

PRESS RELEASE

A majority of Europeans believe in a Ukraine victory

One year after Russia began its war of aggression against Ukraine, 61 percent of Europeans are convinced Ukraine will prevail. But worries persist: 68 percent of respondents see the attack on Ukraine as an attack on all of Europe.

Gütersloh, February 16, 2023. One year into the war in Ukraine, 61% of Europeans believe that the country will prevail. Germans, however, are not quite so optimistic, although a 55% majority believes in a Ukrainian victory. These are the findings of the EU-wide survey conducted by eupinions, the Bertelsmann Stiftung's instrument for European opinion research. The survey is representative for the EU as a whole, as well as for the seven member states of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain. It is published in co-operation with the Belgian King Baudouin Foundation.

Europeans are not only betting on victory, they also see the war of aggression as a matter affecting them all, because it is an attack on the whole of Europe. Nearly 68% of respondents in the EU agree with this statement. Polish respondents overwhelmingly share this view (79%), while the portion of German respondents in agreement lands in the middle (65%). Most EU citizens polled also see Ukraine in a battle to defend a set of common values that are shared by all European states.

"This unity is an important signal," says Isabell Hoffmann, Europe expert at the Bertelsmann Stiftung and head of eupinions. "Common values are a cornerstone of the support provided to Ukraine by the EU and its member states. The longer this war drags on, the more important it is for Ukrainians to know that the majority of EU citizens acknowledge their achievements."

A majority believes that Ukraine is also fighting for European freedom and prosperity

A total of 62% of Europeans agree with the statement that Ukrainians are also fighting for Europe's freedom and prosperity. Differences between the member states range from a high of 72% among Polish respondents in agreement to a low of 59% among Italian and German respondents. At the same time, a clear majority agrees that Ukraine alone can decide when it's appropriate to negotiate with Russia. Three-quarters of all respondents state that only Ukrainians can decide when to fight and when to negotiate.

Europeans are divided when it comes to sanctions against Russia

The greatest differences are revealed in the question of the effectiveness of sanctions against Russia. While 40% of respondents consider sanctions to be an effective instrument, the same number consider them ineffective, and around 20% are undecided. Polish respondents are strong supporters of sanctions (59%), while Italian respondents are less convinced (32%). In Germany, 36% of respondents support sanctions and a near half of the population (48%) consider them ineffective.

There is, however, a consensus on the question of who is to blame for the war: Here, too, most Europeans stand behind Ukraine and 66% say that Russia bears responsibility for the war. Some 13% express uncertainty in this regard. A total of 11% place the blame with the United States and 5% with NATO. Another 5% believe Ukraine bears responsibility.

Anxiety levels are high among Europeans

In general, Europeans feel very much under pressure at the moment. A majority of respondents (66%) express a sense of unease, stating that the world today is a dangerous place and that it used to be a much better place. Another 28% agree with only one of these statements. Only 6% rejected both.

“The level of anxiety is exceptionally high right now. Given the brutality of the war, the toll it’s taking, and the overall level of threat, this is not surprising. What’s really remarkable, however, is that the most anxious are just as supportive of Ukraine as are EU citizens as a whole,” explains Hoffmann. “Our data do not suggest that this high level of anxiety correlates with weakened support for Ukraine in its struggle for independence and self-determination.”

Additional information

eupinions is the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s European opinion-research project, developed jointly with Dalia Research. The program regularly surveys citizens from all EU member states on issues of European importance. The survey referenced in this analysis took place in December 2022 across the entire EU. With a sample size of 13,300, it is representative of the EU as a whole as well as of the seven member states of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain. Detailed information on the survey’s methodology can be found in the publication.

For more information, please visit: www.eupinions.eu

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