

Britons Expect Little Change with New European Union Structure

More than a third of respondents are “happy” that Tony Blair was bypassed for the position of European President.

People in Great Britain do not believe the new structure of the European Union (EU) will lead to significant changes, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

On Nov. 19, Belgian Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy was chosen as the first President of the European Council, and British Labour politician Catherine Ashton was selected as the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 2,019 British adults, 54 per cent of respondents believe the United Kingdom’s relationship with the EU will be the same as it was before the election of Van Rompuy and Ashton.

Just 10 per cent of Britons expect ties to be better this time around, while 15 per cent foresee them becoming worse.

One-in-four Britons (26%) are satisfied with Van Rompuy becoming the new EU President, and about one-third (35%) are happy with Ashton’s role as the group’s Foreign Minister. However, more than two-in-five respondents are undecided when assessing both politicians.

Tony Blair

For months, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair was mentioned as a possible candidate for the EU presidency. More than a third of respondents (38%) claim to be happy that Blair did not get the job, while 19 per cent say they feel satisfied, but not happy. Less than one-in-four respondents are either dissatisfied (12%) or sad (5%) that Blair was not chosen.

Analysis

Britons are not paying a significant amount of attention to the EU at this point. A large proportion of respondents hold no definite opinions on either Van Rompuy or Ashton, and just one-in-ten believe that the new structure will actually be helpful for the UK.

Blair, no longer a factor in these discussions, did not count with a high level of support. Remarkably, the group of people who are happy to see him “lose” this “election” outnumber his backers by an 8-to-1 margin.

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