

EUROPEAN OPINION ALERT

U.S. INFORMATION AGENCY, WASHINGTON, DC 20547

USIA

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND MEDIA REACTION

May 12, 1998

L-20-98

West Europeans Accept Current NATO Enlargement, But Divide on Future Rounds

The U.S. Senate's recent 80-19 vote to admit the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland into NATO has added momentum to the alliance-wide ratification process for the current round of NATO enlargement. Recent USIA surveys indicate that key west European publics support the pending round of NATO enlargement, but are more divided on additional enlargement in the coming years.

Support Remains Stable for First Round

When reminded of the common defense commitment among NATO members, majorities in Britain, France and Greece and a plurality in Turkey support the inclusion of the three current invitees (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) (Table 1). The Germans are the most closely divided (46% support vs. 40% oppose). Two in ten or more in Britain, Greece and Turkey are undecided. For the most part, support for NATO membership for these three countries is consistent with that found in Fall 1997 USIA surveys. Previous USIA surveys have shown that many west Europeans do not consider themselves well informed on the enlargement issue, but that support is stronger among the attentive public.

	<u>Britain</u>	<u>France</u>	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Greece</u>	<u>Turkey</u>
Support	57%	56%	46%	53%	45%
Oppose	23	32	40	25	25
Don't know	21	12	14	21	30

Little Enthusiasm for Future Expansion

Publics in current NATO member states are divided as to whether NATO should engage in another round of expansion in the next five years (Table 2). Only the Greek public expresses clear support for further enlargement, while the Germans are the most likely to believe that "NATO should not invite any other new members any time soon." The British and French publics are more closely divided. About a fifth of each public is undecided. Again, there has been little change in support for further enlargement since last Fall.

	<u>Britain</u>	<u>France</u>	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Greece</u>
Accept Others	34%	41%	27%	50%
No new invitations	42	44	51	27
Don't know	24	15	22	22

When asked separately about a list of specific central and east European countries which might be considered possible candidates for NATO membership, more west Europeans say they would vote against than for admitting each country if the issue were put to a referendum, but many have no opinion or are undecided in each case.

Prepared by Christopher J. Fleury and Nancy Mendrala (202-619-5143; reu@usia.gov). This report is based on face-to-face interviews in Britain (1,029), France (1,012), Germany (1,148), Greece (1,000), and Turkey (1,133) among adults age 18 years and older in early-to mid-April, 1998. The research firms IRB in London, Louis Harris in Paris, INRA in Moelln, MRB Hellas in Athens, and Strateji Mori in Istanbul conducted the interviews for USIA.