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**THE PUBLIC ON THE OVERALL SITUATION,
AMBIANCE AND PROJECTIONS FOR
OVERCOMING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC
DIFFICULTIES**

For more than 20 years the socio-economic development of the Republic of Macedonia was followed by numerous difficulties and problems that has all the features of the economic and social crisis. It may be felt almost in all spheres of everyday work and life and naturally it is expected to have a significant impact on the awareness and sense of the people regarding the economic and social situation in the country.

The relative poverty (as measured by the methodology) is estimated at 30.4%. The non-pecuniary dimension of poverty (especially poor housing conditions and low educational level) additionally affects 30% of the population. The reasons for the deterioration of living standards are in the contraction of employment and the low sectoral growth in sectors with high productivity. Sectors with relatively high productivity, such as trade, transport and communications and manufacturing industry, release labour force in this period. Industrial production compared to 1990 decreased to 55.3% in 2011. Employment in agriculture increased from 10.5% in 1995 to 19.1% in 2011. Republic of Macedonia in this period is being deindustrialised and converted into an agricultural state.

Pensions are important not only because they reduce poverty for the elderly, but also support other family members. Social assistance programmes in significant part

cover the poor, as opposed to the non-poor, substantial amounts (75%) are provided for the poor, suggesting unnecessary spending of funds. The Government allocates more than half of its total revenue for transfers aimed at social protection, or one-fifth of the GDP of current transfers. Most of these transfers are for pensions, and the rest for various types of social support. Resources allocated to social transfers are a heavy burden on public finances and take away resources from other important costs also with a higher rate of return on invested assets, including investments in infrastructure.

In the country there is no good infrastructure which is an important national asset, that will improve the welfare of the population and will facilitate investment. These negative trends are occurring in the background of economic and social upheavals that affected the country as a market economy. From these preliminary remarks on the economic and social situation one may already sense the importance of these issues, as well as the efforts within the public opinion in the Republic of Macedonia to determine the attitude of the public towards the current economic and social situation and the prospects of its improvement.

1. HOW ARE THINGS GOING IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The issue for the situation in the country was opened in the survey with the introductory, inevitable and important question, wherefrom other questions arise and logically follow.

Generally, are things in the Republic of Macedonia going in the right or wrong direction?

Among the respondents, as it can be seen from Table 1, the most numerous are those who think that things in the Republic of Macedonia are going in the *wrong direction* 67.3%.

The research attempted to separate the views of respondents who support the ruling parties, those who support the opposition parties, and those who do not support any party. The differences in the attitudes regarding the states in the Republic of Macedonia are visible and expected among the members of the aforementioned political orientation. What is noticeable at first is the more striking criticism of respondents who support an opposition party. 87.4% of the total number of supporters of an opposition party that were covered in the survey, said that things in the Republic of Macedonia are going in the *wrong direction*, while regarding the respondents who support the ruling party this negative assessment was given by 49.0%. On the other hand, regarding the statement of the views of

citizens providing positions with a positive sign, most of the respondents who answered the question with positive direction (51.0%) support the ruling party, as opposed to the respondents who support an opposition party (12.0%).

Figure 1: *Are things in the Republic of Macedonia going in the right or wrong direction?*

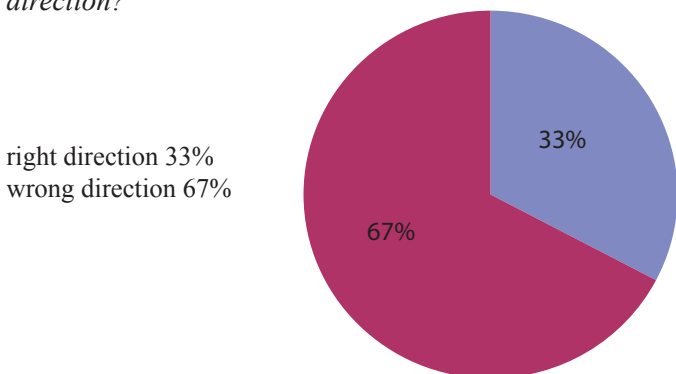


Table 1: *Positions as to how things are going in the Republic of Macedonia, according to the political orientation*

	Political orientation			Total
	Supports a ruling party	Supports an opposition party	Does not support any party	
Right direction	51.0	12.6	30.7	32.7
Wrong direction	49.0	87.4	69.3	67.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The answers of the respondents, divided by their specific socio-professional characteristics show a succession of similarities and differences, so that some features of the respondents were announced as important, and some as irrelevant regarding their position on the states in the Republic of Macedonia. The views of respondents considering their gender and level of education do not show any significant differences, which can be interpreted with some egalitarianism in the management of the situation in the country.

Age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, residential area and regional belonging appear as a factor of differentiation of positions. There is also a difference between

young and old respondents: respondents with respect to the position provided. *Things in the Republic of Macedonia are going in the wrong direction* is usually an assessment among respondents aged 18-29 years (73.8%), and it is the lowest in the age group above 65 years of age (61.3%). The more increased criticism of the younger participants in the assessment of the states in the Republic of Macedonia is likely due to the high unemployment rate.

The ethnicity of respondents (Table 2) affects the differences in their assessments of the situation in the Republic of Macedonia. Thereby, we obtained very interesting information. Namely, even 91.1% of total number of respondents of Albanian origin, said that things in the Republic of Macedonia are going in the *wrong direction*. Only 8.9% of respondents from this ethnic community stated that things are moving in the right direction. On the other hand, the answers provided by the respondents of the Macedonian ethnic community differ significantly. Thus, from this community 56.9% stated that things are moving in the *wrong direction*, whereas 43.1% answered that things are moving in the *right direction*.

Table 2: Positions as to how things are going in the Republic of Macedonia, according to the ethnic background

	Ethnic origin				Total
	Macedonian	Albanian	Turkish	Other	
Right direction	43.1	8.9	33.3	21.9	32.7
Wrong direction	56.9	91.1	66.7	78.1	67.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

It is interesting to note that respondents with Islamic and Catholic religion in only 13.0% and 17.6% of the cases believe that things in the Republic of Macedonia are going in the right direction. Such a response was more frequently provided by respondents of the Orthodox religious community - 42.9%.

As for the socio-economic status, it is interesting to note that students farmers, and housewives feel more affected by the situation in the Republic of Macedonia. Namely, as much as 76.1% of students, 77.3% of housewives and 74.4% of farmers believe that things in the Republic of Macedonia are going in the *wrong direction*.

In terms of the regional origin, that things are not going in the right direction the citizens of the Polog region (85.5%), Vardar region (77.6%), Southwest region (74.2%) are most confident.

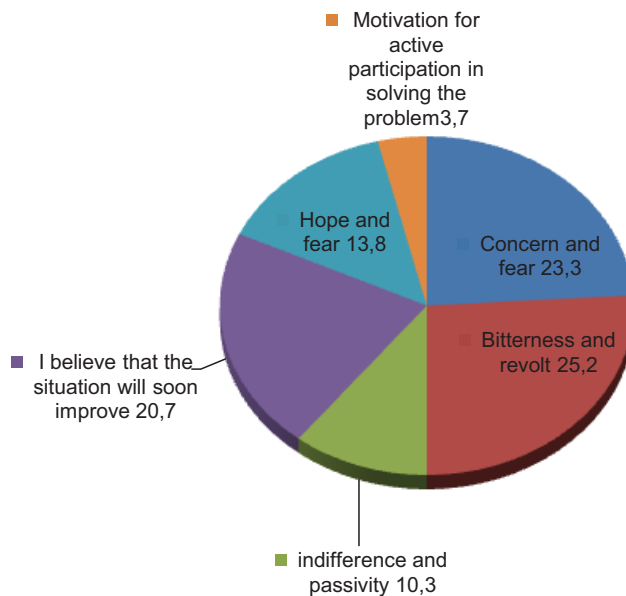
2. FUTURE

Although the previously presented data are a clear evidence of how citizens see the general situation in the Republic of Macedonia, we need direct information about their views on the disposition and expectations associated with the future. In other words, we are interested in the psychological state as a product of the crisis regarding the socio-economic state, but also as a prerequisite for the successful overcoming thereof.

2.1. The situation in the social - economic life (high unemployment rate, poverty, intense social turbulence, etc.), results in a loss of confidence of a large segment of the population in terms of the efficiency of the economic and social measures, striking uncertainty is mainly present with the population, often going into defeatism, but in some cases into revolt, in the basis of which there is a sense of hopelessness and despair. Therefore, the respondents were asked: **In your opinion what mood nowadays prevails among most citizens of Macedonia?**

The overall distribution of responses suggests that the majority of respondents feel *concern and fear* (26.3%) and *bitterness and revolt* (25.2%), and fewer believe that *the situation will soon improve - optimism* (20.7%). Proportionally a small number of respondents feel *hope and fear* (13.8%), even fewer of those have *motivation for active participation in solving problems* (3.7%).

Figure 2: *What type of mood prevails among citizens?*



As it may be observed, most people feel fear, which is mentioned by even 40.1% of the respondents. Although we can not establish whether it is fear that motivates or inhibits, it is certain that the constant anxiety and concern is caused by the state of the economy, but also the sensitive background of the political and ethnic scene which at any moment may start burning with unforeseeable consequences. Therefore, the government should lower the level of emotional tension present in citizens, or to remove their fear and gain their trust.

With reference to the socio-demographic characteristics that influenced the shaping of the general position on the mood of citizens as statistically relevant the following are manifested: the, political orientation, ethnicity, education, socio-economic status and regional affiliation.

According to the political orientation, supporters of a party that is part of the government and supporters of the party that is part of the opposition manifested significant deviations from the general distribution in different modalities. In that respect, 31.0% of the supporters of a party that is part of the government have the opinion that *the situation will soon improve*, or 16.1% think that there is concern and fear. On the other hand, respondents who support a party that is part of the opposition more frequently than the general average (34.6%) are of the opinion that *concern and fear* prevails among the population, 33.0% believe that there is *bitterness and revolt*, and only 10.4% believe that the situation will improve - optimism.

Ethnicity of respondents is the following factor that shows deviation from the normal distribution. In that respect, the superior *bitterness and revolt* prevails among Albanians (35.9%), and the belief that the situation will soon improve among Turks (30.8%).

Comparing the question with the education of respondents, we may conclude that with the large number of respondents with incomplete primary education (concern and fear - 40.7% and hope and fear - 14.8%) and with primary education (concern and fear - 39.8% and hope and fear - 15.0%) the *fear* is present.

The socio-economic status of respondents also has certain influence on the determination of the respondents, so above-average *fear* prevails among farmers (concern and fear - 39.5% and hope and fear - 7%) and housewives (concern and fear 27.3 % and hope and fear 20.5%). According to the region to which they belong, respondents of the Pelagonija region (33.6%), Southwest region (31.5%) and Southeast region (29.2%), have above-average optimism - a belief that the situation will soon improve, while relatively fewer respondents in the Southeast region (16.9%) answered with *bitterness and revolt*.

The global conclusion emerging from our research is that people believe that the feeling of *fear, concern, revolt and passivity* (with 75.6% of respondents) is very present. Only a small number of respondents (20.7%) believe that things will

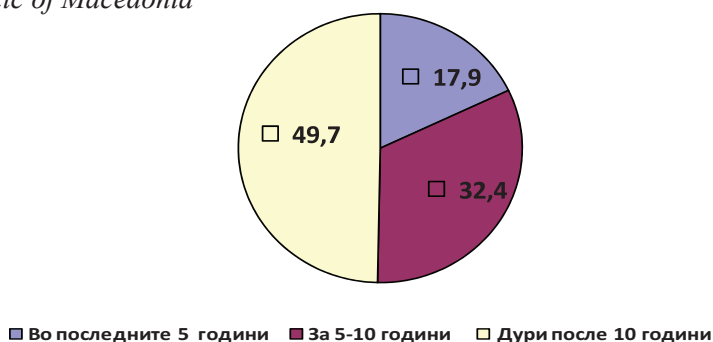
soon improve. It is positive that one-fifth of the population has a sense of soon improvement, because faith and hope that the contradictions in the socio-economic development can be overcome is necessary so that they are motivated to undertake the necessary activities to accomplish that.

Table 3: Positions as to what type of mood prevails among most of the citizens in Macedonia according to the education

	Incomplete education	Elementary education	High school education	Higher or University education	Total
Concern and fear	40,1	39,8	25,6	20,3	26,3
Bitterness and revolt	14,8	18,8	24,7	29,9	25,2
Indifference and passivity	11,1	6,8	8,5	15,0	10,3
Hope and fear	14,8	15,0	13,5	13,6	13,8
Belief that the situation will soon improve	18,5	15,8	24,1	16,9	20,7
Motivation for active involvement in solving problems	0,0	3,8	3,5	4,3	3,7
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

2.2. The overcoming of the current crisis, or the economic and social difficulties, will require, as the relative majority of citizens (49.7%) considers, a period of 10 years. The number of those who believe that the economic and social difficulties will be reduced by five to ten years (32.4%) is interesting.

Figure 3: Projection on the overcoming of the economic and social difficulties in the Republic of Macedonia



When analysing assessments on this issue structured according to the place of residence of the respondents, it can be concluded that there is somewhat inversely proportional relationship between the degree of urbanisation and the number of respondents who expect that the economic and social difficulties will be overcome even after 10 years. Thus, the majority of respondents who expect the overcoming of difficulties to happen after 10 years are respondents living in a village (53.3%), and their number is the lowest in Skopje (45.9%). Lower presence of optimism among the rural population can be interpreted with the objective financial situation of the village in the Republic of Macedonia. However, probably a more important reason for that is the development of the village on the basis of the centre-periphery model, monosectoral development and undeveloped basic municipal and social infrastructure.

The assessments regarding this issue structured by the political orientation of respondents, except for respondents who support a party that is part of the government where, as it might be guessed - optimism is most present (29.1% answered that the economic and social difficulties will be overcome in the following five years, 38.7% answered “in five to ten years”, and 32.2% answered “after ten years”). However, the sense of pessimism is most present with respondents supporting the opposition and more present among undecided respondents (does not support any party). This situation can not be assessed as favourable. On the contrary, the proportionally larger presence of pessimism among the opposition and undecided respondents, indicates seriousness of the socio-economic difficulties.

Table 4: *Overcoming of the economic and social difficulties in the Republic of Macedonia according to the political orientation of respondents*

	Supports a ruling party	Supports an opposition party	Does not support any party	Total
In the following five years	29,1	13,7	14,0	17,9
In five to ten years	38,7	25,8	31,6	32,4
After ten years	32,2	60,4	54,4	49,7
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

The arrangement of assessments that the economic and social difficulties in the Republic of Macedonia will be overcome even after ten years is very unusual according to the regional affiliation of respondents. Namely, this response is most present among respondents of the Vardar region (64.2%), Eastern region (56.7%)

and the Polog region (56.4%). This response was not that often among respondents in the Northeast region (39.5%) and the Southwest region (40.4%).

Similarly as the question of the mood of the citizens, this question does not include optimism. The feeling of fear, concern, revolt and passivity (75.6%) and the projection on the overcoming of the economic and social difficulties even after 10 years (49.7%) prove that their roots, at least in the eyes of the citizens, are extremely deep.

3. SUCCESS IN LIFE

From the responses we received to the question: **What is nowadays most important to succeed in life** it can be seen that the most widespread is the opinion *participation or association with the government*. The answer ranked second is that *one needs to have money* while having *personal capacity and education* is the third.

Table 5: *What is nowadays most important to succeed in life?*

To have personal capacity and education	20,4%
To be honest and fair	16,9%
To have money	21,0%
Participation or association with the government	41,7%
Total	100,0

The specific socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents have a different impact on distribution. Statistically most significant correlation regarding the importance for success in life is seen in terms of the political orientation, level of education, socio-economic status, political orientation and age.

In terms of the political orientation of respondents, the distribution of answers to this question varies considerably. Thus, success in life through *participation or association with government* concerns respondents who support the party that is part of the opposition. This modality was suggested by 55.5% of the total number of respondents who support a party that is part of the opposition, as opposed to the 33.0% of respondents, supporting a party that is part of the position. Only 9.3% of respondents who are supporters of an opposition party believe that most important for success in life is to have a *personal capacity and education*.

The ethnicity of respondents shows a certain level of dependence. Namely, the modality of participation or association with the government was mostly the option

chosen by Albanians (50.8%). Regarding the modality *to have money on order to succeed in life*, it seems that the importance of this modality is most present among Serbs, Roma and the Vlachs (31.5%).

Education of respondents shows dependence regarding the issue of success in life, in a specific way. In that respect, there is a straight line correlation between the position of personal ability and higher education. More educated respondents (higher and university education) perceive the chance of success in life in the *personal capacity and education* in a larger number (26.6%). On the other hand, those with incomplete primary education more frequently than the general distribution consider that most important for success in life is *to have money*.

Table 6: *Most important to succeed in life according to the socio-economic status of respondents*

	Unem- ployed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in the public sector	House- wife	Farm- er	Stu- dent	Total
To have personal capacity and education	17,1	24,1	21,3	13,6	114,0	26,1	20,4
To be honest and fair	15,9	16,3	11,6	31,8	16,3	6,5	16,9
To have money	22,1	20,5	18,7	27,3	30,2	21,7	21,0
Participation or association with the government	45,0	39,1	48,4	27,3	39,5	45,7	41,7
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Naturally, there are mutual differences in the attitudes by the socio-economic status of respondents. Farmers appear in significant deviations from the general distribution of responses to the modality that it is most important *to have money* (30.2%) for success in life, compared to the level of the whole sample (21.0%) . Regarding the modality *to be honest and fair* the concentration of responses among housewives (31.8%) is most evident and it is the least frequent among students (6.5%).

Regional affiliation of respondents also has some influence on the position of the respondents regarding success in life, thus, for example, if *honesty and fairness* is most important for respondents in the Eastern region (29.9%), *participation or association with the government* is most important in the Polog region (50.0%).