

Attitudes towards Migrants and Minorities in Europe

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia releases Eurobarometer and European Social Survey analysis

The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, a Vienna-based EU agency, today released a new report that provides an overview of attitudes towards minorities and migrants across the EU Member States.

“The European Union is becoming ever more diverse. Attitudes towards minorities therefore matter as they are one indicator of the level of openness and intercultural understanding in our societies,” said Beate Winkler, Director of the EUMC, introducing the Centre’s analysis of Eurobarometer and European Social Survey data. “The Social Survey shows that the majority of citizens in the EU are open to concepts of diversity. Yet at the same time the Eurobarometer survey indicates more questioning of diversity in specific areas. The contradictory expression of attitudes demonstrates that we still have work to do to harness the positive elements of diversity to tackle the concerns that underline some of the views of the respondents”.

“The results underscore the need for the EU and its Member States to continue to develop policy initiatives which promote intercultural understanding and community cohesion”, continued Beate Winkler. “Raising public awareness for protecting equal rights for members of minorities remains a priority for political decision-makers.” She highlighted the importance of education which the report found to be directly linked to the level of openness to diversity and multiculturalism.

Ms Winkler also warned against equating attitudes with discriminatory behaviour. “It doesn’t necessarily follow that less open attitudes are transferred into discriminatory and racist behaviour. However, for members of minority communities, both the thoughts and actions of majority populations are important – particularly in relation to how they impact on social inclusion in practical terms, such as equality at the work place or in the education sector. This requires the continuation of anti-discrimination policies at EU and Member State level, and the measurement of their impact on the various communities.”

According to the 2003 European Social Survey, 79 per cent of the respondents had no problem interacting with minorities. At the same time,

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almost half of the respondents displayed a critical attitude towards cultural and religious diversity. According to the 2003 Eurobarometer survey, 60 per cent of the respondents in the EU-15 expressed the view that multiculturalism had certain limits, an opinion that has increased since 1997. This view was less explicit in the new Member States (42 per cent).

These are some of the key findings of the research team, which the EUMC commissioned to undertake an extensive statistical analysis of the Eurobarometer and European Social Survey. The survey data covers a period from 1997 to 2003 and includes data from all EU Member States plus three Candidate Countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey).

The analysis offers particularly interesting results when comparing the personal characteristics of respondents, such as age, income, education and place of residence:

- Openness towards migrants and minorities increases with education. For the EU-15 the researchers found that when people acquire higher levels of education they express less resistance to cultural and religious diversity.
- In all countries surveyed, social status impacts on the level of openness towards minorities. Respondents from socially disadvantaged majority populations – such as people who finish their education earlier or who have low incomes – were more likely to display negative attitudes. In large part, according to the researchers, this may be explained because socially disadvantaged people feel they are in competition with minorities for scarce resources – such as jobs.
- In general, younger people expressed more openness to diversity.
- Those who have most contact with migrants and minorities, that is the urban population, appear to be more supportive of multiculturalism than people living in rural areas.

The report highlights common patterns as well as differences between individual Member States. A notable pattern that emerged from the research is - the higher the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in a country, the lower in general the level of support for ethnic intolerance.

The findings have been written up as four reports. Main findings are outlined in a 'Summary' print version. The reports can be downloaded at: <http://eumc.eu.int>.

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Notes to Editors:

Information about the EUMC:

- The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) was established by Council Regulation 1035/97 (EC) in 1997 and is based in Vienna. It is an agency of the European Union.
- The primary objective of the EUMC is to provide the European Union and its Member States with objective, reliable and comparable data at the European level on racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in order to help them take measures or formulate courses of action. The EUMC also studies the extent and development of the phenomena and manifestations of racism, xenophobia and Anti-Semitism, analyses their causes and effects and highlights examples of good practice in dealing with them. Lastly, the EUMC formulates opinions and conclusions for political decision-makers.
- In December 2003, EU Governments decided to extend the EUMC's mandate to a human rights agency. More information can be found on the designated website of the European Commission: http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/news/consulting_public/fundamental_rights_agency/index_en.htm

Background to the report:

In 2003 the EUMC commissioned a research team from the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands (NISCO) to conduct a major analysis of data from the 2003 Eurobarometer Survey and the 2003 European Social Survey on attitudes towards minorities and migrants in different European countries. The researchers also compared the findings of the 2003 Eurobarometer with results of earlier Eurobarometer Surveys. The research team produced a statistical analysis, written up as four reports.

- **Report I:** The key theories on which the research questions and hypotheses are built are introduced here, and provide a backdrop for interpreting the research results in Reports II to IV.
- **Report II:** Presents research findings from the 2003 Eurobarometer on majorities' attitudes towards minorities in 15 EU Member States (prior to 1 May 2004), and compares these findings with results from the 1997 and 2000 Eurobarometer Surveys.
- **Report III:** Presents research findings from the 2003 Eurobarometer on majorities' attitudes towards minorities in the 10 Accession Countries and 3 Candidate Countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey).
- **Report IV:** Presents research findings from the 2003 European Social Survey on majorities' attitudes towards minorities in the EU-15 plus Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia.