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PRESS RELEASE

NDI RESEARCH: CITIZENS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIGH PRICES, LOW WAGES AND WILL SUPPORT PARTIES THAT WILL IMPROVE THE ECONOMY

Economic issues are increasingly important for the citizens of North Macedonia due to inflation and rising energy costs. To strengthen responsive and transparent governance, the National Democratic Institute fielded public opinion research from April 13-24, 2023 and shared findings with opinion leaders to inform public policy-making.

Fifty-eight percent of citizens surveyed were highly concerned about diminished living standards, low salaries, and low pensions. Four out of ten respondents spend the biggest portion of the family budget (more than 60 percent) on food. Almost half of the population (48 percent) say they frequently or occasionally have difficulty paying their bills at the end of the month, with citizens in lower socio-economic categories (89 percent) and those in rural areas (53 percent) having more difficulty covering the cost of living.

Respondents were pessimistic about the future with almost 40 percent believing that the economic situation, standard of living, and amount of salaries and pensions will become worse in the next 12 months. Seven out of ten (71 percent) citizens surveyed favor parties that have a defined plan to improve the economic situation.

“Citizens of North Macedonia are concerned about their diminished quality of life,” said Robert Scott Heaslet, NDI Senior Resident Director in North Macedonia, “and a majority of citizens will support political parties that have an economic plan which will help improve living standards and offer economic opportunity.”

Almost one-third of citizens (28.7 percent) believe that reducing overall consumption is a solution to overcome the current economic crisis. Additionally, a vast majority of citizens (91 percent) consider that price increases are the biggest threat to their financial situation, and are suggesting the government to prioritize “price stability.”

Citizens praise the government’s decisions to raise the minimum net salary (72 percent), freeze prices (almost 83 percent), and limit profit margins on basic food products (68 percent). The majority of citizens (67 percent) believe the government should continue subsidies for food products and electricity bills (48 percent) as an effective measure to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis.

The recent anti-crisis campaign is perceived to have limited reach as a significant portion of citizens (39 percent) are not informed about most of the measures, especially citizens in lower socio-economic categories. While more than one-third of consumers (38.7 percent) are not familiar with their rights as consumers, 56 percent are unaware that consumer protection programs exist. Even more concerning, more than half of consumers (54 percent) do not trust the service providers nor the judiciary (71 percent) in case of dispute over transaction with a company.

The NDI commissioned face-to-face national survey has a margin of error +/-3.09% and a nationally representative multistage stratified sample of 1003 respondents aged 18+. The public opinion research was conducted by Tim Institute and funded by the National Endowment for Democracy. The findings do not necessarily reflect the views of NDI or NED.

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