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

Abbreviations

EB Eurobarometer

EB65 Standard Eurobarometer 65, data collected in 30 countries between March 27 and May 1st, 2006, and for Romania between March 27 and April 27, 2006

EU25 The European Union, data collected in all Member States

EU15 Europe of 15 or “the old Member States”

NMS Europe of the 10 new Member States, which acceded in 2004

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Synthesis

Essential facts

1. The state of mind of Romanians at the beginning of 2006 is very close to the one they had in 2005:
 - discontent with the present (56% in Romania, as compared with 18% in the European Union);
 - moderate optimism in relation to the near future (39%, as compared with 35% in the EU) ;
 - heightened optimism in relation to situation in 5 years time (52% as compared with 40% in the EU) ;
 - very strong trust in the European Union (68% of Romanians versus 60% of citizens in the NMS and 45% in EU-15);
 - 34% of Romanians trust the justice system, a level identical to that in the NMS, but lower than the one in EU-15 (50%).
2. The social agenda of Romanians is dominated by economic topics - the country's economic situation and the high costs of everyday life. From this agenda derive most of the basic assessments and value options.
 - Economic themes can be found in almost all the social segments. They also appear as such in the EU public agenda, but there they are located at the level of specific social segments.
 - The public agenda profile echoes also in the field of value options where Romanians rank first topics like social security (79%), competitiveness (76%) and free trade (71%).
 - The same public agenda profile also explains Romanians' very strong trust in the EU. The personal meaning of the "European Union" is given by "freedom of movement" (62%, as compared with 51% in the EU) and "prosperity" (50%, as compared with 18% in the EU).
 - Expectations from the EU reflect the public agenda, especially as regards the fight against poverty.
3. Knowledge of European institutions remains at a relatively low level, similar to that of the previous year.
4. Romanians' devoutness - according to partial evaluation, using only the degree of participation in religious services - is characterised by:
 - Weekly attendance of religious services - 22% (as compared with 14% in EU-15 and 36% in the NMS).
 - Conformity with the observance model for Orthodox countries where typical participation is related to celebration days (36% of Romanians, as compared with 14% in the NMS and 19% in EU-15) and the quasi-absence of those declaring that they never go to church (2% in Romania, 18% in the NMS and 34% in EU-15).
5. Romanians' attachment to different living locations (locality, region, country, continent) is closer to that of citizens in the NMS than to that of citizens in EU-15. Because of an increased propensity towards European integration, the proportion of Romanians and NMS citizens belonging to the type centred on their own locality is of only 8-10%, as compared with 16% in the EU15.

Moral disposition and trust

Romanians' moral disposition is characterised by:

- discontent towards the present
- trust in the future, especially in the medium-term future (5 years' time), not the immediate future, and
- assessment that present life is not considerably different from five years ago (Figure 1)

It is a profile reflecting a specific state of mind, largely different from that in the EU. The present is positively valued, in terms of satisfaction, by 70% of NMS citizens and by more than 80% of those in the EU-15. Only 40% of Romanians approximately are content with the present.

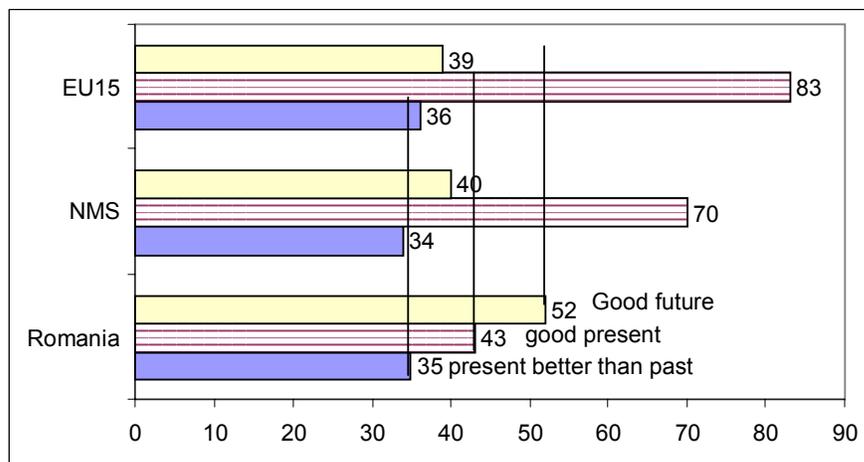


Figure 1. Positive state of mind related to past, present and future, EB65

With regard to the past, the state of mind is determined taking into account the proportion of those considering they live better than they did five years ago. The present is determined taking into account the proportion of those content with their life. The future is assessed taking into account the proportion of optimistic persons hoping to live better in five years' time. An example of a data result: 35% of Romanians interviewed in the spring of 2006 consider they live in better conditions than five years ago.

In comparison with the past, the present is similarly lived in Romania and the EU. But only from the point of view of a similar time perception are Romanian and EU average citizens alike. For the rest, relating to the present and the future are very different. For Romanians, the future is the better. For EU citizens, especially from the old Member States, the present is the better. For the latter, the future seems to be less attractive than the present.

The Romanian characteristic from the point of view of moral disposition in a European context is given by what we have called "dynamic optimism", the optimism of those who are discontent with their present living situation. In Romania, they represent approximately 20%, as compared with 8% in the NMS and 5% in EU-15. Figures indicating the mentioned trends are not conjectural, but have remained very stable and almost unchanged during the past year. The optimism of discontented ones appears especially in the following categories of persons:

- from rural areas (22%),
- with a medium level education (25%),
- employed as qualified workers (25%),
- unattached to their own locality (28%),
- oriented towards Europe (38%).

Personal optimism is also related to perception regarding European integration: two-thirds of those trusting the EU are optimistic about their own living situation in five years' time as compared with only 46% optimistic persons amongst those who do not trust the EU.

Romanians' positive image about the EU (Figure 2) and their trust in the Union (stabilised at a level of 64-68% during the past year), seem to be long-standing, because they derive, to a great extent, from their public agenda. Trust in the EU is the reaction to a problematic material situation, to concerns related to quality of personal life, to economic mechanisms of development.



Figure 2. Positive image of the European Union, EB65

Knowledge of European Union institutions

Although the data available in the survey are not very detailed as regards institutional topics, they allow for an assessment of the stability in relation to Romanians' level of

knowledge about European institutions. On topics more often analysed by the media, like the number of EU Member States, the level of information has improved (increase from 26% to 35% persons knowing the correct number of states). On other themes, such as the election of Members of the European Parliament, rules are still not very well known (Image 8).

As regards the institution of the European Parliament, we can give further details by simultaneously considering the answers to questions: "have you heard of...", and "do you know how..." (Table 2). There are four types of institutional knowledge:

- consistent (the person has heard of the institution and knows details about its functioning),
- weak (the person has heard of the institution but does not know details about it),
- uncertain (the person has not heard of the institution, but subsequently gives a more or less correct answer about its functioning),
- non-existent (the person has neither heard about the institution, nor can give an approximate answer on details about its functioning).

In Romania, consistent information about the European Parliament is at the level of 27% of interviewed population; twice as low as that in the EU. Weak information, of the type "I have heard of", without detailed knowledge, predominates. Consistent information about the EU is specific to young people with a higher educational background, from small or medium sized towns, with high media consumption and trust in the EU (Table A2). Weak information about the EU seems to be specific to young people with a medium level of education. Generally, in Romania, the level of information about the EU tends to be higher for men with a higher education background, under 40 years, from small or medium towns, with high consumption of media and content with their living situation.

From the point of view of information channels about the EU, Romanians use especially television (over 70%), in line with the rest of Europeans. The Internet is still very seldom used, because only 15% of Romanians benefit from home access, as compared with 46% representing the EU average. The discrepancy in means of information used is related not only to Internet, but also to newspapers. Only 25% of Romanians use newspapers as information sources about the EU, as compared with 41% of citizens in the EU.

Challenges and answers

The Romanian public agenda is well-specified, with a distinct profile from the one in the NMS or in EU-15:

- Romanians are most concerned about the country's economic problems. In second place, they rank prices, with unemployment and crime in third place. In the EU, the main topic of concern is unemployment, while in second place is health protection in the NMS and crime in the EU-15 (Tables 5 and A8).
- Illegal immigration and terrorism have a much more important place in the public perception of concerns within the EU-15 than in the NMS.
- Interest in immigration is marginal in Romania (15th place), as compared with the situation in the NMS (11th place) or in the EU-15 (4th place).

- In Romania, concern regarding the fight against terrorism is situated between the relatively high level in the EU-15 and the relatively low one in the NMS.
- In the NMS, much more attention is paid to health-related topics (2nd place) than in EU-15 or in Romania (5th place).

Opinions on the national public agenda and on expectations from the European Union are interconnected according to model challenge-answers. Problems on the national agenda are challenges to which citizens also expect an answer from the EU, as well as from national institutions. However, available data allow for measurement of the degree in which expectations from the EU are associated with the perception on national problems.

For Romania

1:

- EU actions for poverty reduction are considered to be necessary especially by those defining the national agenda in terms of economic problems and of prices too high for their incomes. Those considering that national problems are also related to criminal offences are very little interested in actions in the field of poverty reduction;
- The need for EU actions in the field of unemployment reduction is obviously defined as a priority by persons considering that unemployment is an important problem at national level².
- Increased social demand for information actions developed by the EU is underlined especially by those defining the public national agenda in terms of criminal offences level, increase of drugs trafficking and economic poverty.
- The need for EU actions guaranteeing food safety manifests itself especially amongst persons with serious health and education problems, at national level, but also amongst those who fear excessive taxation. For a significant segment of Romanians, concerned about health and education, this could be translated as: "we believe that, taking into account our health problems and the taxes we have to pay, it is normal and necessary for us to be better protected against bad quality food we find on the market."
- For those concerned about unemployment at national level, supplementary measures for introducing the Euro seem to be a possible solution.
- Demand for measures aimed at environment protection, supported at EU level, is the answer to a perception of environment problems at national level.
- Measures for guaranteeing individual rights and for strengthening democracy within the national space, supported by the EU, are considered to be necessary especially by those who are concerned about education-related problems and economic situation in the country.
- A relatively low percentage of Romanians (6%) argue that one of EU's important roles is "to welcome new Member States". From the point of view of diffuse social conscience, this "welcome" seems to be represented by measures to fight crime and to reduce taxes. Thus, the stronger the EU impact would be upon organised crime, drugs trafficking and reduction of taxes, the better its image.

Value options

The public agenda is also reflected on what people consider to be desirable or positive, including the level of perception on some relatively abstract topics. Its reflection can be considered the overwhelmingly positive perception of topics related to social security, as well as to competitiveness and free trade. As compared to the EU average citizen, Romanians

- focus more on protectionism,
- are more interested in public administration,
- are less interested in globalisation and reform.

As regards religious life and participation in religious services, Romanians are characterised by:

- regular observance, with weekly frequency, for around one-fifth of citizens;
- monthly observance, every one or three months, for a quarter of the population,
- holy days and feasts observance for almost one-third of those with a declared religious affiliation,
- an insignificant number of persons declaring religious affiliation, but without going to church or prayer houses.

Public devoutness seems to be more accentuated than in other European Orthodox countries, but is relatively non-comparable to that in Catholic and Protestant countries. Catholic countries are characterised by a relatively equal split of the population, with approximately one-fifth doing weekly, monthly or holy feasts observance. In Protestant countries, weekly or monthly participation in religious services is much rarer.

In Romania, the most active participants in religious services are older women, the relatively poor and those with a low level of education, living in villages or in small towns. The practicing faithful, going to church especially for holy feasts, is generally male, with a good material situation and content with their own life.

Affiliation to identity-location is as important in Romania as in the EU. In the former, the most important segment is represented by persons declaring a high level of attachment to their country and to the European space (the EU or Europe).

The Romanians' identity-location orientation model is very similar to those of the Polish and Hungarians.

Notes

¹ Facts in this paragraph are based on the analysis of a matrix of correlations between answers related to the national public agenda, on the one hand, and answers expected from the EU, on the other. We have interpreted significant correlations for level $p=0.05$.

² It is less obvious why there is a significant association between the preoccupation with terrorism-related issues and the idea that the EU should give priority to unemployment reduction. A possible cause might be the diffuse awareness of the fact that terrorism is also caused by social-economic problems, such as unemployment