

## Czech Public to European Union

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### Introduction

Many significant findings were obtained from a number of surveys conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre (Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění – CVVM) of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in connection with the integration process of the Czech Republic into the European structures<sup>1</sup>. But because even these findings are subject to the general tendency to sink into fast oblivion, I will try to mention especially the attitudes, opinions, and expectations, forming the basis for the relationship of the public towards the European Union, a body whose part we will become next year and in which we are to build our position.

### I. Attitudes of Czech Society towards the Notion of Unified Europe and its Implementation

To what degree do the inhabitants identify themselves with the thought of integration of the European countries into a large entity? Do they perhaps express only their purely pragmatic, utilitarian interests? These questions were a frequent subject matter of a number of expert discussions, treating the relationship of the public to the European Union, its Europeanism, or the issue of national identity. Surveys conducted in IVVM<sup>2</sup> and CVVM have shown that Czech citizens find the notion of unified Europe very close to them - on average, three quarters of them expressed the conviction about its correctness between 1997 and 2001. Their positive opinion may be explained by the general inclination of members of a small nation to create larger, stronger groups, providing security to its members, and also by the desire to return the country to developed Europe. Respondents accentuated these circumstances after the Czech Republic filed its application to enter the European Union in 1996.

Opinions concerning the integration of the Czech Republic into the European Union depend to a great degree on the notions of its functioning. Investigations from the end of the last year have illustrated to what extent the respondents are convinced of the application of certain principles ensuring equal co-existence of the individual member states. The results are included in Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> The surveys were part of the regular investigations performed by CVVM within the Our Society (Naše společnost) survey.

<sup>2</sup> Public Opinion Research Institute (*Institut pro výzkum veřejného mínění*), the predecessor of CVVM.

**Table 1. Do you think that these values are applied in the EU currently?  
(In %)**

	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Rather not	Definitely not	DK
Democracy	21	52	12	2	13
Co-operation	17	55	14	3	11
Solidarity	14	49	17	5	15
Tolerance	10	41	23	6	20
Justice	7	38	25	8	22
Equality	8	33	33	11	15

Source: CVVM, Our Society (Naše společnost) survey. Field investigations conducted on: 17 to 24 Oct. 2002. Number of respondents: N=1,117 respondents.

The data acquired do not allow for any doubts and prove that the European Union acts as a representative of important democratic values in the eyes of the Czech public. The respondents have especially expressed their conviction of application of such principles as democracy, co-operation, and solidarity. But doubts arise as concerns the opinion on tolerance and justice, and culminate in the case of equality, where scepticism becomes a prevailing attitude.

It has been discovered that certain significantly differentiating social demographic features have an impact on both the opinion concerning more general issues of integration, and the perception of the level of application of democratic principles. But, the fact to what degree individual groups of inhabitants perceive the future accession into the European Union as a reality that will affect them immediately has proved to be a principal circumstance.

The more educated groups therefore show a more intensive interest in the issues of the European Union and they also have more positive attitudes – the dividing line here is the GCSE examination/graduation (*maturita*). People with finished secondary-school education and, especially, university-educated people, have distinct inclination to positive evaluations and more optimistic expectations, higher awareness of the issues, etc. For groups with lower, especially primary education, the typical attitudes range from mistrust to scepticism, along with a lower interest in the issues of the European Union as a whole.

The age of respondents has reflected in a more positive contemplation of the European Union among the youngest groups who understand it as their personal chance. But others also show higher degree of lack of interest.

On the other side, the generation of pensioners – or people over 60 years – is typically mistrusting and rejecting. To what degree this reflects their personal “historic” experience and to what extent it may be attributed to the fact that many of them do not associate their lives with the European Union is a question to which the research data did not provide a clear answer.

The living standard of the households of respondents plays an important role. Low living standard, as perceived subjectively by the respondents, demonstrates in their responses with an increased lack of interest and also with more negative attitudes in general.

From the point of view of the type of economic activity, businesspeople and sole traders, and senior management positions for employees, express clear openness, interest, and positive expectations. Opposite feelings are apparent among employees performing manual work.

Political orientation of the population, especially closeness to the ODS<sup>3</sup> and Unie svobody – DEU, and further, affiliation to KSČM plays at least identically important role as the mentioned aspects in the attitude to the issues of the European Union. Supporters of the first two mentioned, right wing political parties, have a more positive attitude in general. Supporters of KSČM show clear severity and scepticism. They do not share the generally widespread pro-Western orientation of the Czech society and are ideologically connected more closely to the former regime. Finally, the traditionally more detached attitude of women, also demonstrated by a lower proportion of positive (optimistic) and negative (sceptic) standpoints was confirmed.

The suggested logic of the captured structure of attitudes and opinions has reflected in practically all areas or in connection with awareness, expectations, support of accession, etc. In further text, I will therefore not mention it again.

## II. Relationship of Czech Society to the Integration Process

The expert public, politicians, and media, usually used to characterise the relationship of the Czech population to integration and integration process of the country into the European structures as lukewarm, reserved, non-informed. Let us investigate how these judgements are supported by research data.

If we observe the interest of the population in the course of the integration process of the Czech Republic, we have the following data available: while in the autumn of 2001, approximately 57% of the population were, in their own words, interested in the integration, a year later, the figure amounted already to approximately two thirds. The last investigation conducted in February 2003 showed that the interest has already exceeded this level. We could naturally

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<sup>3</sup> The situation applies to the supporters and proponents of ODS. The political representation of ODS itself has more reserved attitudes, describing themselves as Euro-realistic, while others describe it as Euro-sceptic.

imagine better results but the research data itself do not show a clearly negative tone.

**Table 2. Interest in Accession of CR into the EU (in %)**

	11/2001	10/2002	2/2003
High	15	19	15
Partial	42	46	54
Low	32	26	24
Not at all	11	9	7
Interest/Lack of interest *	57/43	65/35	69/31
Total	100	100	100

Source: CVVM, Our Society survey. Field investigation conducted on: 3 to 10 Feb. 2003. Number of respondents: N=1,070.

\* Interest: high + partial, lack of interest: low + not at all.

The lower than expected level of interest of the Czech population is apparently the expression of a situation when a part of the population shares the conviction of the negligible impact of the accession of the Czech Republic into the European structures on their personal lives and (or) apparently even the expression of the feeling that the decision is taken regardless of their wishes or misgivings<sup>4</sup>. We need to take into account the impact of the level and quality of saturation of the relevant information needs. Repeatedly conducted surveys have supported the objections of the critics mentioning information deficit of the government "communication" strategy, and its emotive and persuasive concept. Although with the date of the referendum approaching, the general level of information increased, it is still true that four months before the referendum, majority of the population – see Table 3 – still had a feeling they lacked information. Further results, however, show that if information was provided, it was usually in a comprehensive, acceptable form – in February 2003, 55% of respondents mentioned that opinion.

<sup>4</sup> A survey conducted in April 2001 showed that 41% of respondents expressed the opinion that the accession of CR into the EU would not affect people like them in any significant manner. The research data does not support a more passive attitude, caused by the conviction that the decision taken is "about us, without us", but the opinion may be assumed based on the fact that the pre-accession stage did not involve distinct public discussion.

**Table 3. Do you Have Sufficient Information on the Process of Accession of CR into the EU? (In %)**

	11/2001	10/2002	2/2003
Definitely yes	3	4	6
Rather yes	26	29	34
Rather no	38	39	42
Definitely no	23	20	14
Does not know	10	8	4
YES/NO	29/61	33/59	40/56
TOTAL	100	100	100

Source: CVVM, Our Society survey. Field investigation conducted on: 3 to 10 Feb. 2003. Number of respondents N=1,070.

### III. Integration of the Czech Republic into the EU and Expectations of the Czech Public

Expectations of the population in connection with the accession of the Czech Republic into the EU and notions concerning the consequences of the accession were included across the investigations starting at the moment of filing the application of the Czech Republic into the European Union. From the beginning, the notions of the Czech public were rather cloudy, indefinite, and expressed, above all, generally positive relationship towards the European Union or hope for future boom of Czech economy and society. Nevertheless, the motive of returning the country into Europe and acquiring respectable position within it was the most significant. Gradually – mainly before the referendum on the accession of the Czech Republic into the EU was held – the expectations acquired more precise contours – the familiarity about specific possibilities for the state and the population but also about a number of potential risks was growing.

In what moods did people enter – or decided not to enter – the polling stations is suggested in a survey conducted in May 2003<sup>5</sup> - see Table 4. People thought about how the change may hypothetically be beneficial for them or their close social environment. The previously stressed standpoint, i.e. the higher prestige of our country within the world, has received evaluation completely below the average by that time. The possibilities of free movement of persons, more liberal travel abroad as compared to the past were described as a clear positive. Also, the opportunity to work or study in the European Union was valued, although

<sup>5</sup> Question: "What main advantages and disadvantages should, in your opinion, have the accession of the Czech Republic into the European Union? Please specify three most important advantages and disadvantages of the accession."

more as a hypothetical opportunity.<sup>6</sup> To a lesser extent, progress in living standard, or improvement of social securities was relied upon; the opinion of a certain part of the respondents concerning better job opportunities or “better opportunities for the workers” could be considered rather a reflection of the competitive edge of the cheaper local labour force.

**Table 4. Anticipated Positives of the Accession of CR into the EU (in %)**

Opening (cancellation) of borders, free movement, unproblematic travel	56
Possibility to work in the EU countries	35
Possibility to study in EU, better conditions for the young	24
Economic benefit – GDP growth, foreign investments	20
Opening of the European market, free movement of goods and capital	15
Social securities, growth of living standard (salaries, pensions)	14
Legal system of the EU, better legislature, functioning court system	13
Euro, common currency	12
New work opportunities, better opportunities for workers	6
Better personal relationships, tolerance, acquainting with various cultures and languages	5
Better political situation in our country, larger political stability	4
Subsidies from the budget and EU funds, possibility to acquire grants from the EU	4
We will belong to the West, higher prestige of the CR in the world	4
Everything will improve, overall improvement of life, progress	3
Increasing military safety, common defence policy	3
Decreasing criminality, higher security, restrictions on corruption	3
Improvement in partial areas (health care, education, environment, etc.)	3
No advantages, nothing	5
Other	4
Does not know	8

Source: CVVM, Our Society survey. Field investigation conducted on: 19 to 26 May 2003. Number of respondents N=1,048.

The respondents could mention a total of three answers. The sum therefore exceeds 100.

Among the positive aspects offered by the integration for the entire society, the benefits for local economy in general were evaluated as the most convincing – hopes were attributed mainly to stimulation of economy and improvement of the economic situation of the country. Specifically, the influx of direct foreign investments was expected, removal of remaining barriers to free goods and services trade, or opportunity to draw from the structural funds of the European Union were mentioned. Like in the previous surveys, also here, the expectation or wish for a more perfect legislature, justice, or law enforcement, retained significant weight. The respondents also critically accentuated these areas in

<sup>6</sup> As described in a survey by CVVM from the end of April and May 2001, investigating the interest of the Czech population in working in the EU at the moment when we become their members, 4% of the population older than 15 years “definitely” intended to seek work – short- or long-term, and 8% “probably” had such plans.

other connections. Some respondents also hoped for decrease in criminality, improvement of political situation, health care, or environment.

When the respondents were to articulate risks that could attend the accession of the country into the European structures, they expressed a number of them. By far, the citizens see the decline in living standard, expressed both explicitly and using phenomena such as price growth, approximation of prices to the European prices, while maintaining the level of income and social benefits, as the most significant threat. This group may be expanded with statements suggesting the perception of the European Union as a too strong competitor potentially having a liquidating impact on domestic companies and enterprises. Special misgivings are caused by the fate of the Czech agriculture whose problems appeal to the Czech public and for whose fight to attain equal position in Europe they feel sympathy. Foreign purchase force and its possible impact to ownership relationships in the country cause anxiety as well. References to excessive costs related to the accession, i.e. costs necessary for implementation of technical, environmental, and other EU standards, close the entire chapter of economic worries.

Respondents have further expressed insecurity and misgivings when contemplating the future position of the Czech Republic in the European Union. As clearly suggested in Table 5, there is a notion among the general public, for example, of a second-rate, not fully-fledged membership, limited by a number of conditions of the "transitional" periods and (at the same time) the notion of a significant reduction of the powers of the Czech state and loss of national sovereignty. Reservations concerning the implementation of EU standards and legislature also appeared. Many of those misgivings were probably caused by media stunts concerning, e.g., the cancellation of the production of the Czech "pickled sausages (*utopenici*)", "Domestic Rum (*tuzemský rum*)", or the operation of the "paternoster" lifts.

Finally, there people also express misgivings concerning miscellaneous side effects of the integration, such as influx of economic immigrants, deterioration of security situation within the country, situation in the health care system, education, etc. A specific type of misgivings is represented by personal insecurity of respondents concerning success in future demands and requirements, such as improvement of quality of products, and services, work efficiency, etc., but also (lack of) knowledge of foreign languages.

**Table 5. Anticipated Negatives of the Accession of the CR into the EU (in %)**

High prices, rising prices, disadvantageous relation between prices and salaries (pensions)	53
EU is economically too strong, the competition will destroy, damage us	26
Decline in living standard, deterioration of social conditions, lower pensions	24
Loss of national sovereignty, limits to the powers of the national state	20
Second-rate position in the EU, not equal conditions, transitional limitations	17
Economic dominance of foreigners from the West, they will buy everything out	13
Immigration, influx of foreigners, poor immigrants	13
Necessity to obey foreign standards, foreign legislature	11
Negative impact for agriculture, liquidation of agriculture	9
Growth in criminality, corruption, organised crime, terrorism	8
Euro, end of Czech crown, loss of economic sovereignty	3
Costs on the accession, it will cost us a lot of money, high fees	3
Higher demands on quality, work efficiency, worse working conditions	3
Higher bureaucracy	3
Deterioration of personal relationships	3
Deterioration of situation in specific areas (health care, science, education)	3
Necessity to know foreign languages	3
Other answers	6
Does not know	10

Source: CVVM, Our Society survey. Field investigation conducted on: 19 to 26 May 2003. Number of respondents: N=1,048.

Respondents could mention a total of three answers. The sum therefore exceeds 100.

A survey in which respondents estimated the development in certain – especially economic – areas and conditions after the accession of the Czech Republic into the EU captured the expectations of the public in another manner – see Table 6.<sup>7</sup> The data demonstrates that a change downward is anticipated in a number of areas, especially as far as food prices, land, and energy prices, and public transport prices, are concerned. Approximately half of respondents feared a significant growth in unemployment; but 28% thought it would not change dramatically, and 12% hoped that it would decrease radically. Taxes on personal income will, in the opinion of 37% of respondents, increase, another 30% of respondents think that the situation would not change. Despite that, a quarter of respondents were not able to assess the development of tax burden. Approximately a fifth of them did not have an idea about future development of social benefits; most frequently, people hoped that there would not be any more significant changes (40%). For development of wages, over two fifths of

<sup>7</sup> Question: "In your opinion, how will salaries, prices, etc. develop after the CR is accepted into the European Union?" "They will increase distinctly, they will not change, or they will distinctly decrease, as far as: a) salaries, b) food prices... etc., are concerned."



respondents anticipated significant growth after our accession into the EU; similarly widespread was the opinion that neither decrease nor growth would occur.

**Table 6. Anticipated Changes after Accession of the Czech Republic into the EU (in %)**

	Will decrease significantly	Will not change	Will increase significantly	Does not know
Salaries	10	38	42	10
Food prices	2	12	82	4
Energy prices	2	17	72	9
Unemployment	12	28	48	12
Personal income taxes	6	30	37	27
Social benefits	22	40	18	20
Land prices	2	7	76	15
Public transport prices	1	20	63	16

Source: CVVM, Our Society survey. Field investigation conducted on: 3 to 10 Feb. 2003. Number of respondents N = 1,070.

#### IV. Reflection on the Accession Negotiations between the Czech Republic and the European Union

The accession negotiations with the European Union affected the relationship of the Czech public towards the European Union and the willingness to support the integration of the Czech Republic to a large degree. Due to their complexity and extent, the general public and, for the most part, the local media either could not absorb their content. Therefore, only negotiations that were comprehensible and affected some of the sensitive social areas usually entered public discussions. Frequently distorted information on the requirements of the European Union concerning standards for certain popular Czech food products had a specific impact. From the accession provisions, only the seven-year transitional period for free movement of labour, caused disapproval: 45% of citizens described it as totally futile in July 2001, another 18% described it as "much longer", and further 17% as "rather longer" than necessary. Only seven percent of respondents were convinced of its reasonableness.<sup>8</sup> Majority of the population did not approve of the length of the ban on purchase of agricultural land and real estate properties by foreigners.<sup>9</sup> Also, the opinion held by 64% of respondents

<sup>8</sup> An identical investigation was also conducted in Poland at the same time. 57% of Poles were convinced about complete futility of the implementation by EU of restrictive requirements, another 15% considered the required period to be excessively long, and 17% as rather longer than necessary. Six percent found it as reasonable, i.e. a similar share as in the Czech Republic.

<sup>9</sup> More than a quarter (28%) of respondents thought of limiting the sale of land to foreigners for five to seven years after the accession of the Czech Republic into the EU. If we add the four percent recommending only a four-year period, it is approximately one third (32%), considering a relatively short period as reasonable, similar to what the government has agreed upon with the EU.

that the accession into the EU would bring the farmers more negative than positive aspects proves the dissatisfaction with the conditions negotiated for Czech farmers; only 13% of respondents found it reasonable<sup>10</sup>. The contents and consequences in all these and a number of other provisions agreed within the *acquis communautaire* have become clear for the public only in the final stage of the accession negotiations, when the media compared our conditions with those that the other candidate countries achieved. Frequently, precisely those areas in which the Czech Republic was less or least successful were highlighted. Especially the fact of the lowest volume of funds allocated to the Czech Republic at the Copenhagen summit in December 2002 as compared to the other candidate countries, extensively covered by media, caused uproar<sup>11</sup>.

The level of disenchantment of Czech citizens is apparent from the development of the time line, capturing the opinions concerning work of our negotiators with the European Union. While in 2001 and 2002 content always prevailed significantly, in January 2003 it levelled with the negatives as far as figures are concerned. Dissatisfaction therefore grew within two years from 27 points to 41% - see Table 7.

**Table 7. How do our Negotiators Promote the Interests of the Czech Republic with the European Union (in %)**

	IV/2001	XI/2001	X/2002	I/2003
Sufficiently	9	13	13	11
Rather sufficiently	33	33	34	31
Rather insufficiently	20	22	22	30
Insufficiently	7	8	11	11
DOES NOT KNOW	31	24	20	17
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Source: CVVM, Our Society survey. Field investigation conducted on: 6 to 13 Jan. 2003. Number of respondents: N = 981.

The critical attitude of the Czech citizens stands out also when compared to the opinion of Polish and Hungarian public<sup>12</sup>. Almost two fifths (37%) of respondents in the Czech Republic characterised the results as "worse than expected" at the beginning of this year. In Poland, it was only 18% and in Hungary, the figure was

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One fourth of respondents (24%) had a notion of a longer horizon. The opinion that the ban should be permanent or for 100 years was also frequent (20%).

<sup>10</sup> Source: Survey conducted by CVVM in April 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Usually, the comparison involved an amount of Euro 76 to 78 that will be allocated to one citizen of the Czech Republic, with Euro 125 to be received by one Slovenian. Measured by GDP per capita, the Slovenia represents the second richest candidate country, behind the Cyprus.

<sup>12</sup> The survey was conducted in co-operation with partner CEORG organisations in Poland and Hungary.

17%<sup>13</sup> - see Table 8. In the Czech Republic, only 6% evaluated the results as “better than expected” and, for 36% of respondents, the negotiations finished in line with their expectations. In Hungary, 11% described the results as very successful (“better than expected”), and 32% thought they were adequate to the expectations. The Polish public expressed the highest satisfaction. A fifth of the Poles evaluated the results of negotiations with the EU as very successful and 32% as adequate to their expectations. Findings from this survey include high level of interest, or availability of information to the Czech public – the share of “I do not know” answers was, by far, the lowest in comparison with Poland and Hungary.

**Table 8. Evaluation of Results of Negotiations with the European Union (in %)**

	CR	Poland	Hungary
Better than expected	6	20	11
As expected	36	32	32
Worse than expected	37	18	17
Does not know	21	30	40
TOTAL	100	100	100

Source: Survey by CVVM. Field investigation conducted on: 6 to 13 Jan. 2003, N=981 respondents. Survey by CBOS, Poland. Field investigation conducted on: 3 to 10 Feb. 2003, N=1,025 respondents.

Survey by Tárki, Hungary. Field investigation conducted on: 3 to 10 Feb. 2003, N=1,030 respondents.

#### V. Enter or Not to Enter? Or the Support of Accession of the Czech Republic into the European Union by Czech public

Except from the very first investigation conducted by IVVM after the Czech Republic filed its application into the European Union in January 1996, demonstrating significant uncertainty and lack of information of the population, totally clear support for integration of the country and willingness to support it in a referendum was discovered for the entire previous period. The share of citizens willing to express their “yes” in a referendum remained at a relatively stable level of approximately fifty percent; opponents accounted for approximately one fourth. A large representation of hesitant respondents characterised Czech society because the size of undecided citizens was distinct mainly in comparison with other candidate countries. The share of opponents of the accession was also usually higher. The group of undecided levelled with the numbers in Poland only at the beginning of this year; in Hungary, there were most hesitant people. The

<sup>13</sup> Question: “How would you assess the results of the negotiations between the Czech Republic/Hungary/Poland with the European Union? Are they better or worse than you expected?” Offered responses – see text in Table 8.

numbers of opponents of accession, however, remained at a relatively high level – see Table 9.

**Table 9. Declared Voting in the Referendum (in %)**

	Czech Republic			Poland	Hungary
	5/02	11/02	1/03	1/03	1/03
In favour of the joining of the EU	48	51	55	63	58
Against joining the EU	27	30	26	21	18
DK, REFUSED	25	19	19	16	24
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey by CVVM. Field investigation conducted on: 6 to 13 Jan. 2003, N=981 respondents. Survey by CBOS, Poland. Field investigation conducted on: 3 to 10 Feb. 2003, N=1,025 respondents.

Survey by Tárki, Hungary. Field investigation conducted on: 3 to 10 Feb. 2003, N=1,030 respondents.

Prior to the time when it became apparent, whether at all and when the first historic referendum is to be held, the hesitant attitudes of the Czech population could have been attributed in part to this circumstance. However, later it became apparent that the impact included various other factors, and probably their synergic effects as well.

Undoubtedly, the feeling of insufficient information available to the citizens, especially concerning practical consequences, demand, and potential risks of the accession of the country into the EU was present here. Further, the public also lacked a unified, jointly expressed opinion of the Parliament and the political representation.<sup>14</sup> The impact of the turns in accession negotiations was already mentioned; in certain periods, it was supplemented with uncertainties of the Czech public caused by requirements of our two neighbouring EU countries: that is, requirement of revoking the Beneš decrees articulated by Germany, and further, active resistance of Austrian activists against the launching of the Temelín nuclear power plant. Behind the hesitant attitude, we may also see the expression of Czech mentality, less radical, and emotive than in other candidate countries.

As demonstrated by the last investigation of CVVM prior to the June referendum, a total of 63% of inhabitants intended to support the accession of the Czech Republic into the EU, 12% planned to reject it, and 15% did not have clear

<sup>14</sup> On the one side, the influence of strongly pro-European political parties, especially ČSSD and the association of political parties active under the name Čtyřkoalice until 2002, later Koalice, manifested here. The official opinion of ODS was fast integration into the EU, but certain influential figures within the party, headed by Václav Klaus, did not conceal their "Euro-Realism" and criticism of the current institutional ("centrally distributive") system of the EU. KSČM remained the party with the least inclination to the early accession into the EU. The party required a change in the

opinion – see Table 10.<sup>15</sup> The size of the opponent group oscillated at the average of the year 2003.

**Table 10. Planned Voting in the Referendum (in %)**

	XI/2002	I/2003	II/2003	III/2003	IV/2003	V/2003
In favour of accession	51	55	59	59	58	63
Against accession	30	26	23	22	24	22
DK	19	19	18	19	18	15
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: CVVM, Our Society survey. Field investigation conducted on: 19 to 25 May 2003. Number of respondents with voting rights: N=969.

In order to estimate the results of the Czech referendum (an issue with which all domestic research agencies fought), the view of the standpoints of citizens planning to participate in the referendum was more attractive. It confirmed that this part of citizens is keen, to a great degree, on supporting the accession – in May, i.e. a month before the referendum, the figure achieved 75%; 17% of respondents planned to vote against. Citizens who resigned to participate in the referendum, shared an anti-integration opinion for the most part – 51% would vote “against”, only 18% “in favour”, and almost a third (31%) did not have a solid opinion. The outlined situation was one of the puzzles that the campaign trying to attract the population to support the accession had to deal with – whether to draw more people to the referendum but with the risk of a more frequent “no” or whether only reinforce the pro-integration intentions of those who were already decided to come – which, however, meant a risk of putting the results of the referendum to doubts by low turnout<sup>16</sup>.

Actually, the issue of participation in the referendum was pressing throughout its entire preparation. International comparisons demonstrated the lowest willingness from other candidate countries. This is demonstrated by investigations conducted in January 2003 in the Czech Republic, Poland, and

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character of the European integration, attributing more focus to social and environmental aspects without “subordination to the multinational capital” and “loss of national sovereignty”.

<sup>15</sup> The following question was used: “If you took part in the referendum, would you vote in favour of the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU or against the accession of the Czech Republic into the EU?” All respondents answered the question, i.e. even those who mentioned that they would probably or definitely not go to the referendum or who did not know whether they would attend the referendum.

<sup>16</sup> The validity of the referendum was not contingent on a certain level of participation but its legitimacy, as an expression of the will of a part of the population, was an issue.

Hungary - see Table 11. Less than a half of the firmly decided Czech voters did not warrant too high certainty about the success of the referendum.

**Table 11. Declared Participation of Czech, Hungarian, and Polish citizens in the Referendum on the Accession of the Country into the EU (in %)**

	CR	Poland	Hungary
Definitely yes	46	61	68
Rather yes	31	11	10
Rather no	10	6	2
Definitely no	4	10	7
DK	9	12	13
TOTAL	100	100	100

Source CVVM, Our Society survey. Field investigation conducted on: 6 to 13 Jan. 2003. Number of respondents: N=981.

Survey by CBOS, Poland. Field investigation conducted on: 3 to 10 Feb. 2003. Number of respondents: N=1,025.

Survey by Tárki, Hungary. Field investigation conducted on: 3 to 10 Feb. 2003. Number of respondents: N=1,030.

Although the last pre-referendum survey conducted by CVVM brought information about a stronger resolve of the population to participate in the referendum (see Table 12), not even this result gave greater hopes for a convincing turnout, taking into account the experience with pre-election surveys. Moreover, the strenuous expectations within society and moods of the political representation were exacerbated by the Hungarian referendum, in which the turnout was significantly lower than signalled by the surveys. The scenario of generally widespread notion of the Hungarian public of clear results of the referendum and subsequent lower election turnout was a situation threatening the Czech Republic as well.

**Table 12. Declared Participation in the Referendum on Accession of CR into the EU (in %)**

	XI/2002	I/2003	II/2003	III/2003	IV/2003	V/2003
Definitely yes	46	42	42	40	36	42
Rather yes	31	37	36	40	42	35
Rather no	10	9	10	7	11	10
Definitely no	4	4	5	5	4	6
DK	9	8	7	8	7	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Yes/no	77/14	79/13	78/15	80/12	78/15	77/16

Source: CVVM, Our Society survey. Field investigations conducted on: 19 to 25 May 2003. Number of respondents with voting rights: N=969.

However, the results of the referendum, organised on Friday 13 and Saturday 14 June, brought an overall relief. It was demonstrated that probably due to the mentioned uncertainty concerning the needed turnout and, therefore, concerning the support for accession of the country into the European Union – including the fact of a sudden activation of the critics of the integration – moved the citizens to come to the polling rooms after all. Finally, 55% of the population participated in the referendum, and 77.33% of them voted in favour of the accession; 22.67% of the voters were against.

Despite the mentioned numerous doubts, mistrust, and uncertainty, the Czech public acquired the conviction that the accession of the country into the European Union is the better of the two options. Undoubtedly, dissatisfaction and criticism will remain a side effect of their lives within the European Union. The question remains to what extent their defensive effect will apply and to what extent it will be possible to mobilise the activity of the citizens when promoting their demands and making use of the possibilities in the new conditions.