



Standard Eurobarometer



European
Commission

EUROBAROMETER 71

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

SPRING 2009

NATIONAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Standard Eurobarometer 71 / Spring 2009 – TNS Opinion & Social

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1. State of Opinion

The assessment of the present situation by respondents was definitely influenced the most by the current financial and economic crisis, either due to personal experiences or through information presented in the media. A majority, 61% of Slovaks, considers the situation of the European economy to be rather bad or very bad. Nevertheless, Slovaks can be considered to be optimists because the average for the EU as a whole holding the same opinion is 68%. Respondents assessed the situation of the national economy even more negatively: 79% of respondents in Slovakia and 78% of respondents in the EU27 said that the situation of the national economy is rather bad or very bad. These figures provide a very bleak picture of the assessment of the current situation of the economic situation in the countries of the European Union. This is even more striking when the trends over the last years are examined. While between spring 2005 and autumn 2008, a positive assessment of the situation of the European economy prevailed in Slovakia, at the beginning of the summer 2009, particularly negative assessments prevailed.

The same dramatic drop can be observed in respondents' assessment of the employment situation in Slovakia. While, in autumn 2008, 33% of Slovak citizens considered the employment situation in Slovakia to be very good or rather good, in summer 2009, this figure was only 9%. 88% of Slovak citizens considered the employment situation in Slovakia to be rather bad or very bad. On the other hand, the assessment of the personal job situation is not so dramatic, although, in this case, a decrease can be observed, too. While, in the autumn 2008, 23% of Slovaks said their personal job situation was rather bad or very bad, in summer 2009, 29% of Slovak citizens expressed this opinion.

Slovaks are not great optimists as far as their expectations for the next twelve months are concerned. The proportion of Slovak citizens who expect an improvement in the economic situation in Slovakia has decreased from 19% in autumn 2008 to 14% in summer 2009 and, at the same time, the number of citizens who expect a worsening of the situation has increased from 40% to 48%. Unlike in the case of their assessment of the current situation, where a dramatic decrease in the positive assessment occurred within the few months after the period of a few years of relative stability or very small fluctuations of the public opinion, in the case of expectations for the next twelve months, a gradual fall in optimism and a growth in pessimism since spring 2007 can be observed. This means that this change is not necessarily only related to the financial and economic crisis, but has additional causes. As far as expectations for the next twelve months are concerned, Slovaks are less optimistic than the European Union average. While, in the EU27, only one third of citizens expects the worsening of the economic situation in their country, in Slovakia, it is almost a half.

In Slovakia, the most pessimistic expectations relate to the employment situation in the next twelve months. In this case, the greatest increase, of 23 points, in the proportion of people expecting the situation to worsen is observed. While, in autumn 2008, only one third of Slovaks expected the worsening of the employment situation in Slovakia, in summer 2009, it was more than half of Slovak citizens. In this regard, Slovaks are also more pessimistic than citizens of the European Union on average. A deterioration in the employment situation in their country is expected by 44% of EU27 citizens in comparison to 56% of Slovaks. Surprisingly, Slovak citizens are significantly less pessimistic as far as their personal job situation is concerned. However, also in this regard, Slovaks are more pessimistic than the EU27 average. A worsening of their personal job situation is expected by 19% of Slovak citizens compared with 10% of EU27 citizens. Nevertheless, a majority of Slovak and EU27 citizens does not expect any change in the next twelve months concerning their personal job situation.

According to Slovak citizens, the two most important problems Slovakia is currently facing are unemployment and the economic situation. Unemployment is considered to be the most important problem in their country by 60% of Slovaks and the economic situation is considered to be the most important problem by 52%. These two problems predominate over the other problems. The trends concerning this question are noteworthy. After a two and half

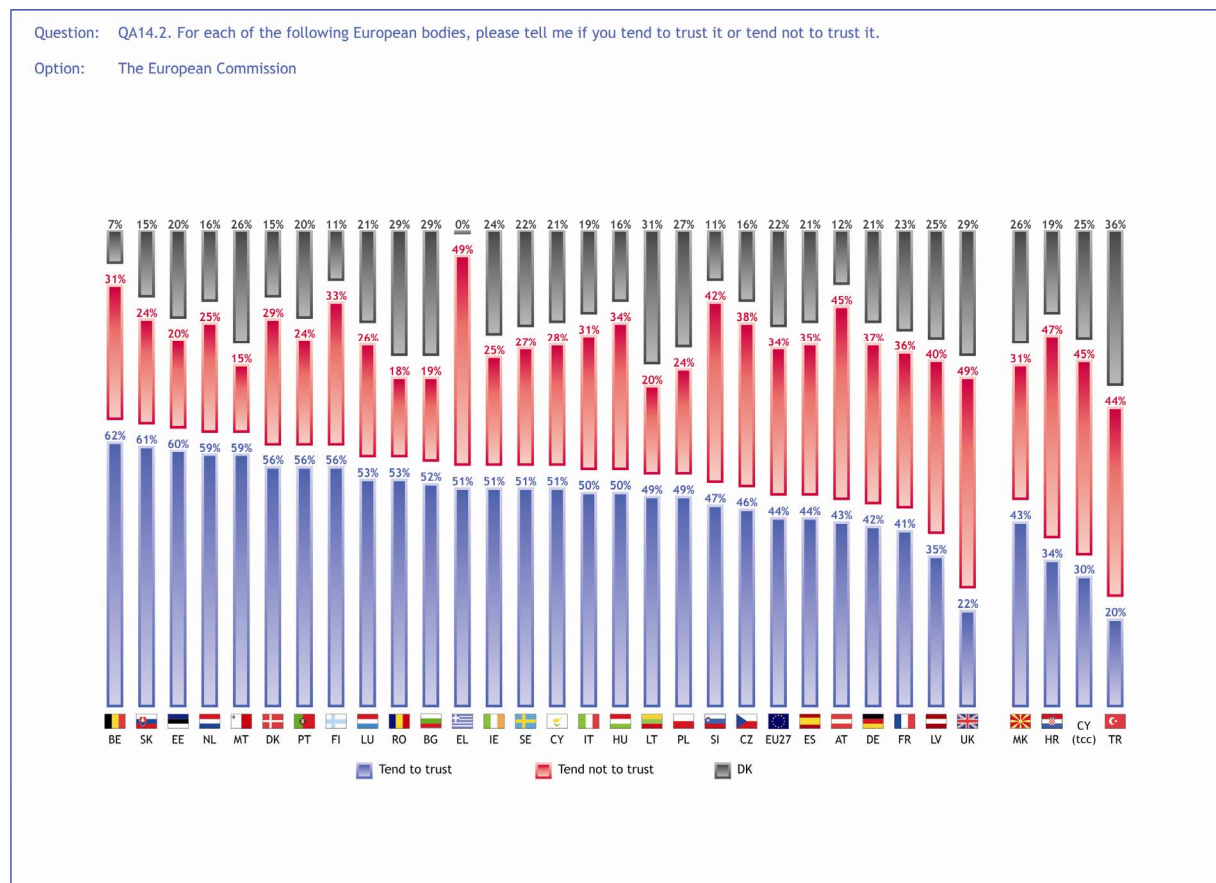
year period, over which the proportion of Slovak citizens who thought that unemployment was the most important problem faced by Slovakia had decreased from 61% to 26%, the trend has reversed completely, within the space of a few months, and returned to the spring 2006 level.

Changes in public opinion concerning rising prices/inflation moved in the opposite direction. Between spring 2007 and autumn 2008, the proportion of Slovaks who considered rising prices/inflation to be one the two most important problems faced by their country rose from 19% to 46%. However, in summer 2009, the figure has dropped to 21%. The introduction of the euro from 1 January 2009 has probably contributed to this fall, especially since citizens' fears concerning price increases following the introduction of the euro have not materialised.

Respondents also answered a similar question which related to the two most important problems they are facing personally. In this case, rising prices/inflation topped the ranking with 41% of Slovak respondents selecting this problem, followed by the economic situation (33%) and the health care system (19%). Unemployment was ranked fourth with 17% of respondents selecting it as one of two most important issues they are facing personally.

2. Trust

A majority of Slovaks does not trust national institutions. In this regard, they do not differ significantly from the EU27 average. The levels of trust in the national government and the national parliament are even little bit higher than the EU27 average. While, in the EU27, 35% of citizens trust the national parliament, in Slovakia the figure is 37%. While, in the EU27, 34% of citizens trust the national government, in Slovakia the figure is 40%. However, the greatest difference between Slovakia and the EU27 is in regard to the level of trust in the justice / legal system. While, in the EU27, almost half of the citizens (48%) trust their national justice / legal system, in Slovakia the figure is less than one third (30%).

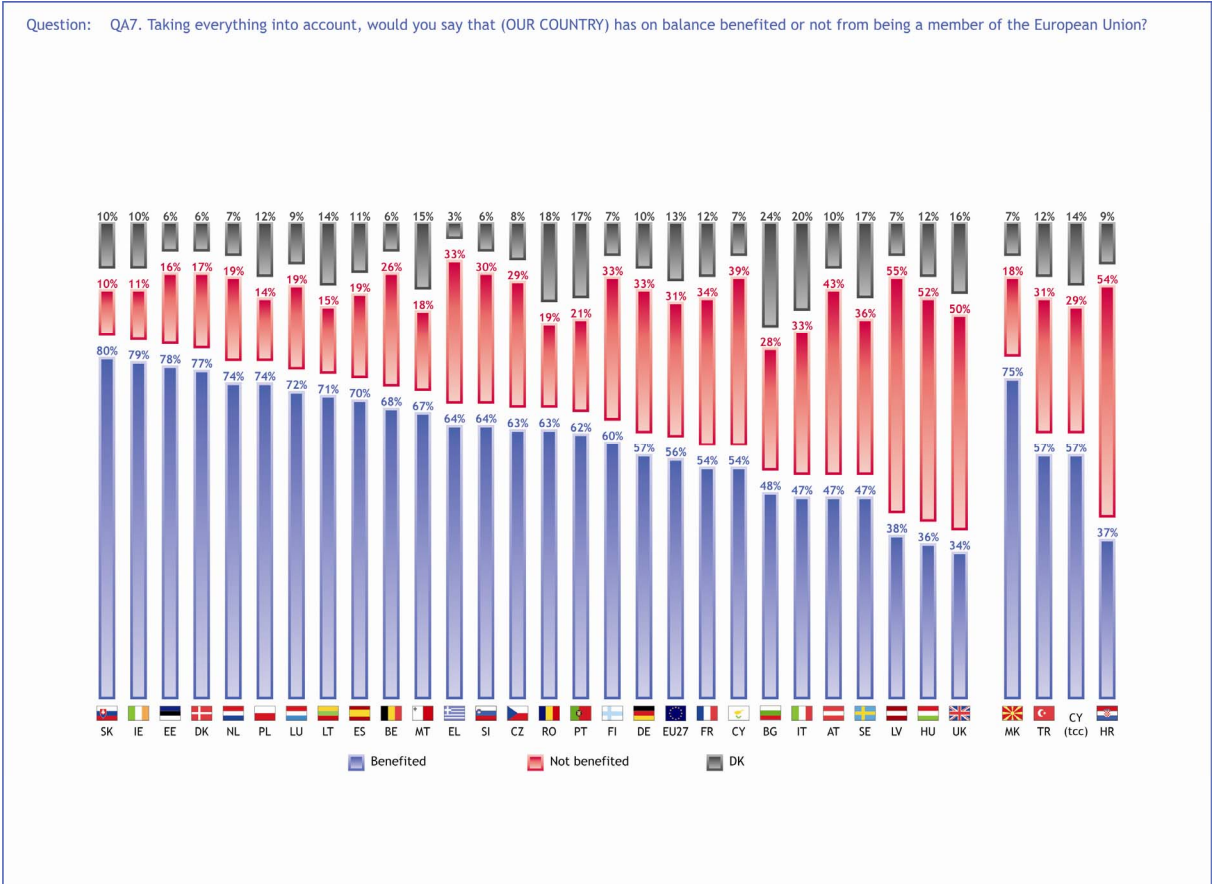


In contrast with the prevailing distrust of national institutions, in Slovakia, a high level of trust in the EU and its institutions prevails. 65% of Slovak citizens trust the European Union, which places Slovakia second in the ranking (together with Romania), just behind Estonia (68%) and ahead of Bulgaria (63%). The European Parliament remains the institution with the highest level of Slovaks' trust. 67% of Slovaks trust the EP, which is 19 points above the EU27 average. Slovakia is therefore the country with the highest level of trust in the EP among all 27 EU member states, just ahead of Belgium (65%) and Malta (64%). The institution with the second highest level of Slovaks' trust is European Commission. 61% of Slovaks trust the EC, which is 17 points above the EU27 average. Thus, as far as trust in the EC is concerned, Slovakia is ranked second among the EU member states just behind Belgium (62%) and ahead of Estonia (60%).

3. Views on the European Union

Slovakia's EU membership is considered to be a good thing by 66% of its citizens, a figure that is 13 points above the EU27 average. At the same time, it is the highest percentage since Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004. This increase could be also influenced by the economic and financial crisis, because economic experts, especially in the media, often mentioned EU membership would be one of the guarantees that the crisis would not have such a devastating impact because Slovakia would be a part of the EU's single market.

The vast majority of Slovaks (80%), a figure that is 24 points above the EU27 average, thinks that Slovakia has benefited from being a member of the European Union. Thus, Slovakia is at the top of the ranking, followed by Ireland (79%) and Estonia (78%).



In the summer 2009, the number of Slovaks who think that their country has benefited from being a member of the European Union has achieved a new high point since Slovakia joined the EU. This moderate increase could also be affected by the world financial and economic crisis and the perception of the European Union as a factor minimising the negative impacts of the crisis on our country. At the same time, since Slovakia has joined eurozone, the number of Slovaks who think we are economically more stable because of the EU has increased from 63% (autumn 2008) to 68% (summer 2009). Slovak opinion is more positive than that of EU citizens as a whole whether from within or outside the eurozone. Within the eurozone, only 49% of citizens think that their country is economically more stable because of the adoption of the euro and, outside the eurozone, only 43% of citizens think that their country is economically more stable because of EU membership.

For the majority of Slovaks, the European Union means freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU. 61% of Slovaks have chosen this answer, a figure that is 19 points above the EU27 average. For more than half of Slovaks, the EU also means the euro. For Slovaks, more than for EU27 citizens, the European Union also means economic prosperity. This option has been selected by 29% of Slovak respondents, a figure that is 13 points above the EU27 average.

From the point of view of trends, since spring 2007, a fall from 73% to 61% in the proportion of Slovaks for whom the European Union means freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU has been observed. In the same period, the number of those for whom the EU means economic prosperity has also fallen from 40% to 29%. Because there has been a continuous decrease over a longer time period, it is not possible to attribute it to the current financial and economic crisis alone.

However, the increase in the number of Slovak citizens for whom the European Union means unemployment is related to the financial and economic crisis. The increase in the number of Slovaks for whom the EU means the euro is not necessarily connected to the financial and economic crisis, insofar as this trend has been observed since spring 2007. Moreover, the Eurobarometer survey took place less than a half year after the introduction of the euro, which has a more important influence on perceptions of the euro than the current crisis.

Slovaks, in comparison to the European average, tend more to believe that they do understand how the European Union works. While, in the EU27, there are more people who think they do not understand how the EU works (48%) than those who think they do (44%), in Slovakia there are more of those who think they understand how the EU works (48%) than those who do not think so (43%).

In spite of the fact that, in Slovakia, there are proportionally more citizens who think that their country's EU membership is a good thing (66%) than the EU27 average (53%), significantly fewer Slovaks think that their voice or the voice of their country counts in the EU. Half of Slovaks think that the voice of their country counts in the EU while, in the EU27, 61% of citizens hold such an opinion. Only 31% of Slovaks think that their voice counts in the EU, while, in the EU27 as a whole, the figure is 38%. In spite of this, a majority of Slovaks (56%) think that the interests of their country are well taken into account in the EU while, in the EU27, it is 44% of citizens. Thus we can observe an interesting phenomenon. While in the EU27, 61% think that the voice of their country counts in the European Union, only 44% of EU27 citizens think that the interests of their country are well taken into account. On the other hand, while, in Slovakia, only 50% of citizens think that the voice of their country counts in the EU, 56% think that the interests of their country are well taken into account. It would appear that Slovaks believe that their country's in the EU are advocated better by someone other than by Slovakia's elected representatives.

Citizens of the Slovak Republic, like EU27 citizens, are in favour of more decision-making taking place at a European level. In all thirteen decision-making areas that were selected in the Eurobarometer survey, the vast majority of respondents in Slovakia, as well as in the EU27, want more decisions be made at European level and only a minority preferred less decision-making at European level or expressed the opinion that no change is needed.

4. European Union and Globalisation

Slovak citizens think that economic power and political influence are most important in determining a country's or group of countries' overall power and influence in the world. These aspects are ranked ahead of military strength and cultural influence. Slovak opinion in this area does not differ significantly from the EU27 average. Economic power and political influence, according to Slovaks, best characterize the European Union. It could therefore be suggested that Slovaks (as well as EU27 citizens) perceive the EU as a powerful global player.

In spite of the global financial and economic crisis, the majority of Slovaks (52%, 10 points above the EU27 average) think that globalization represents a good opportunity for Slovak companies thanks to the opening-up of markets. Only one third (33%, 9 points below the EU27 average) of Slovak citizens think that globalization represents a threat to employment and companies in Slovakia. Slovak opinion on these questions has not changed significantly over the last two years despite the crisis.

The majority of Slovaks (57%) totally agree or tend to agree with the statement that the European Union helps to protect European citizens from the negative effects of globalization. In this sense, Slovaks trust the EU more than European citizens on average, because the EU27 figure is only 47% holding this opinion. Slovak trust is also above the European average insofar as they believe the European Union enables European citizens to better benefit from the positive effects of globalization. 63% of Slovak citizens share this opinion, a figure that is 9 points above the EU27 average.

As far as a solution to the crisis is concerned, Slovak citizens also trust most in the European Union. 31% of Slovak citizens (10 points above the EU27 average) consider the EU to be the actor which is best able to take effective action against the effects of the financial and economic crisis. Slovaks also believe that the European Union has sufficient power and tools to defend its economic interests in the global economy more than the EU27 average. 78% of Slovaks totally agree or tend to agree with this opinion, a figure which is 12 points above the European average.

5. Foreign Policy of the European Union and Human Rights in the World

The Standard Eurobarometer survey also dealt with the very specific topic of the European Union's foreign policy and the question of human rights in the world. The survey was carried out in June, at the time when the question of the observation of human rights in some parts of the world was also a topical issue on the Slovak domestic political scene, the comparison of the opinion of the Slovak population with the opinion of the citizens of the whole European Union is interesting.

Slovak citizens, as well as EU27 citizens, consider that the priorities of the European Union's foreign policy should be economic and social rights, fighting human trafficking and children's rights. The difference between Slovak and EU27 citizens on average is in the order and emphasis on the individual areas. While, in European as a whole, most people cited children's rights as the main priority, in Slovakia, most people cited economic and social rights. These should be the EU priority according to 55% of Slovak citizens, a figure that is 22 points above the EU27 average. Fighting human trafficking should be an EU priority, according to 45% of Slovaks, a figure that is 12 points above the European average. Children's rights should be the priority of EU foreign policy, according to 35% of Slovaks, a figure that is 1 point below the EU27 average.

The greatest difference between the opinion of Slovaks and of EU27 citizens in general is, besides the different emphasis on economic and social rights and fighting human trafficking, in the emphasis on the freedom of speech, which should be a priority of EU foreign policy according to 30% of EU27 citizens, but only 19% citizens in Slovakia. While, in the EU27, freedom of speech was ranked fourth, in Slovakia, it was ranked sixth.

Slovak opinion differs considerably from the European average also in terms of how they perceive what the EU is doing to promote and defend human rights in the world. While,

in Slovakia, two-thirds (66%) of citizens think that the EU is doing about the right amount and only 23% think that EU is doing not enough, in the EU27 on average, only 37% of citizens think that the EU is doing about the right amount and almost half of them (48%) think the EU is not doing enough.

6. Future of European Integration

Within the European Union, Slovakia belongs to the group of countries whose citizens support the further enlargement of the European Union. Two-thirds (66%) of citizens are in favour of further EU enlargement to include other countries in future years, while, in the EU27 as a whole, this proportion is less than half (43%) of the citizens. Further EU enlargement has the support of the majority of the population since Slovakia joined the Union.

There is high, and since spring 2008, growing support for the existence of the European Monetary Union with the single currency, the euro. In summer 2009, support for the EMU and euro is highest since spring 2005. The existence of the EMU with the single currency, the euro, receives support from 89% of Slovak citizens, a figure that is 28 points above the EU27 average.

Not so unambiguous is the opinion of Slovaks relating to the question as to whether the speed of building Europe could be faster in one group of countries than in other countries. 47% of Slovaks accept such a possibility, while 40% oppose it. In the EU27 on average, there are more against (42%) than in favour of this possibility (39%).

Slovak citizens think that, in order to strengthen the European Union in the future, the European institutions should, in the coming years, focus on energy issues, economic affairs and social issues. Its great emphasis on energy issues (in Slovakia, this option was selected by 38% of respondents, twice the EU27 average) has its roots in the energy crisis, which Slovakia was facing, together with some other new EU member states, at the beginning of this year. Their emphasis on economic issues (34% in Slovakia, 33% in the EU27) is clearly related to the financial and economic crisis.

EUROBAROMETER 71.3 TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Between the 12th of June and the 6th of July 2009, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between TNS plc and TNS opinion, carried out wave 71.3 of the EUROBAROMETER, on request of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for Communication, "Research and Political Analysis".

The EUROBAROMETER 71.3 covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union Member States, resident in each of the Member States and aged 18 years and over (16 years and over in Austria). The basic sample design applied in all states is a multi-stage, random (probability) one. In each country, a number of sampling points was drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and to population density.

In order to do so, the sampling points were drawn systematically from each of the "administrative regional units", after stratification by individual unit and type of area. They thus represent the whole territory of the countries surveyed according to the EUROSTAT NUTS II (or equivalent) and according to the distribution of the resident population of the respective nationalities in terms of metropolitan, urban and rural areas. In each of the selected sampling points, a starting address was drawn, at random. Further addresses (every Nth address) were selected by standard "random route" procedures, from the initial address. In each household, the respondent was drawn, at random (following the "closest birthday rule"). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people's homes and in the appropriate national language. As far as the data capture is concerned, CAPI (*Computer Assisted Personal Interview*) was used in those countries where this technique was available.

ABBREVIATIONS	COUNTRIES	INSTITUTES	N° INTERVIEWS	FIELDWORK DATES	POPULATION 15+
BE	Belgium	TNS Dimarso	983	15/06/2009 07/07/2009	8.786.805
BG	Bulgaria	TNS BBSS	1.023	12/06/2009 22/06/2009	6.647.375
CZ	Czech Rep.	TNS Aisa	1.094	13/06/2009 26/06/2009	8.571.710
DK	Denmark	TNS Gallup DK	1.012	12/06/2009 02/07/2009	4.432.931
DE	Germany	TNS Infratest	1.521	17/06/2009 03/07/2009	64.546.096
EE	Estonia	Emor	1.006	12/06/2009 02/07/2009	887.094
IE	Ireland	TNS MRBI	1.006	17/06/2009 02/07/2009	3.375.399
EL	Greece	TNS ICAP	1.000	12/06/2009 02/07/2009	8.691.304
ES	Spain	TNS Demoscopia	1.002	16/06/2009 03/07/2009	38.536.844
FR	France	TNS Sofres	1.038	12/06/2009 30/06/2009	46.425.653
IT	Italy	TNS Infratest	1.036	13/06/2009 01/07/2009	48.892.559
CY	Rep. of Cyprus	Synovate	505	12/06/2009 30/06/2009	638.900
LV	Latvia	TNS Latvia	1.008	12/06/2009 30/06/2009	1.444.884
LT	Lithuania	TNS Gallup Lithuania	1.016	12/06/2009 25/06/2009	2.846.756
LU	Luxembourg	TNS ILReS	530	17/06/2009 06/07/2009	388.914
HU	Hungary	TNS Hungary	1.004	13/06/2009 01/07/2009	8.320.614
MT	Malta	MISCO	500	12/06/2009 29/06/2009	335.476
NL	Netherlands	TNS NIPO	1.000	12/06/2009 03/07/2009	13.017.690
AT	Austria	Österreichisches Gallup-Institut	1.015	12/06/2009 03/07/2009	7.004.205
PL	Poland	TNS OBOP	1.000	18/06/2009 02/07/2009	32.155.805
PT	Portugal	TNS EUROTESTE	1.010	16/06/2009 03/07/2009	8.080.915
RO	Romania	TNS CSOP	1.012	12/06/2009 23/06/2009	18.246.731
SI	Slovenia	RM PLUS	1.012	12/06/2009 28/06/2009	1.729.298
SK	Slovakia	TNS AISA SK	1.065	13/06/2009 30/06/2009	4.316.438
FI	Finland	TNS Gallup Oy	1.012	16/06/2009 06/07/2009	4.353.495
SE	Sweden	TNS GALLUP	1.068	14/06/2009 03/07/2009	7.562.263
UK	United Kingdom	TNS UK	1.352	12/06/2009 28/06/2009	50.519.877
TOTAL			26.830	12/06/2009 06/07/2009	453.722.173

For each country a comparison between the sample and the universe was carried out. The Universe description was derived from Eurostat population data or from national statistics offices. For all countries surveyed, a national weighting procedure, using marginal and intercellular weighting, was carried out based on this Universe description. In all countries, gender, age, region and size of locality were introduced in the iteration procedure. For international weighting (i.e. EU averages), TNS Opinion & Social applies the official population figures as provided by EUROSTAT or national statistic offices. The total population figures for input in this post-weighting procedure are listed above.

Readers are reminded that survey results are estimations, the accuracy of which, everything being equal, rests upon the sample size and upon the observed percentage. With samples of about 1,000 interviews, the real percentages vary within the following confidence limits:

Observed percentages	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
Confidence limits	± 1.9 points	± 2.5 points	± 2.7 points	± 3.0 points	± 3.1 points