

Article – Great expectations: Europeans reveal what they want the EU to do more on

Europeans increasingly realise the need for common solutions to the most pressing problems, yet question whether politics will be able to deliver, according to a new survey. The Eurobarometer survey, carried out in March, was commissioned by the European Parliament to get an idea of what people want. Check out our infographic to see in which areas people expect more from the European Union and read on for an overview of the survey's main findings.

Europeans demand solutions from the EU

Most respondents think that Europe should do more to tackle a wide range of issues, from security, to migration and unemployment. Compared to last year, fewer Europeans think the EU is not doing enough regarding key areas such as terrorism, security, migration, tax fraud and unemployment, which could be because of the measures taken at EU level since then. Check out the infographic for details and a breakdown by member state.

Support for the EU is increasing

In general Europeans are more positive about the EU, with 56% of respondents saying that EU membership is a good thing, up four percentage points from September 2016. However, opinions vary widely between countries: only about a third of Czechs, Greeks, Italians and Croats share this opinion.

In addition 56% of respondents across the EU they have feel an attachment to the EU, up five percentage points from November. However, more people feel an attachment to their city (87%), region (87%), or country (91%).

More people interested in EU politics

More people are paying attention to EU politics, with 57% expressing interest in EU affairs, compared to 54% in September 2015. Now 43% of respondents are saying that they feel their voice counts in Europe, up six percentage points from last September. Yet even more people (53%) say they don't feel heard at the EU level. At national level, things look better: 63% agree that their voice counts in their own country, and only 35% disagree.

Dissatisfaction with democracy

Figures reveal dissatisfaction with how democracy works in the EU, with only 43% of respondents saying they are satisfied and 47% saying they are not. Results vary per country, with only 20% of Greeks expressing satisfaction. Europeans are also concerned about social inequalities.

Overall, many people (50%) think the EU is heading in the wrong direction, but less than before (last September 54% of respondents still felt this way).

More support for a multi-speed Europe

In the debate on the future of Europe, the idea that some countries should be allowed to pull ahead of others is gaining popularity. Some 49% of respondents support such an approach, up from 41% in September 2015. The share of people saying all countries should move forward with the same speed is down to 41% from 48% in September 2015. Opinions differ significantly from one member state to another, so the debate seems far from settled.

The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews with 27,901 Europeans on 18-27 March 2017.

Speech by Michel Barnier at the 7th State of the Union Conference, European University Institute, Florence

Protecting Citizens' Rights in the Negotiations with the UK

Good afternoon to all of you.

I will speak in English – obviously, I wish to be understood by the people who speak French, especially two days before this crucial election in my country. But it is equally important to be understood by the British people. *[Applause]*

First of all, let me first extend my warm thanks to the European University Institute in Florence, and its President Renaud Dehousse, for having offered me the opportunity to speak before you today.

I am also happy to see Commissioner Jourová, who will be speaking shortly after me.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the State of the Union conference has become a major forum for debate.

And debate on the future of European citizenship is very much needed, now more than ever.

My topic today is the importance of the rights of European citizens and the priority that they will be given in the forthcoming Brexit negotiations.

In particular, free movement of people is at the heart of European citizenship. The principle was intensively discussed during the United Kingdom's referendum campaign.

Today, it would seem that this principle is under attack.

How did we get here?

In 2004, the UK was one of very few countries to immediately open its labour market to the new Member States.

Indeed, the United Kingdom was – and remains – an attractive destination for Europeans.

Studies show the positive impact of openness on national growth and prosperity.

The free movement of EU citizens makes labour markets more efficient.

It creates more choice for Europeans.

It allows companies to find the right talent.

On balance, EU citizens contribute more than they benefit from the UK tax and social security system.

In short, free movement of people is one of the four essential freedoms. These four freedoms are indivisible.

This is how our Single Market works.

And let me be clear: the integrity of the Single Market will never be compromised in these negotiations.

But this point fell on deaf ears during the referendum campaign.

The British debate first concentrated on “welfare tourism”, which we must fight.

It then shifted its focus to opposing free movement, which we must defend.

There are lessons for all of us in this campaign.

We should not allow populists to take the political debate hostage.

But we should not ignore what are often deeply felt opinions and reactions.

People are concerned about the free movement of EU workers, not only in the UK, but also in many other Member States.

This is certainly the case, I can tell you as a French citizen, in my home

country.

And people often have good reason to be concerned.

But the solution lies in a *fairer* labour market, and in *better training* for people.

We must also apply EU and national rules in a more rigorous manner so as to prevent them from abuse.

The solution is not to restrict the free movement of fellow EU citizens.

Stopping free movement will not improve social protection.

This debate goes far beyond Brexit.

However, it is important to draw a number of lessons from Brexit if we are to encourage a more informed public debate across the Member States.

Here are some interesting facts that Brexit has highlighted:

- A large UK food retailer testified in the House of Commons that only one in fifty job applicants are UK nationals.
- The British Hospitality Association warned that 60 000 vacancies may not be filled if EU citizens are barred from the labour market.
- And UK farmers have stressed many times their need for access to the EU labour pool.

Against this background, the Brexit process will contribute to a better understanding, for us all, of the nature and benefits of EU integration.

It will also bring into stark relief what it is to be or not to be a Member of the European Union.

Let me now turn to the Brexit negotiations – which Jean-Claude Juncker and the European Council have asked me to conduct.

The EU is ready to start negotiations based on the clear guidelines of the European Council. Two days ago, the Commission put forward its recommendations for the forthcoming negotiations.

I confidently expect that the Council on the twenty second of May will give me a mandate to start negotiations. It is now clear exactly what the EU intends to place on the negotiation table in June.

The European Council has decided that preserving the rights of EU citizens and their families will be a priority; will be my priority.

I anticipate that protecting these rights will be both easy and complex at the same time.

What do I mean by that? It should be easy to agree on general principles.

But it will not be as easy to formulate all these principles neatly in a legally precise text.

There are a number of questions, in particular, that require close attention.

To begin with, who should be protected, and for how long?

The cut-off date is simple and logical: it is the day when the UK leaves the EU.

But protection should apply for the life time of the citizens who are concerned.

EU law specifies who it is that benefits from these rights.

The law sets out the rights of several categories of individual, both those who are economically active and those who are inactive.

Currently around 3.2 million EU citizens work and live in the UK, and 1.2 million British citizens work and live in the EU.

EU law also concerns frontier workers.

Finally, it concerns people who have worked or lived in the UK in the past.

The rights of family members should also continue to be protected including in those circumstances where family members are not themselves EU citizens.

So, we know who we want to protect.

But, what are the principles that we will put forward?

Number one: the level of protection afforded under EU law must not be watered down.

Brexit should not alter the nature of people's daily lives.

Number two: there must be equal treatment between all EU and UK nationals in the UK.

Inversely, equal treatment between UK citizens and the nationals of the 27 Member States must also be the rule when UK citizens live in those 27 states.

Number three: the EU requires crystal-clear guarantees that rights will be effectively enforced.

For UK citizens in the EU, the European Court of Justice will play its role to ensure the application of the withdrawal agreement.

Similarly in the UK, the rights in the withdrawal agreement will need to be directly enforceable and the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice maintained.

Let me now turn to the third issue.

The Article 50 agreement will need to define material rights.

The media has focused a great deal on the “right to stay”.

Individuals legally residing in the UK today must remain residents after withdrawal, including in those cases when people have no documents to prove residency.

Obviously, the same goes for UK nationals in the 27.

No one should be confronted with a mountain of red tape.

But the right to residence is only one aspect amongst many others.

There are a whole series of rights at stake.

Let me give you some examples.

For instance, what if a skilled Polish worker for BMW who works at Plant Oxford, loses his job?

Will he keep his right to UK unemployment benefit for a few months even if he goes back to Poland to look for a job?

That is what EU law allows today.

What if a self-employed photographer from Edinburgh who lives in Malaga goes bankrupt?

Will she still have access to the same healthcare – under the same conditions – as Spanish nationals?

If she decides to restart her professional life in the UK, will she still be able to require that her social security rights obtained in Spain are taken into account by the UK.

The withdrawal agreement must provide clear and affirmative answers to these questions.

Given legal certainty is a question of respect for more than 4 million people.

Let me give you some further examples of the sorts of situations that we will inevitably have to confront:

- A Greek engineer in the UK must maintain the right to export the full amount of her old-age pension to Greece if she decides to retire in Athens.
- A German worker in the UK must have access to healthcare under the same conditions as UK nationals.
- The Spanish widow of a UK national living in the UK must continue to enjoy the rights that she has today.

- A Scottish designer who has worked in Hungary for the last ten years, and who finishes his career in Glasgow, must be able to aggregate all his pension periods after returning to the UK. If his daughter decides to stay in Budapest to attend university there, she must be treated in the same manner as a Hungarian national.
- The son of a Polish worker residing in the UK must be able to attend higher education under the same conditions as a British national. It should not matter if this happens in 2020 or in 2030.

For the coordination of social security systems, national administrations in the EU deal with cross-border cases on a daily basis.

They take care of the aggregation of rights and the export of benefits.

Post-Brexit, the principle of a single applicable law should continue to apply.

Protecting these rights is our moral duty.

It is also a political necessity: we will not discuss our future relationship with the UK until the 27 Member States are reassured that all citizens will be treated properly and humanely.

Otherwise, there can be no trust when it comes to constructing a new relationship with the UK.

I know that in order for this new partnership to be solid and sustainable, we have to build it together on the base of mutual trust.

It would be premature of me to discuss the details of this future relationship today.

Nevertheless we can be certain that Brexit will inevitably entail a number of negative consequences.

This is not a question of "punishment".

There are consequences that simply follow logically from the choice made by the British people.

Let me give you an example of just one potential difficulty.

Peter, a PhD student from Essex, receives a grant from his university in 2020.

He then wishes to spend 4 months at the University of Turin in order to deepen his knowledge with regard to, for instance, a collaborative project on Euroscepticism.

2020 is after Brexit, so Peter will be a third-country national by then. He will have to make sure that he still has the right to reside and study on

Italian territory.

And he will probably need to look into private health insurance as he will no longer have the European Health Insurance Card.

This is only one example.

This leads me to the consequences for the UK of the EU's research and higher education policy.

I understand that universities are keen to have clarity as soon as possible with regard to the future relationship that they will find themselves in.

Planning takes time.

And I know how important EU policy is for creating networks and exchanges between universities in all 28 countries.

It is certainly true that the EU has cooperation agreements with third countries – Norway, Israel or Switzerland.

One option is that the UK could decide to continue to support university networking and joint projects as a third country after Brexit.

But this would require a different legal and financial framework.

I do not expect negotiations to bring clarity on these and a plethora of other issues in the immediate future.

We first need to tackle the rights of citizens, get a fair and clear agreement, and the orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom. The sooner we make sufficient progress, the sooner we can start tackling these sometimes complex issues.

To conclude, some in the UK have tried to blame Member States for the continued uncertainty that citizens have been confronted with for ten months now.

That is wrong.

The only cause of uncertainty is Brexit.

The only way to remove uncertainty and to protect rights properly is through an Article 50 agreement.

Here, I should like to finish by saying that I will, of course, approach our British friends constructively and amicably on all issues.

But I will also be firm, backed by European Council guidelines and Council directives and also the resolutions of the European Parliament.

I will base my position on factual evidence and on EU law.

And I will do everything in my power to ensure that information on the negotiations is made public so that an informed debate can take place.

That, I am confident, will dramatically increase our chances of reaching an enduring agreement.

Thank you very much.

[Air pollution announcement: Caroline Lucas full speech](#)



Green Party

5 May 2017

*** Greens reveal ten-point checklist for Government's air pollution plan**

*** Caroline Lucas: "We must have a new Clean Air Act to protect the health of future generations"**

The Green Party has today (May 5) unveiled an 'air pollution challenge' as the Government is due to release their own plans to tackle the high levels of toxins in the air.

Party co-leader, Caroline Lucas, was in Bristol highlighting what she calls a 'catastrophic failure' by a Government 'trying its best to shirk its responsibilities on air pollution'.

Notes:

1. Caroline Lucas' full speech (check against delivery):

Good morning everyone. Thank you for coming down here this morning to talk about the air pollution crisis.

After seven years battling environmental lawyers in the courts, the Government has now been forced to publish a plan to tackle illegal levels of air pollution in towns and cities across the UK.

The facts around dirty air are widely known, but worth repeating.

Each year in the UK, around 40,000 early deaths are attributable to air pollution.

It affects us all – but its impacts are not felt evenly.

You're more likely to suffer if you're young or old. If you live in poverty. If you're not white. And people who are already ill suffer disproportionately.

This is a national public health crisis.

The air quality plan – expected today, and due by Tuesday at the latest – comes after a totally shambolic week for Ministers.

First they tried to delay its publication, claiming that to do so would unfairly influence local and national elections.

That last ditch attempt at inaction was rightly rejected.

In a strongly worded judgment, the High Court noted that Ministers had plenty of time to act, having known about the deadline for over six months.

Less than a week later, and the day before people across the country went to the polls in local elections, the details of the Air Quality Plan were [leaked to The Telegraph](#) by the Conservative party.

So much for election rules.

As we wait for the Government's long overdue policy to be released, the Green Party has today release a ten-point checklist for what a serious plan would include.

First and foremost, it must announce a new Clean Air Act – enshrining the right to breathe clean air into UK statute – protecting the health of future generations forever.

It must strengthen and expand the network of Clean Air Zones – including here in Bristol.

It must overhaul our transport policy – investing in walking, cycling, and clean, public transport.

To help fund comprehensive action, the plan should also set out how car companies who cheated vehicles emissions testing over many years, will pay for the damage they have caused to our health and the environment.

Despite a 14 billion dollar fine being levied by the United States government on one car company alone – here in the UK, not a single penny has been paid by the car manufacturers who deliberately cheated the system at the expense of people's lives across the UK.

And whilst the Government – supported by opposition parties – continue to invest in the dirty fuels of the past – credible action on air pollution must

include a huge programme of investment in the clean, renewable energy that we have in abundance.

Anything short of wide reaching action on the air pollution emergency is utterly unacceptable.

If the plan is as weak as expected, it will condemn thousands of children and families to continue to suffer the deadly effects of this preventable crisis.

The Green Party has the plan – and if we act now, we can create a healthier future for children across the country – and build a more caring, confident country for everyone.

Ends

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[Greens release air pollution challenge as Government unveils plan](#)



Green Party

5 May 2017

***Green plan includes a fine on cheating companies, a new Clean Air Act, and increased air pollution monitoring**

The Green Party today unveiled an 'air pollution challenge' ahead of the Government releasing its own plans to tackle the high levels of toxins in the air. Party co-leader, Caroline Lucas, was in Bristol to highlight what she calls a 'catastrophic failure' by a Government 'trying its best to shirk its responsibilities on air pollution'.

Lucas said that any air quality plan which fails her party's 'checklist' isn't 'worthy of the name'. She said:

“Any air quality plan which fails this test isn’t worthy of the name. We’ve seen catastrophic failure on air pollution from a Government trying it’s best to shirk its responsibilities. It’s astonishing that today’s plan had to be dragged out of the Government – as ministers tried their best to use the election as cover for their continuing refusal to take action.

“The Green Party’s air pollution plan would tackle this emergency – and force car companies to pay their way for the damage they have done to people’s health. Half measures are not good enough when 40,000 premature deaths are linked to air pollution every year – we need bold action now.

“Through a clean air act we would enshrine the right to breathe in the law – and ensure that Britain becomes a world leader in new technologies which help us clean up our air. The Government must also plough resources into decent public transport – reversing years of underinvestment and skyrocketing fare prices.”

Lucas’ intervention comes after it was revealed that the cost of public transport has skyrocketed in recent years, while motoring has become cheaper. According to the Government the cost of motoring has dropped 20% in the last 26 years, while the cost of travel by train and bus is up over 60%.

Real terms changes in the cost of travel:

Real terms change in cost of transport	Motoring, including the purchase of a vehicle	Bus and coach fares	Rail fares
(1) Between 1980 and 2016	-20%	+64%	+63%
(2) Between 1997 and 2016	-16%	+33%	+23%
(3) Between 2010 and 2016	-10%	+7%	+5%
(4) Between 2015 and 2016	-0.3%	+2%	-1%

Lucas will be joined by children at Fairfield School in Bristol to unveil her party’s air pollution plans.

THE GREEN PARTY’S AIR QUALITY PLAN CHECKLIST

Over the last two years, the Government has lost two UK court cases about its plans to tackle the key pollutant nitrogen dioxide – NO₂. As it stands, a total of 37 out of 43 regions of the UK are in breach of legal limits for NO₂, and, according to the Royal College of Physicians, air pollution is associated with 40,000 early deaths each year, and the annual costs to the health service and society are more than £20bn.

In November 2016, the High Court ordered the Government to publish a draft new clean air plan to tackle NO₂ by 24 April with a final plan by 31 July. The Government attempted to delay the publication of that plan (again) after calling the General Election, citing Purdah rules. That application was rejected by the High Court last week.

The Government will publish its plan today, but leaks suggest it will not go anywhere near as far as it needs to.

Here is what a comprehensive Air Quality Plan should include.

Clean Air Act: It should rapidly introduce a new Clean Air Act to tackle the sources of modern day air pollution that are harming people's health, enshrine the right to breathe into UK law, and ensure the UK becomes a world leader in the new technologies and industries that will help us clean up our air.

Expand 'Clean Air Zones': It should expand and strengthen the network of Clean Air Zones across the country – limiting the most polluting vehicles, including cars, from entering air pollution hot-spots – creating funding for local authorities to invest in walking, cycling and clean public transport. These should be strong enough to ensure legal compliance on NO₂ by the end of 2018.

Increase VED: It should increase the first year Vehicle Excise Duty on new diesel vehicles (except vans) by around £800, to reflect the additional cost to society of dirty diesel engines, [raising £500m](#) to help fund a targeted diesel scrappage scheme.

Diesel Scrappage: It should introduce a targeted diesel scrappage scheme to take diesel vehicles off the road as soon as possible, and ensure that all those who live within Clean Air Zones can affordably replace polluting diesel vehicles. As well as offering replacement clean vehicles, these schemes should also offer alternatives such as car club membership and rail season tickets.

Note: Despite a \$10bn vehicle replacement programme in the United States, VW has only embarked upon an opaque programme of 'technical fixes' on its 1.2 million vehicles in the UK. The Greens, working through UK regulators, would ensure that VW and others offer free vehicle replacement or retrofitting – as has happened in the United States.

Fine the Cheats: It should set out a plan for how companies who cheated emissions testing would be fined. Despite a \$14.7bn settlement in the US, Volkswagen, for example, has yet to pay any damages in the EU – an equivalent fine in the UK could raise more than £8 billion from VW alone.

Independent Regulation: It should guarantee the independence of the Vehicle Certification Agency – changing the way it is funded ensuring that the car industry doesn't have [a disproportionate influence](#) on its activities.

Monitor Pollution Hotspots: It should ensure there is a comprehensive network of air monitoring stations in pollution hotspots – ensuring that air quality is monitored around hospitals, health clinics, and schools, so that those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of air pollution, notably children, the elderly and infirm, are protected.

Active Transport: It should undertake a national review of transport system with serious investment in buses, trams and trains along with safe routes for

walking and cycling. People need an alternative to car use and we must protect our towns, cities and countryside from the pollution and congestion that comes with new roads.

Clean Energy: It should scale-up investment in renewable energy – which, as it stands, is set to drop by 95% over next two years. Harnessing the clean energy that we have in abundance would be a win-win, both for tackling climate change and air pollution.

Ditch Coal: It should bring forward the coal phaseout date to 2023 at the least, and gradually end the [£6bn a year subsidies](#) in the UK to dirty energy. Pollution from the UK's coal-fired fleet causes roughly [2,900 premature deaths](#) a year.

HOW SHOULD THIS BE FUNDED?

There are no cheap fixes when it comes to cleaning up the air we breathe: the long term solution is to completely change the way we travel to reduce the traffic on our roads. Further, any action we take now will relieve pressure on our health services in the future, and reduce the £20bn cost of dirty air – as calculated by the Royal College of Physicians. As note above, the Air Quality Plan should ensure that car companies who cheated emissions are appropriately fined, and that such levies are used to fund action on air quality. UK regulators – namely, the Competition and Markets Authority, the Vehicle Certification Agency, and the Serious Fraud Office – should force car manufacturers in the UK to replace or retrofit polluting diesel vehicles.

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[Greens take second place in Isle of Wight](#)



Green Party

The Green Party is celebrating becoming the second party on the Isle of Wight coming second to the Conservatives on vote share.

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, will be on the island this afternoon [1] to celebrate the party's first councillor on the island – Michael Lilley.

The Green Party's total vote of 5,607 is a huge increase on 2013 when the party stood in one ward and got 297 votes. This time Greens left Labour in second place on 4,134 votes with the Lib Dems in third with 2,783. [2]

The combined Green, Labour, Liberal, Independent vote was more than 50%, from a turn-out of about 40%.

It's been a good night for the Greens nationwide with net gains of +7 nationwide including in Wales and first seats in the Isle of Wight and Orkney.

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, said:

“There are still lots of results to come but so far these results look good for the Green Party. We're offering people a real alternative to business-as-usual politics.

“Across the country Greens have gained seats – with first seats in Orkney and the Isle of Wight, and a first win in Wales. People who believe things can change for the better, and that the next generation must be defined by fairness, not foodbanks, are choosing to back politicians they can trust.

“It's clear the Greens are challenging the Tory reign in the Isle of Wight – and are set to run our boldest ever General Election campaign in the coming weeks. “

Notes:

Isle of Wight stats:

- GREEN GAIN UKIP LOSS (+1/-1)
- Greens win first seat on Council (Ryde East, Michael Lilley)
- Greens came second to Conservatives in a significant 14/24 wards – the remainder second places were independent (loss of council control). No Labour second places where Greens stood.
- Greens beat Labour in 14 wards. Labour beat Greens in only 2.
- Greens total vote greater than both Labour and Lib Dem (5607 Green, 4134 Labour, 2783 Lib Dem)
- Combined Green, Labour, Liberal, Independent vote is greater than 50% with a turn-out of around 40%

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