

# EUROBAROMETER 65

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## SPRING 2006

NATIONAL REPORT

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

HUNGARY

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## **Hungary in the European Union**

The Eurobarometer survey carried out in the spring of 2006 shows that, in Hungary, members of the youngest generation are the most satisfied with their lives in general and are more optimistic about the future than older people. These people between the ages of 15 and 24 are more open towards the European Union. At the same time, the highest proportion of people disappointed with the country's EU membership can be found in the over 55 age-group.

### **Satisfaction with various areas of life**

The proportion of people experiencing improvement over the course of the last five years in their personal situation has been increasingly steadily in Hungary. Although the proportion of people saying their situation has worsened is decreasing, their number still surpasses the number of people experiencing improvement.

Similarly to the results of the previous surveys, Hungarians are the least satisfied in the European Union with the life they lead in general. In the EU, 81% of citizens said they are satisfied with their lives but only half of the people asked in Hungary expressed similar feelings.

Managers and students are the most open towards the European integration among all occupational groups in Hungary. They show more support for all questions concerning the EU than all other groups. The survey did not find any significant difference in the support for EU-related issues by gender, geographical or political groupings.

Expectations on the development of Hungary's economy show a significant difference according to political outlook. People on the right of the political spectrum (the current opposition in Hungary) are gloomy about the economy, 41% say the situation will worsen. Only a fifth of the people in the centre and on the left wing have similar feelings about the near future.

### **Problems Hungary is facing**

Most of the Hungarian respondents mentioned unemployment as the largest problem Hungary is currently facing. This issue was also ranked first in all EU member countries overall but, compared with Hungary, a lower proportion of people mentioned it. However, the average of those citing unemployment is higher in the EU25 is higher than it is in Hungary.

Hungarians living in the eastern part of Hungary, where unemployment is higher than in the rest of the country, were most likely to cite unemployment. At the other end of the scale, is the central part of the country, where the capital is situated and where there are many work opportunities.

In Hungary, immigration and terrorism were hardly mentioned among the most important problems. These issues were of greater importance in other EU25 member countries.

## **Trust in institutions**

In the spring of 2006, when parliamentary elections were held in Hungary, spectacular growth in Hungarians' trust in the national political system was seen. Almost half of those surveyed said they trust in the government and almost the same proportion expressed trust in the parliament. Even trust in political parties, which was very low in previous periods, has doubled and nearly one-third of people taking part in the survey said they trust in political parties. This proportion is extremely high in comparison with other EU member countries.

The trust Hungarians have in institutions in general is significantly higher than the EU25 average. The proportion of Hungarians trusting the EU has now reached 70%, which is also significantly higher than the EU25 average. The result in Hungary about trust in the EU contrasts with the result regarding support for EU membership, which is significantly lower in Hungary than in most of the member states.

## **Opinions on Hungary's EU membership**

According to the Eurobarometer survey, half of Hungarians say the country has benefited from EU membership but one-third of the poll said that membership did not bring any advantages to the country. The average of Hungarians saying that their country has benefited from membership was similar to the EU25 average.

The Irish had the poll with the highest proportion saying that their country had benefited from EU membership. Cyprus is at the other end of this scale.

People were asked about their fears relating to EU integration. In Hungary, most people mentioned the loss of jobs to countries with lower costs, as well as more difficulties for national farmers. The proportion of people mentioning the latter was significantly higher in Hungary than elsewhere in the ten countries that joined the EU in 2004.

## **Sense of national belonging and European identity**

A high proportion of Hungarians are attached to their country. This is followed by their attachment to their region and a similarly high proportion of people said they are attached to the town or village where they live. 16% of Hungarians said they are not attached to Europe and one-third that they are not attached to the European Union.

## **Being informed about the European Union**

The Eurobarometer surveyed how well informed people think they are about EU issues and tested if they are aware of basic facts about the EU. In comparison with the EU-25 average, fewer Hungarians considered themselves well-informed but a higher proportion provided correct answers for the questions on basic information about the EU. Many Hungarians believe they do not need more information on the European Union.

Television is the most frequently used source of information on the EU for Hungarians. Although the use of Internet is continuously increasing in Hungary, the

proportion of people getting EU information from the Internet shows a decrease in Hungary.

### **Awareness of EU institutions**

Like the results of the previous Eurobarometer surveys, the European Parliament is the best known EU institution with 88% of Hungarians saying that they have heard about it. It is followed by the European Commission and by the Council of the European Union. Levels of awareness of the European Central Bank and the Court of Justice of the European Communities were lowest in Hungary.

The ranking of the institutions was similar when people were asked if they tend to trust the institutions. Many people said they trust the Court of Justice without having heard about it before. With the exception of the European Central Bank, the average figures for Hungarians trusting the institutions exceed the EU25 averages.

### **The European Union in the Hungarian media**

Most Hungarians say television, radio and the press provide enough news about the EU. A relatively high proportion of them say that more information should be provided by the media. Fewer than ten percent of people said the media provides too much information on EU-related issues.

More than half the Hungarian poll said the media provides objective coverage on EU-related topics. According to political views, there was no major difference in the proportion of people expressing this opinion.

### **The role and meaning of the EU**

The opinion of Hungarians on the EU has improved significantly in spring of 2006. However, still only slightly more than half of the people said the EU has a positive image for them.

Most respondents still mentioned the freedom of travel, study and work in the European Union when they were asked what the European Union meant for them. The largest proportion of Hungarians highlighted the areas of fighting against terrorism and environmental protection where the EU plays a positive role. About one-third said the EU has a negative impact on inflation in Hungary.

### **The symbol of the European Union**

More than 90% of Hungarians said that they have already seen the EU's flag and almost the same proportion said that the flag is a symbol for Europe.

However, a lower number of people agreed that the flag should be placed on public buildings next to the national flag with only 64% holding this view. Almost the same proportion said they can identify with the flag.

Almost half of the people who oppose Hungary's EU membership agreed that the EU's flag should be placed next to the national flag (45%). Even every third person

saying the EU has a negative image approve of the idea that the EU flag should fly on public buildings. At the same time, one-fifth of those people saying the country's EU membership is a good thing are against flying the EU flag in front of public buildings.

### **The international role of the European Union**

The proportion of EU citizens saying the EU's international role has become more important in the last five years is decreasing and was only 56% in the spring of 2006. At the same time, the number of people saying the EU's importance has not changed is increasing.

More than the half of the respondents agreed that the European Union should have its own Foreign Minister who can be the spokesperson for a common European Union position.

### **The development and economic outlook of the European Union**

Compared with the previous results, the latest Eurobarometer survey does not show significant changes in the proportion of Hungarians supporting the single currency, the common foreign policy, the common security and defence policy and the enlargement of the EU.

### **Support for strategic goals of the European Union**

In line with the results of previous surveys, the largest proportion of Hungarians supported the common defence and security policy. Support for the common foreign policy did not change either. At the same time, the proportion of Hungarians supporting the EU's enlargement has significantly decreased.

### **The common currency, the euro**

Support for the European Monetary Union and the single currency, the euro, is 66% in Hungary. The member state showing the highest level of support is Ireland. In Slovenia, which is entering the euro zone in 2007, support for the euro is very high at 82%. A similar proportion of people support the single currency in Belgium and Luxemburg. The proportion of people opposing the single currency is highest in the United Kingdom and Sweden, which remain outside the monetary union.

### **Expansion of the European Union**

Hungary is one of the countries where there is highest support for EU enlargement. Only citizens of Slovenia, Poland and Latvia were more open than Hungarians to enlargement. The results show that when comparing different groups of countries within the EU, it is the ten countries that became members in 2004 that show the highest levels of support. Support for enlargement is about half of that in the founding countries, where only one in three people supports the enlargement and more than half of the respondents said they are against the further expansion of the European Union.

## **Opinions on the economic performance of the European Union**

Like the results of the previous surveys, in spring 2006, most European citizens say that improving education and vocational training is the area they would prioritise to improve the performance of the European Union.

### **Concepts related to economy**

Respondents were asked to say whether certain terms relating to the economy evoke something positive or negative in their minds. In Hungary and the EU overall, the most positive concepts were competitiveness and social security. There was a significant difference between the opinion on the term free trade of Hungarians and of EU respondents overall, as only 58% of Hungarians said it evokes something positive. The corresponding EU25 average was 71%.

Globalisation and protectionism were at the bottom of the list both in the EU and in Hungary, although the results were different. One-third of Hungarians said that globalisation is a positive term, 10 percentage points higher than the EU-25 average. Protectionism brings something positive to mind for only 15% of Hungarians, while one in three respondents expressed similar feelings in the EU.

### **Energy**

In the spring of 2006, the Eurobarometer survey focused on potential measures to compensate for the increases in energy prices. The results show that energy produced from renewable sources is unpopular in Hungary, as 70% of respondents would not pay more for it than for energy produced from other sources.

However, a smaller proportion of respondents would be prepared to pay more for energy produced from renewable sources. Compared with current energy prices, one-fifth of Hungarians and a quarter of EU citizens would be prepared to pay 5% more. Very few people would pay 5% more than current prices.

### **The European Constitution**

Compared with the EU25 average, fewer Hungarians say they are familiar with the European Constitution. Only one in ten Hungarian respondents said he or she is familiar with its content. In Hungary, 61% of respondents said they had heard about the European Constitution, but know very little about its contents. This proportion is slightly higher than the EU25 average. About one-third of Hungarian respondents and one-fifth of EU citizens said they have not heard about the Constitution.

In France and the Netherlands, the two countries where the Constitution was rejected, more than half of respondents said they support the European Constitution.