

## MORI: EURO REFERENDUM REMAINS “WINNABLE”

*But only if yes camp can persuade electorate to get out and vote, argues new report*

A Euro referendum is still winnable, but only if there is a high turn out on polling day and the electorate maintain their trust in Tony Blair and his Government, according to new polling evidence published by the Foreign Policy Centre. In *Who Are The Euro Waverers?*, MORI's Simon Atkinson and Roger Mortimore claim that a large section of public opinion is still open to argument: “The referendum result will not primarily depend on the balance of opinion when the campaign begins, but the persuasiveness with which the two sides put their case”

The publication builds up a detailed picture of the forty-five per cent of the public say that that they might change their minds on the Euro on economic grounds – the “euro-waverers”- who outnumber those who are beyond persuasion by 2:1. With the definite “Yes” and “No’s” beyond persuasion, these voters will form the battleground during the referendum campaign. With new information on their political complexion, age, earnings, newspaper reading habits and whether they’ve recently visited the Eurozone, Atkinson and Mortimore have identified the two groups that a successful campaign will have to be targeted towards. Crucially, they explore how likely the waverers are to turn out on polling day

Though there have been a glut of opinion polls on the Euro, most have simply focused on the “for” and “against” figures rather than examining the intensity of these opinions, and whether they might be swayed.

The greater likelihood that firm opponents of the euro will turn out to vote compared with firm supporters of the euro, means that the Yes camp will face greater opposition to overcome than the headline polling figures suggest. Their hopes therefore rely on getting a high proportion of the electorate out to the polling booths to outvote this Eurosceptic hardcore.

The publication constructs a plausible scenario for a referendum victory. If the Yes camp secure a 71% turnout, and they manage to maintain the support of the “strong yes” and “wavering yes” vote, they will secure victory if they turnaround half the “don’t know” camp and half the “wavering no” camp.

### THE BATTLEGROUND:

The Yes campaign needs to concentrate its fire on two polar opposite groups who might respond to political leadership.

- **The “No” civic waverers: 6% of British adults: (2.75 million)** This group is opposed to the euro but might change their mind if they thought it was in Britain’s economic interests. They are “civic” – feeling it is their duty to vote as a matter of course. They are predominantly affluent, middle aged and middle class, politically interested and

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active, and are slightly more likely to be women than men. They tend to have two cars, a mortgage and no children who live at home. They respond well to Tony Blair, and they hold Iain Duncan Smith in “unusually low regard” with only 15% satisfied with his performance. They are likely to read the Daily Mail or Telegraph.

- **The “Yes” apathetic waverers: (3.6 million)** This group is in favour of the euro but might change their mind if they felt it was in Britain’s economic interests. They are “apathetic” – they might vote in a referendum but are not certain that they will do so. They are young, (mainly under 35) and politically inactive: many are too young to have ever voted before. They tend to be male and single, predominantly professionals or students who are used to visiting Europe on holiday. Most do not read a daily paper, but if they do it is likely to be a “red-top” tabloid. They view both the Government and Prime Minister broadly positively.

## **FINDINGS:**

- **The Yes camp must make the Euro a more salient issue if they are to deliver the high-turn out needed for victory:** Even if the Yes camp persuades all the “wavering opponents” of its case, their lower likelihood to turn out means that the referendum would still be close. If the turn-out is as low as 50%, the No side win by default, but if the turnout is 70% it will help the yes-side since a greater percentage of the stay-at-homes would be Eurosceptic. Labour must therefore reverse their electoral strategy at last two elections - based on downplaying the single currency as an issue compared to the state of public services.
- **Trust in Blair will be crucial:** Those who admit they could be swayed by the economic arguments will largely be relying on the advice of the experts they most trust rather than judging the detail of the arguments for themselves. Therefore it is essential to maintain trust in the Prime Minister and the Government. There is evidence that all groups apart from the firm “Nos” are broadly supportive of Tony Blair personally or the Government generally. Though Blair’s satisfaction record has been relatively steady through most of 2002, it was very much higher in September 2001 in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the US. Much will depend on the public’s reaction to his handling of the crisis in Iraq and the state of the economy.
- **The battleground for the campaign will be broadcast media rather than newspapers:** Nineteen per cent of the adult population (eight million people) read no newspaper regularly and say that their mind might be changed on the Euro. The Yes camp must find an effective avenue to swing their opinions - through agenda setting in broadcast news, poster advertising or leaflet drops. Political commentators are likely to be the most trusted source of information, with 49% of the public regarding TV as a source of “accurate and impartial information”. This compares to a figure of 12% for daily newspapers.
- **The Yes camp should not pin its hopes on growing familiarity with the Euro to change public opinion:** Contrary to some expectations, the introduction of the Euro in continental Europe has so far had little effect on British public opinion. By visiting only one European country, British holidaymakers failed to experience the Euro’s obvious advantages when travelling across frontiers. Equally, those who visit Europe are already more favourable to the Euro than the rest of the population: visits to the eurozone do nothing to strengthen that support.

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- **Concerted campaigning can make a difference:** Trade Unionists have significantly more favourable attitudes to the euro than the average voter - 49 per cent in favour compared to 48% who are against. This figure is not sufficiently explained by the demographic, political and educational profile of trade union members and might be related to the fact that many Unions have campaigned on the single currency in a concerted way over the last few years.

**Mark Leonard, Director of the Foreign Policy Centre, said**

“ These polls show that a Euro referendum can still be won, but it will rely on the yes camp making the Euro a much more salient issue. A consensus seems to be emerging that we can live happily outside of the single currency. Many seem to forget that the status quo is based on the Prime Minister’s signals that Britain will join. If the decision is fudged further this June, then there could be a dramatic loss of inward investment and political influence”

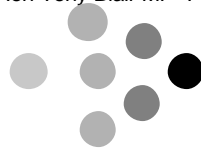
## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

1. The Foreign Policy Centre (Patron Tony Blair, President Robin Cook) is a thinktank established in 1998 to explore the consequences of globalisation.
2. *Who Are the Euro-Waverers?* is strictly embargoed until Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2003.
3. The pamphlet is kindly supported by Trade Unionists for Europe, comprising The knitwear, footwear and textile workers union (KFAT), UNFI, the PSU, Amicus-AEEU, the GMB, the ISTC, and the GPMU.

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