

European Community

News Release

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EEC:
EUROPEAN CITIZENS SUPPORT A UNITED EUROPE, POLL SHOWS

On the eve of the 30th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, a new poll shows that a majority of Europe's citizens support the European Community, and favour an even closer union of Western European nations.

«Our fellow European citizens take positions that are more advanced than the governments of our countries», said EC Commissioner Carlo Ripa di Meana, who announced the poll results March 18 in Brussels. «(They say) the Community is not an obstacle to their national, historic, cultural or economic interests, but represents the best guarantee of those interests.»

The «Europe 2000» survey, a special edition of the EC Commission's «Eurobarometer» polling series, questioned almost 12,000 residents of the 12 EC countries. According to the results:

- Seventy-four percent of Europeans consider their country's membership in the Community important or very important; 53 percent say their country has benefited from membership.
- Two-thirds are for or somewhat for a «United States of Europe».
- Fifty-eight percent would entrust a «government of Europe» with responsibility for the economy, foreign affairs and defence within 30 years. Only nine percent would never do so.
- Almost half believe the Community will have a common defence policy by the year 2000. Fifty-three percent expect to be asked to vote on a proposed European constitution; 50 percent to be writing checks in a European currency; and 86 percent to be watching one or more European television channels by the turn of the century.
- Fifty-five percent believe that a united Europe is the only way to defend their national, historic, cultural and economic interests against challenges from the «great world powers».

The poll shows that opinions about the Community vary from country to country. The original six EC Member States (Belgium, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands) show more enthusiasm than the newer members. The Danes are particularly skeptical.

British opinion, while still relatively negative, is steadily becoming more «pro-European». In 1970, 30 percent of the British favored a «United States of Europe». Today, the figure is 52 percent.

The French, in contrast to their reputation as nationalists, strongly support European unification. Seventy-two percent would entrust a European government with responsibility for important policy areas within 30 years; 65 percent might vote for a candidate of another nationality to head a European government (compared with 50 percent of all respondents).

Young people (ages 15 to 24) are slightly more convinced than their elders that EC membership is important as such and as it is. Along with the oldest age group, however, they are somewhat less committed than 25 to 54 year-olds to going further on the road to European unification.

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