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BAT STIFTUNG FÜR ZUKUNFTSFRAGEN TO PUBLISH NEW EUROPEAN STUDY

“Endless work”. “Poverty that knows no bounds”
“Life in an unsafe society”

How Europeans see their future

Like Europe in all its diversity, the future has many faces. And yet increasingly there is fundamental common ground between Europeans where appraising the reality of their own future is concerned. As globalisation gathers pace and the financial markets become more intertwined, Europeans are becoming more and more alike in their attitudes to life and their expectations for the future. Financial crises and the growing fear of recession and loss of affluence give little cause for confidence. Instead of looking towards the future with hope, Europeans are expecting a fundamental change in affluence which will have far-reaching consequences and are both realistic and concerned. Endless work, poverty that knows no bounds and life in an unsafe society.

What they worry about more than anything is an explosion in the price of the commodities of daily life, in particular food (61%), and an increasing gulf between the rich and the poor (57%) with the consequence of poverty in old age (52%). In future more and more people will be dependent on second jobs or other work on the side (50%) or will even “have to work until I’m 75” (41%). And approximately one European in two is worried about the social consequences of “organised crime” (49%). This is what has emerged from a study of Europe carried out by the Stiftung für Zukunftsfragen – an initiative of British American Tobacco - in which a representative sample of over 11,000 people from 14 years upwards in the nine European countries of Germany, Austria, Finland, France, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, Spain and Switzerland were questioned simultaneously about their expectations for the future.

Prof. Dr. Horst W. Opaschowski, Director of Research at the BAT Stiftung für Zukunftsfragen, says, “Fewer and fewer Europeans can afford to be hopeful about the future. They are being forced to recognise that no country is now in a position to cope with the economic and social consequences of globalisation alone. The fight against poverty and social exclusion therefore has to become the most important function of European social policy in the future, otherwise social security payments will gobble up an ever-increasing share of the gross domestic product – at the cost of growth, innovation and technological progress.”

Herausgeber
Stiftung für Zukunftsfragen
Alsterufer 4
20354 Hamburg
Telefon (040) 4151 - 2448
Telefax (040) 4151 - 2091
zukunftsfragen@bat.de
www.bat.de

Wissenschaftlicher Leiter
Prof. Dr. Horst W. Opaschowski

Redaktion
Dr. Ulrich Reinhardt

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The European study on "Future Expectations for Europe", which has also appeared in book form, published by the Primus Verlag (German version: "Wie die Europäer ihre Zukunft sehen", Darmstadt 2009), includes responses and evaluations from futurologists from eleven countries. In the research coordinated by Dr. Ulrich Reinhardt, an expert on Europe from the BAT Foundation, people in the countries listed above were questioned simultaneously on eight topics: work, security, consumption, integration, education, the environment, family and the relationship between the rich and the poor.

"Europe's future is at a crossroad," says Dr. Reinhardt: "Its citizens' fear of an increasing divide in society is clear everywhere. Many people are afraid of ending up as losers." At the heart of their expectations are concerns about the future. However, only a minority of Europeans expect positive changes such as full employment as a result of decreasing population numbers, equal educational opportunities for all children (in each case 16%) or a solution to food shortages using genetically modified foodstuffs (15%).

THE FUTURE OF EMPLOYMENT: LONGER WORKING HOURS, A HIGHER PENSIONABLE AGE AND A SECOND JOB

Many Europeans (50%) expect that in the future they will have more than one employer and a second job or will be doing other work on the side. As a result of increased life expectancy, the retirement age will also go up. Two-fifths (41%) of those surveyed see most employees working until they are 75. However, only one person in five (20%) has hopes of a reduction in working hours as a result of automation. Europe will also be under pressure as a production location. Almost one person in three (31%) expects goods to be manufactured mainly in developing countries.

THE FUTURE OF CONSUMPTION: EXPENSIVE EVERYDAY COMMODITIES, ONLINE SHOPPING AND A LEASING MENTALITY

Almost two-thirds (61%) of Europeans expect everyday commodities to cost more, with the result that people will economise even in areas such as food or clothing. In contrast, an extravagant consumerism involving shopping trips and visits to theatres or restaurants appears unlikely – only a minority will not look at the price first but instead will be more concerned about service and

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advice (16%). By the same token, consumers of the future (24%) will prefer to lease products rather than to buy them in order not to incur permanent debts. Online shopping will increase, but only just over a third of those surveyed (36%) expect that by 2030 the majority of consumer goods will be bought via the Internet.

THE FUTURE OF SECURITY: FEAR OF CRIME AND THE SURVEILLANCE STATE OR PERSONAL FREEDOM?

Organised crime remains the unsolved problem of Europe. One European in two (49%) from London to Rome, from Madrid to Berlin, from Helsinki to Zurich and from Vienna to Moscow names this as their prime concern. Are the standards of (Latin) America moving in our direction? Will whole streets and residential areas in Europe too soon be policed by private security services? According to Dr. Ulrich Reinhardt, "Most Europeans nowadays take cameras in department stores and filling stations, museums and sports stadiums, railway stations and city centres almost for granted. Protection and safety seem to be more important than concerns about continuous surveillance and the curtailment of privacy in their lives." That is, just under a third (31%) of those surveyed believe that in future their own safety will be of greater importance to many citizens than their own privacy, and one in four (24%) could also imagine that in 2030 they would be carrying an electronic chip for the purposes of identification and location. For more than a third (35%) of Europeans the technology of surveillance methods will even have progressed so far by 2030 that persons committing crimes will be identified immediately in the act of doing so.

THE FUTURE OF INTEGRATION: THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE

The successful integration of foreigners is one of the challenges of the present day. It is true that in future we can still expect potential for conflict – such as tensions between individual groups of foreigners (38%) – but problem areas are only specified by a minority of those surveyed. Even better integration of well-educated immigrants which is frequently mentioned nowadays appears to be no longer relevant by 2030. Not even a quarter (23%) are convinced that this is how it will be in the future. On the other hand, one third (34%) of those surveyed believe in an increase in multinational partnerships. As Reinhardt says, "Foreigners and home country nationals are equally responsible for suc-

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successful integration resembling an identity balanced between the culture of our country of origin and that to which we are to be assimilated. What could work against this joint cooperation would be a spatial separation from one another. This concern is expressed by 35 per cent of Europeans. They fear that most foreigners in their midst will live in particular areas of their towns.”

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION:

LIFELONG LEARNING – ONLINE OR ON A PRIVATE BASIS

In the 21st century education will become a central resource for not only every nation but also each individual citizen. The relationship between life time and learning time will be redefined. People who do not continue learning will not get on in the future either. At the same time, the form that education takes will be diversified. Thus about one third of citizens (31%) expect that it will be taken for granted that they will attend at least one advanced training course a year. Some people (33%) believe that there will be online lectures by the best professors at different universities, and one person in five (21%) expects that the media will take over responsibility through specialist educational programmes. Private schools in every country in Europe can look forward to increasing popularity. Dr. Reinhardt, an expert on Europe, says, “Whether we look at the PISA results, rising crime figures or the hope of better advancement of our own children, anyone can afford it sends his or her offspring to a private school. By 2030 over a third of Europeans (34%) expect there to be more private schools than state schools.”

THE FUTURE OF THE ENVIRONMENT:

WATER AS A LUXURY COMMODITY AND LITTLE HOPE FOR AN END TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The effects of climate change are varied: rising sea levels, shrinking glaciers, an increase in the size of the hole in the ozone layer, floods, melting polar ice and periods of famine and drought. The aspirations of Europeans to counteract climate change by means of technical developments are low. Only 16 per cent believe in a solution of this type. In contrast, concern is growing in Europe about clean water (42%) and also very personal concomitant phenomena such as rising energy costs (38%). But the environmental situation is also regarded by many Europeans as capable of development. Thus half (50%) of the people surveyed expects the greater part of our refuse to be recycled and more than a third (37%) believe in regenerative forms of energy using sun or wind.

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THE FUTURE OF THE FAMILY: THE END OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE, WORK/LIFE BALANCE AND INTERNET DATING

Three out of every five people who took part in the survey (60%) acknowledge that there is little future for the traditional family with a marriage certificate. As they see it, most couples will live together without being married. On the other hand, equal rights for same-sex couples will continue to evolve. However, only a minority (42%) expects that there will be equality by 2030. Searching for a partner on the Internet will become increasingly important – 30 per cent of Europeans expect that there will be an increase in the number of partnerships resulting from Internet dating. Only one third of Europeans (32%) expect the number of children to rise to two per woman – one reason for this doubtless being that only 34 per cent believe that it is possible to combine work and family responsibilities. Initially, allowance is also made for the ageing of Europe's population. Almost two out of every five Europeans (38%) assume that by 2030 there will be more day care centres for senior citizens than children's nurseries.

THE FUTURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR; AN INCREASING GULF, POVERTY AMONG THE ELDERLY AND MINIMUM INCOME

In every European country the gulf is continuing to increase between the rich and the poor (57%). Poverty amongst the elderly (52%) and insufficient income to save for one's old age (49%) are also major concerns among Europeans. In every country involved in the survey, these three problem areas end up in the first three places. Hopes for the state finding a solution to these challenges are only small: one person in six (16%) believes in educational policy programmes that lead to equal educational opportunities for all children. And just one person in five (20%) can imagine a minimum income guaranteed by the state. More and more citizens are caught between a desire for prosperity and fear of poverty. Their prime concern is to "simply" maintain their standard of living – hardly anybody believes that it is possible to improve it.

TO SUMMARISE: THE LAND OF PLENTY HAS FIZZLED AWAY

This study of the expectations of Europeans with regard to their future shows a bleak picture. Broadly speaking, confidence has disappeared. Fear of social

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decline and an uncertain future predominates. For many Europeans, the view into the future is more negative and almost disheartening. All sections of society need to tackle the challenges together – for example, politicians must create the right conditions and show more foresight where the future is concerned, rather than simply thinking in terms of legislative periods. The media needs to become more aware of its role in forming opinions and to deal with topics in a more responsible way, and it also goes without saying that each individual is called upon to shape the future positively. It is a well-known fact that there is no good in the world unless people do it.

Information on the research / Notes on the book

Countries surveyed: Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, Spain, Switzerland

Sample size: 11,100 people in total, from 14 years of age upwards

Method: Representative face-to-face interviews carried out by the Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (GfK), Nuremberg

Publication: The publication "Wie die Europäer ihre Zukunft sehen – Antworten aus neun Ländern" is available as of now at booksellers at a price of 29.90€ – Primus Verlag, ISBN 978-3-89678-802-3 (408 pages, 130 drawings / tables).

In the book, 20 futurologists comment on the expectations in nine different countries.