



## PRESS RELEASE

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## Citizens and Information on EU

### Technical characteristics

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Within the frame of a block of questions relating to the European Union, a part of them was dedicated to problems concerning information on the EU. Based on researches being performed in former times, we know that a completely dominating source of information on the EU for our citizens are generally news media, especially television and press, while other potential sources (training and lectures, specialized publications, Internet, telephone information lines, public administration or face-to-face contacts, personal straightforward experience, etc.) form main source of information only exceptionally, while their importance increases only if people themselves proactively seek certain particular information. Based on former researches, we also know that citizens are mostly interested in information of socio-economical characteristics, which immediately relate to themselves, whether various aspects of living standards (wages, rents, prices), of job opportunities abroad etc., or generally of the Czech Republic (impacts on economy, companies, farmers, and unemployment, financial costs connected with the access to the EU, etc.) are concerned. In this research, we focus on interests in information, their frequency and comprehensibility, and additionally on the fact, who should, according to people's opinion, particularly inform citizens on problems with the Czech Republic's accession to the EU.

At the beginning, we put a question to all informants, whether they are interested in the Czech Republic's accession to the EU.<sup>1</sup>

Table No. 1 – **Persons interested in the Czech Republic's accession to the EU ...**

	11/2001	10/2002
very	15	19
partially	42	46
little	32	26
never	11	9

*percents in columns,  
random statistical discrepancy is  $\pm 3$  percentage points*

Results shown in Table No. 1 identify that 65 % of citizens are interested "very" or at least "partially" in the Czech Republic's accession to the EU. In comparison with last year's November, where we put the same question to informants, the interest in the process of the Czech Republic's accession to the EU is markedly increased, because then a strong or at least partial interest was declared by a number of informants being lower by 8 percentage points than presently.

Higher interest in the Czech Republic's accession to the EU is declared by men, interviewees with higher levels of education, senior expert or managing members of staff, entrepreneurs, interviewees with good living standards, adherents to ODS or US-DEU, and interviewees, who are decided to vote aye in a potential referendum on the Czech Republic's accession to the EU. On the contrary, relatively lower interest in the Czech Republic's accession to the EU was identified in case of young people at age from 15 to 19 years, students, pensioners, unemployed, supporters of KSČM, interviewees, who do not prefer any political party, and informants, who are not decided, whether and how should they vote in a referendum on the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, or who state that they do not participate in such referendum.

<sup>1</sup> Question: **"Are you interested in the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union?"**

Subsequently, the following question was put to all interviewees: **“Do you think that you have sufficient information on this process?”**

Table 2 – **Sufficient information on the process of the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU**

	11/2001	10/2002	Interested in the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU			
			very	partially	little	never
definitely yes	3	4	14	2	0	1
more likely yes	26	29	47	37	11	5
more likely no	38	39	26	45	47	9
definitely no	23	20	12	14	30	45
DO NOT KNOW	10	8	1	2	12	40
YES/NO	29/61	33/59	61/38	39/59	11/77	6/54

*percents in columns*

Data shown in Table No. 2 identify that, in our society, an opinion prevails, according to which information on the process of the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU is insufficient (59 %), over the opposite evaluation (33 %), while the rest of informants stated that they do not know. This result is in substantial agreement with the result of the identical research being performed in Autumn 2001. While quantity of information, how it is shown in Table No. 2, was evaluated as unambiguously favorable by those, who are “very” interested in the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU. The lower interest in the accession process, the higher share of critical voices relating to the quantity of information, and the higher share of those, who have no opinion at all.

Subsequently, socio-demographic differences correspond, to a great extent, with the division in case of preceding questions – the acceptance of sufficiency of information on the accession process is more frequently expressed by men, secondary school graduates with “A” Level of GCE examination, as well as alumni and alumnae, senior expert or managing staff, interviewees with good living standards, interviewees preferring ODS, and people, who should support, in a referendum, the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU. On the contrary, consents were relatively rarely expressed by interviewees with a basic school education, pensioners, adherents to KSČM, those, who do not prefer any political party, and interviewees, who do not know, whether or not to vote, and if yes, how to vote in a referendum on the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU, or who are decided not to participate in such referendum.

Answers to the question: **“Are pieces of information you have available comprehensible for you?”**, which we again put to all informants, is shown in Table No. 3.

Table 3 – **Comprehensibility of information on the process of the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU**

	11/2001	10/2002	Interested in the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU			
			very	partially	little	never
definitely yes	6	8	25	5	2	1
more likely yes	44	42	51	52	31	10
more likely no	31	33	19	36	43	14
definitely no	8	10	4	5	16	35
DO NOT KNOW	11	7	1	2	8	40
YES/NO	50/39	50/43	76/23	57/41	33/59	11/49

*percents in columns*

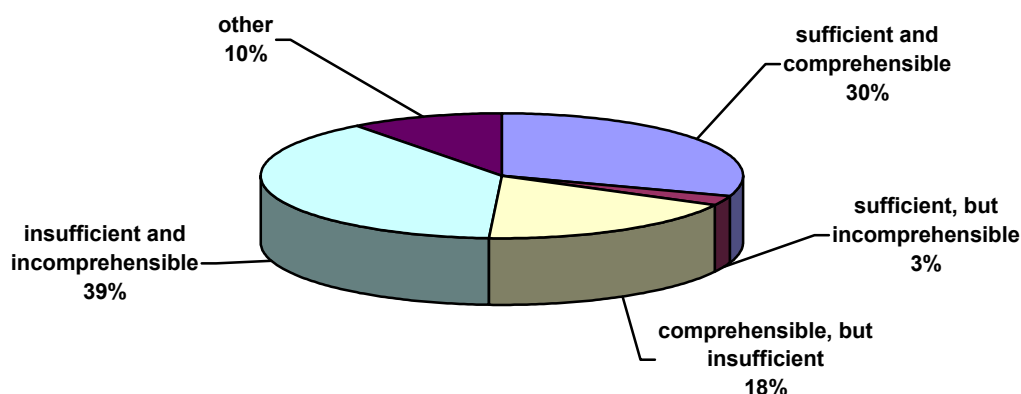
In light of subjective answers of informants, it seems that comprehensibility of information is assessed considerably better than their quantity. The share of those, who consider information to be comprehensible, with 50 % within the frame of the entire set, prevails over the share of those, who do not consider the available information as comprehensible (43 %). Similarly as in case of their sufficiency, also in case of comprehensibility of information, an analogical relationship with declared interest in the process of the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU became evident. The lower interest, the higher share of those, who consider the available information to be incomprehensible, and subsequently the higher share of those, who have no respective opinion at all.

If we link both factors – sufficiency and comprehensibility of information on the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU – (see Diagram No. 1), we can identify that 30 % of interviewees consider them as “sufficient and comprehensible”, 18 % of them as “comprehensible, but insufficient”, and 39 % of them as “insufficient and incomprehensible”. The combination of “sufficient, but incomprehensible” was relatively rare (3 %), remaining 10 % were interviewees, who stated that they do not know in some of their answers or in both of them.

Also in case of “comprehensibility of information” occurred socio-demographic differences being analogous to preceding two questions – the consent to the allegation that available pieces of information are comprehensible, was expressed more by men, people with higher education, members of staff in posts of senior experts or managing personnel, interviewees with good living standards, adherents to ODS or

US-DEU, and people supporting the Czech Republic's accession to the EU in a potential referendum. The available information on the accession process is evaluated as less comprehensible by people with basic education, and with secondary education without any GCE, pensioners, adherents to KSČM, interviewees non-preferring any political party, and those, who do not know, how and whether they should vote in a referendum on the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, or those, who shall not participate in such plebiscite.

Diagram No. 1 – **Comprehensibility and Sufficiency of Information**



*Combinations, which include answers "do not know" are shown in the diagram as "other".*

In addition, interviewees answered the question: **"Who should, according to your opinion, advise citizens on problems relating to the Czech Republic's accession to the EU?"** They had to choose three subjects from the submitted offer being the most important ones according to their opinion.

**Table No. 4 –** Who should inform citizens on problems relating to the accession process

	Answers		
	Interviewed Citizens		Members of Parliament and Senators*
	2001**	2002	2000**
Media	88.3	84.2	88.0
Government	73.3	73.9	83.9
Members of Parliament and Senators	40.2	42.7	35.8
Scientific and Educational Institutions	50.1	42.0	39.1
Political parties	28.9	30.0	41.2
President	14.5	16.1	5.8
Someone Else	-	6.8	-
NON-DISCLOSED	4.7	4.3	6.2
TOTAL	300	300	300

Data in percents show shares of those, who named the respective subject among the three ones, which they could choose from the closed offer of subjects. The category "non-disclosed" includes missing answers of informants, who chose less than three subjects.

\*) Data of the research being performed among Members of Parliament and Senators in 2000. Source: Parliamentary DICE.

\*\*\*) The offer, which was submitted to interviewees, did not include an alternative "someone else".

Data in Table No. 4 indicate that, according to citizens' opinion, news media should communicate most information on the Czech Republic's accession to the EU (it was stated by more than four fifths of interviewees), as well as the government (almost three fourths). Approximately two fifths of interviewees identified representatives elected to legislative bodies as the most important subjects, two fifths of them identified scientific and educational institutions, less than one third of them identified political parties, and approximately one sixth identified republic's president. 7 % of informants.

Table No. 4 shows an interesting comparison with answers to a similar questions, as made by citizens less than one year ago, and how a similar question was answered Members of Parliament and Senators of the Czech Republic. However, this comparison is to be understood, to a certain degree, as indicative only, because the question asked in former times did not contain, in the offer of options for selection of three subjects, the alternative "someone else". Nevertheless, it is clear that, in view of citizens, the distribution of opinions did not change

exceedingly. Placements and separation distances among individual subjects remained essentially the same. Only "scientific and educational institutions", which in the last year's research placed third, when one half of informants identified them, encountered a marked downtrend, even slightly under the level of "Members of Parliament and Senators", which could, however, be caused just by the mentioned inclusion of the alternative "someone else" among available options for selection, when citizens' opinions themselves did not change markedly.

As regards Members of Parliament and Senators, also they identified most frequently news media. The share of those, who identified media among three selected subjects, was nevertheless comparable with the share encountered in case of commoners. Likewise, similarly as citizens, elected legislatives classified the government as second subject, as far as the count of occurrences is concerned. The share of Members of Parliament, who identified the government, was however slightly higher than a share of citizens. Clearly more frequently than citizens, Members of Parliament and Senators accentuated the role of political parties, while a lower weight, especially in comparison with the fully comparable research of 2001, was put on scientific and educational institutions, and on themselves as well. They stressed least the role of president among subjects being included in the offer of available options. Here, they again concur with citizens, after all, citizens identified the president more frequently.