

EUROBAROMETER 65

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2006

NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CROATIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research of public opinion by the Standard Eurobarometer is conducted across Europe twice annually. This is the 65th consecutive (EB 65) and it was conducted between the 27th of March and 1st of May 2006 in all 25 Member States of the EU, in the two acceding countries, Bulgaria and Romania and the two candidate countries, Croatia and Turkey, as well as the northern part of Cyprus under Turkish administration. This is the fourth such study which has covered Croatia.

The Directorate General Communication of the European Commission (DG COMM) ordered the Standard Eurobarometer study and it was conducted by the consortium TNS Opinion & Social, consisting of a consortium created between TNS and EOS Gallup Europe. In Croatia, as in the previous two surveys, the data were collected by the Puls agency. The data were processed and the report was written by the senior correspondent of the newspaper Večernji list, Stojan de Prato.

The main topics covered by this study are:

1. **a) Climate of opinion:** satisfaction with life, expectations, development of personal situation in the past five years and its expected development in the next five years, the feeling of attachment ranging from village/town through region and country to Europe/the European Union.
2. **Citizens in their own country:** a) profiles and religion; b) two most important issues in the country, confidence in state institutions; c) situation of the national economy in comparison with the European economy, employment situation, environment and social welfare in the country, quality of personal life and personal financial situation, comparison with European standards.
3. **The Europeans and Europe:** a) Citizens' viewpoint of the EU – confidence in EU institutions, support for EU membership, benefits of membership, EU image, symbols of the EU: peace, economic welfare, etc., understanding how the EU works; b)

Knowledge about the EU - awareness of the EU institutions, personal knowledge, quiz on the EU, the role of the EU institutions; c) The role of the EU in everyday life – the role of the EU in the next 5 years (expectations and wishes), the role of the EU in the country, fears with regard to EU accession, expectations and the three main priorities of the EU.

4. **Citizens and media:** information sources, how often they use the TV, the radio, the newspapers, frequency of the EU coverage by the media, relation between positive and negative information on the EU in the media.

This study did not tackle EU enlargement matters because DG ENLARGEMENT has ordered a specific study on this subject.

The representative sample of citizens over 15 years of age on whom the research was carried out encompassed a total of 29,220 respondents – 25.193 living in the EU25, 4027 from candidate countries (of whom 1000 are living in Croatia) and 500 people living in the northern part of Cyprus. Participants were interviewed directly by researchers in their homes.

In the text, where the expression Croat or Croatian 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.

During the six months that have passed since the last two Standard Eurobarometer studies, Austria took over the presidency of the European Union from the United Kingdom. In that time, the Financial Perspective, the budgetary framework of the EU for the period from the beginning of 2007 until the end of 2013, was adopted. Furthermore, the agreement on the Services Directive has almost completed the task of the extension of the EU's internal market to the area of services. During this period, the intensive screening process continued providing an assessment of the harmonization of Croatian legislation with the European Union's '*acquis communautaire*'. In November 2005, the European Commission presented a proposal for the replacement of a network of bilateral conventions on the trade liberalization between south-eastern European countries by one regional agreement.

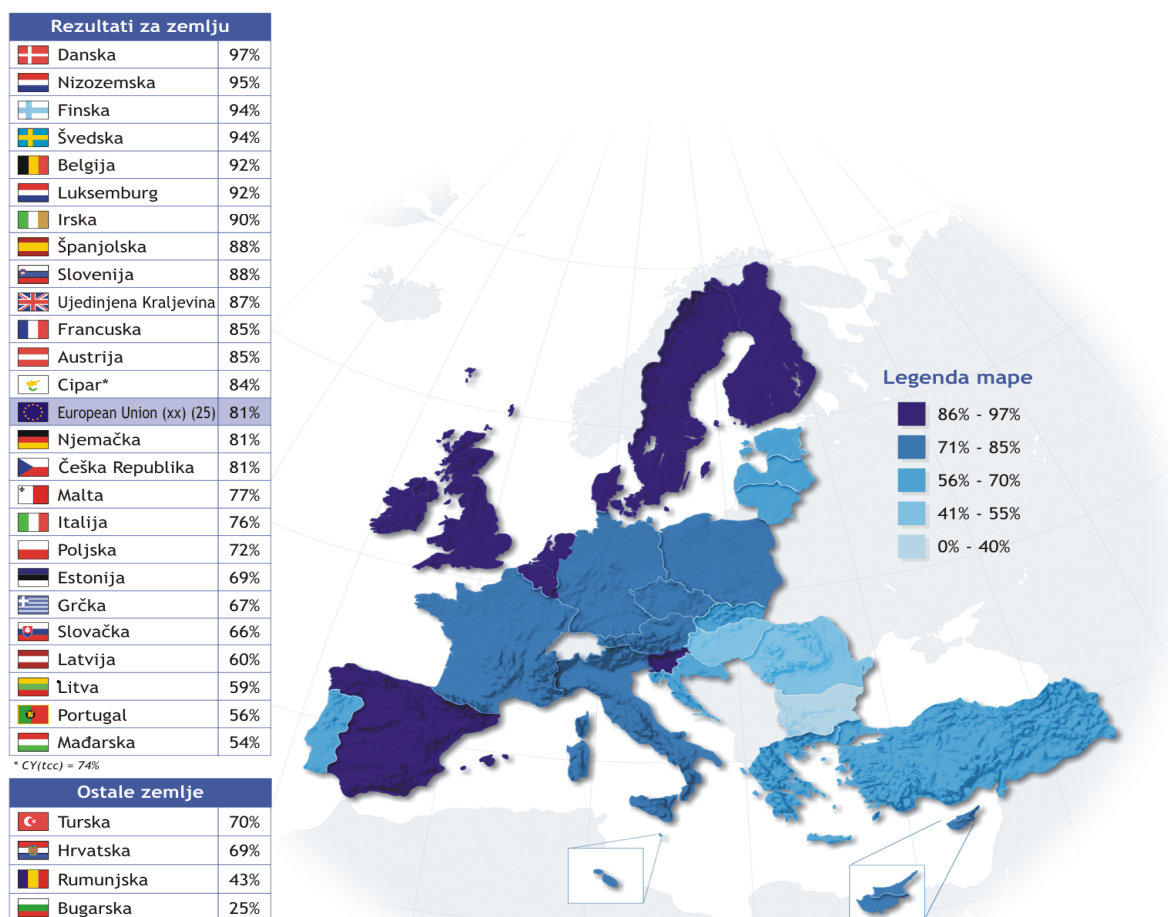
The confidence of the Croatian public in the European Union, which saw a decrease from 42% in the autumn of 2004 to only 28% in the spring of 2005, increased last autumn after the

opening of the accession negotiations to 35%. This upward trend has continued and it has so far reached 38%. However, more than half of the overall poll (51%) does not have confidence in the EU. The number of those in Croatia who believe that EU membership will be beneficial for our country is the same as six months ago and significantly higher than a year ago. In the last six months, the number of those who do not have a clear stance on specific questions on the EU has decreased and they are mostly equal in number with regard to positive and negative opinions. Also, there is an equal number of those who would like to see a larger or the same role of the EU in their everyday life in the next five years, whereas those who would like to see smaller role of the EU remain in the minority.

Pitanje: QA3. Sveukupno gledajući, jeste li svojim životom vrlo zadovoljni, prilično zadovoljni, ne naročito zadovoljni ili niste uopće zadovoljni?

Odgovori: Satisfied

1. Climate of opinion



Half a year ago, satisfaction with everyday life of the average Croat was very close to that of the average European citizen. However, now that distance is growing again because Croatian levels of satisfaction are, once more, falling. One reason could be that salaries in Croatia are growing more slowly than GDP. There is one percentage point fewer of those who expect a medium-term worsening of the economic situation in Croatia (37%) than half a year ago and one percentage point more of those who expect a better economic situation in their household (26%). The pessimism regarding unemployment in Croatia has once again become an overwhelming feeling. However, there is also optimism with regard to expected personal situation in the next five years, which is close to that in the EU25.

2. Citizens and their country

The average citizen of the European Union lives in a small or mid-sized city while the average Croat lives in a village. While the average Croat lives in his own house or flat, that is, he does not tend to change his residence, the average European citizen rents his home. Concerning movable property, the Croats are slightly poorer than Europeans overall. The greatest difference is seen with regard to owning a computer and home Internet access, where the Europeans are significantly better-off. In Croatia, 93 percent of respondents expressed their religious affiliation (in the EU25, the figure was 78%) but there are only 24 percent of practising believers (in the EU25, 17%). The number of atheists is equal to that in the EU25 (5%) but the number of agnostics is lower - 3 percent in Croatia and 14 percent in the EU25. Both Croats and EU25 citizens are principally worried about unemployment and crime, although in the EU25 the percentage of those who are worried is lower (49:62% for unemployment, 24:47% for crime). Trust in state institutions in Croatia is significantly lower than in the EU25. Trust in the European Union, at 38 percent, is significantly higher than in state institutions and it is growing gradually, although the number of those who do not have trust in the EU is still above the half of the total number (51%). The justice system has gained the trust of only 23 percent of Croatian people and the government only a quarter. Trust in

political parties, which are often seen as interest groups due to the frequent corruption affairs, is at a constant, low level of 11 percent.

The situation of the economy and employment in their respective countries is seen by both Europeans and Croats as bad, but in Croatia the percentage is catastrophically high. The Croats assess the social welfare situation in their country to be much worse than Europeans as a whole. While EU25 citizens are satisfied with their financial situation, Croats are dissatisfied. However, both give a positive evaluation of quality of their personal lives with a figure of over 50% and the Croats are even more positive than EU25 citizens in this respect. Both the Croat and EU25 polls record that 50 percent are satisfied with the environmental situation in their countries.

3. The Europeans and the EU

Croats' trust in the European Parliament and the European Commission has decreased, but trust in the Council of the EU has increased. The latter might be due to the opening of the negotiations with Croatia. Trust in the European Commission is lower. A contributing factor might be the mooted establishment of a single free trade area in south-eastern Europe, which raised some fears among the Croatian public that a renewal of Yugoslavia was being imposed. Lower confidence in the European Parliament might be linked to the debate on the enlargement and opposing stances of Euro-parliamentarians on that matter. The lack of confidence in the European Central Bank might be in relation to the expectation of price increases after the introduction of the Euro currency.

Do you think that the membership of your country in the EU is (or will be) good or bad for your country?

	EU 25	CRO
Good	55%	34%
Bad	13%	25%
Neither	28%	36%
Doesn't know	4%	4%

The positive opinion of the Croats about the EU and the positive expectations after accession prevail over the negative ones, which are still strong. Croatian respondents do not differ much with regard to the knowledge on the EU from their counterparts in the EU25. They even gave more accurate answers to some questions than the EU25 citizens. The proportion of those who would like to see the EU exerting greater role in their everyday lives and those who want the same role of the EU is equal in Croatia, whereas the number of those who wish to see that role decreased is significantly lower. This can be explained by the majority expectation of the positive role the EU would play in the fight against unemployment and crime and with regard to the economic situation in Croatia, which are cited as main priorities by the Croatian people. Insufficient information on the EU's policies in Croatia is due to the fact that the Croats, unlike the citizens of the EU25, are afraid that by acceding to the EU they will lose their national identity and culture.

Are you afraid of the loss of national identity and culture?

	EU 25	CRO
Afraid	39%	49%
Not afraid	56%	46%
Doesn't know	5%	5%

4. Citizens and the media

Like citizens in the EU25, the Croats, with a higher percentage, are mostly informed on the EU through the medium of television and the daily press. Both place radio in third place, while the fourth and the fifth positions in the EU25 and in Croatia were swapped. In the EU25, in fourth place is the Internet, which in Croatia is in fifth place, while fourth place was taken by conversations with friends and colleagues in Croatia.

Both Croatian and European respondents mostly believe that they receive enough information on the EU through the media. There is an equal number of those who believe that there is either too much or too little information on the EU on TV or in the press, while they would wish to hear more information from radio. However, the quality of information that the Croats obtain on the EU, which they are hearing during their negotiations, is questionable because

the format of television information is too short, while the Croatian press has been almost entirely transformed into tabloids and leaves little space for serious analysis and, therefore, there is no space for coverage of European matters. The Croats believe that all forms of the media portray the EU in too positive a light.

5. Conclusion

Croatian opinion about the European Union is still unstable and under the influence of everyday political developments and conflicting statements regarding the possibility of Croatia's accession. The way EU matters are reported in the media, which is sometimes in an emotional and sensationalist fashion, may have contributed to the frequent changes in the public's attitudes towards EU accession, as reflected in the opinion polls. In spite of this fact, the basic knowledge of the Croats on the EU is often no worse than the knowledge of EU25 citizens, although when it comes to the Union policies they are lagging behind. This latter group is characterized by its constant fear that within the EU they will lose their national and cultural identity, which is a matter not taken too seriously by the citizens of the EU25. The number of Croats who do not have an opinion or do not know the answer to specific matters relating to the EU is gradually falling and positive and negative opinions are more or less equally balanced.