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This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

Introduction

In autumn 2005, a standard Eurobarometer survey was carried out in all the 25 member states of the European Union. This report aims at reviewing the key results of the study.

The report presents the analysis of Lithuanian population's responses to the main questions of the survey. These responses are compared to the mean scores of the responses recorded elsewhere in the 25 European Union member states. In addition, where relevant, the report presents comparisons with the results from preceding studies, as well as a socio-demographic analysis of some of the results.

During the survey, 1020 respondents aged 15 and over were interviewed throughout Lithuania. The respondents' sample was carried out by applying a random-probability sampling method and the sample represents the opinion of population throughout Lithuania. The survey was carried out in the form of personal interview in respondents' homes by using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviews) system.

The survey was conducted in October and November 2005. The survey questionnaire and technical information on the survey are enclosed as appendices to this report.

Lithuania in the European Union

A further half-year of Lithuania's membership of the European Union has been full of events, both in Lithuania and throughout Europe, that were widely reported in media. The failure of referendums in France and the Netherlands on the Constitution for Europe, terrorist attacks in London, riots in Paris suburbs, extended negotiations on the new EU budget for 2007-2013, the problems caused by emigration in Lithuania, a series of political scandals in Lithuania and intensified discussion on the introduction of the euro – this describes the context behind the public opinion in this half-year.

The referendums in France and the Netherlands which made the headlines, in which the Constitution for Europe was rejected, have left an impact on the public opinion in Lithuania. A decreasing trend in those having a favourable disposition towards the European Union, which was already observed back in spring 2005, persisted during the last half-year as well. Although the change was not big, compared to the spring results, it has, nevertheless, turned in a negative direction. It is possible that a majority of people could have found the hasty ratification of the Constitution in Lithuania one more example of the government flexing its muscles.

It is clear that the above-mentioned arrogance and advance decision without taking public opinion into account is the issue of fear which is also reflected in the case of the introduction of the euro. As discussions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of membership of the eurozone become more frequent, the share of Lithuanian residents afraid of the introduction of the euro is increasing. Other Eurobarometer surveys reveal that people feel considerable fear of facing increased prices and fraud when converting Litas into euros. General fear and negative information about the euro can only strengthen the position of Eurosceptics and have a negative influence on all aspects of attitudes towards the European Union.

The European Union budget for 2007-2013 is one more urgent problem. This survey was conducted prior to the recent UK proposal to reduce support to the new European Union member states. Eventually, the decision that emerged which was relatively favourable to Lithuania and the other new member states most probably will have no negative influence on the support for the membership in the EU. On the other hand, Lithuanian residents never thought that the only advantage of EU would be the financial support it would bring. Political security and stability were, and still are, a very important aspect of EU membership for Lithuanian people.

Terrorist acts in London, although widely reported in the media, have not had an influence on Lithuanian residents. Lithuanians still find terror a phenomenon that is distant and not having a direct impact on their lives. Therefore, this problem, which has most recently become one of the most urgent ones for residents of the United Kingdom and its neighbours, does not feature in Lithuanians' responses.

Thus, in order to expect a further favourable disposition in Lithuania towards the European Union it should be hoped that the country's authorities, embroiled in political scandals, will be able to attract enough attention both to the introduction of the euro and to the EU financial support to Lithuania. The latter two spheres may be the key ones during the next months, which will probably determine not only the Lithuanian population's attitude towards the benefits arising from the European Union, but also the attitude towards local authorities.

Satisfaction with various spheres of life

In terms of future life perspectives, Lithuanians are slightly greater optimists than the EU average. *Lithuanian citizens assess the employment situation in Lithuania most optimistically:* a greater share of citizens, compared to last year (34% in spring 2005 and 42% in autumn 2005) think that the coming years are going to be better with respect to this issue, and one-third expect that the coming years are going to be at least the same. Pessimistic moods prevail in Europe regarding this issue, i.e. only one-fifth of Europeans expect that the coming years are going to be

better in terms of evaluating the employment situation in their countries. Still, notwithstanding a positive attitude of the Lithuanian population towards the employment situation in their country in general, personal possibilities of finding a job do not seem so perspective to them (this index in Lithuania is close to the EU average).

Compared to all other Europeans, Lithuanians are more optimistic also about the perspectives for their country's economic situation. Almost one-third of Lithuanians expect that their country's economic situation will improve, and a slightly smaller share of them claim that it will get worse. In contrast, only one-fifth of Europeans expect that the economic situation will improve in their country during the coming years. However, when evaluating personal possibilities for employment, talking about their family's financial situation, the optimism shown by Lithuanians, regarding their country is not reflected in regard to their personal life. Although they imagine a better future situation with respect to the whole country, they evaluate improvement of their personal situation more pessimistically.

Compared to the last half-year, the satisfaction of Lithuanian respondents with their lives has increased slightly (from 53% in spring 2005 to 58% in autumn). Despite the latter fact, this index remains considerably lower than the European Union average and is one of the lowest in Europe: only Hungarians, Romanians and Bulgarians are more dissatisfied with their lives than Lithuanians. Analysing satisfaction with life in various socio-demographic groups reveals that Lithuanians aged 15-24 are most satisfied with life (79% of this age group's respondents claim to be; this index is the closest to the EU average), whereas the oldest people and residents of rural areas are least satisfied with their lives.

Key problems

As in recent years, Lithuanians currently attach greatest importance to problems related to crime and economy (table 5). As was the case back in spring 2005, crime remains the key problem in the autumn: almost a half of Lithuanians cited this problem. Moreover, the top five key problems remain unchanged. Along with crime, Lithuanians are concerned about rising prices/inflation, Lithuania's economic situation, unemployment and taxation (in spring, the problems were ranked slightly differently in terms of their importance: crime, unemployment, rising prices/inflation, economic situation and taxation).

Comparing the opinion of Lithuanian citizens with the general opinion of the European Union population, the results reveal that the EU citizens consider the same problems as being the most important. Like Lithuanians, EU residents are dissatisfied with the level of crime, unemployment,

prices/inflation and economic situation. Nevertheless, the importance of the said problems differs between Lithuanians and all the Europeans in general: EU25 citizens consider unemployment the most important problem, while Lithuanians place this problem in fourth place in terms of importance, whereas **the problem of crime, which is the most important to Lithuanians, is ranked in third place in the general EU results. Moreover, compared to EU citizens in general, Lithuanians find crime, rising prices (inflation) and taxation more important problems.** Unemployment, immigration and terrorism are less topical. Naturally, Lithuanians attach the greatest importance to the problems they face directly in their country, i.e. issues such as terrorism or competition in the labour market caused by immigration are not so pressing for Lithuanians due to a considerably lower degree of their incidence in Lithuania compared to other EU member states.

Country's key aims during the next 10-15 years

As mentioned before, the problems most important to Lithuanian residents are related to crime and economy, therefore, when talking about the main aims of the country, almost one-third of Lithuanians cite the fight against rising prices and maintaining order in the country in first place. These aims are also the key ones for citizens throughout the European Union. **Interestingly, protecting the freedom of speech is only half as important to Lithuanians than to Europeans in general.**

Trust in various institutions

For several years, Lithuanians have remained faithful to their tradition of not trusting almost all the state institutions. **Most of all, Lithuanians distrust political parties (80% of the poll), the Seimas (Parliament), Government and the police.** These indices are similar to the European Union average: average Europeans also have little trust in political parties and the government and parliament of their country. Compared to the EU average, Lithuanians are even less trusting in the police and their country's legal system.

Interestingly, **of all the institutions listed, Lithuanians trust television, religious institutions, the European Union, army and press most of all** (more than a half of Lithuanians trust these institutions), whereas, EU citizens in general trust the army, police, television and the United Nations most of all (more than a half of Europeans).

Attitude towards membership of the European Union

The attitude of Lithuanian residents towards EU membership remains very favourable, i.e. **Lithuanians can still be reasonably considered some of the most favourably disposed citizens towards the European Union. Lithuanians have a much more favourable attitude towards the benefits of the EU membership, they see a positive influence of the EU on their country's economy and they trust the EU institutions more than the average European does.** Furthermore, Lithuanians express a bigger desire to make important decisions in cooperation with other EU member states, i.e. compared to citizens of other EU member states on average, Lithuanians more often favour making important decisions at EU level.

Benefit of the European Union membership

Since Lithuania has become a member of the European Union, the vast majority of Lithuanians have remained very favourably disposed towards its membership. More than two-thirds of Lithuanians think that EU membership is beneficial for their country, and Lithuania differs considerably from other EU member states in this respect, i.e. in the European Union as a whole, only slightly more than half feel that EU membership is beneficial to their countries.

Priorities for European Union actions

As was seen before, **a majority of Lithuanians think that the European Union should make fighting poverty and social exclusion and fighting unemployment its priority** (these priorities also seem to be the most important ones for the average EU citizen). Fighting organized crime and drug trafficking is a considerably less important priority (although it is more important than for the average EU citizen) and also falls within the top three priorities listed. Fighting illegal immigration, reforming the EU institutions and the way they work, asserting the political and diplomatic importance of the EU around the world and welcoming new member countries are the least important priorities for Lithuanians (these priorities, except for fighting illegal immigration, are also the least important ones for the average EU citizen).

Compared to the EU average, fighting poverty and social exclusion is a much more important priority to Lithuanians, whereas fighting illegal immigration and terrorism is less important. On the other hand, residents of the other EU countries, who have directly faced the threat of terrorism, find this problem one of the key issues.

Information on the European Union

As was the case half a year ago, the actual level of knowledge about the European Union in Lithuania is the same as it is among the average European, i.e. **Lithuanian citizens are slightly**

more aware about the anthem of the European Union and election procedures to the European Parliament, whereas they are less aware of the number of member states and the date of the European Parliament elections.

The main information channels about the European Union remain the same: television, radio and daily newspapers. Like half a year ago, television and radio are the most important information channels to Lithuanians, and newspapers are less important compared to the average European. **A greater share of Lithuanians get information on the European Union from other newspapers, magazines and the Internet, i.e. compared to six months ago, the usage of these sources has increased.**

Image of the European Union

Although Lithuanian residents have an optimistic and favourable attitude towards the European Union, it still gives rise to certain fears in them. Lithuanians fear most the increase of drug trafficking and organized crime: this fear is almost the same as for citizens of other EU countries. **Compared to other Europeans, Lithuanians are more afraid of losing their national and cultural identity.** They are concerned that EU membership will bring about the end of Litas (more than half of Lithuanians are afraid of this), Lithuanian language will be used less and less, and that national identity and culture will be lost.

Compared to the average EU citizen, Lithuanians show less fear about economic and social benefits. Citizens of other EU countries are considerably more afraid of higher taxes to the European Union, the relocation of jobs to countries with lower production costs, economic crisis and loss of social benefits. The above-mentioned problems are of more concern to residents of other, economically stronger countries, particularly the old EU member states.

Attitudes towards development of the European Union

Lithuanian citizens are more favourably disposed to new countries' accession to the European Union than EU25 citizens as a whole. 69% of Lithuanians and 49% of Europeans as a whole agree that new member states should join the EU.

Lithuanians are in favour of all the listed countries becoming new EU member states, except for Turkey. Lithuanians are most favourable to accepting economically strong states – Switzerland, Norway and Iceland (the Lithuanians' rating is very similar to the EU average). Compared to the EU average, Lithuanians are considerably more in favour with respect to the Eastern countries: a considerably larger share of Lithuanians would not be opposed to the Ukraine joining the EU (the

difference between the Lithuanian and the EU average is 25 percentage points), Bulgaria's joining (a difference of 20 points) or Romania's joining (a difference of 12 points).