

EUROBAROMETER 64

JAVNO MNIJENJE U EUROPSKOJ UNIJI

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HRVATSKA

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EUROBAROMETER 64 CROATIA

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Research of public opinion by the Standard Eurobarometer is conducted twice annually. This is the 64th consecutive survey (EB 64) and it was conducted between the 10th of October and 5th of November 2005 in all 25 Member States of the EU, in the two accession countries, Bulgaria and Romania, and two candidate countries, Croatia and Turkey, as well as in the Turkish Cypriot Community in Cyprus. This is the third survey which has covered Croatia. The European Commission's Directorate General for Press and Communication (DG Press) ordered the Standard Eurobarometer study and it was conducted by the consortium TNS Opinion & Social, consisting of TNS and EOS Gallup Europe. In Croatia, as in the previous two surveys, the data were collected by the agency Puls and the data was processed and the report was written by the journalist-senior correspondent of the Večernji List, Stojan de Prato.

Main themes of this study:

1. a) Climate of opinions: satisfaction with life, short-term expectations, confidence in state institutions, the two most important issues facing the country, the long-term objectives of the country; b) Activities and priorities of the EU: level of decision making, three main priorities of the EU (in comparison with the two most important national issues)
2. The individual and the EU: feeling of nationality and Europeanism and their comparison, feeling towards the EU, feelings towards the effect on EU operations
3. Being a Member of the EU today: support for EU membership, benefits of membership, effects of membership on the economy, image of the EU
4. a) Confidence in EU institutions: in the European Commission, in the European Parliament; b) Knowledge about the EU: understanding of how the EU functions, knowledge about institutions and policy of the EU, spending of EU budget

5. a) The political Union and the European Constitution: for or against the political Union, view on the Constitution; b) Support for further enlargement: national view on enlargement support for new countries to become Members
6. Social profiles: opinion about the media, holiday customs, the level of equipment in homes, availability of telephone

The representative sample of citizens over 15 years of age on whom the research was carried out encompassed a total of 29,430 respondents – 26,924 living in the EU, 25,200 from accessing countries, 2005 from candidate countries (of whom 1000 live in Croatia), and 500 members of the Turkish Cypriot Community in Cyprus. The participants were interviewed directly by researchers in their homes. In the text, where the expression Croat or Croat woman is used it does not imply nationality but rather citizenship. The expression 'European', on the other hand, refers to a respondent who is a citizen of one of the Member States of the European Union.

Over six months, which is about the time that has elapsed since the previous Standard Eurobarometer, the crisis of the European Union which was prompted by the rejection of the proposed Constitutional Treaty of the EU in referenda in France and the Netherlands was deepened at the June Summit with the lack of agreement on adopting the Financial Perspectives for the next seven year period from 2007- 2013.

In Croatia, the EB 64 study was conducted immediately after the EU Council, at its meeting in Luxembourg on the 3rd to the 4th of October, announced the full cooperation of the Croatian government with the International Criminal Tribunal of the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and after the Intergovernmental conference held the same night opening the accession talks with Croatia.

The confidence of Croatian public in the European Union, which had fallen from 42 % in EB 62 to only 28 %, in the spring 2005 EB 63, has begun to rise slowly to 35 %. The number of those expecting that membership in the EU would be beneficial to Croatia has risen sharply compared to EB 63. A little fewer than half of the respondents were Euro-optimists; however, they are slightly ahead of the Euro-pessimists. The confidence of Croatian respondents in the European Commission has risen by a third in the last six months and only by a quarter in the

European Parliament. Nearly two-thirds of Croatian respondents were in favour of the EU Constitution, while support for further enlargement of the EU to include Croatia has decreased from three-quarters to two-thirds of respondents. However, all candidate and future candidate countries have over 50 % support from Croatian respondents for their entry into the EU.

Chapter 1

Between the last two Eurobarometer surveys, the gap has been closing between the average Croatian and the average European in regard to **satisfaction with life**, even though they are still somewhat behind. An increase in the number of pessimists and optimists in Croatia regarding short-term expectations in their personal life indicates the continuing stratification of Croatian society. This is also indicated by the fact that there is a slight increase in optimism regarding economic growth in Croatia, while simultaneously there is an increase in the percentage of those who do not expect any benefit for their own household from this growth. While there is a significant increase in expectations that unemployment will decrease in Croatia, the number of those expecting that this will reflect positively on their personal employment position and those expecting that it will reflect negatively are both increasing.

On average, Croatians have little confidence in **institutions**. Only a quarter of the respondents trust the justice/legal system which indicates that in Croatia legal insecurity predominates. Confidence in **unions** is only slightly higher and this tells us that workers feel that their rights are not being adequately protected. Accordingly, there is little confidence in large companies.

Political parties both in Croatia and the EU, are considerable disreputable organisations, mostly due to the fact that they are perceived as interest-seeking institutions. Confidence in them in the Republic of Croatia has fallen by three percentage points in the past half year.

In Croatia, there has been a slight increase in **confidence in the government** although mistrust is on the decrease. There are still three times more of those not trusting the government than those who do. Despite international praise of the government's economic policy, citizens obviously still do not see improvements. The continued very low confidence in the **Parliament** is owing to the low level of parliamentary discussions, so that parliamentary representatives leave the public with the impression that they are undeservedly

privileged. Only one-fifth of Croatians have a positive opinion of the Parliament, while in the EU such an opinion of national parliaments is shared by one third of respondents.

The relatively low confidence in the EU, is for the most part, due to the postponements last year of the start of accession negotiations; however, it is still higher than that of most domestic institutions and it began to increase after talks were finally opened in the autumn. After **confidence in the EU among Croatians** fell to only 28% in EB 63, it is now significantly higher at 35 percent. At the same time, distrust fell from 58 to 52 percent.

Insecurity is also reflected in the fact that Croatians point out that the **two most important issues** faced by Croatia are unemployment and crime, and with a percentage which is nearly double that in the EU 25. The fact that they stressed increasing their influence on Government decisions as their first long-term priority once again emphasises the feeling that the interests of citizens are currently not politically represented. Despite relatively low inflation, Croatians put the struggle against inflation in second place which also indicates their feeling of insecurity and mistrust of the government.

Confidence in the **media** as a corrective of politics is also low – only a third of respondents trust sensationalist press, while half of the respondents have confidence in the radio and television. Less than fifty percent confidence in the **police** also indicates the predominant feeling of physical insecurity. Trust levels in **religious institutions**, even though shaken by last years affairs, indicate that Croatians in this general state of vulnerability look to the Church for support, while the fact that the greatest level of confidence, three fifths of respondents, is enjoyed by the army is mostly due to the lack of affairs in the army in recent times but also due to the fact that in Croatians, because of the lack of a more solid new social support structure, the totalitarian consciousness instilled in them over decades still prevails.

Chapter 2

Even though they are very proud of their nation, the majority of Croats consider themselves European and are proud of their affiliation with Europe. Feelings evoked in Croats by the EU are not much different to those of EU citizens, with hope dominating. Croatians expect that the Government, European and local institutions will include them more in European affairs.

Chapter 3

The perception of the EU by Croatians is worse than that of the citizens of Member States, even though it has improved somewhat since the opening of accession talks so that there are now more who think positively about the EU than those who do not. However, Croatians are still confused when it comes to the possible benefits that EU membership could provide. When asked **whether membership in the EU would be good or bad for Croatia**, the majority believes it will be neither good nor bad (37 %).

When the question is phrased differently, **whether membership in the EU will be beneficial to Croatia**, the majority, nearly half, believe that it will be (48 %), while 41 % of respondents believe that it will not. In the meantime, the number of optimists in Croatia has increased dramatically, from 36 to 48 percent, while there has been a 12 percentage points drop in the number of pessimists. More precisely, when questioned about individual sectors, more than half, the majority of Croatians expect improvement upon entering the EU, except in agriculture and industry.

The perception of the EU in Croatia (*In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?*) in the past six months has begun to improve perceptibly. A relative majority of 37 percent have a positive perception of the EU, while less than 24 percent of Croatians have a negative one and 36 percent are neutral. However, six months ago a relative majority of Croatians, 38 percent, had a negative perception of the EU and there were more with negative perceptions than positive ones (32:28%).

Chapter 4

As specific **information** in the press about Croatia moving closer to the European Union increases, more and more Croatians are becoming aware that the activities of the EU and its policy are not well known to them. It is interesting, however, that their lack of knowledge, when asked directly about, for example, what the major part of the European budget is spent on, does not differ much from the predominant lack of knowledge of EU citizens. As in EB 63, Croatian respondents are again a little more confident in their knowledge of the EU than

the average European. However, both groups now believe that their knowledge of the EU is somewhat less than it was six months ago – Croatsians down by three and EU 25 by two percentage points. In the previous study, three percent of Croatian respondents claimed that they knew a lot about the EU but now there is only one percentage of these.

In the meantime, the confidence of Croatsians in the European Parliament and European Commission is on the rise.

Chapter 5

Support for greater political unification of Europe is on the rise with Croatsians, as is support for the European Constitution. A large majority of Croatsians believe that the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty would make the management of the EU more democratic, efficient and clear and that the Constitution would strengthen the position of the EU in the world, make it more economically competitive and socially minded. More than fifty percent also consider that the Constitutional Treaty is essential for the good functioning of European institutions. A total of **59 percent of Croatsians were in favour of the development of the EU into a political Union**, seven percentage points more than six months ago, while 31 percent, five percentage points less are against it. **Support for the continued enlargement of the EU** is falling in Croatia but two-thirds of Croatian respondents were in favour of the accession of new members, although this is 15 percentage points less than six months ago. It is interesting that Croatsians would rather see Switzerland, Norway and Iceland than their own country in the EU even though three-quarters of Croatian respondents are in favour of EU membership for Croatia. Membership of all pre-accession, candidate and possible candidate countries enjoy more than 50 % support from respondents in Croatia, including Serbia and Montenegro, whose membership was supported by more than half of Croatian respondents six months ago. Nearly two-thirds of Croatsians also want to see Turkey as a full member of the EU.

Currently, one percentage less of European respondents are in favour and one percentage more are against **Croatia's EU membership** than six months ago. However, it is **still the fourth most popular future Member**.

Chapter 6

Nearly three-fifths of Croatians want more **information about the EU**. To date, Croatian respondents are informed about the EU mainly via television. However the short format of television information is not enough to facilitate a deeper understanding of the operations of such a complex organisation. The other source of information is the daily press, in which Croatians, however – as shown in point 1.3 of this study – do not have much confidence. It is interesting that nearly a third of respondents come by information about the EU through discussions with relatives, friends and colleagues which indicates their lack of other information resources.

That Croatians expect their country to be a full member of the EU soon is witnessed by the fact that they are most interested in information about the rights of EU citizens, about employment policy and health and social policy in the EU.

Conclusion

Since the opening of accession negotiations, Croatians again show increased interest in the EU. Hence, those who want to see Croatia in the future as a part of the EU stands at 74%. More than half, and sometimes a two-thirds, majority support greater political unification of the EU, the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty and continued enlargement to all pre-accession, candidate and possible candidate countries. Croatians are also more aware of their shortcomings in regard to knowledge about the EU and want more information about its activities. They are especially interested in the rights they will enjoy as EU citizens.