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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HUNGARY

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Like other EU countries, Hungary was deeply impacted by the economic crisis at the point of the latest Eurobarometer survey conducted in the spring of 2009. The majority of Hungarians were concerned by unemployment and the economic situation in their country. Most of the people who took part in the survey were gloomy about the future, saying that, in general, things are going in the wrong direction in the country. However, many of them believe the Hungarian economy is influenced by the global economic situation.

The majority of Hungarians are not only worried about the country's situation but they are also dissatisfied with the life they lead. In spring 2009? less than half of the Hungarians polled said that they were satisfied with their lives in general. This proportion makes Hungary one of the least satisfied nations in the EU. The same level of satisfaction was shown in Greece, and only Bulgaria recorded worse results.

According to Eurobarometer, the UN and the EU still head the list of organizations or institutions trusted by Hungarians. As in previous Eurobarometer surveys, around half of the country's citizens have trust in them. The proportion of those who trust the national parliament or the government was significantly lower. Only ten percent of Hungarians trust political parties. These results provide an explanation why the majority of Hungarians believes that more decision-making should take place at a European level.

Although almost half of the Hungarians trusts the EU, only one-third believes it is a good thing to be a member of the EU. The majority of Hungarians says it is neither a good thing nor a bad thing to be an EU member country. Membership is considered as a bad thing by a quarter of Hungarians.

According to Eurobarometer, for Hungarians and other EU citizens too, the EU represents, above all, the freedom to travel, study and learn anywhere in the EU.

The proportion of people supporting the European Monetary Union with one single currency, the EU, was similar in Hungary and on average of all EU member states. The further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years is also supported by Hungarians but other EU member countries show significantly lower degrees of enthusiasm. In general, support for further enlargement is significantly higher in the new member states than in those that joined the EU before 2004.

Around one-third of Hungarians and other EU citizens feel that their voice counts in the EU. A similar proportion of Hungarians and about half of all EU citizens believe their voice counts in their home countries.

In Hungary, almost half of the citizens say the country's voice counts in the EU and the same number of people disagree with the statement. Two-thirds of all EU citizens feel that the voice of their country is taken into consideration in the decision-making processes of the EU.

According to Eurobarometer, Hungarians believe it is the G20 that is best able to take effective actions against the effects of the financial and economic crisis. Hungarians and EU citizens attribute more power to the US and to the IMF in the fight against the crisis than to their national governments.

The majority of Hungarians say the EU should prioritise the support to SMEs and the unemployed in order to help people overcome the effects of the financial and economic crisis.

For three-quarters of Hungarians, paying the bills is the top financial priority. Almost half of the people also focus on having some savings for emergencies. Less than one-third says that living as well as possible on their current income is a priority in the current situation. A quarter is making efforts to pay off his or her debts.

The Eurobarometer survey also focused on European society. The results show that the majority of Europeans feel democratic values represent the most important element that goes towards making up a European identity. A quarter of people participating in the survey also cited geography, a common history, a high level of social protection and a common culture.

The citizens of the EU also had the opportunity to evaluate the employment situation in their country. The results show that almost all Hungarians say it is difficult to find a good job in Hungary even with high qualifications. Four-fifths of EU citizens share this view regarding their own countries.

Job security is the top priority for 61% of Hungarians and one-third would focus on getting a good salary when looking for a job. The proportion of those whose priority is having an interesting job is extremely low.

A significant number of Hungarians proved to be dissatisfied with the social security system of the country and believe it is very expensive. When thinking about the future of pensions, three-quarters of Hungarians are not confident. One-third of respondents who currently have a job say maintaining the current retirement age and increasing social security contributions would be an acceptable solution for guaranteeing the financing of the pension system in Hungary.

In the spring of 2009, Eurobarometer also focused on questions concerning human rights. According to half of the Hungarians, economic and social rights should be the main priorities for the EU's foreign policy. One-third said children's rights and the fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination should also be prioritised. One-fifth said the EU should focus on the fight for women's rights, the fight against the lack of fair trial and for the freedom of speech.

The survey also included questions on the attitude of Europeans towards ethnic minorities and immigrants. More than the half of the EU's citizens share the view that people from other ethnic groups enrich the cultural life of countries. About the same proportion of Hungarians agreed and disagreed with the statement and one-fifth did not give any answer.

Half of the Hungarians and EU citizens taking part in the survey believe the presence of people from other ethnic groups is a cause of insecurity. An even higher number of Hungarians said other ethnic groups increase unemployment. About half of EU citizens share this view.

Half of Hungarians and almost two-thirds of all EU citizens are optimistic about the future of the EU. People participating in the survey were also asked to share their ideas on the future of EU citizens. On average in the EU states, answers were fairly equally distributed between those considering life would be easier (28%), life would be more difficult (32%) and life would be neither easier nor more difficult (32%). Hungarians were exceptionally optimistic regarding this question and 42% said life would be easier in the EU in 2030.