



Standard Eurobarometer 98  
Winter 2022 - 2023

# Public opinion in the European Union

National report MALTA

Fieldwork: January – February 2023



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# INTRODUCTION AND KEY FINDINGS



## INTRODUCTION

The national report outlines the main findings of Wave 98.2 of the Standard Eurobarometer. Fieldwork was conducted from the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023 to 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023. A total of 504 interviews were conducted with respondents residing in Malta, aged 15 years and over.

During 2022, the Maltese economy continued to emerge from the period of the coronavirus pandemic and grew by 7% in volume terms. This has tended to generate a positive sentiment which is likely to have had an impact on the results of the survey.

The report covers a number of topics, namely perceptions on the respondents' own personal situation, Malta and its economic situation, and the European Union; the policies of the European Union; trust in institutions; and media and sources of news. It also includes the opinions of respondents in Malta on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the EU response to it.

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## KEY FINDINGS

### 1. Perceptions on own situation

- Rising prices and environment and climate change are the two main issues respondents are facing at the moment.
- 46% of respondents in Malta stated that they expect their life in general to get better in the coming twelve months.
- 91% describe the financial situation of their household as being very good or rather good.

### 2. Perceptions on Malta and the economic situation

- The main issues facing Malta rising prices (61%) and crime (26%).
- 73% of respondents described the current situation in Malta as very good or rather good.
- 41% expect the situation to get better in the coming twelve months while 24% expect the situation to get worse.

### 3. Perceptions on the EU

- 73% are very optimistic or fairly optimistic about the future of the European Union.
- 76% stated that Malta would not better face the future if it were outside the EU.
- According to respondents in Malta the three main issues being faced by the EU at the moment are rising prices, immigration, and the environment and climate change.
- 61% stated that they are in favour of the idea that more decisions are to be taken at an EU level.

### 4. European Union Policies

- 83% of respondents in Malta believe that the recovery plan of €800 billion, NextGeneration EU, to support the economy through grants and loans has been an effective measure to respond to the current economic challenges.
- Malta has also scored higher than the EU average in their favourable opinions on most other EU policies and initiatives. The percentage of those holding a favourable opinion about such policies and initiatives has also increased in general.

### 5. Russian Invasion of Ukraine

- 70% of respondents in Malta are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine by the Malta Government and 68% are satisfied with the EU's response.
- 80% consider Russia's invasion of Ukraine to be a threat to the security of Malta.

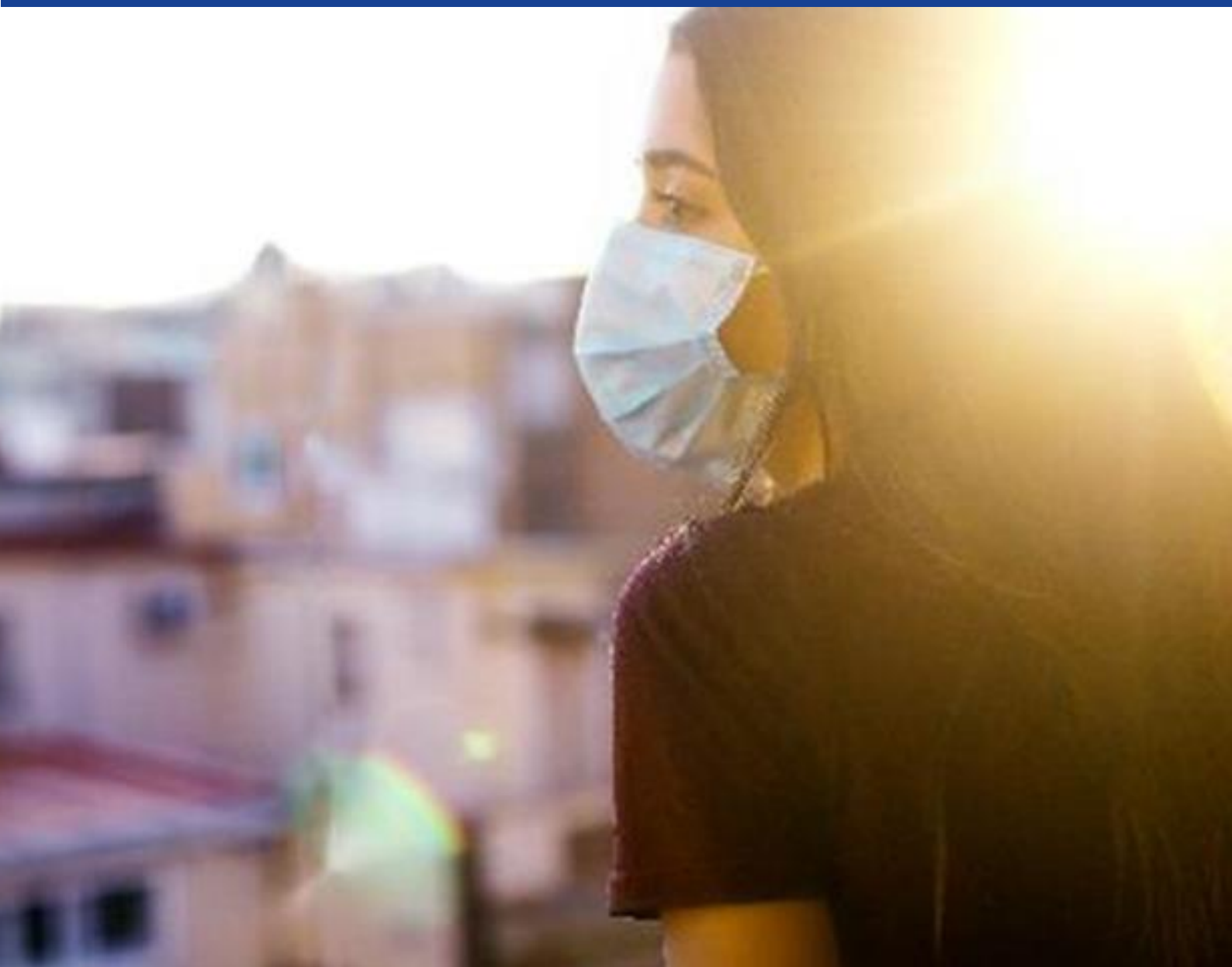
### 6. Trust in Institutions

- Respondents in Malta continue to trust European institutions to a greater extent than the average across the EU.

### 7. Media and sources of news

- 44% of respondents in Malta are considered to be very high users of the media, and 88% of respondents in Malta use internet every day.
- 90% of respondents stated that they often come across news or information which they believe misrepresent reality or are even false.

# I. PERCEPTIONS ON OWN SITUATION



The perceptions of respondents in Malta about one’s own personal situation continue to remain very positive. As shown in Chart 1 below, 94% of respondents are either satisfied or very satisfied with the life they lead. 6% stated that they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. In the whole of the European Union 83% of respondents stated that they are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their daily life. The level of satisfaction expressed by respondents in Malta is among the highest in the EU. Persons with a higher level of education tend to be more likely to be satisfied with the life they lead.

This positive view about one’s personal situation emerged also when respondents were asked whether things in general were going in the right or wrong direction. 82% stated that they are going in the right direction, while 5% stated that they are going in the wrong direction.

A majority of respondents in Malta are also optimistic about their future. 46% of respondents in Malta stated that they expect their life in general to get better in the coming twelve months while 9% expect it to get worse. Persons under the age of 25 years are more optimistic about their future than older persons. In fact 69% of Generation Z respondents expect their life in general to get better in the next twelve months. Persons who consider themselves belonging to the middle class are also more optimistic about their future.

Their outlook on economic issues is also positive with 71% of respondents describing their personal job situation as very good or rather good and 91% describing the financial situation of their household as

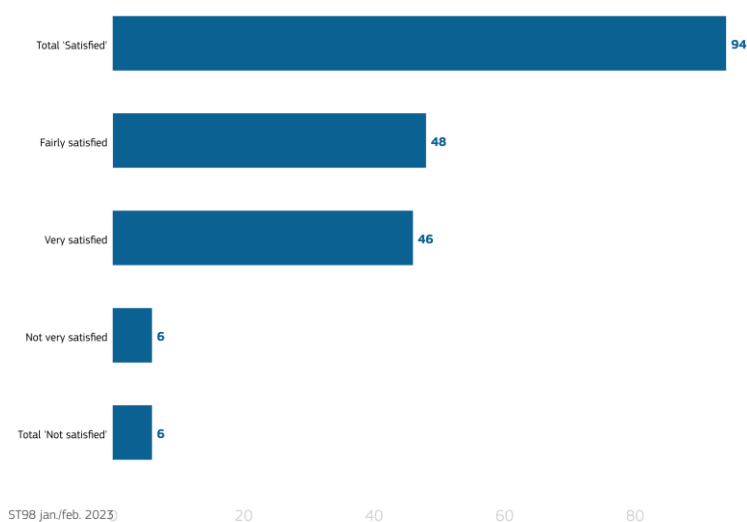
being very good or rather good. In spite of such a positive sentiment, 31% of respondents in Malta stated that they find difficulties to pay their bills at the end of the month, from time to time or most of the time.

Prospects about the future financial situation of their household are also positive, with 39% expecting it to get better and 11% expecting it to get worse. 46% expect it to remain the same. Men are more optimistic about the financial situation of their household, as are younger respondents. With regard to one’s personal job situation, 4% expect it to get worse, while 41% expect it to get better.

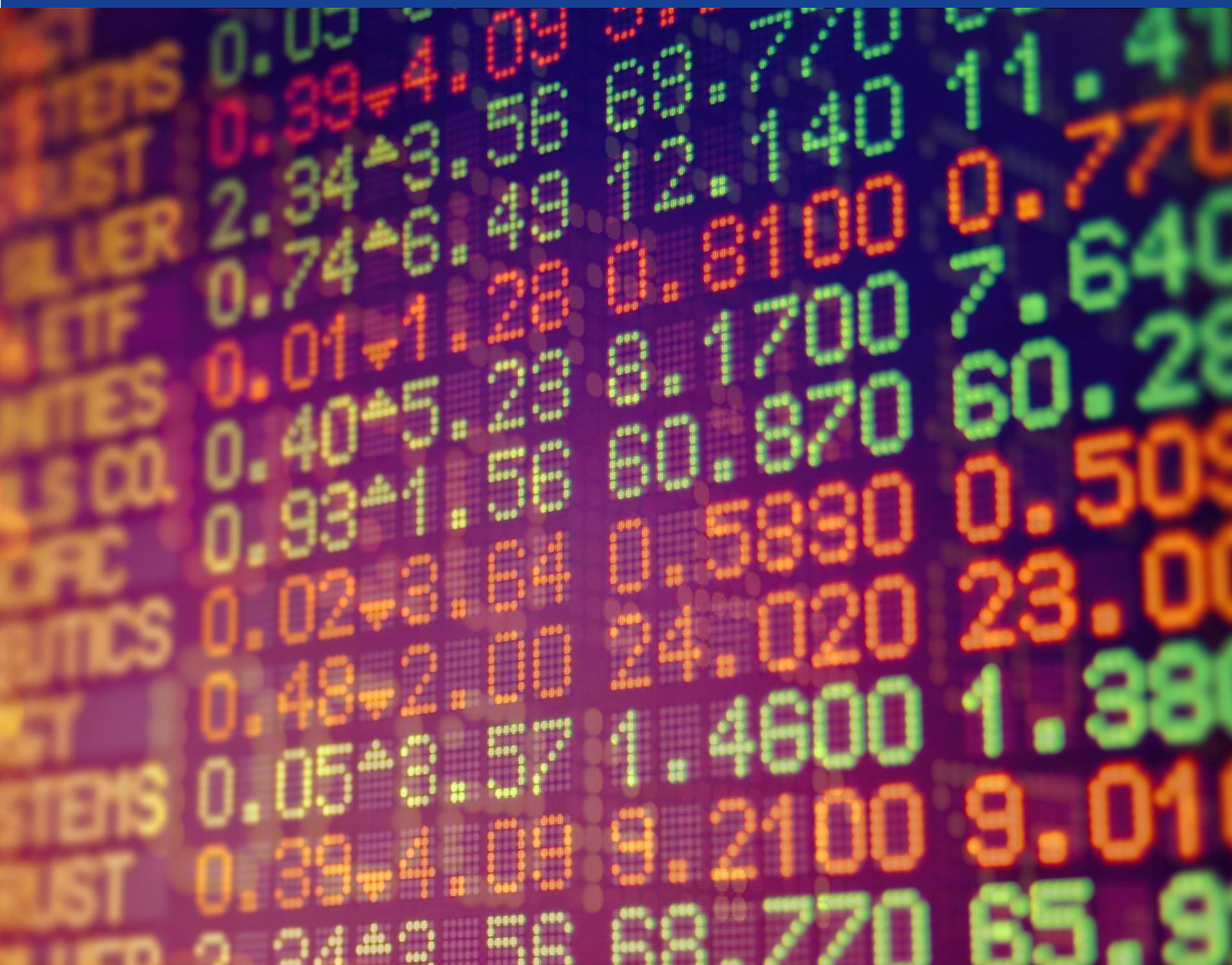
When asked to choose the two most important issues they are facing at the moment from a pre-determined set of issues, respondents gave most mentions to rising prices, inflation and cost of living. 66% of respondents mentioned this as one of their two main issues. This was followed by the environment and climate change, mentioned by 20% of respondents. Issues linked to rising prices, inflation and cost of living, such as the financial situation of their household and pensions, were mentioned by around 10% of respondents each.

Respondents were also asked to place themselves on the political spectrum between left and right. 20% place themselves on the left while 11% place themselves on the right. 54% perceive themselves to be in the centre. 15% did not express an opinion. Persons with a higher level of education and persons who consider themselves to be belonging to the middle class and upper middle class tend to place themselves in the centre to a greater extent.

D70 On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the life you lead? (MT) (%)



## II. PERCEPTIONS ON MALTA AND THE ECONOMIC SITUATION





## 1. Perceptions on Malta

Respondents have a positive view on the situation in Malta. 73% of respondents described the current situation in Malta as very good or rather good while 27% described it as rather bad or very bad. Across the whole of the EU, 41% described the situation in their respective country to be very good or rather good.

An equal percentage (73%) consider the provision of public services to be very or rather good. Generation X and the Millennials are the categories who expressed the most favourable opinions of the public services. Persons who claimed to have difficulties in paying their bills at the end of the month were more critical of the provision of public services.

Respondents in Malta also expressed satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country. 61% stated that they are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in Malta, compared to 58% for the whole of the EU.

Respondents' perceptions about the situation in general in Malta in future are also positive with 41% expecting it to get better, 24% expecting it to be worse and 32% expecting to remain the same. This level of optimism is just over double the level for the whole of the European Union and is the highest among the 27 Member States.

The main issue which respondents in Malta believe the country is facing at the moment is rising prices, inflation and cost of living. This issue was mentioned by 61% of respondents. This mirrors the respondents' views on the major personal issues. Following this issue is crime mentioned by 26% of respondents. Immigration and the environment and climate change were each mentioned by 15% of respondents. Chart 2 below lists the major issues which respondents in Malta believe the country has.

Chart 2

Issue	
<b>Rising prices / inflation / cost of living</b>	61%
<b>Crime</b>	26%
<b>The environment and climate change</b>	15%
<b>Immigration</b>	15%
<b>The international situation</b>	12%
<b>Housing</b>	11%
<b>Government debt</b>	11%
<b>The economic situation</b>	10%
<b>Health</b>	8%
<b>The education system</b>	7%
<b>Energy supply</b>	7%
<b>Pensions</b>	6%

## 2. Perceptions on the Economic Situation

Respondents were also asked about their perceptions on the local economic situation. Even in this regard the views of respondents in Malta are positive. 75% of respondents describe the economic situation to be very good or rather good. 23% described it as very bad or rather bad and 2% did not express an opinion. This positive perception is among the highest in the European Union. In the whole of the EU, 35% describe the economic situation in their respective country to be positive.

An even more positive judgement is expressed about the employment situation, with 80% of respondents stating that the employment situation in Malta is very good or rather good. 16% of respondents judge the employment situation in Malta negatively.

Future perceptions on the economy reflect those of one's own situation. 41% expect the economic situation in Malta to get better in the coming twelve months. In the whole of the EU there is not so much optimism as on average 19% expect the economic situation in their respective country to improve in the coming twelve months.

Expectations about employment are also high with 40% expecting the jobs situation to improve in the coming twelve months and 19% expecting it to get worse. 35% expect it to remain the same and 6% did not express an opinion.

### **III. PERCEPTIONS ON THE EU**



This wave of the Eurobarometer confirmed again the very positive perceptions respondents have in Malta about the European Union. On some aspects, such positive perceptions are the highest among the 27 member states.

50% of respondents stated that things in the European Union are moving in the right direction, while 29% stated that they are going in the wrong direction. This positive perception is the highest among the EU member states. In the whole of the EU, 33% stated that things in the European Union are going in the right direction. Moreover 73% are very optimistic or fairly optimistic about the future of the European Union.

For 54% of respondents in Malta the EU conjures up a fairly positive or a very positive image, and only 10% stated that the EU conjures up a negative or very negative image. The other 36% stated they are neutral or did not express an opinion. In the whole of the EU, 45% of respondents have a positive image of the European Union.

61% of respondents in Malta judge the economic situation of the European economy to be very good or rather good. The view across the whole of the EU is less positive as 40% expressed a positive opinion about the EU economy. 38% believe that the EU economy will get better in the next twelve months, 24% believe it can get worse, and 26% expect it to remain the same. 12% did not express an opinion. The level of optimism about the European economy is the highest among the 27 Member States.

According to respondents in Malta, the main issue being faced by the EU at the moment is the international situation mentioned by 40% of

respondents. This issue was followed by rising prices, inflation and cost of living (32%), immigration (22%), the environment and climate change (19%), and the economic situation and energy supply, each mentioned by 18%. These concerns very much reflect the challenges mentioned in the news. In the whole of the EU the main three issues are rising prices (32%), the international situation (28%), and energy supply (26%).

65% of respondents are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU. This is corroborated by the fact that 68% agree that the interests of Malta are well taken into account in the EU. Moreover 58% believe that their voice counts in the European Union.

Turning to aspects related to what the European Union stands for, 95% of respondents in Malta believe that all EU Member States should respect the core values of the EU, such as fundamental rights, rule of law and democracy. The three values which are best seen to represent the European Union are democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The most positive result of the EU is seen by respondents in Malta to be the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU. This aspect was mentioned by 27% of respondents. 20% mentioned the euro and 19% of respondents mentioned peace among the Member States. In the whole of the EU, the most important result is judged to be peace among member states. Respondents were also asked to mention up to another two positive results of the EU. Chart 3 lists the three most important positive results for the EU for respondents in Malta and across all the Member States.

Chart 3

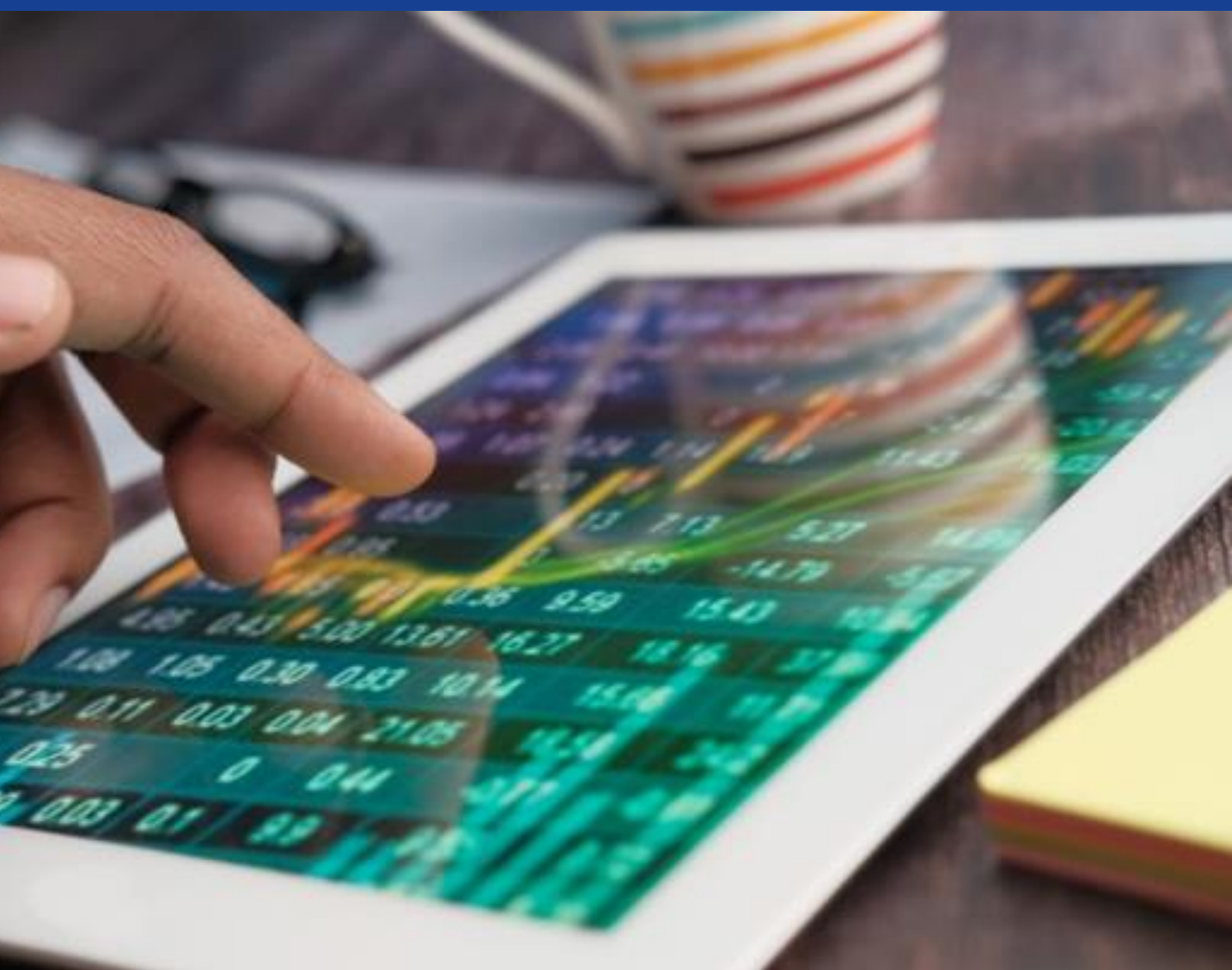
What are the most important results of the EU	Malta	European Union (EU 27)
The free movement of people, goods and services within the EU	51%	52%
The euro	38%	24%
Peace among the Member States of the EU	36%	46%
The level of social welfare in the EU	31%	16%
Solidarity among member states of the EU	30%	25%
Education exchange programmes such as Erasmus	25%	19%
The protection of the environment	20%	12%
The economic power of the EU	14%	23%
The political and diplomatic influence of the EU in the rest of the world	12%	19%
Care for human well-being	11%	10%
The Common Agricultural Policy	5%	8%

There is a strong sense of belonging to the European Union among respondents in Malta as 76% of respondents feel very attached or fairly attached to the EU. 88% feel that they are citizens of the EU either definitely or to an extent. Only 2% stated that they definitely do not feel a citizen of the EU. 67% of respondents believe that they are very well informed or fairly well informed about European matters.

Respondents in Malta view EU membership as something very positive for the country. 76% stated

that they disagree with the statement that Malta could better face the future outside the EU, while 15% agree with such a statement. This survey also indicates that in Malta there is a desire of further integration at an EU level as 61% stated that they are in favour of the idea that more decisions are to be taken at an EU level. This data is a clear indication of the very favourable perceptions respondents in Malta have of the European Union.

## IV. EUROPEAN UNION POLICIES



The positive outlook of respondents in Malta towards the European Union is also reflected in the opinions they have regarding EU policies. The survey asked respondents about a range of policies, which are economic, social and political in nature.

83% of respondents in Malta believe that the recovery plan of €800 billion, NextGeneration EU, to support the economy through grants and loans has been an effective measure to respond to the current economic challenges, against an EU average of 54%. This positive feedback from Malta remains the highest in the whole of the European Union.

With regard to other policies and initiatives, Malta has also scored higher than the EU average in most areas, and the percentage of those holding a favourable opinion about such policies and initiatives has also

increased in general. The only two policy areas, where the percentage of respondents in Malta is lower than the EU average, are a common foreign policy of the member states of the EU and a common defence and security policy. This reflects a preference for the neutrality stance that Malta has adopted, even though there is a majority among Maltese respondents for such two policies. Since this reflects a specific local situation, it is not to be interpreted as a negative perception of the EU.

Persons aged 15 – 24 years tend to be more favourable of EU policies than older respondents. Chart 4 below provides information on the percentage of respondents in Malta and the whole of the European Union, who stated that they are in favour of each of these policies.

Chart 4

What is your opinion on each of the following statements	Malta % in favour	European Union (EU27) % in favour
A European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro	89%	71%
A digital single market	87%	65%
The insurance that every new trade agreement concluded by the EU will have the highest standards of climate, environmental and labour protection	96%	79%
A European Political Community which brings together leaders of the European continent, be they from EU Member States or from other European countries	86%	66%
The EU has sufficient power and tools to defend the economic interests of Europe in the global economy	87%	70%
Public money should be used to stimulate private sector investment at EU level	85%	66%
The EU should build partnerships with countries outside the EU to invest in sustainable infrastructure and connect people and countries around the world	93%	79%
Each EU Member State should have a minimum wage for workers	95%	89%
There should be a fair taxation of large technology companies in the EU	93%	89%
A common foreign policy of the Member States of the EU	66%	71%

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What is your opinion on each of the following statements	Malta % in favour	European Union (EU27) % in favour
A common defence and security policy among EU Member States	75%	77%
The EU's common trade policy	86%	72%
A common European policy on migration	75%	70%
A common energy policy among EU member states	89%	74%
Further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years	71%	52%
The free movement of EU citizens who can live, work, study and do business anywhere in the EU	91%	85%
A common EU health policy	92%	76%

## V. RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE





This wave of the Eurobarometer also asked questions about the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. 70% of respondents in Malta are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine by the Malta Government. A slightly lower percentage (68%) are satisfied with the EU’s response compared to an average of 56% across all Member States. Persons who place themselves to the right of the political spectrum tend to be less favourable of the Maltese Government’s response.

Overall respondents in Malta expressed a more favourable opinion of EU measures in response to the Russian invasion than the average for the whole of the EU. Chart 5 below provides information about the percentage of respondents in Malta and the whole of the EU who agree totally or tend to agree with a number of specific measures.

Chart 5

The EU has taken a series of actions as a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To what extent you agree or disagree with each of these actions taken.	Malta % agree	European Union (EU27) % agree
<b>Imposing economic sanctions on Russian government, companies and individuals</b>	78%	74%
<b>Banning state-owned media such as Sputnik and Russia Today from broadcasting in the EU</b>	70%	67%
<b>Financing the purchase and supply of military equipment to Ukraine</b>	76%	65%
<b>Providing humanitarian support to the people affected by the war</b>	94%	91%
<b>Welcoming into the EU people fleeing the war</b>	93%	88%
<b>Providing financial support to Ukraine</b>	87%	77%

An overwhelming majority of respondents in Malta (91%) consider Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as a threat to the security of the EU. A similar view is expressed by the 27 Member States as a whole. Moreover 80% consider Russia’s invasion of Ukraine to be a threat to the security of Malta, and another 80% believe that by

standing against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU is defending European values. Persons who place themselves to the right of the political spectrum are more likely to consider Russia’s invasion of Ukraine to be a threat to the security of Malta.

## VI. TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS



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Respondents were asked to express an opinion on their level of trust in a number of national and European institutions and the United Nations. Health and medical staff remain by far the most trusted both in Malta and the European Union. Trust in Maltese institutions has increased in a number of instances since the last wave of the Eurobarometer. This may tend to reflect a more positive sentiment among respondents in Malta.

Moreover, respondents in Malta continue to trust European institutions to a greater extent than the

average across the EU. However, the level of trust has decreased since the last wave of the Eurobarometer. Trust in the European Union remains among the highest in Malta when compared to the other Member States.

Chart 6 below provides information on the percentage of respondents in Malta and the whole of the European Union, who stated that they tend to trust the institutions.

**Chart 6**

For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it	Malta Tend to trust 2023	European Union (EU27) Tend to trust 2023
<b>The media</b>	39%	38%
<b>Political parties</b>	38%	21%
<b>Justice / the Legal System</b>	49%	54%
<b>The Police</b>	70%	70%
<b>The Army</b>	78%	71%
<b>Health and medical staff</b>	91%	76%
<b>Regional or Local Public Authorities</b>	66%	56%
<b>The Maltese Government</b>	63%	32%
<b>The Maltese Parliament</b>	58%	33%
<b>The European Union</b>	64%	47%
<b>The United Nations</b>	67%	48%
<b>The European Parliament</b>	63%	49%
<b>The European Commission</b>	66%	46%
<b>The European Central Bank</b>	67%	46%
<b>The European Council</b>	65%	43%

## VII. MEDIA AND SOURCES OF NEWS



Another set of questions dealt with media usage and sources of news. An index was computed to measure media usage. 44% of respondents in Malta are very high users of the media and 36% are high users. 18% are poor users of the media and only 2% are considered as non-users. In the whole of the EU, 25% of respondents are considered to be very high users. In Malta males tend to be higher users, as are Millennials

and Generation Z. Respondents in Malta are higher users of internet than the average for the EU. 88% stated that they use internet every day, compared to 81% for the whole of the EU.

Chart 7 below provides information on usage of each individual medium daily or almost daily.

Chart 7

Medium	Malta 2023	EU 2023
Watch television on a TV set	69%	74%
Watch television on internet	42%	18%
Watch TV total	83%	80%
Use online social networks	68%	47%
Read news on internet	64%	44%
Listen to the radio	52%	41%
Read the written press	26%	18%
Listen to podcasts	25%	8%

Internet is the key source of news on European matters. In fact, 49% stated that their primary source of news on European political matters is internet, with 27% mentioning information websites and 19% mentioning online social networks. 21% mentioned television news channels and 19% mentioned television generalist channels. When looking for information about the EU, its policies, its institutions, respondents in Malta rely on discussions with relatives, friends, colleagues, online social networks and the traditional media such as the written press, radio and television. However, when combining internet sources all together, it emerges that 71% use internet as a source.

A series of questions were asked about internet sources. 91% stated that online social networks are a modern way to keep abreast of political affairs. In spite of this 83% agree that information on political affairs from online social networks cannot be trusted. 85% stated that online social networks can get people

interested in political affairs, and 75% stated that online social networks are a good way to have your say on political issues.

44% of respondents in Malta believe that Maltese media do not provide trustworthy information while 54% believe that they do, while only 40% believe that media provide information free from political or commercial pressure and 59% believe that they do not.

The issue of false news is seen to be a problem in Malta. 90% of respondents stated that they often come across news or information that you believe misrepresent reality or are even false, but 81% stated that it is easy for them to identify news or information that they believe misrepresent reality or are even false. 89% stated that the existence of news or information that misrepresent reality or is even false is a problem in Malta. 95% believe that the existence of news or information that misrepresent reality or is even false is a problem for democracy in general.

# CONCLUSION



The main conclusions from this wave of the Eurobarometer are the following:

- The primary issue for respondents in Malta, both at a national level and at a personal level is cost of living. The next most mentioned issue at a national level is crime, while the next most mentioned issue at a personal level is the environment and climate change. They judge the economic situation of their household and of the country to be positive and generally do not expect it to get worse in the coming twelve months.
- Trust in European Union continues to remain high and well above the EU average, even if there was a decrease in the level of trust since the last wave of the Eurobarometer. Just over three out of four respondents believe that Malta could not face a better future outside the EU. Malta also has the highest percentage of respondents among all the member states who believe that things are going in the right direction in the European Union.
- Respondents in Malta are generally satisfied with the stand taken by the European Union in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- Respondents in Malta are more favourable of European Union policies than respondents in the whole of the EU.

