Europe at a Glance: Studies and Analyses on the European Elections

"Watershed election", "more important than ever before" – many politicians are wielding superlatives to describe this year’s Elections to the European Parliament. Turnout for the election may increase overall. However, who stands to benefit from this? What do Europeans actually think about their continent? Where are the areas that require the most work in the EU? Please consult our overview page to find contacts and studies on Europe.

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Brussels and Strasbourg are everywhere: Whether it is a matter of uniform social standards, caps for environmental pollution in our cities or rules for the internet, the European Parliament takes countless decisions that chart the course of our future. And it is Europeans who will decide who will be setting the tone there in the future. But what do EU citizens think about their future, the role of the EU in the world, and what are their fears and concerns?

What Do Europeans Think?

In eupinions (https://eupinions.eu/de/home/), our EU opinion poll, we regularly ask people's views on representative questions for the EU and the largest Member States. The results reveal a multifaceted picture of Europe: The EU's approval ratings have risen continuously, almost without interruption, in recent years, and Europeans generally want the EU to play a stronger role at international level. However, Europeans are increasingly dissatisfied with how the EU functions.

![Approval Ratings for the EU*](https://eupinions.eu/de/trends/)
Approval of the EU is high – and generally rising – in the EU-28 States and in the five most populous EU Member States (after the departure of the United Kingdom).

Europeans increasingly come across as divided prior to European elections. But a majority of both the optimists and the pessimists among them want to participate in the elections.

The respondents’ assessment of European policy in multiple areas differs depending on the degree of their own social insecurity.

Our European study on election intentions shows that many Europeans would like to use the European elections as a form of protest vote and primarily want to cast their ballot against individual parties. The mobilization of members in fringe parties critical of Europe is better than with voters of moderate parties in favor of Europe, according to our study. This could make it more difficult to reach compromises in the new parliament.
The Financial and Economic Union

The European Single Market is one of united Europe's greatest achievements and should guarantee the free movement of goods, services, people and capital. But what does it actually do for Europeans? Our analysis shows how great the gains are in European wallets throughout Europe and that the Single Market benefits Europeans in the form of income gains.
Per capita welfare gains from the trade boosting effect of the EU Single Market, NUTS2 regions

Annual welfare gains (change in GDP per capita) due to the EU Single Market, in 2016 prices. Results based on a counterfactual analysis using a gravity model of trade as in Mion and Ponattu (2019).

Could you still imagine Europe without the Single Market, or any other of the four freedoms which guarantee free movement of goods, services, capital and labor? For our short film Back to Europe, we fast forward to a future scenario and try to show how Europe would look without the EU. Unlimited traveling, working and studying abroad, 28 countries united in peace? Without the EU, this would hardly be the case.

However, the EU is not only a large market. By adopting a complex web of standards and regulations, the EU has taken numerous measures in the aftermath of the financial crisis to minimize the chance of it breaking up and the risk of contagion during crises. But what do terms like "convergence criteria", "banking union" or the "four freedoms" mean? And what can joint initiatives such as the European unemployment reinsurance achieve? Our Europe Briefings from the "Repair and Prepare" project and a Study on Unemployment Reinsurance should clarify this.

Brexit will also continue to preoccupy Europeans. As long as no deal is reached on an orderly exit for the United Kingdom, a hard Brexit remains a possibility. This would be roughly twice as expensive for Europeans as a soft Brexit.
However, the greatest loss of income would be suffered by the Brits, as our analysis reveals.

The chart depicts the annual losses and gains in income as a result of a hard Brexit. Europe loses, the rest of the world benefits.

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Standards for Democracy in the EU

Europe is the cradle of democracy. However, a democratic past does not always protect against an authoritarian future. What is the situation with standards for democracy and governance in Europe? The latest edition of the "Sustainable Government Indicators" draws a sobering conclusion: The standards for democracy deteriorated in 16 of the 28 EU States in 2018. Above all, the authors criticize the fact that governments in many places are no longer interested in balance and compromise, but instead are increasingly acting in a deliberately polarizing manner to satisfy individual groups of voters.
Our studies on European citizen initiatives show how citizens can get involved in European democracy. Most Europeans do not even know that simply by signing their name, they can ask Brussels to draft a specific law. Our studies show why this is the case and how citizen initiatives could be reformed.

Social Justice in Europe

The Social Justice Index regularly reflects how the EU States are handling the challenges of globalization and structural change. It studies values such as the risk of poverty or unemployment rates for all EU States and shows that the economic crisis of the last ten years has now been overcome. Nonetheless, the EU Member States have worked their way out of the crisis at differing speeds. Our study "How are you doing Europe?" also shows the differences in social standards and the labor market, as we collected empirical data for six subject areas such as poverty and social standards and developed reform proposals.
The Index of Justice shows how fair life is in Europe. The higher the index number, the better the country’s position.

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