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The Europcar Transportation & Mobility Observatory finds 18% of Europeans are ready to do without their cars

- *26% of those surveyed believe travel would cost less if they didn't have a car*
- *Two out of three Europeans have already rented a car*
- *Safety and reliability are much bigger concerns than the environment*

Europcar, in partnership with polling institute OpinionWay, has released the findings of the maiden edition of the Europcar Transportation and Mobility Observatory. This survey, which is designed to decipher European practices in this area and to identify new types of behavior, is based on responses from more than 5,300 people, age 18 and over, in seven European countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the UK.

1 European out of 5 is ready to do without a car and consider alternative solutions

Europeans continue to be attached to their cars. Of the 85% of Europeans owning at least one car, 18% said they had considered doing without their cars when presented with alternative solutions such as car rental and carpooling. This proportion even reaches as much as 35% in France, the leader among the European countries ahead of Portugal (24%), Italy (19%) and Germany (17%). This trend primarily concerns urban residents, especially young ones.

In all these European countries, the main reason is to reduce transportation and mobility costs. Two-thirds (66%) of Europeans who considered doing without their cars thought that would make travel less expensive. In this respect, Italians are the leaders at 71%, followed by the French at 68%. Yet, 76% of Europeans think this solution would make traveling more difficult and 71% felt they would leave less often on weekend trips or vacations.

"Questioning car ownership seems to be a long-term trend," stated Guirec Grand-Clément, Global Sales and Marketing Director of Europcar International. "Europeans increasingly see renting a car as an increasingly attractive alternative to meet their new lifestyle needs. Renting a car seems to be a more rational decision, economically."

2 out of 3 Europeans have already rented a car, and 86% expect to

In all, 62% of Europeans have already rented a car. In this area, the French lead the way at 75%, while the Belgians and Italians bring up the rear at 49% and 43%, respectively. Vehicles are mainly rented for utilitarian purposes, such as moving (for 23% of Europeans) and as a replacement vehicle during car repairs (22%). When moving, 39% of the French have rented a vehicle. Car rentals are also increasingly seen as a solution for vacations and long international trips (17%).

For travel and leisure trips, the personal car is still highly attractive. For 54% of Europeans the personal car offers the greatest freedom, while 50% think it is the most flexible solution. Yet Europeans are very receptive to the benefits of combined solutions (train/air + car rental or public transportation). The combination air/train + car rental solution is considered the least tiring by 36% of respondents, while 43% see the train/air + public transportation combination as the most environmentally-friendly solution.

Environmental awareness still does not carry much weight in the face of cost and safety concerns, although there are some encouraging signs that this is changing

The impact on the environment ranks 6th (75%) among factors to be taken into account when considering transportation means, far behind safety (95%), reliability (95%) and price (93%). Italy, Portugal and Spain scored above average at 88%, 79% and 78%, respectively, while France was slightly below average at 74%.

If 54% of Europeans often think about how much it costs to use their cars, 27% are concerned about the impact of car pollution. In the southern European countries, a greater share of respondents said they often consider the environmental impact of car pollution: 35% of Portuguese, 34% of Italians and 33% of French, versus just 18% of German and British respondents. Could it be because Germany and the UK have already been working on this aspect?

While a vehicle's age is recognized as an important factor, there is a big misconception about the average age of rental cars. Europeans in general estimate the average age at 3.9 years. Though well above the actual figure -- for example, the average age of Europcar's fleet is just over four months -- the French propose the lowest age (2.8 years). The French are also the first to make a connection between the average age of a vehicle and its effectiveness in fighting pollution: 60% of French, compared with 30% of Germans.

Lastly, in a promising sign of growing environmental awareness, 38% of Europeans and 40% of the French said they were prepared to pay more to rent an ecological car, which clearly shows they want to play a role in reducing pollution.

About Europcar

Owned by the French private equity firm Eurazeo, Europcar is the European leader in passenger car and light utility vehicle rentals. The company serves business and leisure customers throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region. Excluding franchise operations, in 2007 Europcar signed more than 10 million rental contracts, with 7,700 employees and a fleet exceeding 215,000 vehicles. In September 2008, Europcar and the leading player in North America, Enterprise Rent a Car, joined forces in a strategic alliance which forms the world's largest car rental network, with more than 1.2 million vehicles and 13,000 locations in 162 countries. For more information: www.europcar.com

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