometer instrument is within its remit and therefore that its use by others (with the exception of the European Parliament) can only be occasional, except of course when it concerns consultation of its results.

83. "The role and impact of local and regional authorities...", *op. cit.*

### 3. The impact of the Eurobarometer: a hybrid between “science” and “governance”

The Eurobarometer remains a database, which was established with the methodological and intellectual support of researchers in social sciences, but also an instrument designed and used by political institutions. Because of its hybrid design, the political commitment of the Eurobarometer does not automatically translate into total control of the instrument, but rather slight pressure, which is felt within EU political priorities.

#### 3.1. The scientific instrument

When we speak of European public opinion, we are compelled to link it to what has now become virtually synonymous: the Eurobarometer<sup>84</sup>. This has been possible due to the fact that since its creation in the early 1970s, the European Commission has been holding the reins of this system of making and analysing opinion polls with the clear objective of providing rigorous scientific analyses. As a result, this mission was led between 1973 and 1987 by its creator Jacques-René Rabier, in close collaboration with the American political scientist Ronald Inglehart. Until 1989, international coordination of the “field” as well as data entry were carried out by *Faits et Opinions* (Paris), directed firstly by Jean Stoetzel and then by Hélène Riffault. Jean Stoetzel (1910-1987) was a French sociologist who introduced the technique of opinion surveys in France. Graduate of the elite *École Normale Supérieure*, he obtained the high-level French competition examination for teachers, *agrégation*, in philosophy in 1937. During a period of research in the United States, he met George Gallup and in 1938 he returned to France to found the *Institut français d'opinion publique*-IFOP (French institute of public opinion).

<sup>84</sup>. Here we are referring to the world of “European Union specialists”. We do not know the level of awareness of Eurobarometer among the general public, but we are led to believe that it is not automatically associated with the concept of European public opinion.

From 1987 to 1996, it was Karlheinz Reif, professor of political science at the Universities of Mannheim and of Bamberg, who continued the programme at the head of the Public Opinion Surveys and Research Unit and, from 1994 onwards, with the help of Anna Melich, an academic from the Department of Political Science of the University of Geneva, who had joined the DG Information and Communication of the European Commission in 1988. From 1994, as Head of Unit, she was in charge of the different types of EBs, for monitoring public opinion on European integration and on EU policies. Between 2000 and 2002, the programme was led within the framework of the DG Education and Culture, Centre for the Citizen – Public Opinion Analysis Unit, under the direction of Harald Hartung. With the revival of the DG Press and Communication in 2002 (*see Box 11*), Thomas Christensen headed the Public Opinion Analysis Unit, followed by Antonis Papacostas from 2003 to 2010<sup>85</sup>, and then Ian Barber.

We consider that such a historical reminder is important, since reviewing the various managers of the Eurobarometer helps us to better understand how it is used.

**The first people in charge of the Eurobarometer were all academics from the world of political science, close to intellectuals who were specialists in quantitative research in social science.** It was only with the departure of Anna Melich<sup>86</sup> in 1999 that these same positions became occupied by traditional “Eurocrats”. It is clear that the scientific quality and the “political objectivity” of an instrument considered as an “oracle” graced with the absence of critical discussion in its respect, is more difficult to challenge if there is a specialist in quantitative analysis in social sciences sitting at its helm. **If the Eurobarometer aspires to be a scientific instrument capable of providing apolitical analyses, this is partly due to the fact that it stems from the work of Community officials specialising in social sciences.** And this is no longer the case today, at least as regards the people in charge.

<sup>85</sup>. From 1999, with the departure of Anna Melich, the organisation and the supervision of surveys was managed by Rubén Mohedano-Brêthes (until 2002) and then by Renaud Soufflot de Magny (until 2006).

<sup>86</sup>. Today, Anna Melich is in charge of monitoring European public opinion at the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA), the bridge between the political decision-makers of the European Commission and the stakeholders of society that can usefully contribute to drafting policies.

In demonstrating the “academic” nature of the Eurobarometer, there is however also the fact that, in order to be exploited by researchers throughout the world, its surveys are automatically stored in their totality in the central archives (*Zentralarchiv*) of the University of Cologne. In 2007, these merged with the Information Centre (Bonn) and the Centre for Survey Research and Methodology (Mannheim) to give rise to GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, and are available through the CESSDA Database (Council of European Social Science Data Archive). In addition, the data are made available to institutes that are members of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) and of the ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research). These huge databases in social sciences archive these files and develop documentation (“code books”) that allow their dissemination within the international research community, for whom it is of great interest to be able to directly exploit extremely rich empirical material.

### 3.2. The governance tool

The argument of nominating traditional Eurocrats instead of academics specialising in quantitative research at the head of the Eurobarometer, could lead us to confirm the idea of recognising the Eurobarometer as a “governance” tool rather than a scientific survey instrument, capable of providing European decision-makers with the expectations of their citizens, given that it has been presented as such since 2001 in the official documents of the Commission<sup>87</sup>. This situation proves how important listening to public opinion has become for the Commissioners and the senior officials of the various services that have the possibility of commissioning EBs. To such an extent that, since the start of his mandate, President Barroso – who in fact was a young researcher in the same political science department in Geneva as Anna Melich – has never ceased to underscore the importance for the Commission of being attentive to citizens’ expectations.

87. In 2001, in its *European Governance: A White Paper*, the Commission makes the need for decision-makers to constantly stay in contact with public opinion an instrument of governance: “This [dialogue] should help policy makers to stay in touch with European public opinion, and could guide them in identifying European projects which mobilise public support.” COM(2001) 428 Final, p. 12. See Philippe Aldrin, *Les Eurobaromètres entre science et politique. Retour sur la fabrique officielle de l’opinion européenne*, in Daniel Gaxie, Nicolas Hubé, Marine de Lassalle, Jay Rowell (dir.), *L’Europe des Européens. Enquête comparative sur les perceptions de l’Europe*, Paris, Economica, 2011. pp. 27-48.

In his first College, he had even introduced a “Trends” note, intended for Commissioners, featuring the most important elements from the EBs and national surveys coming from the Commission’s Representations. However, and for reasons unknown to us, this practice was discontinued during his second mandate.

Yet, to avoid ambiguity about the nature of the Eurobarometer, **it must be clear that we are talking about a hybrid instrument: it is both a tool designed and used by political institutions, mainly the European Commission, and a database created with the help of researchers in social sciences, who are its main users.** The growing interest of the “political sphere” with regard to the Eurobarometer does not automatically translate into total control of the instrument, but should be understood rather as a slight “pressure”, the result of the internalisation of EU political priorities, as the Eurobarometer unit works in a free and autonomous manner.

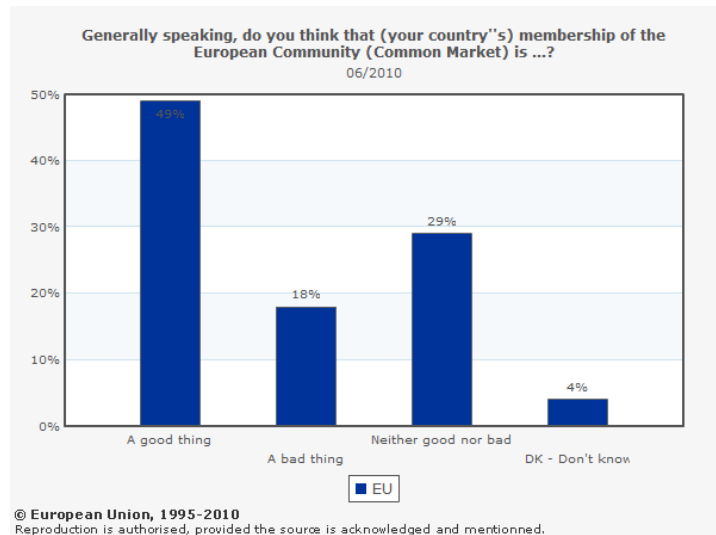
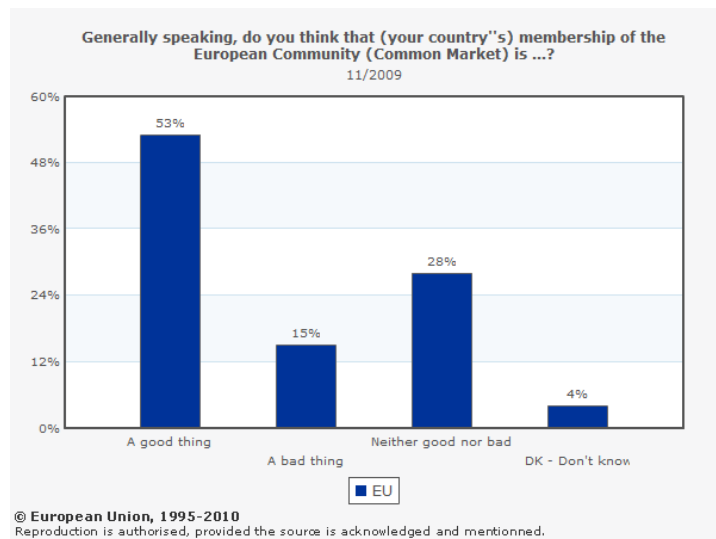
**Political manipulation is undoubtedly a threat for scientific rigour, but the officials in charge of political analysis can resist “pressure” from other services of the Commission, by explaining to them that a biased questionnaire or a partial publication of results could threaten the reputation of the instrument and be counter-productive.**

An example of what has just been said could be seen in the disappearance of certain “Trends” questions, i.e. questions that are repeated identically and that are used to define the evolution of opinions over time (see § 1.2.1.). One of these questions, which has been present since 1973 and has had the same wording from one wave of surveys to the next (with the exception of changing “European Community” to “European Union”), is intended to measure citizens’ support for European integration. Interviewees are asked the following: “Generally speaking, do you believe that (our country’s) membership of the EU is: a good thing / a bad thing / neither good nor bad?”. **In spring 2010, only 49% of Europeans interviewed believed that their country’s membership of the EU was a good thing (53% in November 2009)** as opposed to 18% for a bad thing (15% in November 2009), 29% not taking part in addition to over 4% of Don’t knows (see Graph 3)<sup>88</sup>.

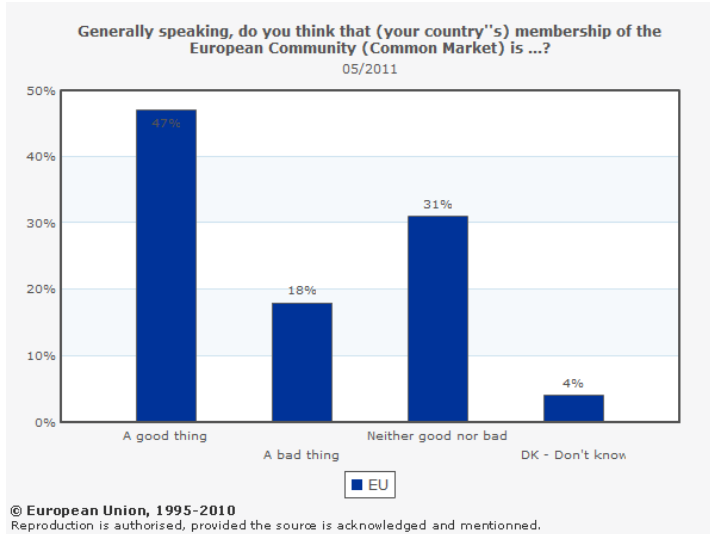
88. On the long-term attitudes of European public opinion see the study by Daniel Debomy, “Do the Europeans still believe in the EU?...”, *op. cit.*



**GRAPH 3** ► Membership of the EU in 2009, 2010 and 2011 (EU27 average)



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**In the June 2010 survey (EB 73) this question was not present.** It was asked again in the May 2011 wave (EB 75), but this time, as the results were worse than those previously recorded, it was only published on the web page of the Eurobarometer interactive search system<sup>89</sup>, and therefore was not included in the official series of the Standard EB<sup>90</sup>. In fact, only 47% of Europeans this time believed that membership of the EU was a good thing. It is not the “bad thing” responses that greatly increased but rather those of “neither good nor bad”.

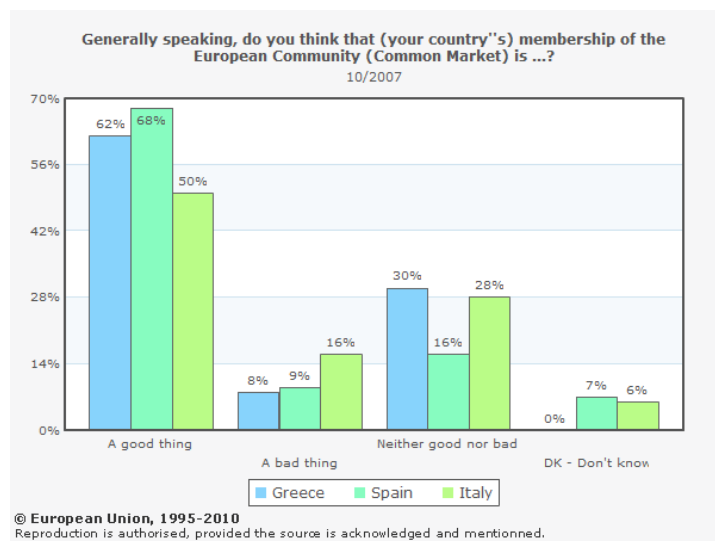
This could mean that this question was withdrawn due to the poor performances recorded concerning support for the EU. The political interest behind the decision not to include a “Trend” question that reflects the difficult period that the EU is going through is obvious here. And while the same goes for the EU in general, **weakening support for the Union is seen in the**

89. Eurobarometer interactive search system: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/cf/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/cf/index_en.cfm)

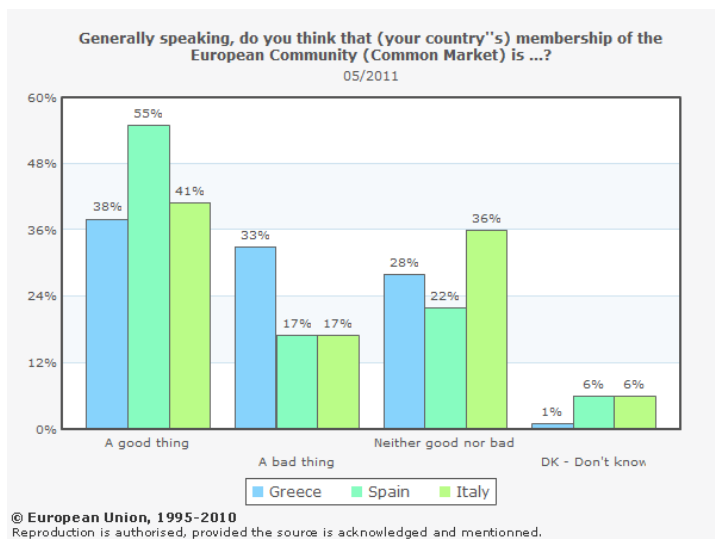
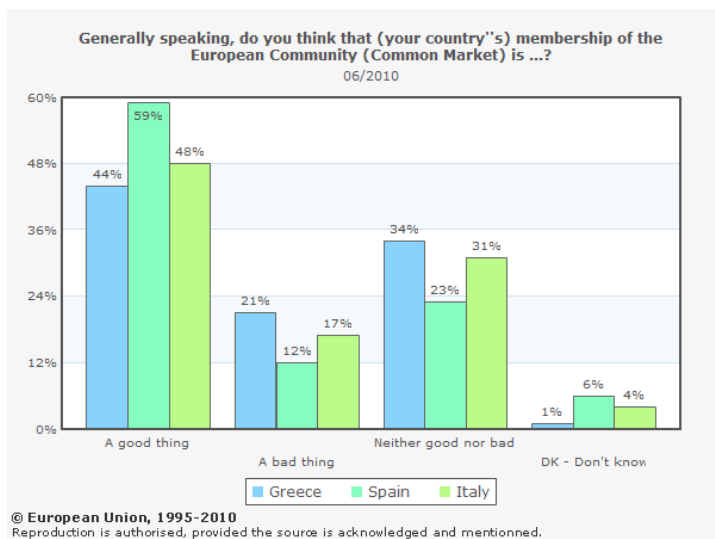
90. However, it was published again in spring 2011 but it only concerned the candidate countries (Q.10, EB/75).

**unprecedented increase in the responses given in the countries mainly affected by the economic crisis.** In order to take stock of this, it suffices to observe and compare the results in three countries greatly affected by the economic crisis, such as Italy, Spain and Greece – countries known for their enthusiasm for European integration – **before the crisis in October 2007 (EB 68), in June 2010 (EB 73) and in May 2011 (EB 75) (see Graph 4).**

**GRAPH 4** ➤ Membership of the EU in Greece, Spain and Italy in 2007, 2010 and 2011



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**It is therefore not surprising that politicians decided to suspend this “Trend” question. It is important to remember that the Eurobarometer is an instrument created and financed by a political institution. It is therefore inconceivable that it could somehow damage that institution with the publication of adverse results in its regard.**

However, and in order to preserve its nature of scientific instrument, it would be a good idea for the Eurobarometer to be accompanied by a **Users’ Committee** in its work. This Committee could be useful by bringing together researchers in social sciences and the EU civil servants in order to carry out the scientific monitoring of the results and therefore give consistency to the “academic” origins of the tool and its political use. Such a committee, by advertising its work, could also communicate more effectively on the results as it would no longer be a communication “reserved” for experts in European matters, but rather a communication with a strong chance of being better disseminated in universities.

This Users’ Committee would also be an advantage for Eurobarometer users who would have the possibility of knowing what needs to be made public and what cannot be. It is precisely the confusion and approximation in the planning of the investigation strategy that threatens the extremely positive image of EB surveys. The publication of a survey that the EU could certainly have done without bears witness to this confusion between the desire to make the results public and the political need not to do so (confusion which is inevitably linked on the one hand to the independence that the Eurobarometer has benefited from for so long, and on the other hand to increasing political scrutiny). In a Flash EB entitled “Iraq and Peace in the World” (Flash EB 151), the question to determine whether Israel constituted a threat to peace, in the 15 countries mentioned, had been slipped into the questionnaire<sup>91</sup>. Some 59% of the 7,515 persons interviewed from the 15 EU Member States placed Israel at the top of the list. For second place, there was a tie between the United States, North Korea and Iran (53%), ahead of Iraq (52%). This ranking was relatively unexpected, given the friendly relations that the European capitals wish to maintain with Israel, and it puts public opinion and leaders in an awkward position.

<sup>91</sup>. The question was worded as follows: “For each of the following countries, tell me if in your opinion, it presents or not a threat to peace in the world – Israel?” (Q. 10, p. 81 of the report).

The surprise is considerable when the figures are examined in detail. One can note, for example, that the levels of mistrust towards Israel concern 74% of people interviewed in the Netherlands and 69% in Austria, whereas countries that have long been presented as terrorist hot spots (Syria, Libya, Somalia), in particular by Washington, have relatively low scores (37%, 36% and 16% respectively). Initially, the Commission had only published partial results relative to the war in Iraq, by ignoring the question that may have inconvenienced Israel and the United States, but it had not provided for the possibility of leaks. It was the Spanish newspaper *El País* that confirmed the existence of these questions in an editorial, placing Brussels, who was thus accused of censorship, in a difficult spot. The stammering reply of the Commission was to deny the existence of a “political will” behind the choice of non-publication of the questionnaire, and to argue technical problems linked to the analysis of the data. It took three days to make the Commission leaders understand that the data should be published and in the end they were.

This event constitutes a case in hand of the balance between the freedom of the Eurobarometer Unit, capable of creating a questionnaire that is potentially explosive for EU foreign policy, and the power of control of the leaders in Brussels. According to our information, Eurobarometer officials were sworn to silence. Today, in order to highlight the continuing increase of “political attention” towards the Eurobarometers, in the corridors of the DG COMM, people speak of a “before” and “after” the questionnaire that mentioned Israel.

### 3.3. Does the Eurobarometer help reveal the Europeans to each other?

As seen in the first part of this study, the objective of the founder of the Eurobarometer, Jacques-René Rabier, was firstly to learn more about public opinion in order to guide information policy and secondly, to help reveal the Europeans to each other, in other words to learn about European public opinion and with this opinion share what the citizens of a particular country thought about such topics. **While we can easily affirm that the Eurobarometer opinion polls help and have helped us to know the state of public opinion, the same cannot really be said of the awareness of Eurobarometer and its ability to reveal the Europeans to each other.**

**In fact, the Eurobarometer remains almost unknown outside of the scientific (quantitative research in social sciences), political and professional circles (opinion poll institutes).** European citizens rarely find Eurobarometer opinion polls<sup>92</sup> by leafing through newspapers. In stating this, we do not wish to say that the Eurobarometer is non-existent in the European media. One simply needs to skim through the results of the most famous Internet search engine to realise its presence in the European information bodies. We instead wish to state that its dissemination remains marginal and insufficient in order to obtain the result hoped for by Jacques-René Rabier. The Commission's COMM.A.2. Unit does not have an independent service to "disseminate" poll results. This work is done through colloquia and conferences mostly organised in institutional bodies (the same goes for the Parliament) and it is therefore difficult for citizens to be aware of it.

In our opinion, what is likely to reveal the European citizens to each other needs to be sought on the "context" side and not on that of the instruments. A period of potentially conflictual tensions or a situation of imbalance or a worrying breakdown can therefore allow European public opinion to reveal itself to others, as was the case during the second war in Iraq (*see Box 17*). It is important to state that the "debt crisis" which, at the time of writing, is changing the political face of the EU, has proven not only the existence of public opinion that is common to Europeans, but has also placed us before a debate at European level that is capable of mobilising national opinion.

The "Indignados" movement, which began in Spain to fight against the austerity measures of the government, job insecurity linked to the crisis and the power of the world of finance, has spread throughout the continent (and even beyond) by giving rise to the awareness of national public opinion on the systemic/European dimension of the crisis. This made possible a series of actions in the Member States capable of proving the existence of a public opinion common to all Europeans.

**Independently of opinion polls and their dissemination, European citizens will reveal themselves fully to each other when the socio-political context urges them to do so. The creation of a "European public sphere",**

92. Cf. Pierre Bréchon et Bruno Cautrès (dir.), *op. cit.*, p. 44.

by responding to the lack of legitimisation, constitutes the necessary infrastructure for the large-scale production of diversified public opinion which, for the moment, only exists within the limits of the nation-states. The public sphere on a European scale will be born of the opening up of existing national worlds *to each other*, and will give rise to the cross-links of national communications that have been reciprocally translated<sup>93</sup>. But this will not happen in the very near future.

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**BOX 16** ➤ Should one consider that European public opinion can only be measured by surveys or can it also be found in the streets, particularly since demonstrations against the War in Iraq?

The answer was given to us indirectly by **Jürgen Habermas** in a document published on the web site German History in Documents and Images<sup>94</sup>. The German philosopher tells us that: "We should not forget two dates: the day the newspapers reported to their astonished readers that the Spanish Prime Minister had invited those European nations willing to support the Iraq War to swear an oath of loyalty to George W. Bush, an invitation issued behind the backs of the other countries of the European Union. But we should also remember the 15th of February 2003, as mass demonstrations in London and Rome, Madrid and Barcelona, Berlin and Paris reacted to this sneak attack. The simultaneity of these overwhelming demonstrations – the largest since the end of the Second World War – may well, in hindsight, go down in history as a sign of the birth of a European public sphere." But the answer was above all given to us by a French political scientist, **Dominique Reynié**, who devoted a book to this issue, which was published in 2004<sup>95</sup>. According to him, the theory of the existence of a European public opinion cannot be limited to a census of prevalent social behaviours or the description of preferences and beliefs, of cultural frameworks shared beyond national borders. On the contrary, proof of its existence also assumes the possibility of identifying the public manifestations of an opinion that is common to all Europeans<sup>96</sup>. And according to Dominique Reynié, the proof of its existence can be found in the "worldwide demonstrations against military intervention in Iraq" capable of providing us with the "possibility of assessing the outlines and the steadfastness of European public opinion [...] independently of polls to which it had been limited thus far. European opinion, which had become "manifest" in its own right, prevailed in 2003 for the first time as a public opinion."<sup>97</sup>

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93. Jürgen Habermas, "Why Europe Needs a Constitution", Article from *New Left Review*, September-October 2001.

94. "February 15, or, What Binds Europeans Together: Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in Core Europe".

95. Dominique Reynié, *La fracture...*, op. cit., 2004.

96. Dominique Reynié, "L'idée d'une 'opinion européenne'", op. cit., p. 99.

97. Dominique Reynié, *La fracture...*, op. cit., p. 17 (Translation by Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute).



## CONCLUSION

The political evolution of the European Union has created a unique decision-making context in which analysing what the public says in opinion polls is not merely a simple instrument to collect information, but a source of legitimacy. In line with the intention of the Eurobarometer's creator, Jacques-René Rabier, polls that were intended to be used to guide information policy more effectively and reveal the Europeans to each other, swiftly became an instrument to help define and evaluate policies. Increasingly, polls mainly conducted on behalf of the Commission, the Parliament or other European institutions, not only serve as a policy preparation tool (reading of input), but also as a tool to evaluate these policies (weighting of output). The creation of the Eurobarometer provided the Community institutions but more generally the public sphere with an effective investigational instrument. The Eurobarometer, a hybrid mechanism, is both a tool designed and used by political institutions, mainly the European Commission (which created it and supervises it), and a database created with the help of researchers in social sciences. However, the growing interest of the "political sphere" for the Eurobarometer does not automatically translate into total control of the instrument, but should be understood rather as a slight "pressure", the result of the internalisation of EU political priorities, as the Eurobarometer unit works in a free and autonomous manner.

But surveying public opinion does not stop at the Eurobarometer. A European Union constantly seeking legitimacy has allowed the Commission to become aware of the need for a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue with citizens, and to include "participation" in the founding principles of European governance. This need for dialogue was accentuated by the French and Dutch rejection of the Constitutional Treaty and prompted Brussels to finance new citizen consultation projects, mainly deliberative polling.

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## AUTHOR



Salvatore Signorelli graduated in political sciences and holds a PhD on the origins of the French parliamentarism in the 19th century. His thesis was published by *Il Mulino* (Bologna) in 2008. In 2009 he studied at the European College of Parma Foundation. He then worked at the European Commission and in the “Public Opinion Monitoring Unit” at the European Parliament.

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Salvatore Signorelli



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## Salvatore Signorelli

Holding a PhD in political sciences, he worked at the European Commission and in the "Public Opinion Monitoring Unit" at the European Parliament.

## THE EU AND PUBLIC OPINIONS: A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP?

The European Union has long sought to analyse the expectations of the public which expresses a distrust that has increased in recent years. It is on the basis of this apparent paradox that Salvatore Signorelli has developed his study on tools that the EU uses to analyse the public opinion, and presents their origins, characteristics and use.

The most interesting aspect of this study is exactly the fact that highlights the attention paid by the EU to the expectations of its citizens, symbolized by "Eurobarometer" surveys, giving the impression that "Brussels" acts and decides in a bubble of experts disconnected from the real world.

Another interesting part of the study is the number of references and data provided which allows to become familiar with the various tools of analysis of public opinion, and specifying how and to what extent the different European institutions use them.

Last but not least, Salvatore Signorelli puts into perspective the use of surveys commissioned by the European authorities, pointing out that they are not intended to replace the positions and messages relayed by the representatives of the citizens, but that they provide useful contributions in determining the orientations of the European construction.

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