Satisfaction with the situation at the country level and with personal circumstances

28 and 32 per cent of Serbian respondents believe that the economic and political conditions in their country were better in 2016 than four years prior to the survey. Both these percentages are higher than the averages for south-eastern Europe (SEE), both at 17 per cent, and the transition region, at 24 and 28 per cent, respectively. About 29 per cent of those surveyed think that corruption levels improved during the four years preceding the survey.

Only 29 per cent of Serbians believe that their household was better off in 2016 as compared with four years prior to the survey, and 31 per cent are satisfied with their personal financial situation. Life satisfaction has nevertheless increased across all demographic groups compared with 2010, with a country-wide increase of 16 percentage points. As of 2016, 46 per cent of Serbians are satisfied with their life, a figure that is higher than both the SEE and the transition region averages (39 and 43 per cent, respectively).

39 per cent of Serbian respondents think that children born now will have a better life than the current generations, an 8 percentage point increase relative to 2010 levels. Still, the Serbian optimism figure is below the transition region average of 50 per cent.

Attitudes towards democracy and the market economy

38 and 30 per cent of Serbian respondents prefer democracy and a market economy over any other form of political or economic system, respectively, while around 23 and 25 per cent, respectively, report that an authoritarian system and a planned economy may be better solutions under some circumstances. This implies that support for both democracy and the market economy is lower in Serbia than in the SEE region as a whole, in the transition region, in Italy and in Germany. An additional 39 and 45 per cent of Serbians believe that “for people like me, it does not matter” which political and economic system prevails.

When asked which democratic institutions exist in the country, 62 per cent of Serbs mention peace and stability, followed by freedom of speech (55 per cent), free and fair elections (50 per cent) and gender equality (49 per cent). Serbians are more sceptical about the existence of an independent press (34 per cent), a fair justice system (34 per cent) and a strong political opposition (26 per cent). These percentages are, however, still above the SEE averages and also compare well with the transition region averages.

Priorities for government spending

28 per cent of respondents would prefer extra government funding to be spent on assisting the poor, the third highest figure in the sample and more than double the average for the transition countries as a whole (13 per cent). The next most popular spending options are health care (20 per cent), investments in education (17 per cent) and pensions (16 per cent). Consistent with this, 59 per cent of Serbian respondents would be willing to pay more taxes to assist the poor. About 47 and 46 per cent would also be willing to pay more taxes to have a better health care and a better educational system, respectively. Alternative spending categories, such as public infrastructure or the environment, attract little support.
CHART 2. Optimism: percentage of respondents who are optimistic about the future of the younger generation

CHART 3. Market economy and democracy: percentage of respondents who prefer a market over a planned economy and democracy over an authoritarian government

CHART 4. Basic democratic institutions: percentage of respondents who agree that the country has these basic democratic institutions

CHART 5. Priorities for government spending

Panel A: Percentage of respondents who identify a given area as a priority in terms of government spending.

Panel B: Breakdown of preferences for the top priority (assisting the poor)

CHART 6. Sources of information: percentage of respondents who use these different sources of information

CHART 7. Health assessment: percentage of respondents who report themselves to be in good health (self-assessed)

CHART 8. Quality of services: percentage of respondents who are satisfied with the quality of public services, by category

CHART 9. Factors for success: percentage of respondents who identify the given factor as the most important for success, by income level

CHART 10. Attitudes towards women: percentage of respondents who agree with the statements below

Women are as competent as men to be business executives
It is important that the business world achieve a gender-balanced leadership
More male political leaders than women
A woman should do household chores even if her husband is not working.