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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TURKEY

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Satisfaction with life

81% of people in European Union (EU) member countries overall express general satisfaction with their lives, whereas the figure is 71% for Turkey. However, the proportion of people dissatisfied with their lives is greater than that in Turkey in only 9 out of 30 countries participating in the research.

Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy

The percentage of people expressing satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in their country is 57% in the EU member countries but only 49% in Turkey. When asked to evaluate the functioning of democracy in the EU rather than in their home countries, the level of satisfaction among the public in the member states was almost the same as that in Turkey with a figure below 50%. 12 countries expressed higher levels of dissatisfaction with the functioning of their democracies compared to Turkey (47%).

Expectations for the future

The Turkish public is considerably more optimistic about the future than the EU public overall. 43% of the people in Turkey have positive expectations regarding the economic situation whereas no other member or candidate country expressed such high optimism. At least at the time the interviews were conducted there was a general pessimism about the economy in the EU.

When asked to assess the financial situation of their households, respondents in no member country displayed a more optimistic picture than Turkey. Only people in Romania, (42%) and Northern Cyprus (40%) appeared to be more optimistic than Turkey.

People expecting a deterioration in their employment/working conditions in their countries drew a much more optimistic picture for their individual cases and expected their conditions to mostly remain the same.

The most important problems faced by the country

When asked to indicate the two most important problems faced by the country, relative differences were observed in the agenda of Turkey compared with countries in the EU. According to the Turkish public, the two foremost problems are unemployment and general economic conditions, followed - with a big gap - by terrorism and inflation. Education and the health system are cited as the two foremost problems by groups of 12% and 19%, respectively.

Unemployment and general economic conditions also top the agenda of the EU public overall. Crime ranks in third place in the EU, whereas it ranks only in seventh place in Turkey. Terrorism is ranked third in Turkey and fourth in the EU, together with the health system and inflation. Migration is in fifth place according to the EU poll, whereas it is only ranked ninth in Turkey.

There are meaningful differences in the importance countries attach to different problems.

Approach to European identity

An overwhelming majority (96%) of the Turkish public state that they are “proud of being Turkish” whereas the proportion of those who are proud of their nation is considerably lower in the EU member states (86%). While Slovenia and the Republic of Cyprus rank similar with

regard to the level of pride in their national identity, three countries ranked even higher than Turkey; namely Greece and Finland (97%) and Ireland (98%).

Only 48% of the Turkish public expressed that they were proud of being European, whereas 7% said that they did not feel themselves as Europeans. In no other country was a lower ratio of pride in being European expressed.

In the EU, there is almost nobody who does not feel himself European, and the percentage of people being proud of being European is 68%. It is obvious that there are important differences between EU member countries and Turkey from the perspective of adopting European supra-identity

Comparison of local and European identity

When compared to continuing ties to locality, loyalty to Europe is relatively low in EU countries (67%). However, this percentage is only 27% in Turkey and it is the lowest expressed loyalty ratio among the 30 countries. The second to Turkey is the Republic of Cyprus (33%).

Left-right ideological differentiation

In Turkey, about 38% of people see themselves on the right of the ideological spectrum, whereas only 33% place themselves on the left. The opposite tendency is observed in the EU. In all countries except for Turkey and Northern Cyprus, more people consider themselves from the left wing. Only in Finland did the two groups equal each other.

Familiarity with the European flag

Only 5% of respondents in member states are not familiar with the EU's 12-star symbol, whereas this figure reaches 39% in Turkey.

Familiarity with the EU flag in Turkey (59%) is considerably lower than in the EU countries (94%). Those who were not familiar with the EU flag were not asked any further questions about what the flag represented. Those who were familiar with the EU flag were asked what this flag actually represented. Of these, 83% gave the correct answer to this question (i.e. Europe and EU institutions) while in the EU countries it was 91% of those who were familiar with the EU flag. Taking the low familiarity with the EU flag in Turkey into account, only about one out of every two persons correctly recognizes the EU flag. In the EU countries, even after taking into account only those individuals who are familiar with the EU flag, we still see that 9 out of 10 persons correctly recognize the EU flag.

In Turkey, the percentage of people who identify themselves with this flag is only 30% while it is much higher in the EU member states at 50%.

While only 40% agree with the idea of hoisting the EU flag next to the national flag outside public buildings, a higher proportion is against it (42%). However, 55% of European Union respondents are in favour of having the European flag outside public buildings, in addition to their national flags.

Level of information about the EU

The general level of information about the EU is worryingly low. Only 25% indicate that they are informed while 73% say that they are not informed about the EU. Turkey scored the lowest among the 30 countries surveyed with 83% of respondents considering themselves not

to be informed about the EU. With 41% of its poll indicating they were informed, the Netherlands topped the ranking. Consequently, there is no country where the majority of the people consider themselves informed about the EU.

When objective criteria are used to replace self-evaluation to measure people's level of knowledge about the EU, Turkey scores the lowest in giving correct answers to questions about the EU, its institutions and policies.

Sources used to obtain information about the EU

The primary sources of information about the EU are similar in Turkey and in the EU member states. Television, daily newspapers and radio are the main sources of information; however, the intensity of resorting to such sources differs. Television is used as a source of information by a much larger group in Turkey (91%) than in the EU (71%) member countries. The figure for people using daily newspapers as a source of reference is much the same in Turkey and the EU, whereas the use of radio and Internet is much lower in Turkey compared with the EU.

Sources preferred to obtain information about the EU

Preferred sources of information are also similar in Turkey and the EU countries; but their relative weights are different. In the EU, television is preferred by only 58% while this number is 83 % in Turkey. It is important to note that a larger group of people indicates a willingness to use radio as a source of information than the actual reported frequency of use.

Mass media coverage of EU topics

According to 41% of the Turkish public, there is extensive media coverage in Turkey on EU topics while this ratio is only 11% in EU member countries. A great majority in Turkey considers this coverage as pro-EU while only 13% consider it against.

Familiarity with the EU institutions

When compared with EU member countries, familiarity with the EU institutions is lower in Turkey. Compared with the EU member states, a smaller group of people in Turkey is acquainted with all the EU institutions, except for the EU Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee.

The role of EU institutions in daily life

The Turkish public sees the role of EU institutions in their daily lives to be of lower importance compared to people in EU member countries.

The level of trust in EU institutions

Levels of trust in EU institutions are higher in EU member states than in Turkey. In Turkey, a majority of the public indicates a lack of trust for all EU institutions cited. Nevertheless, a slight majority (51%) of Turkish public opinion indicates trust when asked to evaluate the EU as a whole.

Besides the EU institutions the most trusted institution both in Europe (69%) and in Turkey (89%) is the military. The second most trusted institution in Turkey is the government (80%) while in EU members those trusting their government is only 34%. In Turkey, religious institutions are trusted by 77%, the parliament by 76% and the justice system by 60%. In EU countries, levels of trust in these institutions are 31, 38 and 20 percentage points lower respectively. In Turkey, levels of trust in radio (50%), television (47%), the printed press (34%) and United Nations (42%) are lower compared with levels in EU countries.

The opinion of the Turkish public on EU membership

62% of the Turkish public state that membership of the EU will be a “good thing” while 12% hold the contrary view. 20% are undecided. Compared with early 2004 results, the ratio of those indicating that membership will be a “good thing” has declined.

35% of the people in Turkey indicated that they would be sorry to hear that the EU was being scrapped. Compared with 39% in EU member states, the Turkish figure is somewhat lower. However, only 17% replied that they would be relieved to hear that the EU was scrapped which reveals that there is limited opposition to the EU.

What does the EU mean to people?

The EU has a different meaning for Turkish people than for people in EU countries. For Turkish people, “economic prosperity” (48%), “social protection” (34%) and “freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU” (30%) top the list, whereas the European public associates the EU with “freedom to travel” (53%), “euro” (44%) and “peace” (36%). For the Turkish people, “peace” (29%), “democracy” (24%), “cultural diversity” (20%) are only secondary importance in this respect.

When asked about personal feelings associated with the EU, Turks and European people are more similar. Both sides put “hope” and “trust” at the top of the list. In Turkey “anxiety” comes third, whereas in EU countries “indifference” is in third place.

Fears about the EU

Fears about the EU among Turkish people are quite different to those in the EU member states. “Loss of power” dominates the fears of relatively small states such as Finland (78%), the Netherlands (56%), the Czech Republic (58%), Denmark (55%), Belgium (53%), while this fear is less in the larger member states, such as Germany (20%) and Poland (43%). Turkish people mostly fear that their language will be used less (59%) and the Turkish Lira will disappear (57%).

Impact of the EU in different policy areas

Except for housing, public transport and immigration, more than 50% of Turkish public opinion considers the role of EU in different policy areas to be positive, whereas people in the EU member states perceive a positive impact only in the areas of environmental protection, foreign affairs, the fight against terrorism and defence.

EU and sharing of sovereignty

Turkish public opinion is not clear about sharing of sovereignty within the EU by way of joint decisions on currency, agriculture and fisheries, broadcasting, press and cultural policy. However, they are against joint decisions concerning defence. Public opinion in EU member states favours joint decisions in the areas of defence, currency, agriculture and fisheries, but is against such an approach in the fields of education, health and social welfare and the fight against unemployment.

Perceptions of EU budget

Public opinion in Turkey and the EU member countries differ in their perceptions about the priorities of the EU budget. The complexity of the issue prevents a large group of respondents from volunteering an answer. Those who do respond indicate employment and social welfare (17%) and scientific research (16%) as the areas receiving the greatest share of expenditure from the EU budget. Only 6% of respondents in Turkey see agriculture and regional

assistance as priorities of the budget, while in Denmark, for example, 51% correctly cite agriculture as the primary budget item of the EU.

Future of the EU

Only in Finland, a majority of 51% is against a development towards a European political union. In Turkey, 67% supports such a development exceeding the average of 59% in the EU member states overall.

When the current speed of political integration is mentioned, all countries - except Austria, Sweden, Ireland, Finland and Denmark - find the current speed as falling behind their average expectations. In other words, with the exception of these five countries, the acceleration of integration has solid popular support.

Role of the EU over the next five years

While the percentage of Turkish people who indicate that the EU will play a more important role in their lives in five years is about the same as that in the EU member states, the number of those who foresee a less important role for EU is about three times the EU average. Romania (65%), Greece (59%), the Republic of Cyprus (62%) and Northern Cyprus (58%) have the largest group of respondents who expect a more important role for the EU.

Public opinion in Turkey and the EU states share similar priorities regarding the issues to be followed up by the EU. The top three items are the same for both. Turkish public opinion places the fight against unemployment (66%), poverty and social exclusion (51%) and terrorism (26%) at the top of their list. However, the relative weights of these items differ between the EU member states and Turkey.

Foreign policy and defence

The Turkish poll supports a common EU foreign policy (54%) and a common defence and security policy (61%) whereas in EU member states, the levels of support are 69% and 78% respectively.

More specific questions on common foreign and defence policy reveal that the Turkish public is relatively more conservative, cautious and less supportive than that of the EU. It would appear that for the Turkish public at least, these issues are too complicated to comfortably and coherently make up one's mind about. Further research is needed to clarify the implications of sharing of sovereignty on foreign and defence policy issues.

As regards the role the United States plays regarding certain issues, Turkish public opinion is less favourable than EU public opinion except in the case of the protection of the environment. A majority of public opinion in Turkey holds a negative attitude towards US policies in all the areas that were cited. However, only two policy areas (the fight against poverty and protection of the environment) are criticized negatively by the EU member states.

A comparison of the US and EU roles in different policy areas reveals that Turkish public opinion views the EU's role much more positively. The only area where Turkish public opinion gives less than 50% support to the EU is where the fight against terrorism is concerned. Overall, the Turkish public has a much more favourable opinion of EU policies than of those of the current US administration.