

EUROBAROMETER 72

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)

Slovenians are more satisfied with their lives than are other residents of the European Union on average and are the most satisfied among those member states who joined in 2004 or later. Assessments of the economic situation in Slovenia are lower than those of the European or global economic situation, and optimism about the future is falling.

86% of Slovenians are satisfied with their lives, which is one percentage point higher than in the first half of the year. Slovenia is above the European average (78%) and is ranked at the top of the list among the new member states EU12 group regarding life satisfaction.

20% of Slovenians rate the current economic situation in Slovenia as good and 80% consider it as bad. Since the last survey, the rating of “good” for the economic situation in Slovenia fell by 7 percentage points which meant that Slovenia has dropped below the EU27 average. On average, 23% of Europeans see their country’s economy as good, while 75% think it is bad.

Slovenians rate the condition of the European and global economy better than the condition of their national economy. 31% of Slovenians rate the European economic situation as good while 68% consider it bad. The world economy is perceived as good by 23% of Slovenian respondents and bad by 75%. Both the European and world economies are rated higher by Slovenians than by EU27 citizens on average: 29% of Europeans consider Europe’s economy to be in a good condition and 19% think the same applies for the world economy.

The majority of Slovenians (57%) don’t expect any changes in their lives within the next 12 months. This represents an increase of 2 percentage points since the previous Eurobarometer. 24% of respondents expect their lives to improve (3 percentage points less than in the previous EB71.3) and 18% expect their lives to worsen (a drop of one percentage point since the last Eurobarometer).

According to Slovenians, the most important issues Slovenia is facing at the moment are unemployment and the economic situation. In the future, the majority of Slovenians expect the economic situation in Slovenia to worsen, but they are a bit more optimistic about the future prospects for the economic situation in Europe and the world.

Among the most significant issues their country is facing at the moment, the most important, according to Slovenians, are unemployment (56%) followed by the economic situation (52%). From the replies received, unemployment has increased by 6 percentage points since the last survey, while the economic situation has decreased by 7 percentage points. These two issues are also considered as the most important by other EU citizens (unemployment 51%, economic situation 41%).

Over the next 12 months, most Slovenians (57%) expect no changes in their lives, while 24% expect their life to improve and 18% expect their life to worsen. Slovenes do expect changes when it comes to the future prospects regarding the economic situation in their country. Over the next 12 months, 40% of respondents in Slovenia expect the economic situation in Slovenia to worsen, 27% believe in its improvement and 31% expect no changes in the country’s economy.

Slovenes’ expectations regarding the European economic situation within the next 12 months show more optimism about the future. One third of Slovenes (4 percentage points more than in previous survey) expect it to improve, 29% (2 percentage points less than in previous survey) expect it to worsen while 34% of respondents' don't expect it to change. Expectations

regarding the economic situation are higher since the previous survey both in Slovenia and in other member states of the EU.

Slovenes' predictions for the global economy over the next 12 months are similar to those for the European economy. One third expects the global economy to improve within the next 12 months, 30% expect it to worsen and 32% expect no change. Since the last survey, expectations about the global economy increased in Slovenia and also among other member states' citizens.

II. SLOVENIA AND THE EU

Slovenia's membership of the EU is a good thing. Support for membership among Slovenians has increased. Nearly two-thirds of Slovenians think that their country has benefited from being a member of the EU.

Half of Slovenians consider the country's EU membership as a good thing, 45% as neither good nor bad and 13% think it is a bad thing. Since the last survey (EB71.3), the proportion of those who see membership as a good thing has increased by 2 percentage points. On the EU level, the view of membership as being good remains at the same level as in the previous survey (53%).

Like in previous polls, 64% of Slovenians polled believe that Slovenia has benefited from its EU membership. This figure is above the European average (57%, i.e. 2 percentage points more than in the previous survey) of respondents believing that their country has benefited from being a member of the EU.

The majority of Slovenians believe that public authorities on the national level have the biggest influence on their living conditions. More Slovenians than the EU27 average think that regional or local public authorities are not taken sufficiently into account when deciding policies in the European Union.

The majority of Slovenians (62%) considers public authorities on the national level to have the biggest influence on their living conditions. However, 31% attribute the biggest influence to public authorities on regional or local level but only 4% of respondents think that authorities on European level have the greatest influence on their living conditions. On average, respondents in the EU feel the influence of national authorities to a lesser extent than Slovenians (45% in the EU) but feel the greater influence of regional and local authorities (38%) or the authorities at EU level (11%). Most Slovenians (78%) consider that regional or local authorities are not sufficiently taken into account when deciding policies in the EU, which is well above the corresponding EU27 average (66%).

Slovenians tend towards more decision-making within the European Union.

Slovenians in general hold the view that more decision making should be transferred to the EU level in a number of areas. Slovenians believe that the areas to be decided upon by the Slovenian government are - pensions, taxation, health care, social protection, the fight against unemployment and consumer protection. Slovenians are in favour of decision-making jointly within the EU regarding the fight against terrorism, science and technology research, immigration, energy issues, defence and foreign affairs, fighting crime, protecting the environment, traffic, support for regions facing economic difficulties, competition, fighting inflation, economy, agriculture and fisheries.

III. EU IN THE EYES OF A SLOVENIAN CITIZEN

In the view of the majority of respondents, things are going in the right direction in the European Union. The proportion holding this opinion has increased since the last poll. Half of Slovenians trust the EU, and the share of respondents who have a positive image of the EU has increased.

44% of Slovenians think things are going in the right direction in the EU and 12% think things are going in the wrong direction. Since the last poll, the opinion among Slovenians that things are going in the right direction in the EU has increased by 4 percentage points. Slovenian opinion is above the EU27 average, where 40% of respondents feel that things are going in the right direction (6 percent points more than in last survey).

Half of Slovenians trust the European Union, and 45% do not. Trust in the EU has not changed among Slovenians since the previous survey. 48% of European citizens on average trust the EU.

The European Union conjures up a positive image for more than a half (53%) of Slovenians, more than the EU27 average (48%). The proportion of those with a positive image of the EU has increased by 3 percentage points since the previous poll both in Slovenia and in the EU27 as a whole.

For Slovenians, the European Union is best characterised by its political influence and economic power. Most respondents associate the European Union with the euro, but it also represents freedom of travel, study and work anywhere in the EU.

The largest share of Slovenians think that the European Union is best characterised by its political influence (76%) and economic power (73%). For the majority of respondents in Slovenia, the European Union represents the euro (56%) and, for more than a half (53%), also the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union. These two answers were also the most cited by other European citizens.

Slovenians are above average regarding their understanding of the Union, while awareness of European institutions, like in past measurements, remains at a very high level. In Slovenia, more people have trust in the European institutions than not.

60% of Slovenians understand how the European Union works, which puts Slovenia at the top of the EU Member States ranking in this regard. Compared to the previous poll (EB71.3), knowledge on how the EU works has increased by 4 percentage points among Slovenians. In the EU as a whole, the level of knowledge remains the same since the spring Eurobarometer; on average, 44% of European citizens understand how the Union works.

Like previous polls, Slovenians' knowledge remains very high regarding European institutions; in general, their knowledge has stayed at the same level or has slightly increased. The majority of respondents have heard of the European Parliament (96%), followed by the European Commission and the European Central Bank (both 91%) and the Council of the European Union (88%).

IV. CURRENT EUROPEAN POLICIES AND GLOBALIZATION

European institutions should focus on economic conditions, social and health issues, environmental issues and climate change as a priority. Slovenians, more than the average Europeans, support the European monetary union and the further enlargement of the EU. Slovenians consider the European Union to be ahead of the USA in most areas, such as social and health protection, environment and education, but the EU is considered to be behind when it comes to entrepreneurship, innovation and scientific research.

In order to strengthen the European Union, EU institutions should focus more on economic issues, social and health issues, environment and climate change, according to Slovenians.

Among the EU27 countries, Slovenians, like in previous surveys, express more than average support for European policies to strengthen political integration. The highest support has been given to the common European Monetary Union with one single currency – euro (86%, in EU27 60%). Also, Slovenians are largely in favour of the further enlargement of the EU (68%, in the EU27 46%). However, the Slovenian public is divided when it comes to the proposition of building Europe at different speeds in different groups of countries (46% in favour, 46% against; these figures are close to the European averages (40% in favour, 43% against)).

Similar to Europeans in general, Slovenians put the European Union in first place compared to the USA in most areas. The majority feels that the European Union is ahead of the USA when it comes to a comparison of healthcare systems, protecting the environment, fighting social inequalities, fighting discrimination, fighting unemployment and education systems. Areas where, according to Slovenians, the EU is behind the USA are scientific research, innovation technology and entrepreneurship.

Slovenians regard globalisation as a cause of increasing social inequalities and support common governance at the global level. More often than Europeans on average, Slovenians see globalisation as a reason for more foreign investments in their country. However, at the same time, they consider it as profitable only for large companies and not for citizens. In order to face global challenges, the two most important factors are seen to be social security and solidarity and research and innovation.

Three-quarters of Slovenians (76%, in EU27 60%) are convinced globalisation is the reason for increasing social inequalities and 80% (74% in EU27) feel that it requires common rules at global level (“global governance”). A large share of Slovenians is convinced that globalisation is only profitable for large companies, not for citizens (74%), regardless of the fact that, according to the majority opinion, it also means more foreign investments in Slovenia (69%).

V. FIGHTING THE EFFECTS OF WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS

Slovenians consider that the European economy is generally doing better than the economies of other world superpowers. A majority of Slovenians believe that the worst consequences of the world's economic crisis are yet to come and that the best equipped to deal efficiently with consequences of financial and economic crisis are the G20 and the European Union.

In general, Slovenians consider that the European economy is doing better than other major world economies, such as Brazil, Russia, India and, to a lesser extent, the US economy, while it is seen as performing worse when compared to the Japanese or Chinese economies.

Respondents in the EU27 are more critical and believe that the European economy is also performing worse when compared to the US economy.

Most Slovenians are pessimistic when considering the impact of the global economic crisis. 61% of respondents think that the worst impact of the economic crisis on the job market is yet to come, while a minority of respondents (35%) thinks that the effects of the economic crisis on the job market have already reached their peak and that the situation will start to improve.

Slovenians are convinced that the best authority to efficiently tackle the consequences of the financial and economic crisis is the G20 (21%, in EU27 18%), followed by the European Union (20%, in EU27 22%). The least capable of coping with the crisis is, according to Slovenians, their national government. The incidence of this last answer has increased most on the EU level and has the second largest share among respondents in the EU (19%).

Two-thirds of Slovenians believe that keeping the Slovenian Tolar as a national currency would not protect Slovenia from the current financial and economic crisis.

Two-thirds of Slovenians (67%) think that keeping the Slovenian Tolar as a national currency would not protect Slovenia from the effects of the financial and economic crisis and 29% believe the opposite. In the European Monetary Union, public opinion is more divided - 45% of respondents think that the old national currency would have protected their country better, while 47% disagree with this statement.

VI. PRIORITIES OF EUROPEAN UNION IN THE FUTURE

More than two-thirds of Slovenians are optimistic regarding the future of the European Union. The priority issue of the European Union is economic recovery, think three-quarters of Slovenians and most European respondents.

Most Slovenians (69%) are optimistic about the future of the European Union, while a little less than a third (29%) are pessimists when it comes to the future of the EU. Compared to the previous poll, the number of optimists fell by 2 percentage points in Slovenia and increased by the same amount in the EU27.

Three-quarters of Slovenians believe that the priority task of the European Union in future years is economic recovery, followed by fighting climate change and helping to create stability in the world and boosting growth in a sustainable way.

70% of Slovenians think that Slovenia needs more reforms to deal with the future, while 24% think the opposite is true. Nearly half of Slovenians (49%) agree with the idea that the financial and economic crisis makes it easier to adopt reforms and 69% of Slovenians are in favour of the idea that reforms that benefit future generations should be adopted, even with sacrifices by the present generation.

Respondents in Slovenia feel that the most effective measure for fighting the current financial and economic crisis would be stronger economic and financial policy coordination between EU Member States.

In order to fight climate change, the best measure, according to Slovenians, would be the development of environmentally-friendly industries, services and technologies, followed by reduction of CO2 emissions and incorporating the fight against climate change in all European Union policies.

Slovenians also believe that, to create stability in the world, it would be best to participate in conflict resolution, peace-keeping and peace building, to work against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and by promoting and protecting human rights.