

EUROBAROMETER 66

PUBLIC OPINION IN EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2006

NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ROMANIA

Abbreviations

EB Eurobarometer

EB66 Standard Eurobarometer 66, data collected in 30 countries between September 6 and October 10 , 2006, and for Romania between 7-29 September, 2006

2006/2 – EB66

2006/1 – EB65

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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Synthesis¹

Eurobarometer 66 (EB66) was carried out in Romania by TNS CSOP between 7 - 29 September 2006, by interviewing 1047 persons aged at least 15. In the Romanian series, this wave of the European survey simultaneously closes and opens a series. It closes the series of comparative surveys during the country's pre-accession period. It opens a series, in as much as it will be considered point zero of the Romanians' social situation, as described in their own opinions, in the actual integration process that will begin on 1 January, 2007.

The opinions gathered through this survey allow the reconstruction of Romania's social situation just before Accession to the European Union through a "sociological reading" on:

- the state of mind
- the population agenda, and
- value orientations.

The State of Mind

Romanians continue to have a high level of trust in the European Union (Figure 1). In fact, it is the same level of trust of almost two-thirds, which they also had in spring 2006. A little lower than the level recorded in Slovenia (70%), the percentage is almost equal to that of Greece (65%). During these last six months, trust in the EU decreased from 48% to 45% in the countries that make it up. For Romania, the decrease of only one percentage point, from 68% to 67% is minor, and can be associated with the normal sampling fluctuations. In any event, together with the Bulgarians and Lithuanians, it remains in the group of countries with the lowest level of mistrust. Since autumn of 2006, Estonia and Slovenia have also joined this group of minimal mistrust.

Of the 11 countries with reduced levels of mistrust in the EU (the level of mistrust is under 30%) eight countries are former communist countries - Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania and Estonia. 12 countries are at the opposite extreme, i.e. countries with maximum mistrust. Of these, only Eastern Germany and Croatia have belonged to the former communist bloc. This fact leads to the assumption that the level of trust/mistrust in the EU depends on the level of development of the country.

However, a detailed analysis of the factors determining the variation of trust in the EU indicates a number of other causes. Trust in the EU tends to be higher (Tables A2):

- at the individual level

- in highly educated townspeople,
- in young people, satisfied with their own life and with a relatively high frequency of church/prayer house attendance;

¹ Different rounding methods having been adopted for the EU graphs and the volumes, as a result the figures shown may differ by a point with the sum of individual cells.

- in people better informed on the EU;
- at the level of the country where they live:
 - in people living in countries with a low GDP/inhabitant;
 - in Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant countries in comparison with multi-religious ones²;
 - in former socialist countries;
 - in Latin countries.

From the perspective of this analysis, the considerable trust that Romanians have regularly manifested in the EU is a combined result of economic and cultural factors. Economically, it depends on the personal impact of the low living standard compared with the same standard in the EU. Romanians' living standard is much lower than the average in the EU judging objectively by the GDP level, and subjectively, by the satisfaction with their own life. However, this trust is also culturally determined, by feelings and values associated with the rejection of socialism, as well as by features associated with trust in traditional institutions, such as the Church or its status as a Latin country. All these country factors act together. Their configuration justifies, to a large extent, the trust level in the EU.

Among the four country factors determining Romanians' increased trust in the EU, the most important are the frustrations associated with the socialist experience in the political field and particular features related to traditionalism associated with trust in religious institutions³.

² Starting from the distribution of interviewed people we have taken into consideration as Orthodox countries Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus; Protestant countries- Denmark and Finland; Catholic countries (with more than 60% Catholic population)- Belgium, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy and Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Croatia; multi-religious countries (with less than 60% belonging to the main religion) Eastern Germany, Western Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Latvia; Islamic countries- Turkey.

³ In the model of multiple regression, we have successively eliminated country variables related to Latinity, socialist experience, religious profile of the country and GDP/inhabitant... Romania Predictor has become significant only when eliminating variables related to socialism and religion.

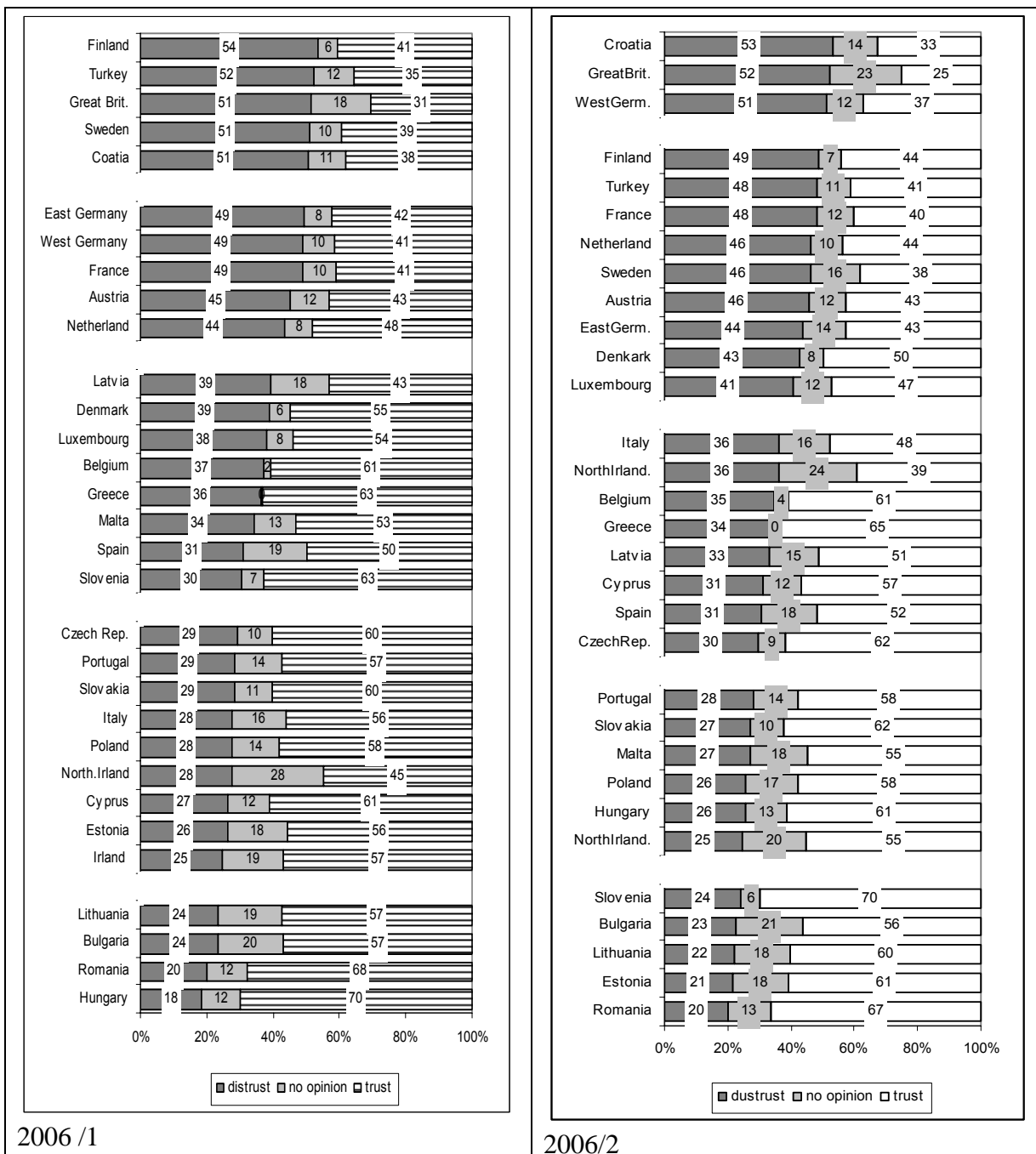


Figure 1. Trust in the European Union, 2006/1 2006/2

By the high trust which they place in the army, mass media and international institutions (EU and UNO) Romanians are closer to the NMS model than to that of EU15.

The very low trust which Romanians have in justice, police, trades unions and political parties is closer to the model in Orthodox Balkan countries (Table 1). For example, trust in justice is 33% in Orthodox countries, including Romania. This index is 26% in Romania. In Protestant countries, the corresponding percentage is 40% and, in Catholic ones, it is 76%. Religion is not, of course, responsible for the variation of trust in justice. However, it is probable that the sociocultural background in every country type, defined by the dominant religion, in this case, influences the legal system and its perceptions at the population level.

Table 1 Trust in institutions according to country type and dominant religion

	Romania	Dominant religion of the country				
		Orthodox	Catholic	Protestant	Multi-religious	Islamic
religious institutions	76	62	45	59	41	71
army	74	69	65	83	73	86
TV	73	63	49	73	58	44
radio	72	64	60	81	66	50
EU	67	64	50	47	36	41
UNO	61	53	50	71	52	36
press	60	54	48	58	37	37
consumers' organisations	52	50	61	60	68	53
internet	42	37	35	41	33	44
police	36	43	57	87	72	71
government	27	30	29	58	29	63
justice	26	33	40	76	52	66
Trade unions	25	27	35	62	40	36
national parliament	24	30	30	68	33	64
political parties	12	15	17	35	16	19

Reading method example: 50% of the persons interviewed in countries with Catholicism as dominant religion trust the EU, in comparison with 64%, the corresponding percentage in countries where the dominant religion is Orthodox (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania).

It appears that the model of institutional trust practised by Romanians is not a specific one; it corresponds to a country which simultaneously has a low level of economic development, is Orthodox from a religious perspective, and ex-communist, from the political point of view.

At the end of 2006, at the positive end of the scale, the state of mind of Romanian society was dominated by trust in the future guaranteed by the status of being an EU Member State. The negative end of the scale was defined by very low trust in the country's institutions, in the law-making institution - the Parliament – as well as in the institution applying the law - Justice:

	Romania	NMS	EU15
trust in the EU %	67	59	42
satisfied with life %	48	72	85
optimistic about personal life in next year %	40	31	35
trust in Justice %	26	34	48
trust in the Parliament %	24	19	36

Trust in justice is low in both absolute and relative terms. During 2006, Romanians' trust in justice decreased from 34% to 26%. In the European context, Romanians' score of trust is 8 percentage points below that in the NMS, and 22 percentage points below that in the EU 15.

Satisfaction with life is considerably lower than in the EU. However, personal optimism is considerably higher than in the EU. Similarly, optimism related to the economic situation of the country: 30% of Romanians believe that, economically, the country will be better off in 12 months' time, as compared with only 20% in the EU (Figure 8).

Public Agenda

Concern with economic development and citizen's purchasing power are the main topics in Romanians' public agenda. Concern with price rises or inflation are of maximum importance for 30% of Romanians. In the EU 15, the corresponding percentage is only 15% and in the NMS 20%. One might say that Romania's population has a specific public agenda (Table 2).

- concern with unemployment is lower than in the EU;
- pensions is a topic more present in Romania than in the EU countries;
- compared with the NMS and Romania, terrorism and immigration are topics of highest concern with EU15 citizens;
- Romanians are more concerned with the economic development of their country than EU citizens.

Romanians' public agenda is closest to that of Bulgarians, Hungarians, Czech people and Lithuanians. The highest differences related to the public agenda profile appear when comparing Romanians with British, Danish and Swedish people⁴.

In Romania, the public agenda is far from being homogeneous. Specific concerns are registered for different social segments:

- adults between 35 - 54 in urban areas health care system
- adults between 35 - 54 in rural areas taxes

⁴ The statement is based on the Bravais-Pearson correlations between country profiles from the public agenda point of view.

- youth housing, country's economic development
- elderly pensions

Romanians consider that the main role of the EU, in cooperation with the Government of Romania, is mainly solving problems related to immigration, pensions, health and regional development. The Government of Romania plays a main part in environmental protection, agriculture, energy and consumer protection (Tables 4).

What is important

Important is whatever is missing. The values presented by EB66 are desirable aspects of social life. Desirable as targets or as means. In their turn, targets represent a project, expectations to overcome some problematic situations. Human rights, peace and respect for human life are values which Romanians, together with EU citizens, consider to be of utmost importance for their personal life.

Romanians, as a reaction to the problems which they have had or continue to have, rank "human rights" first (47%). EU citizens mention "peace" as the most important personal value (52%). Terrorism and associated fights in different parts of the world are problems in relation to which peace is a target, a value.

How can one interpret the fact that 27% of Romanians claim that "personal fulfilment" is one of the most important values to them? As such, the figure does not say much. Related to similar figures in other areas, it makes sense. In the NMS, the corresponding percentage is only 13% and, in the EU15, only 11%.

Out of the seven countries where more than 15% of the population tends to consider personal fulfilment as a main value, only one (the Netherlands) belongs to the EU 15 (Figure 2). In exchange, out of the eight countries where people are very little inclined to claim that "personal fulfilment" is a main value, seven belong to "the old EU". It, therefore, does not necessarily mean that self-fulfilment is not an important value in Western Europe.

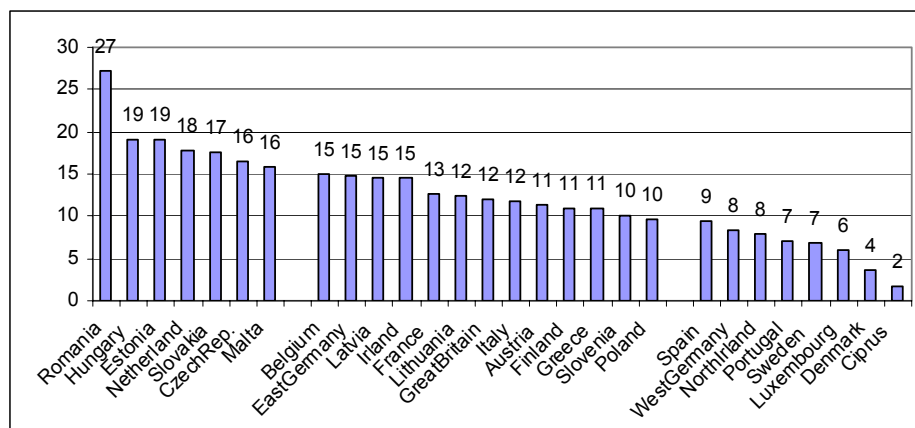


Figure 2 People considering that "personal fulfilment" is one of the most important values, at individual level⁵

We could get closer to explaining this phenomenon if we simultaneously take into account several factors related to the personal and residential situation, as well as the country where the interviewed person lives (Tables A4).

Data for the total sample in EB66 indicate that mainly people in poor countries consider personal fulfilment to be a value of utmost importance. This is why in many Eastern European countries, especially in Romania, self-fulfilment appears as an essential value.

People who tend to consider self-fulfilment as a main value are:

- those who are dissatisfied with their own life;
- young men in rural areas;
- people with medium or high education;
- skilled workers;
- people of a religion other than the Catholicism;
- citizens living in countries where the GDP/inhabitant is relatively low.

“The good society” mark. If the perspective is modified and the ranking is no longer related to a hierarchy of the values, but to an identification of the degree of personal adherence to certain values, the picture is different. In the first case, data gathered are an answer to questions such as "what is more important to you?" to which a list of choices is annexed; in the second case the interrogation is like "how much do you support the belief/ idea that...", offering several values one by one.

Both Romanians and EU people rank first the idea that crime should be punished more severely. Intolerance to crime is highest, with over 89% supporters in Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Belgium. The lowest intolerance to crime, with a percentage of between 70% and 79%, is recorded in Denmark, Austria and France.

Romanians rank at the same level as the NMS' average, with 89% supporting the view that "there is too much tolerance today, criminals should be punished more drastically".

The second most important value for Romanians is political participation. 77% of them claim that "citizens should participate more actively in the political life" of their country. This percentage is close to those in the NMS and the EU15. This is not an actually practised value, but a social need which people translate into a statement that represents a value.

⁵ In order to increase the comparable character of data, we have included only data related to countries in the EU and data related to Romania. For Turkey, Croatia and Bulgaria, the figures are 1%, 5% and 10%, respectively.

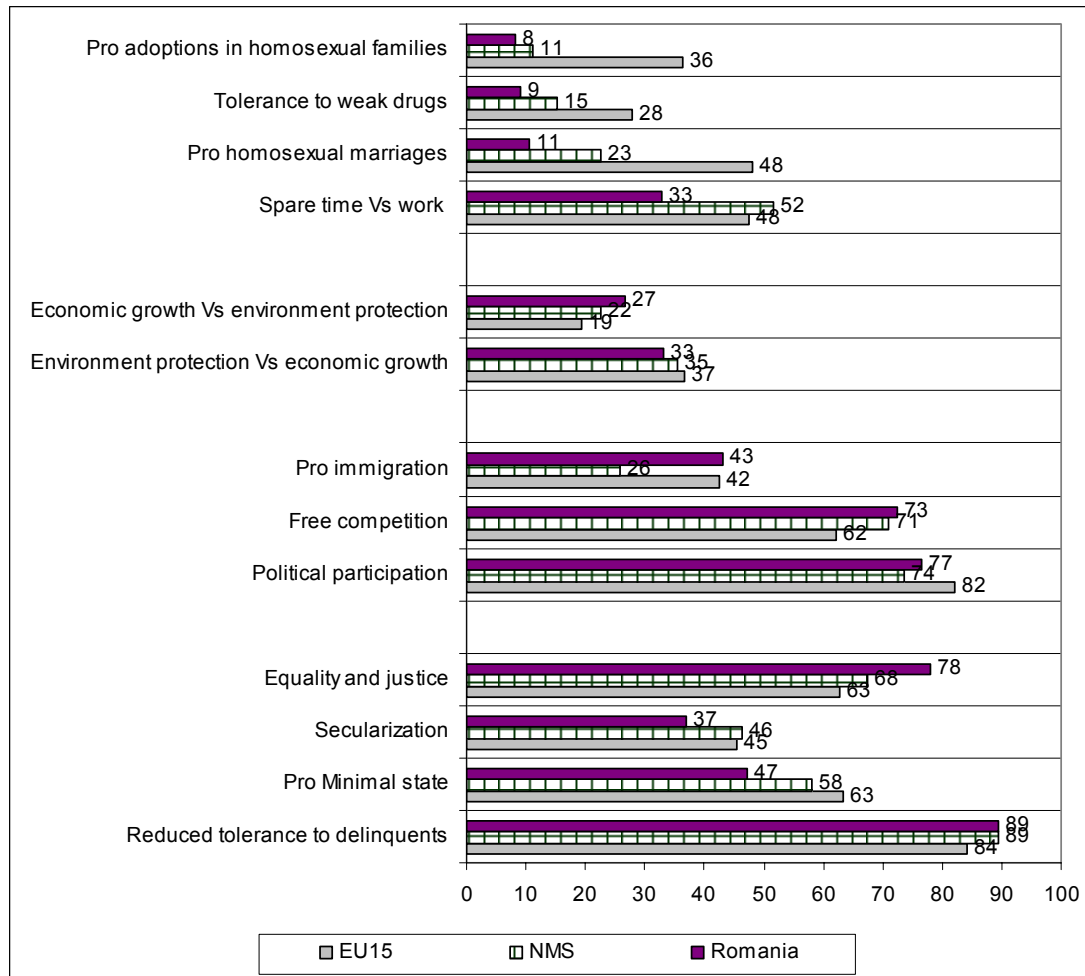


Figure 3 Value orientations. EU 15, NMS and Romania

Contrary to many clichés in circulation, the average 21st century Romanian seems to value work at the expense of spare time, to a higher degree than people in the NMS or in EU15: 33% of Romanians consider that "spare time should be more valued than work", in comparison with 48% in EU15 and 52% in NMS.

The positive relationship with religious institutions should be included in the group of specific values for Romanians:

	EU15	NMS	Romania
% trusting religious institutions	44	46	76
% disagreement with the formulation "in our society, religion is too important"	48	48	49
% people claiming that they never go to church	33	18	8

These data do not support a statement like "Romanians are more religious than the average EU citizen". Available data indicate that Romanians support religious institutions

to a great extent. This attitude is indicated by considerable levels of trust in Church and by the reduced number of those who never go to church. Even for religious practice in the public space - going to church or to the prayer house - differences tend to be more in terms of form than in terms of degree of devotion,. This analysis supports the argument that *“Faith is a feature manifested by Romanians "at important religious celebrations", by people in the NMS daily, while lack of participation in religious services is typical for EU15 people. This difference is, obviously, related to the form of devotion and not to its degree.*

At the level of the EU, the important values are mainly those related to human rights, democracy and peace (Table 7). The perception is similar in Romania and the EU.