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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Hungary in the European Union

The Eurobarometer survey carried out one year after Hungary's EU accession in May 2004 shows that Hungarians are more satisfied with the life they lead compared to previous periods and more respondents expect their personal situation to improve in the medium term. At the same time, the survey indicates that many are disappointed with the benefits of membership one year after Hungary's accession. The level of support in favour of the country's membership has declined, while the number of people uncertain about membership has significantly increased. These changes may partially be due to the recent debates about the European Constitution.

Satisfaction with various areas of life

More than half (54%) of the respondents said they were satisfied with their lives, which is an increase of 4 percentage points compared to the last Eurobarometer survey carried out in the autumn of 2004. However, the proportion of people who feel satisfied with life is still lower in Hungary than the EU-25 (81%) average.

Approximately 28% of Hungarians said they expect a positive change in their lives over the next 12 months, while 21% expect their personal situation to worsen in the same period. Expectations are gloomier with regard to the financial situation of households: only 19% of respondents said it would improve, while 29% believed it would get worse over the next 12 months. Regarding their personal situation in the next five years, the majority of Hungarians are optimistic and the proportion of respondents expecting an improvement in their lives is similar in Hungary to that of the EU average (41% and 42%, respectively).

Problems faced by Hungary today

Most Hungarians mentioned unemployment (49%) and the economic situation (33%) when asked about the largest problems Hungary currently faces. When age groups are examined, the number of people concerned with unemployment was the highest among young people: 54% of respondents aged between 15 and 24 considered unemployment to be Hungary's largest problem. The economic situation was cited most frequently as the most important problem among the self-employed (43%) and managers (42%). Further problems Hungary faces included crime (29%) and the situation of health care services (27%). These are followed by inflation (18%) and pensions (10%).

Trust in various institutions

According to Hungarians, the European Union and the United Nations are the two most credible institutions (58% and 55% respectively). Trust in the EU was the highest in Hungary and Belgium (among member states) but greatest trust of all came from a candidate country, Romania (68%).

Roughly one-third of Hungarians trust the Hungarian government and parliament. Some 32% said they trusted the national government and 29% considered the

national parliament to be credible. Only 16% of Hungarians trust the local political parties, which is 3 percentage points lower than the EU average.

Opinions on Hungary's membership in the EU

Roughly one year after Hungary's EU accession, support for the country's membership has fallen to a record low. By the spring of 2005, it had decreased to 42% from 49% registered in the autumn of 2004 and 63% in the spring of 2003. Along with Latvia, Hungary is ranked 22nd on the list of member states vis-à-vis the level of support for membership. The country comes before the UK (36%), Austria (37%) and Malta (40%).

The proportion of those opposing Hungary's membership slightly increased to 12% from 10%, while Eurobarometer measured a significant increase in the number of uncertain respondents. The proportion of people claiming the country's membership is neither a 'good thing' nor a 'bad thing' has been rising for the past two years and reached 43% by the spring of 2005.

Among the 10 newcomers in the EU, Hungary is ranked 9th regarding support for membership coming only ahead of Malta. The number of people claiming that membership is a 'good thing' was highest in Lithuania (59%), Slovakia (54%) and Poland (53%).

Benefits of EU membership

As in autumn 2004, in spring 2005, most respondents said that EU membership had not increased Hungary's political or economic stability. Moreover, the proportion of Hungarians doubtful about economic and political benefits increased by 7 percentage points and 4 percentage points, respectively.

The proportion of respondents who feel more secure after Hungary's EU accession is highest (62%) among young Hungarians (aged between 15 and 24). Looking at occupations, the majority of students (71%) feel more secure since accession. The number of people who believe their situation did not get any more secure after EU membership is highest among house persons and the unemployed (55% and 50%, respectively).

Fears related to EU membership

In the autumn of 2004, the most serious concern of Hungarians vis-à-vis membership was that farmers could face more difficulties in the EU. By spring 2005, the majority of respondents (81%) said that the relocation of jobs to other member countries with lower production costs was their largest concern.

The increase of organized crime and drug trafficking, as well as the loss of influence of small countries, are also on the list of Hungarians' greatest fears concerning EU membership (69% and 52%, respectively). The proportion of people who fear that small member states lose their influence is higher in Hungary than in the EU-25

(43%) on average. Concerns about increasing payments to the EU and the loss of social benefits are on average higher elsewhere in the EU than in Hungary.

Sense of national belonging and European identity

92% of Hungarians said that they felt attached to Europe, which is the highest figure recorded in any of the 25 member states and the 5 countries or territories wishing to join the EU. Following Hungary, the sense of belonging is highest in Poland (83%) and Luxembourg (82%). On the other hand, only 32% of citizens of the Republic of Cyprus, 42% of Lithuanians and 44% of Greeks said they felt attached to Europe. 96% of Hungarians said they were attached to Hungary.

Being informed about the European Union

Most Hungarians believe they are not sufficiently informed about the EU, its institutions and activities even since the country became a member. In Hungary, 14% of respondents said they had no knowledge about the EU, while only 1% claimed to know the EU very well.

Out of the 4 questions on the symbols and basic information about the EU, Hungarians provided correct answers in 3 cases, a number higher than the EU average.

Being informed about the EU budget

One-fifth of Hungarians could not name the budgetary area on which the Union spends the most. 18% of respondents said that the EU spent most on agriculture, while 17% believe that most of EU revenues are spent on administration and personnel costs. Administration makes up the largest part of EU costs, according to nearly one third (31%) of EU citizens.

Awareness of EU institutions

Of all the EU bodies and organizations listed in the questionnaire, the European Parliament is the best-known EU institution in Hungary with 91% of respondents saying they had already heard of it. The next two best-known institutions are the European Commission (82%) and the Council of Ministers of the European Union (74%).

Sources of information on the EU

In Hungary, the most frequently used source of information on EU issues is the television (75% of the respondents mentioned it). This is followed by daily newspapers (43%) and radio (42%). A relatively large number of Hungarians (25%) gain information from friends and relatives.

According to the overwhelming majority of Hungarians, local television and radio channels and the written press cover EU matters to a sufficient degree. About half of

the respondents said that national media generally provide neutral coverage on the EU, although 36% believe that Hungarian television channels present the EU in too positive a way.

The role and meaning of the EU

As was found in the previous Eurobarometer survey, most Hungarians said in the spring of 2005 that the EU meant freedom to travel, study and work in the European Union. The proportion of people mentioning this is 52%, despite the fact that information on most old member states introducing labour restrictions on the free movement of workers from new member states has become widely known.

In the EU-25, fewer people on average associate the Union with economic prosperity than in Hungary, but as a result of using the Euro in everyday life, more respondents identify the EU with the common currency. Among Hungarians, it is house persons and unemployed people who tend to associate the EU with economic prosperity (30% and 32%, respectively).

The role of the EU in Hungary

Most Hungarians believe that the most important role the European Union plays is in the field of environmental protection (66%). The EU helps solving problems in the fight against terrorism, defence and foreign affairs matters, and in the field of fighting crime, according to 63%, 61% and 53% of respondents, respectively.

The international role of the EU

Nearly two-thirds of Hungarians believe that the global role of the European Union has become more important over the past five years. The largest proportion (77%) of respondents said that the EU plays a positive role in international environmental protection. Following this, most Hungarians believe the EU has a positive role in creating world peace (72%) and in the fight against terrorism (68%).

Future developments in the EU

Over the next period, according to the Hungarian poll, the EU should treat the fight against unemployment, poverty and social exclusion as the most important priority (53% and 52% respectively). Compared to the last Eurobarometer surveys in autumn 2004, Hungarians now regard environmental protection and quality of food products as more important priorities. The proportion of people considering the fight against terrorism as an EU priority has fallen to 12% from the previous 22%.

Support for strategic goals of the EU

The majority of Hungarians (83%) supports the EU's common defence and security policy and 73% agree that the EU should have a common foreign policy. Approximately 62% believe that the EU should appoint a foreign minister and 67% think that the Union should have a rapid military force that can be sent quickly to trouble spots when an international crisis occurs.

About two-thirds of respondents also support further enlargement of the EU (66%) and the European Monetary Union with the single currency (64%). Among all the countries surveyed, support for the euro is the highest in Luxembourg, Belgium (87% in both countries) and Ireland (86%), while the proportion of supporters is lowest in Sweden (48%), Turkey (46%) and the UK (28%).

The European economy

While the majority of EU citizens believe that the standard quality of life is better in the EU than in the US, Japan, China or India, most Hungarians think the quality of life is better in the US and Japan than in the EU.

Concerning the medium-term expectations on economic performance of the EU and Hungary, the majority of Hungarians predict that economic growth will be higher in the EU than in their home country. 61% of respondents said that the situation of the European economy will improve, while only 50% expect that growth will pick up in Hungary. Among the sectors of domestic economy, Hungarians are the most pessimistic about the situation of the labour market.

64% of the Hungarians and 54% of EU citizens on average answered 'no' to the question whether the EU can become the world's top economic power within the next five years.

The European Constitution

In Hungary, 70% of respondents said they had heard about the European Constitution, but only 9% said they knew its contents. In spite of this, 78% believe that the EU will be stronger in the world if all the member states ratify the current draft of the European Constitution.

Among the 25 members of the EU, the level of support for an EU constitution is highest in Hungary. Overall, in the member countries, 61% would support an EU constitution. The Eurobarometer recorded that 60% of French and 53% of Dutch respondents would support a European Constitution. However, both nations voted against the current version of the Constitution in referenda held in May and June of 2005.

The future expansion of the EU

The proportion of those supporting further enlargement of the European Union is 26 percentage points higher in Hungary than the average for the EU-25. At the same time, there are, on average, about twice as many citizens (38%) opposing a future expansion in the EU than in Hungary. However, 59% of Hungarians would restrict the group of countries that are allowed to join the EU and only 19% said that all countries wishing to join should be accepted.

Support for membership of specific countries

Like the overwhelming majority of EU citizens, more than four-fifths of Hungarians support the membership of Switzerland and Norway, although neither of the two countries is planning to initiate accession. Two-thirds of Hungarians would also welcome Iceland as a member.

Among Eastern European countries wishing to join the EU, Hungarians give greatest support (73%) to Croatia's accession. Croatian accession gets 21 percentage points lower support on average in the EU. Hungarian support for the accession of Bulgaria and Romania is 59% and 55%, respectively. These countries are expected to become full members in 2007.

The support for Turkey's membership is significantly higher in Hungary than the EU average (51% and 35%, respectively). Hungarians' support for the accession of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Serbia and Montenegro and Albania is lower (38%, 37% and 35%, respectively).

Opinion on Turkish membership

More than half (51%) of Hungarian respondents said they supported Turkey's EU accession (the EU average is 35%). The proportion of supporters is higher among Hungarian men (55%) than women (48%). Opinions are also quite different among groups of different professions. While 65% of students are in favour of Turkey's membership, 43% of managers and 47% of self-employed respondents oppose it. As for age groups, the proportion of supporters is highest among young people aged between 15 and 24.

Concerning the conditions for Turkish accession, 80% of Hungarians agree that the country should significantly improve its economy and 87% said it should respect human rights to be able to join in about ten years. 67% said that Turkey's accession could have the risk of immigration to more developed countries of the European Union.

The way of life in Hungary and in the EU

The majority (57%) of Hungarians do not go on annual holidays. Together with Turkey, Hungary ranks in top of the list of the countries surveyed (the corresponding rate in the EU-25 is 23%).

Nearly all households have a television and the penetration of mobile phones is largely similar in Hungary to the EU average (75% and 78%, respectively). However, there are less fixed phone lines in Hungarian households than on average in the EU (64% and 82%, respectively).

In Hungary 71% of respondents said they did not speak any foreign languages. Some 35% of Hungarians never attend religious services, excluding weddings and funerals. This rate is somewhat higher than EU member countries (29%) on average.