# **Opinion Survey of the EU integrations in EU PRO Programme AoR**

December 2018

## Summary of Results

**Opinion Survey of the EU integrations in EU PRO Programme AoR** (The Survey), a 26-item questionnaire conducted via Survey Monkey platform, was developed by EU PRO Communication Personnel to obtain insights from the citizens living in the Programme area on their knowledge and attitudes in relation to the EU support to Serbia’s development and the process of the EU integration in general. The results will serve as a baseline for Communication success indicators as well as an orienteer for better placement and format of Programme external communication towards wider audiences.

**The statistics are based on 766 responses** **collected from citizens of 95 localities** included in the Programme.

As the Survey was shared through existing various Programme databases, EU PRO social media and website it is assumed that respondents are using internet and are already directly or indirectly interested or introduced to work of EU PRO / European PROGRES. Consequently a sample of the engaged population possibly might not reflect the opinion of those who do not use internet.

The Survey shows that majority of respondents were between 36-45 years old (33%), college educated (68%), and employed (62%).

When assessing the Survey results the premises of the Programme activates coincided with the citizen perception. Thus:

**A total of 53% percent of the respondents see the Local and regional development as the reform with the most positive effect on everyday life.**[[1]](#footnote-1) Environmental (41%) and infrastructure sector (39%) are seen by 228 (41%) and 220 (39%)[[2]](#footnote-2) as the greatest benefactor of the accession support while 261 (45%) out of 581 participants felt that Serbia’s integration into the EU will not negatively affect any particular sector.

Asked to select **from various media channels used as their daily sources of information about issues relevant to EU integration[[3]](#footnote-3) over 66% of all respondents selected internet portals, 65% chose social media while only 28% choose TV Programme**. Additionally, ninety percent of respondents confirmed that they do use social media, predominantly Facebook (91%).[[4]](#footnote-4)

When asked about the interesting EU relevant content that would resonate with respondents, results of previous DEU and MEI pools were confirmed - **testimonials of ordinary citizens (66,73%) and topics relevant to available funding were voted as most popular.**

A total of 93% of respondents have heard about an EU financed project in Serbia which in part can be attributed to the continuity of the Programme’s intense visibility activities over the past decade in Southern Serbia. Infrastructure related projects, especially those related to education and health facilities, roads and communal infrastructure were seen as most beneficial. The effect of these projects were predominantly seen as positive and contributing to a better standard of living of citizens in Serbia.

Additionally over 71% of participants voiced that they know of the project in their own locality that was implemented by a foreign donor. The EU was mentioned as a part of 65% of responses related to request to name the most prolific donor, while EU PRO, European PROGRES, EU PROGRES were respectively mentioned in a total of 14% of answers. Similarly out of 437 people who responded to this question 323 (74%) identified EU PRO, 316 (72%) European PROGRES and 284 (65%) EU PROGRES logos representing a familiar local development Programme.[[5]](#footnote-5) However, although almost half of the respondents (49%) does understands that the EU contributes large funds to development of Serbia they do not feel the support is sufficient to change the poor overall living standards of Serbia’s citizens.

## Introduction

Opinion Survey of the European Union (EU) integrations in EU PRO Programme Area of Responsibility (AoR) was carried out by the European Support to Municipal Development Programme - EU PRO. The three year Programme started in January 2018 and aims to contribute to overall economic and social growth in 99 local self-governments in the regions of Šumadija and Western Serbia and Southern and Eastern Serbia.

The survey was conducted from 22 October to 31 December 2018 with a primary purpose to obtain insights from the citizens living in the Programme area on their knowledge and attitudes in relation to the EU support to Serbia’s development and the process of the EU integrations in general. Additionally a number of questions was used to assess most effective communication channel used in information dissemination on relevant topics.

## Methodological Notes

The questionnaire was conducted electronically using the Survey Monkey platform.

A random sample of 766 respondents from Programme’s AOR, engaged[[6]](#footnote-6) the Survey after being reached through email (270), social media (77), and pop-up survey (429) placed on the [EU PRO website](http://www.eupro.org.rs/).

The survey instrument was a 26-item questionnaire developed by EU PRO, based on selected questions from the two different annual public opinion polls conducted by the Ministry of European Integration (MEI) and the Delegation of the European Union (DEU) respectively. Three types of questions (closed-ended, multiple choice and open-ended) were used. None of the questions, save for the profile of respondents (municipality, age, gender, education, employment status, profession etc.) were mandatory resulting in different number of respondents per question.

Next to general information about surveyed respondents for respondent profiling, the questionnaire was divided into two broad sections: (1) Perception and impact of the European Union in Serbia (2) Preferred Communication channels and formats.

## Description of the Sample

The statistics are based on 766 responses collected from citizens of 95 localities included in the Programme.

Majority of survey participants were between 36-45 years old (33%), followed by 26-35 (28%), 46-55 (19%), 18-25 (7%) and 56-65 (8%), while predictably age brackets of under 18 and 66 and over were least represented with 4% and 1%, respectively. The respondent group was gender balanced with 238 men and 192 women who opted to specify their sexual category, majority of who were college educated (68%), while 15% completed high school and 16% percent had master degrees. Over 61% of respondents have full time employment, 12% held part-time work, 11% are self-employed and 7% is unemployed. The remaining participants were either pensioned or are currently studying.

## Local Development

**Local and regional development was assessed by 311 (53%) of 587 participants as the reform with the most positive effect on everyday life.** This was followed by anti-corruption efforts (42%), investments in infrastructure (40%), environment (31%), education (26%) and human rights (24%). As per results the justice system (23%), health system (22%), agriculture (14%), civil sector (12%) and consumer protection (10%) reforms were also seen as important but not as crucial.

**Environmental and infrastructure sector are seen by 41% and 40%** **as the greatest benefactor of the accession** followed by economy (32%), SMEs (25%), agriculture (23%), social protection (20%), public administration (20%), education (19%), large businesses (17%), health (16%) and judiciary (14%).

**Although 45% of participants felt that Serbia’s integration into the EU will not negatively affect any sector,** (26%) respondents noted potential adverse effect for agriculture, (25%) SMEs, (14%) Public administration, (14%) Economy, (8%) large businesses, (7%) education, (6%) social protection, (4%) health, (4%) judiciary, (3%) environment and (2%) infrastructure.

## Sources of information

**Responding to sources of daily news and information on the EU integration Internet portals** (66%) **and social media** **(65%)** were identified by far most popular followed by TV (28%), Municipality related sources (22%) and word of mouth (20%). Less popular sources of information were daily print media (11%), public events (9%), radio (7%) and educational institutions (6%).

**Ninety percent of respondents confirmed that they do use social media**, Facebook being the most popular (91%), followed by YouTube (75%), Instagram (55%) and Twitter (28%). LinkedIn was suggested as another useful and popular network to be considered in reaching out to beneficiaries.

When asked about the format of the **EU relevant content that would resonate with respondents, results of the DEU and MEI surveys were confirmed** – Testimonials of ordinary citizens (67%), short informative formats on specific EU related topics (58%), discussions of experts (40%) and daily news (19%) were seen as most engaging. Thirteen respondents (2,5%) were not interested in this topic and would prefer to watch content on negative impact of the EU integration on the country members.

**Respondents were most interested in being informed about funds accessible to individuals** to develop own businesses (59%). Generally funds related topics were interesting - available funds for countries accessing EU (45%); funds and education opportunities available for youth (36%) followed by the interest in the process and benefits of joining the EU (28%); environment (24%); single EU market (17%); common agriculture policy (16%); social politics of the EU (16%); information on funds the EU invested so far in Serbia (14%); the EU youth policy (12%); consumer protection policy (9%); common foreign and security policies (7%) while other topics mentioned were related to water and rail transportation and migrants in the EU countries.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Great majority of respondents, namely 93%, has heard about at least one of the EU financed project in Serbia**. Overall most have responded that they are aware of infrastructure related projects (52%); cross border cooperation (38%); development of NGO sector (34%); development of SMEs (32%); Public reforms (27%); support to minorities (25%); education (22%); agriculture (20%); social development (16%); floods (16%); migration (14%); health (13%); energy (10%); judiciary (6%); transportation (2%).

**The effect of these projects were predominantly seen as positive and contributing to a better standard of living of citizens in Serbia (68%)**, while (30%) felt that the effects were insignificant and (2%) feel that these projects have caused a drop in the standard of living.

**Over 71% of participants voiced that they know of the project in their own locality** that was implemented by a foreign donor. Infrastructure related projects, especially those related to education and health facilities, roads and communal infrastructure were mentioned by 33% , followed by the youth and minority related projects, support to businesses, agriculture, flood recovery and cross border cooperation. When asked to name the largest donor in their locality the EU was mentioned as a part of 65% of responses while EU PRO, European PROGRES, EU PROGRES were mentioned in 14% of answers. USAID, Switzerland, Turkey, GIZ, UNDP, government and in particular PIMO were also mentioned in stated percentage.

However when offered a visual aid i.e. list of logos of different development Programmes, 323 (74%) identified EU PRO; 316 (72%) European PROGRES; 284 (65%) EU PROGRES; 258 (59%) USAID; 240 (55%) EU Exchange, 139 (32%) Floods and 57 (13%) the MIR programme. **Overall the EU was identified by far as the largest individual donor of grants by 82% of respondents, followed by Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Russia, US and China.**

Majority of people (49%), understands that the EU contributes large funds to development of Serbia but that these efforts are not enough to change poor overall life standards of citizens. When estimating the amount of funding EU availed for Serbia so far 145 (34%) estimated it is over 100 million euros, 40 (9%) estimated contribution to be under 100 million Euros while 36 (8%) simply noted that whatever the contribution, it was not enough.

Answering if the EU accession conditions are unchangeable 59% felt that the conditions are constantly changing while 173 (41%), understood that conditions are consistent. Finally, (89%) percent of respondents were in favour of joining the EU while (11%) were against it.[[8]](#footnote-8)

1. Local and regional development was assessed as the most positive effect on everyday life by 311 (53%) out of 587 respondents [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Participants of the survey were able to choose multiple answers for this question [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Internet portals (348 / 66,16% out of 526); Social media (343 / 65%); TV (148 or 28%), Facebook users (423 / 91% out of 475) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Participants of the survey could choose multiple answers for this question [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In total 1,284 emails sent, 5,070 users was reached via EU PRO Facebook page, and 429 via pop-up survey placed on the [EU PRO website](http://www.eupro.org.rs/). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Participants of the survey could choose multiple answers for this question [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Participants of the survey could choose multiple answers for this question [↑](#footnote-ref-8)