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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TURKEY

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Satisfaction with life

The percentage of people expressing general satisfaction with their lives fell to 70% in autumn 2007 and went down further to 63% in autumn 2008 with 33% asserting that they are not satisfied with their lives. In spring 2009, satisfaction with life has fallen further by 2 percentage points to 61%.

Expectations for the future

For the last couple of EB surveys, the Turkish public was consistently more optimistic than the EU public about the future 12 months on all financial and economic evaluations. As of spring 2008, this trend of optimism had changed for the worse. In autumn 2008, only 24% (24% in the EU) expressed some optimism about their lives in the future. In spring 2009, these figures had risen to 30% in Turkey and 27% in the EU expressing a positive expectation about the future 12 months.

Concerning developments in the economy, only 25% (up from 15% in autumn 2008) in Turkey and in the EU had optimistic expectations.

The country's most important problems

When asked to cite the two most important problems faced by the country, differences were observed between Turkey and the EU Member States. Unemployment and economic conditions top the agenda with figures of 67% and 34% in Turkey and 49% and 42% in the EU respectively. According to Turkish public opinion, terrorism, with 42% (68% in autumn 2008), was the second most important problem on the agenda while, for the EU member countries, the figure is only 5%. In the EU countries, the salience of economic problems is on the rise as well. Interestingly, issues that do not receive much mention in Turkey, such as pensions, housing, immigration, healthcare and the education system, are all significant issues in the EU member countries.

Evaluations of EU membership

In spring 2009, the ratio of those stating that membership would be a “good thing” has stopped falling and risen to 48% from 42% in autumn 2008. Nevertheless, 57% (48% in autumn 2008) of the Turkish public indicated that becoming a member of the EU would benefit Turkey.

Image of the EU

The overall “image of the EU” is positive for only 46% (41% in autumn 2008) of the Turkish public.

For Turks, the EU means, first and foremost, economic welfare, whereas, in the EU member states, it means, above all, freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU.

Trust in institutions

Political institutions are comparatively more trusted in Turkey than in the EU member states. Trust in the national government, the Parliament or the Turkish Grand National Assembly and political parties are all higher than in spring 2008. Trust in the courts and the judicial system remains about 15 percentage points higher than in the EU member states at 48%.

Trust in the EU, however, remains lower in Turkey 38% (27% in autumn 2008) than in EU Member States at 53% (47% in autumn 2008).

General awareness about the institutional structure of the EU

At just the level of name recognition, about 60% of the Turkish public continues to have heard the names of various key institutions of the EU. However, this level of awareness is well below that of the EU member states. Compared to autumn 2008, name recognition of all institutions except the European Parliament has fallen by about 3 percentage points.

Trust in European institutions

For all EU institutions, Turkey's trust levels are about half those of the EU member states. There is no member country, other than the U.K., with levels lower than those in Turkey, and these levels have remained at about the same as that observed in spring 2008.

Views on the EU

In both Turkey and the EU member states, there seems little support among citizens that their views count in the EU. In comparison, a higher percentage of people believe that their views count in their own country.

In both Turkey and the EU member states, people seem unable to understand how the EU works. However, in Turkey, 19% of the poll (down from 26% in autumn 2008) does not even make a judgment about this question.

European identity

Several significant differences emerge out of evaluations concerning factors that define European identity. In Turkey, as well as in Europe as a whole, a commonly shared European culture appears to be the most important. However, the emphasis on a common religion is considered more important in Turkey than in EU member countries, and common geography is seen as more important in EU members than in Turkey.

The proportion of those who consider themselves as European is much larger (74%) in EU member countries than in Turkey (30%). Yet nationality preferences are not replaced by a European identity even in Europe since the same EU member countries also seem to define themselves by their nationality (94%) at an even higher rate than in Turkey (90%).

Future of EU

Although optimistic expectations concerning the future of the EU appear dominant both in EU member countries and in Turkey, such optimism is higher in Turkey than in EU member countries.

EU and evaluations of globalisation

Evaluations of globalisation as a threat to national companies and employment slightly declined in spring 2009 to about 27% in Turkey compared to autumn 2008 (33%). Respondents in EU member countries see globalization more as a threat than those in Turkey.

Compared to autumn 2008, Turks see the European Union as a help to protect them from the negative effects of globalisation, as well as a means to enable them to better benefit from its positive effects at a higher rate. Positive evaluations in both cases are, however, higher in the EU member countries for the latter evaluation or about the same for the former one.

EU member countries support the view that their national economic conditions are affected by the global economic crisis at a higher rate (85%) than in Turkey (73%).

The Turkish public (24%) considers its own government as the main institution that is in a position to do something about the economic crisis than do respondents in the EU member countries (12%). EU member countries give the EU and G20 countries a greater role in this task.

Values and Human Rights

Here, there appear to be significant differences between simple value evaluations of the EU member countries and Turkey. The Turkish public appears more focused on material and financial priorities than the EU member countries.

As to differences in policy priorities of the EU members concerning EU human rights policies, we again see significant differences between Turkish and the EU respondents. For example, while in the EU member states children rights (36%) are given the top priority, this appears at a much lower rate in Turkey (17%). Economic and social rights appear to be a top priority in Turkey (39%) while this aspect is only accorded a secondary priority in EU member countries (33%). Human trafficking receives a high priority in EU member states with a figure of 33%, while, in Turkey, this only gets 16% support.

Both in Turkey and in the EU member countries, the promotion and support for human rights by the EU is seen as not meeting expectations and both publics feel that they are not being informed about human rights related activities of the EU.