



Public perception of nanomaterials: A study by the European Union Observatory for Nanomaterials

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The European Union Observatory for Nanomaterials (EUON)

- What is it?
- What are the goals?
- How do EU citizens perceive nanomaterials?
 - Why was the study made?
 - How was it done?
 - Outcomes and conclusions
- Reflections and next steps for EUON

Providing info on nanomaterials

- Lack of information on nanomaterials causes mismatch between **perception** and **reality**
- To collect more info, Commission initiated the EU Observatory for Nanomaterials (**EUON**), adopted a definition for nanomaterials, and included nanos in REACH
- Aim of EUON is to improve **transparency** and **availability** of info on nanos in EU



Increasing transparency

- **Collect existing data** from a variety of public sources
- **Fill knowledge gaps** by performing studies
- **Share information** with the public
- EUON **complements** other EU actions

Why was the study made?

- Increased use of nanomaterials in consumer products
- Currently, public has low level of awareness of risks and benefits of nanomaterials
- Lack of awareness can result in fear of nanomaterials. This could deprive society of the benefits of nanomaterials



How was the study conducted?

- Study conducted in February 2020 and published in November 2020.
- Literature research and public surveys
 - **402** previous publications examined
 - **28** questions in survey
 - **5** countries
 - **1 000** respondents per country





Findings

- Awareness low but **increasing**
- **25 %** concerned about nanomaterials
- **Similar level of concern** as concerns over use of computers, social networks or how electronics may affect us
- **Lower level of concern** than for genetically modified organisms (GMOs), global warming and plastic waste

Consumer behaviour

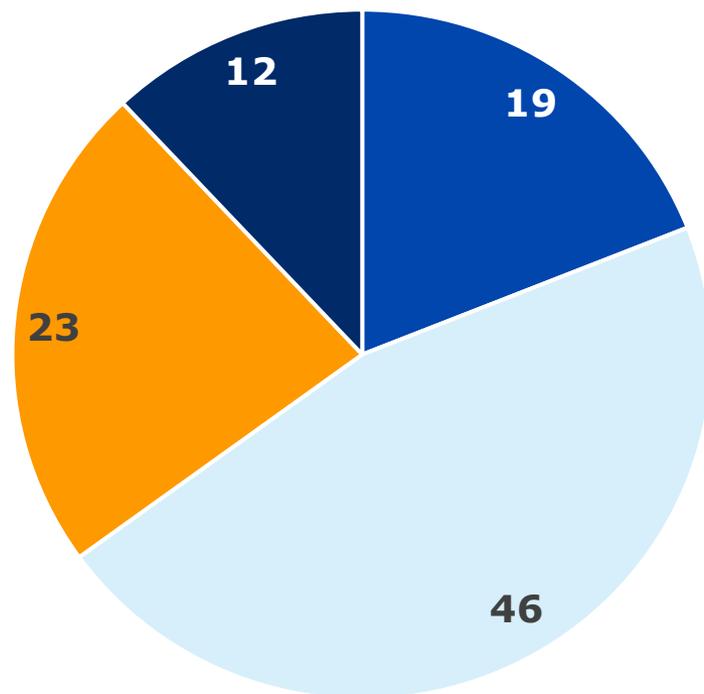
- Consumers want to buy **safe products**
- Consumers **cautious** when buying products with nanomaterials, particularly medicines, food and cosmetics
- The more consumers know, the less concern they have





Four types of attitudes

- **Enthusiasts (19 %):**
very positive attitude
- **Tolerating (46 %):**
open, tolerating attitude
- **Fearing (23 %):**
rejects/avoids
nanomaterials
- **No opinion (12 %)**





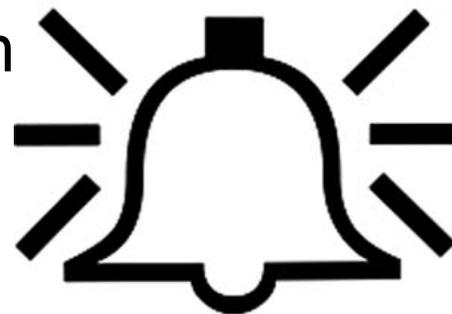
Information sources and trust in authorities

- More than 50 % feel equally informed compared to other modern technologies
- Sources: internet, television
- High level of trust in:
 - Scientists/research institutes
 - National health authorities
 - EU authorities/agencies



What impacts perception?

- Age, level of education and religious beliefs impact level of concern
- Some studies show perception driven by personality type (e.g. cautious individuals will avoid new technologies), rather than e.g. demographics, knowledge
- 87 % of public wish to be informed in products such as:
 - Cosmetics
 - Food
 - Medicines





Conclusions

- Increased awareness of nanomaterials important to understand benefits and avoid risks
- Consumers are **cautious** but **not overly concerned** about nanomaterials
- People trust information coming from scientists, national and EU institutions
- Better **availability** and **accessibility of information** correlates with increased acceptance



Thank you!

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