

Portugal

T*ransatlantic Trends 2014* reflected a public opinion in Portugal that appeared to be committed to the EU and to NATO, but was also clearly overwhelmed with domestic concerns such as the economy, unemployment, and emigration.

TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP

Portuguese respondents expressed mixed feelings about U.S. leadership, with 53% saying it was desirable and 37% saying it was not. Sixty-eight percent of Portuguese respondents approved of U.S. President Barack Obama's handling of international policies — four percentage points higher than the European average (but down seven from 2013) — and 67% said they regarded the United States favorably. A majority of Portuguese (55%), however, wanted their country to take a more independent approach in the transatlantic relationship.

Seventy-one percent said EU global leadership was desirable, while 47% disapproved of their government's foreign policies (44% approved). Sixty-one percent said they held a favorable view of the EU.

Sixty-nine percent (up 15 percentage points since 2013) felt that Russian global leadership was undesirable. Sixty-three percent of Portuguese respondents said their view of Russia was unfavorable. But a plurality (43%) wanted their country to manage its relationship with Russia independently, rather than together with the member states of the EU. Sentiment about Chinese leadership was mixed, with 57% saying it was undesirable, and 30% saying it was not, but 51% held an unfavorable view of China.

THE ECONOMY, THE EU, AND IMMIGRATION

Portuguese respondents were equally split between the economy and unemployment as the biggest challenge facing their country (both 32%). Asked whether they had been personally affected by the economic crisis, 91% said they had been (up one percentage point since 2013). Fifty-five percent said membership in the EU had been good for their country (as opposed to 65% of Europeans in general); 36% said it had been bad. Forty-two percent of Portuguese respondents *who said the EU had been good for their country* agreed that this was because it “allows freedom of travel, work, and study within its borders.” Fifty-six percent of Portuguese respondents *who said the EU had been bad for their country* said that this was because it had harmed their country's economy, and 61% of Portuguese in general thought the euro had been bad for their economy. Twenty percent of Portuguese respondents thought the EU was still not doing enough to combat the crisis, 54% thought both the EU and their own country was not doing enough, and only 6% said that the countries most affected were not doing enough without blaming the EU as well. Fifty-nine percent thought that the EU should not be given more budgetary authority (but down eight percentage points).

A plurality of Portuguese (48%) said they disapproved of their country's immigration policy, but 44% said they approved. When asked why immigrants come to their country, a majority of Portuguese (62%) mentioned “work.” A plurality (44%) was in favor of more restrictive refugee policies. Portuguese respondents were most likely (62%) to be concerned by immigration from inside the EU. However, they were also by far the most likely (83%) to say that first-generation

immigrants were integrating well — and even more (86%) said that the children of immigrants were integrating well. Ninety-three percent of those polled in Portugal thought emigration is a problem for their country (up five percentage points since 2013), and 58% said they themselves had considered moving abroad.

TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY COOPERATION

Asked whether they preferred managing specific relationships together with other EU member states of the EU or independently, 55% of Portuguese respondents said they preferred their country to manage its relationship with China independently; 45% said the same of the Middle East.

However, 68% of Portuguese respondents (up five percentage points since 2013, and seven percentage points over the European average) described NATO as “still essential” for Portugal’s security. Eighty percent said NATO should continue to be engaged in the territorial defense of Europe, and 65% were of the opinion that it should undertake out-of-area missions — the highest level of support registered for this option. Fifty-five percent felt that NATO should provide arms or training to help other countries defend themselves (yet that number dropped to 44% if Ukraine was mentioned as a specific example). Portuguese respondents were the most likely (69%) to agree that NATO should attempt to establish stability in places like Afghanistan.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) approved of providing continued political and economic support to Ukraine, even if there was a risk of increasing conflict with Russia — six percentage points above the European average (58%). Sixty-one percent of Portuguese also favored offering NATO membership to Ukraine, and 64% were willing to offer it EU membership. The same number said they approved of stronger sanctions against Russia, and 71% were willing to increase economic assistance to Ukraine. However, 62% disapproved of sending military supplies and equipment to Ukraine.