Press Release

Two out of three UK respondents expect innovations and technological progress to bring positive effects

**The vast majority of citizens in the UK expect innovation to have a primarily positive impact on their lives in the coming years. Expectations are particularly high in the areas of healthcare, mobility and defence. The coronavirus pandemic has increased the desire for strengthened efforts to foster innovation in the healthcare and long-term care sectors. UK respondents also express confidence in their country’s innovative capability. But they are also keenly aware of the growing competition in key technologies coming from the United States and China.**

*Brussels, 12 October 2020* – Most UK citizens expect innovation and advances in technology such as digital transformation to have a primarily positive impact on their lives in the coming years. They are thus more optimistic than most other Europeans in this regard. At the same time, they recognize the strong international competition they face in technological innovation. While they see innovative capacity in the EU and in their own country as faring relatively well in international comparison, they express nonetheless concern with regard to job creation and issues associated with protecting personal data. These are the findings of a pan-European survey of more than 12,000 citizens in 27 EU countries and the United Kingdom, including 1,400 adults in the UK, conducted on behalf of Germany’s Bertelsmann Stiftung.

**Positive effects expected for mobility and healthcare, concerns about jobs and data protection**

According to the survey, 70 per cent of UK citizens expect innovations to have a primarily positive impact on their lives. A total of 17 per cent believe innovation will have very positive effects. Only 14 per cent fear more adverse effects, of which only two per cent expect particularly negative effects. This means that UK citizens are slightly more optimistic than the average European with regard to their expectations for the future impact of innovation.

Healthcare and long-term care are the areas in which UK respondents most frequently expect to see innovations have a positive impact over the next 15 years (43%). Some 32 per cent believe they’ll experience improvements in mobility and transport, 29 per cent in defence and security, and 27 per cent expect to see progress in the supply of energy as well as environmental protection and the fight against climate change. Only 10 per cent of UK respondents do not expect to see any positive effects in any of the noted areas. A total 39 per cent fear negative effects primarily with regard to job creation, while 31 per cent see risks regarding the protection of personal data.

Compared with the findings of a similar survey in 2019, this year’s survey shows a significant increase – attributable to the coronavirus crisis – in the desire for more innovation. For example, 60 per cent of UK respondents expressed that they would like to see more support for innovation targeting improved healthcare and long-term care (+14% compared with 2019). Some 43 per cent expressed that they would like to see more support for innovation that can secure jobs (+11%), 39 per cent want to see more innovation focussed on the fight against climate change (+2%), and 28 per cent want to see it help improve education (+11%).

**Awareness of international competition**

UK respondents are aware of the state of innovation in their country and the fact that Europe lags behind its international competitors. But when it comes to assessing their national performance, they see their own country as doing quite well. A total of 67 per cent think that the UK performs fairly well or very well on international comparison in terms of technological progress. On the other hand, 23 per cent see a rather poor level of performance, and four per cent see their country as featuring only limited innovative capacity. UK respondents give positive ratings primarily to their country’s policy framework and economic conditions: For example, 58 per cent consider the national framework conditions to be good or very good, while only 24 per cent see poor conditions. Compared with the average European, UK respondents rate their country more positively. Europe as a continent is also seen by 67 per cent of UK respondents as a strong performer when it comes to innovation. This assessment is also somewhat more positive than the European average.

However, a direct comparison with international competitors in strategic innovation areas also highlights Europe’s weaknesses. In the areas of AI, big data or blockchain technology, for example, 44 per cent of UK respondents see the United States as outpacing the European states. A total of 52 percent also see the People's Republic of China as having an advantage over Europe.

**More European cooperation desired**

Given Europe’s weaknesses, a clear majority of UK citizens (55 per cent) think that European countries should increase cooperation in innovation, 17 per cent think current cooperation levels are sufficient, and a further 18 per cent favour less European and more national initiatives. As a comparison with figures from a 2019 survey shows, the share of those who favour increased UK-European cooperation has not shrunk during the coronavirus crisis, but has instead increased somewhat.

Brigitte Mohn, a member of the Bertelsmann Stiftung board of directors, sees the findings as a clear appeal to policymakers and the business sector: “Particularly in the area of innovation and the promotion of cutting-edge technologies, we in Europe must cooperate with one another much more vigorously instead of seeking to go it alone on the national level. Enhancing our technological competitiveness while at the same time working to solve urgent societal problems requires ambitious innovation-policy goals and implementation mechanisms more efficient than those currently in place. Moreover, in the current crisis, we must not shy away from investment in innovation; rather, we need to invest more, in a countercyclical manner, in order to unlock future potential.”

Additional information:

The “European Opinion Survey on Popular Attitudes Toward Innovation” was carried out by Dalia Research on behalf of Germany’s Bertelsmann Stiftung (eupinions project) in August 2019. The survey was conducted in 28 EU member states, with a total of 12,263 participants. The survey sample reflects the EU’s current population distribution in terms of age (16–65 years), sex and region/country. In a follow-up survey conducted in June 2020, questions from the original survey were repeated in order to gauge the possible effects of the global coronavirus pandemic on Europeans’ opinions.

eupinions is an independent platform for European public opinion. They collect, analyse and comment on what the European public thinks about current political issues and megatrends. eupinions employs cutting-edge data collection techniques. Every quarter, they collect samples from each EU member state in 22 languages. The data meets the highest scientific standards and is representative with regard to age, gender, education and country/region. eupinions is a project of Bertelsmann Stiftung. The data is collected by Dalia Research.

Further information: <https://eupinions.eu/de/home>

The survey is part of the global research being conducted in association with the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Reinhard Mohn Prize 2020. The theme of the Reinhard Mohn Prize 2020 is “Fostering innovation. Unlocking potential.” It is looking for solutions that may enable Europe to generate technological change that benefits society. The Reinhard Mohn Prize 2020 is being awarded to Nechemia (“Chemi”) Peres, chairman of the Board of Directors of Israel’s Peres Center for Peace and Innovation. With this award, the Bertelsmann Stiftung is honoring the entrepreneur for his exceptional commitment to fostering innovation, which has benefited economic goals and the broader society in equal measure. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the award ceremony will be held in 2021.

About the Reinhard Mohn Prize:

The Reinhard Mohn Prize is given in memory of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's founder, Reinhard Mohn († October 2009). Since 2009, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has awarded the €200,000 prize to internationally renowned individuals who have played a key role in developing forward-looking solutions to social and political challenges. The prize is given based on a global search for innovative concepts and exemplary solutions to challenges that will have a decisive impact on Germany’s future.

For more information, visit: [www.reinhard-mohn-preis.de](http://www.reinhard-mohn-preis.de)

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**About the Bertelsmann Stiftung: Inspiring people. Shaping the future.**

The Bertelsmann Stiftung is committed to enabling social participation for everyone – politically, economically and culturally The issues we address are education, democracy, Europe, health, values and the economy. In doing so, we focus on people, since only they can change the world and make it better. We share knowledge, promote expertise and develop solutions. A nonprofit foundation, the Bertelsmann Stiftung was established in 1977 by Reinhard Mohn. For more information, please visit: [www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de)