

## Press Release

### „Barometer of Public Opinion – April-May 2012”

Soros Foundation-Moldova pleads for correct and transparent tools for social-political and economic life reflection and for ensuring the access of civil society to information. To this end, a public opinion survey programme – “**Barometer of Public Opinion in Moldova**”- was launched in 1998.

First two polls were conducted in 1998. The following poll was commissioned by the Institute for Public Policy, with the financial support of Soros Foundation-Moldova, in August 2000. Afterwards, public opinion polls were conducted in spring and autumn of each year during the period 2001-2011.

The surveys focused on: political options, rating of main political parties and personalities, living standards and life quality, economic and social Government policy, other issues of major concern.

Taking into consideration the impact and the importance of such surveys, the Institute for Public Policy commissioned in April-May 2012 a new public opinion poll conducted by “**CIVIS**” Centre for Sociological, Political and Psychological Analysis and Surveys.

The programme „Barometer of Public Opinion–2012” is supervised by a Board chaired by Dr. Arcadie Barbăroșie, Director Executive of the Institute for Public Policy. The Board’s members are: PhD. Ludmila Malcoci; Igor Boțan, Director of ADEPT; Natalia Morari, sociologist and independent journalist. The programme consultant is Dr. Viorel Cibotaru, Director of the European Institute for Political Studies of Moldova.

The poll was conducted within the period April, 10 – May, 10 2012 on a probabilistic sample of 1 055 people from 81 communities representative for the adult population of the Republic of Moldova (except its Transnistrian area), the maximal sampling error is  $\pm 3\%$ .

## Major Results

### Economy – General Issues

- 69% of the sample consider that the Republic of Moldova is moving towards a *wrong direction*. The share of respondents who expressed such an opinion has significantly decreased (by 15%) compared to the data of the poll conducted in November 2011. Most of respondents who share such an opinion are of a nationality different from Moldovan, and come mainly from the urban areas.
- To point out in this context that the largest share of population (over 3/4) is still discontent with Government policies in the following major fields of social life: *living standards* (89%), *salaries* (88%), *employment* (88%), *fighting against corruption* (82%); as well as in a series of other fields, such as *agriculture* (80%), *industry* (78%), *pensions* (77%), *settlement of the Transnistrian conflict* (71%) and *health care* (68%). The discontentment with Government policies in the field of education is stronger in the urban areas, among people with a higher level of education and among ethnic minorities. A large share of people of the urban areas are also discontent with the activities undertaken in the field of health care.
- 60% of the population are discontent with the present economic situation in the country. To point out that 43% of the sample consider that the economic situation *has not changed* compared to last year, while 37% of them think that the economic situation *has worsened*, such a share being lower by 14% compared to the data of the previous poll. A fifth of respondents (mainly people of the rural areas, young people, people with a high income and people of Moldovan nationality) perceive a certain improvement of the present economic situation.
- The analysis of the respondents' opinions about the economic prospects for the coming year reveals a share of 28% (i.e. an increase by 6% compared to the previous poll) of respondents with optimistic expectations. 34% of the sample do not expect any change in the economic situation. 25% of respondents are doubtful

about the economic prospects, considering that the economic situation in the Republic of Moldova will worsen in the coming year.

- According to the respondents, the most important measures to be undertaken in order to improve the social-economic situation in the country are *developing the economic sector* – developing industry (38%), encouraging the investments (28%), supporting small business in farming sector (21), alongside with *improving the tools for law enforcement* (33%) and *fighting against crimes* (33%).

### **Life Quality – Social Issues**

- The economic security remains the major concern for citizens of the Republic of Moldova. From this perspective, the largest share of population (74%) stated they do not have a decent living: the income of 28% of population is not enough „at least for the essential”, while the income of 46% of the sample is enough just for the essential. Such a poverty threshold has been constant, with some insignificant fluctuations, over the past 9 years. Aged people (86%), people with a low social-economic level (80%) and with a low educational level (88%), as well as people of the rural areas (75%) are the mostly affected by poverty.
- Most of the population is still concerned the most about *prices* (67%) and *poverty* (57%), both indicators being higher compared to the same period of the past year. Nearly half of the sample are concerned about *unemployment* (47%) and *children’s future* (47%). *It is worth being mentioned that people’s concern about prices is pronounced practically among all categories of respondents, except the respondents with a high social-economic level.* Corruption is mainly a matter of concern for people of the urban areas, people with a higher educational level and with an average and high social-economic level.
- 41% of population are discontent with their living. People’s discontentment is first of all related to *lack of money* (82% are not so content or discontent with it) and *political life in the country* (81%).
- Over half of respondents (56%) stated that their living is *approximately the same* as a year ago, and one respondent in four assessed his/her living as *worse*. On the other hand, the level of optimism towards the living in a year is relatively constant – a double number of people (compared to the number of people who are now content) consider their living will be better in a year. The optimistic respondents are mainly from the rural areas, from the category of young people, of Moldovan nationality and have a high level of income.
- The poll has shown a slow, but continuous increase of daily Internet users – a third of respondents. The profile of respondents who use the Internet regularly (daily or 6-7 days a week) is the following: a young person, living in the urban area, with a higher level of education.
- Television remains the most important source of information of the population (82%), and it is also the source of information in which 32% of population trust the most (such an index has decreased compared to the same period of the previous year). Radio is the most important source of information for 32% of population and newspapers are the primary source of information for only 18% of them (mainly people with a higher level of education and aged people). The Internet stands in the third position in the top of sources of information with a share of 28% (an increase by 7% compared to the similar period of the year 2010), such an option being mainly expressed by male population, people of the urban area, young people (18-29 year olds – one respondent in two), people with a higher educational level and with a high social-economic level. The Internet is the second source of information which enjoys the greatest trust of the population.
- Moldova 1 (47%) and Prime TV (44%) are the TV channels from which the adult population gets informed the oftenest. Nearly a quarter of the adult population gets informed from Pro TV (22%). The recently-created TV channels have a growing audience: Jurnal TV (15% compared to 7% in May 2010) and Publika (13% compared to 1% in May 2010) stand in the fourth and, respectively, the fifth position among the most important informative TV channels.
- A third of the country’s adult population do not feel free to criticize the country’s leadership, and half of them do not feel free to take part in street protests against the decisions of the country’s leadership. On the other hand, half of respondents would take part in massive street protests held at local level against the decrease of living standards or for protection of human rights. The economic crisis/low living standards (49%) and employment issues (41%) are the major factors which would determine the population to take part in protests.

- The level of people's concern about *politics* has lowered compared to the similar period of the previous year– from 34% in May 2011 to 28% at present. The concern about political life is stronger among men, people of the urban area and people with a higher level of education. The level of people's trust in the most important state institutions has significantly grown (compared to the similar period of the previous year): Government – from 23% to 30%, Parliament – from 19% to 25%, President of the country – from 20% to 28%. *Political parties* (20% of respondents expressed very must trust or some trust in them) and *trade unions* (19%) traditionally enjoy the lowest level of people's trust.
- The population of the rural areas traditionally displays a higher level of trust in major state institutions compared to the population of the urban areas. From the perspective of the social-demographic characteristics of the population, there is a visible difference between the options of the respondents of Moldovan/Romanian nationality and the ones belonging to ethnic minorities, the latter expressing a lower (by 1.5 times, on average) level of trust in President of the country, Parliament and Government. A similar trend is remarked in terms of assessment of the Government led by Vlad Filat. In general, a fourth of respondents gave a positive appreciation to the activities of the present Government.
- Among the political personalities, Dorin Chirtoacă (45%, i.e. a significant increase by 12% compared to the previous poll) enjoys the greatest people's trust, being followed by Vlad Filat (43%), Marian Lupu (37%) and the present President of the Republic of Moldova, Nicolae Timofti (35%). In general, all political leaders gained a better rating in terms of people's trust, except Igor Dodon (a significant decrease by 7% compared to the previous poll).
- From the perspective of the open-ended question about the political personality the respondents trust in the most, the rating of political personalities differs considerably: Vladimir Voronin (18%), Vlad Filat (13%) and Marian Lupu (6%).
- Among the political parties, the Party of Communists still enjoys the greatest trust (39%), being followed at a short distance by Liberal-Democratic Party (37%). Democratic Party (31%) and Liberal Party (31%) are the following parties which enjoy a relatively high level of trust (compared to other parties). In fact, only parties represented in Parliament of the Republic of Moldova enjoy the people's trust, while extra-parliamentary parties enjoy a much lower level of trust.
- If legislative elections were held in the Republic of Moldova, 39% **of respondents who expressed an electoral option** would vote for the Party of Communists (i.e. an increase by 2% compared to the similar period of the year 2011). The sympathisers of the Party of Communists are mainly aged people, representatives of ethnic minorities, people with a low educational level and with a low social-economic level. The percentage of other competitors expected to overcome the electoral threshold are, as follows: Liberal-Democratic Party (26%, i.e. a decrease by 1%), Liberal Party (18%) and Democratic Party (12%, i.e. a decrease by 4%). The profile of the supporters of the Liberal Party is the following: young people (18-29 year olds), living in the urban area, of Moldovan/Romanian nationality and with a higher educational level. The electorate of the Liberal-Democratic Party is more homogenous from the perspective of gender, residence environment and educational level.
- The Party of Communists also stands in the top of parties for which the population would not vote in any case, with a share of 32% of options, followed by the Liberal Party (18%), Liberal-Democratic Party (4%), People's Christian-Democratic Party (4%) and Democratic Party (5%). Most options against the Party of Communists were expressed by young people, people of Moldovan/Romanian nationality and people with a higher educational level and a high social-economic level.
- 3 in 4 respondents consider that the people's will does not rule in the Republic of Moldova, while 2 in 3 think that the elections in our country are not free and fair.
- Half of the adult population of the Republic of Moldova support the idea that one political party shall govern the country.
- A third of respondents (i.e. an increase by 9% compared to the poll conducted in May 2011) are persuaded that the level of corruption has increased since the present Government has acceded to power, while 41% of them consider that the corruption level has not changed.
- With regard to recent election of the head of state, 27% of population consider that President of the Republic of Moldova was not elected in accordance with the Constitution, and a fourth of the sample could not express any opinion on this issue. To point out in this context that most of the sample (87%) opted for direct election of the President by the citizens.

- Despite the fact that the problem of electing the President has been solved, most of respondents do not expect in the coming 12 months any improvements in the major fields of social, economic and political life: labour market, salaries/pensions, poverty, high prices, Government activity and judiciary system. In other words, the problem of electing the President was not in fact a serious impediment to improvement of the economic and social situation in our country. According to a third of population, the major problem consists in the lack of collaboration between the parties of the Alliance for European Integration.
- 62% of the country's adult population do not accept the idea of granting the right to vote to 16 year olds.
- Almost half of respondents support the idea of having legislative elections based on uninominal constituencies and only 12% of them opt for maintaining the present system. In the same time, it is important to mention that one respondent in three could not express any position on this point.

#### **Other Social-Economic Issues**

- In the context of debates concerning the name of history course taught in school, the poll sounded for the people's opinions on this issue. It revealed that 2/3 of respondents consider that the correct name of the course of history is *History of Moldova*, while 15% of the sample opted for the name of *History of Romanians* (such an opinion was mainly expressed by young people, people with a higher educational level and with a high income). 14% of the sample opted for the name of *Integrated History*.
- A fourth of respondents have some debts at present. The debts were first of all generated by the basic needs – arrears to payment for public utilities (half of respondents who have debts), food needs (a third of respondents). The first reason for having debts concerns mostly the respondents from the urban areas and the aged people, the second - is mainly valid for people of the rural areas, young people and people with a low income.
- 18% of respondents have some savings.
- 6% of the country's adult population intend to take a loan in the coming 6 months. The major reason for it is the need to undertake renovation works (60% of the respondents who intend to take a loan).
- 57% of households are connected to gas supply facilities. In the rural areas, a third of households are connected to gas pipe, but only 28% of them use gas for heating of the dwelling.

#### **Foreign Relations**

- Most of the population consider that the relations between the Republic of Moldova and its main partners (Romania, Russia, Ukraine, USA and EU) are good. Such a perception is stable over the past two years, with a small decrease as far as the relations with Romania are concerned.
- If a referendum of joining the European Union was held, half of respondents would vote for it, while, 30% of the sample would vote against it. The share of people who are against joining the EU shows a continuous trend to increase over the past two years– from 18% in May 2010 to 30% in May 2012. From this perspective, the survey revealed that 18% of the country's population are persuaded that the European Union will be unable to overcome the present crisis and will decompose.
- The poll has also assessed the people's attitude towards a possible accession to Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union. 57% of the sample, mainly ethnic minorities, opted for joining it.
- Having to choose between two options, the respondents divided into two approximately equal groups: 38% opted for the Customs Union and 35% - for the European Union (mainly, the young population, with a high educational level and a high social-economic level).