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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 reached its peak in spring 2007 with 76% being satisfied with their lives. This group fell to 70% in autumn 2007 and dropped still further to 59% in spring 2008 and 38% stating that they are not satisfied with their lives.

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 optimistic trend seems to have changed for the worse. In spring 2008, only 25% (32% in the EU) expressed some optimism about their lives in the future.

Concerning developments in the economy, only 14% in Turkey (16% in the EU) had an optimistic expectation. Expectations concerning job and work conditions had deteriorated the most. Those with pessimistic expectations concerning employment conditions in the country were about 30% in autumn 2007. This segment has grown to 66% in spring 2008 in Turkey, while in the EU it remained at around 39%.

Comparative evaluation of 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 14% thinks that economic conditions in their country are better than the EU average while 35% in Europe thinks so. Similar evaluations are observed for cost of living, energy prices and general quality of life.

Direction of the country

When asked whether, in general, things are going in the right or in the wrong direction, 72% say that things are not going in the right direction in Turkey. Compared to the surveys in the last year, there has been a considerable drop in positive evaluations on this matter both in the EU and in Turkey.

Trust in institutions

In both the EU and in Turkey, the most trusted institution appears to be the army. While in Denmark trust in the army is 83% and in Finland 93%, 82% in Turkey trust the army. Press, radio and TV stations are trusted less in Turkey than in EU countries. Political institutions are comparatively more trusted in Turkey than in the EU member states. However, trust in government, the Parliament or the Turkish Grand National Assembly and political parties are all dropping in Turkey compared to the past. Trust in the courts and the judicial system remains about 14 percentage points higher than in the EU member states at 60%.

Trust in the EU, however, remains lower in Turkey (31%) than in EU Member States (50%).

The country's most important problems

When asked to indicate the two most important problems of the country, differences were observed between Turkey and the EU Member States. According to Turkish public opinion, the two foremost problems are unemployment and terrorism, followed by economic conditions, crime, inflation and education. While the top priority has not changed since last year, it seems that terrorism has significantly declined in salience in the minds of the public. In autumn 2007, terrorism was cited by 77% but, in spring 2008, only 44% cited it among the top two problems facing the country. While the salience of unemployment as one of the country's top two most important problems has not changed much, concerns about inflation

and economic conditions have both risen and thus, in spring 2008, economic issues occupy top priority in the minds of the Turkish public.

Evaluations of EU membership

In spring 2008, the ratio of those stating that membership would be a “good thing” seems to have stopped its continuous decline in Turkey since early 2004 and stabilized at around 49%. Nevertheless, 58% (82% in spring 2007) of the Turkish public indicated that becoming a member of the EU would benefit Turkey.

The overall “image of the EU” is positive for 49% (48% in spring 2007) of the Turkish public.

Those who think that becoming a member in the EU would be a bad thing predominantly give no specific policy reason but just that they are overall against the EU (30%). However, in EU member states, primary reasons given for these answers are, firstly, that people have little impact on decisions in the EU and that membership has hurt their job prospects.

General Awareness about the institutional structure of the EU

At just the level of name recognition, about 60% or 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 found in the EU member states. When asked to what extent these institutions play a role in EU affairs, we observe that a significantly lower percentage 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 24% of the total could provide a correct answer. This is well below 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 low level of trust in EU institutions. For all EU institutions, Turkey’s trust levels are about half of the EU member states.

Comparative evaluation of the European economies

When compared to the Japanese, Chinese and American economies, the Turkish and European perceptions differ to a great extent. Only concerning the relative standing of the European economy with that of the United States does there seem to be agreement and European performance is considered as better than the American. In all comparisons, the Turkish perspective and the European perspectives differ. For Japan and China, the Turkish perception is that the EU does better but, for the rest, it finds the others in a better situation.

Future of Europe and enlargement

Support for EU enlargement is below 47% in the Member States and is at 52% in Turkey.

Turkey’s membership is supported by only 31% of the public among the EU Member States. As such, Turkish EU membership has the lowest level of support of all the potential members. In Austria, support for Turkey’s membership is only 7% and in Germany 16%.

The overall level of support for Turkey's membership rises to about 45% when the question is worded to remind the respondents how they would support Turkey's membership when and if she were to satisfy all membership requirements.

Transparency in the EU and in local governments

Turkish public opinion is relatively less satisfied with its national public administration's transparency and attaches less importance to transparency than the EU member states. The importance of transparency in Turkey is also lower compared to Europe. However, both in Turkey and Europe, EU administration is seen to be more transparent than its national counterpart.

EU and evaluations of globalization

Evaluations of globalization contain a higher percentage of no answers. Support for the positive assertions about globalization is lower in Turkey than in the EU member states. However, negative evaluations are not necessarily any higher in Turkey than in Europe.