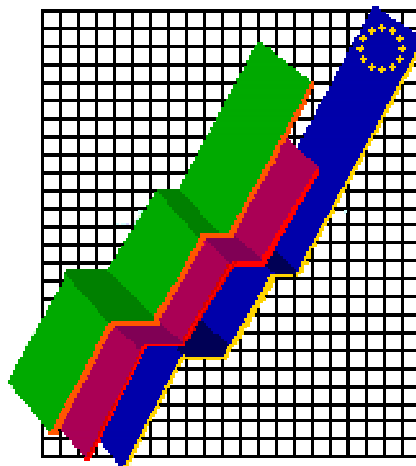


## CANDIDATE COUNTRIES EUROBAROMETER 2002.1

### HIGHLIGHTS - OCTOBER 2002

#### PUBLIC OPINION IN THE COUNTRIES APPLYING FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

#### SUPPORT FOR EU MEMBERSHIP



The latest candidate Countries Eurobarometer survey, was carried out in March-April 2002, in all the 13 countries applying for EU membership<sup>1</sup>.

These highlights present the **level of support for EU membership** and the **perceived benefit from EU membership**. They also report on **voting preferences** if a referendum would be held about joining the European Union in each candidate country.

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<sup>1</sup> See technical specifications, at the end.

## 1. A HIGH – BUT VARIABLE - LEVEL OF GENERAL SUPPORT FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

**6 in ten people in the candidate countries support their country's membership** to the EU. This figure reflects a stability (+1 percentage point) compared to the previous CCEB, carried out in October 2001.

The levels of support range from 77% in Romania to 32% in Latvia.

At the same time, the proportion of people who see their **country's future membership as a bad thing** - that has been consistently low over the past years – has slowly increased, and now stands at **14%** (+4 since Autumn 2001).

Opposition to EU membership ranges from 3% in Romania to 24% in Malta and Latvia.

Support for membership is slightly lower in the 10 countries (Laeken-10 group) that should join the European Union as soon as 2004<sup>2</sup>, and stands at 52%, which is 8 percentage points less than the candidate countries average.

### Support for European Union membership (CC Average)

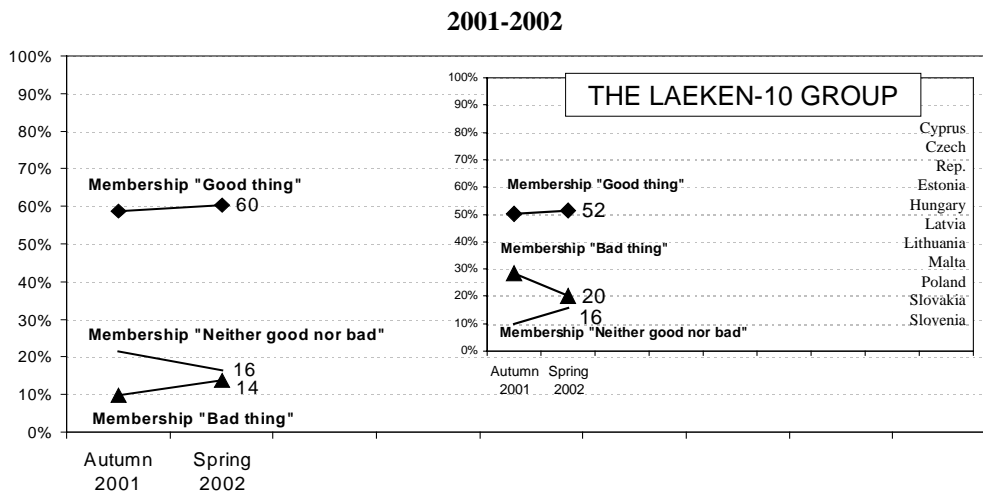


Fig.1.1a

Source: Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2002.1  
April, 2002

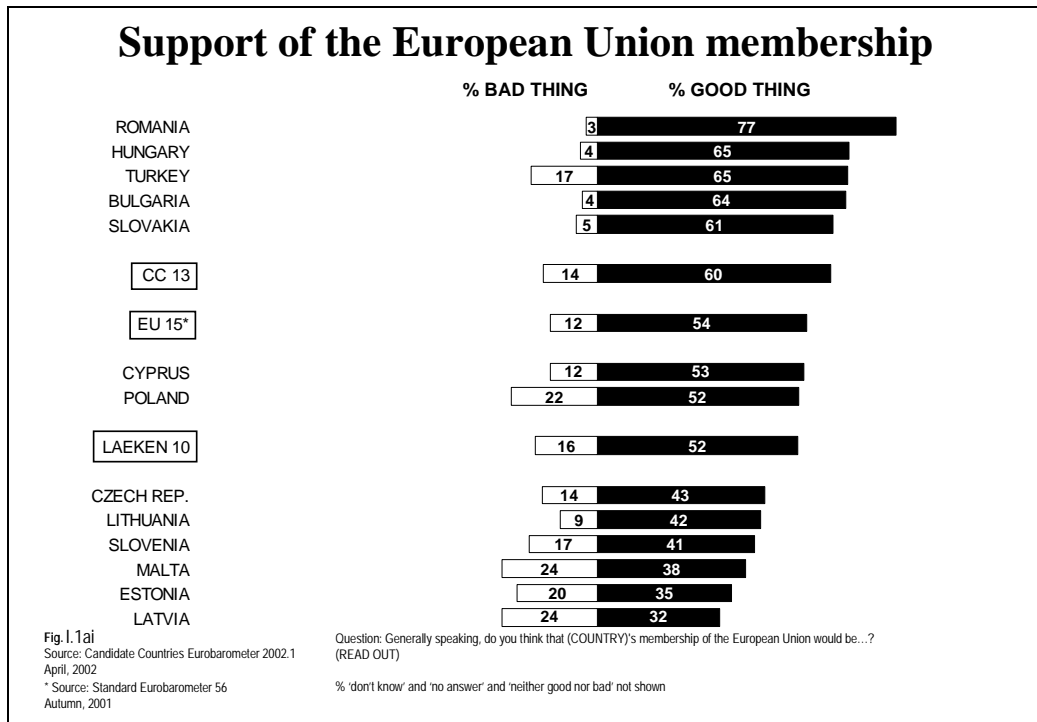
Question: Generally speaking, do you think that (COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union would be...?  
(READ OUT)

% 'don't know' and 'no answer' not shown

However, **the support for future membership in the candidate countries (60%) is higher than the support measured among current members (53%)<sup>3</sup>**. The average support levels of the Laeken-10 group are somewhat lower than the EU average.

<sup>2</sup> Laeken-10: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

<sup>3</sup> EB57, Spring 2002



The graph above shows that almost 8 in 10 people in Romania (77%) support their country's future membership of the European Union. In Hungary (65%), Turkey (65%), Bulgaria (64%), and Slovakia (61%) more than 6 in 10 people support their country's membership. (Hungary shows the highest levels of support in the Laeken-10 group).

The trend analyses show an increase in support levels since Autumn 2001 in Turkey (+6), and Hungary (+6). Though the level of outright support has not changed significantly in Malta, people are now less likely to see their country's membership as a bad thing (-7).

In Bulgaria (-10), the Czech Republic (-3), and Romania (-3) we find a lower percentage of people viewing their country's future membership as a good thing. At the same time, in several countries the proportion of those who regard their country's approaching European Union membership negatively has risen. These countries are Poland (+11), Latvia (+7), Slovenia (+6), Estonia (+6), the Czech Republic (+5), and Turkey (+3).

No significant changes in support have been recorded in Cyprus, Lithuania, and Slovakia.

## 2. BENEFITS FROM EU MEMBERSHIP ARE WIDELY EXPECTED, BUT WITH A REALISTIC ATTITUDE

Nearly **two-thirds of citizens of the candidate countries (64%) feel that their country would benefit from EU membership**, while exactly 1 in 5 people hold the opposite view (20%). At the CC13 level, a decrease of one percentage point has been recorded since Autumn 2001.

## Benefit from European Union membership (CC Average)

2001-2002

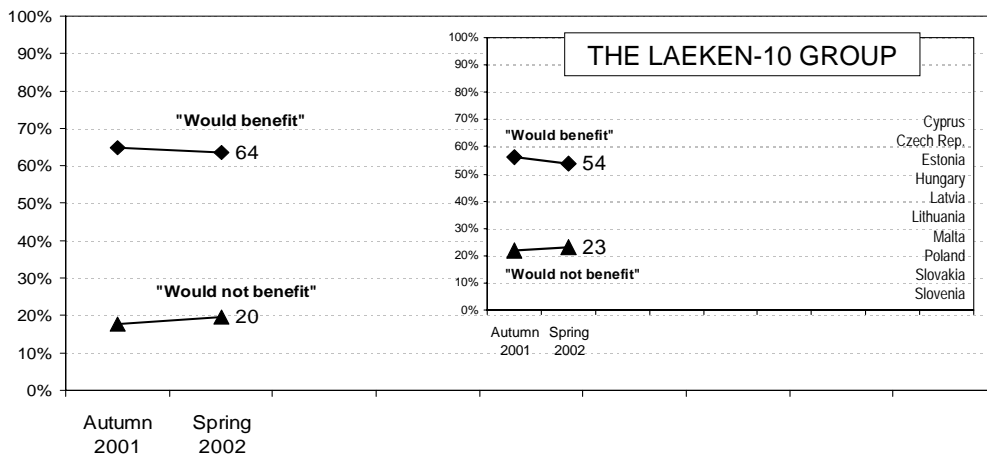


Fig. I.2a  
Source: Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2002.1  
April, 2002

Question: Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (COUNTRY) could get advantages or not from being a member of the European Union?

% 'don't know' and 'no answer' not shown

More than 7 in 10 people in Romania (76%), Hungary (73%), and Turkey (71%) now feel their country would benefit. In Cyprus as well, nearly 7 in 10 people feel their country could benefit from membership (69%), followed by Bulgaria (66%).

In Lithuania (48%), Malta (46%), Estonia (43%), the Czech Republic (43%), and Latvia (39%) less than half of the people are optimistic, but only in Latvia are those who feel that their country will definitely not benefit in the majority.

The proportion of people that lack an opinion ranges from 7% in Turkey to a significant 34% in Lithuania and the Czech Republic.

## Benefit from European Union membership

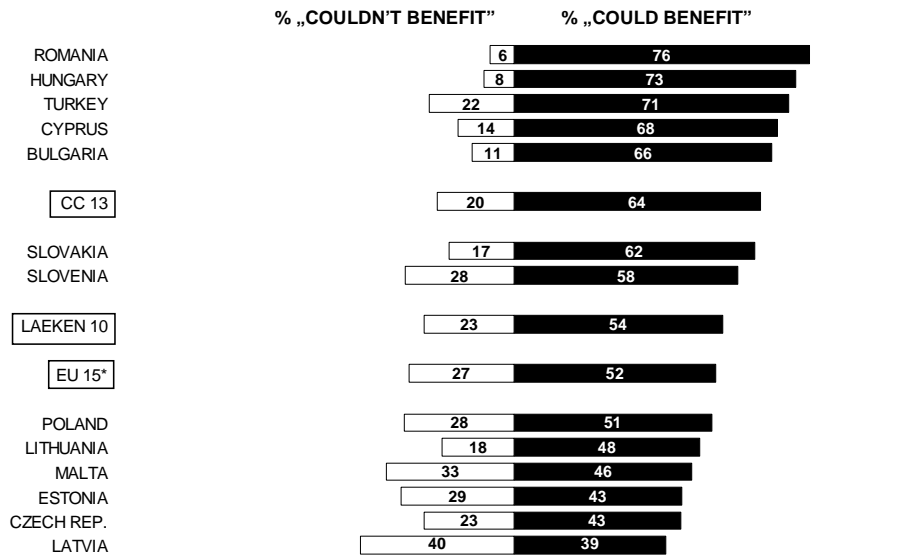


Fig. I.2aj  
 Source: Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2002.1  
 April, 2002  
 \* Source: Standard Eurobarometer 56  
 Autumn, 2001

Question: Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (COUNTRY) could get advantages or not from being a member of the European Union?

% 'don't know' and 'no answer' not shown

Among the 13 candidate countries, the expected benefit has improved only in Cyprus since the Autumn of 2001 (+5). In most countries, we could not detect any significant change, but figures have declined in five of the thirteen candidate countries: the Czech Republic (-10), Latvia (-8), Bulgaria (-7), Lithuania (-5), and Romania (-4). Three countries stand out as those where negative opinions have increased since the last measurement; in Latvia, the scepticism regarding the benefits of the coming EU accession has risen by 10 percentage points. We observed similar tendencies to a smaller extent in Slovenia (+6), Poland (+4), as well as in Turkey (+3), and Bulgaria (+3).

### 3. PEOPLE IN THE CANDIDATE COUNTRIES WOULD VOTE “YES” IN A REFERENDUM ABOUT EU MEMBERSHIP

Respondents were also asked about a slightly different measure of support:

*If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of (country)’s membership of the European Union, would you personally vote for or against it?*

This question cannot be considered a real predictor of the outcome of a referendum that would be held. It is used here more as an attitudinal rather than a behavioural measure of support<sup>4</sup>.

On the average, as of April 2002, a convincing majority, **two thirds (66%) of the respondents declared that they would support their country's membership to the EU** if a referendum were to be held on this issue. Eighteen percent would cast a vote against membership, 7% would not vote, and a further 9% could not decide how they would vote.

## Referendum about European Union membership (CC Average)

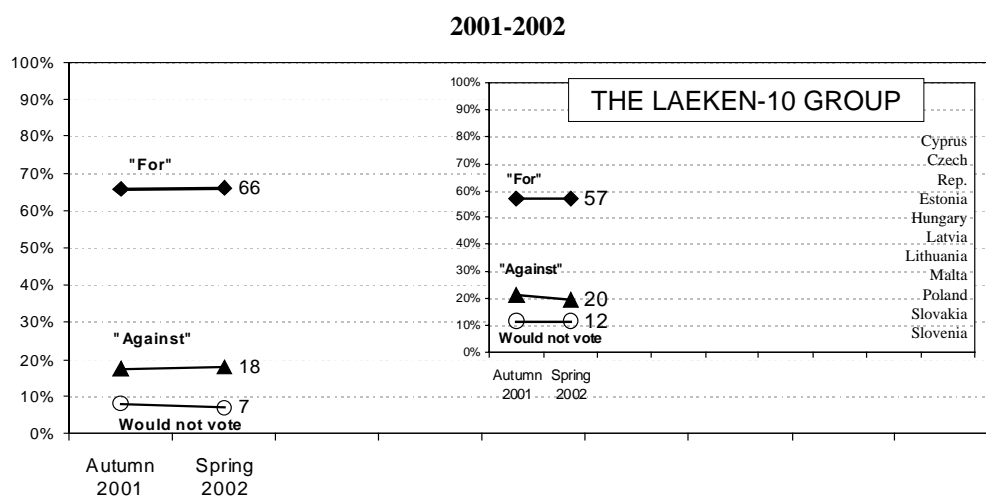


Fig.1.3a  
Source: Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2002.1  
April, 2002

Question: If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of (country)’s membership of the European Union, would you personally vote for or against it?

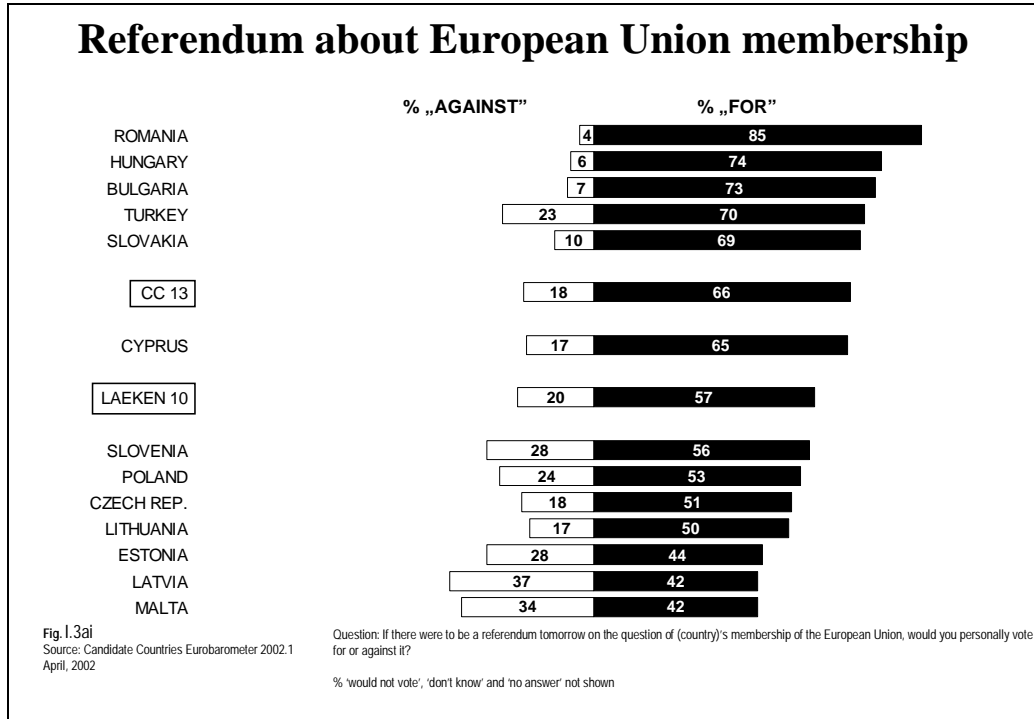
% 'don't know' and 'no answer' not shown

The proportion of those who would vote for the accession in the Laeken-10 countries remained at the somewhat lower level detected in Autumn 2001 (57%), and one in five people (19%) would cast a vote against, thereby actively opposing

<sup>4</sup> The reader is advised not to consider these results as accurate predictions of outcomes of a possible referendum. These numbers should be treated instead as indications of the possible orders of magnitude of such results across the thirteen countries, as of April 2002

the membership of his or her country (-1). Twelve percent told they would not go to the ballot, and 11% lack an opinion about this question.

Repeatedly, we find in the candidate countries that more people say they would vote for membership than people who regard future membership as a good thing.



More than 8 in 10 people in Romania (85%) would vote for their country's EU membership if a referendum were to be held on this issue. Among the Laeken-10 countries Hungary stands out again, with three-quarters (74%) of its citizens saying they would vote for their country's membership.

Hungary is followed by Bulgaria (73%), Turkey (70%), Slovakia (69%), and Cyprus (65%), where pro-EU voters account for more than two-thirds of the population. In Slovenia (56%), Poland (53%), the Czech Republic (51%), and Lithuania (50%) only a slim majority claimed they would support their country's membership on a referendum. In contrast, only 44% of Estonians, and 42% of Latvians and Maltese would vote for their country's membership.

The ratio of pro-voters in the total population increased the most in Estonia over the past six months (+5), followed by Slovakia (+4), and Hungary (+3). At the same time, we detected a decrease of support in Bulgaria (-7), Latvia (-5), and the Czech Republic (-3). In Latvia, the proportion of those who say they would vote *against* the EU membership of their country has risen over the past six months (+6).

Further analyses – see table below – show that at the time of the survey **the majority of eligible respondents in all 13 countries would have voted in favour**

of joining the EU (78%)<sup>5</sup> and the similar proportion is nearly as high in the Laeken-10 group as well (74%).

There are, however, **two countries without a large majority in favour of accession**: Malta, where only 55% of eligible respondents indicate that they would have voted in favour of EU membership (which is an increase of 2 percentage points from Autumn 2001), and Latvia, with 52% of pro-voters among eligible respondents. Six months ago, 59% of eligible Latvian respondents supported their country's accession to the EU, which means a drop of 7 percentage points in support over the past half year.

<b>How would you vote in a referendum about EU membership?</b>					
% of respondents aged 18 and over who indicated they would vote					
	% for	% against		% for	% against
ROMANIA	96	4	<b>LAEKEN 10</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>26</b>
HUNGARY	93	7	CZECH REP.	72	28
BULGARIA	91	9	POLAND	68	32
SLOVAKIA	88	12	SLOVENIA	67	33
<b>CC 13</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>22</b>	ESTONIA	59	41
CYPRUS	78	22	MALTA	55	45
TURKEY	75	25	LATVIA	52	48
LITHUANIA	75	25			

In contrast, nearly every eligible respondent would vote for membership in Romania (96%), Hungary (93%), and Bulgaria (91%). Slovak voters (88%) are also extraordinarily supportive of membership in this question. More than 7 in 10 voters would approve membership in Cyprus (78%), Turkey (75%), Lithuania (75%), and the Czech Republic (72%). Poles and Slovenes are a bit more divided on this issue.

Rubén Mohedano-Brèthes

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<sup>5</sup> Eligible voters are those aged 18 and over. The analysis also excludes respondents who said they would not vote, who did not know how they would vote and who didn't answer the question. The analysis includes the non-citizen permanent residents of Estonia and Latvia (the results, if we exclude these people from the analysis, do not change significantly).

## **GENERAL PRESENTATION AND METHODOLOGY OF THE CANDIDATE COUNTRIES EUROBAROMETER**

The European Commission has launched series of surveys in the 13 countries that are applying for European Union membership. The objective of the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer is to gather information from the future member states in a way that allows direct comparison with the Standard Eurobarometer carried out in the existing EU. Using this tool, the Commission is able to provide decision makers and the European public with opinion data that help them understand similarities and differences between the EU and the Applicant Countries. The Candidate Countries Eurobarometer continuously tracks support for EU membership, and changes in attitudes related to European issues in the applicant countries. In the course of the next few years, a series of Candidate Countries Eurobarometer reports are planned to be released.

These highlights present the results of the surveys conducted during late March - early April period in 2002 in the 13 Candidate Countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey. In Cyprus, the survey only covers citizens living on the southern part of the island.

An identical set of questions was asked to representative samples of the population aged fifteen years and over in each Candidate Country. The regular sample in Candidate Countries Eurobarometer surveys is 1.000 people per country, except Malta and Cyprus (500). For this study a 2.000 sample was used in Poland and Turkey to achieve better coverage.

In each of the 13 Candidate Countries, the survey is carried out by national institutes associated with and coordinated by The Gallup Organization, Hungary. This network of institutes was selected by tender. All institutes are members of the "European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research" (ESOMAR) and comply with its standards.

The figures shown in this report for each of the Candidate Countries are weighted by sex, age, region, size of locality, education level, and marital status. The figures given for the Candidate Countries as a whole (CC-13) are weighted on the basis of the adult population in each country. Due to the rounding of figures in certain cases, the total percentage in a table or graph does not always add up exactly to 100%, but a number very close to it (e.g. 99 or 101). When questions allow for several responses, percentages often add up to more than 100%. Percentages shown in the graphics may display a difference of 1 percentage point compared to the tables because of the way previously rounded percentages are added.