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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TURKEY

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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 around 80%.

Despite ups and downs in the overall level of satisfaction with their lives, satisfaction among the Turkish public remains below that of the EU. Between autumn 2004 and spring 2005, this ratio increased by 2 percentage points to 73% in Turkey and remained at this level throughout 2005. However, in spring 2006 it decreased to about 70%.

52% of the Turkish poll finds economic conditions in their country to be “bad” while the corresponding EU25 average is 58%. Looking at the European economies however, the Turkish public remains more optimistic in its evaluations compared to the public in EU member states. When asked to compare Turkey’s performance to the average EU economic performance it can be seen that the Turkish public is quite pessimistic. More specifically, while 52% of the EU public opinion sees the situation in their own country as better than the EU average, only 15% in Turkey makes such a positive assessment of their country’s performance in comparison to the EU average.

Expectations for the Future

The Turkish public is considerably more optimistic (42%) about the future 12 months than the EU public (35%). When their expectations about the next five years were probed, a similar degree of optimism is seen in Turkey as in the EU poll.

Trust in institutions

As an overall trend, the level of trust of Turks in their national institutions is considerably higher than their counterparts in EU member countries. However, the relative rankings of these institutions according to their levels of trust remains in general the same in Turkey as in the EU member countries. Noticeable exceptions are the relatively lower levels of trust in the United Nations and the EU.

Trust in EU institutions remains lower in Turkey than in EU member states. Only the evaluation of the European Central Bank seems to have increased since autumn 2005. Trust in the European Commission and the Council of the European Union has declined. A factor in these low and declining levels of trust in the EU institutions might be the low level of understanding of the way the EU works. Only 46% of Turkish respondents stated that they understand how the EU works.

Most important problems faced by the country

When asked to indicate the two most important problems facing the country, differences were observed between Turkey and the EU Member States. According to the Turkish poll, the two foremost problems are unemployment and terrorism, followed, with a large gap, by the economic situation, crime and education. While the top priority has not changed since last year, it seems that terrorism has been constantly rising in salience in the minds of the public. In autumn 2004, terrorism was cited by 18%; this increased to 29% in spring 2005 and then to 41% in autumn 2005. In spring 2006, terrorism was picked by 43% as one of the top two problems facing the country. Inflation however, is not seen among the top two important problems facing either Turkey or the EU member states in general. However, considerable variation is observed in this priority list of problems in various countries’ agendas.

Evaluations about EU membership

In spring 2006, the ratio of those stating that membership would be a “good thing” has continued its decline in Turkey compared with the 2004 and 2005 results. In spring 2006, 44% (55% in autumn 2005) of the Turkish public indicated that EU membership would be a “good thing” while 25% (15% in autumn 2005) indicated the opposite. In spring 2006, those who were undecided comprised a group of about 23%.

As such, those who think membership would be a “good thing” is a larger group than those found in Croatia. Nevertheless, 51 % (68% in autumn 2005) of the Turkish public indicated that becoming a member of the EU would be an “advantage” for Turkey.

The overall “image of the EU” is positive for 43% (60% in autumn 2005) of the Turkish public. The EU has a less positive image in only eight out of 29 countries in which the Eurobarometer was conducted.

Information about the EU and its institutions

The general level of information about the EU continues to be low. However, it is increasing. The *subjective* evaluations about the level of information about the EU are obtained on a scale of 1 to 10. The average subjective evaluation of the level of information one possesses about the EU in Turkey ranks lowest, together with Spain. The objective evaluations are obtained by asking the respondents a number of questions for which there are correct or incorrect answers. For each respondent, the number of correct answers forms a measure of *objective* level of information. When objective criteria are used to replace self-evaluation to measure people’s level of knowledge about the EU, on average 49% of Turks (62% in autumn 2005) scored at least one correct answer, which is well below the EU average of 79% (79% in autumn 2005).

The extent of the EU’s influence upon people’s lives, as perceived by the Turkish public, is small in comparison to those of the EU25 poll. The Turkish public also seems to underplay the future importance of the EU upon their private lives compared to the European Union public. It seems that Turkish respondents do not attribute as large an influence upon their personal lives emanating from the EU as do respondents in the EU member states.

When the perceived role of the EU in different policy areas is examined, a pattern among the Turkish public is again observed that emphasizes a greater positive impact upon economic issues than in other policy areas. However, the positive assessment among the Turkish public concerning the fight against terrorism and defence and security policy areas remains below that of EU citizens. In other words, the Turkish poll seems to think that the EU’s impact is most potent in regard to economic issues rather than security-related issues.

The primary sources of information about the EU are not much different in Turkey and the EU. Television, daily newspapers and discussions with relatives, friends and colleagues are the main sources of information; however, the intensity of resorting to such sources differs. Television is used as a source of information by a much larger group in Turkey (73% in autumn 2005 and 77% in spring 2006) than in the EU (66% in autumn 2005 and 70% in spring 2006). The use of radio and internet is much lower in Turkey (radio 12% and internet 7%) compared with the EU (radio 31% and internet 23%).

The figure for those who indicate that they are not interested in having information about the EU is 12% in the Member States but only 4% in Turkey.

Discussions with friends and relatives as a source of information comprise a large group with 19% in Turkey and 22% in the Member States.

The Turkish public also considers that media coverage in Turkey on EU topics is getting relatively scarcer and that negative coverage is also in the rise.

What does the EU mean to people?

The meaning of the European Union is different for Turkish people than for EU citizens. For Turkish people, “economic prosperity” (35% in spring 2006 and 41% in autumn 2005), “social protection” (21% in 2006 and 32% in autumn 2005) and “peace” (24% in 2006 and 23% in autumn 2005) top the list. “Democracy” (18% in spring 2006 and 19% in autumn 2005) and “cultural diversity” (16% in spring 2006 and 19% in autumn 2005) are only of secondary importance in attaching a meaning to the EU. It is noticeable that negative aspects have started to gain some momentum among the Turkish public.

Looking at the EU Member States, it can be noted that the priorities are quite different. For example, “freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU” comprises the largest group (50% in spring 2006 and 52% in autumn 2005). The Euro comes in second on this list with 39% in spring 2006 (37% in autumn 2005).

Fear about EU related issues

Compared to the EU poll, the Turkish poll does not appear particularly fearful concerning the possible negative impact of EU related issues. The two most highly feared issues are “loss of national identity and culture” and the “end of Turkish Lira”. Obviously, these are issues that most clearly reflect some nationalist concerns. However, for both issues, the level of those who claim to be afraid remains at about 50%.

When the details of those who state they are fearful of losing their national identity and culture are examined, it can be seen that Turkish patterns and those in the EU do not, for the most part, coincide. For example, in the EU, women express their concern on this issue more often while in Turkey men are more concerned than women. In Turkey, younger people more often tend to be more concerned, whereas, in the EU, older people are more often concerned about this issue. In the EU, the rural segment of the population expresses its fear more often, whereas, in Turkey, it is the urban segment that is more often fearful on this issue. One point in common in both Turkey and the EU is that those who place themselves on the right wing in ideological terms are more often fearful than their leftwing counterparts.

EU's policy priorities

When asked to choose from a list of actions, the three actions that the European Union should follow in priority, the Turkish public picks fighting unemployment, poverty and terrorism. The EU public, as a whole, does not attach much priority to fighting terrorism and instead emphasizes fight against organized crime as a priority.

Energy policy

Rising salience of energy issues and the policy preferences that they induce have been surveyed in this poll. The most important policy priority in both Turkey and the EU seem to be the provision of information concerning efficient energy use. While the Turkish public

supports stricter regulatory checks upon efficient use of energy resources, the EU public seem to give greater importance to measures that provide incentives for the better and efficient use of energy. However, the European public does not seem to be ready to pay a higher price for sustainable energy resources. Support for paying such an increased prices is lower in the EU than in Turkey. When faced with the question as to the level at which such energy-related policy decisions should be taken, both European and Turkish respondents appear to support the national as opposed to local and European levels.