

EUROBAROMETER 72

PUBLIC OPINION IN EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ROMANIA

The survey was requested and coordinated by the Directorate General for Communication.

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

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission.

The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the author.

EB	Eurobarometer
EU27	EU with 27 Member States, after the accession of Romania and Bulgaria
NMS12	Group of new Member States, which have joined the EU starting 2004, including Romania and Bulgaria
EU15	Group of old Member States

The data analysed in the report were gathered by means of the EB72 survey.

For Romania, data were gathered between 30 October 2009 and 11.11.2009, on the basis of a representative sample at national level, involving 1021 persons, aged 15 years and over. The error margin for the sample is +/- 3.1% for a trust level of 95%.

The EB72 survey was carried out under the coordination of TNS Opinion&Social, upon the request of the European Commission. Data were gathered from the 27 EU Member States, the 3 candidate countries - Croatia, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia -, and the Turkish Community in Cyprus. For technical details of sampling, please see annex on methodological specifications provided by TNS Opinion&Social.

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Synthesis: Romanians following a year of crisis

In Romania, 2009 will probably go down in history not only as a year of global economic crisis, but also as one characterised by a major political conflict, both between state institutions and between political forces.

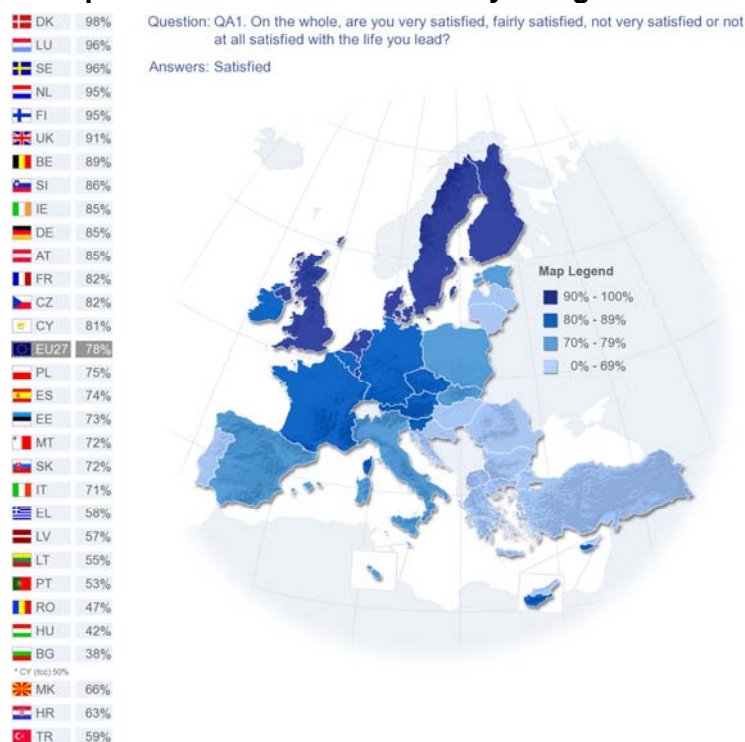
At socio-economic level, the economic crisis resulted in layoffs in the private sector and much debate regarding job cuts in the public sector. Also, a major reduction in credits, as well as the appreciation of the euro compared to 2008, had an effect on public consumption.

On the other hand, although, at the beginning of 2009, it was argued Romanians that had left to work in other EU Member States would have to return due to the crisis, this never came true in a significant way, so that domestic effects would be noticeable. The European Union, as a socio-economic area, continues to create expectations as regards increases in welfare, either directly through available job opportunities, or indirectly through the amounts of money sent back to the country by relatives working elsewhere within the Union.

In this context, pre-requisites exist for a subjective degradation of the quality of life in Romania, in 2009. The Standard Eurobarometer carried out in November 2009 confirms this aspect.

Less than half of the Romanian poll (47%) is satisfied with current living standards, while the European average is 78%. Romania is one of a group of countries in SE Europe where a lower level of satisfaction with living standards is recorded, together with Bulgaria (38%), Hungary (42%), Greece (58%) and Croatia (63%). To this group may be added two of the Baltic countries – Lithuania (55%) and Latvia (57%) and, as an exception to the rest of the Western member states, Portugal (53%).

Map no. 1: Satisfaction with daily living standards

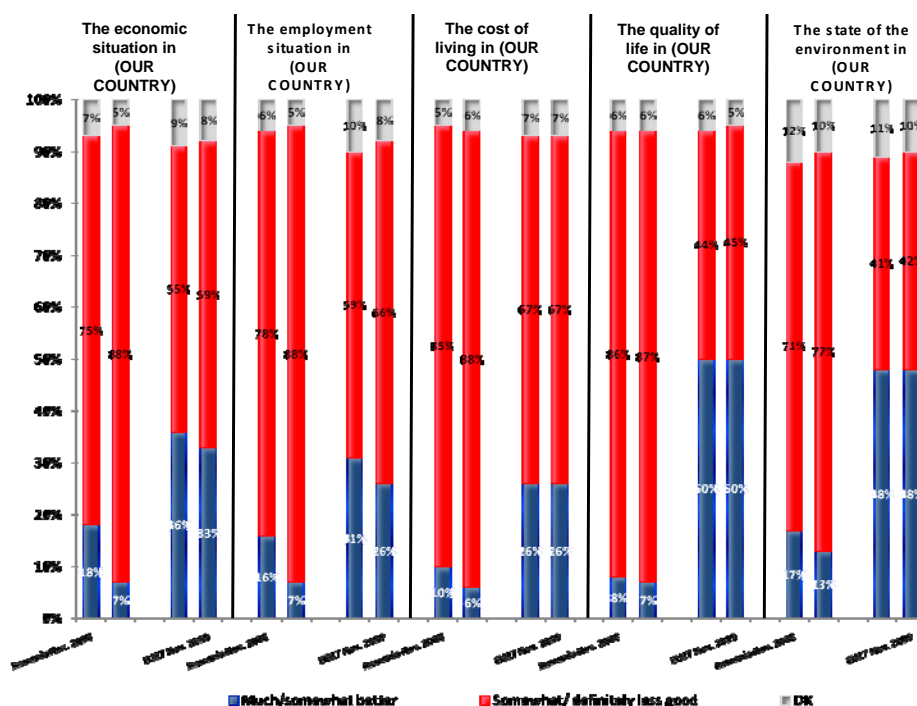


Although the index for satisfaction with their standard of living remained constant at 47% between June and November 2009, Romanians' assessment of their domestic economic situation, as well as expectations as to its future, are becoming more pessimistic.

Comparing results for November 2008 and November 2009, we notice the percentage of Romanians believing the state of the national economy is worsening has increased 13 percentage points (from 75% to 88%¹) compared to the EU average. A similar trend is observed at the level of all the EU27 Member States, although the increase is less significant, at only 4 points (55% in November 2008 and 59% in November 2009).

Chart no. 1: Evolution of perceptions on situation in own country as compared with EU Member States average (Nov 2008 – Nov 2009).

Question: For each of the following fields, please tell me if the situation in Romania [the country where the question is asked] is better or worse compared with the EU Member States average?



Between November 2008 and 2009, there has been a downward turn in the perceptions about job opportunities in Romania, compared with the rest of the EU. The percentage of those believing the employment situation is better in Romania than the rest of EU has fallen from 16% at the end of 2008 to 7% at the end of 2009². Nevertheless, comparing the trends in opinions regarding the situation of the national economy, the downward turn in positive views – although attenuated – is also significant at EU level. Comparing November 2008 with the same period in 2009, there were 7 percentage points fewer Europeans who considered the employment situation in their own country to be worse than the European average.

Comparing people's evaluation of the cost of living in Romania³, we notice a slight decrease (4 percentage points) in the proportion of respondents believing this situation is better than in the rest of the EU, from 10% in November 2008 to 6% in November 2009. In the EU as a whole, there is no difference between the two points in time in this respect.

¹ See chart 1, "Situation of Romanian economy".

² See chart 1, "Situation of job opportunities in Romania".

³ See chart 1, "Living costs in Romania".

In Romania, 87% consider the quality of life in their country to be lower than the EU average, a figure that is similar to that in the NMS12 countries (85%) as a whole. This perception is not observed at the level of the EU27 as a whole, as only 45% of EU27 respondents consider their quality of life to be less good than in other EU countries. In the old EU Member States (EU15), there is even a majority of the population (61%) that considers their quality of life to be better than the EU average.

Romanians (77%) believe that the state of the environment in their country is less good than in the EU⁴. Similar perceptions are registered in geographically neighbouring countries, such as Hungary (81%), Bulgaria (80%), Malta (79%), Lithuania (73%) and Greece (70%). At the EU27 level though, this pattern is reversed: almost half of respondents (48%) consider that the state of the environment is better in their own country than in the other member countries. This perception is even more marked in the old Member States (EU15), where over 53% of respondents believe the state of the environment is better in their own country.

In November 2009, the data show that Romanians are still more pessimistic than the European average as to the evolution of their own living standards in general: 29% of them believe that the next 12 months will be worse, compared with only 15% of Europeans as a whole. Moreover, for all related aspects, Romanians remain pessimistic: 45% (compared to a 31% EU average) about the domestic economic situation, 31% (compared to 19% at EU level) about the household's financial situation, 53% (compared to a 40% EU average) about the national employment situation and 21% (compared to 11% in the EU27) about their own job situation.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Romanians are, in general, less pessimistic as regards the EU's economic situation: 18% of Romanians and 21% of all Europeans believe that the coming 12 months would be worse for the EU's economy.

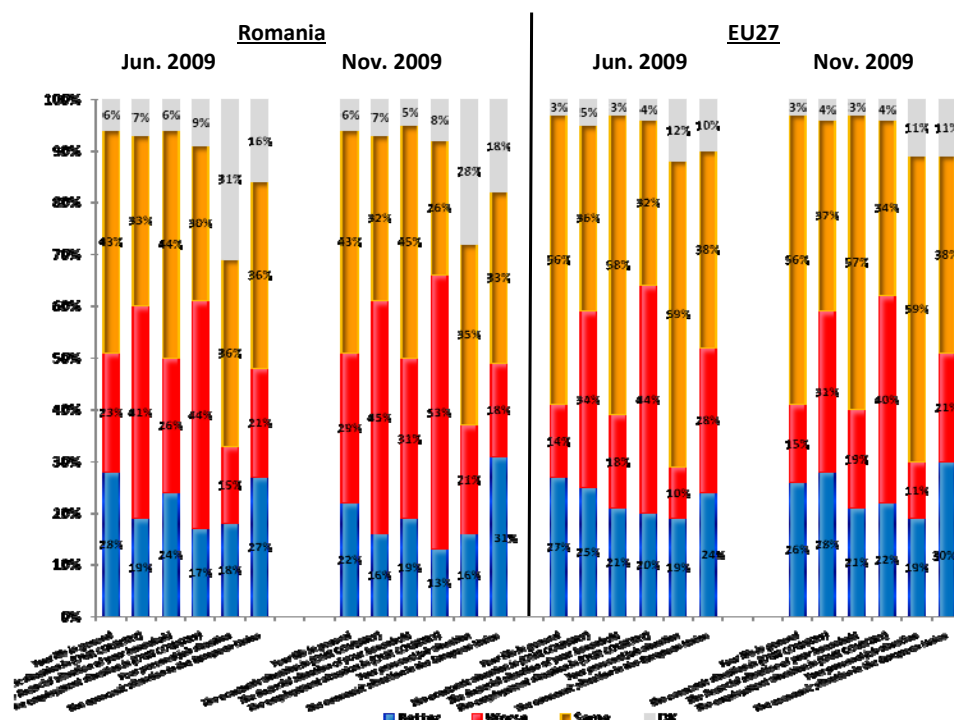
When comparing successive surveys, June versus November 2009, it can be observed that, in Romania, pessimism levels have increased: from 23 to 29% as regards living standards on the whole, from 41 to 45% regarding the domestic economic situation, from 26 to 31% regarding households' financial situation, from 44 to 53% regarding the national employment situation and from 15 to 21% as regards respondents' own job situation.

As to their expectations regarding the future of the European economy, there is a slight fall of 3 percentage points in Romanians' levels of pessimism (21 to 18%), which, although lacking statistical significance, tallies with their higher levels of optimism in relation to the European economy.

⁴ See chart 1, "State of the environment in Romania".

Chart no. 2: Analysis of expectations regarding the evolution of the economic situation in the country and at EU level in the coming 12 months.

Question: *What are your expectations for the coming 12 months: do you believe the next 12 months would be better, worse or the same as regards...?*

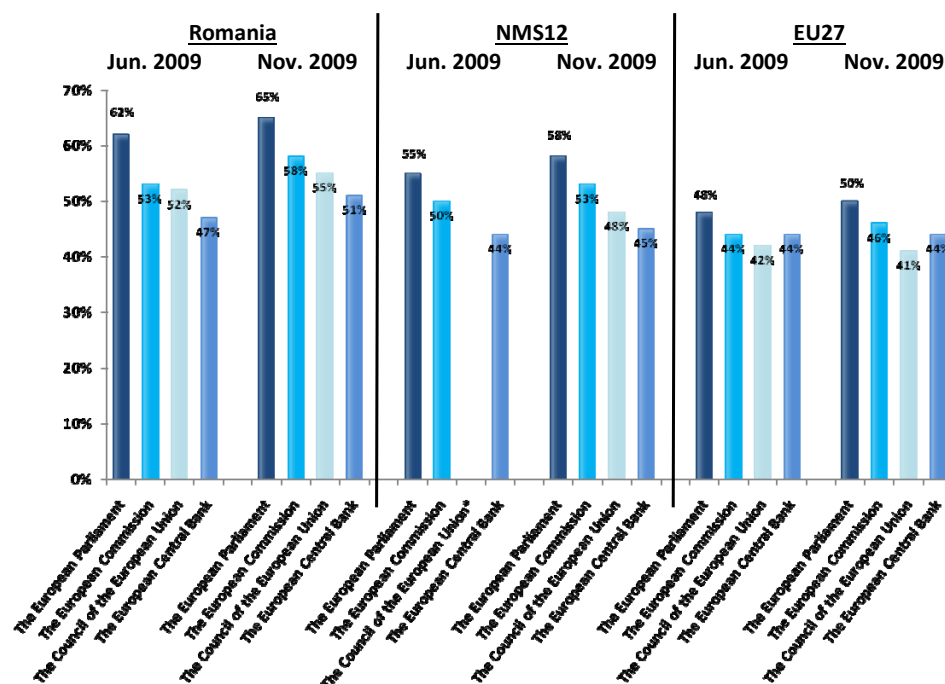


Compared to Romania, at EU level, there is greater stability in the indexes referring to pessimism in relation to the evolution of the domestic socio-economic situation in the coming 12 months. Also, where there is no such stability, the evolution is more towards optimism than pessimism. Thus, in November last year, 15% of Europeans were pessimistic as regards their future living standards on the whole (compared to 14% in June 2009), 19% about the financial situation of own household (compared to 18%) and 11% in relation to own job situation (compared to 10% in June). A fall in pessimism levels, in parallel, with an increase in optimism levels can be seen as regards expectations in relation to the expectations regarding the domestic economic situation (31% in November, compared to 34% in June) and in regard to the employment situation (40% vs. 44%). A significant fall in levels of pessimism is observed in regard to the prospects of the EU economy; only 21% of Europeans consider, in November 2009, that the economic situation would worsen in the next 12 months, a figure which has fallen by seven percentage points since June 2009.

The European Parliament is the institution considered to have the highest degree of trustworthiness both in Romania and in the EU27 as a whole. In November 2009, two thirds of Romanians (65%) and half of the EU poll (50%), aged 15 and over, trusted the European Parliament. The European Commission earns the trust of 58% of Romanians and 46% of Europeans. Romanians (55%) also trust the Council of the European Union, as do 41% of Europeans in general. As for the European Central Bank, this institution has the trust of 51% of Romanian and 44% of EU27 respondents.

Chart no. 3: Level of trust in main European institutions.

Question: *Please tell me if you tend to trust or not the following European institutions?*



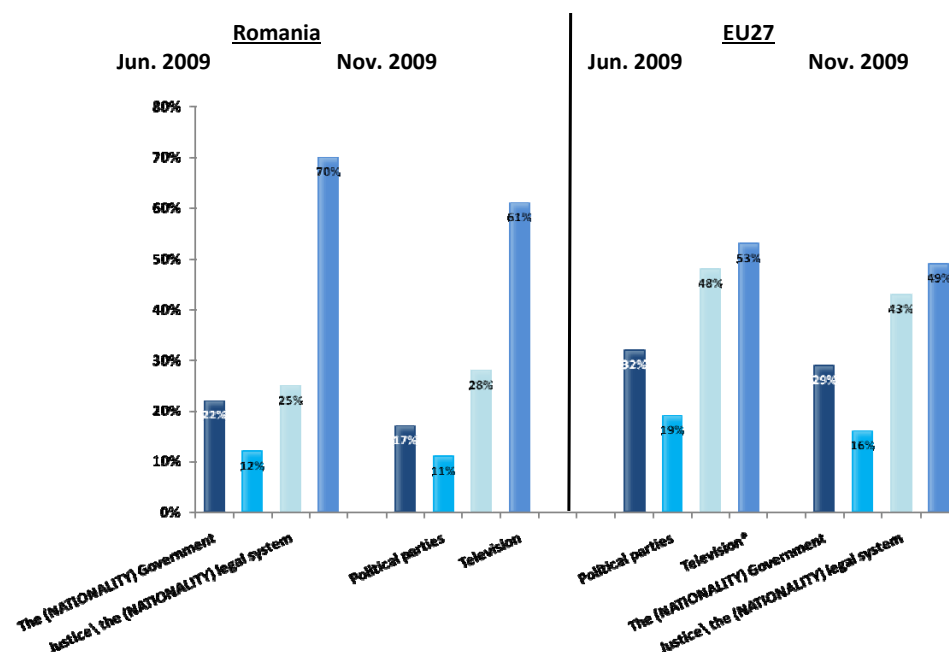
*Data not available at the production of the report

The economic crisis has not affected the level of trust people have in European institutions whether in Romania or in the Union as a whole. At EU27 level, this trust level is stable whereas, in Romania, it is rising. Significant rises are seen, in Romania, especially for the European Commission – from 53 to 58% – and the European Central Bank – from 47 to 51%.

Mainly related to domestic political dynamics, meaning the presidential elections of last year, Romanians' level of trust in national institutions varies as a function of the institution in question. Over the June–November 2009 period, trust in the national government – which was dismissed, but with the same Prime Minister – has dropped from 22% to 17%. Political parties maintained their very low levels of trust, of around 11%. For a change, there have been positive signals - although they need to be reconfirmed in the future - as regards increases in trust levels in Romania's justice system (from 25% in June to 28% in November).

Chart no. 4: Level of trust in national institutions.

Question: *I would like to ask you about the level of trust that you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or not.*



*For television, the historical reference data are from June 2008

The greatest fall in trust levels has been observed by TV stations, from 70% in June 2008 (meaning the pre-campaign period for national parliamentary elections) to 61% in November 2009. The excessive polarisation of public speech and the involvement of major media corporations in the presidential elections seem to have resulted in a loss of respondents' trust in these mass-media channels.

At EU27 level, a relatively low decrease in public trust in national institutions is also recorded. Thus, the level of trust has fallen in relation to national governments from 32% (June 2009) to 29% (November 2009), for political parties from 19 to 16%, and for the justice system from 48 to 43%. Trust levels in TV stations have also fallen by 4 points, from 53 to 49%, at EU level, over the same period.

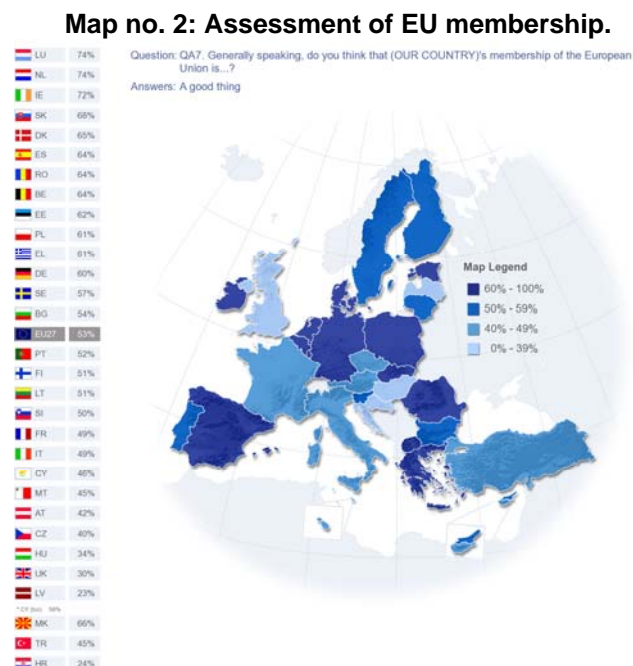
On the whole, the low levels of trust in political institutions and, in parallel, the high levels of trust registered for TV stations existing in Romania, compared with the European average are noteworthy.

When compared with other European citizens, Romanians have a generally positive image of the European Union. Moreover, the Union has the most positive image in Romania (63% of respondents, when the 'very' and 'somewhat' positive image responses are added together), 15 points above the EU average and 10 points over that of the NMS.

Two thirds (64%) of Romanians believe that EU membership is a good thing, while only 8% assess it as bad, and 23% see it as neither good, nor bad. The majority percentage of the poll seeing EU membership positively Romania above both the EU (53%) and NMS12 average (55%).

Romania is ranked fifth as regards its positive assessment of EU membership, together with Spain and Belgium, behind Luxembourg and The Netherlands (first place), Ireland (2nd),

Slovakia (3rd), Denmark (4th) and before Estonia (6th), Poland and Greece (7th), Germany (8th), Sweden (9th) and Bulgaria (10th), all of these countries recording levels above the EU average.



Compared with June 2009, there are no differences in the opinion regarding the country's EU membership status. The stability in this figure may be observed both in Romania and the entire NMS, as well as at the level of the entire Union (EU27).

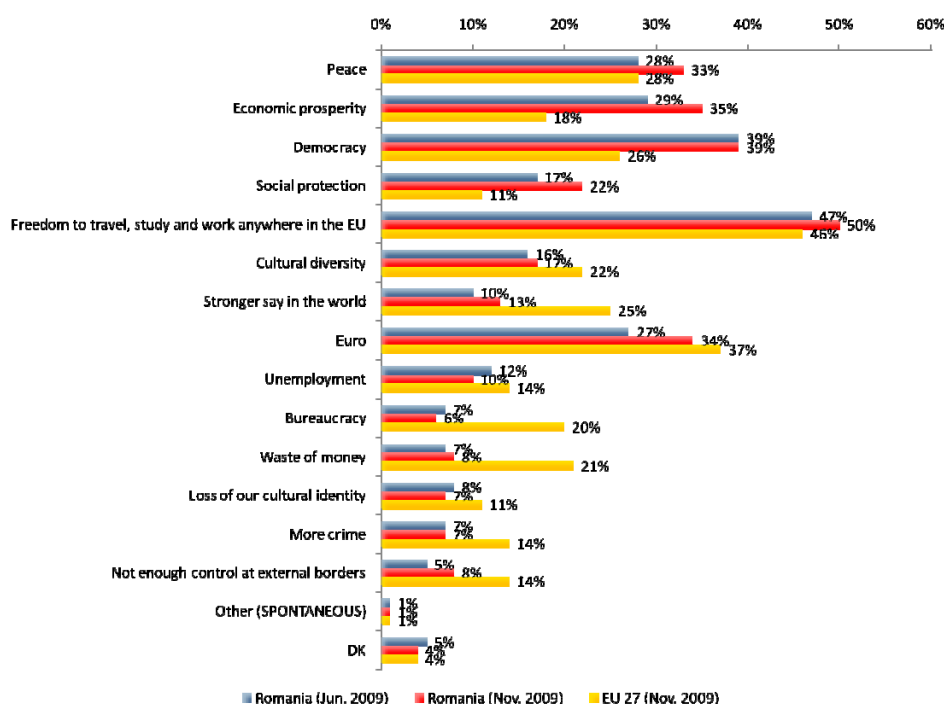
On the whole, in Romania, the European Union is perceived as standing for the same things as in other Member States. First, the EU represents, for half of the Romanian population, the freedom to travel, study or work wherever within its territory. This benefit of EU membership is ranked higher by Romanians than the citizens of old Member States (44% in EU15), as the date since which Romanians have enjoyed this right is more recent. From this point of view, Romania is like other members of the NMS12 group (54%).

The European Union also means democracy for 39% of Romanians. The overlap of Romania's democratisation process in the post-communist period with the European integration process, as well as the constant pressure exerted in this respect by evaluations made by European institutions, are the aspects that give rise to this association in public perceptions. The difference in Romania is significant in relation to both the average registered in the old Member States (25%) and the new ones (26%).

Furthermore, for Romanians, the Union means economic prosperity (35%). In June 2009, a fall of 7 percentage points in this index was registered (compared with November 2008, when the economic crisis was first declared). At the end of last year, following a prolonged governmental crisis and due to politicians' incapacity to find viable solutions for granting support to both citizens and companies, external financing - both from the IMF and the EU - regained importance. Moreover, rumours that Romanians abroad for working purposes - most of them within the Union - would return home did not come true, as they continued to support financially their relatives at home. This links in with Romanians' association of economic prosperity with the Union.

Chart no. 5: Evolution of opinions on topics associated with the European Union.

Question: *What does the European Union mean to you?*



From this point of view, there is a wide difference between Romanians' perception and that recorded at EU27 level, as only 18% of Europeans associate the Union with economic prosperity.

In the context of the global economic crisis and domestic political instability, association of the Union with social protection topics has strengthened, with the figure rising from 17% in June to 22% in November 2009.

The European Union also means peace for 33% of Romanians, this figure being slightly above the EU average (28%).

A significant increase was observed for the association of the EU with the euro, both in Romania and the EU27. Thus, over one third of Romanians (34%) make this association, an figure 7 points up compared to June 2009. At EU27 level, the increase is 4 points, from 33% to 37%. Although, in June 2009, this association was 8 points down compared to the level registered in November 2008, a return to previously recorded levels is observed, most likely due to the measures to ensure monetary stability adopted at European level.

Romanians, compared with the EU average, associate the Union significantly less frequently with a more important role to be played at international level. Thus, only 13% of them have associated the EU with the attribute «A heavier weight at international level», whereas the EU average is 25%.

Associations of the EU with negative topics is relatively infrequent in Romania (under 15%). Nevertheless, it should be noted that unemployment is the negative topic most associated with the EU in the country (10%), although this index is below the EU average (14%).

As for solutions to overcome the crisis, at European level, Romanians favour policies in support of small and medium-size companies (31%), as well as investments in infrastructure

(29%) and education (26%). The European average shows a certain re-ranking of priorities by including measures for social protection. Thus, in the EU27, the priority policies to deal with the crisis are support for small and medium-size companies (37%), investments in education (28%), followed by support for the unemployed (24%) and people living in poverty (22%).

One can safely say these correspond, to a large extent, to the Union's priorities for action, as announced by the relevant Swedish Ministers when taking over the Presidency of the EU Council.