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Greeks Express Mixed Views of EU

Despite a tendency to view major international organizations negatively, Greeks are not wholly negative in their image of European unification and they are more likely than ever to think they will soon be part of the EMU.

Key Findings

- Greek opinion of the EU tends to be negative, but less so than their opinion of the UN or NATO.
- Optimism about Greece joining the EMU by the year 2000 is spreading.

Like the UN and NATO, EU Viewed Negatively

Greeks are less likely to give a "very negative" assessment of the EU (39%) than of the UN (45%) or NATO (80%), but they are nevertheless much more likely to hold an overall negative view of the EU than a positive one (62% vs. 28%). Still, in a 1998 USIA poll, a majority (74%) said they supported their country's membership in the EU.

When asked what comes to mind "when you think about the European Union and European unification," about equal proportions mention "distrust" (28%), "interest" (27%) or "hope" (26%). Half as many or fewer mention "indifference to participate" (14%), "tendency to take part" (13%),

"fear" (12%) or "tendency to protest" (11%). Fewer mention "interest" than in 1998 (39%) and somewhat more mention "distrust" than in 1998 (23%).

EU Valued as Regional and Global Actor

A majority of Greeks (55%) -- down from December 1998 (64%) -- agree that joining the European Monetary Union is their country's primary objective.

An increasing number of Greeks are optimistic that by the year 2000 Greece will achieve membership in the European Monetary Union. Recently, two-thirds (67%) expressed confidence in Greece joining the EMU while two in ten (19%) were doubtful. In December of 1998, a smaller majority (57%) were optimistic and more (28%) were pessimistic. A year ago just slightly more were optimistic (47%) than pessimistic (41%) and prior to that more were pessimistic about Greece's EMU prospects.

More Greeks thought that PASOK (37%) rather than New Democracy (24%) is the party best able to deal with Greece's entry into the EMU. This view is fairly consistently held across age, gender, class, and region.

Limited interest in the European Elections.

A majority (55%) said they had little or no interest in the European elections conducted on June 13th, while fewer said they had a fair amount of interest (28%) and fewer still said they were very interested (16%).