Press Release

A large majority of French expect positive effects from innovation and favor European cooperation

**French citizens are open to innovation and technological progress. At the same time, they are keenly aware of the growing competition in key technologies coming from the United States and especially China. Positive effects particularly in the areas of mobility, healthcare and environmental protection are expected in the next 15 years Also, given the circumstances created by the coronavirus pandemic, they would like to see Europe increase its cooperation efforts and do more to promote innovation so as to create more jobs and improve education.**

*Brussels, 14 October 2020* – Most French citizens expect innovation and advances in technology such as digital transformation to have primarily positive effects on their lives in the coming years. They are only slightly more skeptical than most Europeans in this regard. At the same time, they recognize the strong international competition Europe faces in high-tech areas such as AI. They believe their country’s innovative capacity fares relatively well in international comparison, but they express concern with regard to jobs or the protection of personal data. These are the findings of a pan-European survey of more than 12,000 citizens in 28 European countries, including nearly 1,400 adults in France, conducted on behalf of Germany’s Bertelsmann Stiftung.

According to the survey, 56 percent of French citizens expect innovations to have a primarily positive impact on their lives. A total of 11 percent expect innovation to have very positive effects. Only 26 percent fear more adverse effects, and only seven percent of this group expect particularly negative effects. This means that French citizens are only slightly more skeptical than the average European with regard to their expectations for the future impact of innovation.

**Positive effects expected for healthcare and long-term care, concerns about jobs and data protection**

Healthcare and long-term care are the areas in which the French most frequently expect to see innovations have a positive impact over the next 15 years (44%). Some 35 percent of respondents in France believe they’ll experience improvements in mobility and transport, 28 percent in defense and security, and 25 percent expect to see improvements in environmental protection and the fight against climate change. Only 12 percent of the French population do not expect to see any positive effects in any of the noted areas. Negative effects on job creation is the top-cited concern (39%). A total of 32 percent see risks with regard to the protection of personal data.

Compared with the findings of a similar survey in 2019, this year’s survey shows a significant increase – attributable to the coronavirus crisis – in the desire for more innovation in certain areas. For example, 57 percent of French respondents expressed that they would like to see more support for innovation targeting improved healthcare and long-term care (+15% compared with 2019). Some 53 percent call for the promotion of innovation targeting the creation of new jobs (+15%), 47 percent want to see innovation fostered that helps in the fight against climate change (+10%), and 23 percent want to see it help improve security (+7%).

**Growing international competition**

The French are aware of the state of innovation in their country and the fact that Europe lags behind the competition internationally. But when it comes to assessing their national performance, the French still give their own country a rather good rating. A total of 55 percent think that France performs fairly well or very well on international comparison in terms of technological progress. On the other hand, 34 percent see a rather poor level of performance, and eight percent see a dismal state of affairs in their country. On the whole, the French are slightly more positive in their self-assessment than are Europeans, on average. However, the French express less confidence in their country’s policy framework and economic conditions for innovation: For example, 43 percent think that the national framework conditions for innovation are poor or very poor, while only 36 percent consider the conditions in their country to be good (across Europe, this figure is at 45%).

**More European cooperation**

Some 56 percent of French respondents see the continent of Europe as maintaining a good position internationally with regard to technological innovation. Only a small group of 32 percent see the EU in a rather poor position. A direct comparison with countries that consistently deliver on innovation highlights Europe’s weaknesses. In the areas of AI, big data or blockchain technology, for example, 58 percent of French respondents put the United States ahead of European countries. A total of 60 percent see the People's Republic of China as having an advantage over Europe.

Give Europe’s relative lag, a clear majority of French respondents (55%) are in favor of increased cooperation between EU states on innovation. Some 14 percent consider the current state of cooperation sufficient, and 17 percent would prefer less European and more French national initiatives. The effects of the coronavirus crisis have not diminished the desire for more cooperation among EU states. In fact, the share of those advocating cooperation within Europe has grown by three percent.

Brigitte Mohn, a member of the Bertelsmann Stiftung board of directors, sees the findings as a clear appeal to policymakers and the business sector: “Particularly in the area of innovation and the promotion of cutting-edge technologies, we in Europe must cooperate with one another much more vigorously instead of seeking to go it alone on the national level. Enhancing our technological competitiveness while at the same time working to solve urgent societal problems requires ambitious innovation-policy goals and implementation mechanisms more efficient than those currently in place. Moreover, in the current crisis, we must not shy away from investment in innovation; rather, we need to invest more, in a countercyclical manner, in order to unlock future potential.”

Additional information:

The “European Opinion Survey on Popular Attitudes Toward Innovation” was carried out by Dalia Research on behalf of Germany’s Bertelsmann Stiftung (eupinions project) in August 2019. The survey was conducted in 28 EU member states, with a total of 12,263 participants. The survey sample reflects the EU’s current population distribution in terms of age (16–65 years), sex and region/country. In a follow-up survey conducted in June 2020, questions from the original survey were repeated in order to gauge the possible effects of the global coronavirus pandemic on Europeans’ opinions.

eupinions is an independent platform for European public opinion. They collect, analyse and comment on what the European public thinks about current political issues and megatrends. eupinions employs cutting-edge data collection techniques. Every quarter, they collect samples from each EU member state in 22 languages. The data meets the highest scientific standards and is representative with regard to age, gender, education and country/region. eupinions is a project of Bertelsmann Stiftung. The data is collected by Dalia Research.

Further information: <https://eupinions.eu/de/home>

The survey is part of the global research being conducted in association with the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Reinhard Mohn Prize 2020. The theme of the Reinhard Mohn Prize 2020 is “Fostering innovation. Unlocking potential.” It is looking for solutions that may enable Europe to generate technological change that benefits society. The Reinhard Mohn Prize 2020 is being awarded to Nechemia (“Chemi”) Peres, chairman of the Board of Directors of Israel’s Peres Center for Peace and Innovation. With this award, the Bertelsmann Stiftung is honoring the entrepreneur for his exceptional commitment to fostering innovation, which has benefited economic goals and the broader society in equal measure. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the award ceremony will be held in 2021.

About the Reinhard Mohn Prize:

The Reinhard Mohn Prize is given in memory of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's founder, Reinhard Mohn († October 2009). Since 2009, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has awarded the €200,000 prize to internationally renowned individuals who have played a key role in developing forward-looking solutions to social and political challenges. The prize is given based on a global search for innovative concepts and exemplary solutions to challenges that will have a decisive impact on Germany’s future.

For more information, visit: [www.reinhard-mohn-preis.de](http://www.reinhard-mohn-preis.de)

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**About the Bertelsmann Stiftung: Inspiring people. Shaping the future.**

The Bertelsmann Stiftung is committed to enabling social participation for everyone –politically, economically and culturally The issues we address are education, democracy, Europe, health, values and the economy. In doing so, we focus on people, since only they can change the world and make it better. We share knowledge, promote expertise and develop solutions. A nonprofit foundation, the Bertelsmann Stiftung was established in 1977 by Reinhard Mohn. For more information, please visit: [www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de)