

EUROBAROMETER 68

PUBLIC OPINION IN EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2007

NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ROMANIA

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This report was produced for the European Commission's Delegation in Romania.
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Abbreviations

EB Eurobarometer

EB68 Standard Eurobarometer 68.2

2007/1 EB67.2

2007/2 EB68.2

EU27 The European Union, data collected in all Member States

EU15 Europe of 15 or “the old Member States”

NMS10 Europe of the 10 new Member States, which acceded in 2004

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Executive summary

Perception of the European Union

Between spring and autumn 2007, Romanians' trust in the EU registered a slight increase (non-significant, though, from a statistical point of view), from 65 to 68%. In practical terms, in autumn 2007, the level of trust fell to that registered the previous year. The interpretation of this level as being positive and stable can also be applied to the percentage of Romanians who believe their country benefits from EU membership (69% in the spring vs 67% in the autumn of 2007).

At the same time, it should be pointed out that Romanians are becoming more critical of the EU, in line with the trend witnessed within the Union in 2007:

- The percentage of Romanians with a positive image of the European Union fell from 18 to 12% in 2007. The decrease is in line with the trend witnessed in Europe (from 11 to 8%, over the same period). On the whole, the number of Romanians that have a positive image ("very positive" and "quite positive") remains extremely high (at a level of 67-68%, similar to that recorded in Ireland). The change, in Romania's case, pertains to the significant reduction in numbers of those who, at the beginning of the year, had a high level of trust in the EU.
- Trust in the European Commission went down 5% amongst the Romanian population, from 80 to 75% (as compared to the 11% decrease witnessed at EU level).
- Trust in the European Ombudsman decreased 10% in Romania's case (as compared to 1% at the EU level).
- The proportion of those who believe their voice "counts in the EU" went down from 27 to 20% in Romania, as compared to a decrease from 35 to 30% at EU level.

Trust in national institutions

Romanians, as well as the Danish people, register the highest level of trust in religious institutions (77%) within the EU. However, there is one major difference between the two countries. While in Romania these institutions are ranked at the top, in Denmark they are out-ranked by the army and the police.

Second to the church, Romanians trust the army (68%), TV and radio (61%) and the written press (53%).

The Romanian population's level of trust in the justice system did not change over 2007, remaining at a low level of 26%. This level places Romania within the group of countries with the lowest level of trust in the justice system within the EU (see table 5 in the *National Report* for relevant data for Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Bulgaria).

In 2007, the largest decline in trust in the justice system in Romania was registered amongst older people in urban areas. It amounts to almost 10% and comes in contrast to the increase in trust levels amongst young people, especially from rural areas (table 6).

As is the case in the NMS10 countries, the lowest levels of trust are registered, in Romania, for political parties, parliament and government (see Chart 7 in *National Report*). Indexes are close, showing the fact that Romania is well within the Central and Eastern European configuration. More specifically, Romanians' trust profile in national institutions is in line with that registered in Poland, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania (Chart 8).

State of mind, GDP and institutions

Romanians' state of mind seems to have stayed the same, if looked at from a short-term perspective, over the last couple of years. Half of the population remain happy or, for that matter, unhappy with their living conditions. The level of satisfaction with life in Romania is way beyond that registered in the new member states that joined the Union in 2004 (apr. 25% fewer people in the category "satisfied with life") and very far from the situation in the "old EU15", where the proportion of those satisfied with life is very high, at more than 80% (see Chart 2 in the *National Report*).

Similarly, Romanians' optimism remains high, with close to 40% of people believing that their living standards will be better in 1-year's time (Chart 3). If in terms of satisfaction with life, Romanians are well below the EU average (49% in Romania vs 79% in the EU), in terms of optimism the situation is different (41% optimists in Romania vs 30% at EU level).

As in many other situations, social life is seemingly stable, a reflection of multiple changes taking place within segments of the population with a specific state of mind. In reality, people do not live only in the past, present or future, but frequently by relating to 2 or 3 of these temporal intervals. Available data for the 2007/2 Euro-Barometer edition show there are 5 types of social state of mind, a combination between satisfaction-dissatisfaction with life and optimism-pessimism.

On the whole, the dominating model in the EU is that of a society with content people, who believe they live well now and will continue to do so in the future (46%). The state of mind model for a developed society seems to be that of the EU15 (Chart 1), with:

- around half of the population who hope to have the same living standards in the future as they have now
- a quarter of the population who believe their living standards will improve,
- over 10% who expect their living standards to remain poor or even worsen,
- the rest, apr. 10%-15%, being composed of very heterogeneous categories from a state of mind point of view.

This is a well-structured model that can be found, with minor deviations from the mentioned configuration, in all 6 Euro-Barometer editions from 2005-2007. These deviations appear, from one edition to the next, mostly in the categories "same good living standards" and "even better living standards". The proportion of those in the category "same good living standards", for ex., has increased from 46 to 49% between EB67.2 and EB68.2, at the EU15 level. Over the same period, the number of optimists who believe they have good living standards that will improve in the future fell, from 33 to 27%.

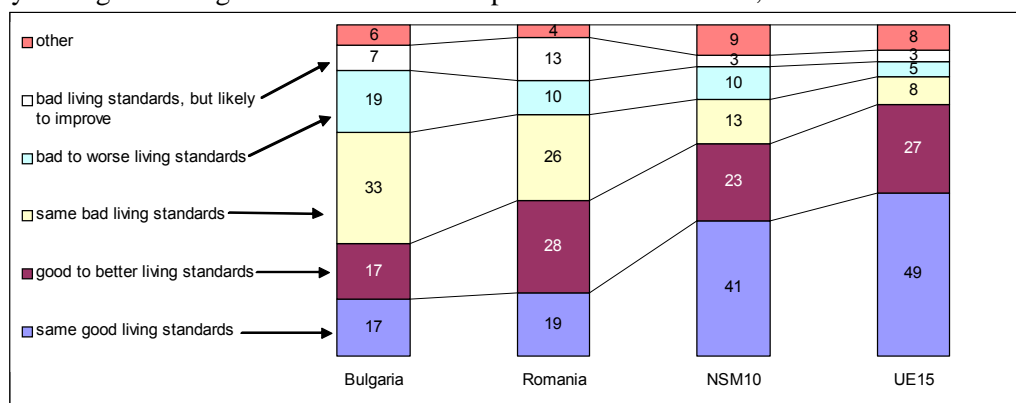


Chart 1. What are now and would be in 12-months time your living standards? (% , EB68.2)

Societies from the 2004 accession wave are quite close to the Western model of the specific state of mind for developed societies. As in the EU15, the dominant proportion is made up of people with long-term satisfaction with life, who hope to have the same good living standards in the future. It is true they have not come to represent half of the population in these countries, but their number is close to 40%. Those that hope for even better living standards, in other words, the content optimists, represent a quarter of the population, the same as in the specific state of mind model for developed societies.

Romania is still far from the developed society's model. The category that should be dominant in a developed society (in other words, people satisfied with life now and in the future) only represents one-fifth of the population. In Romania, concentration is at the extremes, with one-third of the population considering the situation to be "poor and likely to worsen", and a quarter believing exactly the opposite ("my living standards are good and will be better in the future"). This is specific for negative state of mind societies (like Bulgaria, Hungary and Latvia) and similar, to a certain degree, to the situation in highly polarised societies (Italy, Greece, Portugal, Slovakia, etc, as described in table 3 from the Report). The high number of recent optimists ("living standards are poor but they will improve") is a sign of a social dynamic, of possible change in the subjective social structure by means of transition from the subjective poverty status to that of the middle class, where people believe their living standards are "good and will stay the same". Bulgaria, with over half of its population in the category of discontent pessimists ("poor and likely to worsen living standards") or long-term discontented people ("living standards will remain poor") seems to better illustrate the pyramid model of societies marked by strong subjective poverty.

In the same category, alongside Romania and Bulgaria, are Hungary and Lithuania. All four countries have a large number of discontented people. At the opposite end of the discontented society model is the highly positive state of mind society model – see Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands and Luxembourg (Table 3). Between these two extremes, there are three more society types which are a function of their state of mind: positive, to-be positive and strongly polarised:

STATE OF MIND IN EU COUNTRIES		
highly positive	Denmark Finland The Netherlands Luxembourg Austria	Spain France Malta Slovenia Cyprus Poland Czech Republic
positive	Sweden Ireland UK Belgium Germany	strongly polarised
		Estonia Greece Italy Latvia Slovakia Portugal
		negative
		Lithuania Romania Bulgaria Hungary

The state of mind differences between the 5 types of society are quite large (Table 1):

- In countries belonging to the highly positive group, the level of satisfaction with life is over 90%, while this level falls to 69% in the strongly polarised ones and even lower (49%) in the countries belonging to the negative state of mind model;
- Optimism is at maximum levels in societies with a large number of discontented people, and at minimum levels in those that have a large number of content people;
- The highest levels of people discontent with changes in their country are registered in Portugal, Italy and Hungary.

The 5 types of society are different not only in terms of state of mind, but also prosperity. From the "highly positive" to the "negative" group, the GDP is on a downward trend, as is the prosperity level of the individual households (Table 3).

The levels of trust in institutions, in most cases, are strongly associated with the dominant state of mind in the relevant society. From the highly positive societies to the negative ones, trust in institutions follows a downward trend:

- Those that trust the justice system, for ex., reach 73% in the highly positive societies, going down to 28% in negative societies;
- Trust in parliament is 3 times higher in positive societies;
- The same direct proportionality between state of mind and level of trust in institutions is not applicable in the case of religious institutions. The latter tends to reach high levels in societies at the extremes (52% in the highly positive societies and 58% in the negative ones). In the societies ranked between the extremes, trust in the church is at significantly reduced levels.
- Trust in the EU registers maximum levels in poor countries with a negative state of mind, followed by those where the state of mind is to-be positive.

Table 1. Societies' profile within the EU function of state of mind model

		Societies' state of mind					
		Highly positive	Positive	To-be positive	Strongly polarised	Negative	EU Total
% satisfied with life		94	87	83	69	49	79
% optimists		28	27	33	29	32	30
% believing the country is going in the right direction		44	37	37	20	33	34
% believing the EU is going in the right direction		39	34	48	32	54	40
% believing the EU plays a positive role in immigration		26	25	34	24	40	29
% trusting the:	army	79	75	74	64	59	71
	police	79	74	63	56	39	64
	European Union	51	36	57	48	64	48
	Justice system	73	55	46	36	28	47
	religious institutions	52	43	45	47	58	46
	parliament	59	39	33	30	17	35
	government	53	36	36	28	20	34
Average number of durable goods per household		4.26	4.00	3.61	3.48	2.39	3.65

Example of data reading: 24% of respondents from polarised societies consider the EU policy in the field of immigration as good, as compared to the average level of 29% registered in the EU. The index for the number of durable goods per household is calculated by simply adding the following owned goods: DVD player, CD player, computer, home internet connection, car, and apartment. The minimum value of the index is 0, while the maximum is 6, in the case that all mentioned goods are present in the household.

One should also mention that poor and discontented societies relate in a positive way to EU policies in the field of migration.

Changing public agenda

The public agenda has undergone structural changes in the first year since EU accession. The ranking of concerns is also changing. We are witnessing a transition from a situation where the main concern was represented by economic issues, in general, to one where concerns over high levels of prices compared to salaries are brought to the forefront. Second place is taken by economic concerns, while in

equal third are pensions, healthcare and crime (table 2). Interest in education, perhaps as a result of relevant debate in the media in the second half of 2007, increased between spring and autumn 2007. The increased level of information on living standards in the EU does not reduce discontent, but increases the number and specificity of topics for concern.

Table 2. “Which, in your opinion, are the 2 most important problems facing Romania at present?”

	2005/1	2005/2	2006/1	2006/2	2007/1	2007/2
prices/inflation	26	30	26	30	27	35
economic situation	46	45	48	45	44	31
pensions	14	16	22	18	17	23
healthcare system	25	22	23	25	27	23
crime	28	22	24	23	18	22
unemployment	23	26	24	21	20	17
housing	6	7	6	8	13	10
taxation	7	8	6	8	9	8
education system	4	5	5	8	4	8
immigration	0	2	0	3	2	4
environment protection	2	2	2	2	5	3
defence/foreign policy	1	1	1	1	1	3
other	7	7	8	6	6	6

Example of data reading: in spring 2006 (=2006/1) the highest level of concern in Romania was registered, in the EB data series, for the country's economic situation, with 48% of respondents considering it to be one of the main problems facing the country.

In 2007, changes in the intensity of concerns over one public agenda topic or another were selective, associated with specific categories of the population (Table A4):

- Older people became the most concerned with the cost of living and prices;
- The most important reduction in levels of concern in relation to the economy and unemployment was registered amongst young people from rural areas;
- The number of those concerned about the healthcare system fell 4% at national level; the only category, from an age-residential area point of view, where this number increased was older people in rural areas.
- Levels of concern over pensions increased, especially amongst older people in rural areas.

Annexes

Romania's social profile as seen from the last three Eurobarometers (%)

		Romania			NMS10			EU15			Countries with maximum value*	Countries with minimum value *
		2006/2	2007/1	2007/2	2006/2	2007/1	2007/2	2006/2	2007/1	2007/2	2007/2	2007/2
	STATE OF MIND											
1.1	Trust in EU	67	65	68	59	66	61	42	55	45	Romania 68 Estonia 67	UK. 25
1.2	Trust in parliament	24	19	18	19	21	16	36	49	40	Luxembourg 56	Bulgaria 11
	Trust in government	27	19	21		25	22		45	38	Luxembourg 65	Poland 17
1.3	Satisfied with life	48	53	49	72	74	73	85	84	83	Denmark 98	Bulgaria 38
1.4	Optimistic about life in 1-year time	40	43	41	31	35	26	35	37	30	Sweden 42 Romania 41	Hungary 15
1.5	Pessimistic about life in 1-year time	19	15	13	18	15	19	11	9	12	Hungary 37	Sweden, Finland 4
	PUBLIC AGENDA											
2.1	"the country's most important problem" – economic situation	45	44	31	29	27	20	22	17	15	Greece 33	UK 5
2.2	"the country's most important problem" – healthcare	25	27	23	26	32	40	14	15	17	Finland, Poland 49	Spain 4
2.3	"the country's most important problem" - prices, inflation	30	27	35	20	21	33	15	17	24	Latvia 37	Sweden 4
2.4	"the country's most important problem" – crime	23	18	22	21	21	18	24	25	25	Ireland 57	Luxembourg 11
2.5	"the country's most important problem" – housing	8	13	10	6	7	8	5	8	9	Spain 30	Greece, Bulgaria 1
2.6	"the country's most important problem" – pensions	18	17	23	11	16	16	10	11	12	Romania 23	The Netherlands 3
2.7	"the country's most important problem" – education	8	4	8	4	4	5	8	10	10	The Netherlands 24	Italy 2
3	INTERNET: home internet access	19	20	22	32	37	40	51	54	54	The Netherlands 86	Bulgaria 21 Romania 22

Data reading example: the average level of trust in the EU, in autumn 2007, amongst the population of the old member states (EU15) was 45%.

- Figures associated with each country's name represent the corresponding percentage for the relevant index in that country.

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