

Press release – EU is right place to tackle pandemic, but reform is needed, latest survey finds



At the end of 2020, more respondents saw things on the right path at EU level in comparison with their own country. Furthermore, nearly three out of four respondents (72%) believe the EU Recovery Plan would allow their country's economy to recover more rapidly from the negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

A new survey commissioned by the European Parliament and conducted between November and December 2020 by Kantar finds an increase of ten percentage points in the number of citizens who expressed a positive view of the EU (50%) compared to autumn 2019. 66% of respondents in this survey are optimistic about the future of the European Union.

Yet the individual outlook remains pessimistic in the face of the continuing pandemic: 53% of respondents believe that the economic situation in their country will be worse in one year's time than it is now. Only one in five respondents (21%) believe that the national economic situation would improve over the coming year. More than half of respondents (52%) expect their individual living conditions in one year's time to be the same as today. One quarter of respondents (24%) believe they will even be worse off in one year's time, while 21% think that they would be better off.

Likely driven by these perceived consequences, citizens formulate a new top political priority for the European Parliament: 48% of respondents want the fight against poverty and social inequalities at the top of the agenda. This is the first priority in all EU Member States apart from Finland, Czechia, Denmark and Sweden, where the fight against terrorism and crime comes first. On EU average, measures to combat terrorism and crime (35%), to ensure a

quality education for all (33%) as well as to protect our environment (32%) follow suit.

A similar shift also appears in citizens' ranking of the core values the European Parliament should defend. While defence of human rights worldwide (51%) and equality between men and women (42%) remain on top, solidarity between Member States ends in third place with 41% of respondents wanting Parliament to defend this value above all others, compared to 33% one year ago.

The pandemic and other global challenges such as the climate emergency sustain citizens' call for fundamental EU reform. 63% of respondents want the European Parliament to play a more important role in the future, an increase of 5 points compared to autumn 2019. And while the positive image of the EU was increasing at the end of last year, so did the call for change: Only 27% support the EU just the way it has been accomplished so far, while 44% 'rather support the EU' but want to see reform being brought about. Another 22% see the EU 'rather sceptical but could change their mind again in light of radical reform'.

European Parliament President, David Sassoli said: *"The message of this survey is clear: European citizens support the European Union and they find that the EU is the right place to seek solutions to the crisis. But reform of the EU is clearly something citizens want to see and that is why we need to launch the Conference on the Future of Europe as soon as possible."*