

EUROBAROMETER 72

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NATIONAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HUNGARY

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The life and mood of Hungarians and other EU citizens was still feeling the impact of the economic crisis at the point of the latest Eurobarometer survey conducted in the autumn of 2009. People were deeply concerned by unemployment, saying it was the most important issue their country was facing.

Most of the people who took part in the survey in both Hungary and in the EU as a whole believe the worst is still to come as far as the impact of the economic crisis on the job market is concerned. The same proportion of Hungarians and EU citizens (38%) said the impact of the crisis on jobs has reached its peak and things will recover little by little.

Two-thirds of Hungarians and other EU citizens said a more important role for the EU at an international level in regulating financial services would be effective in combating the crisis. The same proportion of people believes the surveillance and supervision by the EU of the most important international financial groups would also be an efficient tool. The same proportion of participants would require the EU to supervise whenever public money is used to rescue a financial institution.

An even higher number of people claimed that a stronger coordination of economic and financial policies between all the EU member states would have positive results in the combat against the crisis.

In addition to measures directly impacting financial and economic fields, almost two-thirds of Hungarians would also prioritise support for reducing unemployment in the fight against the crisis. Almost the same proportion of people would also support the poorest and small business. Investment in infrastructure, support for large companies and industry would be among the least popular measures in Hungary.

Compared to the results from Hungary, a significantly higher proportion of EU citizens would promote education, training and research to help people overcome the effects of the financial and economic crisis.

Concerning the global economic situation and that of the EU, almost one-third of Hungarians expect the next twelve months to be better. In regard to their private lives and the economy of the country, only 14% expects an improvement in one year. Even fewer people believe that the financial situation of their household and the employment situation in Hungary would be better in the next twelve months. Less than one-tenth of the participants expect an improvement in their personal job situation.

In the autumn of 2009, 58% of Hungarians said they were dissatisfied with the life they lead. Like the results of the previous surveys, only Bulgaria showed more pessimistic results than Hungary.

One question where Hungarians proved to be more positive than EU citizens related to trust in the EU. Since the last Eurobarometer survey, conducted in the spring of 2009, the proportion of Hungarians who trust the EU has increased by 4 percentage points to 53%. It is 5 percentage points higher than the average of all EU member states. The same proportion of Hungarians trusts the UN.

One-third of the Hungarians who participated in the survey claimed it is a good thing to be a member of the EU. The majority of people believe it is neither a good nor a bad thing to be a member of the EU. One-fifth of Hungarians said it is a bad thing that Hungary has joined the EU.

Above all, the EU represents the freedom to travel, work and study anywhere in the EU for almost half of Hungarians and EU citizens. A significantly lower proportion (28%) of Hungarians associate the EU with the euro and almost the same number of people say the EU represents unemployment.

Most of Hungarian and EU respondents said democracy is one of the values best represented by the EU. It is followed by peace and human rights in Hungarians' ranking. The rule of law, individual freedom, respect for other cultures and solidarity were also mentioned by a significant number of participants.

The Eurobarometer survey included a short quiz to find out how much European citizens know about the EU. The questions were concerning the number of countries in the euro area and the result of the Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. It was also asked if Switzerland and Iceland are members of the EU. The Hungarian results were 4 percentage points below the EU average, as 38% gave correct answers to all questions. 31% gave incorrect answers or decided not to respond to the quiz.

Among the main EU institutions, the European Parliament proved to be the most frequently recognised in Hungary, followed by the European Commission and the Council of the European Union. The least known institution is the European Central Bank: only two-thirds of Hungarians have heard of it.

More than one-third of Hungarians said things are going in the right direction in the EU. The number of people saying things are going neither in the right nor the wrong direction was somewhat lower and 27% said things are going in the wrong direction. Compared to the results of the previous survey, the proportion of Hungarians saying things are going in the right direction has increased by 8 percentage points.

Concerning the development of the EU, 63% of Hungarians and a similar proportion of EU citizens said the EU had grown too fast. Greeks were the most likely to hold this view and Poles are the least likely to agree with it.

Participants in the survey also had the chance to tell what aspects – among the various issues on which European integration has been focusing in recent years – should be emphasized by the European institutions in the coming years in order to strengthen the EU in the future. Like the results of the previous Eurobarometer surveys, the majority of Hungarians said economic affairs should get more attention. It was followed by energy issues and social and health issues.

The survey also seeks to measure the support for the strategic issues of the EU in the member states. In Hungary, support for the European Monetary Union with one single currency, the euro, has increased by 3 percentage points and remained unchanged in the average of all member states in comparison with the survey conducted in the spring of 2009. The same proportion of Hungarians supports the

further enlargement of the EU in the autumn of 2009 as in the spring of the same year. Looking at the EU27, it can be seen that the proportion of people in favour of enlargement has slightly decreased during the same period.

Three-quarters of Hungarian and EU citizens believe the EU is indispensable in meeting global challenges like climate change and terrorism.

In the autumn of 2009, the Eurobarometer survey also included a question on the factors determining a country's or a group of countries' overall power and influence in the world. In Hungary, more than four-fifths of the participants mentioned economic power in first or second place. It was followed by political influence, which was mentioned by 69% of Hungarians.

Participants in the survey were asked to cite which of these factors best characterise the EU. Political influence took over from economic power as the top of Hungarians' rankings.

Slightly more than the half the respondents in Hungary and in all member states were satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU. When it came to judging democracy in their own countries, a similar proportion of people expressed satisfaction. However, Hungarians were significantly less satisfied: only 23% said democracy works properly in their country.

In autumn 2009, the Eurobarometer survey also revealed that EU citizens do not share the same views on the major questions relating to the EU's financial reforms. A quarter of the participants said the EU should prioritise the transparency of costs, risks and benefits on financial markets. The same proportion of EU citizens would build a stronger European system of supervision of financial markets and financial institutions. A similar proportion of participants would emphasize the accountability of financial managers, including bonuses. The remaining 13% participating in the survey would require government guarantees for deposits made by individuals.