



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
ENTERPRISE AND INDUSTRY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Innovation policy
Innovation policy development

NOTE TO THE ATTENTION OF DAVID WHITE, DIRECTOR ENTR D

Subject: Innovation readiness in Europe

Following a recent survey, a majority of 57% of EU citizens feel attracted towards innovative products or services. This is the result of a special Eurobarometer survey launched by DG ENTR. A total of 30,000 citizens were interviewed in the 25 Member States plus Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia. A set of questions was asked to identify how European citizens feel attracted by innovative products or services. Their replies offer interesting insights into the demand side of innovation, which may hamper or stimulate innovation.

The report concludes that the *“European market seems to be quite diverse when it comes to national citizens’ preferences for opting for innovative products and services. The typology analysis reveals four groups which can be distinguished in terms of their attitudes towards innovation: the ‘anti-innovation’ group make up 16% of interviewees in the EU, the ‘reluctant’ group comprises 33% of the sample, the ‘attracted’ group corresponds to 39% and finally the ‘enthusiasts’ represent 11% of respondents. Slovakia, Malta, Slovenia, Luxembourg as well as Turkey and Romania boast among the highest proportion of ‘enthusiasts’ corresponding to close to one in five citizens. The highest proportions of ‘anti-innovation’ respondents are in Southern Europe and notably in Greece (22%), Cyprus (21%), Portugal (20%) and Bulgaria (20%).”*

Generally, the following characteristics have a positive influence on innovation readiness: the younger generation is more attracted by innovative products or services, as well as those with a higher level of education or higher professional qualification. Males and in particular managers and students seem to be significantly more attracted by innovative products and services than females (over 40) who are over-represented in the “reluctant” and “anti-innovation” groups.

It is worthwhile noting that a high innovation readiness among citizens does not necessarily correspond with a higher innovation performance in their countries. Malta, Slovakia, Italy and France are, for example, countries with the highest proportion of pro-innovation citizens but they are not among the leading innovation countries. On the other hand, Germany and Finland are among the more innovation sceptical countries although both countries are innovation leaders in Europe. These paradoxes need to be further analysed, notably by comparing the Eurobarometer results with those of the Innovation Scoreboard which measures the innovation performance in terms of underlying factors (“input”) and practical results (“output”). So far, citizens’ attitudes towards innovation

have not been taken into account in this analysis, due to the lack of available data. This position may have to be reconsidered in the light of the results of the recent survey. In any case, innovation readiness is a strong factor determining innovation take-up.

- In the case of Germany and Finland, the Eurobarometer results may, for example, indicate that innovation in these countries is less driven by demand but rather by technology-oriented companies. This seems to be acknowledged by public opinion in these countries. More German and Finnish citizens than average agreed with the statement that “a company that does not innovate is a company that will not survive” (EU-25: 42%, DE: 50%, FI: 65%).
- The case of countries with the highest proportion of pro-innovation citizens (MT, SK, IT, FR) is also interesting as all these countries show better results for the output indicators (e.g. turnover coming from new products, employment in high-tech sectors, patent) of the Innovation Scoreboard than for the input indicators (e.g. education, investment in innovation). Demanding customers could be one of the elements to explain why these countries are more successful than others in transforming innovation inputs into practical results. However, there is no linear correlation between these factors as for instance Germany is also a country that is quite successful in transforming its inputs into results.

The results of the survey confirm that innovation is generally perceived as positive. A majority of respondents clearly recognises the importance of innovation for companies and economic growth, with 42% of citizens stating that “innovation is essential for economic growth”.

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