

EUROBAROMETER 68

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

FALL 2007

NATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TURKEY

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Satisfaction with Life

The percentage of people in Turkey expressing general satisfaction with their lives is found to be 70% in autumn 2007, down from 76% in spring 2007. Despite ups and downs in the overall level of satisfaction with their lives, satisfaction among the Turkish public remains persistently below that of the EU.

Expectations for the future

The Turkish public is consistently more optimistic about the future 12 months on all financial and economic evaluations than the EU public. 34% in Turkey expect their lives to be better over the next 12 months compared to about 30% in the EU. Expectations concerning the future of the economy have deteriorated over the past half-year but the percentage of those who think that the status quo will continue over the next year has considerably enlarged. The proportion of pessimists has not increased but, instead, has declined to 26% from 32% in spring 2007.

Evaluation of country conditions

Regarding the conditions of the country's economy in the EU, evaluations in Turkey stand in 17th place in terms of optimism with 46% evaluating the prevailing conditions as favourable. From the perspective of employment conditions, Turkey's favourable evaluations rank in 8th position with 23% having optimistic evaluations. However, Turkey's 33% favourable evaluations concerning social welfare remain well below the EU average of 46% favourable evaluations.

The country's most important problems

When asked to indicate the country's two most important problems, differences exist between Turkey and the EU member states. According to Turkish public opinion, the two foremost problems are terrorism and unemployment, followed, with a large gap, by economic conditions, crime, inflation and education. The top priority has changed since last year. Terrorism has risen significantly in importance. However, over the last two years, the salience of terrorism has been constantly rising in the minds of the public. A similar development does not seem to have taken place in the minds of the EU-27 public and terrorism remains far from being a top priority issue in EU member states.

Are things going in the right or wrong direction?

When asked whether or not "at the present time...things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction" Turkish evaluations are considerably more favourable than those in the EU member states. About 48% of respondents answer that things are going in the right direction while 37% oppose this view. However, in the EU member states, those who consider that things are moving in the right direction constitute only 34% and those who oppose this evaluation constitute 41%. The size of the group that asserts that the country is moving in the right direction ranks 4th among the countries covered in this Eurobarometer.

Trust in institutions

The most trusted institution in both Turkey and EU member states is the military. Trust levels in the media and newspapers remain below the levels in the EU. Trust in religious institutions is at 64% while in the EU this remains at 46%. The Parliament, the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the political parties are trusted by a larger group in Turkey than in the EU. However, trust in the EU is at 25% in Turkey while in the EU it is nearly double that - at around 48%. While trust in the EU is rising in the member states, it is falling in Turkey.

Trust in the government is at 63% in Turkey ranking second in the survey. Similarly, trust in the Grand National Assembly is ranked third with 64%.

Evaluations of EU membership

In autumn 2006, the proportion of those stating that membership would be a “good thing” stopped its continuous decline in Turkey since early 2004. In spring 2006, 44% (55% in autumn 2005) of the Turkish public indicated that membership of the EU would be a “good thing” while 25% (15% in autumn 2005) indicated the opposite. In autumn 2006, however, those who indicated that membership of the EU would be a “good thing” reached 54% which was close to its autumn 2005 level. In spring 2007, the figure for this group fell to 52% and in autumn 2007, it shrank further to 49%.

Nevertheless, 53% (62% in spring 2007) of the Turkish public indicated that becoming a member of the EU would be an “advantage” for Turkey.

Image of the EU

The overall “image of the EU” is positive for a proportion of the poll that is slightly less than fifty percent (53% in spring 2007) of the Turkish public.

Are people well informed about European political affairs?

When asked to what extent people are well informed about European political affairs, we see that while 31% think that they are well informed in Turkey, this group is only 18% in the EU member states. Turkey ranks at the very top on this issue among all member and non-member states covered by this survey.

Future of Europe

The Turkish public is relatively more pessimistic about the future of the EU than the member states. Among the EU27 member states, 69% hold a positive evaluation regarding the future of the country whereas this group remains at 52% in Turkey. Longer term evaluations in Turkey are even more pessimistic than in the EU27.

The EU and the use of sovereignty rights

Among the different policy areas presented for evaluation, in Turkey, there are fewer favourable evaluations of joint decision-making at European level than at national level than in the EU27 as a whole. It is only in the case of issues pertaining to welfare system that support for EU-level decisions are lower in the EU27 than in Turkey. On protection of the environment, the EU member states are much more supportive of EU-level decision-making than Turks are.

Different roles the EU plays

Only about 37% in Turkey think that the EU has a positive role upon the Turkish economy. This level is lower than that in the EU (39%). Similarly, those who find the EU's role as positive on the protection of the environment constitute a group of 36% in Turkey while in the EU27 this group accounts for 52%. However, on other issues like inflation, housing or pensions the group comprising those who think that the EU's role is positive is larger than in the EU member states.

Media and the EU

Turkish public opinion considers that, compared to the EU member states, the media in Turkey give much more coverage to EU issues. While in the EU this coverage is considered to be fair and impartial, the coverage in Turkey is seen either as too positive or too negative. Turkish public trusts media sources at a significantly lower level than EU27 respondents.