

EUROBAROMETER 70

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
TURKEY

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Satisfaction with life

The percentage of people expressing general satisfaction with their lives fell to 70% in autumn 2007 and went down further to 59% in spring 2008 with 38% asserting that they are not satisfied with their lives. In autumn 2008, satisfaction with life rebounded from that low level by 4 percentage points to 63%.

Expectations for the future

For the last couple of EB surveys, the Turkish public was consistently more optimistic about the future 12 months on all financial and economic evaluations than the EU public. As of spring 2008, this trend of optimism had changed for the worse. In autumn 2008, only 24% (24% in the EU) expressed some optimism about their lives in the future.

Concerning developments in the economy, only 15% in Turkey (15% in the EU) had optimistic expectations.

Expectations concerning job and work conditions improved slightly. In Turkey, the figure for those holding this view grew to 66% in spring 2008, but in the autumn it receded to 56%.

Comparative evaluation country conditions

When asked about conditions in Turkey compared to the EU average, we see that Turkish public opinion is not optimistic. For instance, only about 22% of Turks think that economic conditions in Turkey are better than the EU average while 36% of EU27 citizens think so. Similar evaluations are observed for cost of living, energy prices and general quality of life.

When asked whether people tended to agree or to disagree with the statement that the children who live in their country would have a better life if they emigrated to another country, the numbers of those who agreed with this statement were higher in Turkey (37%) than in EU member countries. However, it was noticeable that 41% in Turkey disagreed with this statement.

Direction in which the country is going

When asked whether, in general, things are going in the right or in the wrong direction, in spring 2008, 72% said that things were not going in the right direction in Turkey. In autumn 2008, this group had shrunk to 64%. Similar, but smaller, changes were also observed in the EU countries.

Trust in institutions

Political institutions are comparatively more trusted in Turkey than in the EU member states. However, Turks trust in the national government, the Parliament or the Turkish Grand National Assembly and political parties are all lower than in autumn 2007. Trust in the courts and the judicial system remains about 8 percentage points higher than in the EU member states at 48%. Trust in municipalities in Turkey – at 50% - is 13 percentage points lower than in EU member countries.

Trust in the EU, however, remains lower in Turkey (27%) than in EU Member States (47%).

The country's most important problems

When asked to cite the two most important problems faced by the country, differences were observed between Turkey and the EU Member States. According to Turkish public opinion, terrorism, with 68%, was by far the most important problem on the agenda while for the EU

member countries figure is only 5%. Unemployment and economic conditions follow terrorism in importance in the eyes of the public in Turkey. In the EU countries, the salience of economic problems is on the rise as well. Interestingly, issues that do not receive much mention in Turkey, such as pensions, housing, immigration, healthcare and the education system, are all significant issues in the EU member countries.

Evaluations of EU membership

In autumn 2008, the ratio of those stating that membership would be a “good thing” has fallen further to 42% from 49% in spring 2008. Nevertheless, 48% (58% in spring 2008) of the Turkish public indicated that becoming a member of the EU would benefit Turkey.

Image of the EU

The overall “image of the EU” is positive for only 41% (49% in spring 2008) of the Turkish public and thus has fallen below its level in spring 2005.

For Turks, the EU means, first and foremost, economic welfare, whereas, in the EU member states, it means, above all, freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU.

General Awareness about the institutional structure of the EU

At just the level of name recognition about 60% and above of the Turkish public has heard the names of various key institutions of the EU. However, this level of awareness is well below those of the EU member states. Compared to spring 2008 name recognition of all institutions except the European Central Bank has fallen by about 4-5 percentage points. When asked to what extent these institutions play a role in the EU affairs we observe that a significantly lower level in Turkey thinks that they are important in EU affairs.

When a number of objective questions concerning the level of knowledge about the EU are asked we observe that only about half the respondents could answer these questions and only about 17% of the total could provide a correct answer. This is less than 50% of the level of objective knowledge about the EU in member states.

Trust in European institutions

Low levels of subjective as well as objective knowledge and a low level of importance attributed to EU institutions are also coupled with a low level of trust in EU institutions. For all EU institutions, Turkey’s trust levels are about half those of the EU member states. There is no member country with levels lower than those in Turkey and these levels have fallen compared with spring 2008.

Future of Europe and enlargement

Support for EU enlargement is 44% among the Member States and is 45% in Turkey. However, compared with spring 2008, this level has also dropped.

Views on the EU

In both Turkey and the EU member states, there seems little support among citizens that their views count in the EU. In comparison, a higher percentage of people believe that their views count in their own country. However, in Turkey more people seem to believe that their views count in the EU than in their own country.

In both Turkey and the EU member states, people seem unable to understand how the EU works. However, in Turkey 26% of the poll does not even make a judgment about this question.

EU and evaluations of globalisation

Evaluations of globalisation as a threat increased by about 3 percentage points in Turkey compared to spring 2008. A lower percentage gave no response to this question but the group that sees globalisation as an opportunity also increased by 10 percentage points.

Turks see the European Union neither as a help to protect them from the negative effects of globalisation nor as a means to enable them to better benefit from its positive effects. Positive evaluations in both cases are much higher in the EU member countries.