



Граѓанска мрежа за спречување на конфликт на интереси во јавната администрација

МАКЕДОНСКИ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА МЕДИУМИ



CSOs Watchdog Network to Prevent Spoils and Conflict of Interest in the Public Administration
The project is funded by the European Union



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PERCEPTIONS ON MACEDONIA'S EU INTEGRATION

Public Opinion Survey conducted in February and March 2015

May 2015



This publication has been prepared with the assistance of the European Union. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" Skopje (IDSCS) and can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.



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Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions

The support for Macedonia's EU Membership is still great and unchanged compared to March 2014. Nevertheless, "changing the name" of the state is still an influencing factor among a considerable part of the citizens and their support for the EU integration process. A majority of citizens supports the EU accession without changes in the name of the state (58.8%), while near one quarter of the citizens support the EU accession, despite of changing the name (23.8%). Small majority of citizens does not support Macedonia's EU membership at all (13.6%).

A majority of citizens perceive stagnation in the EU integration process, compared to March 2014. The perception that Macedonia has advanced in the process of EU Integration has been reduced, whereas the percentage of respondents who think that Macedonia has made a drawback or no advancement at all has been increased. While in 2014 a large part of the respondents thought that Macedonia advanced to a certain degree, in 2015 they thought that Macedonia slightly advanced or made no advancement at all (total of 57.3%).

There is a considerable difference in the perception of Macedonia's readiness for an EU membership, compared to 2014. While last year, the citizens have been nearly divided in terms of this question, in 2015 the majority of citizens think that Macedonia is not ready for an EU membership (57.2%). This attitude is mostly prevailing among young people between 18 and 29 years old.

This year, compared to 2014, there is a marked rise of the view that the non-realization of domestic reforms is the main reason for Macedonia still not being part of the EU. While 27.1% held this view in 2014, now it has increased up to 32.1%. On the other hand, between 2014 and 2015, there has been a small decline in the view that the main reason for Macedonia still not being part of the EU, are the neighboring states. In March 2015, 43.8% of all respondents thought that the main reason for Macedonia's stagnation are the neighboring countries. This opinion is still prevailing among the citizens.

The greater part of the ethnic Macedonians think that main reason for Macedonia still not being part of the EU are the neighboring countries (46.1%). The same opinion is shared by 37.2% of the ethnic Albanians. The majority of Albanians think that the main reason is the non-realization of the domestic reforms (50.3%), while the same opinion is shared by somewhat more than one quarter of the Macedonian respondents (26.7%).



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Introduction

This Report accounts for the findings from the public opinion survey conducted in the period between 19 February – 2 March 2015, under the Project “CSOs Watchdog Network to Prevent Spoils and Conflict of Interest in the Public Administration”. The purpose of the survey is to gather data on the perceptions, views and experiences of respondents in relation to a range of questions, regarding conflict of interests and the corruption at a local government unit level, but also regarding the progress of Macedonia in the EU integration process.

In addition to this report, the findings of the survey related to the perceptions of citizens on Macedonia’s EU Integration are enclosed. The findings on the perceptions as to the conflict of interests and the corruption at a local government unit level, are contained in a separate report, available on the website of IDSCS (www.idscs.org.mk).

Findings of a total of 4 questions addressing the views of the population regarding the support, the progress, the key areas for EU integration, as well as Macedonia’s readiness for an EU membership, are presented in this report. The data is presented descriptively, shown in tables and charts.

The questions from the survey conducted in the year 2015 are identical to the questions used in the initial public opinion survey under the “CSOs Watchdog Network to Prevent Spoils Conflict of Interest in the Public Administration” conducted in March 2014. This report includes questions addressed comparatively, so the results of the 2014 survey are compared to the results of the 2015 survey in order to depict the identified trends, but also the major deviations in obtained data.

The report accounts for an insignificant minority to respond to up to 10% of the sample, small minority for responses between 10% and 25% of the sample, minority for responses between 25% and 40%, majority for responses between 50% and 70% and great majority for over 70% of the sample.

Methodological Approach

Data is gathered by the means of a field survey in person, to a sample of 1603 respondents and with a statistical error of +/- 2.5%. The survey was conducted in Macedonian and Albanian language. The sample included individuals aged over 18 years, whereas the structure of the sample was determined according to the following criteria: gender, age, ethnicity, education and balanced regional distribution. The survey was conducted by the SWOT Research agency from Skopje (<http://www.swot.com.mk>).

Out of a total of 1603 respondents in the sample the following split according to the set of criteria was rendered:

- According to **gender**: 49.6% men, and 50.4% women;
- According to **age**: 20.1% aged between 18 and 29 years, 20.0% from 30 to 39 years of age, 18.5% from 40 and 49 years of age, 17.7% from 50 to 64 years of age and 23.7% over 65 years of age;
- According to **education**: 19.7% have completed elementary education or less, 49.7% hold a secondary education degree and 30.6% hold a college or higher education degree;



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- According to **ethnicity**: 69.9% are Macedonians, 22.1% are Albanians, 2.5% are Turks, 2.2% are Roma, 2.1% are Serbs etc.
- According to the **employment status**: 14.3% are public sector employees, 27.4% are private sector employees, 19.6% are unemployed, 8.8% are housewives/housekeepers, 6.8% are students and pupils and 20.8% are retired persons.

Political and Social Context

Macedonia is in a deepen state of blockage in the EU integration process, deriving from the impossibility to start negotiations for accession to the European Union, despite having received a “candidate” status since 2005. The process of Macedonia’s NATO membership is also at halt, until finding a solution for the name dispute with the Republic of Greece.

According to the views of many, the last Country Progress Report from 2014, was the most negative in terms of the country’s EU perspectives in the last few years.

At the beginning of the gathering of the research data, the disclosure of the wiretapped conversations by the opposition political party SDSM was already started, revealing indications for numerous corruptive scandals among the highest-ranking state officials. Some of the results presented in this report may be influenced by the direct effect of the corruption scandals, revealed through the disclosure of the wiretapped conversations.

Besides that, the country is in a prolonged state of political crisis, resulting with the non-involvement of a greater part from the opposition representatives in some of the institutions. This condition causes a more general decline of trust in the state institutions, among the citizens.

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Findings and Conclusions

Support for the EU integration

To the question with a possibility for one response, “Do you want/ support Macedonia becoming a member of the European Union?” the majority respondents (58.3%), supported the membership of Macedonia in the EU, while keeping the official state name. Almost a quarter of the respondents (23.8%) supports Macedonia’s accession to the EU, even with changes in the name. A small majority of the respondents (13.6%) does not support Macedonia’s EU membership.

Q1. Do you want/ support Macedonia becoming a member of the European Union?	2014 %	2015 %
Yes, even if the name is changed	25.2	23.8
Yes, with keeping the name	59.3	58.8
No	11.8	13.6
I don't know	3.1	2.4
No answer	0.6	1.6
Total	100	100

This data largely complies with the data gathered from the survey in 2014. The data shows permanence of the citizens’ positions between 2014 and 2015, in terms of the support for the country becoming a member of the European Union. The gathered data also largely complies with the data from other previous surveys, taking into account the fact that if the name issue is excluded as a variable for supporting the accession to the European Union, a large majority of the citizens (82.5%) supports EU membership.¹ Nevertheless, the issue of keeping the constitutional name is still an important factor, which may condition the support of the citizens for the EU integration process.

In the period between 2014 and 2015, there has not been a considerable change in the view for rejection of EU membership. In 2015, every seventh citizen does not support Macedonia’s membership in the European Union.

The two largest ethnic groups have opposing views regarding Macedonia’s accession to the European Union, should the variable for changing of the name be introduced. Thus, an inconsiderable minority (10%) from the Macedonian respondents supports Macedonia’s membership in the European Union, even if the name of the state is changed, whereas the same view is supported by the majority of Albanian respondents (67.4%). In a similar manner, 71.8% from the Macedonian respondents support the accession, only with keeping of the constitutional name, while the same view is supported by a small majority of the Albanian respondents (19.4%).

¹ For a thorough comparative review of the public opinion surveys conducted in the last ten years on the topic of EU integration see: Damjanovski, I. (2014) *Public Opinion and Macedonia’s Accession to the European Union (2004-2014)*. Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis”, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in the Republic of Macedonia. Skopje. Accessed at: <http://idscs.org.mk/images/publikacii/2014-EU-integracii/javno-mislenie-eu-MAK.pdf> (last visit 27 May 2015).

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Nevertheless, there is a marked rise in the percentage of Macedonian respondents, who support the accession, with changes in the name, compared to March 2014 (10% compared to 5.6%), as well as that of the Albanian respondents, who support the accession, while keeping the constitutional name (19.4% contrasted with 13.4% in 2014).

The view supporting the EU accession with changes in the name, declines as the age of respondents' increases, whereas the view supporting the EU accession without changes in the constitutional name, rises. Thus, while 46.3% of the respondents aged 18-29 are ready to support EU membership with changes in the name, 22% of the respondents aged 30-39, 21.6 % of the age group 40-49, 18.9% of the age group 50-64 and only 11.5% of the respondents aged above 65, support the same view. In a similar manner, 40.2% of the respondents aged between 18-29, support the accession with keeping of the name, whereas this percentage rises as the age of the respondents' increases, amounting up to 67.1% for the respondents older than 65.

There is a rise in the percentage of respondents aged 18-29, who support accession to the European Union even with changes in the name, between 2014 and 2015 – in 2014, this percentage was 36.6%, which means that in 2015 there is a marked rise of almost 10%. Similar changes are perceived among the other age groups, which are still much lower than the changes marked in the group between 18-29 years old.

Perceptions on the stagnation towards EU accession

The respondents were asked to assess Macedonia's progress in the EU integration last year, by giving one possible answer to several offered. The largest part of the respondents think that Macedonia has slightly advanced (29.4%), followed by those thinking that it has somewhat advanced (23.8%). Inconsiderable minorities of respondents think that the country advanced a lot (7.6%) and that there is a decline in the process of EU integration (4.9%).

This data differs from that obtained in March 2014 in several respects. Generally, there is a decline in the perception that Macedonia has advanced in the process of EU integration, whereas the percentage of respondents thinking that it has not advanced at all or that there has been a drawback, has risen. While in 2014, the largest part of the respondents thought that Macedonia somewhat advanced, and the second largest part that it has slightly advanced, the largest part of the respondents in 2015, think that it has slightly advanced or that it has not been advancing at all. A small decline among the respondents thinking that Macedonia has advanced a lot, is also registered.

Q2: In regards to the previous year, do you think that Macedonia has advanced in the process of EU integration?	2014 %	2015 %
Advanced a lot	10.9	7.6
Somewhat advanced	29.8	23.8
Slightly advanced	27.8	29.4
Not advanced at all	23.0	27.9
There has been a drawback	2.4	4.9
I don't know	5.3	5.3
No answer	0.8	1.0
Total	100	100

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Within the Macedonian ethnic group, 28.7% of the respondents think that the country has somewhat advanced, 25.8% that it has slightly advanced and 24.2% that it hasn't advanced at all. The largest part of the Albanian respondents think that Macedonia has not advanced at all (42.8%), followed by those who think that it has slightly advanced (37.4%). Only 9.1% of the Albanian respondents think that the country has somewhat advanced, and 1.1% that it has advanced a lot. Considerable differences in the perceptions of advancement among the respondents from the two largest ethnic groups, can be perceived in regards to this question too.

Compared to March 2014, there has been a considerable rise of the Albanian respondents, thinking that the country has not advanced at all (from 26% to 42.8%).

As with the research from March 2014, the greater part of those employed in the public sector think that the country has advanced a lot (14.6%), a result which considerably deviates from the views of all other groups in the category "employment status".

Unpreparedness for membership

The majority of respondents think that Macedonia is not ready for EU membership (57.2%), and almost one third that it is ready (32.9%). When it comes to this question, there are considerable differences compared to the research made in March 2014. In 2014, the respondents were almost equally divided regarding the question of readiness, (42.4% said that Macedonia is ready, and 47% that it is not) while in 2015 the view of unpreparedness is a dominating one, among the majority of the respondents.

Q3: Do you think that Macedonia is ready for EU membership?	2014 %	2015 %
Yes	42.4	32.9
No	47.0	57.2
I don't know	9.0	7.7
No answer	1.7	2.1
Total	100	100

A large majority of the Albanian respondents think that Macedonia is not ready (72.9%), while half of the Macedonian respondents (51.2%) share the same view. The number of Albanian respondents, thinking that Macedonia is not ready, has risen up to almost 15%, compared to March 2014, when the percent was 57.8%. In a similar manner, a larger percent of Macedonian respondents think that Macedonia is not ready, namely 10% more (51.2% against 41.3%), compared to March 2014.

The view that Macedonia is not ready for an EU membership is mostly present among the age group 18-29 (67.6%) compared to the other age groups. The majority of those employed in the public sector, think that Macedonia is ready for an EU membership (53.1%), a result which represents a considerable deviation from the views of other groups in the category "employment status".

Reasons for stagnation in the EU integration

The largest part of the respondents think that the main reason for Macedonia still not being part of the EU are the neighboring states (43.8%). Every third respondent (32.1%) thinks that the main reason is the non-realization of the domestic reforms. Compared to the survey in 2014, there has been a marked rise in the percentage of respondents, thinking that the main reason is the non-

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realization of domestic reforms. There is also a decline in the percentage of respondents, who think that the main reason for Macedonia still not being part of the EU are the neighboring countries. The percentage of respondents who think that EU is not prepared to accept Macedonia is unchanged.

The largest part of the Macedonians think that the main reason are the neighbors (46.1%), and the same opinion is shared by 37.2% of the Albanians. The majority of Albanians think that the main reason is the non-realization of the domestic reforms (50.3%) and the same opinion is shared by somewhat more than one quarter of the Macedonian respondents (26.7%).

Q4. According to you, what is the main reason for Macedonia still not being part of the EU?	2014 %	2015 %
Non-realization of domestic reforms	27.1	32.1
Unpreparedness of the EU to accept Macedonia as its member	17.4	17.6
The neighbouring countries obstruct Macedonia's accession	47.8	43.8
I don't know	4.9	5.5
No answer	2.7	1.1
Total	100	100



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IDSCS is a civil society organization founded in 1999 by a group of intellectuals gathered around the ideas of democracy, solidarity and civil society. The Mission of IDSCS is to support the development of the democratic processes by promoting policy-based research, analysis and consultations with the stakeholders. IDSCS explores the development of the country's good governance, rule of law and European integration. IDSCS's mission is to support the development of the civil society's inclusion in the decision-making process and to strengthen the participatory political culture. By strengthening liberal values, IDSCS contributes to coexistence of diversity.

Other research by IDSCS:

Bliznakovski, J. and M. Popovikj (2015) *Conflict of Interest and Corruption at a Local Level. Public Opinion Survey Conducted in February-March 2015*. Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" (IDSCS). Skopje

Bliznakovski J. and M. Popovikj (2015) *Public Opinion on the Wiretapping Affair: Public Opinion Survey*. Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" (IDSCS), Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC), Telma, TV, Skopje.

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