

# EUROBAROMETER 71

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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## NATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SLOVENIA

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### I. LIVING IN SLOVENIA (EU AND THE WORLD)

**On average, Slovenians are more satisfied with their lives than other residents of the European Union. The majority of respondents in Slovenia believe that the current economic situation is poor, but the Slovenians' overall assessments still show higher levels of satisfaction than the EU average.**

86% of Slovenians are satisfied with their lives, which is one percentage point lower than in the previous Eurobarometer. Slovenia is, however, above the European average (77%) and remains at the top of the list with respect to life satisfaction of its residents.

27% of Slovenians assess the current economic situation in Slovenia as good, 73% of respondents see it as poor. Since the last measurement, in January 2009 (EB71.1), the proportion of respondents who assess the economic situation as good has dropped by 12 percentage points. On average, respondents in other EU member states are more critical of the economic situation in their countries than respondents in Slovenia. Only 20% of respondents of other European states consider the economic situation as good. Since the last measurement at an EU level (EB71.1), a one percentage point increase has been recorded in the proportion of those who consider the economic situation as good.

A third of Slovenians have long-term plans for their households, one-third plan 6 months ahead, while just under a third of Slovenians live a day-to-day existence. A similar trend is also evident at the EU level. More than half of respondents believe their lives will not change over the next 12 months. The majority of respondents expect the economic situation in Slovenia will deteriorate over the next 12 months, but they do not expect any major changes in the European economy.

The two most important concerns faced by Slovene respondents are inflation and pensions. For the majority of Slovenians, the financial priority is paying their bills and half are trying to use their current income to live 'as best as they can'. 39% of Slovene respondents believe that, at the present time, things in Slovenia are going in the wrong direction. However, at the European level, this figure is higher with almost half of European respondents on average saying things in their countries are going in the wrong direction.

### II. EUROPEAN IDENTITY

**According to Slovenians, European identity is largely defined by the geographical positioning of the country and common democratic values while, in shaping the national identity, the key element is the knowledge of the Slovene language. The strongest sense of identity among Slovenians is their identity with their own country (being Slovenian), closely followed by their identity with the region.**

According to the majority of Slovenians (51%), the most important element that shapes European identity is 'feeling European' and special significance is also given to being born in Europe. At the European level, the responses are similar. However, respondents in Europe as a whole rate a shared European cultural tradition more highly than do respondents in Slovenia.

In terms of various categories of identities, Slovenians predominantly feel 'Slovenian' (96%), as well as residents of their region. A high proportion (80%) also feels European, which is significantly higher than the EU27 average.

### III. SLOVENIA AND THE EU

**Slovenia's EU membership is a good thing. Support for membership among Slovenians has decreased. Two out of three Slovenians believe that Slovenia benefits from EU membership.**

The majority, that is nearly half of respondents in Slovenia (48%), believe that their country's membership of the European Union is a good thing. 36% say it is neither good nor bad. 14% feel that Slovenian membership of the EU is a bad thing. Compared to the previous poll (EB71.1), the proportion of those in Slovenia who see membership as a good thing dropped by 9 percentage points and is below the average of the EU27.

64% of Slovenians consider that Slovenia has benefited from its EU membership and 30% believe the opposite. Since the previous poll (EB71.1), the proportion of those who believe Slovenia has not benefited from its membership increased by 7 percentage points. However, with 64% holding a positive attitude towards membership, Slovenia is still above the EU27 average where 56% of respondents believe their country has gained with membership.

**Being part of the Euro zone guarantees higher economic stability in Slovenia. Slovenia has a voice in EU. The proportion of Slovenians who believe that their country's interests are taken into account in EU has fallen.**

More than half of respondents in Slovenia (57%) think membership of the eurozone provides their country with greater economic stability. These new figures show a fall of 8 percentage points but, even so, the proportion in Slovenia remains well above the average of the eurozone countries. In other Member States, only 49% of respondents feel that being part of the eurozone brings economic stability to their countries.

59% of Slovenians believe their country's voice is taken into account in the EU. Since the previous polls, just after the end of Slovenian presidency to the Council of EU when the support for the Union and its policies showed a major increase, support for this statement has fallen by a fifth.

### IV. THE EU IN THE EYES OF A SLOVENIAN CITIZEN

**According to a majority of respondents, things are going in the right direction in the European Union. Half of Slovenians trust the European Union and about the same percentage of respondents also have a positive image of EU. For most respondents, the European Union means freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU and, to a large extent, it is also associated with the Euro.**

The largest share of Slovenians (41%) thinks things in the EU are going in the right direction, 22% of respondents disagree, and 31% believe neither one nor the other. Since January 2009, Slovenian opinion that things are going in the right direction in the EU has dropped by 7 percentage points. At European level, public opinion is divided: 34% of respondents believe things are going in the right direction, while 35% are convinced they are going in the wrong direction.

50% of Slovenians trust the European Union and 45% do not. 47% of Europeans, on average, trust the European Union.

Half of Slovenians (50%) also have a positive image of the EU. For the largest proportion of respondents in Slovenia (52%), the European Union represents freedom to travel, the opportunity to study and work anywhere in the EU. The second most common response

(46%) among Slovenians is the Euro. These figures are very similar to the results at the EU level.

**A majority of Slovenians have a good knowledge of European Union and understanding of its institutions remains at a high level.**

More than half of respondents (56%) in Slovenia are knowledgeable about the European Union, which ranks the country near the top of the EU27. This figure was even higher in the previous poll almost a year ago (EB70), with current results showing a drop of 9 percentage points. On the other hand, the level of understanding in the EU27 has risen by 3 percentage points, to 44%. Higher levels of understanding of the EU than in Slovenia have been recorded in three new member states, namely Poland, Cyprus and Estonia.

Understanding of EU institutions in Slovenia remains at a high level. A majority of respondents have heard of the European Parliament (97%), the European Central Bank (90%) and the European Commission (89%). The level of knowledge and understanding of all three institutions ranks Slovenia well above the European average. Since the previous polls, awareness about the European Parliament has grown by 3 percentage points, which is probably due to the European Parliament elections.

The level of trust in European institutions in Slovenia slightly decreased since the previous measurement 5 months ago (EB71.1). Slovenians put most trust in the European Central Bank, followed by the European Commission and the European Parliament.

**Slovenians support more decision-making at European level for many areas. When assessing the work of the European Union, Slovenians are sometimes more, sometimes less, critical than other EU citizens.**

The majority of respondents in Slovenia support more decision-making at European level in many areas. Compared with the polls done three years ago, support for more decision-making at European level has increased for all policies. Slovenians feel the following policies require joint decision-making at European level: fight against terrorism, ensuring peace and democracy in the world, fight against organized crime and energy supply.

In regards to the efficiency of work of the European Union, Slovenians believe the most successful areas are research and innovation and energy supply. These are followed by equal treatment of men and women and ensuring peace and democracy in the world.

## **V. CURRENT EUROPEAN POLICIES AND GLOBALIZATION**

**Compared to other citizens of European Union, Slovenians remain major supporters of European monetary union and further enlargement of the EU. Support of Slovenians for individual European initiatives fell slightly, but still remains well above the European average. Slovenians are critical of the European Union regarding protection of human rights.**

Slovenia is one of the greatest supporters of European common policies. The Slovenians are largely in favour of European Monetary Union (86%), rating second amongst individual Member States and well above the European average (61%).

63% of respondents in Slovenia support proposals for further EU enlargement. This is 20 percentage points above the EU27 average. The latest figures show that support for enlargement fell by 7 percentage points in Slovenia and by 1 percentage point in the European Union.

When assessing the possibility of enhanced cooperation, Slovenians' opinion is divided - 44% support the proposal, another 44% oppose it. Slovenian support for this proposal is only slightly higher than support in the EU27 (39%).

Slovenia is the biggest critic of European Union's efforts regarding protection of human rights in the world. 67% of Slovenians, which is the highest figure among all the member states, believe the European Union is not doing enough to protect human rights worldwide. At the EU27 level, fewer than half of respondents (48%) feel the EU is not doing enough to protect human rights.

Slovenians are one of the most informed nations in the EU27 when it comes to the EU's role in protection of human rights worldwide. 40% of respondents in Slovenia consider themselves informed about the EU's activities regarding human rights while, in the EU27, the figure is 27%.

**Slovenians regard globalization as a cause of increasing social inequality. However, to a lesser extent, they also believe it offers opportunity for economic growth. Half of Slovenians see it as a threat to employment and companies in their country.**

76% of Slovenians, and more than the EU27, are convinced that globalization increases social inequality and, therefore, that there is a need for global governance. 60% of Slovenians feel globalization presents a good opportunity for economic growth (at the EU27 level, 59% share this opinion).

Half of Slovenians believe globalization represents a threat to employment and companies in Slovenia; a slightly smaller proportion of respondents (42%) view it as a good opportunity for Slovenian companies due to easier access to foreign markets. At the EU27 level, the results are fairly divided.

43% of Slovenians argue that the European Union acts serves to protect against the negative effects of globalization but 47% disagree. Slovenians are evenly divided on the question as to whether being part of European Union brings greater benefits when it comes to the positive effects of globalization (46% agree and 46% disagree).

## **VI. THE WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS AND HOW TO TACKLE IT**

**The majority of Slovenians believe the global economic situation is affecting the Slovenian economy. They consider that the European economy is generally doing better than that of the world's other powers. According to respondents, the European Union is also the best equipped to deal efficiently with the consequences of the financial and economic crisis.**

82% of Slovenians believe the global economic situation is affecting their country's economy, a figure which is less than the EU average at 85%. When comparing the European economy with the economies of other global powers, Slovenians consider that only the Japanese economy is doing better at the moment. At the EU27 level, respondents are more critical and believe the European economy only comes third after Japan and China.

26% of Slovenians and 21% of Europeans feel that the European Union is in the best position to efficiently tackle the consequences of the financial and economic crisis. According to respondents in Slovenia, the EU is followed by the G20, then the U.S. and International Monetary Fund. Both respondents in Slovenia and Europe as a whole feel national governments are the least capable of coping with the crisis. Since the previous poll (EB71.1),

the highest growth in respondents' trust is recorded for the International Monetary Fund (in Slovenia, by 7 percentage points) and for the European Union (an increase in Slovenia by 2 percentage points).

**According to two-thirds of Slovenians, the European Union has sufficient power and mechanisms to defend its interests in the global economy. The EU should give priority support to small businesses and the unemployed.**

Two-thirds of Slovenians believe that the European Union has sufficient strength and mechanisms to defend its economic interests in the global economy, a figure which is similar to the EU27 average (66%). Almost half (48%) of Slovenians feel that the European Union should focus its help on SMEs in order to overcome the effects of the financial crisis. The EU should also focus on providing support in the following areas (these represent the next 20 percentage range of entries): unemployment, investing in education, training and research, and helping the poor.

According to more than half of Slovenians (53%), society needs to focus on ensuring social equality and solidarity in order to overcome global challenges. To achieve these significant changes, the majority of Slovenians (56%) favour a gradual approach even if that means slower progress and changes.

## **VII. THE EU IN 2030**

**The great majority of Slovenians are optimistic about the future of the European Union. However, they believe the lives of Europeans will be more difficult in 2030 than they are today. There is a significant gap between what Slovenians wish for the future and what their expectations are for the development of society by 2030.**

71% of Slovenians are optimistic about the future of the European Union, a figure which is above the EU27 average (64%). More than one fifth of the respondents in Slovenia (21%) believe that the lives of citizens of Europe will be better in 2030 but more than twice as many (44%) are expecting it to be more difficult by then. 28% of Slovenians did not have a view one way or the other. At the EU27 level, the answers are fairly evenly distributed between all three options.

A comparison of expectations and aspirations for society in 2030 shows there is a significant gap between what Slovenians are predicting and what their hopes and wishes are. They predict that, in 2030, society will attribute an almost equal importance to the economy as to the environment, although three times more respondents hope that concern for the environment (50%) would come before concern for the economy (16%). When asked about whether the future society will be one of individualism or solidarity, 44% believe it will be dominated by individualism, while 35% are convinced solidarity will prevail. However, a large majority of Slovenians (73%) would like to see a society showing a greater emphasis on solidarity by 2030. More than half (59%) of Slovenians believe that future generations will see the increasing importance of work in life and only 16% are convinced that society will value leisure more than work. Respondents' hopes for society in 2030 are different to their expectations: only 17% want a future where more attention is given to work and 46% of Slovenians want to live in a society where greater importance is given to leisure.

## **VIII. SLOVENIA TODAY AND IN 2030**

**Just under a third of Slovenians are already paying - or believe they will have to start paying - for professional care for their elderly parents in the future. According to the majority of Slovenians, their national social welfare systems will not have enough funds and will be too expensive for Slovenian society in 2030.**

Almost two-thirds of Slovenians (64%) are currently not paying, never were and are not expecting to be forced to pay for professional care for their elderly parents. 31% are already paying or are expecting to be paying for these services in the future. The majority of Slovenians (58%) do not believe that Slovenian social welfare systems in 2030 will provide enough funds (in the EU27, this figure is 46%) and 30% disagree. An even higher proportion of respondents in Slovenia (65%) believe that, in 2030, their national social services system will be too expensive for its citizens. The EU27 average is 57 percent.

**Two-thirds of Slovenians are concerned about the future of their pensions. A majority of Slovenians are in favour of the current retirement age and suggest increasing contributions to ensure the future of pension system.**

Two-thirds of Slovenians have no trust in the future of their pensions, the remaining third still voiced trust. The level of confidence in pensions in Slovenia fell by 2 percentage points since the previous measurement (EB66); at the EU27 level, it fell by 3 percentage points. To ensure funding of the pension system in the future, most Slovenians chose to keep the current retirement age and increase social security contributions (26%); slightly fewer respondents (21%) would accept the current retirement age and a lower pension. Among respondents in Slovenia, the most unpopular option (only 10% of respondents) is to work and contribute to the social welfare system for a longer time.