



MEDIATIZED EU - Mediatized Discourses on Europeanization and Their Representations in Public Perceptions

Research Summaries: Population Surveys

This series of summaries presents the results of different phases of research of MEDIATIZED EU, grouping all seven case-studies. The present issue summarises the results of population surveys.

BELGIUM

This section explains the Belgian people's perceptions of Europeanisation and the 'European Project', alongside its correlation with media and elite discourses identified in prior stages of the MEDIATIZED EU Project. To achieve this goal, a nationwide survey was conducted in Belgium, with 1006 participants surveyed between 25 July and 18 August, 2023. The Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) method was selected for data collection due to numerous reasons such as its alignment with research objectives, high response rates, and minimal error margin. The research team collaborated on a standardised questionnaire tailored specifically for Belgium, ensuring continuity with previous reports. Out of 13,402 attempted contacts, 1,022 completed interviews were collected.

The survey conducted in Belgium aimed to ensure a comprehensive representation by considering key demographics such as age, gender, education level, and province of residence. It targeted individuals aged 18 and above to encompass a wide range of age groups within the adult population, reflecting diverse perspectives and attitudes toward European integration and media discourse. Out of the 1,006 respondents, 49% identified as male and 51% as female. Notably, 25% of respondents were in the 65+ age group, while the other age groups (25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64) each comprised around 16-17% of respondents, with those aged 18-24 representing 10% of the total. The survey included participants from Flanders (58%), Wallonia (32%), and Bruxelles (10%). Education levels varied, with approximately 35% of respondents completing secondary education and 40% holding a higher education degree (college, university, or other tertiary degree).

Respondents were surveyed on their opinions and trust levels regarding various aspects of the political system, media, and elites in Belgium. Interestingly, while overall trust in institutions and elites remains somewhat limited, journalists are viewed as the most trustworthy group, with 5.2% expressing full trust in them. Conversely, politicians in Belgium are the least trusted, with 21.7% expressing complete distrust. Moreover, the journalists are trusted to varying degrees



(43%), followed by the federal government (33.6%), the federal parliament (32.8%), and the European Parliament (32.7%). Notably, a significant percentage of respondents (52.8%) expressed either complete or partial distrust in Belgian politicians, followed by regional government (42.5%) and regional parliament (41.3%). This mistrust towards regional authorities is noteworthy, given Belgium's complex federalised political structure. Age and education also played a role in satisfaction levels with the federal government, with younger respondents and those with higher education levels expressing differing levels of satisfaction. Additionally, a considerable portion of respondents (42%) believed that media coverage of politics in Belgium is polarised, highlighting a widespread perception of media polarisation despite Belgium not being a highly polarised country overall.

According to the findings, 46.8% of Belgians support integration and therefore believe that European integration should go further. When considering these results across the linguistic division of Belgium, French-speaking respondents are more supportive of integration (50.6%) than those Flemish speakers (43.4%). It is obvious that Francophones have a clearer stance regarding the further development of EU integration, whereas Flemish-language respondents take a more neutral or oppositional side. Both language groupings, however, support integration more than those who oppose it. When participants were asked how they interpreted EU integration (enlargement of the EU or strengthening of central EU institutions), almost 30% of them answered "strengthening EU institutions", whereas another 30% answered "both". Merely 8.2% of people consider EU integration to be enlargement, while 11.6% say it's neither. However, it should be emphasised that every fifth respondent chose the "don't know" or "refusal" option. Support for EU integration was also impacted by the age and gender of respondents. Younger respondents supported EU integration more than respondents aged 45 and over, while female respondents (41%) supported it less than male respondents (52%). Men also take a more definite position than women, due to the fact that in the neutral category there are more females (32.4%) than males (22.2). When it comes to the level of political knowledge and its impact on support for EU integration, it's clear that pro-integration sentiment is higher among individuals with the highest and lowest levels of political knowledge, compared to those in between. Nearly 50% of the population believe that, overall, Belgium has benefited from membership in the EU. The age group with the highest percentage of respondents believing that Belgium benefits from EU membership is 45-64 years old. Women believe that Belgium has overall benefited slightly more from being a member of the EU than men. French speakers and Flemish speakers differ significantly from one another on this question. This means that Francophones (52.3% vs. 45.8%) are more likely than Flemish-speakers to believe that Belgium benefits from EU membership. Lastly, it is important to note that Belgians believe that the EU should bear some or all responsibility regarding immigration, environmental, energy, and security-related policies which confirms the findings of the report on interviews with the Belgian elite.



ESTONIA

This survey is a follow-up to the works that have been prepared previously in the framework of the international consortium “MEDIATIZED EU – Mediatized Discourses on Europeanisation and their Representation in Public Perceptions”. Turu-uuringute AS conducted the fieldwork of the survey in Estonia. The data was gathered from 6 September to 18 September 2023. The actual sample size was 1,007 respondents. Data was collected with online interviews. The sample was drawn with random sampling to ensure the representativeness of the sample. The online survey sample was formed from the online panel of Turu-uuringute AS. The core questions of the survey are how Estonian people conceive Europeanisation, whether they support or oppose further integration, what future EU-image is closer to their preferences, how do they perceive media and elite structure. The main focus of the analysis of population survey was: 1) on the public perception of the EU, 2) its connection with personal cultural characteristics, 3) to identity related factors, 4) to describe the possible impact of elite polarisation and 5) to study institutional trust and its implications on public understanding of the politicisation of the media.

The general profile of respondents corresponds to the generally known distribution of the Estonian population. 68% of the respondents were of Estonian ethnicity and 28% of Russian ethnicity. However, in certain regions (Tallinn, Ida-Virumaa) the share of Russian citizens is still significantly higher than might be expected on the basis of the data presented here. 65% of respondents had Estonian as their home language and 34% declared Russian as their home language. In terms of age, 26% of the respondents were in the 35-49 age group, while the 50-64 age group accounted for 24%. 63% of respondents had secondary or higher education, while 30% had higher education.

69% of Estonians and 32% of Russians are not members of any church or denomination. Among Russians, the share of religious participants is high, especially in the age range 34-64 (30%). 59% of Russians in Estonia belong to the Orthodox Church. The questionnaire also profiled respondents in terms of how they perceive their position in society. As expected, the result is a normal distribution, with the majority of respondents placing themselves more or less in the middle of the 'social hierarchy', or slightly above.

There are four important aspects to stress in this respect: (1) Estonians and non-Estonians live in separate media spheres. Less than 3% of Estonians regularly follow media in Russian and less than 11% of Russians regularly follow media in Estonian. A third of respondents agree or tend to agree that Estonian media coverage is polarised, 27% disagree. (2) Estonian media coverage is not directly polarised between “black and white” and simplified but there can be found tendencies towards this. 28% of respondents say they have personally been exposed to fake news and disinformation in the last 7 days often or very often, 33% sometimes and 24% rarely or not at all. (3) Two thirds of respondents discuss politics in their social networks - 26% often and 38% sometimes. Older people (65+) and those with a higher education are the most active in discussing politics. Estonians are more likely than Russians or other nationalities to discuss political issues. A third (31%) of respondents rarely discuss policy issues and 4% not at all. (4) The Prime Minister is thought to be the most influential institution. This is followed by large commercial and financial

institutions, followed almost equally by the Mayor of Tallinn and members of the Riigikogu. Local authorities have a relatively small influence. The impact on the ordinary person was rated the lowest, and was at the bottom of the ranking based on the average of the ratings (2.0 points on a 7-point scale).

There are seven key takeaways in respect to Europeanisation and perception of the EU: (1) Estonian society tends to be more conservative than liberal. The Russophone community is more conservative and more eurosceptic. When the native language is stated as “Russian” the likelihood of seeing oneself as a “conservative” is much greater. The model provides strong evidence of a relationship between native language and views on European integration. (2) Estonian society is becoming more Euro-sceptic in the prospects of further integration. There are more people against further European integration than for it. (3) The EU influence is more valued in economic terms. Financial support by European funds in different areas of society is generally well-known. (4) More than 60% of the respondents support that security, energy, immigration and environmental policies are the areas where policy decisions should be taken at EU level. More than 50% say that decisions related to health and unemployment should be taken at national/local level. (5) When rating countries on the development scale, the majority (85%) considered the economy as priority and less than half (45%) considered democracy as priority. Russians significantly more likely than Estonians consider the economy and social cohesion as a concern, but the Estonians and female respondents were significantly more concerned with the fate of democracy. (6) 51% of the respondents agree that Estonia should adopt a flexible strategy for different alliances depending on the topic. This response option was chosen by 45% of Estonians and 69% of Russians, with a statistically significant difference. The choice of the 15% of respondents was that Estonia should seek a more active leadership role in the European Union as well as that Estonia should seek stable cooperation with the main EU powers. (7) Membership in the European Union is seen as beneficial for Estonia by 75% and beneficial for themselves personally by 77% of the respondents. EU membership has brought benefits in terms of support for economic development (77%), better security guarantees (52%) and, to some extent, better protection of human rights and democracy (28%).

GEORGIA

The fieldwork for the MEDIATIZED EU project has been carried out by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC Georgia) in Georgia during July-August 2023. The fieldwork involved several phases, including piloting, training interviewers, and employing face-to-face Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) with Android-based tablets for data collection. The survey aimed to explore public perceptions of the EU and Europeanisation from a representative sample of citizens aged 18 and above (excluding occupied territories), utilising a multistage stratified clustered sampling design. Over 18 days, 1022 interviews were successfully conducted, resulting in a 24% response rate. Rigorous cleaning and weighting processes were applied to the survey data to ensure accuracy.

Among 1,022 respondents, 46% identified as male and 54% as female. The age distribution reveals a significant presence in the 45-64 age group (36%), highlighting the prevalence of middle-aged individuals. Education levels indicate that more than half of the survey participants completed secondary education, while the third holds a higher degree. Employment-wise, 40% are currently engaged in paid work. Monthly income distribution exhibits diverse ranges, starting with reporting no income (17%) and ending with monthly earnings over 1600 GEL (8%). Occupation-wise, 30% hold higher positions, 18% occupy middle positions, and 20% have lower positions. Settlement types comprise 43% villages, 28% the capital, and 27% other urban areas. Citizenship is affirmed by the vast majority (99%), with 87% identifying as Georgian, 9% Azerbaijani, and 1.4% Armenian. A new composite variable was introduced to gauge cultural exposure versus non-exposure, amalgamating language proficiency (proficiency in 2-3+ languages, including native ones), social connections with non-nationals (affirmation of relationships outside nationality), and extended residency abroad (living outside the country for over 3 months). A majority, comprising 68%, exhibit a positive inclination toward cultural exposure, while 32% express a lack of such exposure. This implies that a significant segment lacks experience in engaging with diverse cultures. Despite this, 10% of respondents plan to emigrate in the next 2 years.

The data revealed that from the list of media outlets the pro-governmental Imedi TV is the most popular one, while the party-neutral online newspaper Netgazeti is the least popular one. Frequencies show that the majority (41%) watch at least one pro-governmental media outlet, 28% watch pro-oppositional and 13% the neutral ones. This indicates that the majority of the population relies on news from media outlets hostile to each other, contributing to the deepening of media and political polarisation. Regarding disinformation, it appears that the respondents struggle to identify it, with 31% claiming never to have encountered it in the last week. Additionally, a substantial portion (17%) was uncertain about encountering any disinformation, while 26% reported often/very often encountering it. Local media was most often associated with disseminating disinformation, while the EU and quite unexpectedly officials of authoritarian countries were mentioned least. Correlation analysis showed that the viewers of pro-government media perceive oppositional actors as major disseminators (12%) of disinformation and vice versa, highlighting the link between media consumption patterns and political polarisation. The results show that 41% of respondents rarely or never discuss politics, while 13% often engage in political discussions. Men, older individuals, and those with higher education discuss politics more frequently. Regarding their influence on political matters, the majority feels they have minimal or zero influence. Tbilisi residents and those with higher levels of formal education are more inclined to participate in protests. Engagement in political discussions positively correlates with a sense of influence and protest readiness. It is worthy to mention that the oppositional media consumers lean slightly more towards liberalism, while pro-governmental media users tend towards conservatism. Approximately half of the participants perceive media coverage as polarised, and the elites are viewed as divided over EU-related matters. Consequently, 76% of survey respondents, especially those in Tbilisi and individuals with higher education, believe that the Georgian political elite should be more unified.

The survey findings align with the observed trend of evident political and media polarisation in Georgia, as highlighted in the media analysis and the elite interviews. Despite this polarisation, the respondents express trust in the EU, surpassing trust in national institutions. Notably, media consumption plays a pivotal role, with pro-governmental media linked to lower EU-related knowledge, conservative views, perception of the EU as a threat to sovereignty, satisfaction with the government-EU dealings, and a positive stance toward Russia. In contrast, pro-oppositional media consumption correlates positively with EU knowledge and the acknowledgment of pragmatic gains stemming from the EU. Surprisingly, even though pro-governmental media are more frequently consumed for news, dissatisfaction with the government's handling of EU matters exceeds satisfaction (35% vs. 25%). Regarding general attitudes toward the EU, positive attitudes prevail over the sceptical ones. Furthermore, the proportion of individuals agreeing with six or more optimistic EU statements is significantly higher (over 40%) than those agreeing with an equivalent number of sceptical statements (approx. 10%).

The favourable perception of Georgia's European integration is further evidenced by responses regarding the potential benefits of EU membership. A significant majority (81.5%) holds a positive outlook, with only 8.6% expressing a negative stance. Similarly, when assessing personal benefits from Georgia's EU membership, a substantial majority (73%) anticipates advantages, while only 14% foresee none. Regarding the most crucial benefits of EU membership for Georgia, the majority (57%) prioritises the EU's support of the country's economic development, followed by an enhanced safeguarding of the country's security (32%). It should be underlined that the majority of survey participants does not view the EU as a threat to the Georgian identity - 63% of the respondents agree to none of the statements viewing the EU as a threat to the national identity. Moreover, 47% of the respondents agree that the EU shares the same values with Georgia, in contrast to the 18% who disagree with this statement. Younger, more educated individuals with liberal views and cultural exposure exhibit stronger attachment to Europe and the EU. Also, trust in NGOs and oppositional parties decreases the likelihood of viewing the EU as a threat or applying double standards to Georgia. Conversely, trust in the Orthodox Church and the ruling party increases the likelihood of these concerns. Sovereignty concerns and perceptions of the EU as guided by double standards may be attributed to the ruling party's and pro-governmental media's hostile rhetoric, as revealed in the previous stages of research.



HUNGARY

The aim of the nationally representative survey of 1,022 respondents was to describe the main features of the Hungarian adult population's views and attitudes towards European integration, elites and the media.

In the earlier stages of the research, a discourse analysis was carried out to see how the media frames the elite agenda on the EU. In the following step, we also used elite interviews to gain insights into how elites interpret asymmetrically polarised media discourses. The population survey reveals how these dimensions are reflected in public views. The fieldwork was conducted

from 21 07 2023 to 02 08 2023, using the CAPI method. The sample was formed by a three-step probability sampling method. An experienced polling company processed the survey in the frame of an omnibus poll.

Just over half (56 %) of the population convey a low level of interest in politics while 44 % reveal that they sometimes or often discuss political issues. As for the extremes: around 12 % of the population claim they never discuss politics among their friends while one in nine often do so. Gender has no effect but age shows a significant correlation with cognitive mobilisation: the majority of young people are not or only rarely involved in political discussions as opposed to the 45-64 age group, which manifests the most active political interest. The retired elderly's political interest is around the national average. Occupation does have a considerable influence on political interest. Typically, managers and professionals show well above-average while unskilled workers and those in office or service jobs significantly below-average political interest.

In terms of political affiliation, around 30 % of the population identify themselves as left-wing, 44 % as right-wing, and about a quarter as being in between. Political interest is significantly higher on the left and average on the right. A massive majority of those who place themselves in the middle never discuss political issues with their acquaintances.

According to the public the Hungarian elite is divided about the EU. In terms of proportions, half of the population think that the elite is disunified and less than a quarter think it is unified on EU issues. In contrast, 58 % expect that elites should be more unified on core values related to the EU and one in five believe the opposite. That is, the relative majority of the public sees the elite as divided and would expect greater unity in relation to the EU.

Similarly, the public think that the media is polarised and distorts reality. In proportion, only one in seven people deny this view. The majority of the remainder agree or strongly agree, with a minority taking an intermediate position. As for exposure to disinformation and fake news, only one in fifteen say they have never experienced it, while two in five claim they have encountered it frequently.

The level of trust in institutions is low but trust in EU institutions is somewhat higher than in domestic institutions. Politicians are perceived as having more influence than those in top economic positions, and the Prime Minister is perceived as having a particularly strong influence. At the same time, a relative majority is dissatisfied with the government's EU policy.

Our previous survey of elites found two dominant and two marginal factors considering the statements about the EU. The two high weight factors were the integrationist (which included both federalist and pro-enlargement views) and the sovereigntist perception factors, while the multi-speed and Huxit factors remained marginal. With the exception of Huxit (supported by a small far-right party and its associated marginal press), all elite narratives found EU membership beneficial. With the exception of the sovereigntist, all factors were critical of the government.

Factor analysis of the public opinion survey revealed five interpretable factors, each explaining 10-19, overall 73 % of the variance. The first and strongest factor is the pragmatic integrationist perception, which combines the EU's beneficial features (economic support, external and internal security guarantees) and advocates further integration. The second factor is Huxitism, which believes that the EU should be left because it interferes in Hungary's internal affairs,

threatens national identity as well as youth through LGBTQ propaganda. It also claims that the West is chaotic and declining, and the EU serves the interests of big business. The third factor is that of sovereignty, which says that we must return to the cooperation of sovereign nations, that the EU serves the objectives of the old member states while Hungary is the custodian of traditional values and that it shares common traditions with the countries of Central Europe. Representatives of the Huxit and sovereigntist factors are satisfied with the way the government manages EU-affairs. The dividing line between the two is that sovereigntists don't reject European identity and don't deny the benefits of the EU in terms of external security. The fourth factor focuses on European identity, which it considers compatible with national identity, and believes that the EU must take action against Russian and Chinese disinformation.

The five factors are: pragmatic integrationism, Huxitism, sovereigntism, identity-based Euro optimism and federalism. The distinction between soft and hard Euroscepticism is well established in the literature. This research allows us to apply these concepts not to parties but to individuals. We consider as soft Euroscepticists those who occupy a critical position on the EU on a pragmatic basis, weighing up the pros and cons. In contrast, those who distance themselves from a supranational entity on the basis of identity stick to their EU critical views. Huxitarians are hard Eurosceptics while sovereigntists mix soft and hard Eurosceptic arguments. In an analogous way one can distinguish between soft and hard versions of Euro optimism. Pragmatic integrationism and federalism are variants of soft Euro optimism and represent a greater weight in explaining the variance.

This research confirmed the finding that there is a positive relationship between national and supranational attachment. The two types of attachment do not undermine but strengthen each other. Another lesson is that on average people would accept to distribute one-fifth of collected tax at EU-level, which is significantly greater than the current redistributive capacity of the EU.

The preferences concerning media discourses, the perception of media polarisation and the manner of media consumption directly influence the perception of the EU. Those who feel that the domestic press distorts reality above average support the EU, while those who are informed only by the pro-government media are against further European integration.

IRELAND

The general population survey in Ireland was designed, conducted and analysed by Dublin City University. The fieldwork data collection was conducted between 12 July and 3 September, 2023 by Red C Research for MEDIATIZED EU. The survey aimed to study the public perception of how media and elite discourses frame Europeanisation, what people think about the EU, and how this relates to pragmatic, identity-based and sociodemographic explanatory variables. A total representative sample of 1,046 adults aged 18+ were interviewed, with fieldwork conducted via face-to-face CAPI interviewing and applying a quota sampling approach. Refusal rate for the

project was approximately 21%, meaning that out of every 100 surveys completed, there were 21 refusals to achieve those 100 completions. Rigorous cleaning and weighting processes were applied to the survey data. Weighting was applied based on latest CSO 2022 Census data for age, gender, education status, & region. The margin of error for the survey amongst 1,046 participants is +/- 3.0% at 95% confidence interval.

Among 1,046 respondents, 48% identified as male and 49% as female, with the remainder choosing other gender options. Proportions of respondents by age group are fairly evenly spread, reflecting the broad diversity of the Irish demographic by age. The weighted sample for education levels shows that 50% of respondents report third level education while the remaining 50% hold second level or below. 29% of the weighted sample report their place of residence as Dublin (the capital), and a significant proportion reside in other urban areas. Employment levels were reported as quite high, even among the younger population (the over-65s being the exception). Those with higher education levels and living in urban areas reported higher income levels and more non-Irish connections and experience residing abroad.

The Irish citizens' media consumption is characterised by a relatively low level of consumption of traditional media (except public service television and radio which enjoy continued popularity), a growing reliance on digital and online media, and a growing level of distrust towards journalists and traditional media organisations. Trust in the media overall (47.6%) is marginally more prevalent than distrust in the media (32.2%). At the same time, almost half of the respondents (49.7%) considered the coverage of politics by Irish media in general to be "polarised" and 46.5% believe that the majority of media in Ireland "distort reality". Despite this, only a quarter of the respondents (23.6%) believe that they have been exposed often or very often to disinformation.

Older respondents were more inclined to discuss political affairs more frequently: 54.9% of those over 65 report discussing them sometimes or often. The proportion of younger respondents who never discuss politics is particularly high: 42.1% of the 18-29 year olds reported never discussing politics with friends. Respondents with a tertiary level of education discuss politics more frequently (24.9% doing so often), while people with a primary level of education discuss politics less often (8.1% do so often, while 31.1% never do).

In the majority, Irish respondents believed that European institutions are the most "trustworthy" political institutions, with 46.8% saying they trust the European Parliament and 47.9% saying they trust the European Commission. Trust in Irish governing institutions, journalists and politicians was below the levels of trust in European institutions. The Irish parliament was by far the most trusted institution nationally, with 43.6%. Trust in the Irish Government was on par with trust in journalists (38.2% and 38.5%, respectively). The category "politicians in Ireland" enjoyed the least amount of trust with 21.6%.

Knowledge of EU affairs tended to be higher for older age groups and male respondents, and was also positively associated with higher levels of education. Politically right-leaning respondents tended to be slightly more EU-knowledgeable than left-leaning ones, and also expressed slightly higher interest in politics overall.

In general, respondents tended to be more satisfied than dissatisfied with how the Irish government manages EU-related issues. When asked, 33.6% of respondents were satisfied, compared to 28.6% who were not satisfied. Respondents with left-leaning views were less satisfied with the performance of the current centre-right government. The majority of respondents (57.1%) believe that Irish elites should be more unified on EU-related issues than they currently are (37.7% believe elites are unified currently).

An overwhelming 98.2% of the respondents thought Ireland has benefited from EU membership. 84.2% also believed that being in the EU benefits them personally. This belief is especially prevalent among those with higher levels of EU knowledge and more politically active respondents. 35.7% of the Irish population surveyed favoured European integration and believed that it should go further. In contrast, a roughly equal number, 36.3% believed that European integration has already gone too far. Support for more EU integration was more evident among female, younger and more educated respondents, as well as left-leaning ones.

European integration was interpreted by the majority of respondents (41.7%) as both strengthening of the EU's central institutions and as EU enlargement. 33.6% said integration was more about strengthening EU governing bodies, while 21.8% said it was mostly about extending the Union with new member states. Most respondents (35.9%) believed the main aim of the EU is to both make the European economy more competitive worldwide and to provide better social security for all EU citizens.

Despite lower trust in national institutions, when asked about the level of governance that should be responsible for political decisions-making (regional, national, and EU level), respondents gave preference to the national level of governance over the EU level in all policy areas.

When reflecting on statements about EU-Ireland relations, participants identified a number of major benefits of EU membership for Ireland. The EU was seen as playing a positive role in Ireland's economic development (81.8%); supporting Ireland's interests in the Brexit negotiations, both in the context of the border and NI peace process (78.6%) and in the context of the Single Market (64.8%). The EU was also thought to be instrumental in protecting human rights and democracy in Ireland (77.2%) and increasing Ireland's security in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine (68.5%). At the same time, some of the concerns expressed by respondents with regard to EU membership included Ireland bearing the excessive burden of enforcing EU user data protection policies and regulating the activity of tech giants (52.6%); Ireland's internal affairs and sovereignty being intruded on by the EU (e.g., military neutrality, economic model and interests) (43%) and the EU potentially threatening Ireland's national identity and related traditional values (43.8%).



PORTUGAL

Population survey enables us to triangulate results with those of media analysis and elite interviews by integrating the opinion of the general public into the research. This is therefore the third vector of the political elite-media-public triangle. The questionnaire was developed in

coordination with the MEDIATIZED EU consortium and applied by the survey company Equação Lógica in face-to-face interviews between July 21 and August 23, 2023.

The survey interviewed 1,013 people (N = 1,013). The sampling process considered the study's criteria and resulted in a population of 53% identified as females and 47% as males, while 28% of the total were 65 years old or more and 18% between 45-54. The majority of our respondents were older than 65, with females slightly overpassing males, and the minority of our respondents corresponded to the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups, with women being less represented in the 18-24 slot. Considering that people in Portugal tend to engage in the job market in their mid-twenties, the majority (62%) of our respondents were in a working life period (30% male and 32% female). Therefore, 64% of our respondents (between 35-65+) have witnessed important moments of the EU debates, such as the Schengen creation, the single currency, etc.

Other relevant socioeconomic characteristics indicate that the majority of the respondents (61%) declared that they earn up to 1,500 euros after taxes, which is close to the country's average monthly gross salary of 1,517 euros and above the average net of 1,162 euros (figure 2). However, a significant 31% of the respondents said they earn less than the minimum wage of 740 euros, whereas 30% earn between 740 and 1,500 euros. Only about 13% have higher incomes —only 2% between 2,300 and 3,300. It is worth noting that in 2022, the country's average wage was the fourth lowest in the EU. With an inflation rate of 8% in the first quarter of 2023, real wages in Portugal have followed the downward trend in all of Europe.

Media consumption is also a key factor to gauge overall access to information and relate the survey's results with that of the previous research phase, that of media analysis. Most respondents, 74%, access news through the television —especially the private channels SIC and TVI with over 50% each, though RTP1 is not that far behind with 49%— and 41% via the print press, especially *Correio da Manhã* and *Jornal de Notícias* with 25% each, and 14% of the respondents read *Público*. Finally, politics is not that popular of a topic of conversation among the Portuguese interviewed. Overall, most respondents answered that they never (28%) or rarely (29%) talk about politics, in a total of 57%, whereas 36.2% talk about it sometimes, and only 7.2% talk about politics often. Still, when asked about political positions, 38% self-identified with the centre, 26% with the left, 24% with the right, and 11% did not know or refused to answer. Considering that most replied that they never or rarely talk about politics, choosing the centre may also have meant “neutrality” for some.

Several factors appear to have a bearing in these responses, particularly gender, level of education, and monthly income. Female participants mostly replied that they never (33%), rarely (31%), and sometimes (31%) discuss politics, and only 5% do so often, while male participants lead the percentages of those who sometimes (41%) or often (10%) debate the issue, with 49% still answering “never” or “rarely”. Respondents whose highest education level is primary education lead those who never talk about politics, with 34%, followed by those who sometimes (32%) or rarely (29%) debate the issue, while only 5% often discuss politics, while Those with University degrees lead the ones that talk often (13%) about politics, although in a modest percentage, while most talk about it sometimes (44%), rarely (28%), or never (14%). As for monthly income, among those earning the least, up to 550 euros or between that amount and 1,500 euros, only 5 to 7%

talk about politics often. Still, 41% of those earning between the minimum wage (740 euros) and 1,500 euros, the nominal average income in Portugal, also talk about it sometimes, which puts this stratum debating the issue with some frequency at 48%. These data may be telling of a class character that is also suggested by other variables, i.e., education levels, weighing heavy on peoples' habit of debating politics for several reasons, such as access to information.

Knowledge of the EU was also gauged by the survey with two questions that offer options. More than a third (36.6%) of the interviewees answered correctly which countries are EU members, for instance, while the majority made at least one mistake (38.3%), from a sample of three countries. Despite only 2% getting all options wrong, a considerable amount refused to answer or did not know how to answer this question (27%). In all, the survey suggests that, broadly speaking, there is generic knowledge about the EU in Portugal, or at least in certain contexts.

In all, there is significant support for the deepening of the EU integration process, regardless of the variables discussed above, but depending on the political position, knowledge about the EU, and residence place, although all still have high numbers of support. Most Portuguese believe that Portugal's integration into the EU should be deepened (51.5%), while 27.8% are neutral about the issue, and 20.6% think that integration has already gone too far.

Overall, this reflects a positive attitude towards the process, even if criticism and possibly soft-scepticism, as described in our previous analyses, still linger. Interestingly, those who position themselves on the left are the ones that show the greatest support (54.3%) and opposition (23.5%) to the integration process. Those on the right also show great support, with 51.5%, and have the least opposition to the integration (16.2%). The political centre is the least enthusiastic about the integration process, but still shows a high support of 48.2%, while 22.6% opposed it. People who responded to all four questions correctly are 57.7% supportive, and those who have just one correct response lower to a 41.4% rate of support.

Pragmatic elements have a significant explanatory strength concerning attitudes towards the EU, with economic aspects performing a key role. These elements usually also go hand-in-hand with an overall very positive attitude of the respondents towards the EU in general, and in particular sectoral areas. A consistent majority believed that Portugal has benefitted from being an EU member (86.8%), with only 13.1% saying that it has not. A slight difference is found in the question about the personal benefits of Portugal's membership in the Union, although the positive evaluation remains high: 78.5% responded that people like them have benefitted, and 21.4% believe that they have not.

Among those with a positive assessment of Portugal's EU membership, most pointed to economic development (56%), and better protection of social welfare (30%), of human rights and democracy (28%), of security (25%), of migration (18%), and of green policies (17%). Some of these topics actually mobilise both identity and pragmatic perspectives in Portugal because they usher the memory of the 1974 revolution that overthrew a long-lasting dictatorship and commitments that have enmeshed with national identity, as well as the view that accession to the European Economic Community in 1986 has consolidated the process of democratic transition.

Overall, these results are also in line with the media analysis in that it found that the coverage of the main television news shows and newspapers convey a positively pragmatic

perception of the EU's role in crucial developments for the country and the people. In the current juncture, considering that most respondents are from low to middle-income classes (61%, including an expressive 31% earning less than the minimum wage), have up to primary (58%) education, indicated a centrist political position (38%), do not frequently debate politics (57%), made at least one mistake or refused to reply/did not know the answer (75%) to specific questions about the EU, and mostly get their news from privately-owned television channels, further analysis of their conditions, including their access to information or to diverse views, would help understand their perceptions of the Union, of the country, and of their own situation.



SPAIN

Nebrija University conducted a survey among the general population over 18 years of age, as part of the MEDIATIZED EU project. It contacted Analysis and Research (Ael) to execute the survey. The survey aims to shed light on public perception of how media and elite discourses frame the process of Europeanisation, as well as what people think about the EU, and how this relates to pragmatic, identity-based and sociodemographic explanatory variables.

The proportional sample (50% men and 50% women) covers the following age ranges: 18 to 29; 30 to 44; 45 to 64; and 65 and above. Regarding the level of education of the population surveyed, the sample is mainly composed of individuals holding a university degree or secondary education. The majority of respondents have a paid job (64%). There are 33% who do not currently have a paid job but did have one in the past. Only 3% report never having had a paid job. Based on occupation, three categories are distinguished at the social level: high, medium and low. We see a greater presence of the middle social level (44%), followed by a high social level (35%) and, to a lesser extent, a low social level (16%).

In terms of media consumption in Spain, public television (TVE) and private channel Antena 3 stand out as outlets with a higher frequency of consumption. Press media (written and/or digital) are used less frequently. Looking at the level of trust in media, distrust (46%) is more prevalent than trust (26%). Both people who often talk about politics and those who are uninformed are more distrustful of the media. We can also say that the Spanish population considers exposure to disinformation to be high (61%); the percentage is higher in men, left-wing people, people who discuss politics often, and respondents who generally distrust institutions. In terms of polarisation, the majority of respondents (7 out of 10) consider that the Spanish media are “polarised” and “distort reality.” Informed and highly-informed respondents believe to a larger extent that the media in Spain are polarised. Rather, it is the uninformed who have the largest opinion that the media distorts reality. In terms of interest in political issues, based on how often respondents typically talk about politics in their environment, nearly half (42%) talk about it “often” and one-third do so “sometimes” (32%). Higher levels of education correlated with greater interest in political issues; respondents with university education talk about politics in their environment “often” (47%). Significant differences also occur according to political ideology, with respondents more “left-winged” (46%) or “right-winged” (45%) discussing politics more “often” than “centrists” (33%). Within the group of the uninformed people, there is a greater presence of those who speak

rarely or never about politics. A large portion of the population (81%) believe that a person like them has little influence on the important decisions of the country. The perception about the influence of people on matters of importance in the country is greater in women than in men. People with a left ideology generally attach a higher level of influence to individual impact compared to centre or right respondents. In terms of respondents' trust in institutions, although trust in all proposed institutions is not high, respondents still highlight European institutions as the most "trustworthy." The distrust of institutions is greater among men than among women regarding all institutions assessed, while people with a left ideology have greater trust in institutions than centre or right respondents. At the age level, the group aged 30 to 44 is the most distrustful in general of the different institutions.

The level of knowledge increases with education. Gender and interest in political issues also influence the level of knowledge; women seem to be a less informed profile on EU issues. In terms of general perceptions of European integration, 60% of the population surveyed favours European integration and believe that it should go further. In contrast, 19% believe that European integration has already gone too far, while 21% are neutral. People from the "left" are more supportive of European integration than people from the "centre" and from the "right." In addition, individuals with a higher level of trust in institutions and those who inform themselves through many media ("highly informed") are the most supportive of integration. Among men the percentage of those who oppose European integration is significantly higher. The importance of aid to Ukraine is positioned as the aspect that generates a greater degree of agreement among the population. In addition to this, there are other aspects such as the positive effect of the EU in Spain's economic development or the risks of the fuel price increase caused by the EU's position against Russia. If we look at the perception of media discourses, differentiating between positive aspects, negative aspects for Spain and general negative aspects, we can see some differences between them. Within the positives group, the largest agreement comes from considering that the EU plays an important role in providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine, as well as a positive role in Spain's economic development.

Conversely, we see immigration management as the most critical aspect, with nearly half of respondents not believing that the EU is helping to improve this issue. As to the EU's positive role in Spain's economic development, we see that this idea is greater in left-wing people, in respondents with a higher level of trust in institutions, and in "highly informed" people. In asking the Spanish population whether or not they believe Spain has benefited from its EU membership, we see that the vast majority believe that it has been beneficial to the country (86%). With regard to the personal benefit that it has entailed for citizens, we also see a high consideration, as 3 out of 4 respondents believe that being in the EU benefits them. Looking at the negative aspects related to Spain, we see that about 4 out of 10 respondents believe that EU aid comes with imposed conditions that harm Spain. In contrast, it should be noted that the vast majority of respondents favour being part of the EU, as only 1 in 10 believe that Spain should leave the EU. In analysing whether Spain's influence on the EU corresponds to its economic power, population size and its political role at the international level, we observe that the population surveyed is divided in this regard. 51% believe this influence does correspond, while 49% believe it does not. Among those

who think it does correspond, we find a greater presence of women, people of left ideology, respondents who have greater trust in institutions and those who are opposed to leaving the EU. On the contrary, among those who consider that Spain's influence does not correspond to its size, we find a greater presence of men, of people from the centre and right, of people who distrust institutions, and of respondents who are in favour of leaving the EU. Men and right-wing people show greater agreement with these statements which refer to the negative consequences for Spain. They could be said to be somehow more sceptical about the benefits of being in the EU.

**For more information on the project and on our results, visit us at
www.mediatized.eu**

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004534