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4TH REPORT ON MIGRATIONS AND CITIZENSHIP IN EUROPE

ENLARGEMENT AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
Citizens' attitudes and expectations
First results

by Ilvo Diamanti and Fabio Bordignon

Survey coordinated by Pragma Srl

Commentary

THE UNCERTAINTIES OF THE NEW EUROPE

Over the last days, with the enlargement of the European Union to 10 new Member States, a very important task towards the European integration has been achieved. In spite of the solemn celebrations that were carried out for this historical date, the realization of a so-called “Big Europe” takes place between hopes and fears. In fact, a sense of uncertainty is widespread among the citizens, not only in the countries that are members of the EU since many years, but also in those countries that have just become part of it.

Support without passion

The survey, coordinated by Pragma, was carried out by Fondazione Nord Est and Demos over the last weeks before the enlargement in nine different European countries. The results show an attitude of “support without passion”, which is not that appropriate for such an event in the European history. However, it is not possible to grasp real signals of opposition or resistance to the project itself. Disenchantment and resignation prevail, instead, as if the enlargement of the European Union were a necessary, but not favorable step for the citizens. As if the integration within Europe would entail more costs than benefits, at least according to the interests of the citizens.

Considering what has been done over the last decades, the results propose a reversal of perspective. The integration within Europe has been pursued during the last 20 years through mechanisms and rules dealing with finance, currency, products and markets. It was thought (and hoped) that the introduction of a single European currency and the economic integration would have not only favored, but also hauled the political and institutional unification; and, last but not least, the social cohesion.

However, this tasks were only partially achieved. On one hand, specific interests of the different Member States complicated the creation of common institutions, which should be able to go over national veto or partiality. On the other hand, because of the deep worsening of world economy, the attitudes and the social expectations were noticeably modified. Thus, development and employment, which could have been consolidated benefits only to be strengthened and shared, have become problems both for the current Member States and the new acceding countries.

Moreover, the current international tension – especially the global war on terrorism – has emphasized suspicion and fears, because of cultural and religious reasons, and it is now even more difficult to open national borders to other people, to other societies.

The results of the following survey show, therefore, that the EU enlargement has to face a wide sense of uncertainty within the public opinion. Among European citizens, there is a positive attitude towards strategic, political and institutional matters. However, at the same time, they feel skeptical or at least cautious about employment and other economic issues. For the majority of the Europeans, the EU enlargement is very important in order to strengthen the common defense policy and the role of the European Union worldwide. At the same time, they feel worried about the different economic and employment problems. And this does not only apply to the historic

members, but also to the newcomers, because – in spite of the expectations and promises – they fear to be overshadowed within the European institutions and to have a limited access to the EU financial resources.

The social costs of the enlargement

So we face a big paradox. The European integration, which was promoted over the last decade on an economic and monetary base, is now accepted and sustained by the citizens because of political and institutional reasons. It is a worthy process, from a political point of view, but an unfavorable one, if we talk about economy. The outward security seems to prevail over the home interests.

Another problem is that the demand for political and institutional integration – among European citizens – is not oriented towards the promotion of a European subject, able to prevail over the different Member States' interests. Europe is therefore conceived as a “cartel”, a venue of negotiation processes among States and governments and not as a confederation endowed with sovereignty, authority and power.

The new Member States themselves consider the European Union as a sort of “open house”, where they enter prudently. A common house, whose they are still tenants and not owners. And that explains why they prefer an integration that guarantees a wide autonomy and real powers to the different Member States. They fear to be overshadowed and to have to sustain more costs than benefits from the “new Europe”.

It is also important to stress that Italy and Spain, traditionally the two countries with the most favorable attitude towards the EU enlargement, have confirmed their feelings. On the other hand, the United Kingdom still has the deepest reservations about the enlargement. The attitude among the French is also tepid, because they fear a further reduction of their sovereignty and national identity. In Germany, we can notice a deep decline of the support towards the enlargement and the strengthening of the EU powers, because of the concerns linked to the worsening of the economic and social conditions.

Within this general context, the attitude towards the Euro is emblematic. In the countries that have already adopted the single currency, the majority of citizens consider it as “a necessary complication”. Useful, but little advantageous. Moreover, the Euro is also considered a mere complication by 40% of citizens. Among the new acceding countries, the possibility of joining the single currency generates conflicting opinions. Very favorable in Slovenia; positive in the Czech Republic; prudent in Hungary; predominantly negative in Poland, influenced by the concerns about the difficult economic and employment situation of its neighbor, Germany.

Step by step towards a “Big Europe”

At the time, the enthusiasm towards the European integration seems to have passed away. Some years ago, the unification was perceived as an ideal, a political project, an opportunity. The European integration proceeds nowadays by force of habit. Many governments incline to interpret it in a flexible way. They tend to discuss again its rules and ties. From a social perspective, the integration seems not to be as “advantageous” as it was in the past; many people think that it is simply a cost. The political integration is proceeding too slowly, in a closely-fought way, so that it hardly generates enthusiasm

among European citizens. The disenchantment replaces now passion and hopes of the past. After many years of reliance on the European integration, which was developed into a sort of “faith” in countries like Italy, we can perceive now a growing sense of secularization. A prudent meeting has occurred between those citizens of the old and new Europe that were once divided from an impassable wall.

However, we should not be too concerned. That wall has been definitely crumbled over the last days. Another important step towards the European integration has been accomplished. At the same time, we should also not be indifferent to such a tepid attitude expressed by European citizens.

In fact, such feelings can not lead and sustain the growth of a real “Big Europe”. Such an important goal can not be pursued without passion, if everyone concentrates only on national and individual interests.

The results of the survey

Western Europe and the enlargement

Among the 5 largest countries of the European Union the results show a (slightly) growing positive attitude towards the enlargement. On average, one third of the citizens (35%) consider that the accession of 10 other countries to the EU is necessary and favorable. The figure was 28% in 2001. Another 22% of them feel that this process is necessary, even if it could bring some disadvantages to the people. This rate is also expanding, if we consider the results of the previous survey which was carried out in 2001. On the whole, the majority of citizens (57%) are in favor of the European enlargement, in spite of some hesitations. However, even if it declines, there is still a substantial rate of people expressing their opposition to the EU enlargement: 19% feel that the accession should have been limited to few countries, whereas 24% think that it should have been completely avoided, because it will entail more problems than advantages.

If we draw the attention on those citizens who are in favor of the enlargement (with or without reservations), we can highlight the distinctive features of the five countries. First, it can be pointed out that Spain is the country with the highest rate of people supporting the enlargement of the EU: almost 80% of the Spaniards feel that this further step towards the European integration is necessary. In Italy the public opinion seems to be more divided. However, thanks to a substantial growth over the last few years, the majority of Italian citizens are in favor of the enlargement (57%, versus 42% in 2001). In the United Kingdom (54%) and France (50%) the majority of people say “yes” to the enlargement too. These results have to be stressed, since the same figure was at about 36% during the first edition of this survey (2000/01). In Germany, there is a quite stable attitude towards the European enlargement: as in 2001, 46% of German citizens are in favor of the accession to the EU of 10 other countries.

Advantages and disadvantages of the enlargement according to the Western Europeans

Which are the factors that can strengthen the support to the new acceding countries? Western European citizens concentrate their reservations mostly on two different issues: immigration and unemployment. More than 40% of the people feel that the enlargement is going to bring disadvantages in terms of unemployment in their country (42%) – whereas less than a half (20%) think that the enlargement will not affect the domestic employment. These fears are widespread especially in Germany, where 64% of the people feel that the accession of 10 new members will have a negative impact on the German unemployment rate.

Such feelings are also linked to those of the citizens that do associate the opening of the national borders to new considerable streams of immigrants. From now on, according to 37% of the Western Europeans, it will be more difficult to impede illegal immigration. This figure rises to 60% in Germany and 45% in the United Kingdom.

At the same time, the uncertainties concerning the employment are appeased by the fact that “foreigners” are useful in order to fill the gaps caused by an increasingly ageing population. Italian, Spanish and British citizens pay much more attention to these issues,

whereas the Germans seem to be less convinced. Western Europeans do not have certain evidences in order to evaluate the economic impact of the enlargement and its effects on their lives. The division is therefore the final result: a third of them feel that the enlargement will have positive effects from an economic point of view, whereas another third make completely opposite predictions.

Dealing with political issues, a higher degree of consent among Western European citizens should be pointed out. According to 44% of them, in fact, the enlargement will increase the political weight of Europe on the international scenario. The differences among the five countries are in this case less evident: France is a bit more optimistic (53%), whereas Britons are more prudent.

If we put all these different rates together in order to obtain a general index on the attitude towards the EU enlargement, the result does not change in terms of the opinion expressed by the citizens of the five different countries. In fact, Spain and Italy continue to feel that the new “Big Europe”, with 25 Member States, is going to bring more advantages than negative effects. The United Kingdom and France do occupy an intermediate position, whereas Germany expresses more reservations than its other partners. The enlargement towards the Eastern European countries is welcomed and appreciated because of its political and symbolic value. On the other hand, there is more criticism considering its impact on the economy.

Advantages and disadvantages of the enlargement: the Eastern European countries

The opposition between economic and political effects of the enlargement keeps coming up also in the new Member States, even if it is based on different reasons. For these countries the accession to the EU is the final step of a “return to Europe”. That’s why the enlargement is a crucial moment, because of its historical, political and also symbolical significance. On average, in the 4 countries, more than a half of the citizens feel that there will be a positive impact on the Defense and Foreign Policy. Furthermore, 37% of them consider that the democratic institutions will be strengthened because of the accession to the EU.

In origin, these countries considered the enlargement as an important goal also to be pursued from an economic point of view. Currently, in this new edition of the survey there are many more reservations and hesitations to be taken into account. On average, 40% of people feel that from the 1st of May 2004 the situation will improve with regard to the economic prospects. However, 35% have got a completely opposite opinion and feel that new difficulties will arise. For those countries that were also included in the previous surveys, the positive expectations towards the enlargement are falling down. In Poland the optimism rate decrease from 46 to 37%, and the same trend can be noticed in Hungary (from 60 to 43%). This is not the case of the Czech Republic: in this country citizens were originally quite cold towards the membership of the EU, but now all the rates are quite similar to those of the three other new Member States (Poland, Hungary and Slovenia). Similar feelings have been expressed also concerning the employment issue. In that case, 41% of people have a positive attitude, while 34% are pessimistic. From this point of view, Hungary has been affected by a reduction of enthusiasm, while an opposite trend has to be pointed out in Poland.

Euro-skepticism

The other significant transformation, which has been characterizing the life of European citizens during the last years, goes on within a context of growing dissatisfaction. The new single currency, which was introduced in 2002, in spite of its good performances on the international markets, generates widespread unrest in many countries of the Euro zone. In the four countries (among those included in the survey) that have already adopted the new currency, the majority of citizens continue to feel that this choice was necessary for Europe. However, the original atmosphere of enthusiasm towards the new currency belongs to the past. About 38% of citizens think that the fact of giving up their old national currencies has brought only new problems in their lives. This figure goes up to 42-44% in Germany and Italy. The United Kingdom, one of the EU Members that decided to opt out of the monetary union, confirms its strong opposition to join the Euro zone. About two thirds of the Britons reaffirmed that they do not agree with the possibility of giving up the Pound.

Different opinions can be observed also among the 10 new Member States, which are going to face a long course before joining the Euro zone. In Slovenia and in the Czech Republic 85% and 69% of the citizens respectively would like their country also to join the monetary union. However, there is much more hesitation in the other countries. In Hungary, for example, only 45% of the population is in favor of adopting the single currency. It is also necessary, in that case, to stress that almost 25% of citizens still do not have a definitive opinion on this issue. Nevertheless, the most astonishing result is that of Poland: 46% of the population oppose the introduction of the Euro, whereas only 34% of the Poles support it.

The future of the EU

Which place does the enlargement take within the frame of the European integration? Over the last decades Europe has been characterized by a growing push to a higher political and institutional integration. Is the attitude showed by the citizens of the new Member States consistent with that push? If so, how much? Some figures can be useful in order to answer to these questions.

The citizens of the 5 Western countries were asked if the European Union should strengthen, or reduce its authority in four different areas. As we have already noticed with regard to other issues, there are many different opinions to be taken into account. Spain and Italy are very determined to pursue a further European integration. Moreover, in Italy the majority of citizens are looking for more powerful European institutions in all the different areas, with top rates for the Foreign Policy (61%) and Justice (65%). The same figures can be pointed out for Spain. In this country, however, less than half of the citizens (but still the majority) would give more powers to the European Union with regard to immigration policies.

The French and the Germans are more cautious: they are still bound to their national prerogatives and so less ready to give part of their powers to Brussels. This attitude is stronger for such matters like immigration and defense policies. With regard to this last issue, the Western Europeans are increasingly claiming their national autonomy. This could be seen as a result of the contrasts that arose on the war against Iraq. These two countries are looking for more cohesion in such areas like Justice (especially the

French) and Foreign Policy (the Germans). The Britons would not like to alter the current status quo. The strengthening of the European institutions would be appreciated only in relation to justice (39%). With regard to the other areas, less people (about 26-28% of citizens) are positive towards stronger European institutions.

What should the European Union become in the future? This is another issue that has been presented to the Western and Eastern Europeans. Should it be an agreement between sovereign states which would keep wide powers and autonomy? Or a confederation of States that concentrates on itself most of the powers and decisions? In the five Western European countries the latter option is not that much shared. Italy is the only country where the majority of people agree with that prospect (44%). This rate stands at about 30-31% in France, Germany and Spain. A wider uncertainty has to be pointed out in Spain. Finally, in the United Kingdom only 17% of the people would agree with a higher level of political and institutional integration, but 33% of the Britons say that they do not believe in the EU.

Such an attitude towards the European integration can be found also among the citizens of the four new Member States. The current EU structure seems to be the most appropriate for them. There is not such a wide demand for a higher level of political and institutional integration. In each of the four countries, only 15-18% of the population promote that kind of future outlook for the European institutions.

The enlargement and the “idea” of Europe

To summarize, two factors are influencing the attitude of the Western Europeans towards the EU enlargement: the inclination of each Member State towards the political and institutional integration within the EU and the economic benefits of this process. This pattern can be represented by a scatterplot where each country occupies a different position as a result of two dimensions.

- A) The first one is the degree of optimism or pessimism towards the enlargement and its consequences.
- B) The second exposes the way the powers and the authority should be divided between the European Union and the Member States.

Spain and Italy do occupy a specific position in this graph. They are much more inclined than their partners to give more power to the EU institutions and they also feel that the enlargement will bring more pros than cons in the future.

The other three countries are more prudent and much more worried about the consequences of the enlargement. The United Kingdom confirms its traditional coldness: the Britons fear that their national identity and features would be damaged by a further level of integration. The Germans are concerned especially about economy and employment. However, a good share of them (45%) feels that the enlargement is necessary, even if negative consequences have to be expected. Considering this indicator, Germany would be much closer to France on the graph.

Ilvo Diamanti and Fabio Bordignon

THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EU						
Next May ten new countries will become members of the European Union. How do you feel this will effect (your country)? Do you feel it...						
	ITA	FRA	SPA	UK	GER	Media
Is necessary and advantageous	40.4	22.9	51.6	32.6	25.3	34.6
Is necessary but disadvantageous	16.5	27.3	27.1	21.2	20.8	22.6
Should have been limited to few countries	20.3	19.8	11.3	16.6	25.1	18.6
Should have been avoided, because it will entail more problems than advantages	22.8	30.0	10.0	29.6	28.8	24.2
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100
Don't know / no answer / refusal	11.6	2.9	21.3	13.0	8.1	--
<i>Fondazione Nord Est/Demos Poll, conducted by Pragma Srl, April 2004 (N=8795)</i>						

THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EU: TIME SERIES						
Next May ten new countries will become members of the European Union. How do you feel this will affect (your country)? Do you feel it... (in brackets the value of 2000/01)						
	ITA	FRA	SPA	UK	GER	Media
Is necessary and advantageous	40.4 (31.2)	22.9 (14.4)	51.6 (58.1)	32.6 (21.3)	25.3 (25.3)	34.6 (27.8)
Is necessary but disadvantageous	16.5 (10.7)	27.3 (21.9)	27.1 (20.5)	21.2 (15.0)	20.8 (20.9)	22.6 (17.9)
Should have been limited to few countries	20.3 (30.9)	19.8 (29.2)	11.3 (10.0)	16.6 (19.7)	25.1 (28.6)	18.6 (24.9)
Should have been avoided, because it will entail more problems than advantages	22.8 (27.1)	30.0 (34.5)	10.0 (11.4)	29.6 (44.0)	28.8 (25.1)	24.2 (29.3)
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100
Don't know / no answer / refusal	11.6 (11.3)	2.9 (6.5)	21.3 (27.9)	13.0 (8.5)	8.1 (3.5)	--
<i>Fondazione Nord Est/Demos Poll, conducted by Pragma Srl, April 2004 (N=8795)</i>						

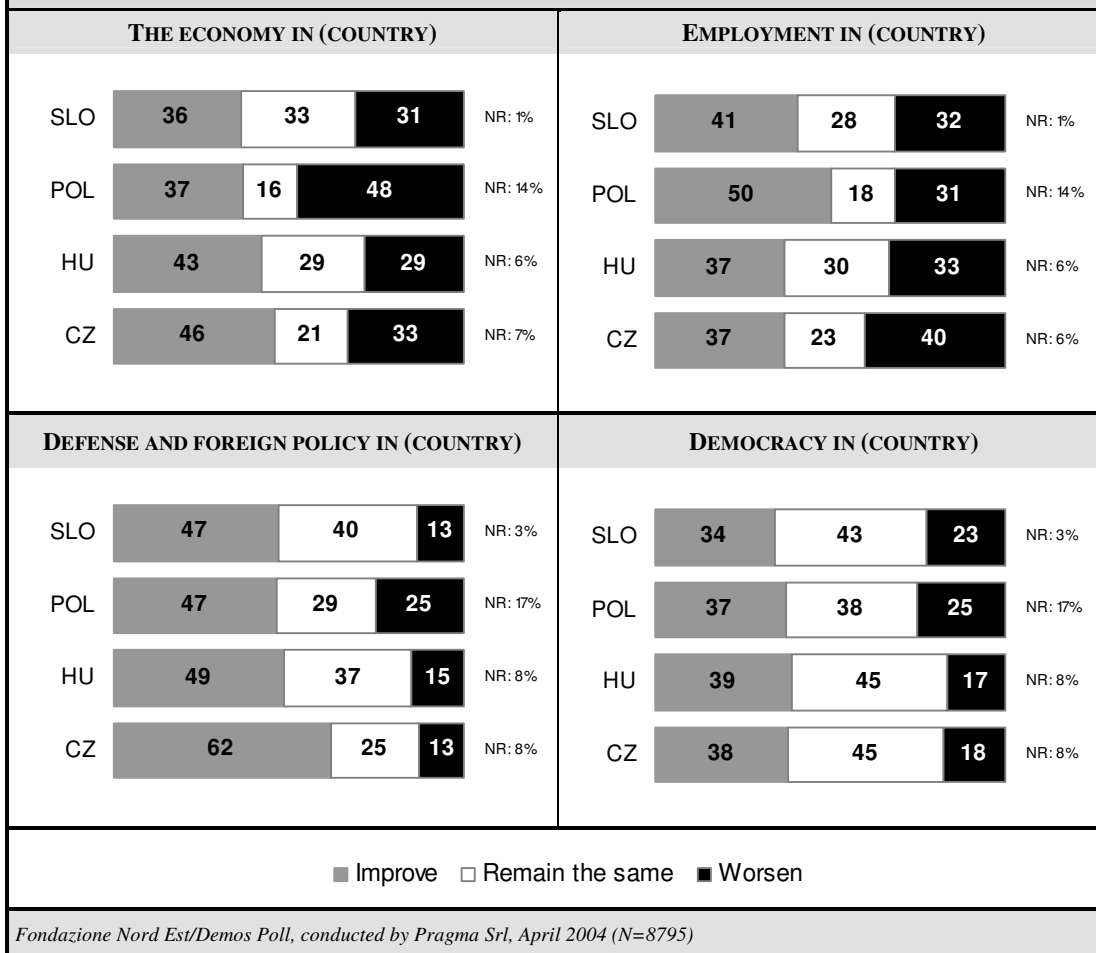
THE EFFECTS OF THE ENLARGEMENT
And what impacts will the enlargement have on the following aspects?

THE ECONOMY OF YOUR COUNTRY					UNEMPLOYMENT IN YOUR COUNTRY				
ITA	36	29	26	9	ITA	22	38	33	8
FRA	34	35	27	4	FRA	20	43	32	4
SPA	34	25	19	22	SPA	20	27	31	22
UK	34	33	23	10	UK	27	36	30	8
GER	29	46	17	8	GER	11	64	20	5
EU	34	33	22	11	UE	20	42	29	9
THE POSSIBILITY OF PULLING IN (COUNTRY) FOREIGN MANPOWER					THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPEDING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION TO YOUR COUNTRY				
ITA	44	24	24	8	ITA	35	29	29	7
FRA	38	30	28	4	FRA	33	29	33	5
SPA	37	19	20	24	SPA	36	22	19	23
UK	41	25	28	7	UK	28	45	21	7
GER	20	42	27	11	GER	16	60	17	7
EU	36	28	26	11	EU	30	37	24	10
THE POLITICAL WEIGHT OF EUROPE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO					<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/> No impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't know / no answer / refuse </div>				
ITA	43	19	25	14					
FRA	53	19	24	5					
SPA	46	12	16	26					
UK	37	27	26	10					
GER	43	23	21	13					
EU	44	20	22	14					

Fondazione Nord Est/Demos Poll, conducted by Pragma Srl, April 2004 (N=8795)

ENTERING THE EU: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

In your opinion, once your country has become a member of the EU, will things in your country improve, worsen or remain the same concerning the following issues?



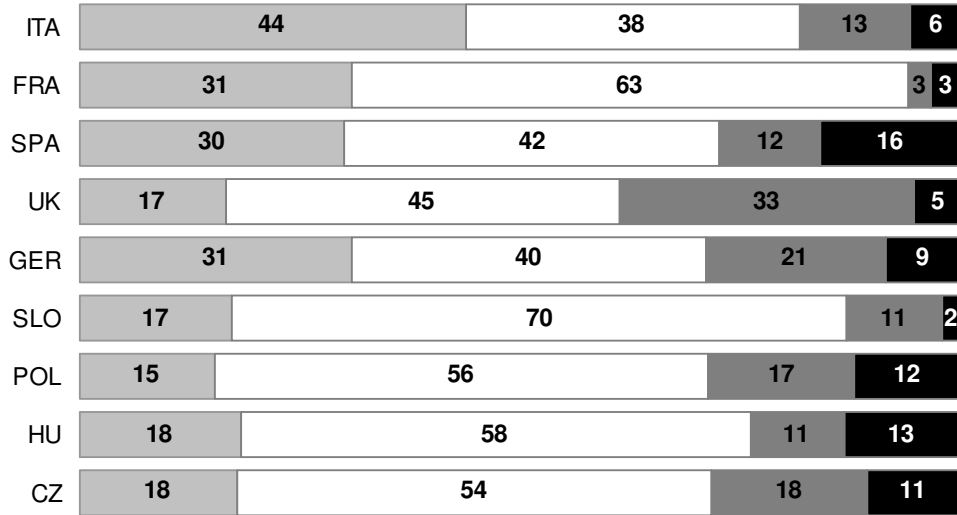
ENTERING THE EU: INDEX OF OPTIMISM				
In your opinion, once your country has become a member of the EU, will things in your country improve, worsen or remain the same concerning the following issues?				
	SLO	POL	HU	CZ
The economy in (country)	+5	-11	+14	+13
Employment in (country)	+9	+19	+4	-3
Defense and foreign policy in (country)	+34	+22	+34	+49
Democracy in (country)	+12	+12	+23	+20
* The index is obtained as the mean of differences between the percentages of optimists and pessimists for each of the four issues considered				
Fondazione Nord Est/Demos Poll, conducted by Pragma Srl, April 2004 (N=8795)				

THE SINGLE CURRENCY				
Since January 2002, Euro has been introduced. In your opinion, the single currency ... ?				
	ITA	FRA	SPA	GER
Has generated and will keep generating advantages	11.1	31.7	22.9	19.9
Is causing some complications, but this is necessary for Europe	46.5	28.9	48.2	34.4
Just entails complications in your life	42.1	38.0	27.7	44.3
Don't know / No answer / Refusal	0.3	1.4	1.2	1.4
<i>Fondazione Nord Est/Demos Poll, conducted by Pragma Srl, April 2004 (N=8795)</i>				

ENTERING THE EURO-ZONE					
Would you be favorable or unfavorable if your country, like other European countries, would join the single currency: the Euro?					
	UK	SLO	POL	HU	CZ
Favorable	30.1	85.3	33.7	45.0	68.6
Unfavorable	66.3	13.8	46.2	31.0	25.3
Don't know / No answer / Refusal	3.5	0.9	20.1	24.0	6.2
<i>Fondazione Nord Est/Demos Poll, conducted by Pragma Srl, April 2004 (N=8795)</i>					

THE FUTURE OF THE EU

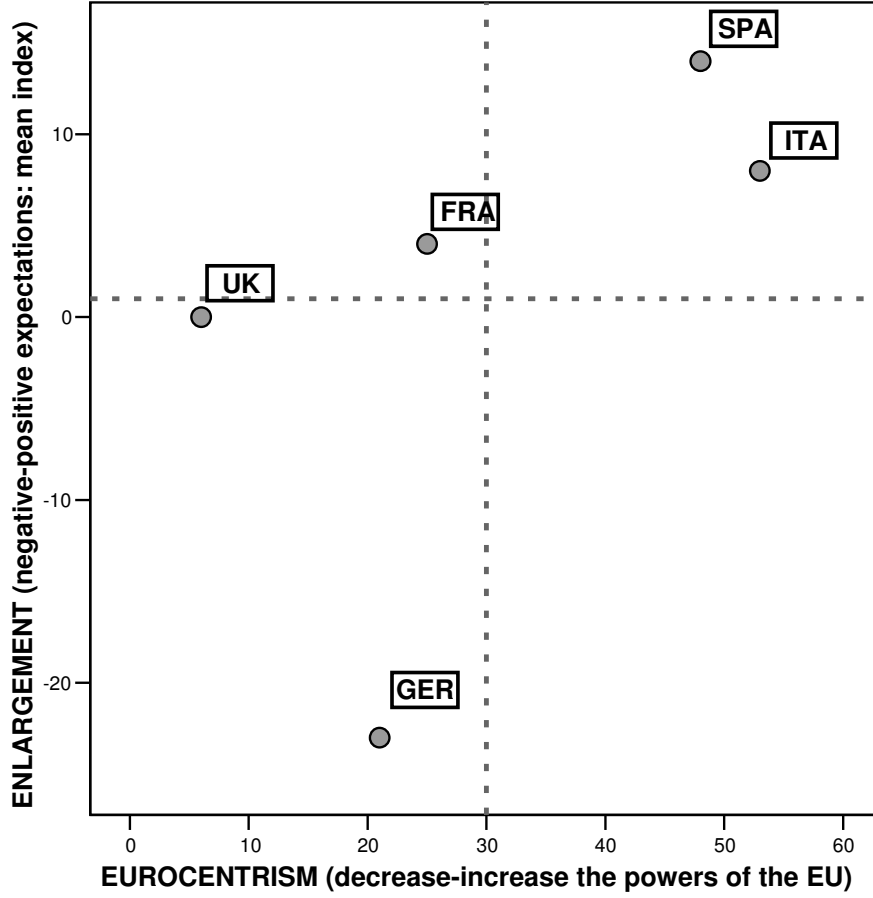
According to you, what should the European Union become in the future?



- A confederation of States which concentrates most of the powers and decisions
- An agreement between States which keep exerting most of the powers and decisions
- I don't believe in the European Union
- Don't know/No answer/Refusal

Fondazione Nord Est/Demos Poll, conducted by Pragma Srl, April 2004 (N=8795)

THE ENLARGEMENT AND THE "IDEA" OF EUROPE



Fondazione Nord Est/Demos Poll, conducted by Pragma Srl, April 2004 (N=8795)

METODOLOGY

- ✓ Universe Population of 9 European countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, , Hungary) with more than 15 years
- ✓ Sample National stratified samples. Strata defined according to distributions of the main socio-demographic variables.
- ✓ Techniques CATI (computer assisted telephone interviewing): France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Slovenia, Spain;
FACE TO FACE:Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland
- ✓ Sample size 8795 cases (France: 909, Germany: 907, Great Britain: 1032, Italy: 900, Spain: 1002, Czech Republic: 917, Hungary: 1230, Poland: 991, Slovenia: 907,)
- ✓ Field 29 March – 14 April 2004
- ✓ Research institutes The survey has been carried out by nine important European institutes, coordinated by Pragma S.r.l (Rome), Pragma has also conducted the Italian survey.
The other agencies are:
 - France: CSA*
 - Germany: GMS Dr Jung*
 - Great Britain: Opinion Research Business*
 - Poland: IPSOS Demoskop*
 - Czech Republic: Ultex*
 - Spain: Gallup*
 - Slovenia: Galiteo*
 - Hungary: Median*
- ✓ Acknowledgements The research, conducted by Fondazione Nord Est and Demos, was directed by Ilvo Diamanti. Fabio Bordignon designed the research and performed the data analysis.