



## **Strict but fair?**

### **Dutch views on Turkish accession (2004 – 2005 Eurobarometer surveys)**

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## **Executive Summary**

The events of 11 September 2001, the murder of film-maker Theo van Gogh by a Dutch Moroccan extremist in late 2004, and the discovery of extremist Islamist networks in the Netherlands have all contributed to the current debate on Islam in the Netherlands. The rejection of the EU constitution in the Dutch referendum on 1 June 2005 also raised questions about the level of support for European integration by the Dutch public.

So far, however, neither the debate on Islam nor the new debate on the EU have undermined Dutch support for EU enlargement and Turkish accession. The key findings of this analysis, carried out by ESI and based on Eurobarometer surveys done in 2004 and 2005, are the following:

A relative majority of Dutch citizens (48%) is in favor of further EU enlargement. Support of EU enlargement among young Dutch citizens (59%) is significantly above the Dutch average.

Dutch support for Turkey's EU accession is 41%, significantly above the EU average (31%), ranking the Netherlands fourth among all EU member states. The strongest support for Turkish EU accession comes from young Dutch citizens.

Dutch opposition to enlargement and Turkey's accession played a minor role in rejecting the EU constitution. Only 3% of all "No"-voters mention Turkey as one of their reasons to vote against the EU constitution. Opposition to enlargement is mentioned by 6% of all "No"-voters. Lack of information is considered as the main reason for rejecting the constitution (mentioned by 32% of all "No"-voters)

## 1. Attitudes towards enlargement

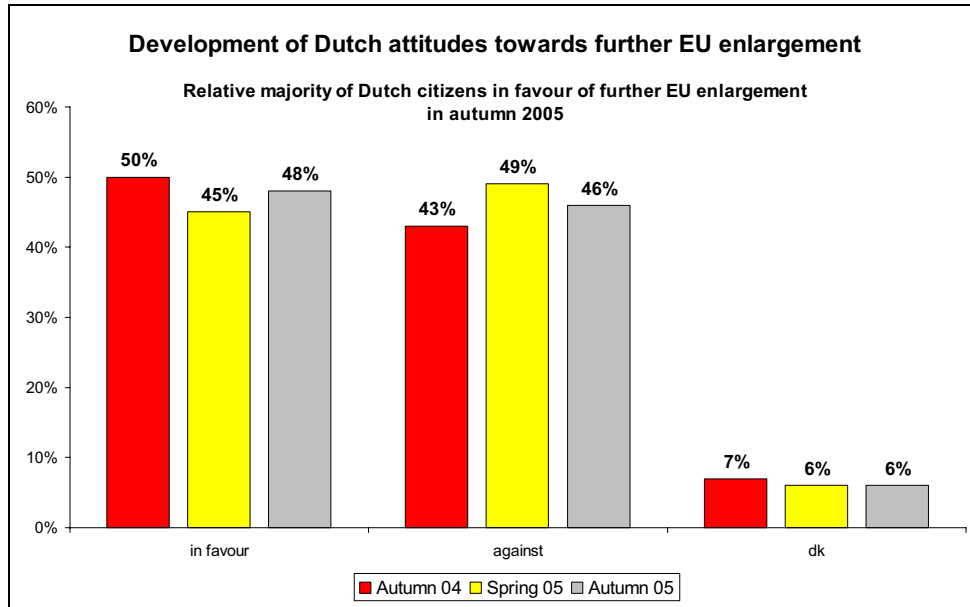


Diagram 1, Sources: Eurobarometer 62, autumn 2004; Eurobarometer 63.4, spring 2005; Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

A relative majority of Dutch citizens is supporting further EU enlargement.

Since autumn 2004, Dutch support for further EU enlargement has decreased by 2 percent from 50% to 48%. However, the **most recent** trend is a rise in support for enlargement by 3 percent between spring 2005 and autumn 2005. The Dutch referendum on the European Constitution took place on 1 June 2005.

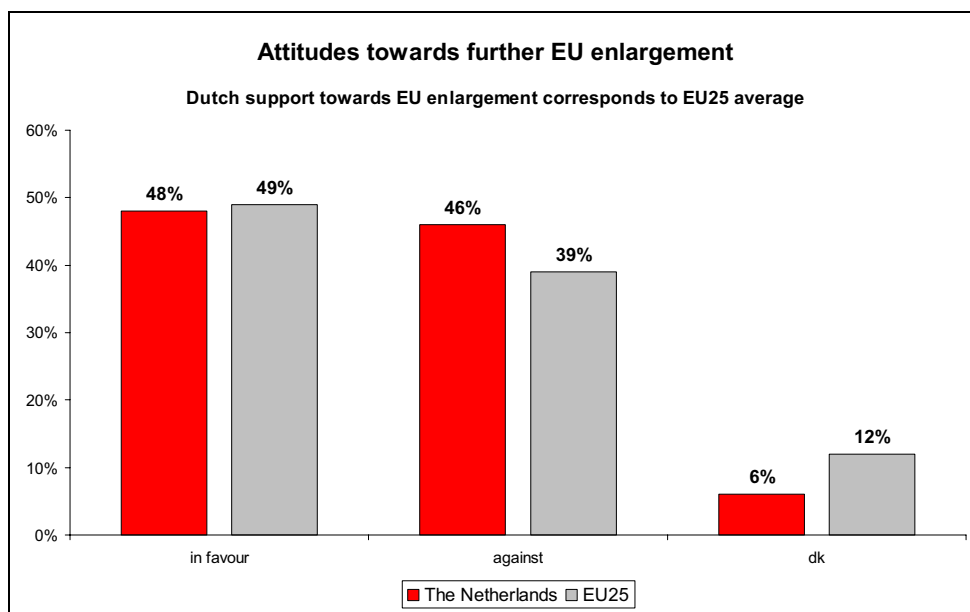


Diagram 2, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

Dutch support for further EU enlargement (48%) is close to the EU average (49%). It exceeds the average support level among the old EU15 member states (44%).

Support among the new member states – on average 69% - is 20 percent above the EU average. Greece (74%), Slovenia (74%), Poland (72%) and Lithuania (69%) are the strongest supporters of further enlargement.

The clear majority of young Dutch citizens (59%) is in favor of further EU enlargement.

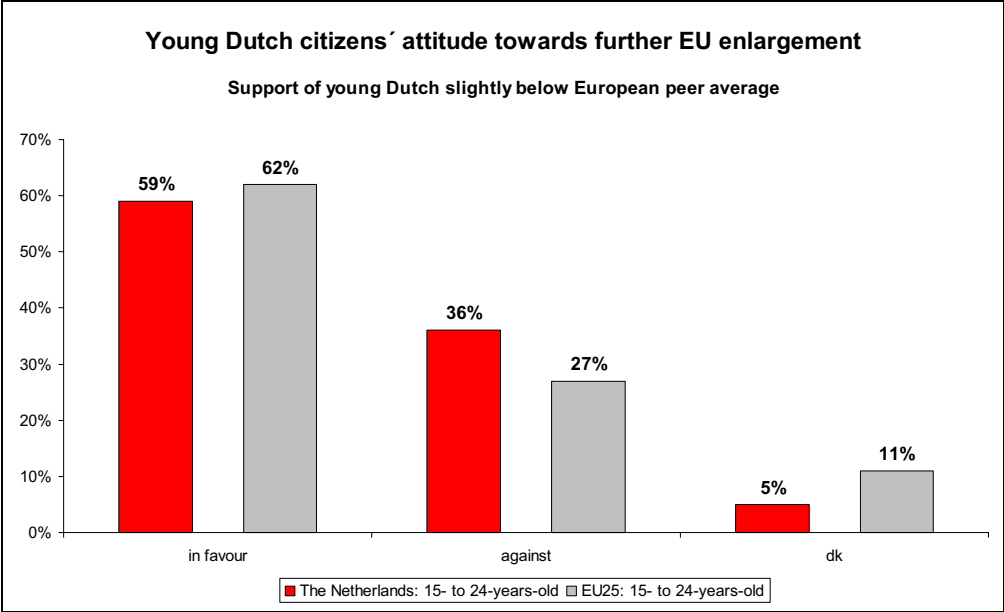


Diagram 3, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

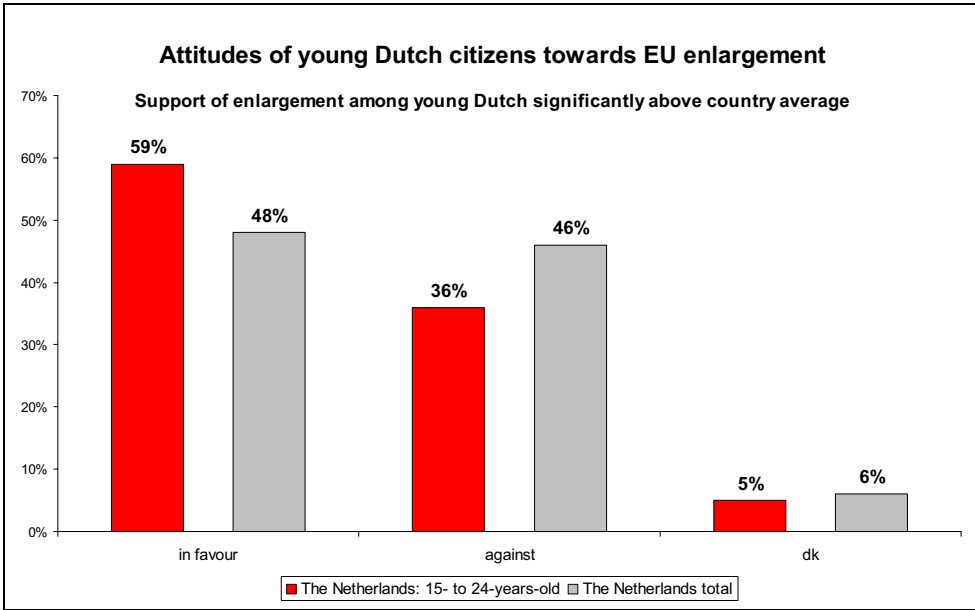


Diagram 4, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

56% of Dutch citizens who consider their political orientation as “left” are in favor of further EU enlargement. The greatest opposition is shown by the political right (37% in favor, 60% against). Among the political centre, support and opposition both account for 47%.

Dutch students are the greatest supporters of further enlargement (61%), followed by the self-employed (58%). Unemployed Dutch citizens rank third (54%) and show more support than Dutch managers (51%). Manual workers show the weakest support (40%).

## 2. Attitudes towards Turkey’s accession

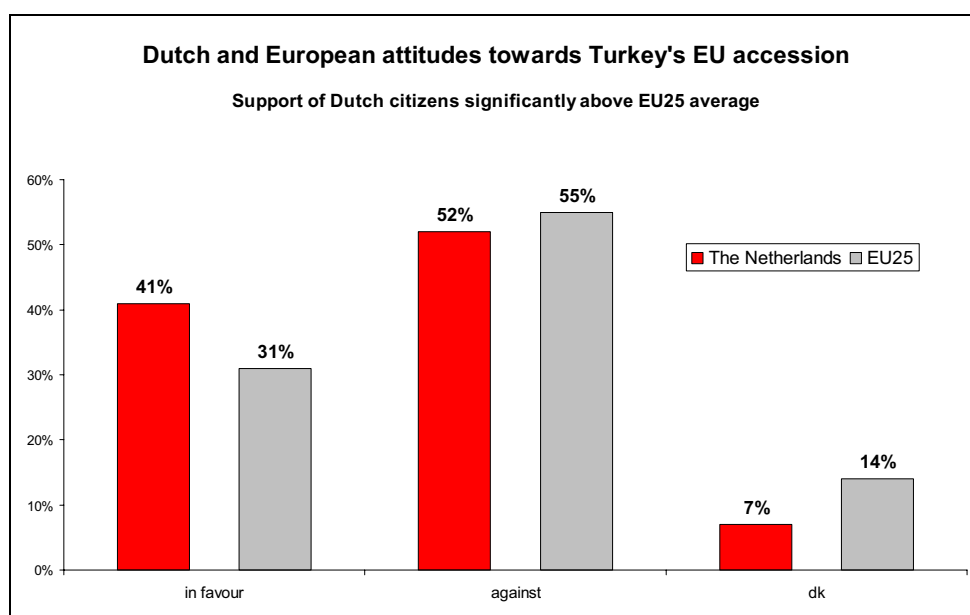


Diagram 5, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

With 41% in favor of Turkey’s accession to the European Union, the Netherlands are one of the strongest supporters of Turkey’s EU accession. They rank fourth among all EU member states and second among the “old” member states. Only Slovenia (49%), Sweden (48%) and Poland (42%) show greater support.

Hungary demonstrates the same support level as the Netherlands, followed by Spain and Portugal (both 40%). The weakest support comes from Austria (11%), Cyprus (16%) and Luxemburg (19%).

The Netherlands are one of only three countries that have seen a rise in support for Turkey’s EU accession (2 percent) since spring 2005. The same is true for Denmark (3 percent) and Austria (1 percent).

On average support for Turkey has decreased by 4 percent among EU member states. Lithuania (-15 percent) and Poland (-12 percent) have seen the strongest relative decline in support since spring 2005.

## Age

Young Dutch citizens are the only age group with an absolute majority in favour of Turkey's EU accession. 55% of 15- to 24-year-olds support it, 15 percent above their EU peers.

Support declines to 41% among 25- to 39-year-olds, to 39% among citizens aged 40- to 54-years and to 36% among citizens aged 55 and older. Opposition to Turkey joining the EU increases with age.

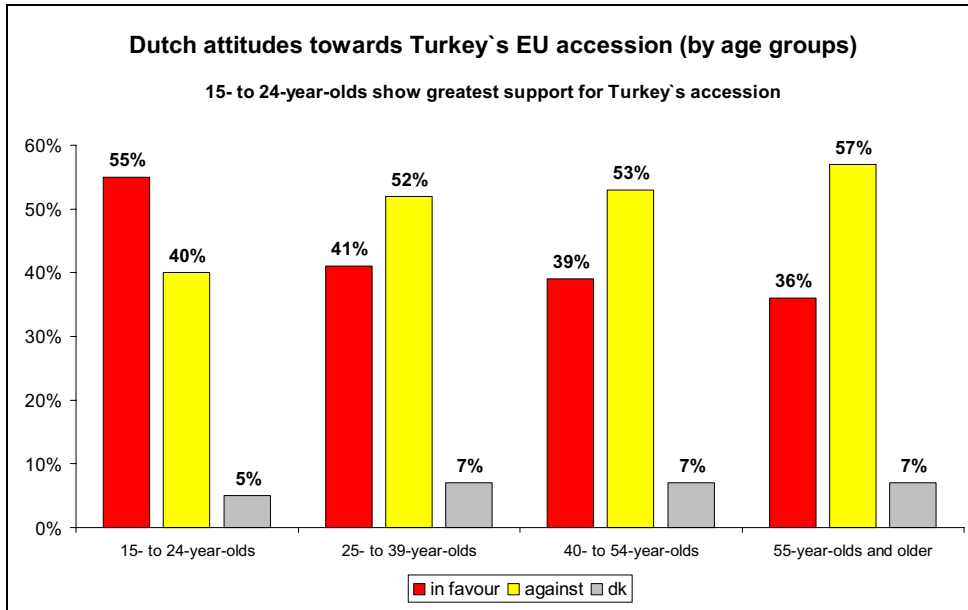


Diagram 5, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

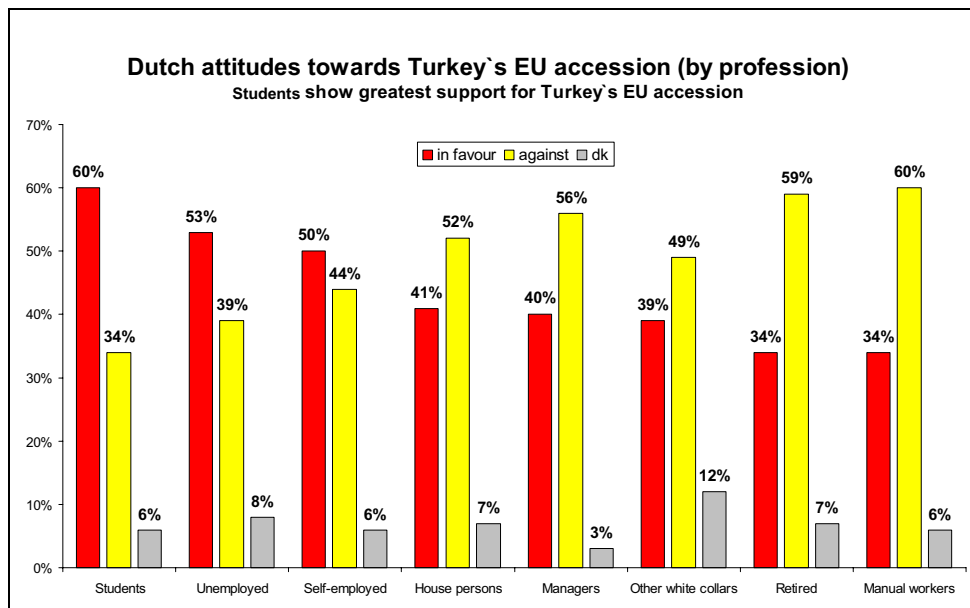


Diagram 6, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

Students show the greatest support towards Turkey’s accession. 60% of Dutch students are in favour of Turkey’s joining, putting them 19 percent above the EU average.

Unemployed citizens already rank second (53% in favour of Turkey joining), followed by self-employed citizens (50%) and house persons (41%). Remarkably, Dutch managers only rank fifth, while on EU average managers rank second. Support is weakest among retired citizens and manual workers, of whom only 34% favour Turkey joining the EU.

### Political Orientation

A majority of Dutch citizens who consider their political orientation as “left” support Turkey’s EU accession. With 50% in favour, support is 13 percent above the EU average.

37% of the “political centre” and 33% of the “political right” are in favour of Turkey joining the European Union.

Opposition to Turkey is weakest among the “political left”. 43% are against Turkey’s EU accession. Opposition increases to 63% among the “political right”.

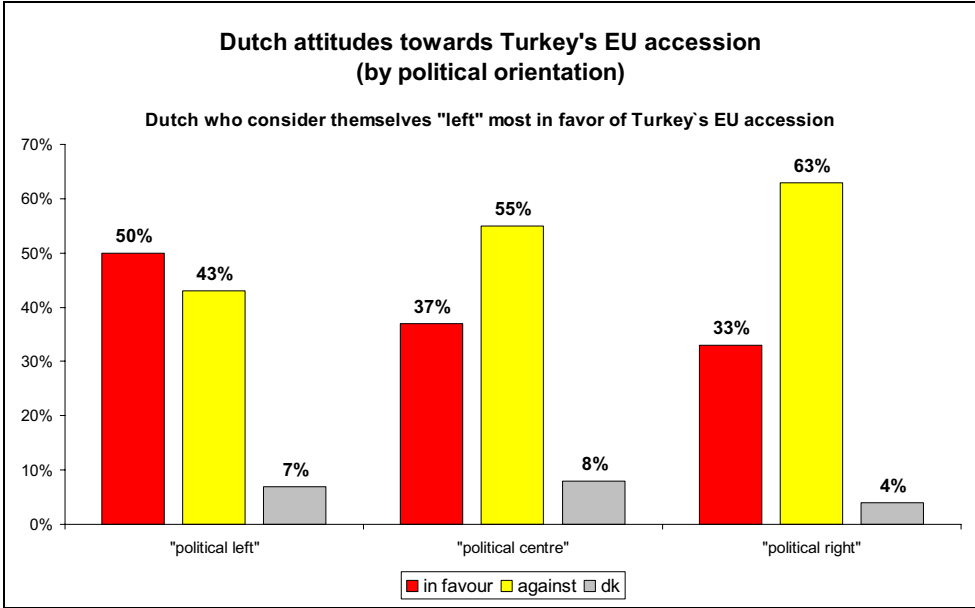


Diagram 7, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

### 3. Reasons for Turkey's accession

In general, Dutch citizens display a more positive but also more demanding set of opinions towards Turkey's accession than the European average.

Dutch citizens tend to show stronger support for pro-arguments of Turkey's joining. With regards to pre-conditions they also tend to be stricter than the European average.

While 83% of all respondents in the EU require Turkey to systematically respect Human Rights before joining, this pre-condition is supported by 95% of all Dutch respondents. While the EU average shows 76% saying Turkey will have to significantly improve the state of its economy, this argument is made by 83% in the Netherlands.

On the other hand, only 46% of Dutch respondents worry that cultural differences between Turkey and the European Union are too significant to allow for Turkey's EU accession (55% in the EU). 61% of Dutch citizens are concerned that Turkey's accession could favour immigration to more developed countries, 3 percent below the EU average.

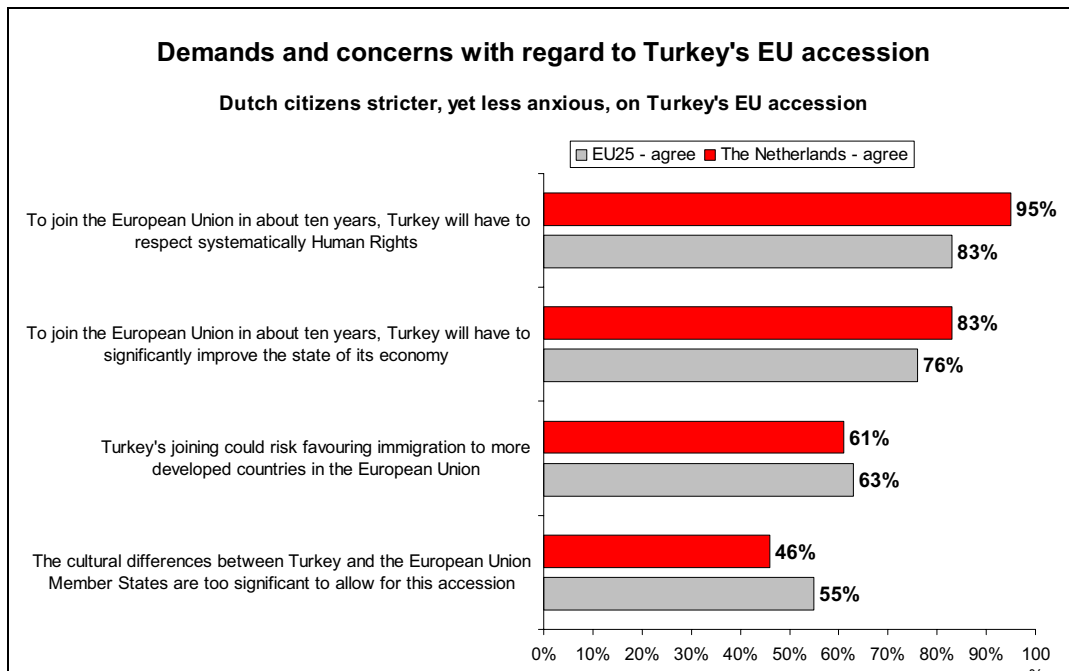


Diagram 8, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

46% of all Dutch respondents believe that Turkey's joining would foster the mutual understanding of Muslim and European values, an argument made only by 38% of their European counterparts. The EU average shows 35% saying Turkish EU membership would foster security in that region, while in the Netherlands, this is believed by 42%.



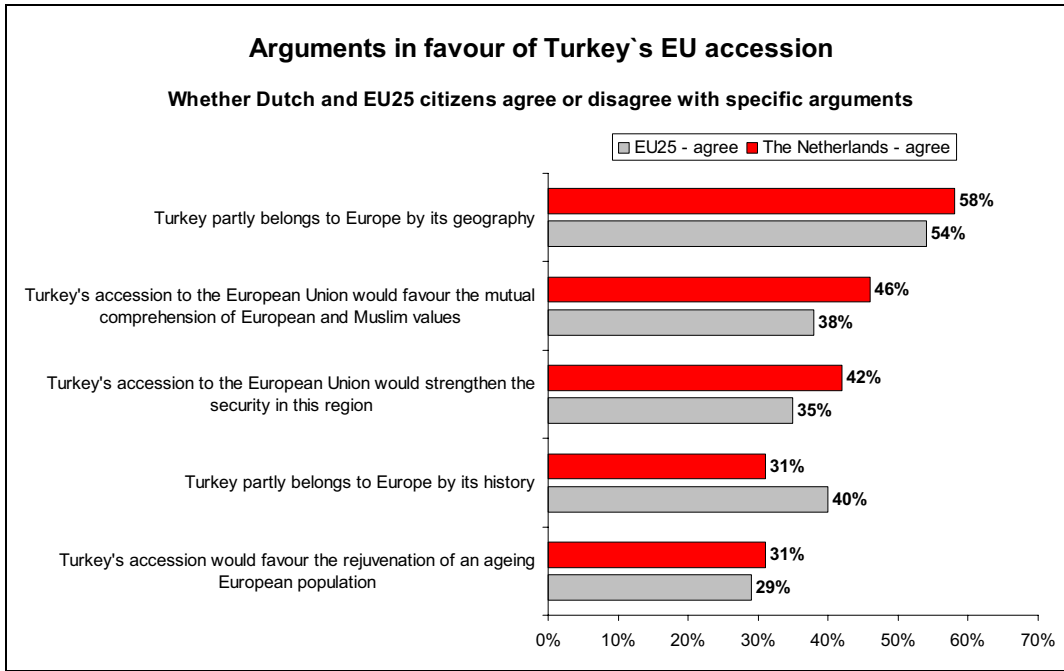


Diagram 9, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

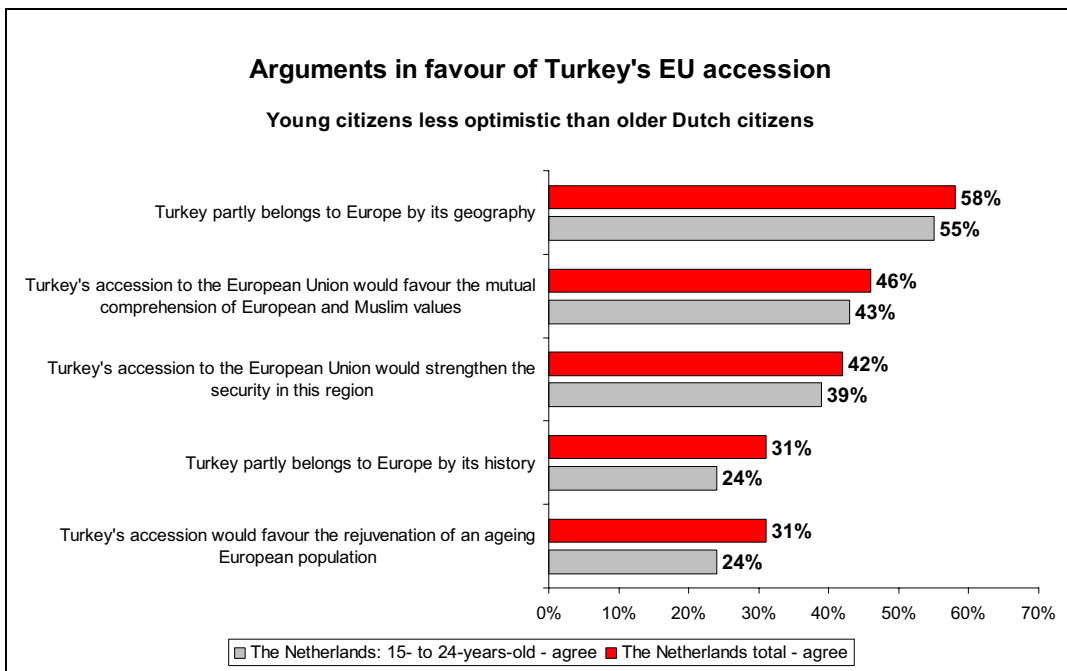


Diagram 10, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

#### 4. Turkey and the European Constitution

The reasons for the rejection of the EU constitution in the Dutch referendum on 1 June 2005 have been diverse. Nevertheless, lack of information has been mentioned by “NO”-voters as the main reason for voting against the EU constitution (32%), followed by concern of losing national sovereignty (19%) and opposition to the national government or certain political parties (14%).

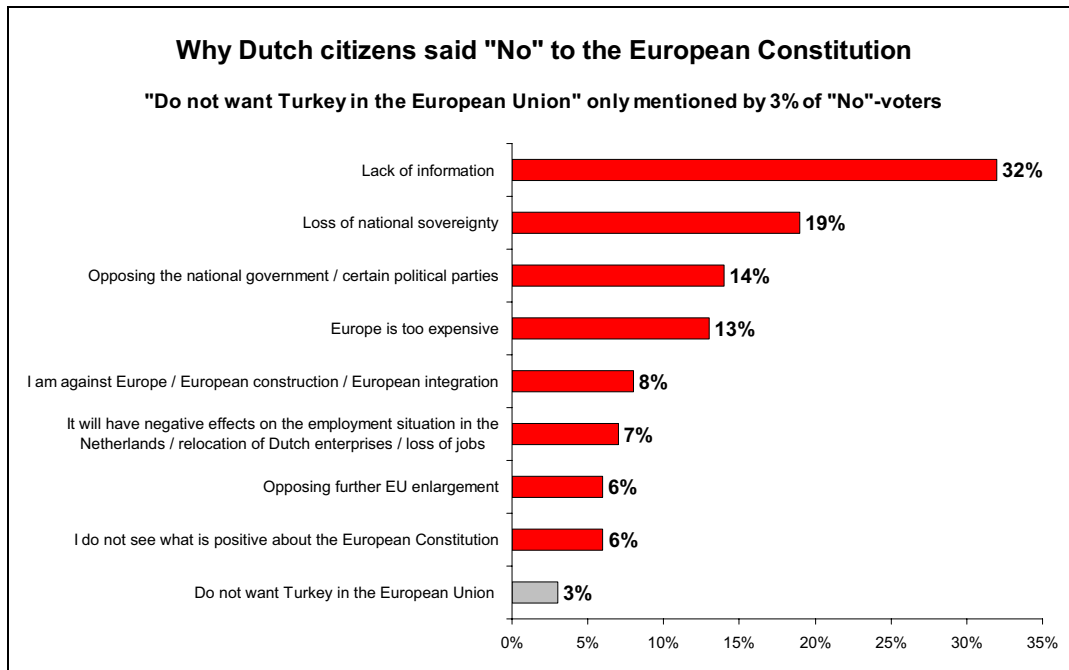


Diagram 11, Source: Eurobarometer 64, autumn 2005

Only 3% of all “No”-voters mention their opposition to Turkey’s EU accession as one of their reasons to vote against the EU constitution. Opposition to further EU enlargement has only been mentioned by 6% of all “No”-voters as one of their reasons to vote against the EU constitution.