

EUROBAROMETER 65

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2006

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SLOVENIA

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This report was produced for the European Commission Representation in Slovenia.

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.

Background

This report explores the state of the Slovenian public opinion two years after the country's accession to the European Union and a year after the rejection of the EU Constitution in referendums in France and the Netherlands. It continues to reveal strong overall optimism among Slovenes regarding the EU, which is even slightly higher than in the previous two Eurobarometer surveys.

I. LIFE IN SLOVENIA

Slovenes satisfied with their lives

Slovenes are (as shown in previous EBs) more optimistic when talking about their personal situation than the general situation of the country and its economy. 87% of them are satisfied with their lives, which is above the average of the EU25 and the EU10. Only one percent of Slovenes are not at all satisfied with their life.

Comparing their current personal situation with that of five years ago, 21% of Slovenes stated it had got worse, while 47% said it had not changed and 31% that it had improved.

II. EUROPEAN UNION AND ME

Very positive image of the European Union

For the majority of Slovenes (58%), the EU has a positive image. At the same time, Slovenes (36%) see themselves in the near future as Slovenes only. Trust of Slovenians in European institutions has increased. Especially noticeable is the increase of trust in the European Commission (now 65%, up from 53% six months ago) and in the European Central Bank (now 61%, up from 47% six months ago).

Does my voice count in the EU?

45% of Slovenes believe their voice does not count in the EU, while half of them (49%) consider it does (this is above the EU25 average). Compared with the previous standard EB survey, the share of 'no' answers decreased from 61% to 45%.

Key word for the EU is euro

Slovenes most often associate the EU with the euro (57%) and the freedom to travel, work and study elsewhere within the EU (49%). Generally speaking, Slovenes associate the EU mainly with positive characteristics, since the first negative characteristic (bureaucracy) is ranked only 8th.

82% of Slovenes (in comparison to 77% six months ago) support the European monetary union and the common currency, the euro. On the other hand, 35% (39% six months ago) of the population fear the loss of Slovenia's national currency, the tolar.

Fears about the EU

The current EB reveals less fear in all mentioned categories compared with the previous EB.

55% of Slovenes said they fear more difficulties for Slovene farmers (70% six months ago). 59% of Slovenes said they are afraid of an increase in drug trafficking and international organised crime (69% in the previous EB).

The biggest fear is related to transfer of jobs to other Member States with lower production costs - 65% (72% in the previous EB), an increase in drug trafficking and international organised crime (59%) and fears that Slovenia will pay more and more to the EU - 56% (six months ago 68%).

Relatively good EU knowledge

A majority of Slovenes perceive their own knowledge of how the EU works, its policies and institutions as mediocre. However, the actual level of knowledge (respondents had to answer whether a statement about the EU is correct or incorrect) about some basic facts related to the EU is much higher than the EU25 average. 26% of Slovenes answered correctly to all four questions – this is the third highest percentage among all the 25 Member States. In general, better knowledge of EU affairs is found in smaller states.

Desired sources of EU-related information

Traditional news media are considered to be the most important sources for acquiring EU-related information. The most frequently mentioned source of information regarding the EU is television (75%), followed by daily newspapers (45%) and radio (44%).

III. SLOVENIA AND THE EU

“EU membership is a good thing”

54% of Slovenes believe that Slovenia’s EU membership is a good thing compared with the 43% figure in the previous EB, while only 6% think membership is a bad thing (9% six months ago).

Taking everything into consideration, 68% of Slovenes are of the opinion that Slovenia has benefited from being a member of the European Union (in autumn 2006 the level was lower - 57%). The EU25 average stands at 54%.

Compared with 81% of respondents who said six months ago they feel safer due to Slovenia’s membership of the EU, today, there are only 58% of those sharing that view. This is still above the EU25 average of 47%.

No. 1 – the fight against poverty and unemployment

Slovenia has faced high unemployment levels in recent years. Therefore, it is no surprise that unemployment is the issue that comes up most frequently among those that the respondents feel Slovenia should deal with – the same goes for other EU10 member states and for the EU25 in general.

Slovenes believe that fighting poverty (68%) and unemployment (59%) are the priorities which the EU should address. Those two tasks are followed by peace and security in Europe (28%) and protecting the environment (26%).

IIII. DEVELOPMENT OF EU INTEGRATION AND EU POLICIES

For a stronger and bigger EU

Slovenes largely support the European integration process. Most of the projects are supported by more than three-quarters of respondents. 82% of Slovenes support the European Monetary Union with one single currency, the euro; 76% of them are in favour of the common foreign policy among the member states of the EU towards other countries.

Among the EU29, EU enlargement has the biggest support in Slovenia (73%). 21% of respondents are against the further enlargement of the EU in future years. Support for enlargement in the EU25 as a whole is much lower: 45% for and 42% against. Compared with previous Eurobarometers, the EU25 trend of those in favour of enlargement is decreasing, except in Slovenia and Poland.

Energy

Due to high energy prices, Slovenes prefer tax incentives (55%) and more information (50%) in order to take new measures that would help people reduce their energy consumption. 59% of Slovenes would not be prepared to pay more for energy produced from renewable sources than for energy produced from other sources, and 26% of them are prepared to pay up to 5% more. Only 10% of them are prepared to pay between 5-10% more.

New energy challenges (like high energy prices, international obligations to reduce CO2 emissions) could imply efforts from citizens. The propositions with which Slovenes agree the most are: I intend to reduce my energy consumption and I would not be prepared to pay more (37%), I do not intend to change my energy consumption habits and I would not be prepared to pay more (17%), I do not intend to change my energy consumption habits, so I would be prepared to pay more (17%).

The EU Constitutional Treaty

The EU Constitutional Treaty enjoys strong support. 73% of respondents are of opinion that the Constitution brings more transparency and 72% believe that it brings more effectiveness. On the other hand, 53% (compared with 41% six months ago) of Slovenes would change the Constitution and only 25% (six months ago 37%) would continue with the ratification process. 10% of them think the European Constitution should be dropped (4% six months ago).