

EUROBAROMETER 67

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2007

NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HUNGARY

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This report was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Hungary.

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Life in the European Union

In the series of Eurobarometer reports, Hungary regularly excels in the levels of discontent and pessimism of its citizens in regard to their lives, as well as the high levels of trust they display in the European Union.

The mood and contentment of EU citizens

Once again, in spring 2007, Hungarians excelled in their levels of dissatisfaction with life. However, EU newcomer, Bulgaria, took over the leading position from Hungary in this regard with its citizens being even less content with their lives.

When the socio-demographic data are analysed, it would appear that young people in Hungary are happiest with their current situation, while older Hungarians are less satisfied with their lives. The probability of being content with life increases among Hungarians with the size of their families or households, according to the poll's results.

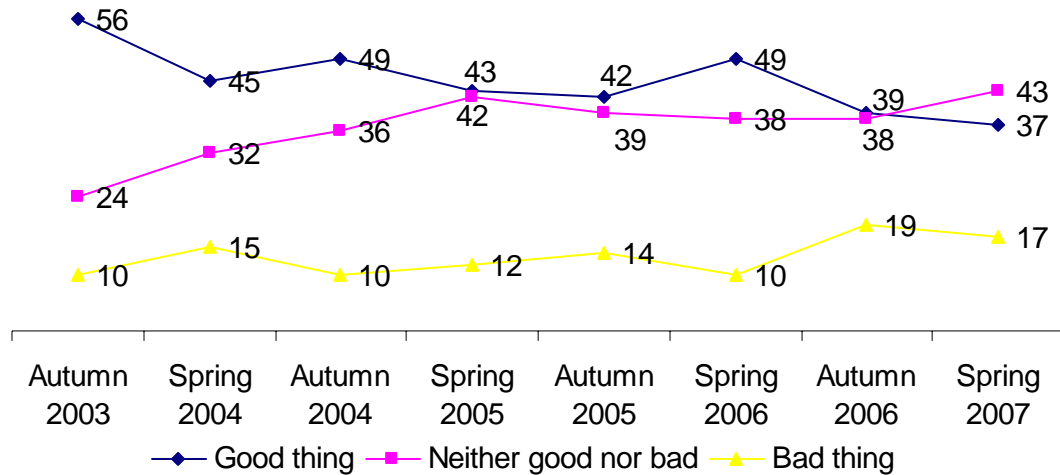
Contrary to the average results for the EU27, there is a significant gender gap in Hungary: 55% of men and 47% of women saying that they are satisfied with their lives. It may also be another specific characteristic of Hungarians that the proportion of people satisfied with their lives shows a great difference depending on political preference. Less than half of those who profess themselves to be right-wingers say they are content with their lives, while nearly two-thirds of people on the left say they are satisfied with their situation.

Besides their pessimism, Hungarians' confidence in the EU is also unchanged. Like the results of the last poll six months earlier, nearly two-thirds of Hungarians have trust in the EU. This proportion still exceeds the EU average, although the previously big difference has been diminishing. The decreasing difference is due to the fact that EU27 average for citizens trusting the Union has been rising.

Attitude on EU membership

It has also almost become a tradition in the results of the Hungarian poll that the proportion of people having confidence in the EU is still significantly bigger than the proportion of those believing that EU membership is a good thing. The number of people sharing the latter view has further decreased since the last poll and, for the first time in the history of Eurobarometer reports, people saying EU membership is neither good or bad has gained a majority over those believing EU membership is a good thing. The proportion of Hungarians viewing EU membership negatively has not changed significantly over the past six months.

Changes in the view on the EU membership Hungary (%)



Source: Eurobarometer 67

The proportion of interviewees thinking positively about EU membership is highest in the Netherlands, followed by Ireland, Luxembourg, Spain and Belgium.

The number of people saying EU membership is a good thing is lowest in Austria, followed by Hungary and Latvia. This figure is higher in the United Kingdom – a country often considered to be the most eurosceptic nation of all. However, more people say EU membership is a negative thing in the UK than in any other member state.

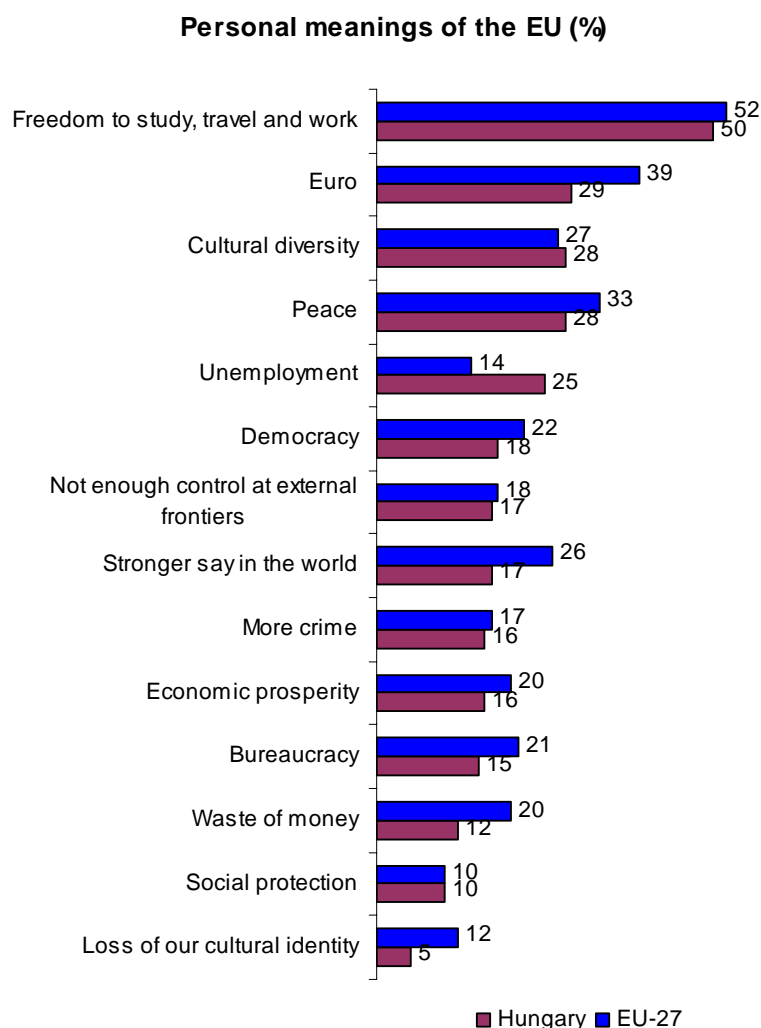
The meanings and roles of the EU

Half of EU citizens have a positive image of the Union, according to the poll results. A significant number of people interviewed consider the words 'democratic' and 'modern' to be appropriate in describing the EU. For most people who were interviewed in spring 2007, the free movement to travel, study and work remains the greatest advantage of EU membership.

Feelings about the EU

The figure for Hungarians claiming to have positive feelings about the EU is lower than the EU average. The proportion of those with positive feelings about the EU nearly equals that of those saying EU membership is a good thing and is significantly lower than the number of people having trust in the EU.

In the question about the role of the EU in individuals' lives, the freedom to travel, study and work is ranked number one both in Hungary and in the EU as a whole.



Source: Eurobarometer

When asked about the meaning of the EU to them personally, a higher percentage of citizens in the EU as a whole cite the euro than is the case in Hungary. This is probably due to the fact that the euro is the valid currency in many member states, while Hungarians come across the common currency less frequently. As might be expected, citizens of eurozone countries are those who cite the euro most frequently.

Information and being informed about the EU

Like citizens in other EU member countries, about 80% of Hungarians feel that they are not well-informed about political issues in the EU. Slovenia is the only country, where most people interviewed say they feel they are well-informed about the EU.

One in ten people in both Hungary and the EU on average is not interested in or looking for information about the EU. In Hungary, the proportion of people taking this stance is highest among those who had only received a primary education in contrast to only about 3% of those with higher education qualifications.

Hungarians believe that existing and new exchange programmes could help raise people's awareness about EU issues. They are less optimistic about the possible effects of a common European history book or a common European curriculum.

Current issues and challenges in the EU

Besides the mood, satisfaction, feelings and problems of EU citizens, the Eurobarometer poll in spring 2007 also included questions on how people see the current situation of the EU and how they would improve it in certain areas.

Supporting the EU's strategic issues

Both Hungarian and EU respondents would like to receive information about the EU during their education. Education in schools about EU institutions is the most supported strategic area.

People interviewed are more divided about the Constitution: while only two-thirds of EU citizens support it, its support was much higher among Hungarians. There has been a little change regarding this question since the last poll.

Support for a common defence and foreign policy is higher among EU citizens than support for the Constitution. Support for the common European currency is highest in the founding member states and the members of the eurozone.

Achievements and directions of European integration

More than one-third of Hungarians believe that the biggest achievement of the European integration is the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU.

In Hungary and in the EU in average, every tenth person interviewed highlights the euro as one of the important achievements of European integration. Only a small number of people cite student exchange programs, such as ERASMUS, among the important achievements, despite the fact that this area received strong supported in previous waves of the poll.

The development of the EU

The EU celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Rome Treaty in 2007. The Eurobarometer poll also included questions on how people evaluate the EU's history and how they see the anniversary.

The anniversary of the Rome Treaty

One-third of EU citizens say that hope is the main feeling evoked by the anniversary. The proportion of those with no feelings whatsoever about the anniversary is equally high. Every tenth person interviewed feels satisfaction when thinking about the anniversary while the proportions of people feeling concerned and proud are somewhat lower.

The future of the EU

EU citizens on average are more optimistic about the future of the EU than Hungarians. About one-fifth of EU citizens on average and a quarter of Hungarians interviewed are pessimistic about the future of the EU.

People had the opportunity to go into detail about the future of the EU in 50 years. More than half of the citizens say that the EU will have its own army, the euro will be stronger than the US dollar and that the EU will be a leading diplomatic power in the world by then.

There are no big differences between member states regarding the question about the EU's future foreign policy. About 80% of EU citizens agree that the EU's foreign policy should be independent from that of the United States and only one-tenth disagree.