

# EUROBAROMETER 67

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## SPRING 2007

### NATIONAL REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### SLOVAK REPUBLIC

This survey was requested and coordinated by Directorate-General Communication.

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## 1. State of Opinion

As was the case in previous Eurobarometer public opinion surveys, levels of satisfaction among Slovaks with the life they lead was below the European average in the spring 2007. While, in Slovakia, there were 72% respondents very satisfied or fairly satisfied, within the EU27, the figure was 80%. In spite of long-standing lower levels of satisfaction among Slovak citizens with the life they lead, compared with the EU average, for a few years, we have been able to see a moderate but continuous growth of satisfaction in Slovakia. Since autumn 2004, the number of very satisfied and fairly satisfied people has grown by 13 points.

There are no major differences in the responses of Slovak and EU27 citizens to the question about their expectations concerning their life in general over the next 12 months. An improvement of the situation is expected by 36% of Slovak citizens (37% in the EU27), a deterioration is expected by 14% of Slovak citizens (11% in the EU27) and 47% of Slovak citizens does not expect any change (49% in the EU27). In comparison with the previous Eurobarometer survey, the number of Slovaks expecting an improvement of their life in general in the next 12 months has increased by 3 points and has reached the highest level since Slovakia joined European Union. In comparison with autumn 2005, the number of Slovak citizens who expect the improvement of their life in general has risen by 7 points.

Even more positive and optimistic are the expectations of Slovak citizens concerning the economic situation in their country. While, in the EU27, only 28% of citizens expect an improvement of the economic situation in their country, in Slovakia, the figure is 40%. On the other hand, a worsening of the economic situation in Slovakia is expected by only 22% of Slovaks - 5 points fewer than the European average. Since the survey undertaken in autumn of last year, the number of Slovak citizens who expect an improvement of the economic situation in Slovakia in the next 12 months has risen by 12 points. And, at the same time, the number of citizens who expect the worsening of the economic situation has decreased by 8 points. Thus, in the spring 2007, the Slovaks were the fourth most optimistic nation among the twenty-seven member states of the European Union as far as their expectations concerning the economic situation in their country are concerned, just behind the Germans, Dutch and Lithuanians. The growth of these optimistic, positive expectations is with great probability related to the wide media coverage of the growth of Slovakia's GDP in the last year and similar expectations for this year.

Slovak citizens are optimistic in their expectations concerning the employment situation in Slovakia in the next 12 months. In Slovakia, 39% of citizens (8 points more than in the EU27) expect an improvement and only 24% of Slovaks expect a worsening (3 points less than in the EU27). We can also observe a positive trend in this indicator since autumn 2005. The number of citizens who expect an improvement in the Slovak employment situation has grown since spring 2005 from 20% to 39%. Since the last Eurobarometer survey, undertaken in autumn 2006, the number of Slovaks who expect an improvement in the employment situation in their country has grown by 13 points. This growth is accompanied by a gradual decrease in the number of Slovaks who expect a worsening of the employment situation in Slovakia by 15 points since autumn 2005.

Slovak citizens also have a more positive view on their present situation compared with five years ago. 41% of Slovak respondents stated that their situation has improved in this period (3 points more than in the EU27) and only 22% of them stated that their situation had worsened (6 points less than in the EU27). From the point of view of trends, we can observe the same development as in the case of questions concerning the expectations for the next 12 months. Between spring 2006 and spring 2007, the number of Slovak citizens who thought that their personal situation had become worse than it was five years previously, has decreased from 33% to 22% and, at the same time, the number of citizens who thought that their personal situation has improved compared with the situation five years ago, has

increased from 28% to 41%. These results indicate that Slovak citizens perceive the positive impact of the economic reforms and their country's membership of the European Union more and more.

Slovaks are also, in comparison with the European average, more positive and optimistic as regards their expectations of the future. 47% of Slovaks (4 points more than in the EU27) expect that their personal situation will improve in the course of the next five years, and only 12% (2 points fewer than in the EU27) assume that their personal situation in the next 5 years will worsen. We can also observe a positive trend since the autumn 2005. During this period, the number of Slovaks who expect that their personal situation in the course of the next five years will worsen has decreased from 23% to 12%. At the same time, since autumn 2005, the number of Slovaks who expect that their personal situation will improve in the next 5 years has increased from 37% to 47%.

## **2. Slovakia and the European Union**

Citizens of the Slovak Republic consider unemployment to be the greatest problem faced by their country. It was identified as one of the two greatest problems by 36% of Slovaks and 34% respondents within the EU27. The second greatest problem, according to Slovaks, is the economic situation (29%), while, in the EU, it is crime (24%). Crime is also a concern for Slovak respondents with 27% of them citing this issue and the 21% mention the healthcare system. From the point of view of trends, the perception of unemployment as one of the greatest problems faced by Slovakia has shown an impressive decline. While in spring 2006, unemployment was identified as one of the greatest concerns by 61% of Slovaks, in the autumn of 2006, this figure was only 44% and, in spring 2007, it had fallen to only 36%.

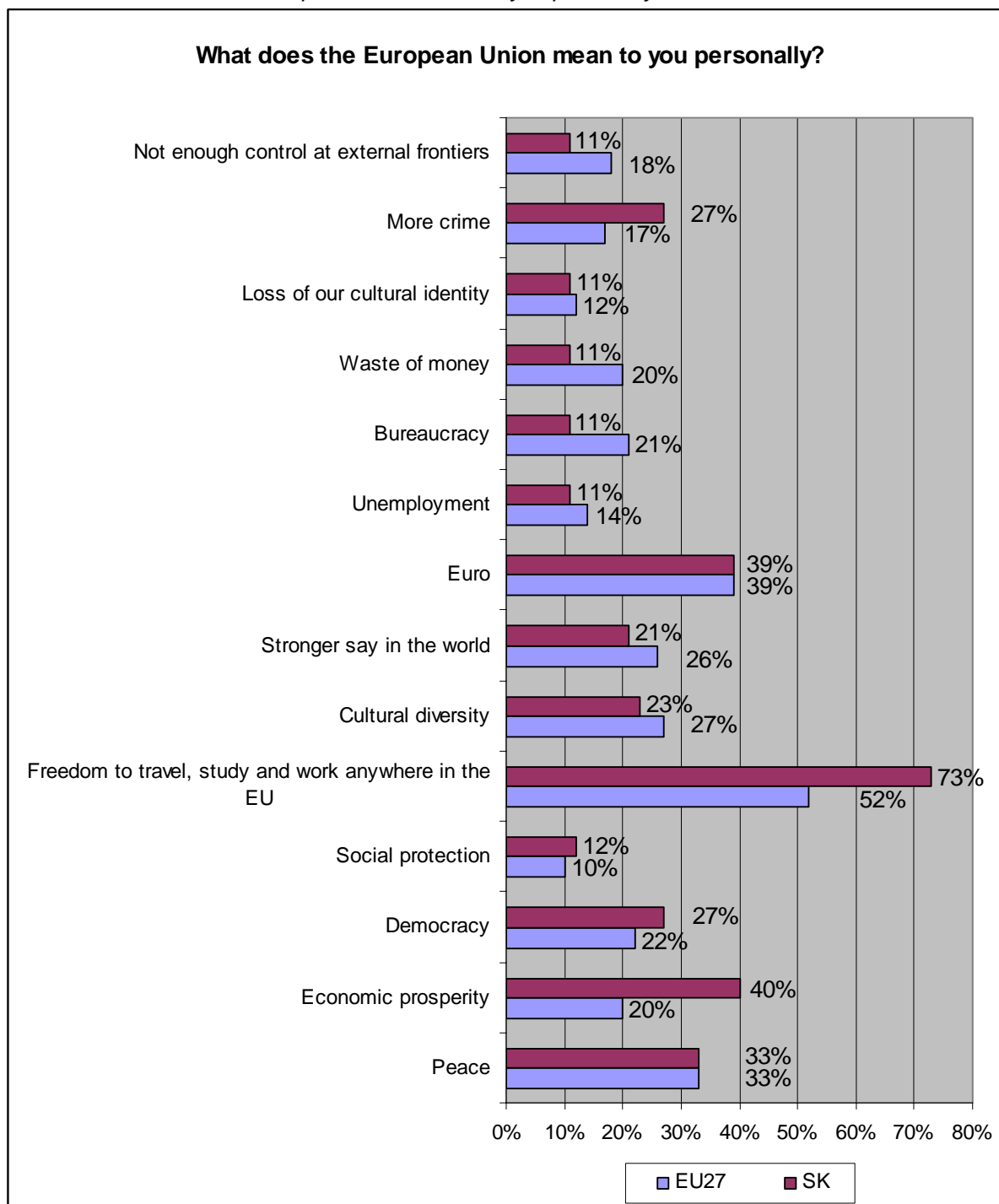
80% of Slovak citizens think that the biggest countries have the most power in the EU (75% in the EU27) and only 35% of Slovak citizens think that the interests of their country are well taken into account in the EU (45% in the EU27). Only 48% of citizens think that Slovakia's voice counts in the EU (66% in the EU27) and only 25% of Slovaks think that their own voice counts in the EU (35% in the EU27). However, 51% of Slovak citizens (52% in the EU27) believe that their country will become more influential in the EU in the future. These views should be viewed in the context that only 37% of Slovak respondents (43% in the EU27) say that they understand how the European Union works. Therefore, we cannot assume that the opinion of the Slovak respondents concerning the "strength" of the voice of their country in the EU is based on a deep knowledge of the methods of voting in the Council of the European Union or on a knowledge of the competencies of the Council, European Commission and the European Parliament. It is likely that when answering the questions on the "strength" of the voice of their country, the majority of respondents simply assumed that a small country like Slovakia cannot have great influence in the European Union.

Slovakia has, for a long period, belonged to the group of countries with the greatest number of citizens who are convinced that their country has benefited from EU membership. In spring 2007, 76% of Slovak citizens, that is 17 points more than in the EU27, believed that their country had benefited from that membership. Since spring 2004, the number of Slovaks who believe that their country has benefited from EU membership has increased by 19 points. At the same time, the number of citizens who think that Slovakia has not benefited from EU membership has decreased by 9 points and the number of people who do not express any view on this question has decreased by 10 points.

### 3. The European Union Today

For Slovaks personally, the European Union means, above all, the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU. This option was chosen by 73% of respondents, that is 21 points above the European average. The European Union for Slovaks also means economic prosperity (40%, 20 points more than in the EU27), the Euro (39%, same as in the EU27), peace (33%, same as in the EU27) and democracy (27%, 5 points more than in the EU27). In comparison with the previous survey undertaken in autumn 2006, the number of respondents for whom the European Union means the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU, has grown from 67% to 73%.

*Question: What does the European Union mean to you personally?*



In Slovakia, the European Union has, for a long time, a more positive image than in the European Union as a whole. While, in Slovakia, for 58% of citizens the EU conjures up a very positive or fairly positive image and only for 8% of citizens does the EU conjure up a fairly negative or very negative image, within the EU27, the EU conjures up a very positive or fairly positive image for 52% and a fairly negative or very negative image for 15%. In terms of trends, it can be seen that, since autumn 2005, the number of Slovaks for whom the EU conjures up a very positive or fairly positive image has risen by 15 points.

66% of Slovak respondents agree with the opinion that every European decision is the subject of negotiations in which the opinions of the national governments of all member states are taken into account. In the EU27, an average of 63% agreed with this opinion. However, the opinion of Slovak respondents is to great extent in contradiction with their answers to similar questions. Only 35% of Slovak respondents think the interests of their country are well taken into account and 54% do not agree with this opinion. Moreover, only 48% of Slovak respondents think that the voice of Slovakia counts in the EU and 45% of them do not agree with this opinion.

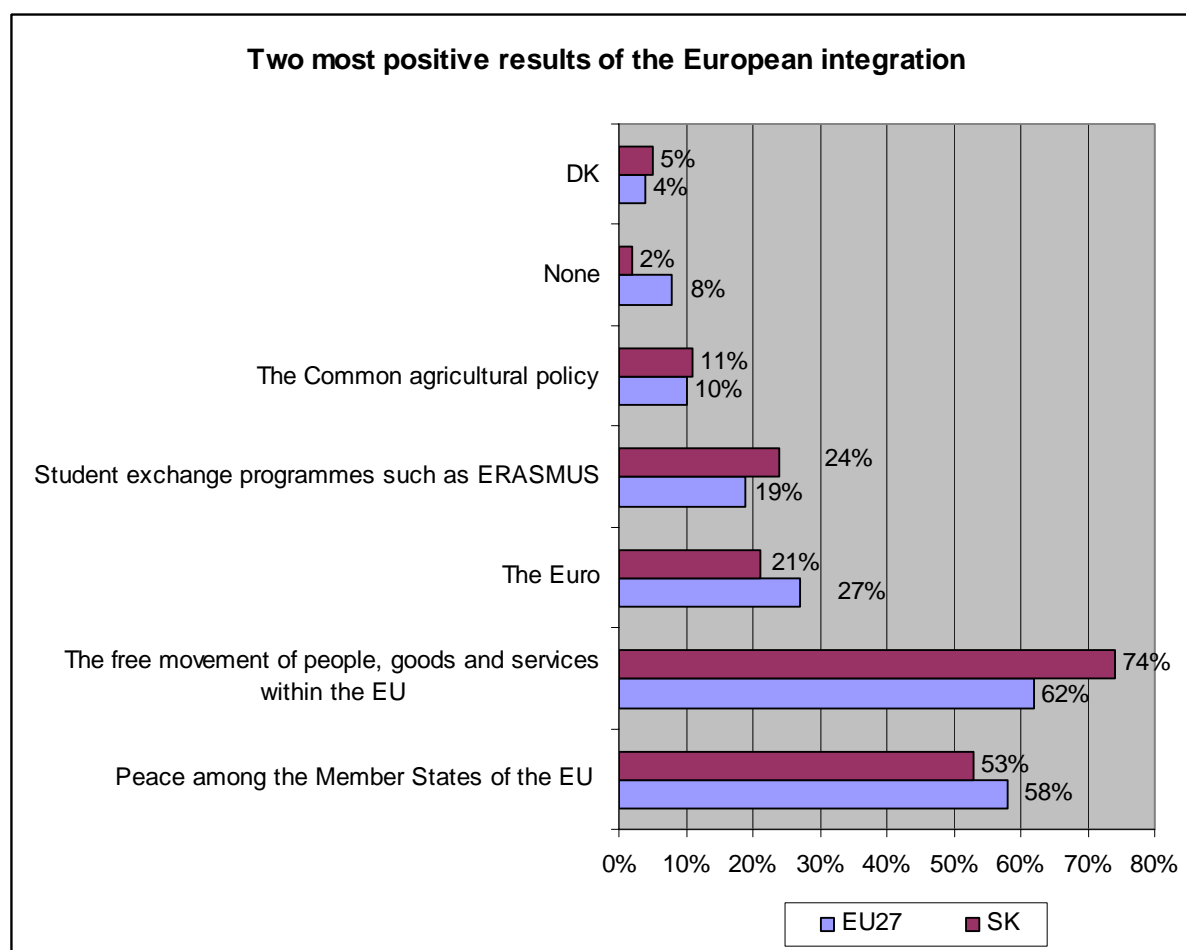
Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising, that 75% of Slovak citizens (7 points more than in the EU27) want decisions on taxes to be taken by the national government. Similarly, 72% of Slovaks (the same figure as in the EU27) want the national government to take decisions on pensions. Further areas which should remain within the exclusive competence of the national government are health and social welfare (68% of Slovaks and 66% of EU27 citizens), the educational system (67% of Slovaks and 64% of EU27 citizens) and agriculture and fisheries (58% of Slovak citizens and 45% of EU27 citizens).

There is a paradox in the opinion of the Slovak citizens. In spite of the fact that two-thirds of Slovaks think that every European decision is the subject of negotiations in which the opinions of the national government of all member states are taken into account, a majority want to keep a great part of the competencies exclusively at national level. For instance, the majority of Slovaks are against decisions on agriculture and fisheries being taken within the European Union and want to keep this competence at national level. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Common Agricultural Policy has been, for 45 years, one of the key European policies and, at the moment, approximately 40% of the EU's budget is spent on the CAP.

Slovak citizens are, in contrast, in favour of joint decision-making within the European Union in the areas of the fight against terrorism (92% of Slovak citizens and 81% of EU27 citizens), defence and foreign policy (81% of Slovak citizens and 62% of EU27 citizens), fighting crime (76% of Slovak citizens and 60% of EU27 citizens), immigration (69% of Slovak citizens and 59% of EU27 citizens), support for regions facing economic difficulties (67% of Slovak citizens and 60% of EU27 citizens) and protecting the environment (64% of Slovak citizens and 69% of EU27 citizens).

From these answers, it is clear that Slovak citizens want the European Union to have powers in certain areas in which Slovakia does not have strong "national interests" (foreign policy), does not have the capacity to effectively implement policies (defence and the fight against terrorism), the national government has failed in that policy area (fighting crime), or where citizens expect the European Union to provide a significant "financial boost" (support for regions facing economic difficulties). However, Slovaks do not want that their country to give up sovereignty in areas that either give Slovakia a competitive advantage (taxes), areas which, according to Slovak citizens, are better than the European average (educational system), or in areas where they think Slovakia has suffered as a result of a common European policy (agriculture and fisheries).

While, in the old member states (EU15), the impact of the May 2004 enlargement on the European Union is assessed positively by 29% of citizens, in the new member states (EU10) 51% of citizens hold this view and in Slovakia the figure reaches 52%. Only citizens of Poland (58%), Estonia (56%) and Slovenia (55%) have more positive view on the impact of the 2004 enlargement. In other new member states and in all old member states, citizens have a less positive view on the impact of the enlargement. 23% of EU15 citizens hold negative views on the impact of the 2004 enlargement in contrast to just 17% of EU10 citizens and 14% of Slovaks. The view that the impact of the 2004 enlargement has been neither positive nor negative is shared by 33% of EU15 citizens, 24% of EU10 citizens and 30% of Slovak citizens. Within the EU15, only 15% of citizens say that the enlargement of the European Union has been positive and they did not expect this to be the case. In the EU10, the enlargement had been unexpectedly positive for 22% of citizens and, in Slovakia, 28% of citizens hold this view. Thus, for Slovakia, of all the member States, the enlargement has been the most unexpectedly positive surprise.



In line with the view of a significant majority of the Slovak citizens that the European Union for them personally means, first of all, the freedom of travel, study and work anywhere in the EU, the greatest proportion of Slovaks (44%) consider the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU to be the most positive result of European integration. The second greatest proportion of Slovaks (38%) consider peace among the member states of the EU to be the most positive result of European integration. Within the EU27, the order on the first two places is reversed. Also, when identifying the second most positive result of European integration, the greatest proportion of Slovak respondents (32%, same as in the EU27) has chosen free movement of people, goods and services within the EU. However, unlike in the EU27 average, the second greatest number of Slovaks identified

student exchange programs such as ERASMUS as the second most positive result of European integration, while, in the EU27, it was the peace among the member states. Overall, 74% of Slovak respondents identified the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU as one of the two most positive results of the European integration, that is, 12 points more than the EU27 average. Peace among the member states of the EU is identified as one of the two most positive results of European integration by 53% of Slovak respondents, i.e. 5 points below the European average. While, within the EU27, the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU is 4 points ahead of peace among the member states of the EU, in Slovakia, the difference is 21 points. The Euro, student exchange programs, such as ERASMUS, and the Common Agricultural Policy lag behind.

To 58% of Slovaks, the first thing that comes to mind in relation to the 50th anniversary of the European integration is the word 'hope'. This figure is nine points more than in the EU27. In second place, was the word 'satisfaction' which came to mind in the case of 41% of Czechs - a figure 14 points more than the EU27 average. Only 6% of Slovak citizens associate the 50th anniversary of the European integration with 'disappointment' (4 points below the European average), but 23% (3 points above the European average) associate this anniversary with the word 'worry'.

#### **4. Globalisation**

For Slovak citizens, globalisation means, above all, the relocation of some companies to countries where labour is cheaper (31%, 4 points less than in the EU27). In second and third place, according to Slovaks, globalisation means foreign investments in Slovakia and opportunities for Slovak companies in terms of new outlets. 53% of Slovak citizens agree with the opinion that the European Union helps to protect us from the negative effects of globalisation while, in the EU27, only 42% of citizens share this opinion. In comparison with the survey undertaken in autumn 2006, the number of Slovaks who think that the EU helps protect us from the negative effects of globalisation has decreased by 3 points and the number of those who do not agree with this opinion has also increased by 3 points. In spite of this negative trend, the positive assessment of the role of the EU is still higher than the negative assessment. Also, 53% of Slovaks think that the European Union enables European citizens to better benefit from the positive effects of globalisation. In the European Union overall, half of citizens hold this view.

#### **5. The Future of European Integration**

Slovaks have an optimistic view on the future of the European Union. 63% of citizens are fairly optimistic concerning the future of the EU (5 points more than the European average) and another 12% are very optimistic. In total, the optimists' lead over the pessimists is 75(%) : 22(%).

Slovak citizens expect that, in 50 years from now, the European Union will have, with the euro, a more powerful currency than the dollar (66% of respondents, 5 points more than in the EU27) and will have its own army (63% of respondents, 7 points more than in the EU27). 49% of Slovak citizens expect that the EU will be a leading diplomatic power in the world (12 points less than in the EU27) and 47% of Slovaks (4 points less than in the EU27) expect that the EU will have its own president directly elected by European citizens. These expectations are in line with the prevailing opinion that, in the area of defence and foreign policy, the Slovak government should make decisions jointly within the European Union and, therefore, this area should not be the exclusive competence of the national government.

According to Slovaks, a feeling of community among European Union citizens is created especially by history (38%, 17 points more than in the EU27), languages (31%, 14 points more than in the EU27), culture (27%, same as in the EU27), religion (25%, 12 points more

than in the EU27) and values (24%, 4 points more than in the EU27). In the European Union overall, 27% of respondents identified the economy as creating a sense of community among European Union citizens, i.e. 6 points more than in Slovakia. For Slovaks, in contrast with the European average, a feeling of community among European Union citizens is related rather to history, languages and religion and less to the economy, although the economic area, particularly the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU, is, according to a large majority of Slovak citizens, the most positive result of the European integration.

Slovak citizens believe that the European institutions, in order to strengthen the European Union in the future, should, in the coming years, focus on the issues of environment (32% in Slovakia, 34% in the EU27), European foreign policy (30% in Slovakia, 16% in the EU27), the fight against crime (28% in Slovakia, 33% in the EU27) and internal market (26% in Slovakia, 13% in the EU27). The greatest differences between the views of Slovak and EU27 citizens on the future priorities of the European institutions is in the area of European foreign policy, the internal market and immigration. While Slovaks place emphasis on the first two areas, in the European Union overall, immigration is considered more important than in Slovakia.

Since Slovakia joined the European Union, Slovaks are among the greatest supporters of the further enlargement of the EU. 59% of Slovaks, that is 10 points more than in the EU27, expressed their support for further enlargement of the EU. 30% were against the further enlargement of the EU.

## **6. Trust**

Slovak citizens traditionally show high levels of trust in the EU institutions. The European Parliament is the institution in which Slovaks have greatest trust. 72% of Slovak citizens, that is 16 points above the European average, trust the EP. 62% of Slovaks trust the Council of the European Union (15 points more than in the EU27) and the European Commission (10 points more than in the EU27). 63% of Slovaks trust the European Central Bank (10 points more than in the EU27). It is perhaps paradoxical that with regard to the opinion of the majority of Slovak citizens concerning the strength of the “voice” of their country in the European Union, they trust most the institution in which the strength of the voice is really minimal, when it is borne in mind that in the European Parliament Slovakia is represented by only 14 out of a total of 785 MEPs. On the other hand, Slovaks trust the Council of the European Union less – an institution in which the voice of Slovakia “counts” much more (including the veto right as far as in many areas the decisions are taken with a consensus).

Slovak citizens show high levels of trust not only in the individual EU institutions in the European Union itself. 66% of Slovaks (9 points more than in the EU27) trust the EU. Trust in national institutions is much lower in Slovakia. 39% of citizens trust the Slovak Parliament (43% in the EU27) and 42% of citizens trust the Slovak Government (41% in the EU27). Slovaks show a much higher level of trust in the national media. 53% of citizens trust the press (47% in the EU27), 71% of citizens trust television (58% in the EU27) and 79% of Slovak citizens trust radio (66% in the EU27). Eurobarometer No. 67, which was conducted in spring 2007, confirmed the growth in trust of Slovaks in the national parliament and national government that was observed in the autumn of last year. Compared with the level of trust in these institutions, in spring 2006, i.e. before the parliamentary election, growth in the level of trust in the parliament of 12 points and in the government of 21 points has been noted.



## EUROBAROMETER “Standard” 67.2

### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Between the 10th of April and the 15th of May 2007, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe, carried out wave 67.2 of the EUROBAROMETER, on request of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate General Communication, “Public Opinion and Media Monitoring”.

The STANDARD EUROBAROMETER 67.2 is part of wave 67.2 and covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union Member States, resident in each of the Member States and aged 15 years and over. The STANDARD EUROBAROMETER 67.2 has also been conducted in the two candidate countries (Croatia and Turkey) and in the Turkish Cypriot Community. In these countries, the survey covers the national population of citizens and the population of citizens of all the European Union Member States that are residents in these countries and have a sufficient command of the national languages to answer the questionnaire. The basic sample design applied in all states is a multi-stage, random (probability) one. In each country, a number of sampling points was drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and to population density.

In order to do so, the sampling points were drawn systematically from each of the "administrative regional units", after stratification by individual unit and type of area. They thus represent the whole territory of the countries surveyed according to the EUROSTAT NUTS II (or equivalent) and according to the distribution of the resident population of the respective nationalities in terms of metropolitan, urban and rural areas. In each of the selected sampling points, a starting address was drawn, at random. Further addresses (every Nth address) were selected by standard "random route" procedures, from the initial address. In each household, the respondent was drawn, at random (following the "closest birthday rule"). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people's homes and in the appropriate national language. As far as the data capture is concerned, CAPI (*Computer Assisted Personal Interview*) was used in those countries where this technique was available.

ABBREVIATIONS	COUNTRIES	INSTITUTES	N° INTERVIEWS	FIELDWORKDATES	POPULATION 15+
BE	Belgium	TNS Dimarso	1011	11/04/2007 - 07/05/2007	8.650.994
BG	Bulgaria	TNS BBSS	1039	13/04/2007 - 26/04/2007	6.671.699
CZ	Czech Rep.	TNS Aisa	1043	13/04/2007 - 04/05/2007	8.571.710
DK	Denmark	TNS Gallup DK	1002	10/04/2007 - 14/05/2007	4.411.580
DE	Germany	TNS Infratest	1513	10/04/2007 - 09/05/2007	64.361.608
EE	Estonia	TNS Emor	1005	16/04/2007 - 14/05/2007	887.094
EL	Greece	TNS ICAP	1000	10/04/2007 - 08/05/2007	8.693.566
ES	Spain	TNS Demoscopia	1000	10/04/2007 - 10/05/2007	37.024.972
FR	France	TNS Sofres	1013	10/04/2007 - 08/05/2007	44.010.619
IE	Ireland	TNS MRBI	1000	10/04/2007 - 10/05/2007	3.089.775
IT	Italy	TNS Abacus	1010	10/04/2007 - 08/05/2007	48.892.559
CY	Rep. of Cyprus	Synovate	502	11/04/2007 - 07/05/2007	596.752
CY(tcc)	Turkish Cypriot Community	KADEM	500	10/04/2007 - 06/05/2007	157.101
LV	Latvia	TNS Latvia	1013	13/04/2007 - 15/05/2007	1.418.596
LT	Lithuania	TNS Gallup Lithuania	1018	10/04/2007 - 05/05/2007	2.803.661
LU	Luxembourg	TNS ILReS	511	10/04/2007 - 07/05/2007	374.097
HU	Hungary	TNS Hungary	1006	12/04/2007 - 10/05/2007	8.503.379
MT	Malta	MISCO	500	10/04/2007 - 30/04/2007	321.114
NL	Netherlands	TNS NIPO	1009	10/04/2007 - 10/05/2007	13.030.000
AT	Austria	Österreichisches Gallup-Institut	1011	10/04/2007 - 01/05/2007	6.848.736
PL	Poland	TNS OBOP	1000	10/04/2007 - 02/05/2007	31.967.880
PT	Portugal	TNS EUROTESTE	1011	14/04/2007 - 07/05/2007	8.080.915
RO	Romania	TNS CSOP	1019	10/04/2007 - 08/05/2007	18.173.179
SI	Slovenia	RM PLUS	1013	10/04/2007 - 09/05/2007	1.720.137
SK	Slovakia	TNS AISA SK	1106	13/04/2007 - 01/05/2007	4.316.438
FI	Finland	TNS Gallup Oy	1038	16/04/2007 - 09/05/2007	4.348.676
SE	Sweden	TNS GALLUP	1005	10/04/2007 - 10/05/2007	7.486.976
UK	United Kingdom	TNS UK	1319	10/04/2007 - 07/05/2007	47.685.578
HR	Croatia	Puls	1000	10/04/2007 - 07/05/2007	3.722.800
TR	Turkey	TNS Piar	1005	10/04/2007 - 10/05/2007	47.583.830
TOTAL			29222	10/04/2007 - 15/05/2007	444.406.021

For each country, a comparison between the sample and the universe was carried out. The Universe description was derived from Eurostat population data or from national statistics offices. For all countries surveyed, a national weighting procedure, using marginal and intercellular weighting, was carried out based on this Universe description. In all countries, gender, age, region and size of locality were introduced in the iteration procedure. For international weighting (i.e. EU averages), TNS Opinion & Social applies the official population figures as provided by EUROSTAT or national statistic offices. The total population figures for input in this post-weighting procedure are listed above.

Readers are reminded that survey results are estimations, the accuracy of which, everything being equal, rests upon the sample size and upon the observed percentage. With samples of about 1,000 interviews, the real percentages vary within the following confidence limits:

<b>Observed percentages</b>	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
<b>Confidence limits</b>	± 1.9 points	± 2.5 points	± 2.7 points	± 3.0 points	± 3.1 points