



Standard Eurobarometer



European
Commission

EUROBAROMETER 68

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

AUTUMN 2007

NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CROATIA

Standard Eurobarometer 68 / Autumn 2007. – TNS Opinion & Social

This survey was requested and coordinated by Directorate-General for Communication.

This report was produced for the European Commission's Delegation in Croatia

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..

Introduction

The public opinion survey of Standard Eurobarometer is performed twice a year. Its 68th edition (EB 68) was performed between September 22 and November 3, 2007 in all 27 EU member states, in two candidate countries currently in negotiations (Croatia and Turkey), for the first time in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, that has candidate status but the date for beginning of negotiations has not been set yet, and in the part of Cyprus under Turkish administration. EB 68 is the seventh Standard Eurobarometer survey that includes Croatia.

In the past six month period between the last two Standard Eurobarometer surveys, Portugal has succeeded Germany at the EU helm, and drafted the mandate for the new so-called Reform Treaty, that was entrusted to it at the EU Summit held in June in Brussels. At the informal summit held in Lisbon in October, the heads of state or government of the EU 27 adopted the text. They decided to sign the text, dubbed Lisbon Treaty, in Lisbon on December 13. After it is ratified, the new treaty should replace the currently valid Nice Treaty in 2009.

Between the previous and this Eurobarometer, Croatia opened a further six chapters in negotiations with the EU in the last days of Germany's presidency: *Right of establishment and freedom to provide services, Company law, Financial services, Information society and media, Statistics, and Financial control*. During the survey in the first half of October, a further two were opened: *Consumer and health protection, and External relations*. From a total of 35 chapters of European acquis communautaire – 33 of which are negotiated, and the legislation from the remaining two is adopted automatically – Croatia has, until the completion of this survey, opened a total of 14 chapters, and closed negotiations for two of them – *Science and Research, and Education and culture*.

The field of internal politics was marked by the pre-election campaigns for parliamentary elections, in which all the parliamentary parties represented Croatia's European orientation, while Euroscepticism was predominant only in a part of smaller parties from the margins of the Croatian political scene.

A Standard Eurobarometer survey was commissioned by the EC's Directorate General for Communications, and performed by TNS Opinion & Social consortium,

consisting of Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe. In Croatia, the data was collected by Puls agency, while the reporter of Večernji list from Brussels, Stojan de Prato, processed it and wrote the report.

The representative sample of citizens older than 15 on which the survey was performed, included a total of 30.281 respondents – 26.768 citizens of 27 EU member states, 1.000 Croats, 1.004 Turks, 1.009 citizens from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and 500 citizens of Cyprus under Turkish administration. The respondents were interviewed in their homes by the interviewers.

When the text uses the expression Croat, we don't mean ethnic affiliation, but nationality. The term "European" means respondents from one of the EU states.

1. Opinion climate

Croats' satisfaction with their life has decreased between the past two Eurobarometer surveys by two percentage points, to 70%, while among the EU citizens it stagnates at 80%, meaning that the Croatian respondents are ten points below the European average. A large majority of Croats find the situation in Croatia to be poor in terms of employment (88 %), the economy (80%) and social welfare (70%) and an overall majority (51%) consider the state of the environment to be poor.

In regard to short term expectations, optimism in Croatia has slightly increased – an improvement of the economic status of the country is currently expected by 24% of Croatian citizens, compared to 19 % six months ago; 30% hope to improve the economic situation in their own household (three percentage points more); 25% hope the employment situation will improve (six points more); a quarter expect to have a better economic situation in the EU (6 percentage points higher); better status of the EU economy is also expected by a quarter (three points more); but a sense of resignation predominates. However, in regard to the situation of personal employment, with 2 % of optimists, Croats are, by one percentage point, greater pessimists than six months previously, and the number of optimists decreased by three points to 31%, in regard to short-term expectations for personal life in general.

The two most important issues their country is facing, according to Croatian respondents, are, again, unemployment (55%) and crime (51%), and the percentage of those concerned in Croatia is double the European average. However, concern regarding crime in Croatia in the past six months has increased by one point, and concern in regard to unemployment is constantly on the decrease with each new survey, and, in the past six months, it has decreased by as much as seven points. Concern over inflation is also on the decrease, moving from a ranking of 11 to 13, and pensions, from a ranking of 17 to 19.

Confidence in institutions, both domestic and European, has increased slightly in Croatia. Confidence in European institutions is significantly higher –39% in the European Commission (+3), 40% in the European Parliament (+1), and 41% in the EU Council (+3) – than in the Croatian Government (20%, +2) or the Croatian Parliament (20%, +1). At the same time, however, the confidence of Croats in the EU decreased somewhat (32%, -3). Croatian confidence in political parties is negligible (8%), and as much as 79% of them do not trust the Croatian justice system. The highest degree of trust found in Croatia is in the military (59%), followed by religious institutions (55%) and consumer associations (54%).

A relative majority of Croatian respondents believe that affairs in Croatia are going in the wrong direction (43%), and in the right direction in the EU (40%).

2. Opinions on the EU

In the past six months, the number of Croatian respondents who see the EU positively has increased by four percentage points to 34%, significantly higher than the number of those who have a negative perception (27%), which decreased by three points. The “don’t know” in Croatia are, however, still predominant (37%), although one point less than in the previous survey. The percentage of EU27 citizens who see the EU positively decreased, on average, by three points, now only equivalent to a relative and not an overall majority (49%).

The number of Croats who see membership of the EU as good for their country has increased by six percentage points compared to six months ago (35%), one point more

than among the Europeans (58%). The number of those who see membership of the EU as bad for their country is now three points lower (25%), and two points lower in the EU (13%). The number of Croatian respondents who expect Croatia to reap benefits from membership of the EU is now four points higher than six months ago (47%), while the number of those who expect no benefits has decreased by the same number of points (44%). The proportions of EU citizens who think that their country benefit from EU membership, and also of those who do not see this benefit, have both decreased by one point compared to six months ago (58% and 29% respectively).

3. What kind of EU?

Croats do not differ much from the EU 27 average in regard to what kind of EU they want. The majority of both support common European policies, although that support has in the past six months decreased slightly, and the number of “don’t knows” has increased. Two-thirds of Croats and more than three-fifths of Europeans want the EU to have a common currency - the Euro; even more than both want a common foreign policy. Common defence and security policy is desired by three-quarters of respondents on both sides; the number of supporters in Croatia is slightly lower than in the EU and has decreased since spring.

The continuation of EU enlargement is losing support in both the EU and Croatia, but in Croatia it is supported by two-thirds, and in the EU, on average, by less than half of respondents. However, the EU, on average, has more supporters than those opposed to enlargement, but the number of “don’t knows” has increased on both sides. Among the EU members, Poland shows by far the greatest support for continuing the process of enlargement (76%); followed by Lithuania (67%), Slovenia (66%), Hungary and Romania (64%), Czech Republic (62%), Malta (61%), Spain and Slovakia (59%), Cyprus (57%), Estonia and Bulgaria (55%), Sweden (54%), Greece (53%) and Latvia (52%). The continuation of EU enlargement is supported by a relative majority of respondents in Denmark (49%), Portugal and Netherlands (48%), Ireland (45%) and Italy (43%). Those opposed to EU enlargement outnumber those in favour in Belgium (47:49%), Finland (43:52%), United Kingdom (36:49%), France (32:59%), Germany

(28:66%), Luxembourg (25:65%) and the least inclined towards further EU enlargement, Austria (24:67%).

While on the increase in the EU, the number of respondents in Croatia who wish the policies to be managed on a common, national and European level is decreasing. The overall majority of Croats would thus only like the fight against terrorism, immigration policy, science and research and support to underdeveloped regions to be managed at Community level; the relative majority of Croatian respondents would like energy policy to be managed at this level, while they would keep everything else under the authority of national governments.

The average EU citizen, on the other hand, would only leave taxation, the fight against unemployment, the education system, pensions, health and social care under national authority.

4. Future of European integration

The future of European integration is viewed with optimism by four percentage points more Croats than six months ago (57%), while the number of optimists decreased by three points (66%). However, a significant majority of Croats and Europeans are optimistic in regard to the future of the EU.

For both Croatian and European respondents, the key issue for strengthening the EU is the fight against crime. While Croats put social issues in second place and solidarity with underdeveloped regions in third, the second most important issue for Europeans concerns the environment, while immigration is third.

5. Quality of information

As much as 77% of Croatian and 78% of European respondents consider themselves to be poorly informed about the EU's political affairs. Trust in the media is decreasing in both Croatia and the EU. However, the respondents on both sides mostly trust the

radio and television, but not the press. More than a third of European and Croatian respondents would like more information on the EU.

6. Profiles

Croats are extremely devoted to the place where they live (92%), as well as their country (92%), although this rate has decreased compared to six months ago by two (place), and three (country) points. The fact that as much as 92% of them own or pay a mortgage for their own living space, explains the low level of labour mobility. 30% of Croatian respondents are devoted to the EU, two points lower than six months ago. In terms of political affiliation, Croats mostly place themselves in the centre (32%) which is five points lower than six months ago. In second place, with a steady 25%, are those on the left, and in last place (21%) is the right, whose number increased by 2 percentage points since last spring. As much as 15% of Croats, two points more than last spring, do not know where they belong politically, and 7%, one point more than six months ago, refuse to state their political affiliation.

The percentage of Croats owning a computer has risen slightly since last spring (51%, +1), as well as those with Internet access from home (43%, +2), but both percentages are still significantly below the EU average. The difference compared to neighbouring Slovenia, where 70% of respondents own a computer, and 61% are connected to the internet from home, is even more prominent, but, in this category, Croatia is ahead of all the new member states except Estonia (61%) and the Czech Republic (45%) which has overtaken Croatia since last spring. Croatia is also ahead of older member states Italy and Spain (38%), Portugal (33%), and Greece (27%).

Conclusion

The number of Croats who see the EU positively is on the increase and has surpassed the level of one-third of respondents, so they now hold a significant lead over those who see it negatively. The “don’t know”, however, are still predominant.

The Croatian respondents are still fairly confused in terms of what EU membership will bring them. Trust in the EU, as well as in the European Central Bank, is decreasing, but trust in the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Council is on the increase. Trust in the EU and central European institutions remains on a level that is significantly higher than that in the national Government and Parliament.

There are twice as many Croats who believe that things are going well in the EU than those who think things are going badly, while the opposite is true in Croatia itself. Although concern among Croats over unemployment is decreasing with each new survey, it is still the number one issue on the list. In second place is crime, with the reverse trend – it worries ever more respondents with each new survey. Concern over the economic situation in the country is decreasing, while worries over pensions and inflation are increasing.

Slightly less than a third of Croats see the EU positively, while those who “don’t know” predominate. The answers to the question as to whether Croatian membership of the EU is good or bad are almost the same, although the relative majority of Croats expect that membership will bring benefits to their country.

Croats do not differ much from the EU 27 average in terms of what kind of EU they want. Both express overall support of the common European policies, although this has decreased a little in the past six months, while the number of “don’t know” has increased. However, when asked directly, the overall majority of Croats would only prefer central management of the fight against terrorism, immigration policy, science and research, and support to underdeveloped regions, while the relative majority would prefer energy policy to be managed on that level as well. They would keep everything else under the authority of national governments.

The most Euro-optimistic region in Croatia is, again, Lika and Banovina, where the number of Euro-optimists continued to grow strongly, while Euroscepticism is

predominant only in Istria, Rijeka and Gorski kotar. Among the student population, the number of those who find membership of the EU to be good for Croatia has risen from 27 to as much as 41%, while those who think the opposite has decreased from 24 to 16%.

More than three-quarters of Croatian respondents consider themselves to be poorly informed about the EU, making them very similar to EU citizens. More than a third of them would prefer more information on the EU in the media.