

# EUROBAROMETER 70

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## AUTUMN 2008

### NATIONAL REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### HUNGARY

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

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

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## **Assessment of the current situation in Hungary**

### **Contentment with life in general**

The Eurobarometer survey conducted in the autumn of 2008 shows that the mood of Hungarians has not improved significantly. Hungary is still one of the countries with the least satisfied people, only Bulgaria had worse result in Europe.

According to Eurobarometer, the contentment of Hungarians is not very closely related to their financial situation. The proportion of those who are satisfied with the life they lead was significantly higher than the proportion of people who said they are satisfied with their financial situation.

The majority of Hungarians believe that the life of today's children will be tougher than the adult generation's life is currently. Many people share the opinion that immigration would not solve the problems and only less than one-third of the people said kids would have a brighter future abroad.

### **Expectations for the next 12 months**

Hungarians are not very positive about their future, only one-tenth of them expect improvement in the life they lead or in the financial situation of their household. Even less than that believes that the economic situation of the country will be better in one year. Hungarians are extremely pessimistic about the employment situation in the country.

### **Problems Hungary is facing at the moment**

Although most of the Hungarians are concerned about the employment situation in the country, the majority of people choose the economic situation and the inflation as the main problems Hungary is facing at the moment.

## **Views on the European Union**

### **Opinions on the country's European Union membership**

In the last few years the enthusiasm of Hungarians towards the EU membership has significantly decreased. In 2003, more than the half of Hungarians said that the country's membership would be a good thing. In the autumn of 2008, less than one-third of people expressed positive feelings towards the membership.

There is a proved connection between the political view of people and their view on the EU membership. People who say they belong to the left wing are more likely to say the membership is a good thing than people who say they share the views of the right wing. One-third of Hungarians saying they are politically neutral stated that the membership is a good thing.

The majority of Hungarians say the membership is neither a good thing nor a bad thing. In the autumn of 2008, the proportion of people saying the membership is a bad thing was the double of the proportion measured by Eurobarometer in 2003.

### **The image of the EU**

People participating in the survey had the opportunity to tell what the EU means to them personally. The majority of EU citizens and Hungarians choose the freedom to travel, study and work abroad from the list. Most of the people choosing these fields were students, more than three-quarter of them shared this opinion.

### **Trust in institutions**

Although the proportion of Hungarians saying the membership is a good thing is continuously decreasing, the EU still have a high rank on the list of institutions and organizations trusted by Hungarians. Only the UN had better results. The national justice system was well behind on the list but it still surpassed the Parliament and the National Government significantly. Political parties are at the very end of the list, trusted by less than tenth of the Hungarians.

### **The past of the European Union**

In addition to questions on the EU's future, the Eurobarometer survey also wanted to understand the views of people on the past. The questions were concerning the enlargement of the EU 2004 and the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Less than half of the EU citizens believe that the EU-s enlargement in 2004 was a step towards strengthening the EU. One-third of people said the EU was weakened by the new members. Countries that have become members in 2004 were generally more positive about the enlargement than those who were members before.

The Eurobarometer survey also asked the EU's citizens about the end of the Berlin wall and the Iron Curtain that have divided Europe. Three-quarter of the Hungarians said the EU has benefitted from these changes in the history. But it was only two-third of Hungarians who said Hungary has benefitted from the change. One-quarter of the people said the end of the separation from Western Europe was not advantageous for the country.

### **The development of the EU**

The common defense and security policy is the most supported strategic field of the EU, the Eurobarometer survey revealed. It is followed by the common foreign policy and the European Monetary Union. The further enlargement of the EU is the least supported area.

EU citizens and Hungarians believe that energy issues should be in the main focus of the European integration in the future. The support for other fields like the internal market and environment protection was considerably lower.

## **Institutions and the budget of the European Union**

### **Recognition and image of the EU's institutions**

According to the Eurobarometer survey, the majority of the EU citizens know the European Parliament. The proportion of those who say they have heard about the European Commission or the European Central Bank. A lower number of people are familiar with the Council of the European Union.

Most of the Hungarians say they have trust in the European Parliament. It is followed by the European Commission. Around half of Hungarians trust the Council of the European Union and the European Central Bank.

Only one-tenth of the EU's citizens have heard about the budget of the European Union and are familiar with it. In Hungary, this proportion is even lower. The majority of Hungarians and EU citizens has heard about the budget but does not know its details. About one-third of the people say they have never heard of the budget.

Despite of the lack of information on the budget, the majority has a strong opinion on what it should be spent. One-fifth of the EU citizens voted for the support of economic growth. It is followed by employment and social affairs. Tenth of the people would give support to healthcare on the first place.

The list in Hungary is very similar, as the support for economic growth should have priority according to one-third of Hungarians. Next on the list is the employment and social affairs. They are followed by energy issues, which should be prioritized by one of ten Hungarians.

### **Hungary and the European Union**

According to the latest Eurobarometer survey, around the same proportion of Hungarians believe that their voice counts in the European Union and in their countries. However, this proportion is considerably lower than those measured in the average of the EU.

More than half of the Hungarians say the EU imposes its views on the country. One-third of the people said that the interest of Hungary is properly taken into consideration in the EU.

Although the number of Hungarians who trust the EU is much higher than the number of those who trust the National Government, people would reserve the right to decide in many sensitive issues for the Hungarian Government.

Pensions, the education system, healthcare and tax issues should be influenced mainly by the Hungarian Government, according to the vast majority of Hungarians. The number of people who say the government should have authority over

unemployment, social welfare and tax issues is lower but it still accounts for more than half of all Hungarians.

### **Russia and Georgia**

In the autumn of 2008, the conflict between Russia and Georgia was in the headlines of European news and it has also become part of the Eurobarometer survey.

The results show that only one-third of the EU's citizens have heard about the conflict between the two countries and knows its details. About half of the people said they have heard about the crisis but have no further information on it.

Only one-fifth of the EU's citizens said the conflict would not have an impact on the energy supply of the EU, the number of people sharing the opposite opinion was three times higher. The proportion of Hungarians saying the conflict would definitely have an impact on the energy supply was very similar. According to European citizens, the EU have contributed to the solution of the conflict to a great extent.