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Europeans see the EU as a protective umbrella in the era of globalization

Right-wing conservative parties are mobilizing votes throughout Europe with their criticism of globalization and the EU. By contrast, centrist parties cannot agree about how best to respond to this policy of rejection. The current edition of eupinions shows what Europeans think about globalization and the role the EU should play.



Isabell Hoffmann

For many Europeans a policy of isolation and nationalism is not an appropriate response to the challenges of globalization. This is because, although almost half of all Europeans see globalization as a threat, the majority of them consider the EU to be part of the solution and not the problem.

They expect European policy to concern itself above all with questions of security and migration. Economic questions and questions of social justice are considered to play a far less important role, irrespective of country of origin and party affinity. It is striking that whereas enthusiasm for the EU is crumbling in some right-of-center parties (FDP in Germany, Les Republicains in

France), a broad majority of supporters of center-right to left parties support greater European co-operation.

"In 2017 there is cross-party acceptance of Europe as a source of stability, prosperity and peace. That is one of Europe's successes," says our chairman and CEO Aart De Geus, commenting on the findings.

)) *"Those voices that promise a future confrontation between nations instead of international togetherness have to be countered with persuasion, facts and open discussions. To do that, strong political leadership is also required."*

Aart De Geus, chairman and CEO of the Bertelsmann Stiftung

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Whether for or against globalization: a majority sees Europe as part of the solution

There is a considerable gap between the general and personal perceptions of Europeans with regard to attitudes towards globalization. Whereas almost half (44 percent) of EU citizens consider globalization to be a threat, at the same time the majority (66 percent) state that with regard to the accessibility of affordable goods and services their experiences of globalization have, at the very least, been "quite good".

In Germany supporters of the EU are in a clear majority across nearly all the political divides. However it is noticeable that the supporters of the FDP have shifted to the right in terms of European policy. The greatest proportion of advocates of stronger EU integration can be found in the SPD (66 percent), followed by the Greens (65 percent), the CDU/CSU (63 percent) and the Left Party (62 percent). In contrast, commitment to Europe among the FDP seems to be shaky; only 49 percent of their supporters are in favor of more European integration. This is the worst score after the AfD, the majority of whose supporters are against more integration (59 percent).

A European-wide split between the extreme right and all other parties

In the other EU states we find a similar picture. In France only the supporters of the right-wing conservative Front National (64 percent) are against more EU integration. In Poland there is a majority for a clear anti-EU perspective only among supporters of the right-wing nationalist party Kukiz'15 (54 percent).

In Spain, by contrast, the EU has an excellent reputation whatever the party position. The Spanish socialists register the lowest approval rating; but even so, 71 percent of supporters still want more EU-integration.

)) *"Many supporters of left-wing parties see globalization as a threat but still support the further development of the EU. In contrast the right see Europe as the problem rather than part of the solution. For this reason throughout Europe they consistently reject stronger integration."*

Isabell Hoffmann, co-author of the eupinions

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Terrorism and migration are the most urgent problems for Europeans

Asked what the greatest challenges are for Europe's future a clear picture emerges among Europeans; those surveyed identified terrorism and international migration as the most pressing areas. A quarter of all Europeans state that the fight against terrorism should be Europe's top priority. Another fifth of all Europeans consider Europe's main task to be better management of migration. By contrast, growth (6 percent) and inequality (6 percent) are not anywhere near the top of the Europeans' to-do list.

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"eupinions" is our European opinion research instrument, that was developed jointly with Dalia Research. We regularly seek the views of the citizens of all 28 EU member states on European matters. The current survey took place in July 2017 and with a sample of 10,755 respondents, is representative for the European Union overall and the six largest member states – Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain and Poland. Because this study focuses on relevant questions for the post-Brexit EU, for reasons of methodological robustness we have not taken into account the British sample.

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