

# EU INTEGRATION: CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS

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DESK ANALYSIS OF EXISTING RESEARCH

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## Introduction

This document presents a desk analysis of the existing research on the citizens' perceptions regarding the integration of Republic of Macedonia in the European Union, conducted in the past five years. The purpose of the analysis is to identify the topics that will further be addressed as part of the project “National EU debate”, conducted by EPI and financed by Civica Mobilitas.

The project addresses the lack of debate and inclusiveness of the wider public in the public policy process in Republic of Macedonia. The situation regarding inclusion of the wider public, as well as the existing of an argumentative debate about the EU accession process, has worsened further, due to the backsliding in the accession process as a result of the combination of domestic issues and the name issue. The wider public – as target group of the proposed action – is mostly excluded from debates about the EU. Moreover, there has been a lack of accessible and objective data and information about the EU. Thus, the “National EU debate” will provide a model of consulting and informing the public, which will contribute in bridging the gap between the issue of chronic lack of consultation and debate, especially when regarding EU related issues.

When it comes to attitudes and perceptions of the public regarding the EU integration processes, the research body is limited. This could be attributed partly to the high costs related to conducting a full survey, but also because questions and debates about the EU integration remain predominantly in the elite circles. This being said, the surveys reviewed in this analysis are conducted by the **Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis – Skopje (IDSCS)**, the **Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC)** and the **Macedonian Center for European Training (MCET)**. In addition, attitudes of the Macedonian citizens on the topic of interest have also been conducted by the **International Republican Institute (IRI)**, by the **European Commission's Public Opinion Analysis sector (the Eurobarometer)** as by academics **Antoaneta Dimitrova and Elitsa Kortenska** from the Institute of Public Administration, Leiden University. In the following, we give an overview on the topics assessed within these surveys as well as a summary of the relevant findings.

## 1. Overviews of topics

**The Standard Eurobarometer** survey<sup>1</sup> is conducted twice per year (spring and autumn), with the latest survey for Macedonia being conducted in spring 2016. The Eurobarometer fact sheets for Macedonia report on issues that could be divided in several categories, such as Political and Economic situation (at Macedonia and EU); Opinion and attitudes about the EU; and Knowledge about EU affairs.

The questions related to political and economic situation explore the attitudes about the national and economy of the EU, about the personal job situation of the citizens and regarding the economic crisis (predominantly on the crisis' impact on the job market and which institutions are most able to deal with the crisis). Furthermore, the survey explores what issues citizens find to be the most important for them and for the country, as well as the citizens' trust in the Macedonian institutions and in the EU. As regarding the questions related to *Opinions and attitudes about the EU*, the Standard Eurobarometer explores questions such as what does EU mean to Macedonians, what picture does EU conjure to them, which values best represent the EU, and what does Macedonia's membership in the EU mean for them. Assessing the *Knowledge and information about EU affairs* is through questions such as how well citizens are informed about EU affairs, or where they obtain information on EU political affairs from.

The **IRI** conducts citizens' surveys exploring various topics from the political sphere in Macedonia<sup>2</sup>. The existing data addresses the Euro Atlantic orientation through questions about the country's relations with the EU and other countries and various questions related to the EU accession process of Macedonia. The survey also addresses questions on the economic progress, the EU integration, but also regarding the refugee crisis and the effects of the political crisis on the EU integration process.

In addition to conducting survey exploring citizens' perceptions about the EU integration process, **the IDSCS and the MCIC** have also conducted analyses exploring the perceptions on Macedonia's foreign policy (related to the EU integration), including the perceptions of

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<sup>1</sup> All polls are available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_arch\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> All polls are available at: <http://www.iri.org/polls>

citizens regarding the “name issue”. It is interesting however, that all of the issues explored in these analyses present not only the trends for the overall population, but also compare the trends between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians.

The **MCET** analysis from 2014 complements the existing data from the Eurobarometer surveys by crosscutting the citizens’ perceptions on the EU integration processes not only with ethnicity, but also with party supporting and level of education. The analysis explores the citizens’ expectation from EU membership, the perceptions on the foreign policy of the country as well as the attitude of the EU towards Macedonia.

Finally, **Dimitrova and Kortenska’s** research presents key discourses on enlargement from six different European countries, among which Macedonia. By using an innovative methodology (Q methodology), they differentiate four different discourses among citizens, through a method that allows them to define the components and parameters of the discussion on the topic of enlargement themselves.

Overall, most of the analyses look into similar questions, yet due to the different methodologies applied, the following review does not intend to compare findings from the different researches, but to rather present an overview of the findings (grouped by topics) and help in determining the topics to be addressed and assessed in EPI’s **National EU Debate** project.

## **2. Perceptions and values about the EU and the integration of Macedonia**

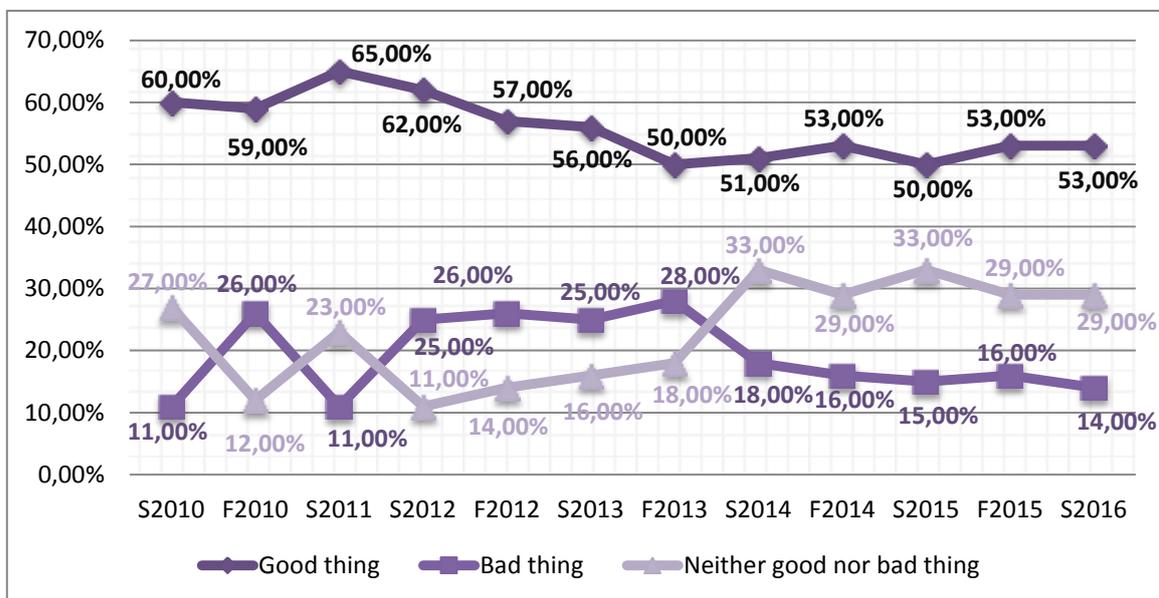
The Standard Eurobarometer provides data on citizens’ perceptions on the EU integration of Macedonia. More specifically, the question asked is whether they perceive EU integration to be a good thing/bad thing/neither?<sup>3</sup> Even though looking at the findings it is obvious that as of 2010 the majority of citizens find it to be a good thing, there have been small declines and decreases in the percentage of respondents, hence from 60% in 2010, this percent came down to 53% in the spring of 2016. Greater oscillations within the past 5 years are however noted in

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<sup>3</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 73 (Spring 2010) to 85 (Spring 2016), available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_arch\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm)

the population of citizens which have found EU membership to be a bad thing for Macedonia. From 2010 to the spring of 2012 there is a trend of constant decline and decreasing, followed by a constant rise of the percent of people perceiving EU integration as bad (spring 2012 to spring 2014), and finally from spring 2014 until spring 2016, albeit the decline and decrease, it can be said that the differences are minor. The last survey shows that 29% of the total respondents answered that EU integration for Macedonia would be a bad thing (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Do you consider the EU integration of Macedonia do be a good thing/bad thing/neither a good not a bad thing (Source: Eurobarometer)

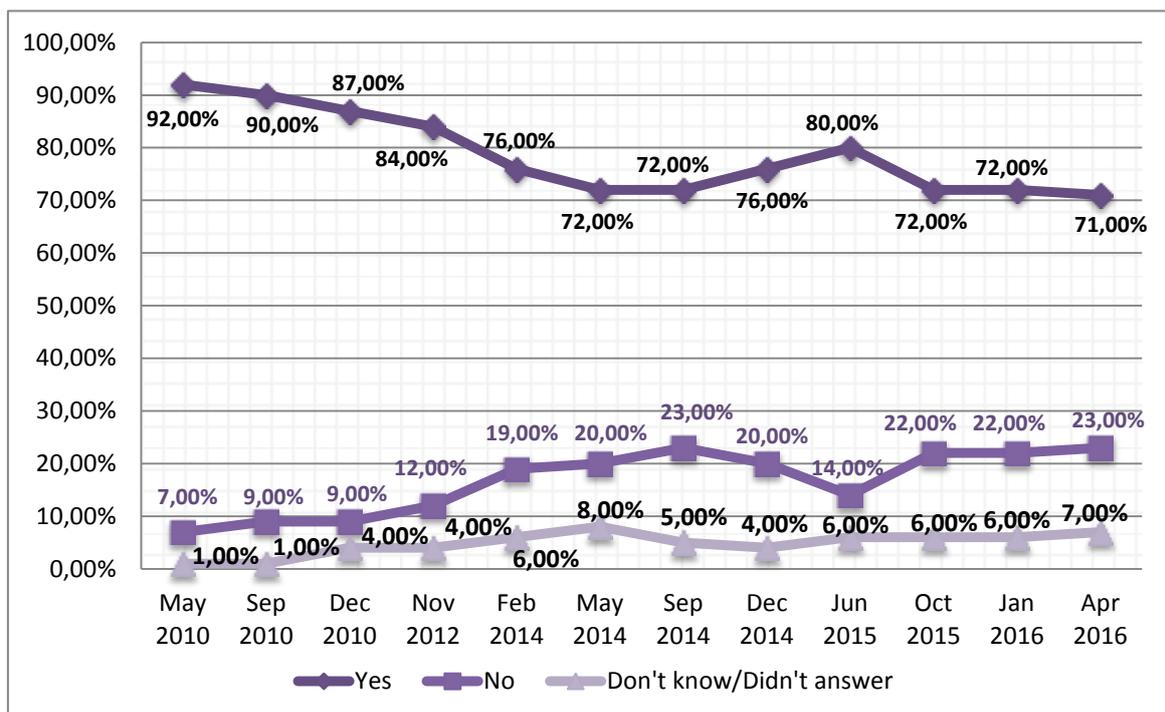


MCET’s analysis<sup>4</sup> from 2014 crosscuts this question with the level of education and the party preferences of the respondents and finds that EU membership is perceived as a good by 68% of the citizens more inclined towards the Social Democrat Union of Macedonia, and by 53% of the VMRO supporters. At the same time EU membership is perceived as a good thing by a larger portion of the respondents with primary education (74%) than by those with higher education (60%).

<sup>4</sup> The political culture, europeanization and fears in Macedonia: 2014 Report from the survey research “Eurometer“. Available at: [http://www.akademik.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Izvestaj-Evrometar-2014-MK\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.akademik.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Izvestaj-Evrometar-2014-MK_WEB.pdf)

IRI's polls provide an overview on perceptions regarding citizens' support for Macedonia to become a member of the EU for the period between 2010 and 2016<sup>5</sup>. As it can be seen from Figure 2, the support follows a slight declining trend, going from 92% in May 2010 to 71% in April 2016. The percentage of people who have answered that Macedonia was closer to EU when it got the candidate status than it is today has increased from 34% in May 2014 to 56% in April 2016. This being said, according to the 2016 poll<sup>6</sup>, the majority of respondents consider that it is going to take more than 10 years for this to happen. Between June 2015 and April 2016, for most of the respondents the reasons for the slowdown are the name issue (an average of 45.25%), the lack of domestic reforms (an average of 26.5%) and the new conditions set by the EU (an average of 15.5%)<sup>7</sup>.

Figure 2: Do you support Macedonia becoming a member of the EU? (Source: IRI)



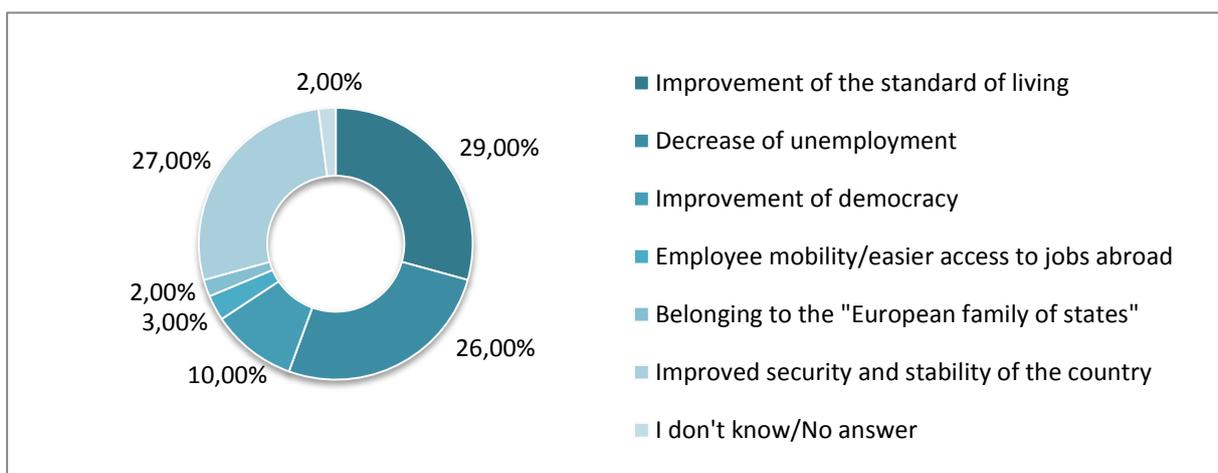
<sup>5</sup> Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion, April 19-25, 2016. Available at: [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri\\_macedonia\\_survey\\_april\\_2016\\_0.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_macedonia_survey_april_2016_0.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

Related to the above question, a 2014 survey looks into the reasons behind Macedonian's attitudes to vote against (Figure 4) and for (Figure 3) the integration of Macedonia in the EU<sup>8</sup>. They found that most of the citizens (29%) that would vote *for*, would do so as that way the employment would decrease, 26% considered it would improve the security and stability of the country, whereas the third largest group (26%) would support EU membership because it would improve democracy.

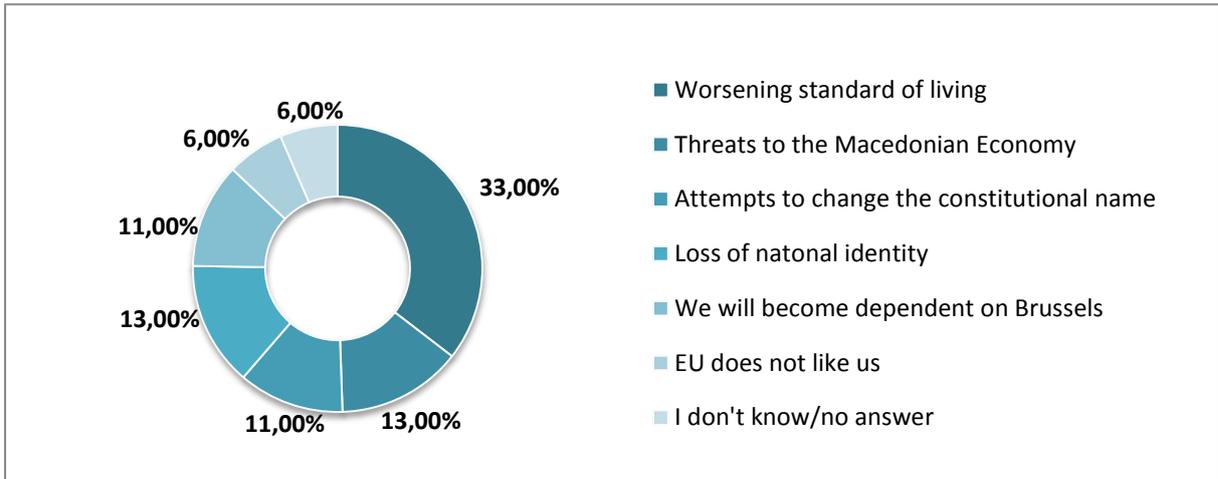
Figure 3: Why would you vote FOR EU integration of Macedonia? (Source: IDSCS)



On the other hand, the main reasons for voting *against* the EU accession of Macedonia are because it would worsen of the standard of living (33%), it would be threatening to the Macedonian economy (13%) and it would result with attempts to change the constitutional name (13%).

<sup>8</sup> Ivan Damjanovski: Public opinion and Macedonia's accession to the European Union: 2004-2014, available at: <http://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/javno-mislenje-eu-ENG.pdf>

Figure 4: Why would you vote AGAINST EU integration of Macedonia? (Source: IDSCS)



The IRI 2016 poll<sup>9</sup> also shows that 29% of the respondents strongly agree that Macedonia’s interest are best served by maintaining strong relations with the EU, 34% somewhat agree, while “somewhat disagree”, “strongly disagree” and “don’t know” have each received 9% of the total responses. In addition, 22% find that EU helps Macedonia’s national interest the most.

The IRI’s 2014 survey<sup>10</sup> shows that EU integration is seen as one of the means for improving the standard of living. More specifically, citizens perceive higher wages, lower prices and EU membership as the major factors that could improve the standard. In that respect, 33% of the respondents have said that higher wages would improve the standard of the majority of citizens, lower prices are seen as one of the factors for 15% of the respondents, whereas 23% said that EU membership would improve the standard. By the end of the year these percentages change slightly, hence 42% chose higher wages, 24% chose EU membership and 14% chose lower prices as the main factors that would contribute to a better standard of living.

<sup>9</sup> Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion, April 19-25, 2016. Available at: [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri\\_macedonia\\_survey\\_april\\_2016\\_0.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_macedonia_survey_april_2016_0.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion, August 29 – September 5, 2014. Available at [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20September%2026%20Survey%20of%20Macedonian%20Public%20Opinion%2C%20August%2029-September%205%2C%202014-English\\_0.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20September%2026%20Survey%20of%20Macedonian%20Public%20Opinion%2C%20August%2029-September%205%2C%202014-English_0.pdf)

The IDSCS' analyses from 2014 and 2015<sup>11</sup> show that while attitudes regarding the readiness of Macedonia for EU membership were almost split in 2014, a year later there is a greater discrepancy (Table 1).

**Table 1: Do you think Macedonia is ready for EU membership?**

	2014	2015
Yes	42.2%	32.9%
No	47.0%	57.2%
I don't know	9%	7.7%
No answer	1.7%	2.1%

*Source: IDSCS*

Namely, while in 2014 almost half of the respondents thought Macedonia was ready and almost half responded that it was not, in 2015 almost twice as much people found that the country is not ready than those who perceived it is.

Related to the above, further findings point to the changes in the opinion on the progress in the integration process<sup>12</sup>. As IDSCS' analysis shows, while 10.9% of the respondents found that Macedonia has advanced a lot in 2014, only 7.6% found the same in 2015. On the other hand, in 2014 2.4% thought there has been a drawback, while in 2015 this number increased to 4.9%. The analysis further investigates the reasons for stagnation, which according to the majority of citizens is mostly due to the obstruction from the neighboring countries, the second largest group of citizens prescribed it to the non-realization of domestic reforms and the third largest group said it is due to the unpreparedness of the EU to accept Macedonia as a member.

<sup>11</sup>Perceptions on Macedonia's EU integration: May 2015. Available at: <http://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Anketa-EU-integracija-31052015.pdf>

<sup>12</sup>Ibid

**Table 2: What is the main reason for Macedonia still not being part of the EU?**

	2014	2015
The neighboring countries obstruct Macedonia's accession	47.8%	43.8%
Non-realization of domestic reforms	27.1%	32.1%
Unpreparedness of the EU to accept Macedonia as a member	17.4%	17.6%
I don't know	4.9%	5.5%
No answer	2.7%	1.1%

*Source: IDSCS*

The MCET analysis<sup>13</sup> assesses the expectations of the Macedonian citizens from the EU membership. They find that for the majority of the respondents (69.8%), EU membership would mean more democracy, personal freedom and law abidance. Further 68.1% think EU membership would mean economic prosperity and more economic possibilities, for 62.7% it would mean more expensive life and decreasing of the standard of living, 60.9% think it would contribute to a better inter-ethnic life and higher tolerance in the country, whereas 55.9% think it would decrease the emigration.

In addition to expectations from the EU accession as well as perceptions towards the accession process, it is interesting to have a look at the data presenting the trust of Macedonian citizen in the EU. Interestingly, as figure 5 indicates, the trust in EU<sup>14</sup> varies throughout the years, or with other words - the percentage of people that tend to mostly trust the EU is volatile.

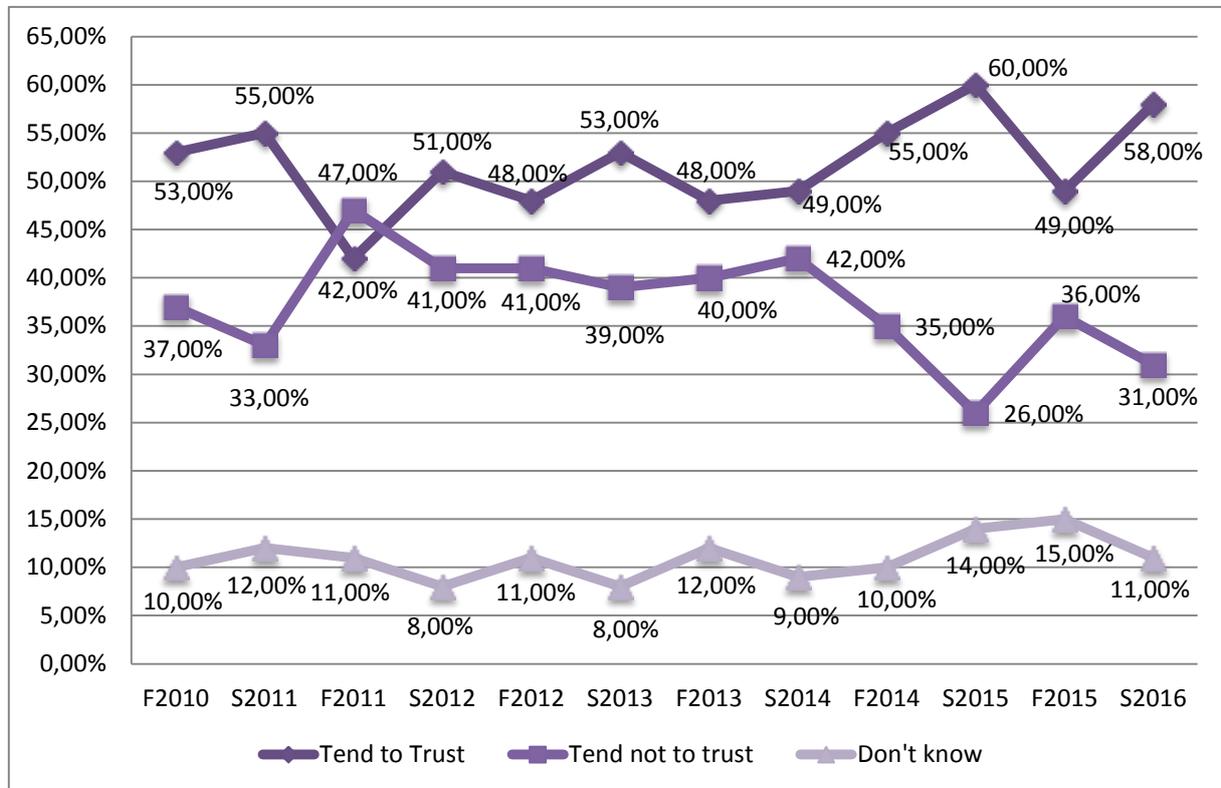
<sup>13</sup> The political culture, europeanization and fears in Macedonia: 2014 Report from the survey research "Eurometer ". Available at:

[http://www.akademik.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Izvestaj-Evrometar-2014-MK\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.akademik.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Izvestaj-Evrometar-2014-MK_WEB.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 74 (Fall 2010) to 85 (Spring 2016), available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_arch\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm)

Figure 5: Trust in the EU (Source: Eurobarometer)



As shown in the above figure, the trust the EU is fluctuating increasing and decreasing between 2010 and 2013. As of 2013, the percentage of people who tend to trust the EU is slowly increasing until the spring of 2015, when it marks a decrease of 11% by fall the same year, and then it decreases for 9% by the spring of 2016. In addition, the number of people which tend to not trust the EU was highest in fall 2011, reaching almost 50%, whereas the latest survey shows that only 31% of the people tend to not trust the EU.

Last but not least, Dimitrova and Kortenska explore the different discourses that exist among citizens in Macedonia in relation to the enlargement process.<sup>15</sup> Their analysis identifies four main discourses: (A) EU as better governance; (B) EU as business; (C) Not ready yet; and (D) EU accession and preparation. As they report, the proponents of the *discourse A* find that the inability to start negotiations is caused by the domestic elites' lack of political will,

<sup>15</sup> Dimitrova, A. & Kortenska, E., 'Understanding Enlargement: discourses in six countries' Conference Paper, *European Union Studies Association Conference, 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, Boston, 5-7 March 2015*. Available at: <https://eustudies.org/conference/papers/download/184>

and not by external factors. For them, EU accession should bring better governance in the sense of rule of law and statehood. At the same time, these respondents disagree with statements related to the domestic criticism against the EU, the arguments that the country is subject to additional requirement by the EU and the deadlock caused by the name issue.

For proponents of the *discourse B*, EU is seen as a source of opportunities and a possibility for establishing and maintaining liberal market economy, but also for meeting the EU ‘standards and rules’. These respondents do not think that EU membership means loss of national sovereignty and think that Macedonia is ready for the EU. At the same time, they do not agree that national and EU elites are preventing the accession of Macedonia in the EU. Contrary to these respondents, the respondents belonging to the *discourse C* find that the accession process is taking too long. This discourse, as the authors find, is predominantly found among ethnic Albanians. It is similar with the remaining discourses on issues such as preparation, national political elites’ commitment and benefits. These respondents disagree that the accession will have any negative consequences. The last discourse, *discourse D* has the most sceptic view in regard to the consequences Macedonia will bear upon joining the EU. Respondents from this discourse do not think the country is ready to join the EU, but also think that it will be worse off as a non-member than as a member. The proponents of this discourse disagree with statements that completely reject the potential benefits from the country’s accession in the EU. Surprisingly though, what differentiates the findings of this research from the other researches is that the authors did not identify a discourse that opposes Macedonia’s integration in the EU.

### **3. The name issue**

When it comes to the “name issue”<sup>16</sup> as part of the EU integration process of Macedonia, most of the research investigating the citizen’s perceptions related to this topic is done by the

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<sup>16</sup> Upon the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991, Republic of Greece opposed the use of Macedonia’s constitutional name, arguing it was because of historical and territorial reasons. Ever since, Greece claims that it has exclusive right to use the name “Macedonia” for its northern territory - just next to the border with Republic of Macedonia, and refers to Republic of Macedonia as The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Furthermore, Greece vetoed the invitation for Macedonia’s membership in

MCIC and IDSCS. As seen from Table 3 below, the data shows no major changes between 2014 and 2015 in the perception on changing the constitutional name when it comes to EU integration<sup>17</sup> – almost 60% of the citizens would support the membership of Macedonia in the EU without changing the constitutional name, whereas about one quarter of the citizens would support EU membership even if the name is changed.

**Table 3: Do you want/ support Macedonia becoming a member of the European Union?**

	2014	2015
Yes, even if the name is changed	25.2%	23.8%
Yes, with keeping the name	59.3%	58.8%
No	11.8%	13.6%
I don't know	3.1%	2.4%
No answer	0.6%	1.6%

*Source: MCIC/IDSCS*

Furthermore, an analysis from 2013<sup>18</sup> showed rise in the percentage of people who would not support any change of the constitutional name whatsoever, going from 48.4% in 2010 to 62.4% in 2013. Additionally, while in 2011 EU integration on the cost of a compromise for the name (40.5%) was given a slight priority over preserving the name on the cost of stalling the EU integration (39.6%), in 2013 the priorities shifted, thus 49.9% of citizens were in favor of preserving the name on the cost of stalling the EU integration, whereas only 29.4% prioritized the EU integration. Nevertheless, the attitudes on this issue differ for the different ethnic communities. Namely, even though preserving the name and Euro-Atlantic integration are priorities for both ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, 64.9% of ethnic Macedonians favor preserving the name over Euro-Atlantic integration, whereas 68% of ethnic Albanians favor Euro-Atlantic integration over preserving the name.

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NATO. Finally, while in 2009 Republic of Macedonia received an invitation to commence the EU accession talks, it was emphasized that this would also require a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue.

<sup>17</sup> Perceptions on Macedonia's EU integration.: May 2015. Available at:

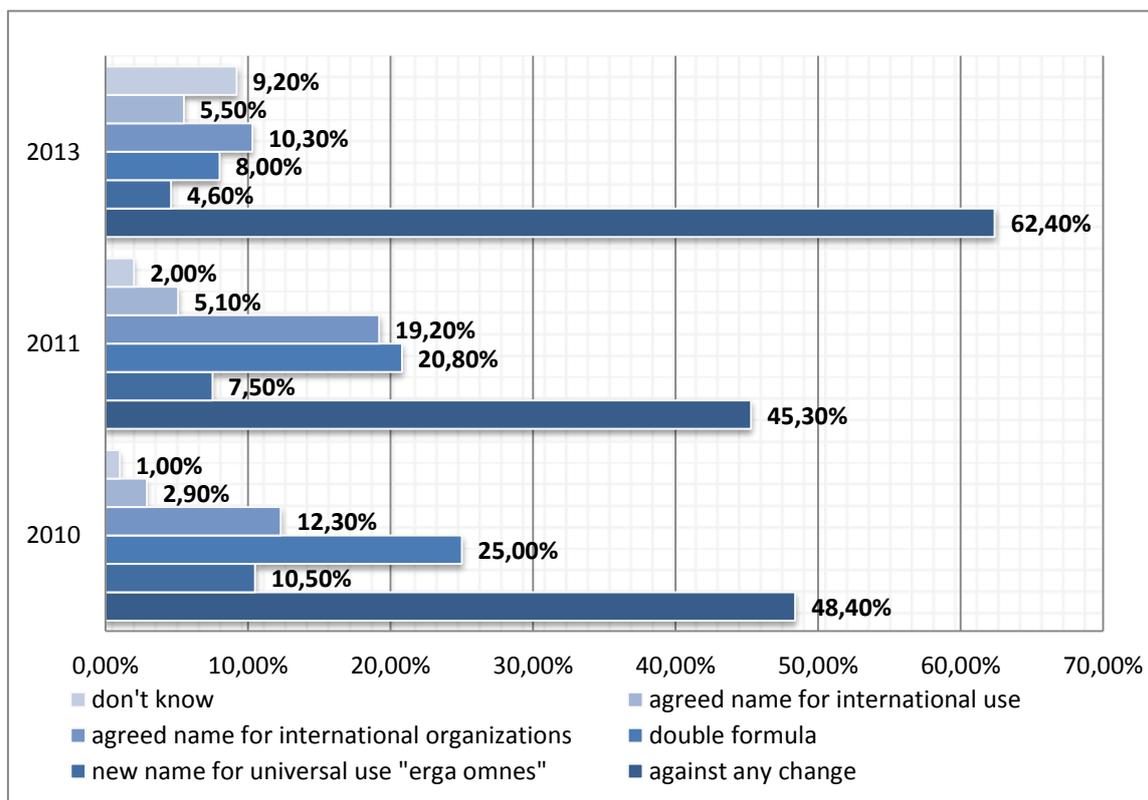
<http://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Anketa-EU-integracija-31052015.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> "The name issue – Public opinion 2013", January 2014. Available at:

<http://www.mcms.mk/mk/za-nasata-rabota/istrazuvana-i-publikacii/lista-na-istrazuvana-i-publikacii/1171-sporot-za-imeto-makedonija-stavovi-na-javnosta.html>

Further findings point that identity seems to continue being the red line. Namely, as MCIC and IDSCS's survey shows, identity is the key factor in resolving the issue; hence 53.8% of the citizens consider the unacceptance of Greece for the exiting of Macedonia, the Macedonia language and the Macedonians as the main burden in resolving the name issue. Nevertheless, the support for a referendum for the name issue has increased from 54.4% in 2010, to 64% in 2011, reaching 66.3% in 2013<sup>19</sup>. Finally, when the name issue is put in the context of EU integrations, the majority of the respondents have found the main risk of not resolving the name issue would be the stagnation of the EU integration processes (32.3%). This being said, while 22% of citizens think that the EU can contribute the most to resolving the issue, 30.6% think this role 'belongs' to the USA<sup>20</sup>.

Figure 6: Acceptable Solutions for the Name issue (Source: IDSCS)



<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

Figure 6 shows the results for the most preferred solution for the name issue, for the polls conducted in 2010, 2011 and 2012<sup>21</sup>. The majority of Macedonian citizens prefer no change at all, but while this was the preference for slightly less than 50% of the respondents in 2010, in 2013 this number rose to 62.40%. Furthermore, major changes in attitudes are visible for the “double formula” solution – only Greece would refer to Republic of Macedonia with a name different than its official, constitutional name. Namely, this option enjoyed a much wider support in 2010 (25%), than in 2013 (10.30%).

The MCIC/IDSCS’ 2013 poll<sup>22</sup> includes survey with 17 experts, in addition to the survey with the wider public. They found that 35.2% of the experts consider there is a certain support to resolving the name issue with an agreed name for use in the international organizations. Most of the respondents would accept a compromise with Greece so as to ensure progress for Macedonia in the EU, as long as it does not put any burden on the language and culture and identity, However, 82% find that whatever agreement is reached, it is best that it enters in use upon the EU accession of Macedonia. Similarly to the citizens, the expert also find that USA can contribute the most to resolving the issue (41%), whereas 37% think this should be the EU.

#### **4. Foreign Policy**

Attitudes on the foreign policy of Macedonia are assessed both by the IRI and the IDSCS/MCIC surveys. IRI’s survey results<sup>23</sup> show that the most important foreign policy issue facing the country was perceived to be the recognition of the constitutional name of Macedonia for the polls done between November 2012 and June 2015, with the exception of December 2014 when starting negotiations with the EU was perceived as the most important.

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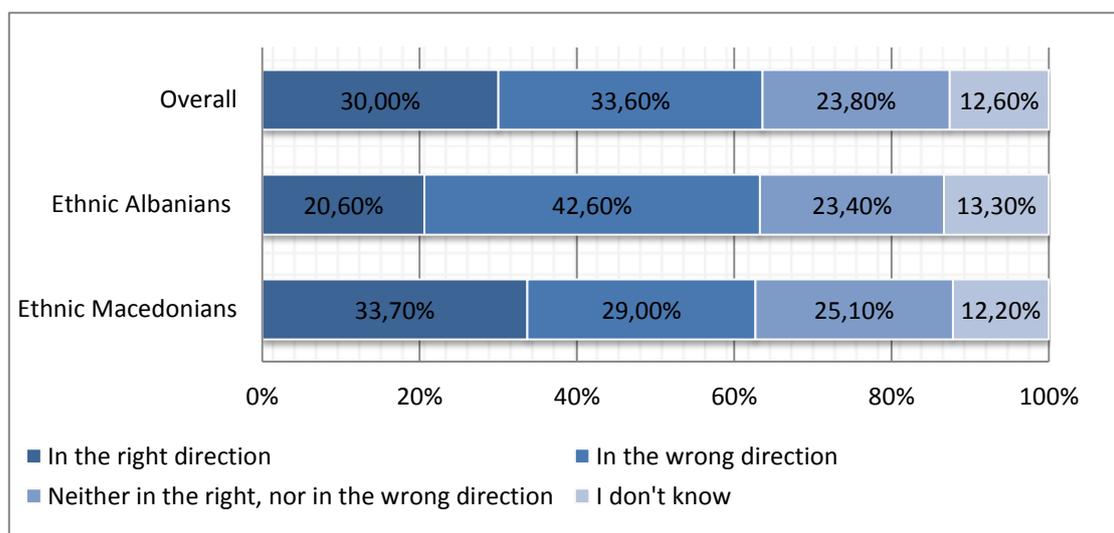
<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> International Republican Institute: “Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion”, June 6-15, 2015. Available at: [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/2015-07-13\\_survey\\_of\\_macedonian\\_public\\_opinion\\_june\\_6-15\\_2015.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/2015-07-13_survey_of_macedonian_public_opinion_june_6-15_2015.pdf)

The 2012 analysis<sup>24</sup> on perceptions about the foreign policy of Macedonia and the EU integration by MCIC and IDSCS revealed that 61.4% of Macedonians think that Euro-Atlantic integrations should be the strategic priority of the country. However, the attitudes of the citizens as to whether the country is moving in the right or wrong direction are divided. Namely, 30% have said it is going in the right direction, whereas 33.6% responded the opposite and 23.8% think it is neither of the two (Figure 7). The analysis also revealed that the attitudes of the ethnic Albanians seem to be more critical towards this question.

Figure 7: Do you think Macedonia's foreign policy is lead in the right or wrong direction? (Source: IDSCS/MCIC)



Regarding the commitment to becoming an EU member state, the attitudes of the different ethnic communities differ, according to the analysis. Namely, while the majority of ethnic Macedonians (41.8%) perceived that the Government does everything it can to lead the country in the EU, 56.8% of the ethnic Albanians think the opposite<sup>25</sup>.

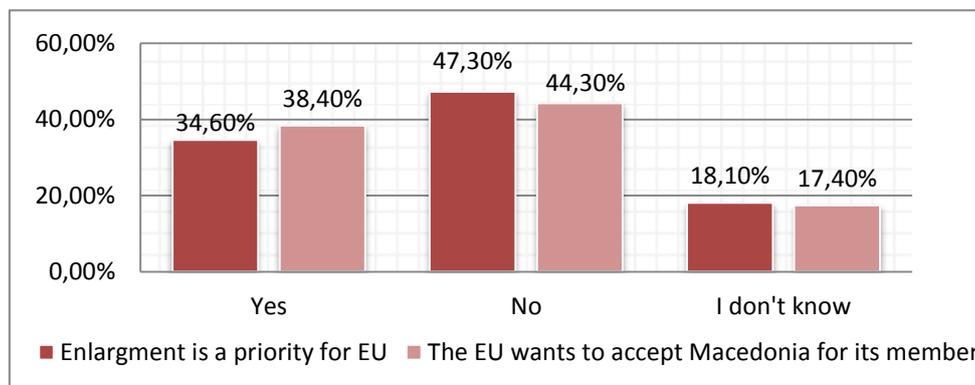
<sup>24</sup> “United regarding Euro-Atlantic perspectives, divided regarding perceptions for dedication”, July 2012. Available at: <http://www.mcms.mk/images/docs/2012/zaedno-za-evroatlantskata-perspektiva-podeleni-za-posvetenosta.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

The MCET's analysis<sup>26</sup>, on the other hand, explores what do citizens think is the best option for Macedonia in terms of future development of the country. Accordingly, the position that European Union seems to be the best alternative for Macedonia is supported by a larger percentage of the ethnic Albanians (75%) than of the ethnic Macedonians (33%), as the majority of the latter think Macedonia should look for a personal model for development outside of the EU (53%). In addition to that, the EU is the best option for Macedonia for 60% of the respondents inclined to SDUM, and only for about one third of the respondents inclined to VMRO (33%).

The Macedonian citizens seem to be more pessimistic than optimistic about EU's position towards Macedonia and the enlargement. Namely, as figure 8 illustrates, 47.3% of the total respondents think it is not the EU's priority to enlarge its membership and 44.30% think that EU does not want Macedonia to become its member state<sup>27</sup>.

Figure 8: The position of the EU towards Macedonia: citizens' perceptions  
(Source:MCIC/IDSCS)



In addition to that, the ethnic Albanians seem to be more optimistic than the ethnic Macedonians towards the position of the EU regarding Macedonia's accession. Namely,

<sup>26</sup> The political culture, europeanization and fears in Macedonia: 2014 Report from the survey research "Eurometer". Available at:

[http://www.akademik.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Izvestaj-Evrometar-2014-MK\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.akademik.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Izvestaj-Evrometar-2014-MK_WEB.pdf)

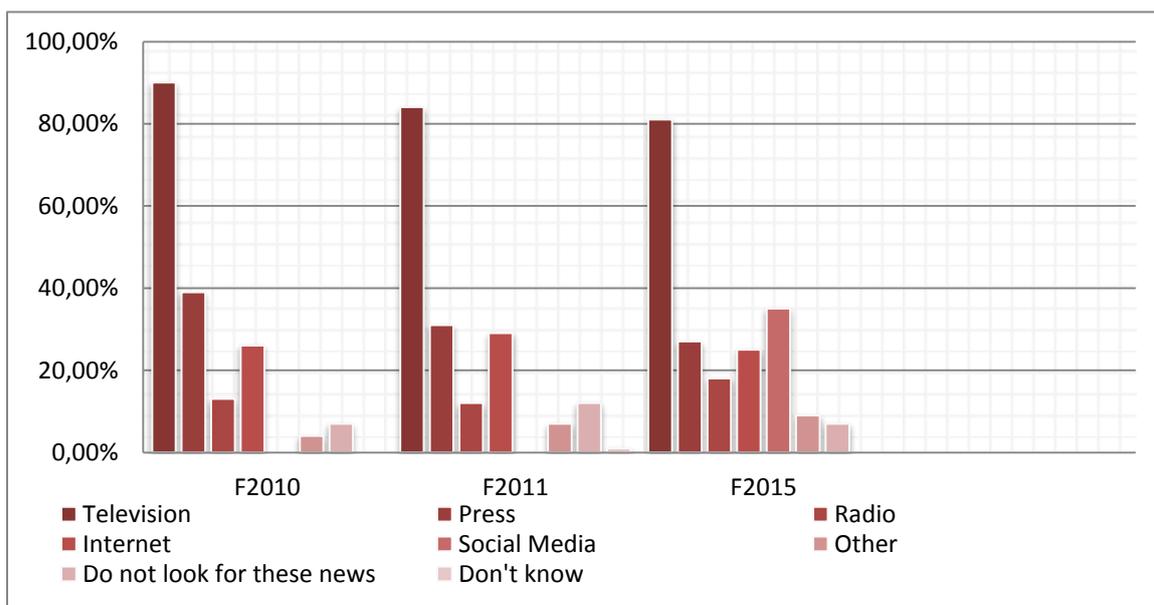
<sup>27</sup> "United regarding Euro-Atlantic perspectives, divided regarding perceptions for dedication", July 2012. Available at: <http://www.mcms.mk/images/docs/2012/zaedno-za-evroatlantskata-perspektiva-podeleni-za-posvetenosta.pdf>

47.3% of ethnic Albanians have found the enlargement in this context to be EU's priority, compared to the 52.7% of ethnic Macedonians that found the opposite<sup>28</sup>.

## 5. Information about the EU

The Eurobarometer survey data<sup>29</sup> indicates that Macedonians mostly obtain their information about EU political affairs from television, written press and from the internet (websites and social media).

Figure 9: Where do you mostly obtain information on EU political affairs? (Source: Eurobarometer)



Nevertheless, when it comes to the level to which citizens consider themselves to be informed on EU affairs; the majority of the citizens seem to not be well informed. The findings from the Eurobarometer surveys<sup>30</sup> suggest that on average, 43% of Macedonian citizens consider themselves well informed on EU matters, whereas an average of 58%

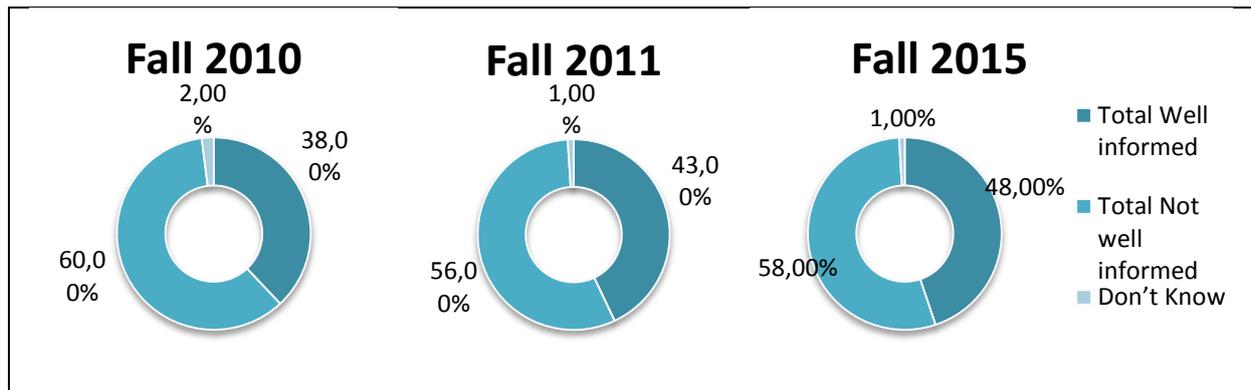
<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 74 (Fall 2010) 76 (Fall 2011) and 84 (Fall 2015), available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_arch\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

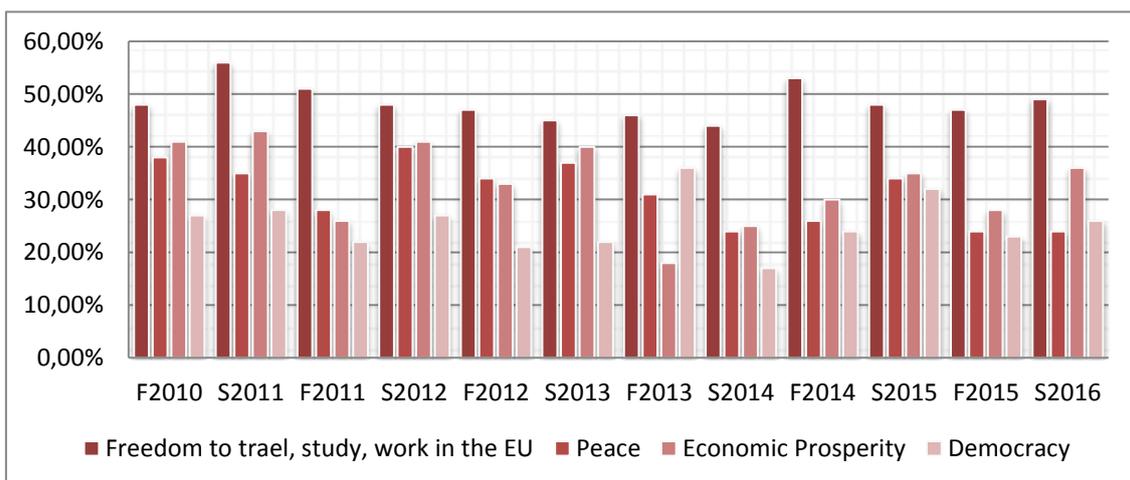
consider themselves not well informed. Nevertheless, it is evident that there has been an increase of 10% from 2010 to 2015 in respect to the people considering themselves to be well informed.

Figure 10: How well are you informed on EU political matters? (Source: Eurobarometer)



The IRI polls<sup>31</sup> look into perception about the EU as well. In that regard, when asked what does EU mean for them personally, the highest percentage of the respondents have answered that EU for them means mostly, freedom to study, travel and work anywhere in the EU, peace, economic prosperity and democracy (Figure 11).

Figure 11: What does EU mean for you personally? (Source: IRI)



<sup>31</sup> Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion, April 19-25, 2016. Available at: [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri\\_macedonia\\_survey\\_april\\_2016\\_0.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_macedonia_survey_april_2016_0.pdf)

## Conclusions

Overall, the existing research provides data on a range of topics and questions related to the EU integration process of Macedonia. In a nutshell, on most issues the attitudes of the Macedonian citizens fluctuate throughout the years, even though this fluctuation is more visible for some and less visible for other issues. Negative trends are also present when it comes to questions such as support for Macedonia to become a member of the EU, and perceptions about the EU membership of Macedonia being a good thing. The trust in EU is volatile and overall people tend to think the EU does not have the enlargement as a priority, as well as that it does not want to accept Macedonia as its member. Finally, the name issue is perceived as the major reason for the stagnation in the negotiation process, and the number of citizens who would not accept any changes of the constitutional name is rising.

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