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EUROPEAN PERCEPTIONS IN ROMANIA - 2015

A national quantitative survey

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**THE WELL-TEMPERED OPTIMISM OF ROMANIANS 8 YEARS
AFTER JOINING THE EUROPEAN UNION**

- Prof. Radu Carp, PhD -

Romanians are still confident in their future as part of the European project 8 years after joining the EU. Two out of three Romanians believe that free circulation is beneficial, obviously having in mind the right to work abroad. Quite probably, this outcome is also related to the slow transition to the full liberalization of the labor market for the Romanian workers, which ended only on January 1, 2014. As a result of this positive perception and of the benefits of EU membership, three out of four Romanians consider that the accession was a step in the right direction. The association of the EU with a positive aspect, due to the freedom to work in a Member State, could be cleverly used by Romania in the potentially challenging negotiations with the United Kingdom, which plans to demand limitations on the labor market as a condition to remain in the EU. In its turn, the EU could use this public opinion barometer to offer Romania as an example in the same negotiations.

60% of Romanians get their information on the European Union from the Internet and only 40% from TV programs. This shift in the sources of information is a general trend. However, several particular considerations need to be added. The European Union's efforts to make itself known through the Internet did not have much of an impact on this outcome. Rather, Romanians refer to information on their fellow citizens who live in EU Member States. TV stations show little interest in the European subjects, even in those concerning the employment opportunities available in the EU. They are desperately seeking to raise their ratings, but are hardly willing to change the orientation of their programs in response to the market demand.

43% of Romanians believe that the EU funds should support the agriculture, while only 20% consider that they should be invested in research. The high percentage in favor of agriculture is explained by the great number of Romanians who actually experience the benefits of the CAP in the form of EU subsidies - not only the farmers, but also urban people who bought

or recovered farmlands under the property restoration laws. The investment in research is not seen as a priority, because the connection between higher allocations to the R&D sector and an economic growth that could benefit all citizens through the redistribution of higher budget revenues has not been stated or emphasized. The fact that 85% of respondents have participated in EU-funded programs shows that, in fact, the funds absorption rate is not the only relevant indicator, but both indicators should be considered. This percentage also points at another thing that bolsters the enthusiasm regarding the EU accession: the direct experience with EU-funded projects.

Romanians consider that all institutions are affected by the European Union, without seeing too many differences. It is worth noting that trade unions and religious denominations are placed at the bottom of the rankings. This points at a significant gap between perception and the actual situation, caused by the lack of communication of these institutions with regard to their participation in the European project. In fact, the trade unions and the religious denominations have long understood the benefits of joint actions, at EU level, with similar actors in other countries and have been very effective in this respect, but choose not to communicate too much on this subject in Romania.

With regard to Romania's joining the Schengen Area, it is important to note that one out of five Romanians is not familiar at all with this subject and does not know its implications. This shows the failure of the authorities to explain the benefits of this membership. Most of those who are aware of the topic believe that the accession to the Schengen Area will bring economic benefits. The perception is right, but the explanation is not strictly economic: if Romania enters the Schengen Area, the political confidence of the other EU Member States will increase (in fact, the admission into the Schengen Area would be an expression of such confidence), which will ultimately result in economic benefits, too. Of course, joining the Schengen Area would also have economic effects in itself, but they should not be overrated. Romanians see as positive the free circulation within the EU, but would like that the migration of persons from outside the EU be limited. This is a clear indicator of the position stated in the refugee crisis: it is not clear whether the public influenced the media in creating a rather negative perception of migration

or the other way round, or both sides fueled each other's opinions. Regardless of the explanation, any public policy in this area should consider this perception, which is neither extremely positive, nor extremely negative, but rather moderate and skeptical.

Most of Romanians believe that there are not too many obstacles in getting a job in the EU. Almost certainly, the respondents refer to employment as a whole, both legal and illegal. 40% of Romanians would work abroad for a higher wage than in Romania, but only 23% would accept it only if hired by an employment contract. Romanians are less interested in the working conditions, social security, etc., but see as a priority the earning of higher wages than in Romania.

The respondents consider that the healthcare systems in other Member States are better than the Romanian one, as a result of direct experiences or of public debates. A smaller percentage believe that education is better abroad. The positive image of the school persists and could be used more intensively to improve the perception of the benefits of EU accession.

A significant percentage of respondents (52%) consider that the EU citizenship is important, while a comparable percentage (69%) value the national citizenship. This result may seem surprising, considering the very low value placed by the majority of Europeans on a supranational citizenship, but it is obvious that the respondents do not refer to the rights associated to the EU citizenship, but to the right to find a better paid job abroad.

Romanians have a higher degree of confidence in the EU institutions (the European Commission, the Council and the Parliament of the European Union) than in the national ones, a fact that may be largely due to the local debate on corruption, in which corruption is almost entirely associated to the national institutions, not to the European ones. Romanians view terrorism as a major threat (65%), but only 38% see a danger in the ascension of extremist/nationalist parties, although 82% of them support the need for European programs to fight extremism. The absence of an extremist/nationalist/populist party in the Romanian politics is an explanation for this cognitive dissonance.

84% of Romanians expect to be offered the unrestricted right to work in the EU and 84% of them believe that they are entitled to social benefits in the Member States, which confirms that the access to the European labor market is seen by Romanians as the greatest post-accession achievement and as an inviolable right.

The survey is a very good indicator of the current perceptions of Romanians in respect of the European Union. Obviously, it demonstrates an improved level of knowledge compared to the one existing before 2007 or immediately after the accession. This is due to the very extensive number of Romanians who travel to and work in EU Member States or who benefited from EU funding in Romania. The European optimism of Romanians remains high but, at the same time, there are some concerns related to security (terrorism, uncontrolled migration, etc.). The survey also reveals that the formation of perceptions is influenced by the agenda of the media. Even though the Internet is the leading source of information, surpassing the television, for most respondents, the Internet means online news agencies, news feeds, etc. Political culture is less valued by Romanians. They are less interested in the European debates, including those concerning the future of free circulation or of the granting of social benefits by the EU Member States where they work and place very little value on political participation. (It would have been interesting to include a question regarding the voting in the election for the European Parliament, not only in Romania, but in other EU Member States, for those who reside in such states, as well as a question to test the knowledge of the names of the political parties active at EU level).

On one hand, the political leaders will have to take into account this perception in the negotiations with other countries on free circulation, the right to work, Schengen Area membership and the migration management, as all these aspects are more interconnected in the European agenda than the officials in Bucharest tend to believe. On the other hand, the EU institutions should focus more on improving the political culture, which could result in a wider participation of citizens in the decision-making process and, ultimately, in a better democracy.

I. INTRODUCTION¹

The population of Romania has had a positive perception of the European Union in recent years, with most sociological surveys indicating a high level of confidence of Romanians in the EU. Most often, this positive image is not correlated with specific arguments to underpin the way the European Union is perceived. The public discourse and, in particular, the political one maintain this positive, yet diffuse attitude of the population, without actually proposing a European project for Romania, even after eight years of EU membership.

This study supported by Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies seeks to analyze, using sociological tools, the Romanian population's perception of the key topics of the current European debate: economy, employment, competitiveness, transportation, internal market, labor mobility, populist movements, security, EU funds, etc. The study diagnoses the actual status and trends in the Romanian society concerning the European Union. The analysis also aims to identify the societal values and their impact on the social and political behavior in the European context.

To achieve its objectives, the initial phase of the research included a brainstorming session with Romanian experts in various fields: economics, politics, law and sociology. During the debate, various prevailing European topics were proposed to be tested and analyzed during the quantitative phase of the survey. The topics were selected based on criteria including relevance, persistence in time, accessibility to the general population, usefulness and specificity. Thus, the topics put forward, selected and discussed were those with a high level of relevance for the European debate, actual for a longer period, accessible and of interest for the general public, useful for initiating a public debate on a consistent European project and highly specific, focusing on the perception of particular issues.

¹ The study was conceived and drafted by Alexandru Zodieru and Paul Acatrini, based on the results of a focus group consisting of Viviana Anghel, Tanase Stamule and Radu Carp.

The brainstorming session with Romanian experts identified 14 research topics, divided into three wider dimensions that were approached in three survey waves. The three research dimensions included:

A. Romania in the European context: general perceptions. This dimension consisted of: spontaneous associations of the populations with regard to the European Union, sources of information concerning the EU, perceptions and evaluations of the impact of EU funds in Romania, the relation between Romania and the European Union (cooperation, decentralization, regionalization, and localization).

B. Employment, migration and tourism. The second questionnaire focused on aspects related to free circulation within the European Union, the Schengen Area, employment in EU and Romania in the context of labor migration (opportunities, obstacles), tourism, transportation, economy and trade (competitiveness and common regulations).

C. Politics, citizenship and European security. The third dimension dealt with European political matters: citizenship (national and EU), relations between Romanian institutions and the European ones, citizens' confidence in these institutions and attitude towards politics and elections. Trends regarding security in Europe, tolerance and political extremism in the context of European security were also measured.

By analyzing the dimensions referred to above, we have obtained a picture of Romanians facing Europe, a general public's opinion on the meaning that Romania should have in the European Union.

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY

The survey "European Perceptions in Romania - 2015" was conducted based on a combined (quantitative and qualitative) methodology. Thus, a focus group of experts was set up in the initial phase to identify, select and group the research topics. Discussions led to a survey plan that included the structure of the questionnaires considering the research dimensions and topics. Following the analysis, it was decided to develop three opinion polls on 4 to 5 topics each.

1. Sampling

The target population of the opinion polls is represented by citizens of Romania aged over 18 who are currently living in Romania. The adult population of Romania is 16,266,822.

The **sample** for each opinion poll included 1,064 respondents, with a total of 3,192 questionnaires used. Stratified probability samples, representative for the targeted population, were used. The maximum tolerable error for this research is $\pm 3\%$ for a confidence interval of 95%.

The **sample stratification criteria** for this survey included: area of residence, age, gender and region.

Population and sample structure by development region:

BUCHAREST-ILFOV	15.7%
CENTER	12.6%
NORTHEAST	15.7%
NORTHWEST	11.9%
SOUTH	7.8%
SOUTHEAST	12.9%
SOUTHWEST	11.7%
WEST	11.8%
TOTAL	100.0%

Population and sample structure by area of residence:

RURAL	44.8%
URBAN	55.2%

Population and sample structure by gender and age group:

	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Total
MALE	14.6%	13.6%	11.8%	8.0%	48.0%
FEMALE	13.9%	13.2%	13.0%	11.9%	52.0%
Total	28.5%	26.8%	24.7%	20.0%	100.0%

2. Data collection

Questionnaires were used as **research instruments** for collecting quantitative data. The three questionnaires applied included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The questions were developed based on the 14 topics identified in the qualitative research phase.

Data collection was performed by telephone interviews (CATI – Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) in September – November 2015. One representative sample of Romania's population aged over 18 was interviewed for each of the three polls. The samples were formed randomly, by automatic generation of telephone numbers (both mobile and landline) based on the number assignment intervals of ANCOM (National Authority for Telecommunication Administration and Regulation). The average questionnaire application time was 13 to 16 minutes.

III. ROMANIA IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT: GENERAL PERCEPTIONS

The general perceptions of Romanians concerning the position of Romania in the European context were identified in the first wave of the sociological survey. This was made by telephone, in October 2015. The sociological questionnaire was the research instrument used and 1,064 respondents were interviewed.

Given the number of respondents, their answers can be generalized to the entire population of Romania. They should be read considering a margin of error of $\pm 3\%$ applicable for this sample size.

The *research topics* of the first wave of the survey included:

1. General associations with Europe/the European Union
2. Sources of information on Europe
3. European funds
4. Decentralization and cooperation (European, regional, national and local)

III. 1. General associations with Europe/the European Union

Romanians see the European Union from multiple perspectives. Thus, when asked to say the first word that came to mind when thinking of this entity, their answers included: *agriculture, help, blue, harmony, money, Brussels, civilization, cohesion, community, competition, corruption, debts, democracy, destabilization, disorganization, development, economy, Euro, globalization, Germany, thieves, investments, free circulation, wages, etc.* Obviously, the picture outlined by respondents comprises elements of various natures, associated with mixed feelings.

These words were associated to a more limited number of categories, i.e. *politics, economy, social, dissatisfaction, migration* and *other*. The political dimension was the most frequent option (28%), represented by words like *union, integrity* or *freedom*. The second dimension

associated to the European Union is the **economy** (*the Euro currency, better living, jobs, etc.*) The social **sphere** is also a significant association, represented by words like *modernization, fairness, education*.

The least represented dimension of the image of the European Union is **migration**, with less than 10% of Romanians making an immediate connection between it and the entity.

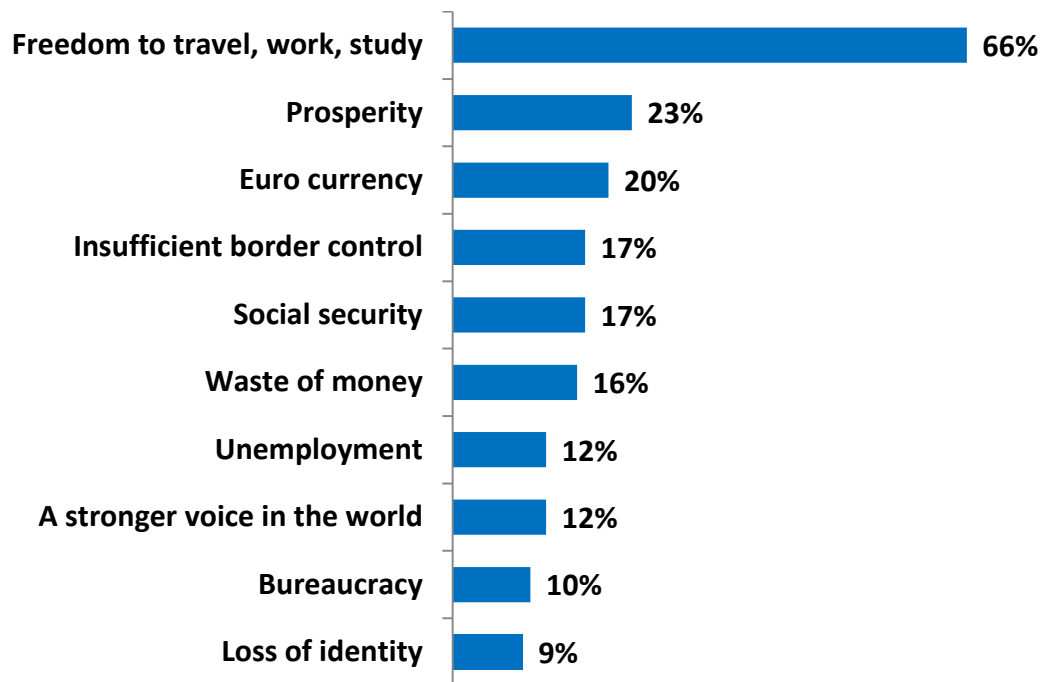
In addition to spontaneous associations between the European Union and certain words, the respondents were invited to choose from a long list of possible answers what the entity means to them. Thus, we can say that for over 60% of Romanians, the European Union means the freedom to travel, work and study. Apparently, the breaking of the space barriers between the EU member states is the key aspect identified by Romanians.

Prosperity and the *Euro currency* are other two dimensions that Romanians view as representative for the European Union. Less than 10% of Romanians believe that, for them, this entity brings a loss of (national) identity.

The individuals with a level of education below average associate to a greater extent the European Union with the **economic** dimension compared to those with an education level above average, while the latter associate it with **dissatisfaction** and **politics**. These differences highlight the interests of these categories of Romanians: the ones with an education level below average being concerned with concrete matters, e.g. the economy, rather than with abstract ones. On the other hand, the associations of words made by the respondents with higher education direct the debate on the European Union to slightly more sensitive dimensions, e.g. politics.

The **economy** is associated with the European Union by the people living in the southwest of Romania and to the smallest extent by those in the northwest. Southeastern Romanians link politics to the European Union to a greater extent than other Romanians. There are no significant differences in answers between the age groups or genders.

Chart No. 1 Personal meanings of the European Union for Romanians



Source: EKI Support Solutions report

Regardless of the associations made with the European Union, most Romanians (45%) think that the accession to the EU had **no visible impact** on their lives (status). Nevertheless, one third of them considered that their lives had improved after 2007.

In spite of this, around 75% of citizens believe that Romania **does have certain benefits** related to its EU membership.

Most women in Romania stated that their lives had not changed after the accession into the European Union. The highest percentage of respondents that answered that their lives had improved after 2007 were young people aged 18 to 34 and the lowest were those aged over 65.

One third of the Romanians with below-average education levels said that their lives worsened after accession and only 18% of the persons in this category believe that their current situation is better.

A higher percentage of the Romanians living in the Bucharest-Ilfov area stated that their situation had improved after the EU accession, compared to other areas of the country. Those in the southeast area consider that their lives remained the same (60%).

A rather low percentage of Romanians (34%) believe that currently **things are going well in Romania**, while, at the same time, half of them think that things in the **European Union** are heading the **right direction**.

Compared to the Romanians with below-average (secondary) education levels, a higher percentage of Romanians with above-average (graduate and postgraduate) education levels declare that things are heading the right direction in Romania. The persons with below-average education levels are more optimistic than the others about the evolutions in the European Union, with over 60% saying that they are on the right path.

A higher percentage of urban respondents consider that things are heading the right direction in Romania compared to the rural ones. However, rural Romanians believe that things are going the right direction in the European Union.

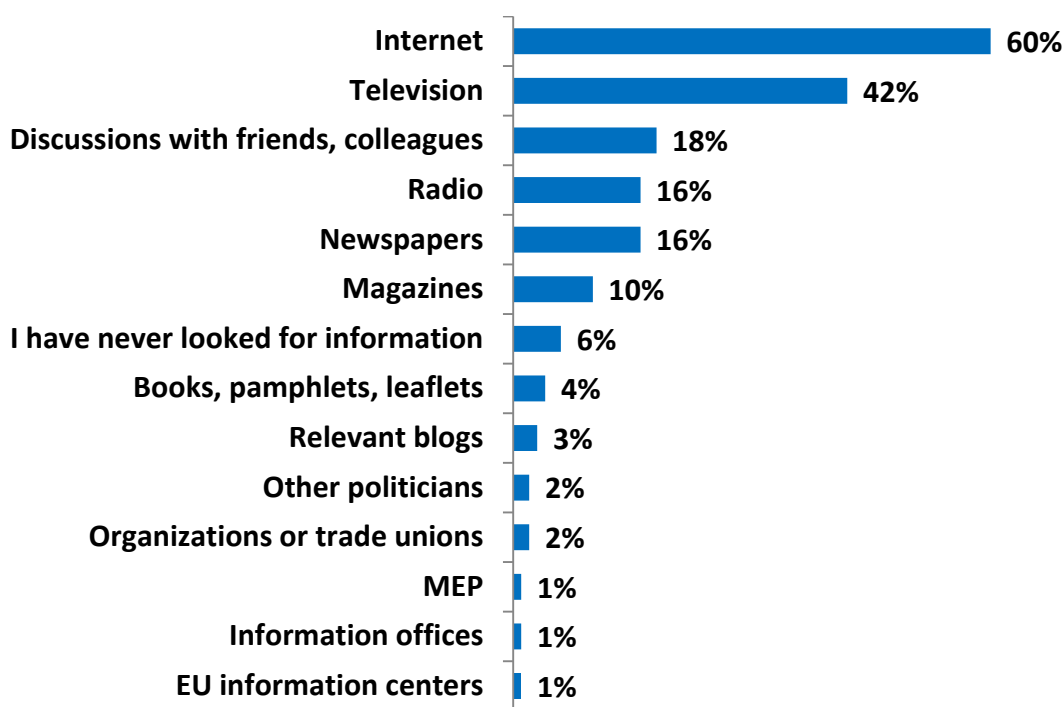
The Romanians living in the west of the country are the least optimistic with regard to the current situation of Romania. On the other hand, around 40% of the respondents in the Bucharest-Ilfov area consider that Romania is on the right path. The most optimistic about the evolutions in the European Union are the respondents living in the Southwest-Oltenia region, while the most pessimistic are those in western Romania.

III. 2. Sources of information on Europe

On average, Romanians' self-rating of their knowledge about the European Union is 4.28 on a scale of 1 to 7 ("very much knowledge"). One third of Romanians self-rate their knowledge on the European Union as level 5.

Around one third of respondents believe that their level of knowledge is below the average calculated for the entire sample. A rather low percentage of Romanians - about 10% - stated that they *did not know anything* and approximately the same percentage declared that they *knew very much* about this entity.

Chart No. 2 Sources of information on the European Union



Source: EKI Support Solutions report

Romanians obtain most of their information on the European Union from the **Internet**, with 60% of them using this source. **Television** comes second, 40% of Romanians saying that they improve their knowledge of the European Union by watching TV programs. The **discussions**

with friends and colleagues are the third most important source of information on this subject, with one fifth of Romanians using it to obtain new information about the EU.

One third of Romanians **have never talked with friends or colleagues** about the European Union. Subjects related to this entity are seldom discussed with other persons by 25% of Romanians.

The percentage of women who never talk with friends about the European Union is higher than that of men. Most of the Romanians who frequently talk with friends about EU issues live in the Southwest-Oltenia area.

On average, men self-rate their knowledge about the European Union higher than women. Young people aged 18 to 34 believe that they know less than individuals in other age categories. The Romanians with below-average education levels self-rate their knowledge about the European Union as medium (around 3 - the average of the scale).

The average self-rating of knowledge of urban Romanians is higher than that of people living in rural areas. Geographically, northwestern Romanians rate higher their level of knowledge about the European Union.

Most Romanians obtain information on the European Union from the **Internet**, with 60% of them using this source. **Television** is the second favorite source.

Slightly more than 5% of Romanians have never looked for information on this subject.

The least used information sources are the members of the European Parliament, information offices and the EU information centers.

The **Internet** is a source of information used by more men than women. Women, however, prefer television. Young people up to the age of 35 use the Internet as a source of information more extensively than those above 50. The Romanians aged 50 and above use radio and newspapers for information more than those aged up to and including 49.

Urban Romanians use the Internet as a source of information about the European Union more than the rural ones. In their turn, rural Romanians mainly obtain their information on the European Union from television, discussions with family, friends and colleagues and the radio.

The Romanians in the Bucharest-Ilfov area use the Internet most to find information concerning the European Union. Television is the source of information used by half of the Romanians living in the southeast area.

III. 3. European funds

A high percentage of Romanians - around 45% consider that the EU funds should be invested with priority in **agriculture** and **rural development**. These are the main areas of interest for investments for male respondents and/or rural respondents and/or respondents living in central Romania.

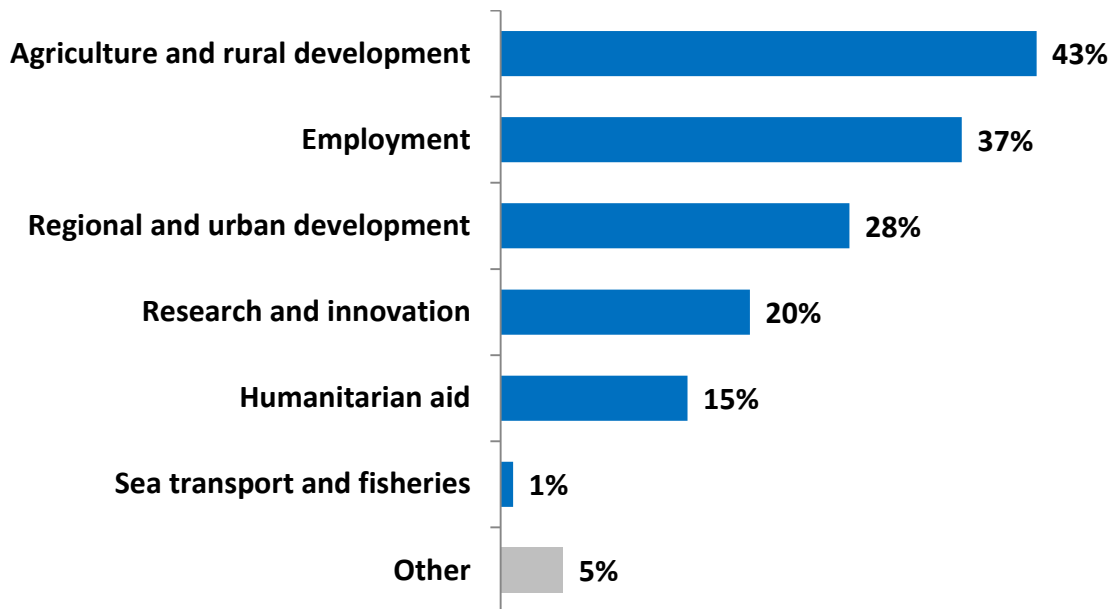
Employment is another area in which Romanians consider that EU funds should be rapidly invested. Over 40% of Romanian women would give priority to investing European funds in employment and social inclusion.

Employment is seen as a priority for EU funds investment by the Romanians with an education level below average, while those with above-average education levels favor agriculture, regional and urban development, research and innovation.

Romanians attach a **very low level of priority** for EU funding to **sea transport** and **fisheries**.

Other mentioned areas include: healthcare and education, economy and defense, and infrastructure.

Chart No. 3 Priority areas for EU funding



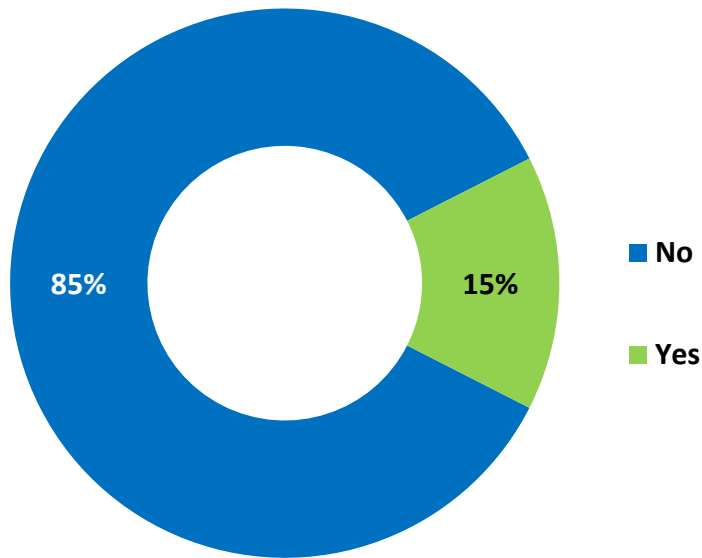
Source: EKI Support Solutions report

EU-funded professional development programs were attended by 15% of Romanians. Most participants were individuals with an above-average education level. A possible explanation is that information on such programs is disseminated in particular through channels that are more accessible to this category of people.

Furthermore, these programs were attended in a greater proportion by urban Romanians compared to those living in rural communities. These differences can be explained by the deficient access to information. The Romanians living in the South-Muntenia region participated in EU-funded professional development programs in a greater proportion than those in other regions.

About one half of Romanians believe that the EU-funded projects contributed to a small or very small extent (or had no contribution) to the improvement of their lives. Only an extremely small percentage of respondents - 3% - stated that the projects of this type had a major positive impact on their lives.

Chart No. 4 Participation in EU-funded personal development programs



Source: EKI Support Solutions report

Of the Romanians who participated in such programs, around 60% had only one experience of this kind, while one third of them took part in two or three projects.

The **EU-funded projects** that are best known by Romanians are those related to **local infrastructures** (e.g. water supply and sewerage systems, roads and bridges) and to **leisure and relaxation** (e.g. parks).

The investments less frequently identified as funded by the EU are those in healthcare (e.g. hospitals and outpatient facilities), as well as in education.

III. 4. Decentralization and cooperation (European, regional, national and local)

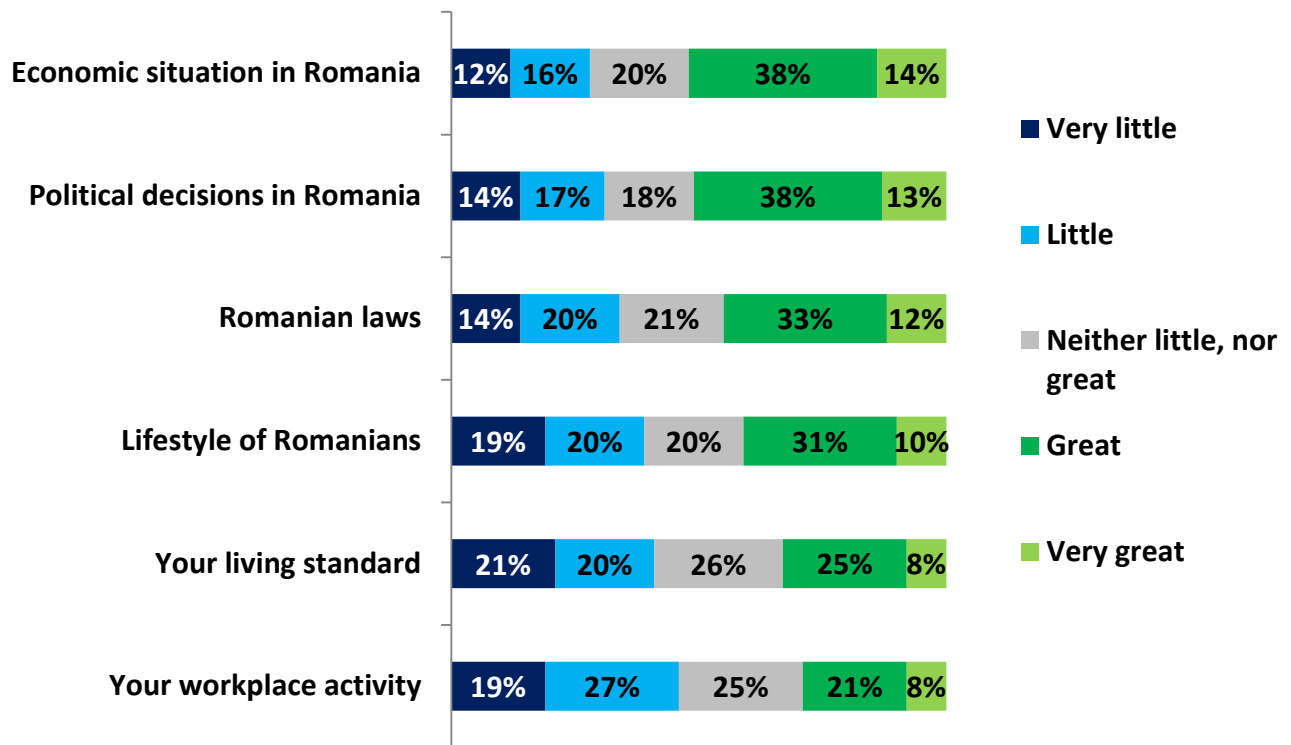
In respect of the influence of the European Union's decision on certain aspects of life in Romania, Romanians perceive the strongest impact as being on the **economic situation** and on the **political decisions** in Romania. Around 45% of Romanians think that Romanian legislation is influenced to a great and very great extent by the decisions taken at EU level.

The least affected by the decisions of the European Union are the living standards and the day-to-day workplace activities, while around 30% of respondents consider that these are influenced to a great or very great extent. The European Union is also considered able to change the lifestyles of the EU citizens by the regulations and standards imposed on agriculture, technology, procedures and the economy as a whole. Thus, about 40% of Romanians state that the EU decisions have affected their lifestyle.

On average, Romanian men are more inclined than women to believe that the decisions of the European Union have a visible impact on the economic situation of the country. Furthermore, such impact is perceived in a greater proportion by young people aged 18 to 34 compared to those over 35.

The Romanians with below-average education levels identify a lower influence of the decisions of the European Union on the political decisions in Romania. The urban population also sees a greater impact of EU decision on the national policy compared to the rural one.

Chart No. 5 Impact of EU decisions on Romania

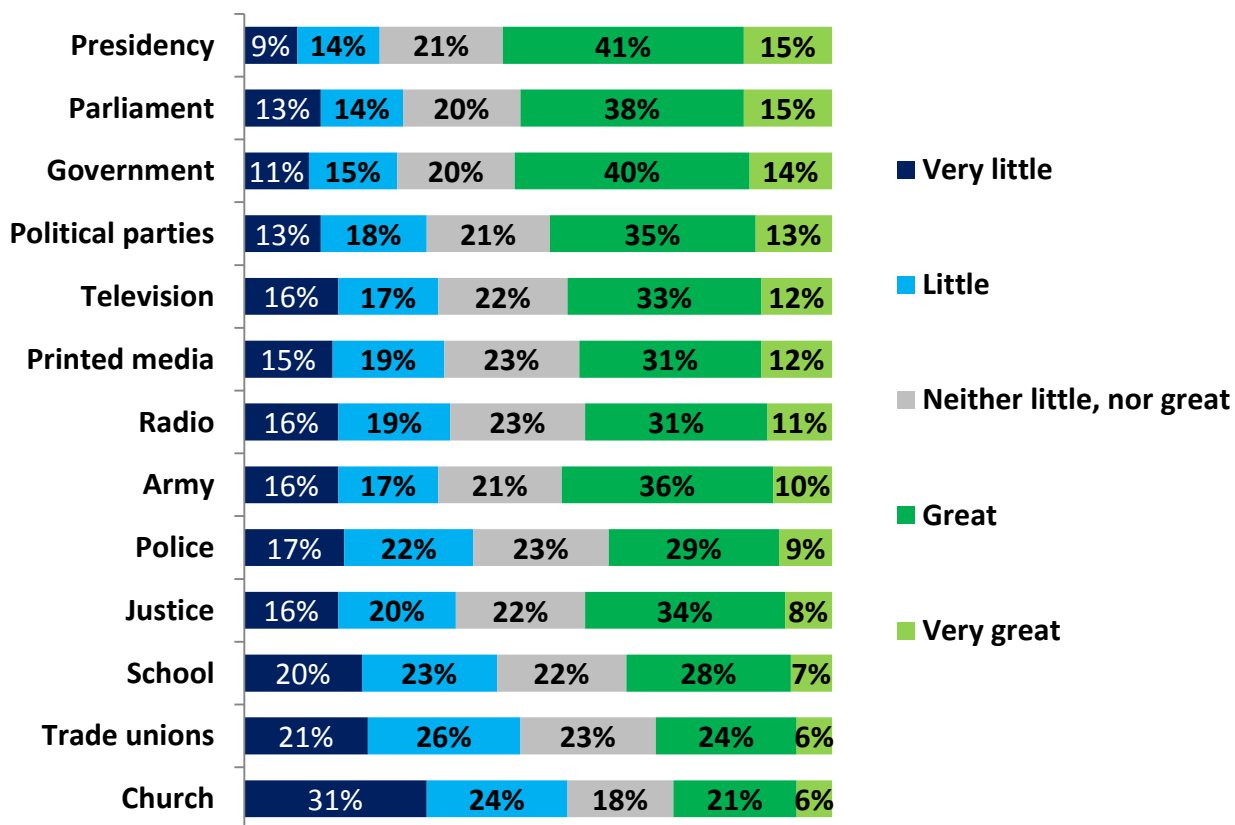


Source: EKI Support Solutions report

Romanians believe that the central institutions (the Presidency, the Parliament and the Government) are the ones influenced to a great or very great extent by the decisions of the European Union. The political parties are also identified by Romanians as influenced by the EU decisions. These results are quite expectable, considering that the entity concerned is primarily a political authority.

The church is perceived as the least influenced by the EU decisions, with around one third of Romanians stating that they have not identified any influence of the European decisions on religious institutions. The trade unions, education and justice are also seen as being among the least affected by the EU decisions.

Chart No. 6 Impact of EU decisions on Romania's institutions:



The Romanians in the Bucharest-Ilfov area perceive a higher impact of the EU decisions on the Presidency compared to those living in central Romania.

The **level at which various decisions are made** directly and/or indirectly influences different aspects of the lives of the people living in a specific country, but also the life of the country itself. When asked to specify the level at which certain decisions should be adopted, the majority of Romanians answered that, irrespective of their nature, decisions should be made at **national level**. Another significant percentage of population (about 35%) believe that the decision-making level for any aspect concerning Romania is the European one. This opinion might be motivated by Romania's EU membership.

Romanians consider that the areas in which decisions should be made at **European level** are the following (in descending order of importance): *trade, infrastructure, labor market and*

tourism. National-level decisions should focus on: *law, national security, education, agriculture and fisheries, as well as healthcare.*

Romanians believe that decisions on policy should be made at regional and national level (20% and 45%, respectively).

A very small percentage of Romanians consider that the **East-European level** would be adequate for making decisions concerning important fields of activity for Romania.

Romanians believe that the Romanian institutions should cooperate with the European ones in developing the *healthcare sector and health policies, labor market, education, national security, trade and infrastructure*. Politics is the area in which cooperation between the national institutions and the EU ones is seen as least important by Romanians.

On average, a greater percentage of young people aged up to 35 stated that cooperation between the national and the EU institutions is required for the development of education, compared to the age group of over 35. A possible explanation is that the former category has a more recent educational experience than the latter, as well as the fact that both categories are biased in judging the importance of education.

IV. EMPLOYMENT, MIGRATION, EUROPEAN ECONOMY

The second opinion poll of this survey investigated the opinions and attitudes of Romanians concerning employment, migration and the European economy.

The first topic of this phase of the project analyzes Romanians' perception of the Schengen Area: how they self-assess their level of knowledge of this concept and what are the areas affected by Romania's joining the Schengen Area (economy, tourism, security, labor, etc.).

The second part of this section deals with the attitude of Romanians towards the current European regulations on intra- and extra-EU migration, the rights that intra- and extra-EU migrants should have, previous experiences with traveling in Europe and the purpose of traveling.

Whether they had a European migration experience or not, Romanians have different views on the impact of European integration on the dynamics of labor and opportunities available in Europe. They also have different concerns or expectations with regard to the way Romanian migrants are treated as employees in the EU member countries.

The last part of this section is dedicated to the perception of the impact on Romania of the EU regulations concerning the economy and trade.

Data collection was performed by telephone in November 2015. A sociological questionnaire was used as research instrument.

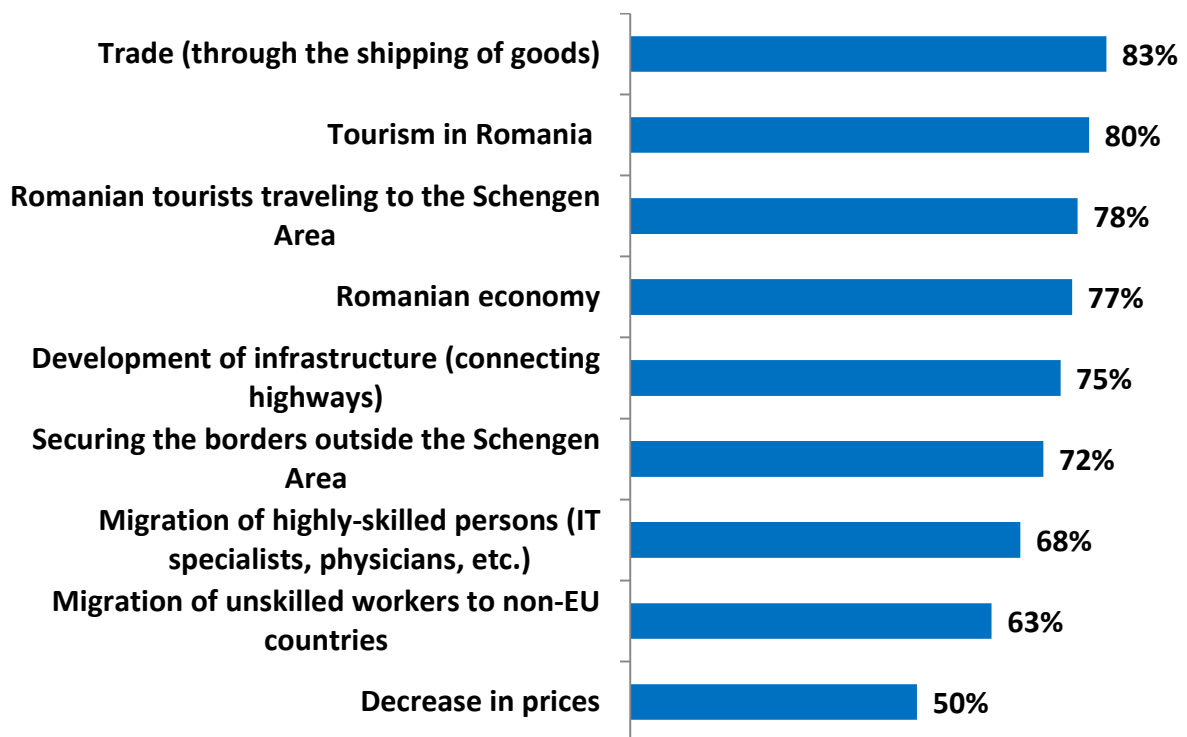
IV. 1. Schengen Area

On average, Romanians self-rate their knowledge about the Schengen Area as level 4 out of 7 (the maximum limit - "I know very much"). However, one fifth of Romania's population admit knowing nothing about the Schengen Area. The self-assessed level of knowledge on the subject is higher in men than in women.

The persons estimating their knowledge about the Schengen Area as high are than that of the rest are people aged above 65, people with an above-average education level and/or people living in the Bucharest-Ifov area.

Romanians believe that a noticeable impact of the country's joining the Schengen Area will be on *trade* and *tourism*. Half of respondents said that the lowest impact will be in terms of a decrease in prices.

Chart No. 7. Areas impacted by Romania's joining the Schengen Area



Source: Cult Market Research Report

There are no significant differences between men and women in the answers concerning the possible impact of Romania's joining the Schengen Area. The effects on trade and tourism are mentioned in a greater percentage by the persons aged over 65. Furthermore, the opinion concerning the trade is shared by the Romanians living in the west of the country. .

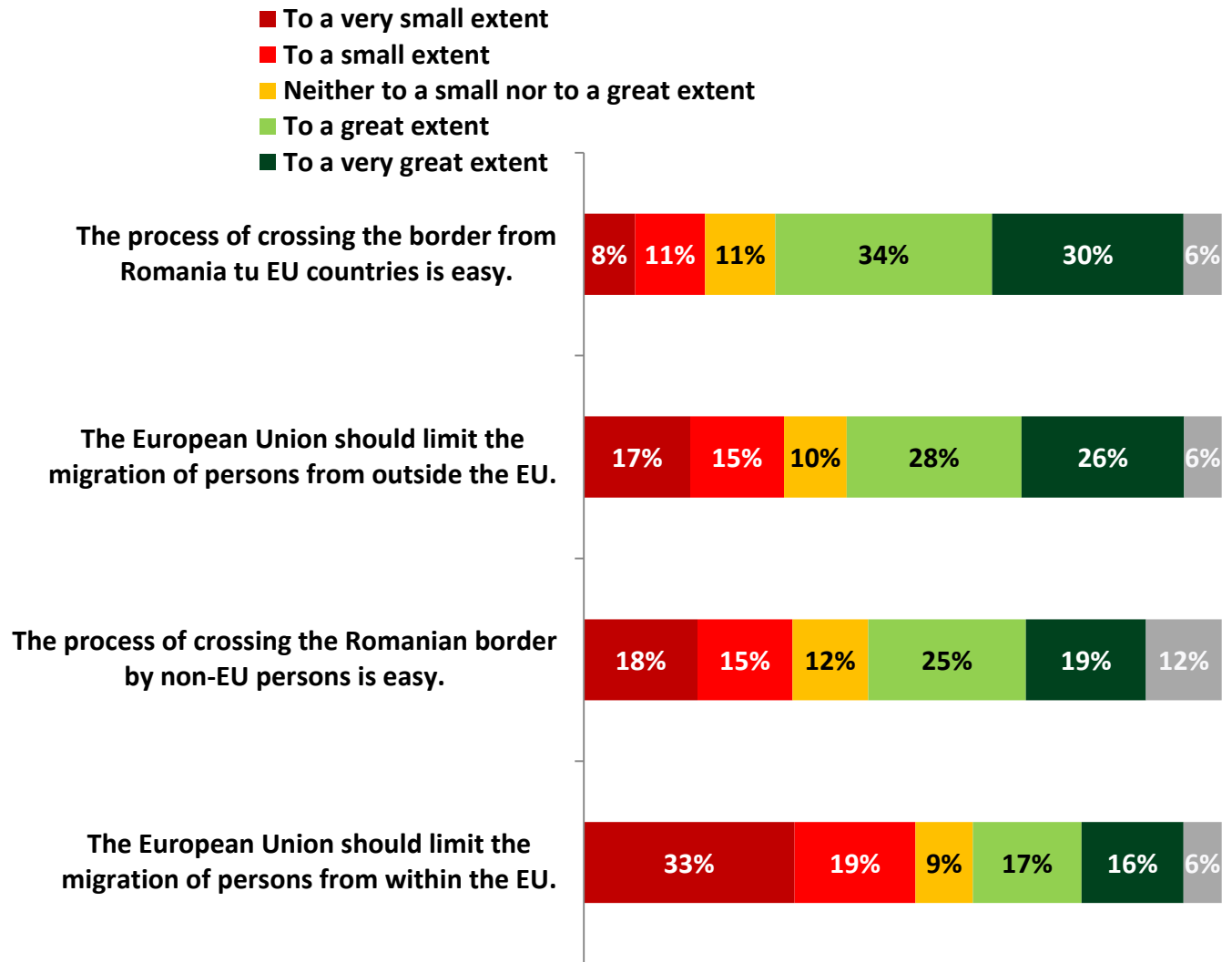
The people living in the South-Muntenia development region believe that the possible impact of joining the Schengen Area will be seen in the domestic tourism, as well as in the flow of Romanian tourists to the countries in the Schengen Area.

IV. 2. Intra- and extra-EU migration

Romanians consider that migration should be a benefit primarily allowed to the citizens of EU member states. More than one half of respondents believe that *the European Union should not limit the migration of persons within the EU*, while a similar percentage state that *the European union should limit the migration of persons from outside the EU*.

With regard to border crossing, over two thirds of the persons interviewed consider that Romanians can easily cross the borders to other countries in the EU. Nevertheless, perceptions differ as to the crossing of Romanian borders by non-EU citizens: 33% believe that it is rather difficult for non-EU persons to cross the Romanian border, while 43% think it is easy.

Chart No. 8. Intra- and extra-EU migration (statements)



Source: Cult Market Research Report

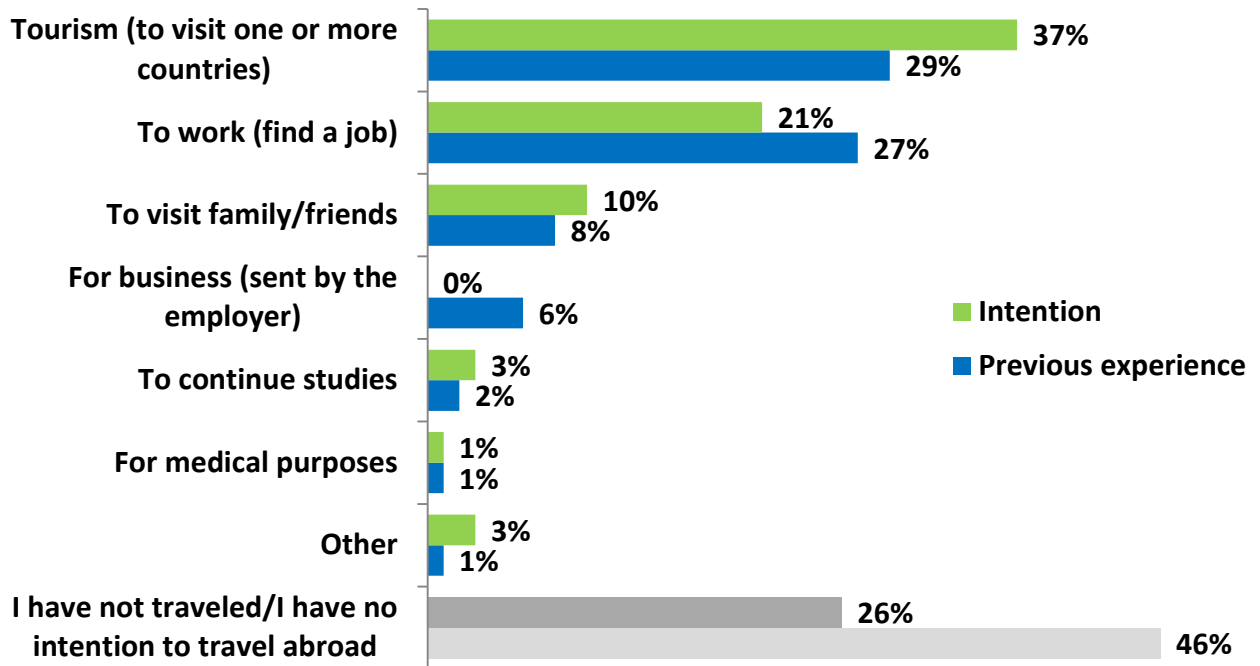
Over one half of Romanians have left the country at least once in the last three years, most of them (over 50%) for tourism and one third to look for a job or to take a job offer. Education and health rank at the bottom of the list of purposes of traveling abroad.

Other reasons for previously traveling abroad: Work&Travel US program, exchange of experience, sports competitions, shopping.

The possible profile of the Romanian citizen who traveled abroad in the last three years: urban, male, living in the Bucharest-Ilfov development region, with an above-average education level.

He left the country to visit one or more areas or to fulfill professional tasks. Men from rural areas usually left the country to find a job.

Chart No. 9. Purpose of previously traveling abroad and possible future purposes



Source: Cult Market Research Report

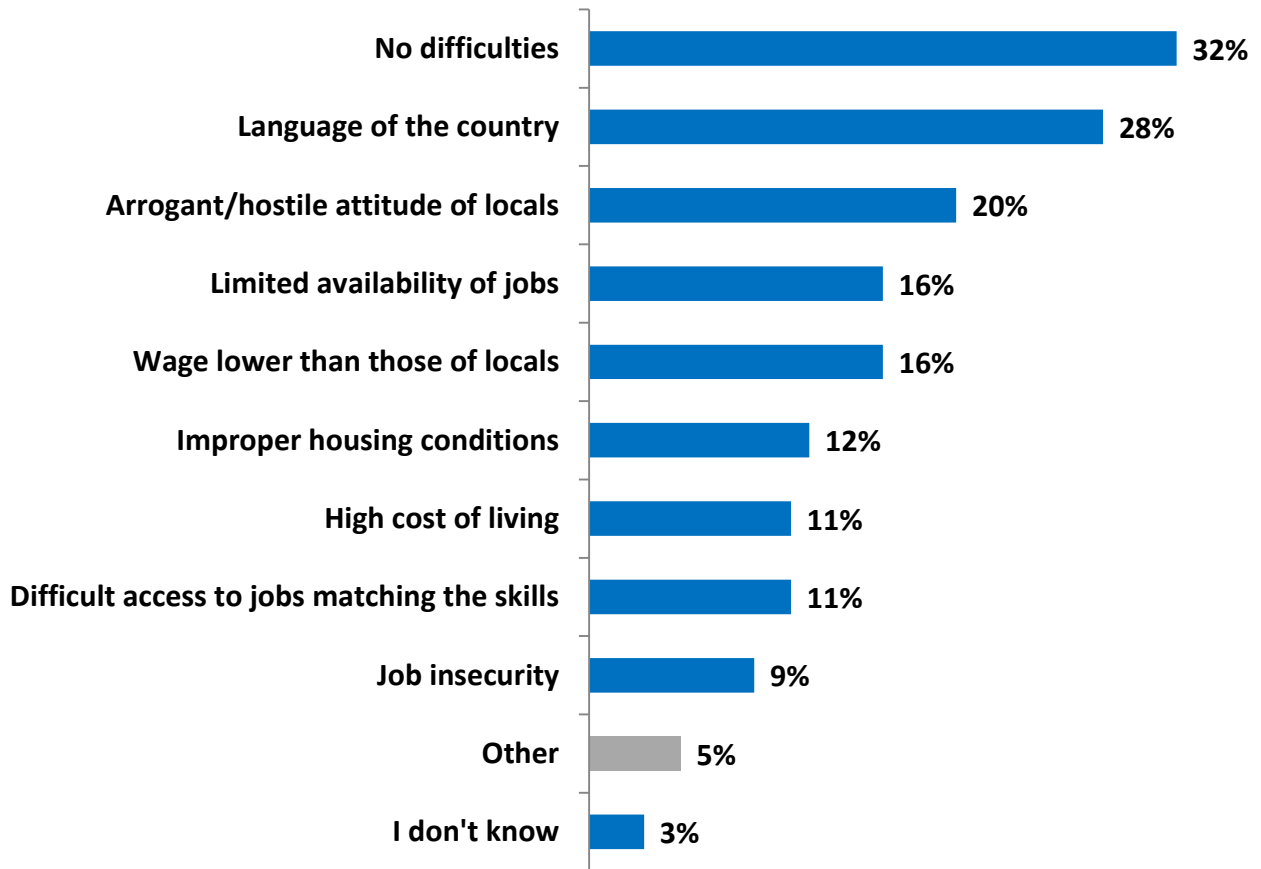
Almost two thirds of Romanians contemplate the idea of traveling abroad in the next three years. They plan to do it for tourism, as well as for work. The future intentions to travel for healthcare or for continuing studies remain at the bottom of the list of purposes.

The portrait of the Romanian planning to travel abroad in 2015-2018: urban, living in the Bucharest-Ilfov region or in southeastern Romania, aged 18 to 50 and with an above-average level of education.

IV. 3. Employment in EU and Romania in the context of labor migration

Of the Romanians who *looked for a job abroad*, a significant part (over 60%) encountered certain obstacles in the process. The most significant one was the *arrogant or hostile attitude of the citizens* of the country/countries of destination. *The language of the destination country* was another challenge for those who tried to find a job abroad. The language barrier affected in particular the rural Romanians and those living in the southeast region.

Chart No. 10. Difficulties in finding a job abroad



Source: Cult Market Research report (a sub-sample of people who went abroad for work – 147 persons)

The least significant obstacles were the uncertainty of employment and the difficult access of jobs matching the skills. The Romanians who did not face such problems were those in the South-Muntenia and Southwest-Oltenia development regions.

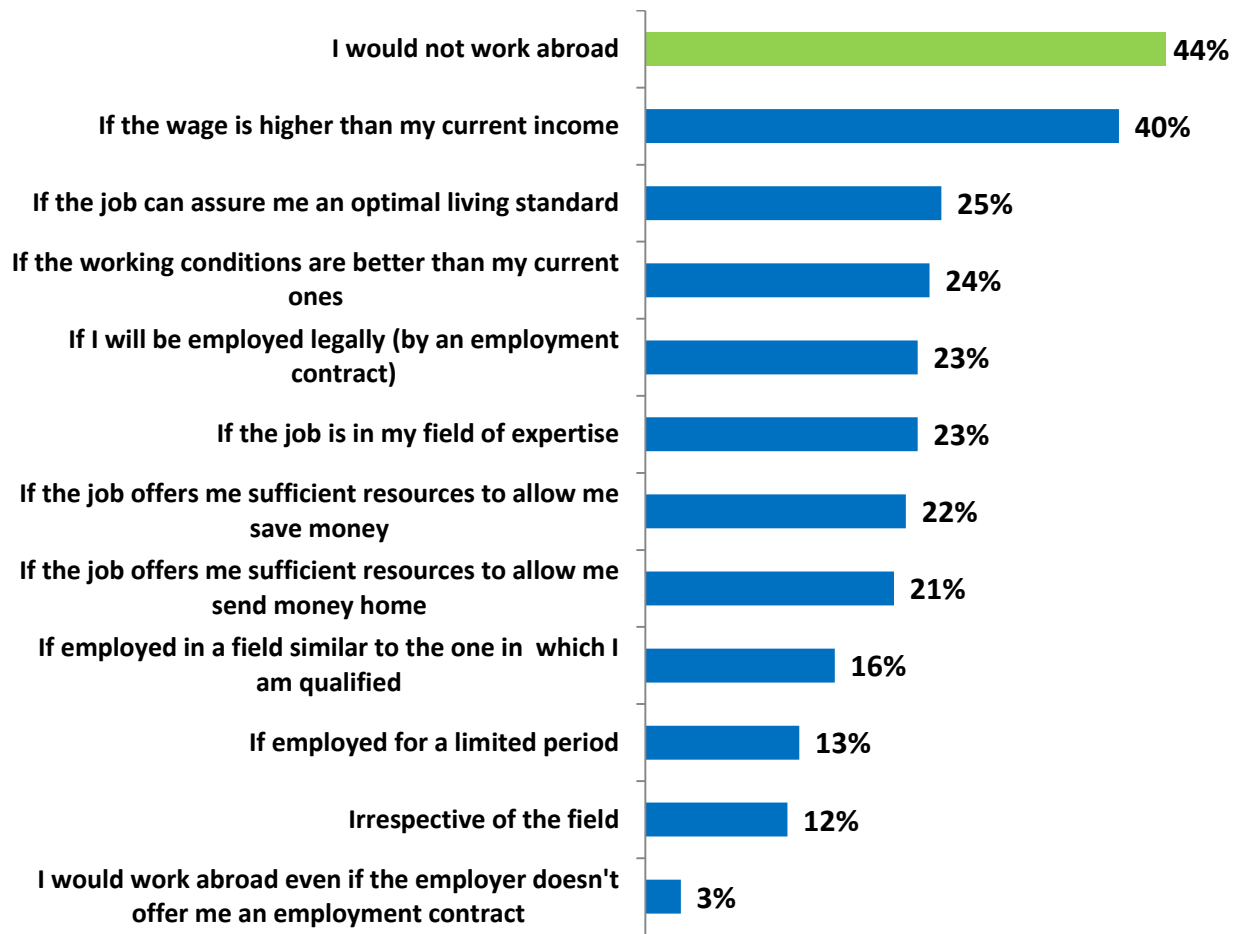
The longest period spent by a respondent abroad for work was 20 years, with an average of 4 years.

The Romanians who spent less than five years working abroad represent the largest share of the population that left the country for this purpose. However, there is a significant percentage of Romanians (8%) who chose to live abroad for more than 11 years.

The persons who spent less than one year working abroad were Romanians with an above-average education level who currently live in the Northwest region, aged 18 to 34, while those who worked abroad for more than 11 years now live in southeastern Romania.

Irrespective of their experience as work migrants, Romanians will accept to go abroad for work if they are offered a higher salary than their current income. It is important to note that Romanians pay attention to the legal commitments of the employer that have a direct impact on their present and future income (e.g. employment contracts), as a very low percentage would accept to work abroad without an employment contract. Furthermore, they are slightly more lenient about the field in which they would work abroad or about limited-time employment.

Chart No. 11. Conditions for accepting to work abroad



Source: Cult Market Research Report

Almost all Romanians (95 out of 100) know someone who works abroad and, from what they were told by such persons, the *main obstacles* encountered in finding a job were the language and the arrogant/hostile attitude of the locals to them. *The least frequent difficulties* mentioned by those who worked abroad to their friends include: difficult access to jobs latching their qualifications, improper housing and limited availability of jobs.

The Romanians who believe that Romania offers sufficient jobs to those willing to work are fewer than those who consider that the European Union offers enough jobs to those interested. It is important to mention that, with regard to the estimation of the match between the availability of jobs and the actual demand in the labor market, a greater percentage of

Romanians abstained from giving a specific answer with regard to the situation in the European Union compared to those who did the same for the situation in Romania.

IV. 4. Free circulation/transport

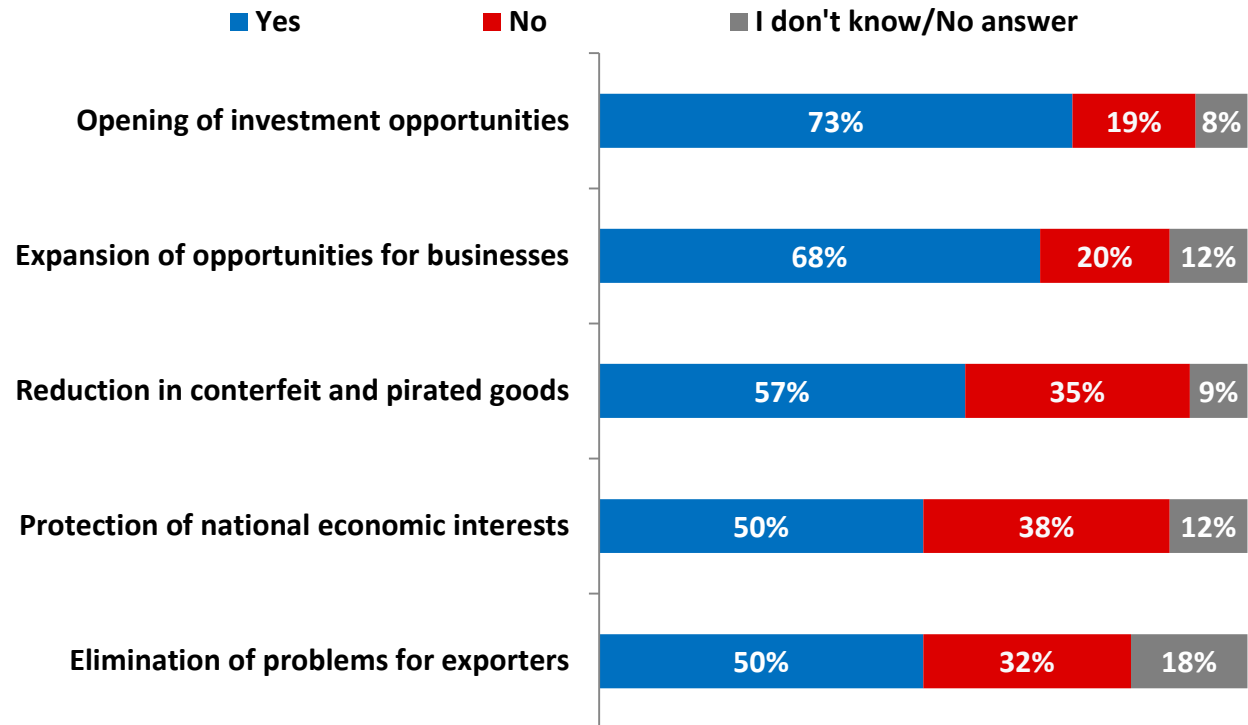
As we have mentioned above, Romanians largely agree to a great or very great extent with the statement that *the process of crossing the borders to the European Union member states is easy*, but a much smaller percentage of them have a similar opinion with regard to Romania's transport systems. Over 40% of Romanians consider to a very small and a small extent that the transport systems of the European Union are properly connected with the Romanian ones. The analysis of these opinions leads to the idea that Romania has infrastructure problems that prevent rapid access to the border crossing points.

IV. 5. Economy and trade in EU - rules, competition

Romania's participation in the common market of the European Union is viewed by the population of the country as having a positive impact on the national economy. However, 1 of 5 Romanians stated that the impact was negative. The opinions of Romanians on this subject are uniformly distributed among the gender, age, residence area, development region and education level groups.

The main contributions of the economic policy of the European Union identified by Romanians include the offering of investment opportunities and/or the expansion of opportunities for businesses. Half of Romanians believe that the economic policy of the European Union supports the protection of the economic interests of Romania and the elimination of difficulties for exporters. The Romanians with below-average levels of education consider in the smallest percentage that the economic policy of the European Union contributes to the elimination of difficulties for exporters.

Chart No. 12. Contributions of the economic policy of the European Union identified by Romanians



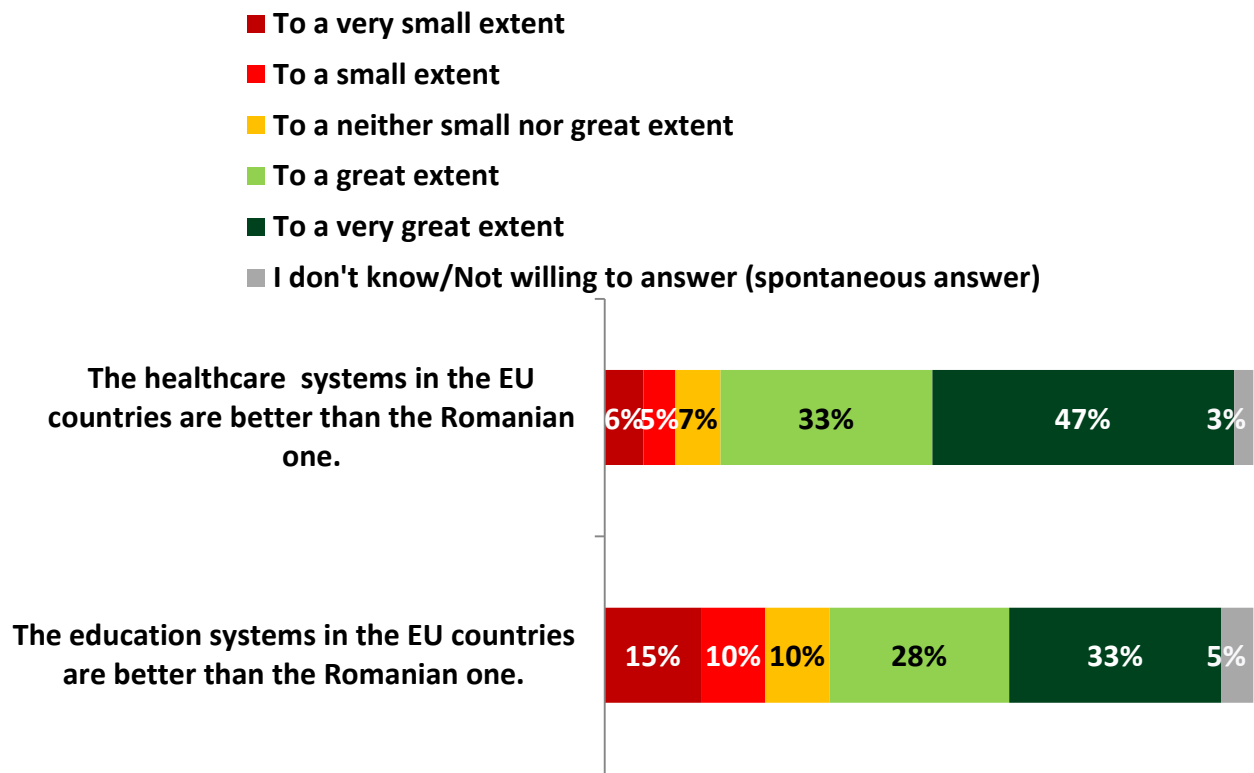
Source: Cult Market Research Report

Romanians indirectly state that a strict customs control of the goods transported within the EU is necessary in the European trade. However, they are equally strict about the need for the Romanian economy to be closely monitored by the European Union. About half of Romanians agree to a great and a very great extent to the monitoring of the national economy by the EU.

IV. 6. Quality of life

Romanians believe that the healthcare system in the European Union is better than the Romanian one, with 80% of them agreeing to a great or very great extent with this statement. The same applies with regard to the education system. About half of Romanians stated that the education systems of the European Union member states are better than the Romanian one.

Chart No. 13. Agreement of Romanians with the statements concerning the healthcare and education systems



Source: Cult Market Research Report

The Romanians who consider that the healthcare and education systems of the other member states are better than the Romanian ones are young people aged below 35 who live in the West development region, in the Southeast one or in Bucharest-Ilfov area.

C. POLITICS, CITIZENSHIP AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

The third wave of the sociological survey focused on aspects of the lives of Romanians directly or indirectly linked to their status as citizens of Romania and of the European Union. It also included questions meant to identify the attitude of the Romanian population towards institutions and political parties.

The answers offered by the 1,064 respondents can be extrapolated to the entire population of Romania. They should be read considering a margin of error of $\pm 3\%$ applicable for this sample size.

A sociological questionnaire was used as research instrument. Data collection was performed by telephone in November 2015.

Research topics included in the third wave:

1. Citizenship (national and European)
2. Romanian political institutions vs. European political institutions (attitudes towards politics, institutions and voting behavior)
3. Left wing/right wing extremism
4. Security and tolerance

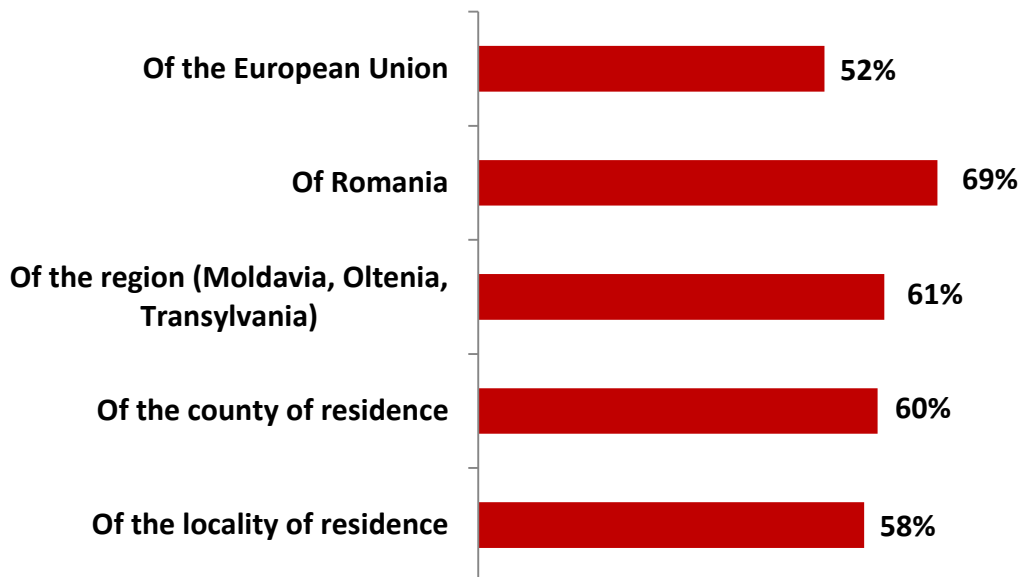
V. 1. Citizenship (national and European)

Romanians consider themselves Romanian citizens rather than EU citizens, as the former citizenship prevails over the latter. Of course, this can be the consequence of the simple idea that the Romanian citizenship is a concrete thing, while the European one is rather abstract.

Furthermore, the Romanians' feeling of belonging to the county and region of residence is stronger than that of belonging to the European Union.

The feeling of belonging to a certain organizational structure is more important for women, persons with below-average levels of education and people aged over 65 than for men, persons with higher education degrees or young people below 35.

Chart No. 14. Importance of citizenship...



Source: The Street report – percentage of "Very important" answers

The *decisions of politicians* adopted nationally or at EU level are viewed as having a higher potential to influence the lives of Romanians than the ones made at county, local or global level.

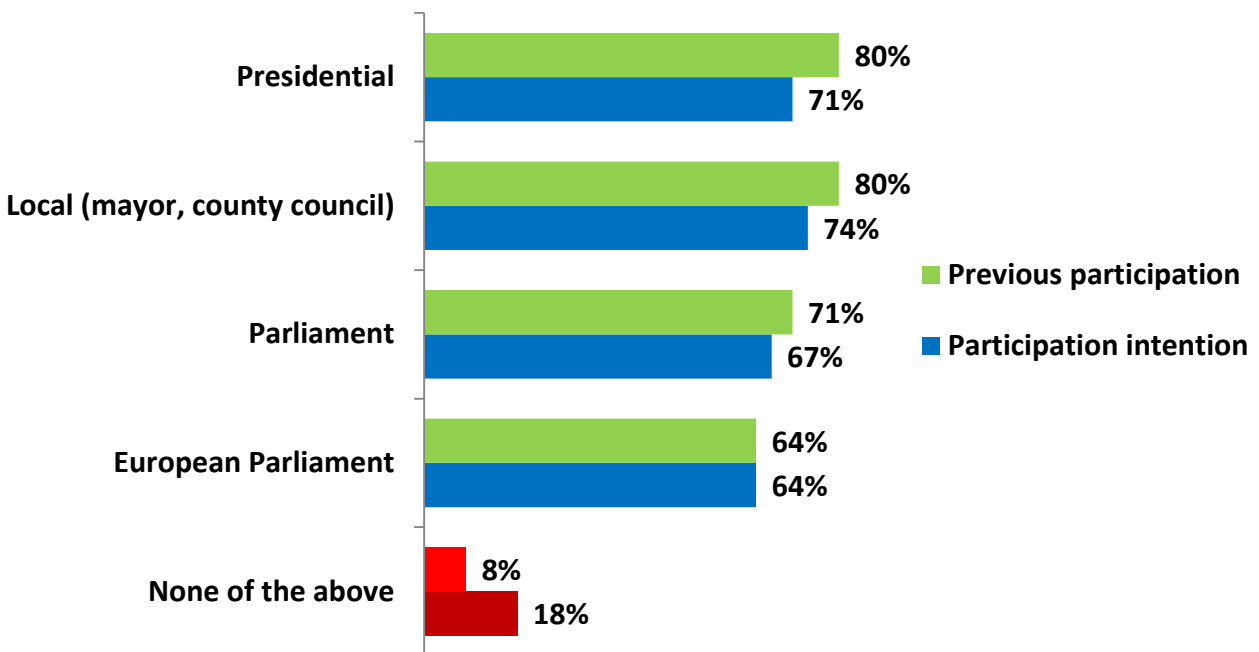
The *power of global decisions* to have an impact on the lives of Romanians is perceived to a greater extent by women than by men. The decisions made by politicians at *county* and *national* level are identified as having a potential to influence the lives of Romanian to a greater extent by young people aged 18 to 34 who live in urban areas and have above-average education levels.

The Romanians living in the Bucharest-Ilfov region perceive the impact of all political decisions on the lives of Romanians, regardless of the level where they are adopted, to a greater extent than people in other regions of the country.

V. 2. Romanian political institutions vs. EU political institutions

Considerably more than one half of the Romanians entitled to vote have exercised this right on at least one election round (irrespective of the type of elections). Romanians *avored* presidential and local elections and this could be explained by their knowledge of each type of elections. Thus, Romanians can have better access to information in the presidential and local election campaigns compared to other types of elections (e.g. for the national parliament, the European parliament, etc.). It is important to note that, in all the sociological surveys, both the voting behavior and the voting intention are overrated compared to the actual rates of voting in the elections concerned.

Chart No. 15. Previous and future voting behavior



Source: The Street report

There have not been any significant voting behavior differences in the last five years between men and women or among the people living in the eight development regions of Romania. A higher percentage of Romanians with above-average education levels voted in the presidential elections in recent years, compared to the people with below-average education. A similar behavior was noted in the local, parliament and European parliament elections.

Young people aged up to 35 had a lower rate of participation, their non-voting rate being 20%, compared to 5% in other categories of Romanians.

Considering the intention of Romanians to participate in elections, their behavior does not show any tendency to change, as the percentage of citizens with the right to vote who participated in the election rounds in the last five years is almost equal to that of the Romanians who intend to vote in the next five years.

They are mostly willing to vote in the local and presidential elections. However, the percentage of Romanians that are not willing to vote in the future is higher than that of the citizens who failed to vote in the last five years.

This gap may be caused by the uncertainty concerning the subject discussed, considering the possible changes in the voting behavior. The voting behavior differences identified between the people aged up to 34 and those over 65 remain unchanged in the intention to participate in elections in the next five years.

The Romanians with above-average education levels intend to vote in the presidential elections in the next 5 years in a greater percentage than those with below-average education. Furthermore, the citizens entitled to vote who live in the Southeast region stated that they will vote in the presidential election in a greater percentage than the residents in the other areas of the country.

In the next five years, we will also have a higher rate of participation in the parliamentary elections in the Center region compared to the other regions. A high rate of voting in the local elections will be seen in the counties of northwestern Romania, while the lowest rate, according to this survey, will be in the Bucharest-Ilfov region.

Romanians are equally interested in the Romanian and the European politics. However, on average, the Romanian citizens are more interested in the domestic politics than in the political events taking place in Europe. Whether it is about Romanian or European politics, men and women are interested in fairly equal proportions.

Young people below 34 are more interested in the national and European politics than the persons aged over 50 and, similarly, the Romanians with below-average education levels show more interest in politics than those with above-average education levels.

By the region of residence, the Romanians who are the most interested in all political evolutions are the ones living in the Northwest region, while the ones in the Southwest-Oltenia region are the least interested in the Romanian politics and the ones in the Center region are the least concerned with the European politics.

The involvement of Romanians in various organizations, e.g. nongovernmental, religious or political, is low, with a small percentage of them actively participating in the activities of such entities. The differences in the proportions of Romanians involved in the current activities of organizations are extremely small (up to 2%), but the political parties enjoy the highest level of involvement.

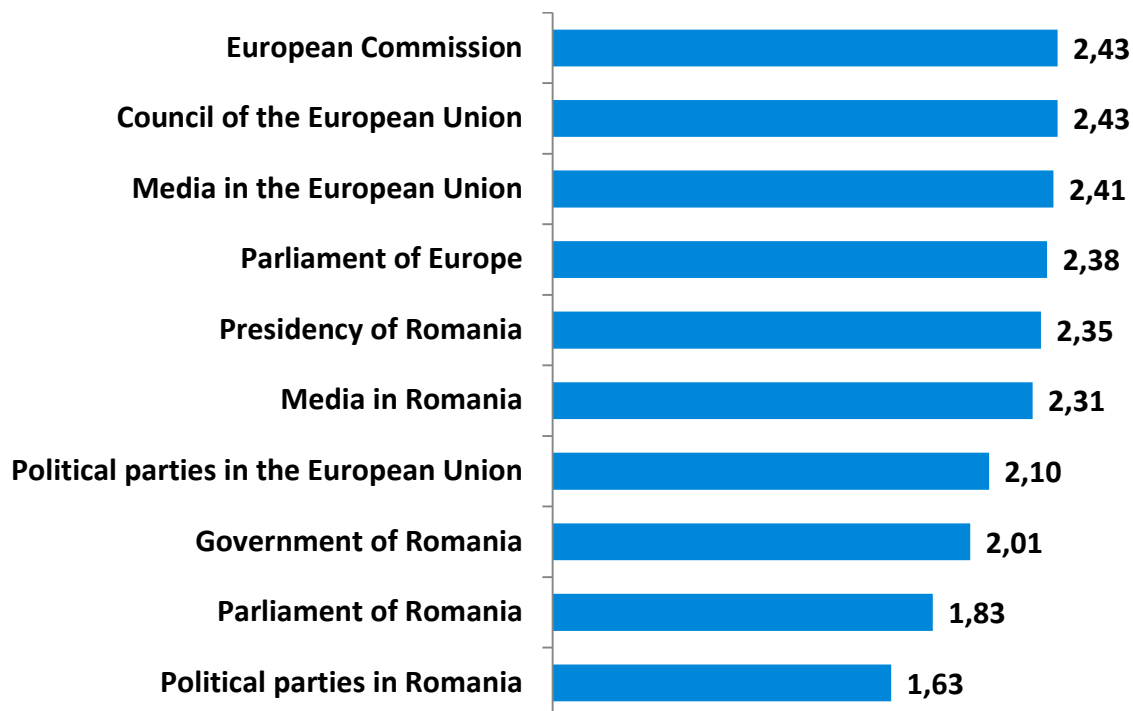
Men have a higher degree of participation in the activities of political organizations and political parties, while women have participated in the activities of nongovernmental organizations in the last three years.

Furthermore, the persons aged 18 to 49, inclusively, those living in the Northwest region and those with higher education degrees have a higher level of participation in NGOs than in the other two types of organizations. The Romanians in the Northwest region also take part in the activities of religious organizations, while those in the Northeast region engage in the activities of political organizations and parties.

Romanians trust the European institutions more than the national ones.

The European Commission and the Council of the European Union are better positioned than the Presidency of Romania in point of confidence of Romanians. At the other extreme of confidence are the political parties and the Parliament of Romania.

Chart No. 16. Confidence of Romanians in the national and European institutions (average values, where the minimum value is 1- *Very low/no confidence* and the maximum value is 5 – *Very high confidence*)



Source: The Street report

Men trust the Romanian political parties less than women and the same applies for the parties in the European Union.

The Romanians with below-average education levels trust all the institutions considered in the survey more than those above average in education. Furthermore, the people living in urban areas have less confidence in institutions than those in rural communities.

The Romanians residing in the West development region have the lowest levels of confidence in institutions like the Presidency and the Government of Romania.

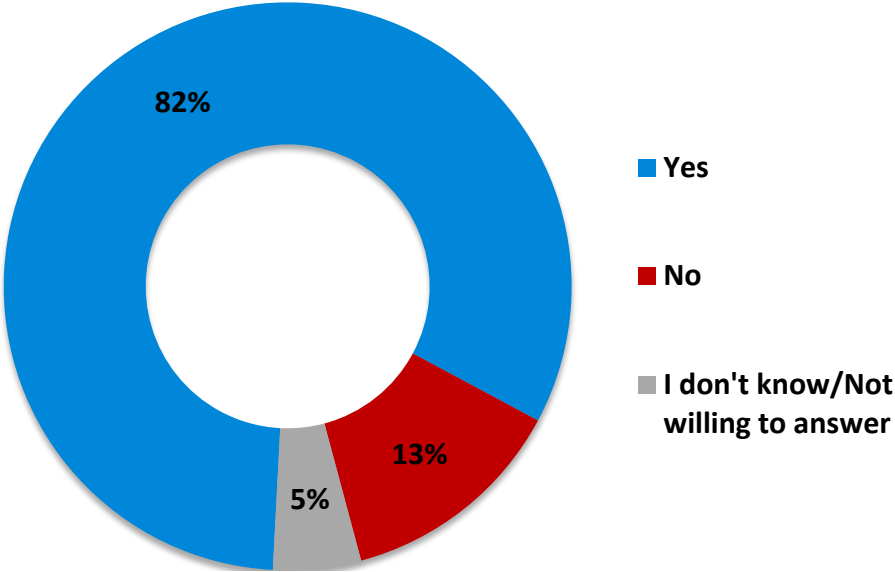
The Romanian media sees the highest level of confidence in the South-Muntenia region and the lowest in the Bucharest-Ilfov region.

Most of Romanians believe that Romania's attitude concerning the security problems of the European Union was fully positive compared to the position of the European Union.

V. 3. Left wing/right wing extremism

Romanians consider that the initiation of programs to fight radicalism and extremism is necessary for a peaceful European Union. The highest proportion of Romanians who believe in this necessity are persons with a level of education above average and living in the Northwest region.

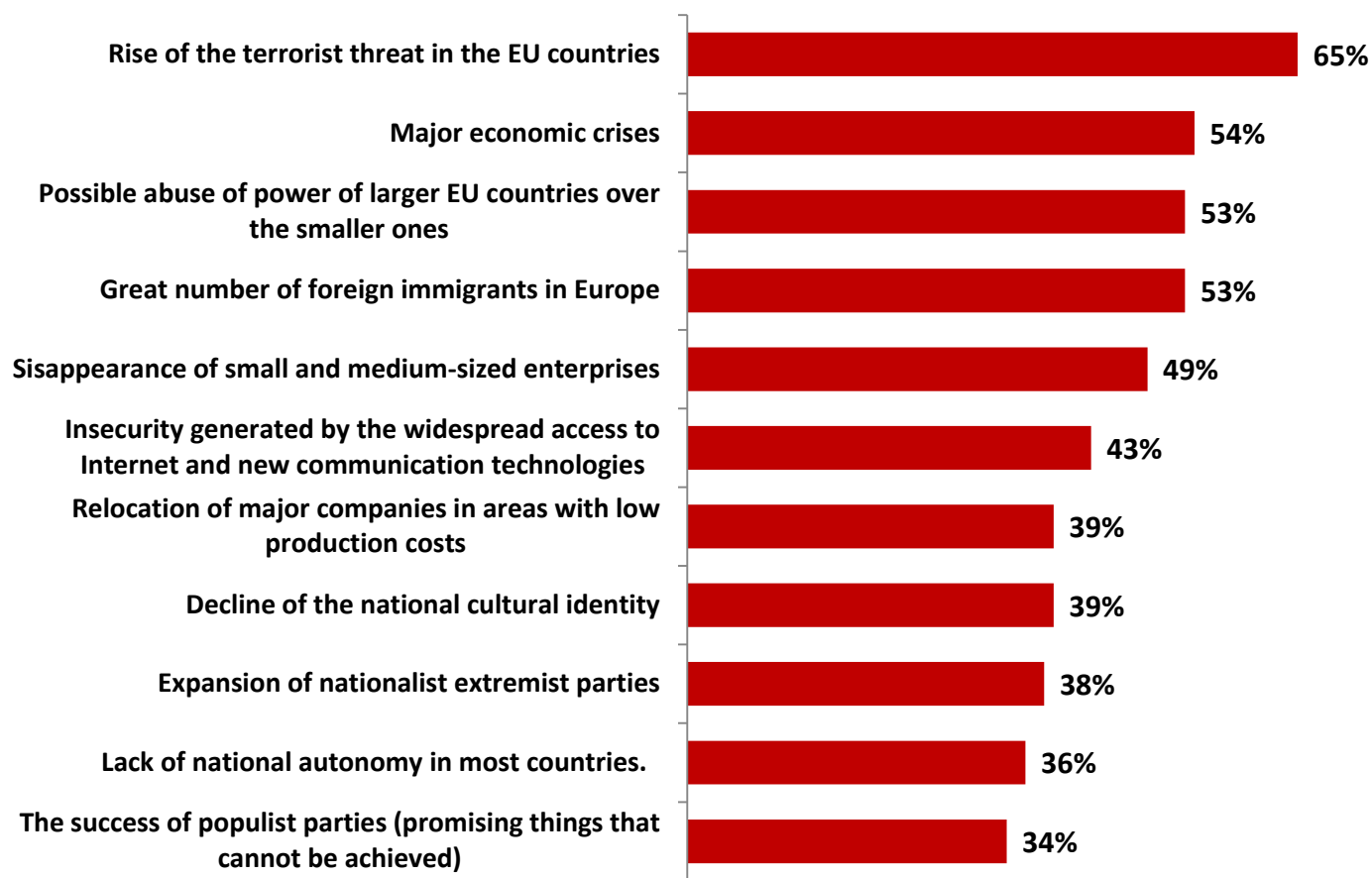
Chart No. 17. The need for programs to fight radicalism and extremism in the European Union



Source: The Street report

The *terrorist treat* in the European Union is currently the greatest concern of Romanians. The rise of the terrorist threats in the EU countries and also the great number of immigrants in the European Union is associated to certain concerns particularly by the Romanians aged 50 to 65 and less by those below 50. The concern related to immigrants is present in the West region to a higher degree than in the rest of the country.

Chart No. 18. Citizens' concerns regarding the European Union



Source: The Street report

Other causes of concern include: *major economic crises, a possible abuse of power of the larger EU countries over the smaller ones and the great number of immigrants in Europe.*

The *decline of the national identity* and the *expansion of the nationalist extremist parties* are the evolutions that Romanians fear least. Romanian women fear more than men all the possible events that could disrupt the peace of the European Union.

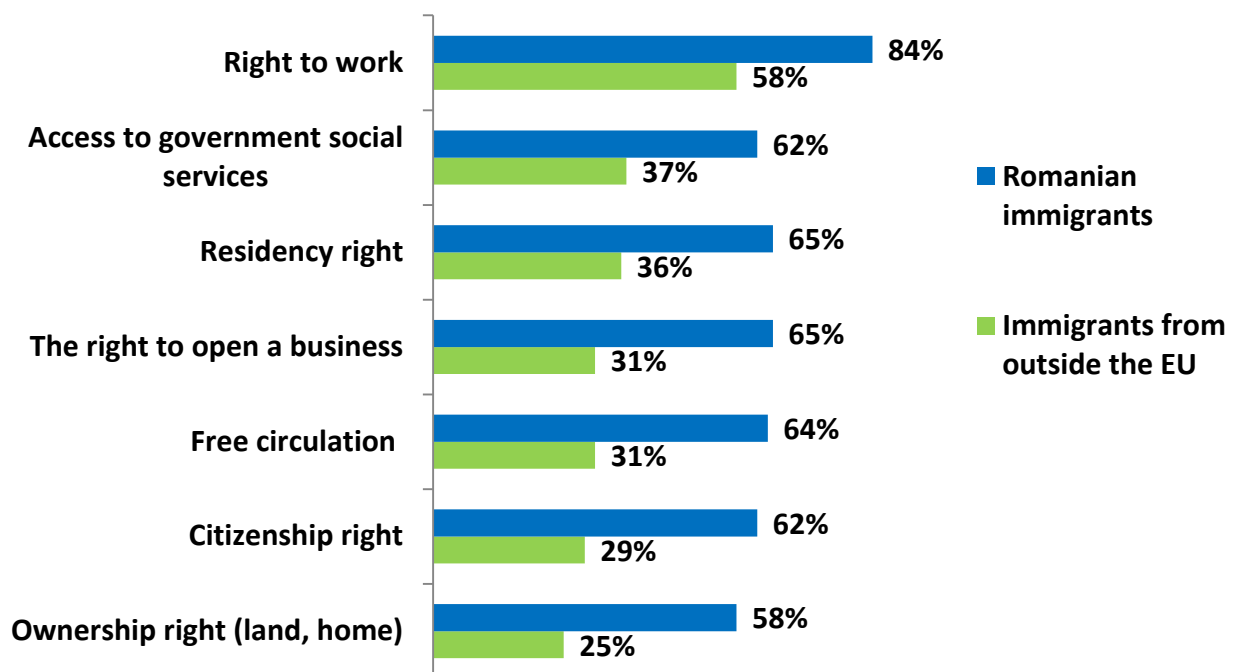
V. 4. Security and tolerance

The concerns referred to above should be appeased by the existence of a stable environment in which the Europeans could feel safe.

Romanians believe that all Europeans should be equal before the laws of the Member States and that the citizens of Europe should be assured the same living standards, irrespective of the country they live in.

Furthermore, the idea of tolerance is fundamental for the development of a supranational entity and this is why the opinions of Romanians concerning the rights and benefits that the Romanian and non-EU immigrants should enjoy in the EU Member States have been included in this survey.

Chart No. 19. The rights that the European Union should grant to Romanian and non-EU immigrants



Source: The Street report

Romanians are more tolerant to their fellow citizens who choose to leave their country than to the immigrants from outside the European Union who come to the Member States. This is supported by the answers of the participants in the survey, who stated that the Romanian immigrants should enjoy certain rights and benefits in the host countries to a higher degree than the immigrants from non-EU countries.

The right to work is considered of utmost importance by Romanians, as it was mentioned by the majority of the population with reference to the Romanians who emigrated to European Union countries, as well as to persons from non-EU countries who were accepted as immigrants in the Member States.

In addition to the right to work for immigrants, regardless of their country of origin, Romanians believe that other rights should also be granted, including: *access to government social services and the right of residence in the countries concerned*. Moreover, the Romanian immigrants should be provided with opportunities to *open a business*.

Romanians see as a priority the granting to all Europeans of the right to vote in the country where they reside. The avoiding of military conflicts in the European Union by diplomatic action and measures to prevent new economic crises are also aspects that the European institutions should consider in order to assure an environment favorable to the growth of the European Union and to improve the lives of the European citizens.

The persons with above-average education levels and those living in the Bucharest-Ilfov development region are more sensitive to the problem of human trafficking and, consequently, to the identification of solutions. The Romanians who see the closer monitoring of the national governments by the European institutions should be a priority for the European Union live in the Center development region or belong to the group of persons with below-average education levels.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This survey diagnoses the actual situation and the tendencies of the Romanian society with regard to the European Union and was supported by Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies. The results of the survey offer a relevant image of the Romanian *general public's opinion* on the European Union and on the role of Romania within this entity.

VI. 1. Romania in the European context: general perceptions

Romanians describe, by the *associations* made between the European Union and various words, multiple facets of the EU. Mixed feelings are indirectly attached to these associations. In Romanians' minds, the European Union is a symbol of democracy, harmony, support, community, cohesion, economy, etc., as well as an epitome of duty, disorganization, corruption, etc.

Regardless of the associations of words with the European Union, to Romanians, this entity means *freedom to travel, work and study*. In addition to these *benefits* obtained following the accession to the European Union, Romanians believe that there are also other benefits arising from Romania's EU membership. However, only one third of Romanians consider that their lives have improved after Romania became member of the European Union.

Romanians think that things are going the *right direction* in the European Union rather than in Romania.

On average, Romanians' self-rating of their *knowledge about the European Union* is 4.28 on a scale of 1 to 7 ("very much knowledge"). Romanian's *favorite sources of information* on the European Union are the Internet (mainly used by persons with above-average education levels living in urban areas) and the television (preferred by people in rural areas). The issues concerning the European Union are rather rarely discussed with friends and this is done more by men than by women.

The areas mentioned by Romanians as priorities for the investment of EU funds include: *agriculture and rural development and employment*.

They are more familiar with the *EU-funded projects* in the areas of local infrastructures and leisure and relaxation. However, these projects seem to have little impact on the lives of Romanians. The *participation of Romanians in EU-funded professional development programs* was rather low, as only 15 of 100 Romanians benefited from this type of training, mostly in urban areas.

Romanians believe that the *decisions* made by the European Union institutions have an impact on multiple aspects of life in Romania, mainly on the economic situation and on the political decisions adopted at national level.

The central institutions (the Presidency, the Parliament and the Government) are seen by Romanians as being the ones influenced to a great or very great extent by the decisions of the European Union. On the other hand, the church is the least affected by such decisions.

VI. 2. Employment, migration, European economy

On average, Romanians self-rate their *knowledge about the Schengen Area* as level 4 out of 7 (the maximum limit - "I know very much"). Although the level of knowledge is not high, the respondents answered to the questions related to the Schengen Area. Romanians believe that a noticeable impact of the country's joining the Schengen Area will be on *trade and tourism* in Romania.

The *process of migration in the European Union* is viewed by Romanians as a privilege for non-EU citizens rather than for those coming from EU Member States. Romanians consider that it is easy for the citizens of Romania to cross the borders.

Over one half of Romanians *have traveled abroad in the last three years*. The main purposes included visiting other countries or conducting various economic activities. At the same time, 7 of 10 Romanians would travel abroad in the next three years for the same purposes mentioned above.

Most of the Romanians who went abroad for work stated that they had not had difficulties in looking for and finding a job. However, those who encountered certain obstacles in the process mentioned the language and the arrogant/hostile attitude of the people in the host country.

A significant percentage of Romanians (44%) *would not take a job abroad*, but most of those willing to work outside the country will accept such a job only if the wage offered is higher than the one in Romania.

Romanians believe that the *participation of Romania to the common market of the European Union* has a positive impact on the national economy and that the main contributions of the economic policy of the European Union are visible in the opening of investment opportunities and/or in the expansion of opportunities for businesses.

VI. 3. Politics, citizenship and European security

Romanians consider that being a *citizen of Romania* (or of any historical or administrative division of the country's territory) weighs more than being a citizen of the EU. At the same time, they believe that the decisions made by politicians at EU level are equally important as the ones made on national level in influencing the lives of Romanians in a way or another.

The *highest rate of participation in elections* in Romania in the last 5 years (80%) was seen in the presidential and local elections. Romanians are more inclined to participate in the same types of election in the next five years. The lowest intention to participate is in the parliamentary elections.

Romanians are equally interested in the Romanian political scene and in the European one. They also state that they trust the European institutions more than the national ones. Romanians have the highest level of confidence in the European Commission and the Council of the European Union. The Romanian institution that Romanians trust most is the Presidency of Romania, followed by the media.

The greatest concern of Romanians regarding the European Union is the risk of possible terrorist attacks. Next comes the fear of a *major economic crisis* and of a *possible abuse of*

power of the larger EU countries over the smaller ones. Romanians also believe that the *initiation of programs to fight radicalism and extremism* is necessary for the proper development of the European Union.

The Romanian citizens believe that all Europeans should be equal before the laws of the Member States and that they should be assured the same living standards, irrespective of the country they live in. However, they prove to be less tolerant to the immigrants from outside the European Union who come to the Member States than to their fellow citizens emigrating to EU countries.

Irrespective of the origin of migrants, Romanians believe that *the right to work in the destination countries* should be guaranteed to all. Moreover, the immigrants should be granted other benefits, too, including: *access to government social services and the right of residence in the countries concerned.* The Romanian immigrants in EU member countries should also be provided with opportunities to *open a business.*

To conclude, Romanians are open to the process of migration in the European Union, regardless of the reasons for leaving the countries of origin, but consider that they should enjoy more rights in the host countries than the immigrants from non-EU states. Most of them know someone who had the experience of migration and, in particular, the experience of working abroad.

The post-accession benefits are evident in the freedom to move, travel or study and, to a more limited extent, in the implementation of EU funding. The European funds should be invested in agriculture, rural development and employment. However, only a small proportion of Romanians participated in EU-funded professional development programs.

Overall, Romanians have a positive perception of the European Union, of the European institutions and of all they mean for Romania. However, a certain inconsistency can be noted in the perceptions and attitudes of Romanians concerning certain subjects, as a result of deficient information.

A public debate on Romania's European priorities should include, in the initial phase, the restructuring of the process of communication on the European Union, the European institutions and the EU funds (a diversification of the communication channels). The representatives of the political and economic circles, of the civil society and of mass media could use this survey as a tool in configuring the priorities for laying the foundations of a coherent European project.