

Alona Lebedieva: Europeans' fears are the bill for years of indecision

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The latest [Eurobarometer](#) survey clearly captures a shift in public sentiment across Europe. Europeans increasingly perceive the world as dangerous and unstable. Wars near the EU's borders, terrorism, cyberattacks, climate-driven natural disasters, and uncontrolled migration are shaping a sense of constant pressure. Notably, this pessimism primarily concerns the global future and the European Union itself, while in their personal lives most citizens retain cautious optimism. This points not to panic, but to a crisis of trust in the ability of institutions to manage large-scale risks.



Alona Lebedieva

According to Alona Lebedieva, owner of the Ukrainian diversified industrial and investment group Aurum Group, the core problem lies not in the threats themselves, but in how the response to them is perceived. "Europeans are not afraid of war or cyberattacks as such. They are afraid that the EU too often reacts too late, spends months coordinating positions, and acts in a fragmented way," she notes. This is precisely why nearly nine out of ten respondents speak about the need for greater unity among member states, and more than two-thirds directly call for strengthening the EU's resources to act at the international level.

The demand for a stronger EU is increasingly taking on a pragmatic rather than ideological character. Citizens expect the Union to focus on defence and security, economic competitiveness, industrial development, and energy independence. In essence, this is about transforming the EU from a normative regulator into a geopolitical actor. This is particularly important against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, changes in the role of the United States in global security, and the strengthening of authoritarian regimes that are increasingly testing Europe's resilience.

At the same time, Alona Lebedieva warns that political rhetoric about unity and strategic autonomy is not yet matched by sufficient decisiveness. "The EU talks about strength, but avoids

an honest conversation about the price of that strength. Without a willingness to invest in defence, industry, and tough decisions, any unity will remain declarative," she emphasises. In her view, without a rethinking of budgetary and economic policy priorities, the European Union risks falling short of its own citizens' expectations.

A separate signal of concern remains the cost of living. Inflation, prices, and employment have once again become the main domestic priorities for Europeans. This means that security challenges are closely intertwined with socio-economic ones. Citizens will not support large-scale defence or foreign policy ambitions if they do not feel basic economic stability in their own countries. For the EU, this creates a complex task of balancing security, prosperity, and long-term transformations.

It is telling that young people remain the most pro-European and, at the same time, the most demanding audience. Young citizens not only assess the EU more positively, but are also far more likely to support strengthening its role in the world. "Young people support the European Union not because of the romance of the European idea, but because they understand the risks. They clearly see that a weak EU is unable to protect their future," notes Alona Lebedieva. This demand for a mature, responsible Europe is becoming increasingly vocal.

The Eurobarometer results show that the European Union still has a reserve of public trust, but it is no longer automatic. Citizens are ready to support stronger common solutions if they see the ability to act quickly, coherently, and strategically. Otherwise, fear and uncertainty may turn into disappointment. Today, the EU faces a clear choice — either to turn public demand into momentum for real strengthening, or to lose the chance to establish itself as a fully-fledged player in an increasingly harsh world.

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