

# EUROBAROMETER 63

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2005

## NATIONAL REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### TURKEY

The survey was requested and coordinated by the Directorate General Press and Communication.

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The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

### ***Satisfaction with Life***

The percentage of people expressing general satisfaction with their lives has remained unchanged in the European Union (EU) Member States since the autumn of 2004 and remains at 81%.<sup>1</sup> In Turkey, this figure has increased by 2 percentage points to 73%.

Despite increasing levels of overall satisfaction with their lives, satisfaction among the Turkish public remains well below that of the EU.

### ***Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy***

In the autumn of 2004, some 49% of the Turkish public was content with the functioning of democracy in their country while in spring 2005 this number rose to 56%. In the EU Member States, satisfaction regarding the functioning of democracy in their respective countries went down over the same period from 57% to 53%. However, when asked to evaluate the functioning of democracy in the EU as a whole, the satisfaction of respondents fell below 50%, almost 10 percentage points below the figure given by respondents in Turkey.

In short, the Turkish public seems to be more satisfied with the way democracy functions in their own country and in the EU as a whole compared to the views of EU respondents about their own countries or the EU as a whole.

### ***Expectations for the Future***

The Turkish public is considerably more optimistic about the future than the EU public.

Excluding Ireland, the Turkish Cypriot Community and Sweden, Turkish people are more optimistic than other Europeans when asked about their lives in the upcoming year. More than 20% of respondents in Greece, Portugal and Hungary are pessimistic about the future.

When asked to assess the financial situation of households, no member country other than Ireland displayed a more optimistic picture than Turkey. Among other countries, only Romania and the Turkish Cypriot Community appeared to be more optimistic than Turkey.

In Turkey, the percentage of people who expect a deterioration in employment is 32% while this number remains higher in Greece (63%), the eastern part of Germany (62%), the Republic of Cyprus (61%), Portugal (59%), Belgium (52%), France (50%), the Netherlands (38%) and Austria (42%).

Compared to five years ago, 47% in Turkey consider their present conditions to be better while in EU Member States, this ratio is only 37%.

### ***The most important problems in Turkey***

When asked to indicate their country's two most important problems, differences were observed between Turkey and the EU Member States. According to the Turkish public opinion, the two foremost problems are unemployment and the general state of the economy followed, with a large gap, by terrorism, crime and education. While the first two priorities have not changed since last year, the third ranking priority, inflation, moved down to fifth place in spring 2005.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all comparisons with previous Eurobarometer results refer to autumn 2004.

In Turkey in 2004, terrorism was considered one of the two most important problems in the country by 18% of respondents, whereas this number increased to 29% in spring 2005. Before the most recent wave of terrorism in Europe, the trend observed in spring 2005 by Eurobarometer 63 in the EU Member States was the opposite to that in Turkey; i.e. 16% mentioned terrorism among the two most important problems of the country in 2004 whilst this declined to 10% in 2005.

### ***Comparison of Local and European Identity***

Among Turks, the sense of belonging to a locality is stronger than a sense of European identity. Compared to EU Member States, Turks indicate a higher sense of belonging to their province, region or country. When asked about their degree of belonging to Europe, 66% of respondents in EU Member States indicate that they feel 'attached' to Europe compared to only 30% in Turkey.

### ***Left-Right Ideological Differentiation***

In Turkey, about 42% (38% in 2004) of those polled see themselves on the right of the political spectrum, whereas only 35% (33% in 2004) place themselves on the left. The opposite tendency is observed in the EU. In all countries except for Turkey, the Republic of Cyprus and Lithuania, more people consider themselves to be on the left. It is interesting to note that among the Turkish Cypriot Community, compared to 2004, where support for the right was higher, the balance shifted in favour of the left in 2005.

### ***Level of Information about the EU***

In spring 2005, the perception regarding the overall level of information about the EU has increased both in the Member States and Turkey. The *subjective* evaluations about the level of information on the EU are ranked on a scale of 1 to 10. Here those who pick a value from 1 to 5 are grouped under "uninformed" and those choosing a value of 6 to 10 may be described as being "informed". The objective evaluations are obtained by asking the respondents a series of questions. For each respondent, the number of correct answers forms a measure of *objective* level of information.

From the perspective of subjective evaluations, 29% (17% in 2004) felt they were "informed" in the Member States while 70% said they were "uninformed" (83% in 2004). In 2005, 77% of the Turkish sample indicated that they were "uninformed" with only 22% of those polled feeling that they were "informed" about the EU. Turkey scored the lowest among the 30 countries polled in terms of the level of information.

Similar to the 2004 findings, the Netherlands is the most informed country with about 50% of respondents falling in this category followed by the western part of Germany and the Turkish Cypriot Community. France, Portugal, Hungary and Spain all have a larger uninformed group than Turkey.

When objective criteria are used to replace self-evaluation to measure people's level of knowledge about the EU, on average 27% of Turks scored a correct answer that is well below the EU average of 41%.

### ***Sources used to obtain information about the EU***

The primary sources of information about the EU are similar in Turkey and the EU. Television, daily newspapers and radio channels are the main sources of information. However, the intensity of use of such sources differs. Television is used as a source of

information by a much larger group in Turkey (87%) than in the EU (70%). The ratio of people using daily newspapers as a source of reference is the same in both the EU and Turkey (about 43%), whereas the use of radio and the Internet is much lower in Turkey (radio 20% and the Internet 6%) compared to the EU (radio 32% and the Internet 22%).

Those who indicate that they are not interested in having information about the EU amount to 10% in the Member States, but only 1% in Turkey.

Discussions with friends and relatives as a source of information about the EU are cited by 30% in Turkey and 23% in the Member States.

### ***Mass media coverage of EU topics***

According to 37% (41% in 2004) of the Turkish public, there is extensive media coverage in Turkey on EU topics while those sharing this view only amount to 10% (11% in 2004) in the EU. A vast majority of Turks considers this coverage to be pro-EU while only 12% (15% in 2004) considers it negative. In short, there is an increasing public perception that the press is less critical about the EU.

### ***Familiarity with the EU institutions***

When compared to the EU Member States, familiarity in Turkey with EU institutions is lower except for the Council of Ministers. The figure for those in Turkey who have not heard of the European Parliament (23%) and the European Commission (33%) is significantly larger than in the EU Member States (8% and 17% respectively).

### ***The role of EU institutions in daily life***

The Turkish public sees the role of the EU institutions in their daily lives to be consistently of lower importance compared with citizens of the EU.

### ***The level of trust in EU and other institutions***

In addition to having less information about them and perceiving their importance in the future to be lower than EU respondents do, Turkish public opinion also holds a lower level of 'trust' in the EU institutions. For each institution evaluated, the level of trust in Turkey is 6 to 16 percentage points lower than in the EU Member States. It seems that the higher the level of information about it available, the higher the level of trust in the institution concerned.

The Turkish government is the most trusted institution in Turkey with 76% of Turks polled admitting this, whereas in the EU the level of trust in national governments in general is 31% (34% in 2004). The second most trusted institution in Turkey is the parliament with 73% of the poll citing this, followed by the justice system and courts with 69%. The justice system and courts (50%), as well as the United Nations (52%) are the most highly trusted institutions in the EU Member States.

It is interesting that the smallest difference between Turkey and the EU Member States concerns the level of trust in the EU, in which 41% of the Turkish public and 44% of the EU Member States expressed confidence. However, between 2004 and 2005, the level of trust in the EU has dropped in several countries. Germany, France, Sweden, Croatia and the United Kingdom expressed a lower level of trust in the EU than Turkey.

### ***Turkish public opinion on EU membership***

Compared with the 2004 results, the ratio of those stating that membership would be a “good thing” has declined in Turkey. 59% (62% in 2004) of the Turkish public agreed that membership of the EU would be a “good thing” while 20% (12% in 2004) indicated the opposite. Around 17% (20% in 2004) of the poll is undecided.

Nevertheless, 68% of the Turkish public indicated that becoming a member of the EU would be an “advantage” for Turkey. Such a positive evaluation is made by 62% in Bulgaria but by only 36% in Croatia.

The overall “image of the EU” is positive for 61% of the Turkish public. The EU has a more positive image only in Italy, Ireland, Romania and the Turkish Cypriot Community. Croatia, with only 28%, gets the lowest ranking in this respect.

### ***What does the EU mean to people?***

The meaning of the European Union is different for Turkish people than for those in the EU. For Turkish people “economic prosperity” (43% in 2005 and 48% in 2004), “social protection” (27% in 2005 and 34% in 2004) and “freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU” (27% in 2005 and 30% in 2004) top the list. “Peace” (23% in 2005 and 29% in 2004), “democracy” (20% in 2005 and 24% in 2004) and “cultural diversity” (18% in 2005 and 20% in 2004) are only of secondary importance in terms of association with the EU.

Looking at the EU Member States, we see that the priorities are quite different. For example, “freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU” comprises the largest group (52% in 2005 and 53% in 2004). The euro comes in second on this list with 37% in 2005 and 44% in 2004.

When asked about personal feelings associated with the EU, Turkish and European sentiment is more similar. Both put “hope” and “trust” at the top of the list with “anxiety” coming third.

In Turkey, 17% indicated “anxiety” in 2004 and 21% in 2005. Similarly, “feelings of rejection” comprised a group of 10% in 2004 and 18% in 2005. “Feelings of mistrust” have risen from 13% in 2004 to 15% in 2005. In short, negative feelings are on the rise among the Turkish public with regards to the European Union.

### ***Fears about the EU***

Fears about the EU among Turkish people are quite different from those of the EU Member States.

There are five issues on which the Turkish public has a lower level of fear compared to EU members. The greatest difference between Turkey and the EU Member States is fear of “businesses moving to countries where production costs are lower” whereas this issue has evoked the most widespread fear in the EU. Similarly, 45% of the Turkish public sees “payments to EU” as a fear-invoking issue compared to 62% in the EU Member States.

Turkish people mostly fear that “their language will be used less” (62%) and that “organized crime and the drugs trade will increase” (62%). Only 37% in the EU, but 58% in Turkey reported “loss of national identity and culture” as a fear-invoking issue, which reflects some nationalist sentiment.

### ***Impact of the EU in different policy areas***

Concerning the impact of the EU on a number of different policy areas (including the fight against crime, unemployment and terrorism, public transport, pensions, economic conditions, inflation, taxation, housing, immigration, healthcare and education, defence and foreign policy) – the EU was perceived to have the lowest impact on immigration policy by those polled in Turkey (46%). In the EU Member States, the policy area in which the EU was perceived to have the lowest impact was pensions (14%). In Turkey, respondents expected the EU to have a positive impact on policy in 9 out of 14 policy areas included in the survey. In the Member States, levels of confidence regarding the impact of the EU are much lower.

In some policy areas such as the fight against terrorism, 47% of the Turkish public expects a positive impact of the EU while, among the EU Member States, this figure is as high as 55%. In Turkey, 54% expect a positive impact of the EU on social protection while only 14% in the Member States share this optimism. Similarly, in Turkey 63% of respondents expect a positive impact on unemployment policy while in the Member States this reading is only 24%.

### ***The future of the EU***

In 2004, with 51%, only Finland was against the development of European political union. In Turkey, 67% supported such a development exceeding the then average of 59% in the EU Member States.

In 2005, the highest level of support for European political union was observed in Romania (77%) followed by Slovenia (76%), Slovakia (74%), Lithuania (62%) and Spain (68%). Bulgaria (73%) and Hungary (73%) also have a high level of support for European political union.

In 2004, Turkey had supported European political union with a percentage of 67%. In 2005, this ratio declined to 61% but still remained above the overall level of the EU Member States (58%).

### ***Role of the EU over the next five years***

Around 50% of Turkish people indicated that the EU would play a more important role in their lives over the next five years, which is similar to that in the EU Member States. The number of those who foresaw a less important role for the EU (22%) is about three times the EU average.

Public opinion in Turkey seems to welcome a more active role of the EU in their lives. However, according to the Eurobarometer research, the willingness of the new Member States and the candidate countries to have a more active EU is considerably higher than that of the 'older' Member States. This may be due to the fact that these countries' experiences with the EU are more recent and that the benefits expected are correspondingly much higher.

Support for a European Constitution has declined from 68% in 2004 to 61% in 2005 among the Member States and from 59% to 55% in Turkey. Although shrinking in size, the group supporting a European Constitution still constitutes a majority in the EU countries.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Support for a European Constitution***

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted here that these surveys were all taken before the referenda in France and the Netherlands and thus could only reflect the situation at the time of the field work.

The level of information about the European Constitution is quite low. Only 13% in both the EU-25 and Turkey claimed to have heard about the Constitution and to have some information about its content. 68% in the Member States and 58% in Turkey claimed to have very little information about the Constitution's content.

It is interesting that in the two countries, France and the Netherlands, which rejected the Constitution in a referendum, people have the highest level of information about the Constitution when compared to other Member States. 35% in Turkey, 39% in the Turkish Cypriot community, 38% in Portugal and the Republic of Cyprus, 36% in Croatia and 33% in Lithuania stated that they had no information about the EU Constitution.

In response to a question which read "According to what you know, would you say that you are in favour of or opposed to the European Constitution?" 48% in Member States indicated that they were for the Constitution. In France, the number of those against was 44% and in the Netherlands 43%. Around 59% of Germans were in support of the Constitution. Only 6 countries had a support level above 50% and the highest among these were Germany (59%) and Belgium (71%).

The reasons behind the support for, or opposition to, the Constitution vary from country to country. However, in general terms those in favour state that the Constitution is necessary for the continuation of the European project. Those against most commonly cite a lack of information and limitation of sovereignty.

### ***Support for Future Enlargement and the Question of Turkish Membership***

In general, support for expansion of the EU by taking in new Member States has declined from 53% in 2004 to about 50% in the EU Member States in 2005. The ratio in Turkey over the same period has increased from 62% to 66%.

Three alternatives were offered to respondents regarding future enlargement. 42% supported the view that the "EU should be enlarged to include only some of the countries wishing to join" while 23% indicated that the "EU should be enlarged to include all countries wishing to join". 25% indicated that the "EU should not be enlarged to include any additional countries". Thus, some kind of enlargement is supported nearly by three-quarters of the EU members. However, sizeable resistance is also present.

In Turkey, 49% of those polled felt that the "EU should be enlarged to include all the countries wishing to join" while selective enlargement is supported by 33%. Only 7% holds the view that the EU should not be enlarged at all.

Turkey is not alone in these views since Romania, Malta and Croatia also have similar public preferences on this question. However, 44% in France and 43% in Austria would prefer to halt the enlargement process.

Besides the differences on the modalities for future enlargement, there are also widely differing views about which countries should be allowed to join the EU in the future. For example, Switzerland and Norway's membership is supported by about 78% of the public of the Member States. A majority of people also supports the membership of Iceland (70%), Croatia (52%) and Bulgaria (50%), while 50% are against future membership for Albania and 52% against Turkey's membership.

In Slovakia, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Luxembourg, Germany, France, the Republic of Cyprus and Austria, a clear majority is against Turkey being a part of EU in the future. More specifically, in Austria, only 10% and, in Germany and France, only 21% support Turkey's accession. In Bulgaria and the United Kingdom, around 45% support Turkish membership.

### ***Foreign policy and defence***

Turkish public opinion supports a common EU foreign policy (63% in 2005 and 54% in 2004) and a common defence and security policy (63% in 2005 and 61% in 2004). In the EU Member States, this level of support is 67% and 77% respectively in 2005.

More specific questions on common foreign and defence policy revealed that Turkish public opinion is relatively more conservative, cautious and less supportive than that of the EU. However, since 2004, the level of support for an EU common foreign and defence policy has been increasing.

As regards the policies of the United States, Turkish public opinion seems less favourable than EU public opinion except regarding the protection of the environment. A majority of public opinion in Turkey seems to have a negative approach towards the policies of the US in all policy areas questioned. Except for the fight against terrorism and growth of the world economy, a net majority holds a negative opinion of US policy.

A comparison of US and EU policies in different areas reveals that Turkish public opinion is much more positive towards EU policies. The only area where those polled gave less than 50% support to the EU concerns the fight against terrorism.