

EUROPEANS AND AMERICANS WANT MORE TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

Results of a representative survey by the Bertelsmann Foundation

By far the great majority of the populations of Europe and America support closer transatlantic cooperation. They also agree on the key areas for such cooperation: action on climate change, the prevention of the further proliferation of nuclear weapons, ensuring a secure supply of energy and promoting democracy worldwide.

These are the results of a representative survey carried out by the Bertelsmann Foundation on the eve of the EU-US summit to be held on 30 April. The results also provide the basis for discussions in the "**Brussels Forum**", a high-powered transatlantic strategy forum hosted by the Bertelsmann Foundation together with the German Marshall Fund, Daimler-Chrysler and other partners from **27 to 29 April** in Brussels. The results reflect an interest in placing transatlantic relations on a new footing. The period of reflection on the state of relations following the discord over the Iraq conflict has been replaced with a pragmatic rapprochement. People are now less inclined to take this relationship for granted and are mapping out specific areas for possible cooperation.

Among the Europeans surveyed, the Germans seem to have best overcome the tensions in transatlantic relations. They seem particularly open to the idea of closer cooperation with the US. About 90 percent of Germans support greater cooperation on climate change, while the numbers supporting greater coordination in the promotion of democracy worldwide and in securing energy supplies are 84 percent and 80 percent respectively. There is also broad agreement with a shared approach to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in states such as Iran, and bringing peace to the Middle East.

A: General trends in Europe and the USA

The results from European respondents point to clear differences across the continent. There is particular openness to specific cooperation with the Americans not only in Germany, but also in Finland and Spain for example (something surprising in view of the domestic discord over military involvement in the invasion of Iraq). Other close allies of the US, such as Italy, returned much lower values. Support in France is quite low. Respondents in Eastern Europe were much less enthusiastic, which is partly due to a lack of familiarity with the concept of a common European position in relation to the US. In addition, there was also a much higher proportion of people who didn't understand the question at all.

The Americans, in contrast, indicated a great willingness to cooperate with Europe in their answers. Around 80 percent of those surveyed would welcome greater agreement on climate protection, the control of potential nuclear states such as Iran or the securing of energy supplies. This development is in line with the current efforts of the American administration to bring its European allies, in particular the Germans, back on board politically. It is also clear that the Americans would particularly welcome dialogue with Europe on subjects that have not yet found an agreed upon strategy in their own country. These include climate protection and the securing of energy supplies, the question of how to handle Iran or future efforts to promote democracy.

B: The desire for specific cooperation

- **Climate protection**

By far the greatest concern for Europeans is climate protection (73 percent on average, even reaching 93 percent in countries such as Spain and Finland). This issue has been one of the central concerns in such surveys for some time. However, its significance has increased even further, due to massive attention in the media and public debate on political measures, such as the European Union's undertaking to further reduce CO₂ emissions at the EU summit in March. At 78 percent, the issue of climate protection is not at the top of the agenda for Americans, however here too its importance has increased, due to many initiatives at local level and the success of Al Gore's documentary on global climate change. This type of rapprochement provides

an excellent basis for launching a serious debate on the revamping of the old Kyoto Agreement. However, it should be remembered that the Americans tend to see climate protection in an economic context. US citizens are more interested in cooperating with Europe in the area of securing energy supply than in protecting the environment (81 percent versus 78 percent).

- **Control of nuclear weapons**

The control of potential nuclear states such as Iran is extremely important to Europeans and Americans alike (73 percent and 81 percent respectively). In fact this is the most important issue for US citizens, alongside security of energy supply. The two sides do not differ greatly in their assessment of the benefits of a common approach. This may also be because the way the crisis in Iran has played out so far has brought it home to both European and American politicians that only a delicate combination of diplomacy and military strength has any hope of success. Of course we shall have to wait and see how these values will develop if military intervention becomes the subject of serious debate. In the past, Europeans have always shown much greater reserve on this issue than Americans.

- **The stabilization of the Middle East**

The stabilization of the situation in the Middle East is of almost equal importance to Europeans and Americans (66 and 75 percent respectively). The politicians are already coming closer to a political consensus here. US President George W. Bush recently publicly identified the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a central factor for development in the Middle East. The idea has been mooted of a Middle East conference that would also be attended by the neighboring states of the conflicting parties. Europeans and Americans may still differ on the question of whether the peace process is the key to stability in the region, but they do agree that it is one of the most important aspects.

- **The promotion of worldwide democracy**

Europe is split on the question of backing democracy worldwide. Some Western European countries, in particular Germany, are happy to support this cause, with figures of up to 84 percent. However, the European average is just 57 percent. The French, for example, are very skeptical (35 percent), as are the citizens of Eastern Europe. Support for this issue in the US (72 percent) is still surprisingly high,

although the Iraq conflict and the way the Bush administration has become ensnared in the "Freedom Agenda" have made this issue much more unpopular. This is demonstrated in other surveys in which the Americans show far less willingness to sponsor democracy by military means. It is to be assumed that Europeans and Americans now both primarily link the promotion of democracy with peaceful measures. The EU can point to the success of its accession policy as a mechanism for encouraging democracy.

- **The removal of barriers to trade**

In contrast, support for the abolition of trade restrictions between Europe and the US is quite low (54 percent in Europe and 65 percent in the US). Exporting nations like Germany or Finland are in favor of the project, while the French and Austrians are extremely circumspect (28 percent and 38 percent respectively). This will be a central issue for the German EU presidency in the context of the US-EU summit. The aim is to draft an institutional framework that will do away with obstacles, for example in relation to patent protection, copyright issues and questions of intellectual property. The results show that the complexity of the issue still confuses many people. Until now these negotiations have mostly taken place at the highest level and have not filtered through to the public consciousness. On top of this, there is also the problem that the Americans are almost completely unaware of the single European market and its positive effects (which provide an argument in favor of the initiative).

Conclusions:

- a) There is a clear mandate among the citizens of Europe and the USA for close transatlantic cooperation. Both parties see the other side as a vitally important partner.
- b) It is no longer possible to draw a clear dividing line between "Old Europe" and "New Europe". Readiness for pragmatic cooperation with the US is particularly strong in countries like Germany, which criticized American policy during the Iraq crisis. This is in contrast with the comparatively low figures in Eastern Europe, where some states strongly backed US policy in Iraq. However, this also reflects a lack of familiarity with the concept of "European"-American cooperation. The responses would probably also be more positive here in relation to the question of closer cooperation between the individual countries and the US.
- c) The high level of support for transatlantic cooperation in the USA is an encouraging sign that interest in partnership has grown there once again. This may be due to recognition of the limits of their own "hard power" and the simultaneous erosion of America's "soft power". The willingness of Americans to trust in cooperation with Europe in response to central challenges is very high at present – in particular in areas where cooperation seems vital, such as climate protection, the securing of power supply, the question of how to handle potential nuclear powers, or bringing peace to the Middle East.

Survey period:

01.03. to 30.03.2007

12,000 respondents in

- a) Western Europe (Germany, Finland, France, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Austria, Spain)
- b) Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary)
- c) USA

48 percent of those surveyed were male, 52 percent female.

The age profile of the respondents was as follows

18-29-year-olds: 20 percent

30-39-year-olds: 18 percent

40-49-year-olds: 19 percent

50-59-year-olds: 17 percent

60-69-year-olds: 14 percent

70 and over: 12 percent