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NATIONAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TURKEY

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Satisfaction with Life

The percentage of people in Turkey expressing general satisfaction with their lives is found to be 76% for spring 2007. Despite the ups and downs in the overall level of satisfaction with their lives, satisfaction among the Turkish public remains persistently below that of the EU.

Expectations for the future

The Turkish public is consistently more optimistic about the future 12 months on all financial and economic evaluations than the EU public. 44% in Turkey expects their lives to be better over the next 12 months compared with about 37% in the EU. Expectations concerning the future of the economy have been improving over the last two years.

Trust in institutions

As an overall trend, the level of trust in Turkish institutions is considerably higher than their counterparts in the EU member countries. The government in Turkey is trusted by 71% (63% in fall 2006) while the overall average for the EU member states is around 41% (30% in fall 2006). Similarly, the Parliament or the Turkish Grand National Assembly is trusted by a larger group in Turkey than is the case of EU citizens with regard to their respective national parliaments.

Trust in the EU, however, remains lower in Turkey (38%) than in EU Member States (57%). While trust in the EU is increasing in the EU Member States, it is falling in Turkey.

Evaluations of EU membership

In autumn 2006, the ratio of those stating that membership would be a “good thing” has stopped its continuous decline in Turkey since early 2004. In spring 2006, 44% (55% in autumn 2005) of the Turkish public indicated that membership of the EU would be a “good thing” while 25% (15% in autumn 2005) indicated the opposite. In autumn 2006, however, those who indicated that membership of the EU would be a “good thing” reached 54% which was close to its autumn 2005 level. In spring 2007, this group has shrunk to 52%.

Nevertheless, 62% (63% in autumn 2006) of the Turkish public indicated that becoming a member of the EU would be an “advantage” for Turkey.

Image of the EU

The overall “image of the EU” is positive for 53% (55% in autumn 2006) of the Turkish public. While positive evaluations are on the rise in the EU, they have fallen slightly in Turkey.

The country’s most important problems

When asked to indicate the two most important problems faced by the country, differences exist between Turkey and the EU Member States. According to Turkish public opinion, the two foremost problems are unemployment and terrorism, followed, with a large gap, by economic conditions, crime, inflation and education. While the top priority has not changed since last year, it seems that terrorism has also fallen slightly in importance. However, over the last two years, the salience of terrorism has been constantly rising in the minds of the public. A similar rise is also observed in the salience of crime.

EU Decision Mechanisms

The Turkish public tends to support the view that “every European decision is the subject of negotiations in which the opinions of the national government of all Member States are taken into account” at a lower rate than citizens in the EU Member States (15 percentage points lower). There is no country where support for this view is lower.

The EU and the use of sovereignty rights

Among the 18 different policy areas, in only 4 is the level of support higher for decisions taken jointly within the EU. These four areas are health and social welfare, scientific and technological research, support for regions facing economic difficulties and the economy. There are slight increases in the level of support for decisions taken jointly within the EU in the areas of fighting crime, taxation, defence and foreign affairs, pensions and protecting the environment.

Evaluations of the EU Constitution and Integration

Support for European Monetary Union, common foreign policy, defence and security policy are all higher in the EU Member States than in Turkey. While support in the EU is rising for these policy areas, it is falling in Turkey. Similarly, support for a constitution of the EU reached 66% in the Member States while in Turkey it remains around 42%.

Future of Europe

Those who are optimistic for the future of the EU form a group of 52% in Turkey, while in the EU Member States this group is 69%. Similarly, evaluations concerning the EU in 50 years from now are also relatively more pessimistic in Turkey than in the Member States.

Common foreign policy

Turkish public opinion follows similar supportive patterns to those of the Member States on issues concerning the necessity of having an EU foreign minister, independence from the US foreign policy and a common immigration policy.

Awareness of the EU flag

Evaluations of the EU flag in Turkey are considerably lower than in the Member States. Only 20% in Turkey identify with this flag. 31% support the view that this flag should be seen on all public buildings next to the national flag, while in the EU this group comprises 61%. In Turkey, only 46% support the view that “this flag stands for something good”, while in the Member States this group is as large as 78%.

In Turkey, the most important issue seen to create a feeling of community among the EU citizens is religion, firstly, while, in the EU Member States, culture and economy come first.

Priority issues that the EU should address in order to strengthen integration are different in the EU Member States than in Turkey. For instance, in the EU, environmental issues and the fight against crime dominate the list, while in Turkey these issues are secondary to religion and history.

EU and evaluations of globalization

The meaning of globalisation in Turkey is primarily one that makes citizens think of foreign direct investments, while, in the Member States, it primarily evokes thoughts of the relocation of some companies to countries where labour is cheaper and where there are more opportunities for companies in terms of new outlets.

Within the context of globalisation, sensitivity to environmental issues in Turkey is somewhat lower than that seen in the EU Member States. However, it is not possible to claim that Turkish public is insensitive to these issues as well.