

Dialogues for vision - Report on Public opinion surveys

This report summarizes findings of analyzed public opinion surveys conducted in the past year (September 2014 – September 2015) for the purpose of determining priority topics for dialogues within the framework of the project [“Dialogues for Vision”](#) funded by the British Embassy. The project aims to identify priority areas for debate in relation to democracy and rule of law, socio-economic reform and inter-ethnic relations.

The main findings suggest that **socio-economic reform** topics are of utmost importance for citizens, given that unemployment persistently tops all other concerns, followed by poverty and low standard of living. Topics related to **democracy and rule of law** became prominent with the unraveling of the political crisis and refer to political instability and concern over the general political situation. Regarding **inter-ethnic relations**, in the survey conducted in May 2015, terrorism and crime emerged among top four issues the country is facing, coinciding with events/conflict in Kumanovo in the same period.

Six public opinion surveys from three different sources were analyzed, namely the [Standard Eurobarometer](#), the [Balkan Barometer](#) and surveys conducted on behalf of the [International Republic Institute \(IRI\)](#). In order to be considered for analysis, each survey had to contain a question about the most important issues/problems the country is facing at the moment. What follows is a brief summary of findings of public opinion surveys presented in a chronological order. The timeline when surveys were carried out is important as it reflects changes in perceptions of most important problems, in line with recent developments in the country.

In the survey conducted by IRI in September 2014, 44% of the respondents singled out unemployment as the most serious problem the country is facing today. Low standard of living and poverty are on the top of the problems for 15% of respondents, followed by economic problems with 6%, and low/non-payment of salary or pension with 3%.

Unemployment (61%) is also seen as the most important issue facing Macedonia in the Standard Eurobarometer survey carried out in November 2014. The economic situation in the country (36%) remains to be seen as a source of concern along with

concern over rising prices (20%). Immigration (11%) and taxation (11%) are ranked fourth in among the most important issues.

Similarly, in the survey conducted by IRI in December 2014, when asked to point out the two most important problems the country is facing, respondents expressed high concerns in regards to unemployment (47%), low standards of living/poverty (15%), economic problems (8%), and low/non-payment of salary or pension (5%).

The Balkan Barometer, a survey commissioned by the Regional Cooperation Council and carried out in December 2014, shows similar results. Unemployment tops all other problems, followed by concerns over the economic situation, rising prices and political instability.

The Standard Eurobarometer carried out in May 2015 shows similar responses as the previous Eurobarometer mentioned above in terms of unemployment, economic situation and rising prices. However, it is worth noting that concerns over crime and terrorism ranked fourth in this report, replacing immigration and taxation.

Unemployment (35%) and poverty/low standard of living/problems of common people (13%) remain on the top of the list of problems the country is facing, according to IRI's survey carried out in June 2015. In this period, concerns over the general political situation increased (11%). The economic and financial crisis continued to be mentioned as a problem (9%).

The table below shows that respondents in Macedonia are primarily and consistently worried about unemployment. Poverty, low standard of living, the problems of common people coupled with the economic situation and inflation in the country present the second most pressing concerns. Although not the leading concern, respondents worried more about low/non-payment of salary or pension prior to the political crisis. Political instability and worry about the general political situation emerged high on the list of concerns in the last three polls, along with crime and terrorism.

Table 1: Summary of concerns of citizens expressed in public opinion surveys

Concern	IRI September 2014	Eurobarometer 2014	IRI December 2014	Balkan Barometer 2015	Eurobarometer 2015	IRI June 2015
No.1	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment
No. 2	Low standard of living and poverty	Economic situation	Low standard of living and poverty	Economic situation	Economic situation	Poverty, Low standard of living/ problems of common people
No.3	Economic problems	Rising prices	Economic problems	Rising prices	Rising prices	General political situation
No.4	Low/non-payment of salary or pension	Immigration and taxation	Low/non-payment of salary or pension	Political instability	Crime and terrorism	Economic crisis and financial crisis

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