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PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **ROMANIA**

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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 authors.

The main objective of this Report - the first report in a series of national analyses conducted based on Eurobarometer data – is to show Romanians’ perceptions of the European Union (EU), issues related to their country and its institutions and European values in general.

The main questions to which this report attempts to answer to are:

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| ➤ How do Romanians perceive the EU? | What do they know about the European institutions?
What is their perception of the EU’s image and what are their concerns and their expectations in connection with the EU? |
| ➤ What is the Romanian public’s agenda? | What are the major specific issues on the agenda?
How is the EU expected to help with solving the issues facing Romania?
How important is the role of the EU and of the national government in solving Romania’s problems |
| ➤ How do Romanians perceive their own life? | Now, compared to five years ago
In the future, compared to now |
| ➤ What do Romanians think about: | Their own institutions
National democracy versus EU democracy
The place, region, country and continent in which they live |

The data used in this analysis were collected in Romania between 10 and 27 October 2004 by TNS CSOP based on a representative sample at national level made up of 1012 respondents aged 15 and over.

The opinions recorded in Romania by the Eurobarometer 62 (EB62) are compared with those recorded in:

- The EU,
- The old EU Member States (EU-15),
- The new EU Member States (NMS),
- Other candidate countries (CC),
- Countries sharing very similar views in terms of certain opinion indicators.

The report focuses in particular on the comparative analysis of the opinions of the “average Romanian” versus those of the average European.

At the same time, the report systematically analyses the data in relation with population subcategories grouped by age, place of residence, education, their degree of knowledge of the European institutions, etc.

Key findings

1. The overview which results from the analysis of Romanian public opinion in late 2004 compared with that of people in the EU Member States and in the candidate countries centres around the three following dimensions: Romanians’ perceptions of the European institutions, their expectations as to how their lives and various social issues in Romania are going to evolve and their values.
2. Looking at the three dimensions specified above – perceptions of institutions, expectations and values, the dominant profile of the average Romanian appears to resemble more that of the NMS population than the EU-15 one.
3. What is most characteristic of the Romanian population’s opinion profile, seen in the European context at the end of 2004, is that Romanians have great confidence in the EU and have positive expectations as to the how their social and personal life is going to evolve in the longer term. In terms of both of these

aspects, Romania tops the ranking of European countries, with 62% of those polled confident that their life will improve in the next five years and with 74% of its respondents trusting the EU.

4. In spite of their high degree of trust in the European Union, Romanians have little knowledge of how the European institution actually function. Only the Bulgarians, the Turks and the British (Figure 1) are in this situation too.
 - 4.1 There is a considerable gap between Romanians' actual and the perceived awareness of the European institutions. In a self-evaluation, Romanians believe they have solid knowledge about the European Union (placing Romania among the nine countries with greatest knowledge about the EU), but when asked some questions on the subject, Romania proves to be one of the countries with least awareness about the EU. This situation is common to all the candidate countries that have little experience of the EU institutions but are, nevertheless, very keen to acquire EU membership (see Bulgaria and the northern part of Cyprus, for example).
 - 4.2 The historic and cultural explanation for this low level of individual knowledge about EU institutions varies greatly from one country to another. While Romanians and Bulgarians may claim that their poor knowledge about the EU institutions is due to their somewhat similar historic background, their situation differs greatly from that of the British or the Turks.
5. According to the Romanian poll, the EU already plays a very important role, not necessarily in terms of what membership is expected to bring along but rather in terms of the solutions that the EU may provide to dealing with various issues.
6. Romanians believe that issues such as international crime, migration and internal social cohesion (regional development, social security, etc.) may be resolved primarily with EU support (Table 13).
7. From a socio-demographic point of view, Romania is one of the most heterogeneous countries in the survey. Age and place of residence strongly influence opinions about the EU, personal future life and value orientations. The two residential environments (urban and rural) intersecting the three age categories – young people, adults and those aged 55 and over - reveal the existence of six residential-age groups, whose opinions and life styles differ to such extent that we may speak of six specific social worlds. Young people in urban areas, for example, have the strongest positive perception about how their life in the last five years has evolved, whereas older members of the population in rural area are the most dissatisfied from this point of view (Table 17). Considerable differences are also apparent with regard to many other aspects dealing with European integration or the national/European identity, when analysed using the same criteria.
8. The degree of awareness of the European institutions is a major factor in determining the opinions respondents in Romania and in other countries have about European Union, membership and European integration.
9. The cultural model Romania seems to subscribe to with respect to national/European identity is one of maximum diversity, with relatively equal shares of individuals with preponderantly national, preponderantly European, national-European and European-national orientations (Figure 19). Countries such as Bulgaria, the northern part of Cyprus, Slovenia, Ireland, Croatia and Hungary fall within the same category.
10. Spatial identities – understood as attachment to a place, region, country or continent – are associated with but are not completely attributable to ethnic identities. Seen from the perspective of the cultural spatial

identity model, Romanians, like Luxembourgers and Hungarians, are characterized by a high degree of attachment to their region, country and to Europe (Table 24).

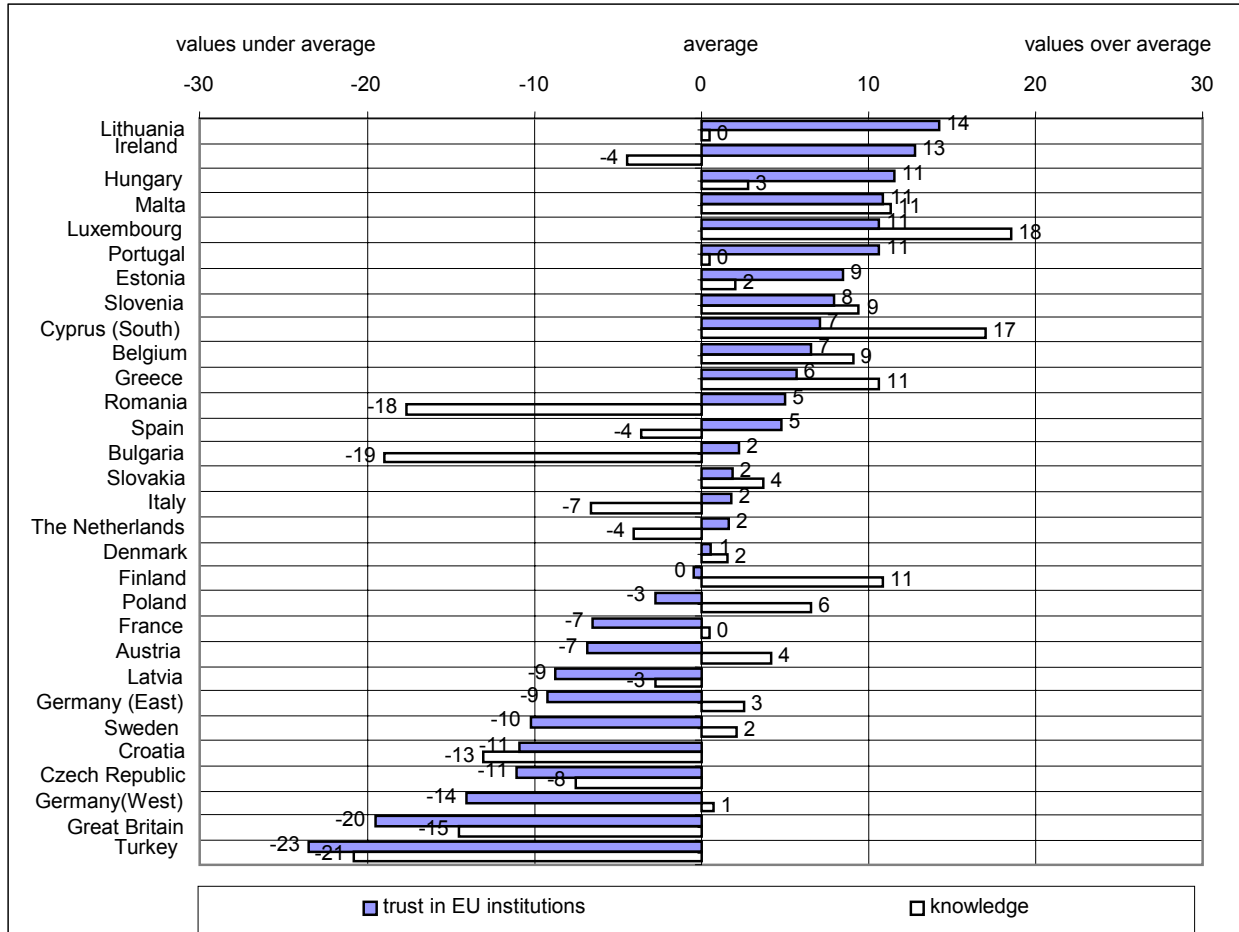


Figure 1. Trust in and knowledge of European Institutions

Values

Democracy

Romanians, like respondents in the NMS and other candidate countries, believe that democracy in the EU functions better than it does in their own country. Unlike Romanians, the dominant opinion among the EU-15 countries is that, on the contrary, democracy works better at national than at EU level.

Those most satisfied with how the democracy functions in Romania are those living in the country, in contrast with the EU where it is those living in big cities who are the most satisfied.

The explanation for this may be found in the fact that the rural population in Romania seems to have lower expectations in terms of a functional democracy than the urban population.

Trust in institutions

The institutions enjoying the highest degree of confidence among Romanians are the Church (82%), the EU (74%), the Army (72%) and the Television and the Radio (71% each). From a comparative perspective, it may be observed that:

- Romania is the country with the highest degree of trust in the European Union (74%, followed by Lithuania with 68%) of all the 30 countries surveyed;
- Trust in the Army scores highest at the EU level and is ranked third in Romania;
- NGOs (and in particular charitable organisations) are valued more in the EU than in Romania;
- political parties rank lowest on the trust scale in Romania, the NMS and the EU-15;
- trust in Justice is low both in Romania (13th position on a descending scale from 1 (maximum trust) to 15 (minimum trust)- at 26%) and in the NMS (12th position - 26%) compared with the EU-15 (12th position, 48%);
- Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Poland come closest to Romania in terms of their trust levels in institutions.

Table 1. Trust scores in institutions

	Romania	NMS	EU15
Highest trust score (from 1...)	1. the Church 2. the EU 3. the Army	1. the Army 2. Radio 3. NGOs	1. the Army 2. the Police 3. NGOs
Lowest trust score (... to 15)	13. Justice 14. Trades Unions 15. Political Parties	13. Government 14. Parliament 15. Political parties	13. Government 14. Big companies 15. Political parties

Identity

In terms of identity, Romanians follow the “50% - 30% - 10%” typology: half of them are very proud, over one-third are fairly proud and over one-tenth are not at all proud of their national identity. Other countries that show similar patterns are Spain and Denmark.

In terms of how proud one is to belong to a nationality compared to being a European citizen, five types of cultural orientation may be distinguished: predominantly national, predominantly European, European-national, national-European and, lastly, uncertain.

Romania belongs to the group of countries where there is a great diversity of these orientations, and the four types of highly structured national-European values account for relatively equal shares. A detailed analysis identifies at least eight types of identity orientation in Europe.

These orientations vary considerably depending on the level of development of the various regions in the country:

- A predominant national orientation is apparent mainly in the western, north-western and the southern regions;

- A predominant European orientation is mostly apparent in the central region;
- A composite European-national orientation of moderate intensity is common in the south-western and the north-western regions;
- A composite European-national orientation is common in Bucharest.

Personal perception of EU membership

“What does the European Union mean to you personally?” was the question asked in order to identify the meaning each individual associates with EU membership. When given a list of possible feelings the EU might evoke in them, the prevailing sentiment of those polled in Romania was hope, whereas negative concerns were only occasionally expressed:

- the EU is most frequently associated with freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU (64% of the poll). This view is widespread among people living in urban areas where three-quarters cited this. Least likely to give this answer are those aged over 55 living in rural areas.
- economic prosperity is ranked in second place and is cited most commonly by those aged under 55 living in the countryside;
- peace is cited by older people living in rural areas;
- EU membership is associated with democracy by respondents living in cities and towns aged between 40 and 54;
- concerns relating to unemployment and increased crime rates are observed mainly among older people in urban areas;
- concerns relating to a loss of cultural identity are only minimal and are more common in urban than in rural areas.

The main disadvantages that Romanians associate with EU membership relate to:

- increased drug trafficking (46%)
- higher payments to the Union’s budget (46%) and
- more difficulties for Romanian farmers (41%), a concern shown mainly by those with a high level of knowledge about how the European institutions operate (58% of those polled who have a good knowledge about the EU are concerned about agricultural problems).

On the whole, Romanians seem to have fewer concerns than the EU population overall.

Role of the EU

Romanians’ expectations with regard to the EU’s role in solving various issues facing their country are extremely high. Between 50% and 70% of them expect the EU to play an active and positive role in solving issues such as terrorism (70%), foreign affairs (64%), the economic situation (64%), crime (62%), environmental protection (61%), healthcare and education (50%).

With regard to crime, Romanians share similar views with the newly integrated EU countries. They consider the Union as playing a positive role in the taking of joint decisions designed to fight organised crime. Romania records higher numbers of respondents in favour of EU decision-making with regard to crime and justice than the EU Member States.

Romanians who are knowledgeable about how the EU institutions work tend to favour a greater role for the EU in taking decisions regarding Romania.

When asked to specify the three actions the EU should undertake in connection with Romania, Romanians answer that such actions should attempt to combat poverty and social exclusion (56%), fight against drug trafficking and organized crime (41%), maintaining peace and security in Europe (40%). Romanians' opinions are very similar to those of the Bulgarians and the Finns when it comes to the actions expected from EU.

Table 2. Classification of the EB62 countries depending on actions expected from the EU¹

Countries with similar profile in terms of expected EU actions	Characteristics of the option profile for the population in the respective group of countries
Lithuania, Croatia, Poland, Greece, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In virtually equal first place, fighting unemployment and poverty/social exclusion • Peace and security in Europe and fight against organized crime: second-ranking interests • Environmental protection and the fight against terrorism: third-ranking interests
Southern Cyprus, Finland, Romania , Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fight against poverty and social exclusion – a primordial interest with the highest ranking • Peace and security in Europe, fight against drugs and unemployment occupy the second place in the hierarchy of interests • Environmental protection and fight against terrorism are third-ranking interests
Spain, Italy, Turkey, Northern Cyprus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first three ranks in the interest hierarchy are occupied by actions combating unemployment, poverty and terrorism
France, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, Austria and Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first three rankings in the interest hierarchy are occupied by actions combating unemployment and poverty and actions ensuring the European security • The gaps between economic versus social interests are less than in the case of the first three groups
Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple interests in relatively equal shares regarding actions designed to combat drug trafficking, poverty, terrorism, environmental pollution and ensuring peace and security in Europe.

¹ Country groups were established by means of a type of cluster analysis using the results obtained from the answers to question 37. A matrix consisting of 17 variables representing the types of actions desired and 30 units (i.e. 30 countries), with the data in the matrix standing for percentages per item-country, has been used as input data in the cluster analysis.

EU Institutions

Awareness

The average Romanian claims that he /she “has heard” of four out of the following nine European institutions (compared with 5.4 in the EU15 and 5.1 in the NMS):

- 82% of the European Parliament
- 75% of the European Commission
- 53% of the European Central Bank
- 50% of the EU Council of Ministers
- 47% of the Court of Justice of the European Communities
- 36% of the Ombudsman
- 24% of the European Economic and Social Committee
- 24% of the European Court of Auditors
- 18% of the Committee of the Regions.

In Romania, people in the big cities show higher levels of awareness of EU institutions, citing 4.6 institutions compared with only 3.6 on average cited by respondents in rural areas. The deficit in awareness of European institutions is higher among the rural population in Romania than in the EU15 and NMS.

The degree of information among the Romanian population, at the time of this poll, is relatively low when it comes to details about the workings of the European institutions (see the EU institution knowledge index in Figure 1).

The percentage of individuals with poor knowledge of the European institutions is at its peak in the candidate countries. In Romania, 42% have low levels of knowledge about EU institutions compared to only 11% who have a great deal. This difference reflects the polarization of EU-related information at country level. For those countries that became EU members in 2004, the situation is also polarized, mainly in regard to high knowledge of EU institutions. In EU15, this polarization is much lower.

Information sources

Romanians cite television, radio and newspapers as their preferred sources of information about the EU. This order of preference is slightly different in terms of information sources actually used, with radio occupying third place.

Romanians’ preferences regarding sources of information on EU issues compared with EU citizens’ preferences:

- in both cases, television is the preferred source of information
- in the EU, newspapers are the second most preferred source of information, whereas in Romania, the radio is in second place
- Romanians appear to prefer radio and magazines more than the average EU citizen
- There is a greater preference for the Internet, brochures, DVDs and CDs in EU countries than in Romania;
- In Romania, preference for using the Internet as an information source only equals EU levels in the case of citizens who have a high level of information about the EU.

The majority of Romanians think that media speaks just enough about the EU. The opinion about the level of information provided by the mass media differs with the extent of knowledge about the EU:

- people with good knowledge about the EU claim that information provided by the media is insufficient
- many people with low levels of knowledge about the EU do not express an opinion
- people with average levels of EU knowledge think that media provides sufficient information on the EU.

Trust

Romanians record the highest degree of trust in the EU (74%), followed by Lithuanians (68%) and Hungarians (64%) and in contrast with Croats (42%), British (36%) and Swedes (33%). When trust is clearly associated with specific institutions of the European Union, this ranking changes, with Romanians ranked in twelfth place, while Lithuanians and Hungarians remain in first and third places respectively.

A comparison between the levels of awareness about the European institutions compared with the degree of trust therein shows how each country relates itself to the EU institutions:

- Romania and Bulgaria record an average level of trust in the EU institutions, given their low knowledge about them. Ireland resembles Romania and Bulgaria from this point of view, although in Ireland the level of trust in EU institutions is much higher while the level of knowledge about the EU is below the EU average but still a little higher than in Romania and Bulgaria.
- The British and Turks are good examples of low levels of trust in and awareness of the EU institutions;
- High levels of trust in the EU are not always coupled with the high degrees of awareness of the European institutions. The Lithuanians, Irish, Hungarians and Maltese have the highest levels of trust in EU institutions, but their levels of awareness of the various EU institutions is close to the EU average.