

Extract from:

Daniel Debomy, "[The EU, despite everything? European public opinion in the face of crisis \(2005–2015\)](#)", *Studies & Reports No. 111*, Jacques Delors Institute, June 2016.

SUMMARY

This Study analyses the changes in citizens' attitudes with regard to the EU over the last decade which was punctuated by three periods of crisis: the political crisis resulting from the failure of the draft Constitution in 2005, the economic crisis from 2007 and the current development of a major migration crisis.

This Study is mainly based on data from the European Commission's Eurobarometer surveys, and in addition some points refer to surveys commissioned by the European Parliament.

At the start of the period, the "Eurofavour" measured by the indicators considered here continued its laboured resurgence which began following an all-time low in 1997. This trend was reversed after 2007, reaching another low point around 2011, before moving into a phase of partial recovery: while the acknowledgement of the justification and benefits of EU membership are at the same level at the start and end of the period considered, indicators on trust in the EU and its future, as well as its image, remain significantly impaired (*see Part 1, pages 11 to 21 and Annex 1, pages 73 to 79*).

Besides, it has been noted that these indicators suffered a decline between the spring and autumn of 2015 - while it is not possible at this time to state whether this is a temporary trend or the start of a new downturn.

As regards the impact of the successive crises, it can firstly be observed that the rejection of the draft Constitution did not have a significant and sustained effect on attitudes towards the EU - including in countries in which referenda were held.

The slump recorded after 2007 clearly runs alongside the economic crisis, and the upturn started with the slow recovery from the crisis (although there is

not a full correlation between the degree of economic optimism and opinions in favour of the EU).

The immigration issue has become a major concern in Europe at the end of 2015, even though citizens in different Member States reacted to varying degrees. This may be one reason for the new decline recorded over the last six months (*see Part 2, pages 22 to 48*).

The in-depth study of the situation in Member States shows highly contrasting changes, resulting in the creation of five groups that make up a new European landscape: the most “Euro-defiant” group now includes both Member States traditionally marked by serious reservations with regard to the EU and other Member states which were once very much in favour but which have undergone particularly negative changes (*see Part 3, pages 49 to 68 and Annex 2, pages 80 to 109*).