Open Society Foundation

# Public Opinion Barometer

**October 2006**

# Voting Profiles

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# Contents

Public Opinion Barometer – presentation of the program and research ..... 5

Population state of mind ….……... 9

Voting intentions…….…… 13

„The Securitate files affair”……. 22

Social effects of communist persecution …… 28

Left or right?……. 31

Political leaders and the voters……..... 40

From the “Father State” to “Father Becali” …… 56

# Public Opinion Barometer[1]

The Public Opinion Barometer (POB) is a research program analyzing the public opinion in Romania, aimed to consolidate the links between power structures and the society as a whole, clarifying the key issues that must be found in the agenda of NGOs and public institutions, making available to all interested parties the necessary data for a professional development of public policies and providing rigorous analyses of the results for the benefit of the public.

The Barometer is the longest running of the current programs of the Open Society Foundation, as it has started in 1994. Twelve years from the first research, the Barometer keeps providing, on a regular basis, credible quantitative data concerning citizen perceptions and opinions to all interested parties.

The program is centered on the biannual quantitative research (opinion poll) *Public Opinion Barometer*, supplemented by dedicated research, focusing on certain segments of the society: *Rural Barometer*, *Urban Romania*, *Gender Barometer*.

POB is based on a series of polls that are representative for Romania's adult non-institutionalized population, carried out twice per year (in May and October), on a large sample (1800-2200 persons), using a probabilistic sampling scheme, with outside control for data collection.

Starting with 1998, the Public Opinion Barometer uses a standard sampling scheme, allowing results from different research waves to be compared. This has made it possible to unify the databases for the period 1998-2004, a project that was carried out in 2005.

**The POB questionnaire includes a standard module, the same every year, and one or more thematic modules, following the interest issues for the current year.** Among the specific issues analyzed during the previous year we could mention:

- labor and entrepreneurship
- the education system
- corruption
- the political system
- state of mind
- welfare and poverty
- habitation
- values and mentalities
- perceptions of the mass media

Following the traditional system, in 2006 the Barometer will have two research waves, the first in May and the second in October. For each wave, the research instruments – the sample and questionnaire – were prepared by the project team, and the collection, entry and collection control were subcontracted to specialized firms.

Research results (questionnaires, databases, poll presentation books and analyses) are available free of charge on the OSF web page (www.osf.ro). Starting from these results, many analyses, articles, studies and books have been written. Some of these are available on the same page.

[1] The *Public Opinion Barometer* and the *Barometer of Public Opinion* are trademarks of the Open Society Foundation

**October 2006 edition: Voting Profiles**

For the research of October 2006, the chosen subject is "voting profiles". The research uses a representative sample at national level and at historical cultural region level. The sample is designed based on the electoral lists, ensuring that population from marginal rural areas is also taken into account. The database will also be published on the OSF site, so that anyone who is interested may easily obtain detailed information on the perception of various issues in the urban and rural areas or according to social and demographic particulars of the respondents (sex, age, education level, occupation, etc.).

The research has the following **methodological features**:

- **Sample volume:** 1975 persons aged 18 and above
- **Sample type:** layered, probabilistic, three-stage sample
- **Layering criteria:** 18 cultural areas, grouped by historical provinces, residential area (urban - rural), size of urban settlements (4 types), rural development degree (3 categories).
- **Sampling:** probabilistic selection of settlements, sampling points (voting sections) and persons. For person selection, the last electoral lists were used mostly. The sample maintains the design principles of the POB of the previous years (1995-2002):
  - layering according to cultural area and settlement type (18*7= 126 theoretically possible layers);
  - defining three types of sampling units: settlements, voting sections, adult persons;
  - random selection in all sampling stages,
  - using electoral lists as sampling framework in the final stage.
- **Representative sample:** the sample is representative for the adult non-institutionalized population of Romania, with a tolerated error margin ± 2.3 %.
- **Validation:** the sample was validated based on NSI data and the population census of 1992 and 2002.
- The values shown are those that result directly from the field (no weighting).
- Interviews took place at the respondents' homes.
- **Field research:** 7-19 October 2006

The team that designed the methodological instruments (sample, questionnaire) consists of: Ovidiu Voicu (program manager), Mihaela Ştefănescu (program assistant), Mircea Comşa, Dumitru Sandu, Andrei Gheorghiță (experts).

Data collection and entry was provided by **The Gallup Organization Romania.**

**Research Report**

This volume is the research report prepared by the project team in cooperation with *The Gallup Organization Romania*. The content of this report is intended to be an introduction to the research of the subject proposed by the *Barometer*. The text goes further than merely presenting the percentages of responses and opens a way for a thorough research of many subjects related to media access and consumption in Romania.

The report starts by presenting certain information on the population's state of mind, as recorded by the Barometer data in the second half of October and compared with the previous years. The section refers to the percentage of pessimists and optimists and to Romanians' satisfaction or dissatisfaction about how they live.

The second section covers the electoral context electoral when the data was collected. Voting intentions for parliament and president are shown (opinions were collected with open questions, a methodological option that is explained in the text) and the respondents' position on certain current issues. Of these issues, perceptions on the Securitate file affair and the impact of communist persecution are covered in depth.

The report focuses then on the distinction between left and right both in public perception and as a result of values embraced by the respondents. The text attempts to show how party voters position themselves in terms of political values.

The image of the ideal president and the voting profiles of the main political leaders are the subject of the next section, *Political leaders and the voters*. A detailed analysis of common features of voters for Gigi Becali is added.

The report is accompanied in its appendix by a graphical representation of the frequency of answers to the most interesting questions.

The report text is available free of charge in electronic form on the OSF internet page, at www.osf.ro. Organizations interested in cooperation on in-depth studies on one or more of the issues included in the research should contact the Open Society Foundation.

# Population State of Mind

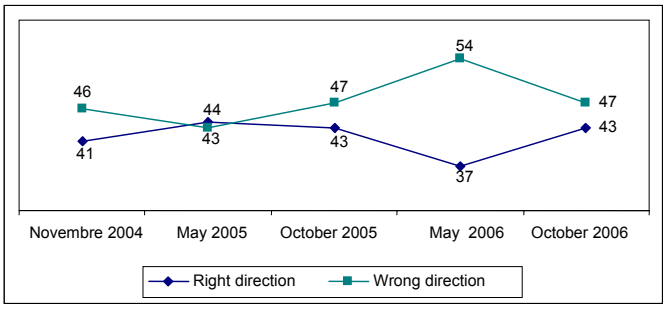
**Ovidiu Voicu**

The data of the Public Opinion Barometer, October 2006, record a slight increase in optimism regarding the direction in which the country is headed, compared to May this year, but the general background is that of dissatisfaction with income and government actions.

The number of dissatisfied persons continues to be higher than that of satisfied persons, nearing half of the population. A large majority of the Romanians looks at the government's actions with a critical eye and is unhappy with its performance in all fields. Even voters of parties in the Alliance are unhappy with the Executive. The main source of dissatisfaction remains the living standard – four of five Romanians declare that they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their money.

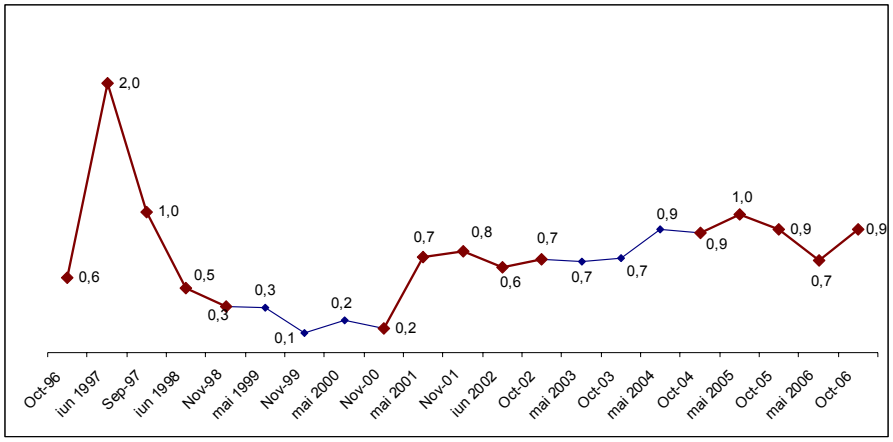
## Right direction, wrong direction

A few months before Romania's European Union accession we can see, according to Public Opinion Barometer data, a slight increase in optimism for the Romanians. If in May this year we had 54% negative opinions about the direction in which we are headed, in October the percentage dropped to 47%, while the number of people that estimate that we are headed in the right direction grew from 37% to 43%.




*Evolution of the percentage of people who think that we are headed in the right or wrong direction, 2004-2006. The figures are percents of the whole sample. Differences up to 100% are non-answers.*
Source: POB-OSF 2004-2006

A good indicator to measure the evolution over time is the ratio between the percentage of people who claim that the direction is right and wrong, respectively. In the following chart, a value above 1 indicates that there are more optimists than pessimists, while a value lower than 1 indicates the opposite situation. In general, an electoral cycle starts with a period when the new government is credited with a high level of hope (increase in optimism six months after the elections), followed by a period of stagnation, and then by an increase in pessimism. The comparative analysis of the indicator during the last ten years, we can notice that population optimism remains at a higher level than during the entire previous period, but the number of pessimists continues to exceed the number of optimists(the indicator is lower than 1).




*Ratio between people who think that the country is headed in the right and wrong direction, respectively; dynamic for 1996-2006*
Source: POB-OSF1996-2006

Quite predictably, voters of the "DA pole" have a higher percentage of people who think we are headed in the right direction. The most dissatisfied are PRM voters.

| | Right direction | Wrong direction |
|---|---|---|
| Total sample | 43 | 47 |
| DA Alliance | 63 | 29 |
| PD | 60 | 36 |
| PNL | 59 | 38 |
| PSD | 43 | 52 |
| PRM | 31 | 67 |
| PNG | 43 | 51 |
| UDMR | 30 | 54 |
| Undecided | 35 | 50 |

*The figures are percentages of the voters of each party. Differences up to 100% are non-answers.*
Source: POB-OSF October 2006

**Evaluation of Government actions**

The increase in the number of optimists regarding the direction in which we are headed is reflected in the trend to evaluate the Government's actions slightly better. Although a majority of respondents is dissatisfied with the Executive in all fields, a slight increase of positive evaluations can be seen, at the same time with a decrease in negative ones. We should underline that most of such differences are very low, within the error margin for this research, but the fact that there are increases in all fields allows us to take note of this trend.

In this case, too, supporters of the Alliance and its member parties declare themselves more satisfied by government actions than voters of the opposition and the undecided. However, even from the perspective of supporters of the main governing party there are still critiques of Government actions. Supporters of PD have a greater extent of negative opinions about the

Executive than those of PNL.

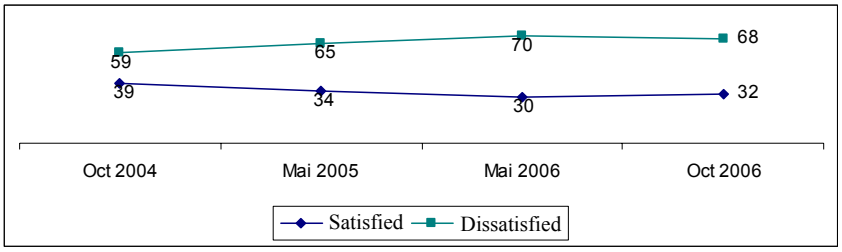
| *Field* | *May 2005* | *Oct 2005* | *May 2006* | ***Oct 2006*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Satisfied / Very satisfied** | | | | |
| Public order | 43 | 38 | 40 | **43** |
| Education | 37 | 29 | 40 | **39** |
| Privatization | 24 | 22 | 25 | **29** |
| Living standard | 23 | 17 | 12 | **13** |
| Environment | 22 | 18 | 28 | **30** |
| Health | 21 | 16 | 20 | **21** |
| Agriculture | 17 | 14 | 15 | **15** |
| Housing | 17 | 12 | 21 | **23** |
| Industry | 14 | 12 | 14 | **16** |
| Jobs | 14 | 13 | 10 | **13** |
| **Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied** | | | | |
| Jobs | 75 | 79 | 82 | **79** |
| Health | 74 | 79 | 76 | **74** |
| Living standard | 72 | 78 | 86 | **83** |
| Agriculture | 71 | 77 | 76 | **74** |
| Housing | 69 | 76 | 67 | **66** |
| Industry | 66 | 74 | 70 | **64** |
| Environment | 57 | 66 | 59 | **55** |
| Privatization | 56 | 61 | 56 | **49** |
| Education | 51 | 61 | 48 | **49** |
| Public order | 49 | 56 | 51 | **48** |

| | *Total sample* | | *Voters of the DA alliance* | | *PD* | | *PNL* | | *PSD* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - |
| Public order | 43 | 48 | 51 | 45 | 49 | 49 | 48 | 47 | 44 | 54 |
| Education | 39 | 49 | 44 | 51 | 43 | 51 | 45 | 50 | 41 | 48 |
| Privatisation | 29 | 49 | 35 | 51 | 34 | 51 | 45 | 45 | 28 | 58 |
| Living standard | 13 | 83 | 17 | 81 | 18 | 81 | 20 | 79 | 12 | 87 |
| Environment | 30 | 55 | 41 | 50 | 30 | 61 | 36 | 58 | 28 | 62 |
| Health | 21 | 74 | 26 | 71 | 23 | 75 | 27 | 70 | 19 | 80 |
| Agriculture | 15 | 74 | 16 | 76 | 16 | 76 | 26 | 68 | 13 | 81 |
| Housing | 23 | 66 | 27 | 65 | 25 | 69 | 32 | 62 | 19 | 74 |
| Industry | 16 | 64 | 22 | 64 | 18 | 70 | 27 | 62 | 16 | 70 |
| Jobs | 13 | 82 | 20 | 76 | 15 | 81 | 18 | 77 | 10 | 85 |

*The percentage of people who are satisfied and dissatisfied, respectively, with Government actions by fields, May 2005 – May 2006. Figures are percents of the total sample. Differences up to 100% are non-answers.*
Source: POB-OSF 2005-2006

*The percentage of people who are satisfied and dissatisfied, respectively, with Government actions by fields.*
Figures are percentages of the voters of each party. Differences up to 100% are non-answers.
Source: POB-OSF October 2006

The number of people who are unhappy with their living standard (68% of the total sample) continues to be twice the number of people who are satisfied (32%), remaining constant for the last two years. Only 25% feel that they live better than last year (45% do not feel any change, but 30% believe that they live worse than last year). Looking towards the future, 30% of the respondents believe in an improvement, 29% expect no change, while approximately one quarter (26%) think that things are going to get worse.




*Evolution of the percentage of people who are satisfied and dissatisfied, respectively, with how they live, 2004-2006. Figures represent percents of the total sample. Differences up to 100% are non-answers.*
Source: POB-OSF October 2006

The main dissatisfaction of Romanians is their material status – 78% of the respondents say that they are not satisfied with their money. At the opposite end we have the family and friends, giving reasons for satisfaction to more than three quarters of the respondents.

# Voting Intentions

**Ovidiu Voicu**

This section presents the political situation when the data was collected (end of October 2006). In the beginning, a few methodological considerations explain the option for open, unassisted questions and the differences that usually arise in vote distribution between open questions and questions with a list of parties or persons.

Then we present the position of political parties and personalities on the political scene and the evolution during the period May 2005 – October 2006. Based on the poll data, we can estimate the force of each party and the consequences of a break up in the D.A. Alliance. Then we present some information regarding the vote in the presidential elections and population trust in political personalities (a detailed analysis of the main political personalities of the moment is presented in the section *Political leaders and the voters*).

In the end of this section we find a series of considerations about respondent opinions on two current issues (the potential conflict between the prime minister and the president and the organization of anticipated elections in 2007), and the role of the media in shaping political opinions.

**About the wording of the voting questions**

In order to measure the voting choices of the population, the Public Opinion Barometer, edition October 2006, used **open questions** (unassisted), i.e. the respondents were asked to indicate freely, spontaneously, without being given a list of parties of personalities, the party or the politician they would vote with if general elections were to take place next Sunday.

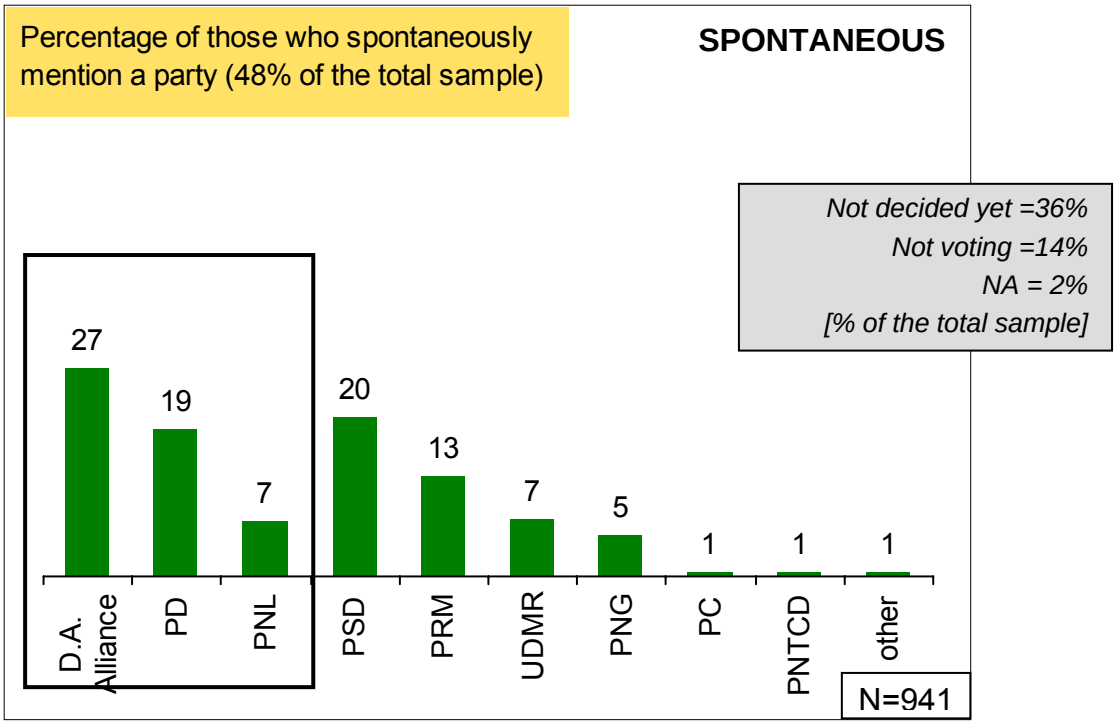
The manner in which the question is asked – open or closed (assisted, with a list) – influences the distribution of answers. This is not to say that one way or the other of asking the question is wrong, just that the analysis of answers must take into account these differences. In other words, we must also remember that voting questions do not give a prediction of the election results, but only a snapshot of party supporter distribution at a given time.

In general, with open, unassisted questions, the number of the undecided is higher than in the case of questions with a list. Some of the voters who are not yet decided, but tend to like somewhat a party or a politician, have a easier time choosing if they are given a list of choices than when the question is unassisted. This usually gives an advantage to parties and personalities with faithful voters and high notoriety. This is why some of the sociologists feel that closed questions give a better approximation of the voting moment, because in the voting booth the voter is faced with a list of parties and candidates (however, we must note that the list in the opinion polls is incomplete; one could raise the question about the extent in which parties not included in the list are disadvantaged).

In the economy of the research, the open question helps in determining the core of faithful voters for one party or personality with greater accuracy, which is useful in investigations that aim to find the common features of the supporters of one political organization, such as this Public Opinion Barometer. Also, for this study, the unassisted form of the questions on voting intentions allows to better see how supporters of PNL and PD declare to be voters of the party or the alliance.

**Voting intentions**

The data shows that the D.A. Alliance and its component parties are placed very well in the voting intentions declared by the respondents. Thus, 27% of those who have an option have spontaneously mentioned the D.A. Alliance. Adding the 19% that chose PD and 7% for PNL, we have a total of 53%[2] voting options for the alliance and its two member parties. The main opposition party - PSD, is indicated by 20% of the respondents who have an opinion, placing second in the voters' preferences. On the third position we have PRM, with 13 percents, followed by UDMR, 7%[3] and PNG, 5%. All other parties are given less than 1% by people who already have an opinion; PC and




Frequency of answers to the question *If next Sunday parliament elections were to take place, which party or alliance would you vote with?,* open question (without a party list).
Source: POB-OSF October 2006.

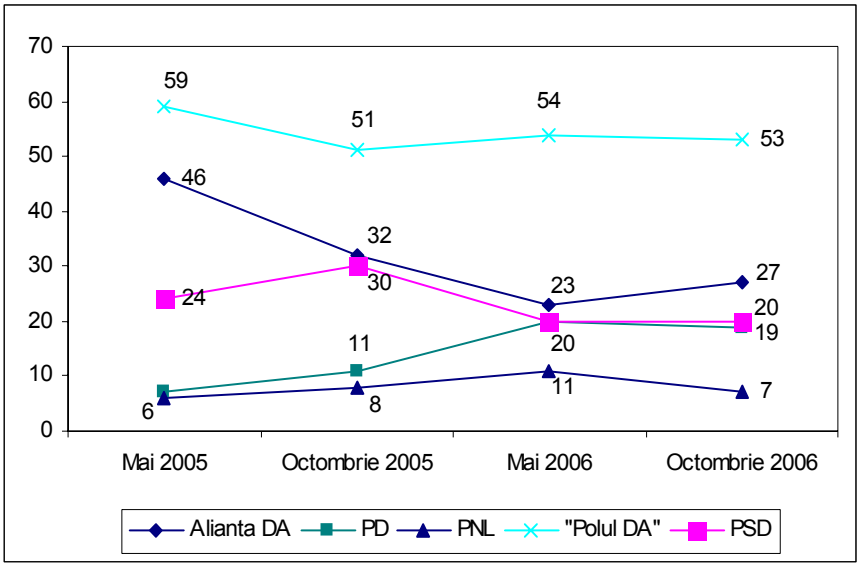
PNTCD are indicated somewhat more often by the respondents, but both parties are under the error margin of the poll.

[2] The figure is 5-6% percents higher than the estimates of other polls for the same period, which used closed, assisted questions. This can be interpreted as the current potential of the Alliance rather than an election prediction. Differences occur mostly because of how the question is worded.
[3] The percentage obtained by UDMR, higher than the percentage of Hungarian nationals in the sample, is explained by the better discipline of voters for this party. The percentage of the undecided is lower in the Hungarian subsample, which leads to a better score for UDMR.

Only 48% of the respondents have indicated a political organization, while 36% are undecided, 14% do not intend to vote and 2% refused to answer.

Analyzing the answers from the last four editions of the Public Opinion Barometer (May 2005 – October 2006; all editions used open questions) we have a few interesting conclusions:

- the electoral potential of the "DA pole" (total answers for the DA Alliance + PD + PNL) dropped in the first year of governing, and then stabilized around 50-55% of the expressed options. At the same time, PSD lost almost 10 percents, most likely due to its internal unrest, which drove the two poles further apart.
- at the same time, the number of those who spontaneously choose the Alliance has practically halved in a year and a half. Increasingly more voters for the "DA pole" feel rather voters of the parties than of the Alliance as a whole
- within the "DA pole", the most significant increase is that of the Democrat Party, as the number of those who answer "PD" to the open question increased from 7% in May 2005 to 19-20% in October 2006. At the same time, the number of those who initially turn to PNL remains constant around 10%




*The evolution of votes for the DA Alliance, PD, PNL and PSD during the period May 2005 – October 2006. Figures are percentages of those who spontaneously mention (open question) a party. The percentage of the "DA Pole" was calculated by adding up the percentages of the DA Alliance. PD and PNL.*

The dominant position of PD in the "DA pole" was confirmed when those who answered "DA Alliance" spontaneously were asked who they would vote with if the Alliance were to break up and the two parties to run separately (251 persons, representing 12.7% of the total sample). 63% of them

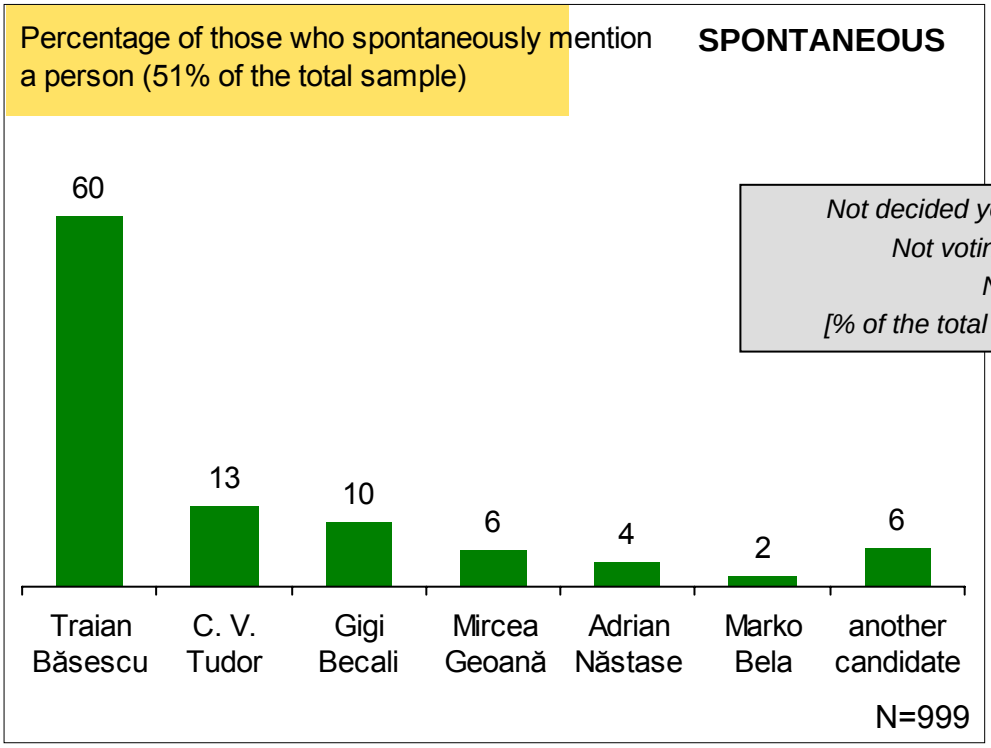
indicated PD as the preferred party, and only 14% chose PNL (22% said they hadn't decided yet or they would not vote in that case and only 1% would choose another party).

By redistributing the votes within the Alliance according to the answers to the second questions, we obtain a configuration of the political spectrum in which the most important party in Romania is PD, with approximately 38% of the voting options. Next would be PSD, with 22%, and then PRM (14%) and PNL (11%). The number of the undecided increases by 3% in this case.

*The percentage of voters for political parties if PD and PNL run separately.*
*The percentages were obtained by redistributing DA alliance voters according to their choice.*
*The figures are percents of those with an option (45% of the total sample)*
Source: POB-OSF October 2006

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| PD | 38 | |
| PSD | 22 | |
| PRM | 14 | Not decided yet: 37% |
| PNL | 11 | Not voting: 14% |
| UDMR | 8 | No answer: 4% |
| PNG | 6 | [% of the total sample] |
| PC | 1 | |
| PNTCD | 1 | |
| Other | 1 | |

The former president of PD, now president of Romania, Mr. Traian Basescu, is also first in the voting preferences of the Romanians. Furthermore, we could say that he dominates the political scene at this time, as no less than 60% of those who have an opinion have spontaneously (again we used an open question) picked Mr. Băsescu when asked who they would vote with for president. Far behind we have Mr. Corneliu Vadim Tudor, with 13% of the options and Mr. George (Gigi) Becali, 10%. Next we have two representatives of PSD, Mr. Mircea Geoană and Mr. Adrian Năstase, with 6% and 4%, respectively. The leader of UDMR, Mr. Marko Bella, would have the vote of 2% of the respondents, and all other politicians that were mentioned would receive less than 1% of the potential votes. No woman was indicated spontaneously by the respondents. 51% of the sample answered, while the others are undecided or do not intend to vote.




Frequency of answers to the questions *If next Sunday there were to be presidential elections, who would you vote for?,* open question (no list of personalities).
Source: POB-OSF October 2006.

Mr. Traian Băsescu finds supporters among the voters of all parties, but he is mainly the champion of people who prefer the DA Alliance or the PD. More than three quarters of those who would vote for the Alliance or PD would also vote for Mr. Băsescu. The next two in voter preferences, Mr. Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Mr. Gigi Becali are supported mostly by their parties, PRM and PNG, respectively. Mr. Becali manages to find more supporters among voters for other parties, which explains why his score is double than his own party's score.

PNL and PSD voters have in common the fact that they fail to find a convincing leader within their party and most of them choose Mr. Traian Băsescu or are undecided. The few sympathizers of Mr. Călin-Popescu Tăriceanu lie mostly among voters of his party, but even here Mr. Tăriceanu has as many supporters as Mr. Becali.

Voting choices are reflected to a large extent in the trust in political personalities. Traian Băsescu is the most trusted politician by the Romanians and the only one with more positive than negative opinions. Trust in all other politicians is very low, each of them causing more distrust than trust in the eyes of the voters. A detailed analysis of the major political personalities of the moment is given in the section *Political leaders and the voters.*

How sympathizers of the major political parties vote for president.
Figures are percents of the number of voters for that party.
*Example of reading (on a line): of those who spontaneously choose the DA Alliance, 82% vote for Traian Băsescu, 3% for George Becali, 1% for Theodor Stolojan and Corneliu Vadim Tudor each, 12% do not vote, have not decided or do not answer, and 1% choose other candidates.*
Source: POB-OSF, October 2006.

| | Traian Băsescu | Adrian Năstase | Mircea Geoană | George Becali | CV Tudor | Theodor Stolojan | Călin Popescu Tăriceanu | Do not vote/ DN/ NA | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DA Alliance | 82 | | | 3 | 1 | 1 | | 12 | 1 |
| PD | 82 | | | 2 | | | | 14 | 2 |
| PNL | 40 | | 2 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 32 | 3 |
| PSD | 30 | 10 | 25 | 4 | 3 | | 1 | 25 | 2 |
| PRM | 8 | 2 | | 3 | 78 | | | 8 | 1 |
| PNG | 2 | 2 | | 80 | 4 | | | 12 | |

**Traian Băsescu vs. Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu**

In the perception of 59% of the Romanians, at this moment there is a conflict between the President and the Prime Minister. Only 20% say that there is no conflict, while the other 21% have no opinion on the issue. Of those who perceive a state of conflict between the two palaces, an overwhelming percentage, 84%, believe that this conflict has a negative impact on the functioning of the state institutions. When asked what they would do if they had to take a stance on the dispute between Mr. Băsescu and Mr. Tăriceanu, 37% of those who consider that there is a conflict would rather agree with the president, 31% believe that the truth is somewhere in the middle, 19% say that none of them is right, and only 6% are on Mr. Tăriceanu's side.

The conflict is perceived to a much greater extent by people who are interested in politics and follow news and political broadcasts more often. The percentage of those who perceive a conflict increases up to 82% among respondents who declare to be very interested in politics. Similarly, perception of the conflict is stronger the more time respondents spend for informing themselves about politics from the media (TV, radio, written press).

Analyzing opinions within the "DA pole" reveals a significant difference between those who choose the Alliance as a whole and those who prefer the member parties. For the former, the percentage of perception for the conflict is the same as at national level, increasing to over 70% among voters of PD and PNL. From this perspective, the conflict between the two political leaders partially explains the voters' trend to no longer see the DA Alliance as a unit. It is as interesting to notice that in each of the three groups, including among voters of the party he runs, Mr. Tăriceanu has less supporters than Mr. Băsescu. PD and Alliance voters choose the president's position with priority, while PNL voters are rather undecided and have a neutral position.

| *Is there a conflict?* | | | *What is your position?* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Voters* | Yes, there is | No, there is not | pro Băsescu | pro Tăriceanu | Neutral |
| **DA Alliance** | 59 | 31 | 51 | 4 | 40 |
| **PD** | 73 | 17 | 63 | 4 | 32 |
| **PNL** | 71 | 21 | 25 | 15 | 49 |
| *How many of the voters who spontaneously choose DA/PD/PNL think there is a conflict between Traian Basescu and Calin Popescu-Tariceanu.* Figures are percents of the voters of each party Differences up to 100% are non-answers. | | | *What position is taken by those who perceive a conflict: pro Basescu, pro Tariceanu or neutral.* Figures are percents of the voters of each party that perceive the existence of a conflict. Differences up to 100% are non-answers. | | |
| *Example of reading: 73% of PD voters think there is a conflict; of them, 63% are pro Basescu, 32% are neutral and 4% are pro Tariceanu* Source: POB-OSF October 2006. | | | | | |

**Anticipated elections in 2007?**

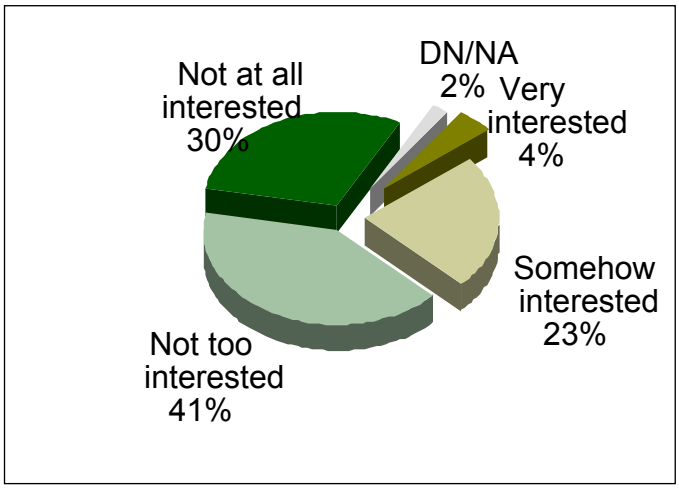
Another question of the study aimed to find how Romanians feel about organizing anticipated elections in 2007, immediately after Romania's EU accession. At national level, opinions are divided: 32% of the respondents agree with the elections, 43% are against, and 25% do not have an opinion.

Those who already have a political option also tend to have an opinion about the possible anticipated elections. We notice that although the Democrat Party is one of the parties that support the solution of anticipated elections, most of their voters are against it. Voters of PNL and opposition parties give more supporters for the anticipated elections, without their number exceeding half of the sympathizers for each party.

| *Do you agree that anticipated elections should be organised immediately after Romania enters the European Union (1 January 2007)?* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Voters* | For | Against | DN/NA |
| DA Alliance | 36 | 50 | 14 |
| PD | 35 | 51 | 14 |
| PNL | 44 | 45 | 11 |
| PSD | 42 | 42 | 16 |
| PRM | 43 | 43 | 14 |
| UDMR | 45 | 43 | 12 |
| PNG | 28 | 41 | 32 |
| Undecided | 26 | 41 | 33 |
| Figures are percents of those who declare that they would vote for that party. Source: POB-OSF October 2006. | | | |

**The media's role in shaping political opinions**

Romanians say that they pay little attention to the political life. Only 27% state that they are somewhat or very interested in politics; they are also those who invest more time in informing themselves, and the main means information remain the media, especially television.




Frequencies of answers to the questions *How interested in politics would you say that you are?*

For all questions that asked the respondents for opinions about the political system (for instance the potential conflict between the prime minister and the president or the issue of anticipated elections, both covered above), the level of interest increases with media exposure. Persons who spend more time informing themselves about politics and political events have opinions more often, one way or the other, while respondents without such concerns have more often the tendency to decline competence ("don't know" – DN) or to refuse to answer ("no answer" – NA).

TV stations from which respondents select information about politics are, most often, ProTV (32%), TVR1 (18%), Antena 1 (15%) and Realitatea TV (9%), while 10% declare that they do not inform themselves at all about politics from the television. Of the radio stations, Radio Romania Actualitati (24% of the respondents inform themselves about politics most often from the national radio station) and Europa FM (11%) stand out; also, 23% of the subjects name a local or regional radio station. Of the written press, local newspapers are the main source of political information for 28% of the respondents, followed by Libertatea (16%), Evenimentul Zilei (7%) and Jurnalul National (6%).

Voters of different parties choose a different television station they prefer to inform themselves about politics. What is common for everyone who has a political option, as we have shown above, is that they inform themselves more than the undecided. Voters of the "DA pole" prefer, when it comes to politics, stations specializing in news, such as Realitatea TV or Antena 1 (especially the former), while PSD supporters inform themselves more than the overall average for the population from ProTV. OTV is a source of political information especially for voters of PNG and PRM, but also for a segment of the PNL electorate.

| *Voters* | ProTV | TVR1 | Antena1 | Realitatea TV | Antena3 | OTV | Other | Do not inform themselves |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **DA Alliance** | 30 | 19 | 19 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| **PD** | 28 | 20 | 17 | 12 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 6 |
| **PNL** | 30 | 22 | 15 | 18 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| **PSD** | 41 | 19 | 18 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| **PRM** | 28 | 23 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| **UDMR** | 28 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 1 | | 33[4] | 16 |
| **PNG** | 40 | 6 | 22 | 6 | | 16 | 6 | 2 |
| **Undecided** | 31 | 17 | 14 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 14 |

*Which is the TV station from which you get information most often about politics and political events?*
Figures are percents of the voters of each party. Differences up to 100% are non-answers.
Source: POB-OSF October 2006.

The data shows that the media, and especially television, plays an important role in shaping political opinions. It cannot be said for sure whether citizens choose the sources of information to match their political preferences or the media channel informs opinions of the consumers. Most likely, both mechanisms are valid and in both situations the media plays the role of a filter through which political information reaches the citizens from politicians and parties[5].

[4] 29% of UDMR voters declared that they informed themselves about politics mainly from Hungarian stations (Duna TV, TV Budapesta 1, TV Budapesta 2)

[5] The May 2006 edition of the Public Opinion Barometer offers a detailed analysis of the population's perceptions regarding the media. The study is available free of charge on the Internet page of the Open Society Foundation, at the address www.osf.ro

# The Securitate Files Affair

**Andrei Gheorghita**

The fear of disclosure of former Securitate collaborators has been a constant presence in public debate after 1989. However, until recently it has only taken a marginal position on the population's agenda, as none of the significant public actors had made any significant effort for the "moral reconstruction" of the Romanian society. Furthermore, long periods of the post-communist stage can be characterized by deliberate (and sometimes desperate) efforts to place the issue of disclosing the collaborators of the former Securitate in a cone of shadow, by discrediting and ridiculing its supporters.

Starting with 2006, the process of studying the archives of the communist political police has entered a new stage, characterized by an intense dynamic. Of the causes for this change, the most obvious seem to be the renewal of CNSAS and the increased determination of the government to settle this issue once and for all. Disclosing politicians that collaborated with the Securitate has been a topic of interest for the media, who insistently covered the information from CNSAS and organized many debates on the issue of "informers" and officers that are still present in public office more than 16 years after the fall of communism.

Initially, many commentators looked at this as a press whim, a bubble of soap that would burst quickly and be soon forgotten. Until today, these expectations have been constantly proven wrong, and the issue of the archives of the former Securitate is now more current than ever. Constant media attention on the issue of public personalities that collaborated with the political police before 1989 led to a repositioning on the topic on the agenda of the population, with a constant and relatively solid growth of population interest. While in early September an Insomar poll showed an interest rate (respondents who declare that they are interested and very interested) around 35.8% for the issue of access to the files of the former Securitate, data collected in October for the Public Opinion Barometer indicated a slight growth of the population segment (37.1%) that gives increased importance to this issue. Even if this change does not appear to be that significant, other indicators seem to suggest otherwise. While in the Insomar poll, 55.4% of the respondents declared that they were little, very little or not at all interested in the phenomenon of the files, our data indicate only 46.9% of those who find the issue of little or no importance. A third category of differences appears in respondents who have no opinion on the matter or refuse to answer, as they were 8.9% in September and 16% in October. We can assume that this increase in the undecided category comes mainly from the category of population with low interest on the issue of Securitate collaborators, a

category that is reconsidering its attitude to the issue. On the other hand, we should not ignore possible differences between our results and those of the Insomar study, as the form of application of the question is different.

| ***Insomar, September 2006*** | ***POB, October 2006*** |
|---|---|
| … how interested are you in this issue? | … how important is this issue? |
| - very much (13.7%); | - very important (13.4%); |
| - rather much (22.1%); | - important (23.7%); |
| - rather little (28.9%); | - little important (24.8%); |
| - very little/not at all (26.5%); | - not at all important (22.1%); |
| - don't know/no answer (8.9%). | - don't know/no answer (16.0%). |

**Table 1: The interest of population in the issue of access to the files of the former Securitate and its former collaborators**

The attitude of the population to the process of analysis of files of former Securitate collaborators that are present in the public life seems to be positive, 44.3% of the respondents considering that this process is a good thing for the Romanian society, while only 9.6% see the "file affair" as a bad thing (Chart 1).

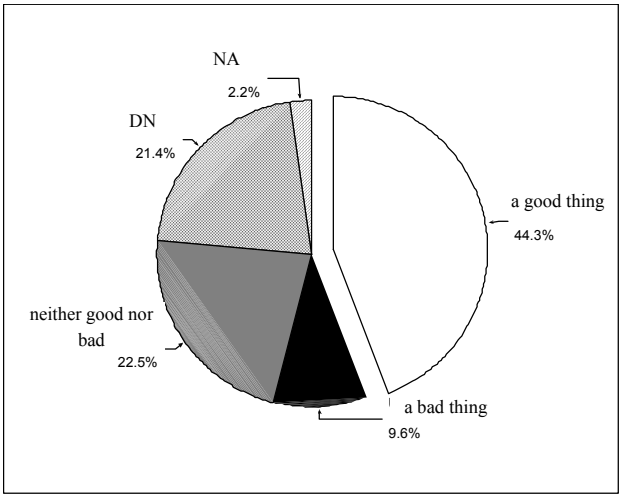



**Chart 1**: In your opinion, is the review by CNSAS of the files of former Securitate collaborators that are active in the public life a good thing or a bad thing for the Romanian society?

Most favorable to the disclosure are respondents in the category between 35 and 54 years old, who see a positive end in this process in a percentage of 49.9%. The same category includes the most opinions against, as 12.4% of them feel that the process managed by CNSAS has prevailingly unfavorable effects on the society.

Also, the proportion of positive opinions on disclosing former Securitate collaborators increases with the size of the settlement of origin: it peaks (53%) in cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants and is at a minimum (36.4%) among respondents from rural settlements without a commune centre. Similarly, the higher the level of completed studies, the higher the proportion of people who think that the process managed by CNSAS is beneficial, with 68.4% support among respondents with post-graduate studies.

| **In your opinion, is the review by CNSAS of the files of former Securitate collaborators that are active in the public life a good thing or a bad thing for the Romanian society?** | It is a good thing | Difference from value of the whole sample | It is a bad thing | Difference from value of the whole sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18-34 years old | 45.9% | +1.6 | 7.8% | -1.8 |
| 35-54 years old | 49.9% | +5.6 | 12.4% | +2.8 |
| Over 55 years old | 37.4% | -6.9 | 8.4% | -1.2 |
| Graduates of gymnasium (5 to 8 grades) | 36.5% | -7.8 | 8.8% | -0.8 |
| Graduates of secondary school (9 to 12 grades) | 48.8% | +4.5 | 11.4% | +1.8 |
| Graduates of university | 60.6% | +16.3 | 9.2% | -0.4 |
| Graduates of post-graduate studies | **68.4%** | **+24.1** | **15.8%** | **+6.2** |
| Urban over 200,000 inhabitants | 53.0% | +8.7 | 13.3% | +3.7 |
| Urban 100,000-200,000 inhabitants | 52.5% | +8.2 | 9.2% | -0.6 |
| Urban 30,000-100,000 inhabitants | 46.6% | +2.3 | 7.1% | -2.5 |
| Urban under 30,000 inhabitants | 40.4% | -3.9 | 11.9% | +2.3 |
| Rural, commune centre | 41.1% | -3.2 | 7.5% | -2.1 |
| Rural | 36.4% | -7.9 | 8.2% | -1.4 |

**Table 2: Proportion of people who think that the process of disclosing former Securitate collaborators with public offices is a good thing, and a bad thing, respectively, within various categories of population**

The image of the National Council for Studying the Archives of the Securitate (CNSAS) among respondents is prevailingly favorable, 42.7% of them stating that they had a rather good or very good opinion about this institution and only 27.5% that they had a rather bad or very bad opinion about it. This is probably the least expected conclusion, as CNSAS has been, during the last six months, the institution that was attacked and contested the most by a large part of the main political actors, whether they came from the opposition (PRM, PSD), or the government (PC). Furthermore, the many scandals about CNSAS members have taken consistent space in the media, rather frequently.

From the politicians' perspective, the verdict of CNSAS seems to become an increasingly significant factor in their process of being (re-)elected in public office. Given the current social and political context, in which the "file affair" is a significant point in the public agenda, 45.8% of the respondents categorically reject the idea to vote for **mayor** a candidate that was a collaborator of the former Securitate. The percentages are even more drastic for **member of parliament** (48.2%) and **president** (49.3%). Practically, the more significant is a political office perceived to be, the stricter the moral standards used in evaluating the candidates are (or seem to be). Nevertheless, Romanians

remain sensitive to the nature of the collaboration of a candidate with the Securitate, being ready to find mitigating circumstances if, by their information notices that they filed, they did not harm other persons. Thus, 15.2% would vote for mayor a candidate that collaborated with the Securitate if "by the information provided they did not harm other people", while for members of parliament and president the percentages are 14.9% and 14.1%, respectively.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Would you vote for a candidate that was proven to be a collaborator of the former Securitate for **mayor**? | Categorically YES | 5.5% |
| | Yes, but only if the information concerned issues related to foreign citizens. | 1.6% |
| | Yes, but only if the information provided did not harm other people. | 15.2% |
| | Depends on the candidate. | 18.8% |
| | Categorically NO. | 45.8% |
| | I don't know. | 11.5% |
| | No answer. | 1.6% |
| Would you vote for a candidate that was proven to be a collaborator of the former Securitate for **member of parliament**? | Categorically YES | 5.0% |
| | Yes, but only if the information concerned issues related to foreign citizens. | 1.2% |
| | Yes, but only if the information provided did not harm other people. | 14.9% |
| | Depends on the candidate. | 17.1% |
| | Categorically NO. | 48.2% |
| | I don't know. | 11.9% |
| | No answer. | 1.7% |
| Would you vote for a candidate that was proven to be a collaborator of the former Securitate for **president**? | Categorically YES | 5.0% |
| | Yes, but only if the information concerned issues related to foreign citizens. | 1.2% |
| | Yes, but only if the information provided did not harm other people. | 14.5% |
| | Depends on the candidate. | 16.4% |
| | Categorically NO. | 49.3% |
| | I don't know. | 11.9% |
| | No answer. | 1.7% |

**Table 3: Willingness to vote for a collaborator of the former Securitate for the public offices of mayor, member of parliament and president**

Then the questionnaire focused on a specific case, the case of Mrs. Mona Musca; this case was chosen due to reasons of notoriety and media coverage. When asked about how the publication of Mrs. Mona Musca's Securitate collaborator file influenced their trust in her, the distribution of answers was the following (Table 4):

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. I have less trust than before; | 23.8% |
| 2. my trust in Mrs. Musca has not changed, it is still low; | 19.2% |
| 3. my trust in Mrs. Musca has not changed, it is still high; | 22.0% |
| 4. I have more trust than before; | 3.3% |
| 7. I don't know who Mona Musca is; | 9.4% |
| 8. I don't know; | 18.6% |
| 9. no answer. | 3.5% |

**Table 4: Distributions of answers to the question: "During the last weeks, there have been intense discussions about Mrs. Mona Musca's Securitate collaborator file. How did these discussions affect your trust in Mrs. Musca?"**

Even if the veracity of the answer (practically its consistence) to such a question could only be

tested under a panel study or with a simulation of trust indicators for Mona Musca in several consecutive polls, the results seem to be believable. It is obvious that there has been a significant drop in trust for Mrs. Mona Musca during the period August-October 2006, and this drop cannot be explained otherwise than by the decision of CNSAS about her past as a Securitate collaborator. While during the period June-July 2006, a study of Insomar showed 44% with much and very much trust in Mona Musca and an upward trend (5% growth), this study reports a decrease of this percentage to around 25.6%, an 18% drop in approximately three months.

The last issue we shall address is the opinion of population about the need to block access to public offices for collaborators of the former Securitate and for the leaders of the former Romanian Communist Party, based on a *lustration law*. This is hardly a novel idea, being first formulated in the famous point 8 of the Timişoara Proclamation, a document that was launched on 11 March 1990, proposing that "the election law should forbid, for the first three consecutive legislatures, the right to be a candidate, on any list, for former communist activists and former Securitate officers". While the idea of a lustration law has been discussed many times during the post-revolution period, there has never been a minimum level of support for it among the political elite, allowing it to be at least impartially debated in public.

The "File Affair" phenomenon has turned the issue of the lustration law in an open debate, while interest in the subject had been rekindled by the submission of a bill on this matter, signed by Mona Musca, Eugen Nicolaescu, Viorel Oancea from the Chamber of Deputies and Senator Adrian Cioroianu. In the socio-politic context defined by the aforementioned coordinates, we have deemed relevant to analyze population opinions about this matter. For methodological reasons, the question concerning the need for a lustration law was formulated separately for collaborators of the former Securitate and leaders of the former Communist Party. Results are shown in table 5. In both cases, most respondents are in favor of a lustration law. The majority is extremely high if we consider only the respondents that spontaneously formulated an opinion about the issue.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Do you think that a lustration law is necessary that would block access to public office for collaborators of the former Securitate?** | Yes, it is necessary | 52.3% |
| | No, it is not necessary | 21.9% |
| | I don't know | 22.9% |
| | No answer | 2.8% |
| **Do you think that a lustration law is necessary that would block access to public office for former leaders of the Communist Party?** | Yes, it is necessary | 50.2% |
| | No, it is not necessary | 23.4% |
| | I don't know | 23.3% |
| | No answer | 3.0% |

**Table 5: Distribution of respondent opinions in connection with the need for a lustration law**

Opinions in favor of blocking access to public office for collaborators of the former Securitate (52.3%) tend to be more popular than those in favor of prohibiting former communist leaders to run for office (50.2%), but the difference is not significant. On the other hand, it is an understandable difference seeing the extreme media attention to cases of politicians that were collaborators of the former Securitate. Furthermore, the consistency between answers regarding the willingness to vote in various public offices collaborators of the former Securitate and answers to the question regarding the need for a lustration law is noteworthy.

# Social Effects of Communist Persecution

**Mircea Comşa**

Although 16 years have passed since the end of communism in Romania, we still know relatively few things about its impact on regular people. Of course, this impact has been many-sided and hard to quantify. However, within certain limits, we can imagine a few ways to look for an answer, even an approximate one. In this material we are only concerned with persecution during the communist period. How many of the people who live now in Romania have suffered politically due to communism? What are the socio-demographic features of such persons? What was the form of their suffering? Which are the consequences of persecution at attitudinal, axiological and behavioral level? These are the questions we aim to answer in this text.

## How many have suffered?

According to the statements, the percentage of people who **have suffered personally personal sub aspect politic** from communism is **6%** if we consider the total current adult population, and **8%** if we only consider people who are over 34 now (they were 18 or older in 1989). If we extend the reference framework to include **family**, the percentage of people who had direct or indirect contact with some form of political persecution increases to **12%** of the total current population (14% if the respondent is over 34).

**9%** of the respondents who were 18 in 1989 declare that in their family or among near relatives there was a person who had at least one problem of **political persecution**. 6% have had only one type of problem, while 3% two or more types.

If we consider any of the previous indicators, we have approximately **14%** of respondents in the category of people who **have suffered in any way from communism** politically, directly or indirectly, or were persecuted under various charges (personally or a relative).

## Who suffered?

The forms of repression that existed during communism did not reach all social categories to the same extent (Table 1). As expected, people who have lived longer under communism suffered/were persecuted to a greater extent. Thus, one of ten persons aged 55+ declares that they have suffered personally from a political aspect. If the person has lived during the initial years of communism (is currently over 65) the chance of having suffered seems to be much higher (although the difference is not statistically significant), reaching 13%. Differences also appear by other socio-demographic variables. Thus, men have suffered relatively more than women, people with less than 8 grades of education or with higher education more than the rest, people in the rural areas somewhat more than people in urban areas, people in Transylvania more than people from other regions (the difference is reduced if nationality is controlled, i.e. if we only consider Romanian nationals from Transylvania, but it still remains significant; this is because Hungarians and Germans declare that they have

suffered personally from a political aspect in a greater extent). For the total adult population, the chance of having suffered politically is 6%. If the respondent is male, over 55, has a maximum of 8 of education, lives in rural areas and is from Transylvania, the chance of having suffered politically increases to approximately 36%.

When we speak of political suffering or persecution of a family member, the data shows pretty much same. It seems that persons from older, more educated families from Transylvania have suffered more. Furthermore, persecution was more frequent in educated families in large cities.

**Table 1 Variation of certain political persecution indicators (%)**

| Variable | Category | Has suffered personally politically | A member of the family has suffered politically | Problems of political persecution in the family |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | **7** | 13 | 8 |
| | Female | 4 | 11 | 7 |
| Age | 18-34 | 1 | 8 | 5 |
| | 35-54 | 6 | 11 | 9 |
| | 55+ | **10** | **16** | 9 |
| Education | Max. 8 grades | **8** | 13 | 6 |
| | 10 grades | 3 | 8 | 4 |
| | Secondary / post-secondary school | 4 | 12 | 9 |
| | Higher education | **7** | **20** | **20** |
| Type of settlement | Urban large | 4 | 12 | **11** |
| | Urban small | 5 | 12 | **9** |
| | Rural | **7** | 12 | 5 |
| Region | Moldavia | 4 | 10 | 9 |
| | Walachia | 4 | 8 | 5 |
| | Transylvania | **8** | **18** | 9 |
| | Bucharest | 5 | 12 | 10 |
| **Total** | | **6** | **12** | **9** |

## Which were the forms of persecution?

Forms of political persecution can be grouped under three large categories:

- dispossession of property (land, house)
- deprivation of freedom (arrest, prison, forced labor for the Channel, forced domicile)
- deprivation of certain rights (access to school, professional advancement)

Each of these categories includes approximately 3% of the total population. If we only consider people above 34, the percentage increases to approximately 4%.

Of all the above, **land dispossession** has affected the highest number of persons, either personally or for a family member.

The most frequent accusations to these persons were, in this order: **wealthy peasant** (5%), **unhealthy social origin** and **enemy of the people/class enemy**, each with 2%.

**Which were the consequences?**

What do people who have suffered due to communism believe about it, compared with the rest of the population? As expected, their attitude is clearly leaning towards the negative:

- only 5% of them think about communism that it was a good idea that was well implemented, compared to 12% in the total population
- 50% believe about communism that it was not a good idea, compared to 34% of the total population

The same findings occur if we analyze the other indicators measuring political persecution at family level (the data is practically identical with the personal level data).

As for the vote, there do not seem to be large differences. Some differences, albeit small (and statistically insignificant) are shown below. People who have suffered politically vote ...

- in a greater extent for PD and PNL
- in a lesser extent with the DA Alliance

Some other features that differentiate people who have suffered from communism are that they:

- trust other people somewhat more;
- participate in protest activities (signing petitions, meetings) in a double extent compared to the rest of the population; willingness to participate now is similar;
- consider that access to the files of the former Securitate is important in a much higher percentage (28% compared to 13%);
- refuse in a higher percentage to vote for a collaborator of the former Securitate (regardless of the position they run for);
- are more in favor of a lustration law;
- have a better image of the CNSAS;
- are self-positioned on average more to the right;
- are in a greater extent in favor of private ownership;
- it is more important for them to live in a country that is governed democratically.

# Left or Right?

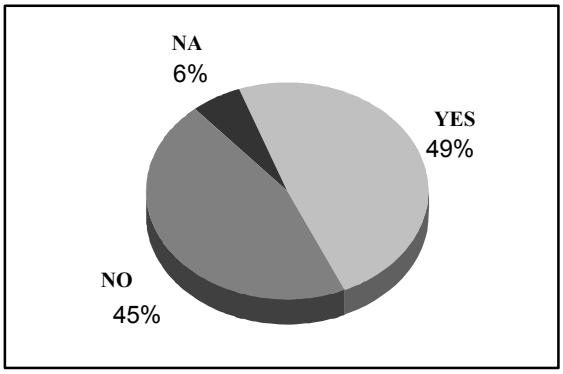
**Mircea Comşa**

Rather frequently, we hear the media speaking of the political left and right: "the party X is centre-left, the candidate Y is right-wing", etc. Gradually, positioning political actors on the left-right axis has become common place, at least in the media or in politician speeches. However, what is the significance of these labels for common people? Do these concepts have a well defined content or significance and, if yes, how close is the people's perception to that of the specialists? Furthermore, how many of those who position themselves on this axis are on the left, on the right and in the centre? Has the positioning of Romanians on the left-right axis changed over time? Comparatively to citizens of other countries (former communist, EU), where are Romanians placed on the left-right axis? These are the main questions that this text is aimed to address.

## What do we mean by left and right?

The notoriety of the concepts of political left and right is rather low among Romania's adult population. According to POB-OSF data (November 2003) only half of the respondents declare that they have heard of these terms (Chart 1).

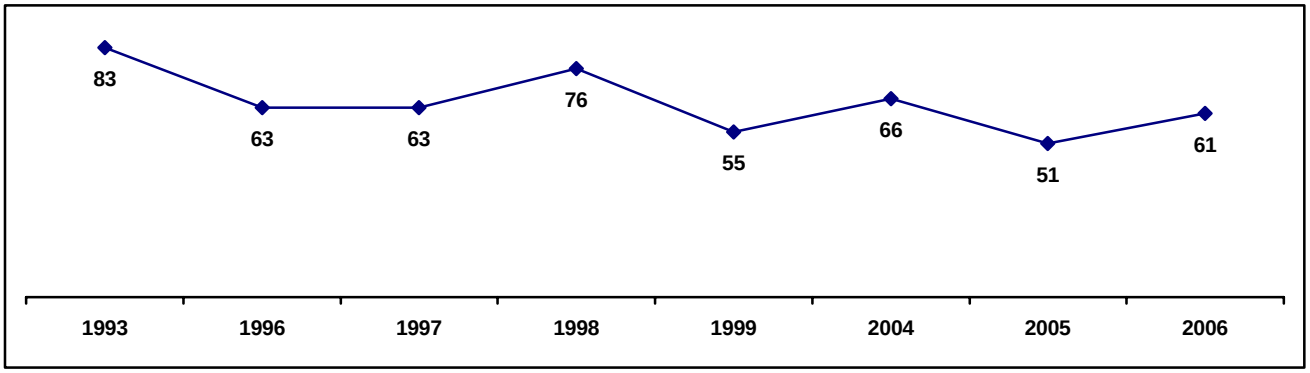
**Chart 1 Politics uses the terms left and right. Have you heard of these terms?**




*Source: POB - OSF, October 2003*

In 2006, when asked to position themselves on the left-right axis, 36% of the respondent did not know how to do that and 3% did not answer. The percentage of people who position themselves on this axis is relatively stable after 1990, with just a few exceptions (most likely due to different data collection methodology: 1993 and 1998).

**Chart 2 Percentage of people who position themselves on the left-right axis (1993-2006)**



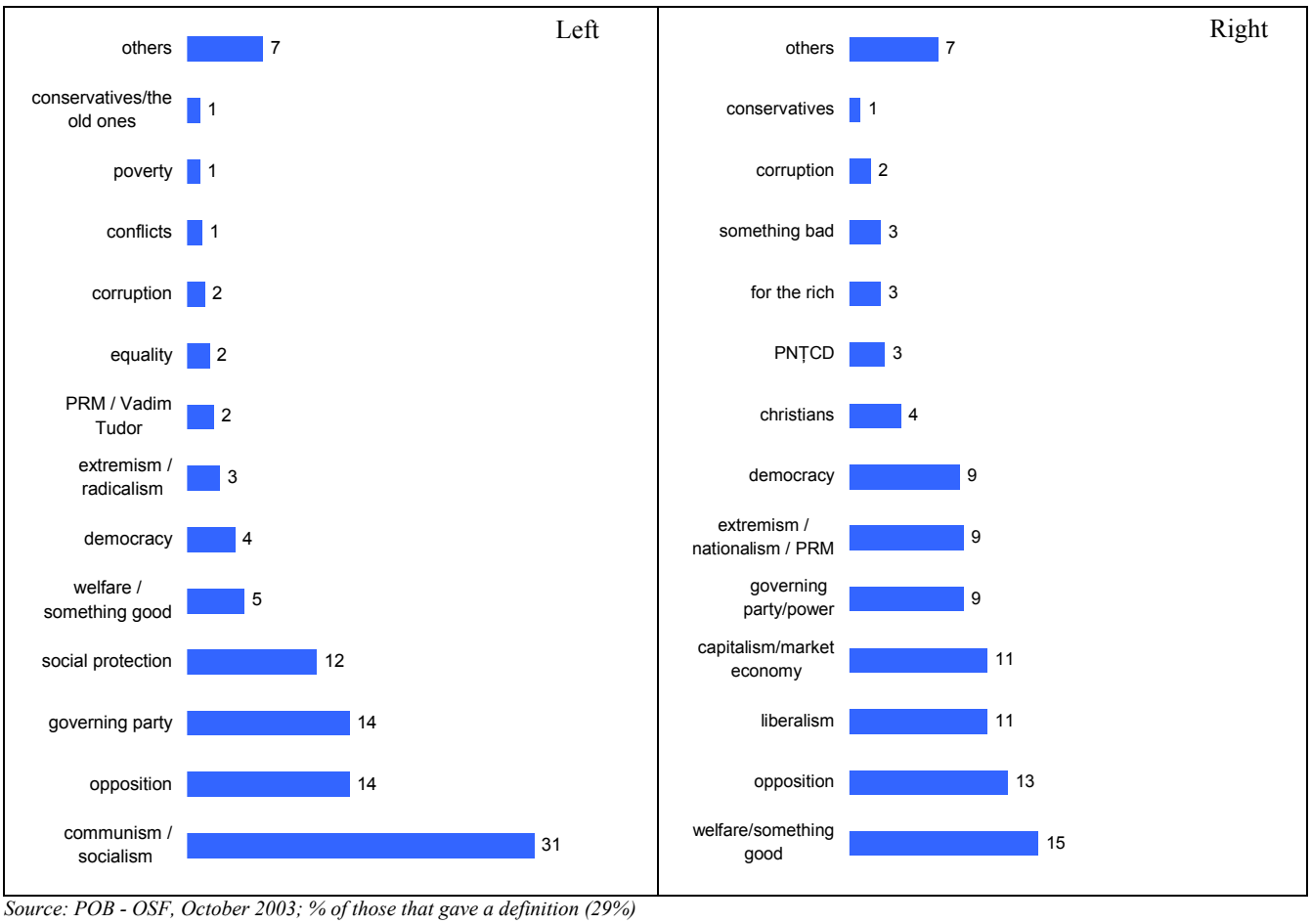

*Source: POB – OSF 2005, 2006; EVS&WVS 1993, 1998 and 1999; ICCV 1997; CSES 1996 and 2004 (%)*

Compared to other countries, Romania is among the last positions for the percentage of people positioning themselves on the left-right axis (CSES, EVS&WVS). Compared with other former communist countries (that are now at similar levels with capitalist countries), Romania is also among the last places (only former USSR members and, according to some of the data, Bulgaria, have values that are so low). Most likely, this situation is probably caused by the fact that opinion leaders (politicians, journalists, political analysts) have used little or not at all the terms of left and right in the public space after 1989, preferring positioning on other coordinates (communist – anti-communist, reformist - anti-reformist) to explain certain attitudes, events or public policies.

Of those who have heard of the political left and right and defined it, three out of five give a content for it (29% of the total population; 20% do not know or won't answer), in a somewhat higher extent for the political left. The semantic content attributed by the population to the left or right include aspects that are generally consistent with the theoretical and logical perspective, with one large exception (the indiscriminate overlapping of the axes "left-right" and "power-opposition"), and a few relatively smaller ones (left means welfare but also poverty, right means liberalism but also nationalism, although this association can also be found in reality or in theory).

As expected, left and right are defined partially in opposition, as they refer to opposing political currents. Thus, left means "communism/socialism" (31%) and right "liberalism" (11%). As we can see, the ideological content is predominant and much higher in the case of the left compared to the right. This happens because for the left political and economic organization are indistinct (sometimes not only for common people), while for the right they are two separate aspects with approximately the same significance.

**Chart 3 What do people understand by political left/right?**




*Source: POB - OSF, October 2003; % of those that gave a definition (29%)*

In addition to this content of opposition, there are contents that only appear in relation with one of the two poles. Thus, left is identified specifically with social protection (12%) and equality (2%) and right with capitalism/market economy(11%).

Some contents are found on both sides (are claimed by both poles), in relatively close degrees. Thus, both left and right are identified with the opposition (14-13%), governing party/power (14-9%), welfare (5-15%), democracy (4-9%), extremism (5-9%), corruption (2-2%). If for attributes such as welfare, extremism, corruption, democracy, the association is (or may be) correct and found in reality, what is surprising is the high percentage (28% for the left and 22% for the right) of those who associate the two poles with power and opposition, respectively (approximately to the same extent). On the other hand, in relation with the moment of data collection, approximately half of those who identified in terms of power/opposition were right (indeed PSD, the party in power in 2003, is a left-wing party and a large part of the opposition could be identified with the right).

Overall, we can draw the following conclusions:

- Self positioning on the left-right axis is accepted by approximately 60%.
- Although we could expect the percentage of people who position themselves on the left-right axis to grow in time, the data shows relative stability.

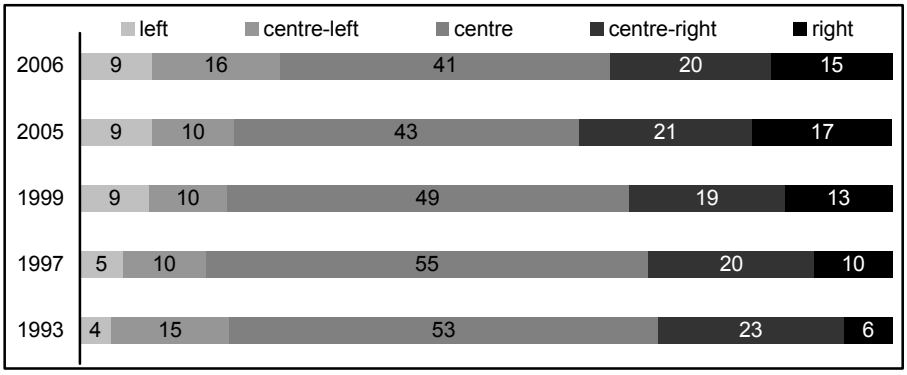
- ❖ Compared to other countries (former communist or not, except those from the former USSR), Romania has one of the lowest percentages of self-positioning on the left-right axis. The irrelevance of the terms of left and right for approximately half of Romania's population is mainly the result of their absence from the public vocabulary of opinion leaders after 1989.
- ❖ 49% of the respondents subjectively know the meaning of the terms of political left and right.
- ❖ 29% of the citizens can attribute to the left and right labels a meaning found among those that are recognized by specialists.
- ❖ The percentage of ideological and pragmatic contents (living standard) in defining the two poles differs (the following percentages are calculated on the total of people who have given a definition). Thus, left means to a higher extent ideology (31%) compared to the right (22%, if we add up the two components: liberalism and market economy). In the case of left, the political dimension is dominant, while for the right there is a differentiation between the economic dimension (market economy) and the political one (liberalism).
- ❖ The ultimate objectives of the left (social protection) and right ("generalized" welfare) are identified approximately to the same degree (12% and 15%, respectively).

## Left or right?

Currently, only 6 out of 10 Romanians position themselves on the left-right axis. While it is to be expected that they understand different things by these labels, the population's perception is relatively close to what specialists understand by these concepts. Therefore, it is relatively legitimate to group the positions and give them the appropriate labels. In order to simplify analysis, we decided to group the ten possible positions in pairs, giving five categories of respondents. From the total of people that position themselves, these categories have the following shares: left 9%, centre-left 10%, centre 41%, centre-right 20% and right 15%.

The meanings assigned by the population to the terms of left and right probably have differences over time, but we believe that there are no spectacular differences. Therefore we can compare the evolution of the percentage of different choices in time (see the following chart).

**Chart 4 Percentage of ideological categories determined by self-positioning on the left-right axis**




*Source: POB – OSF 2005, 2006; EVS&WVS 1993, 1999; ICCV 1997 (% of those that expressed a choice)*

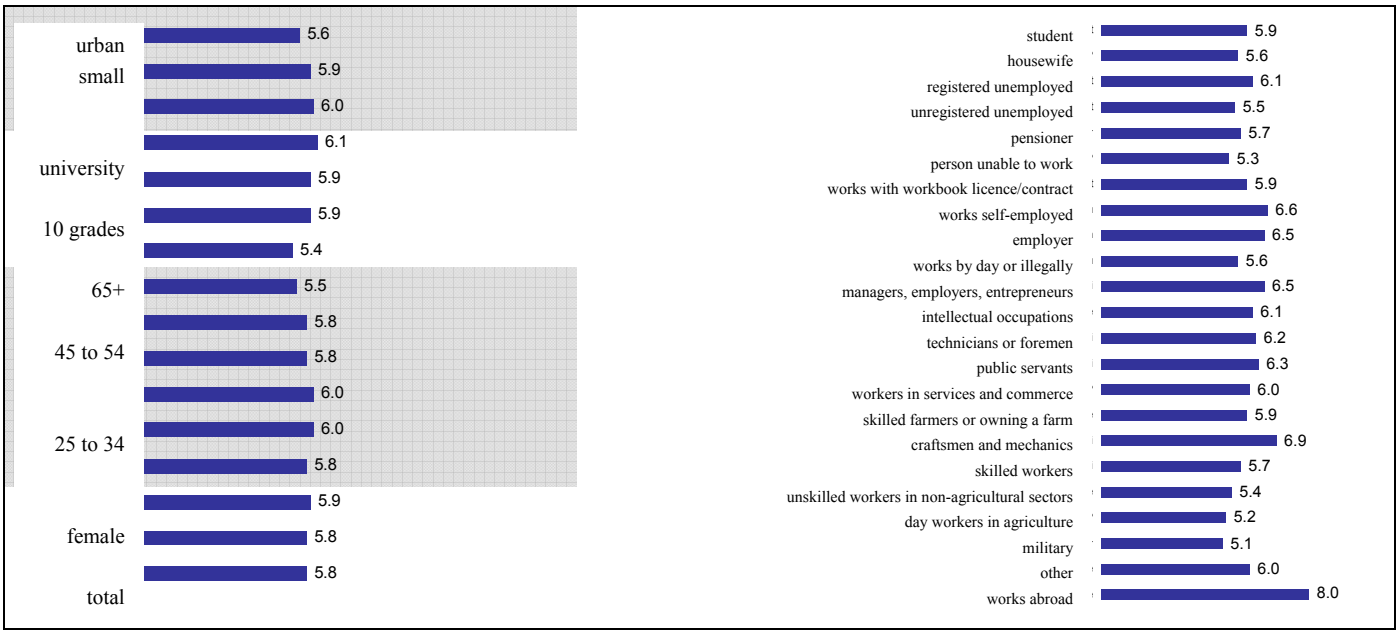
Although the changes over time are relatively small, we can notice some trends (percentages are calculated on the total of those who have expressed a choice; to see the percentages of total population we should divide the values by two):

- the percentage of population declaring to be "centre" decreases over time;
- the percentage of "left-wing" population decreases until 1997 and then increases slightly;
- the percentage of "right-wing" population increases relatively constantly in time, but by a small amount;
- regardless of the reference period, about half of the population positions themselves in the centre, around one third on the right and one fifth on the left.

It is to be expected that respondent self-positioning on the left-right axis is done also according to certain socio-demographic features (Chart 5). With the exception of status and occupation, variations by other features are small to non-existent. Thus:

- there are no differences by gender;
- the relationship with age has a Bell-curve shape, with the middle segment slightly shifted to the right;
- the increase of education level brings self-positioning slightly to the right;
- the urban areas are a little more "right-wing" (due to differences in population structure);
- employers and self-employed are the most right-wing, while persons who cannot work the most left-wing;
- advancing in social class (defined by occupation) brings positioning to the right.

**Chart 5 Variation of self-positioning on the left-right axis according to certain socio-demographic variables (average of evaluations on a scale of 1=left to 10=right)**




Certainly, the meanings of left and right show large variations from one country to another. Therefore, comparisons between countries (especially very different ones) are not quite correct. Indicatively, however, we shall show some figures and conclusions obtained by analyzing data produced in two international compared researches (CSES both modules and EVS&WVS 1995-1997 and 1999-2000).

- ❖ of a total of 78 countries (both waves of EVS&WVS), Romania places 55 with an average of recorded values of 5.8 (on a scale of 1 to 10), i.e. in the region of "centre-right" countries (equal with states such as Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, Malta, USA, Latvia, Turkey and Bulgaria);
- ❖ if we consider CSES data (module 1), only Mexico is more "right-wing" then Romania.

**The relevance of self-positioning on the left and right axis**

Is it relevant that voters prefer the centre, the left or the right? In other words, is there a connection, even a "hidden" one (as in subconscious), between the positioning on the left-right axis and other choices (regarding the vote to a candidate or party, certain social policies, certain values, etc.)? We shall investigate next the relationship between self-positioning and these preferences (based on data from the POB-OSF, October 2006).

Based on the self-positioning of the parties (by direct or indirect statements, by party documents) or expert evaluations, political parties in Romania can be placed on the left-right axis. Does this image overlap with the population's evaluations? To great extent it does. Thus, voters that position themselves on the left or centre-left tend to vote more for PSD, those in the centre for the DA Alliance and PD (less for PSD), those in the centre-right with the DA Alliance and PD, and those on the right with the DA Alliance, PD and PNL (Table 2). If we consider the voters of a given party, the relationship becomes clearer (

Table 3). The DA Alliance, PD and PNL are voted mainly by voters found on the centre or right (with different percentages), PSD by voters on the centre or left, UDMR by voters on the centre or centre-right, and PNG and PRM almost to the same extent by all voters (albeit slightly more by centre voters).

**Table 2 Vote for parties depending on self-positioning on the left-right axis**

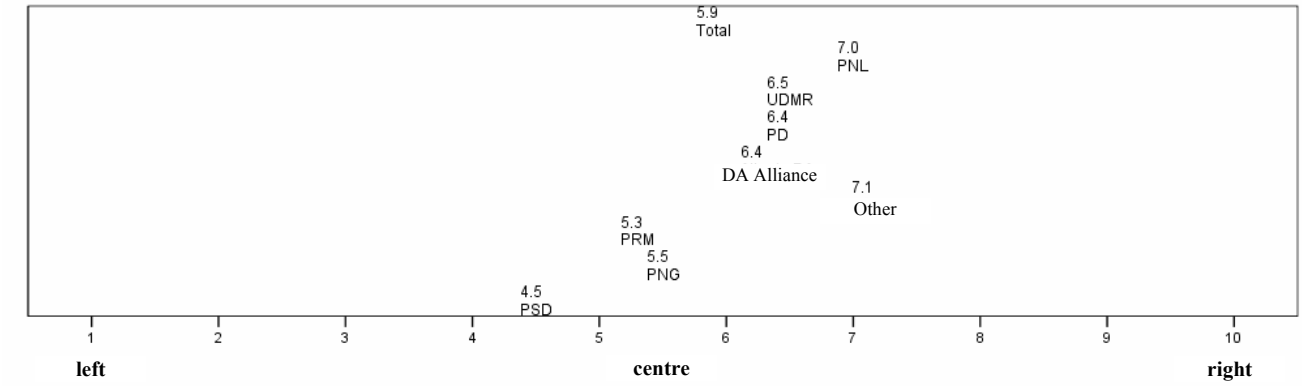
| Party | Left | Centre left | Centre | Centre right | Right | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D.A. Alliance | 13 | 23 | 29 | 38 | 33 | 29 |
| PD | 8 | 13 | 25 | 19 | 23 | 20 |
| PNG | 11 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| PRM | 19 | 17 | 11 | 11 | 10 | 12 |
| PSD | 44 | 41 | 16 | 10 | 8 | 20 |
| PNL | 5 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 16 | 9 |
| UDMR | 0 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| Other | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

**Table 3 Self positioning on the left-right axis according to the vote for parties**

| Party | Left | Centre left | Centre | Centre right | Right | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| D.A. Alliance | 4 | 12 | 38 | 26 | 19 | 100 |
| PD | 4 | 10 | 48 | 19 | 20 | 100 |
| PNG | 23 | 10 | 29 | 23 | 16 | 100 |
| PRM | 15 | 21 | 34 | 17 | 13 | 100 |
| PSD | 20 | 32 | 32 | 10 | 7 | 100 |
| PNL | 5 | 3 | 38 | 22 | 31 | 100 |
| UDMR | 0 | 4 | 56 | 30 | 11 | 100 |
| Other | 0 | 7 | 43 | 21 | 29 | 100 |
| Total | 9 | 15 | 39 | 20 | 17 | 100 |

If we use a synthetic measure of positioning on the left-right axis (average of self-positioning of a party's voters), we can place parties on this axis as follows:

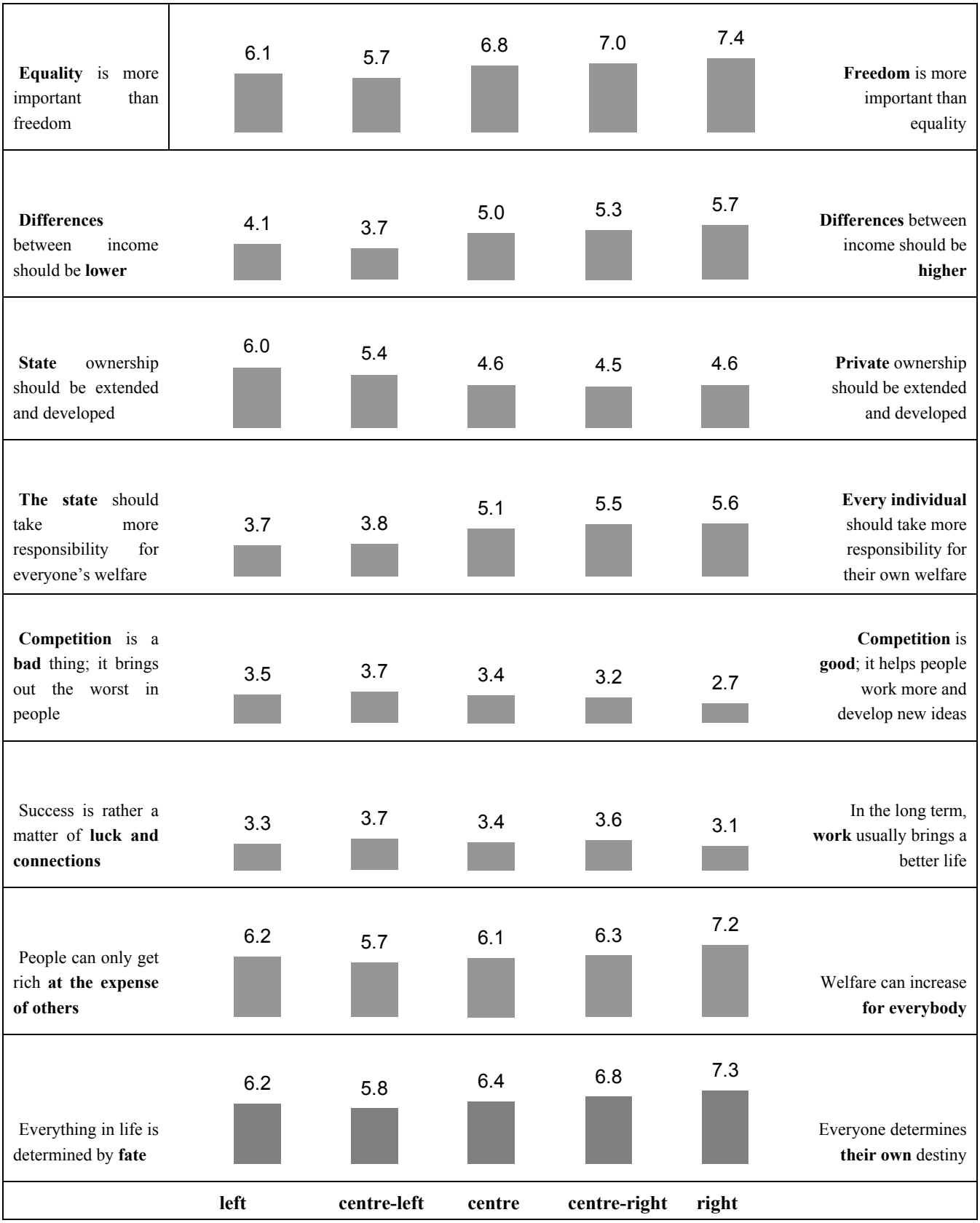
**Chart 6 Positioning of parties on the left-right axis according to their voters' self positioning**




The median on this axis is the point 5.5, and current voters (those who have indicated a party) in Romania are at 5.9, so the average of voters is found slightly to the right from the centre. The only significant left-wing party is PSD, in the centre we have PRM and PNG and the rest on the right (PNL is the most right-wing).

Left and right are associated (in the literature, in programs of political actors, by common people) with preference for certain values and social policies. Thus, left is associated with socialism, social protection, state ownership, equality etc., while right with capitalism, middle class, private ownership, freedom, etc. Of course, each individual may put different emphasis on these values, but we expect at a statistical, aggregate level to have these dimensions overlap the left-right dimension (Chart 7).

**Chart 7 Relationship between self positioning on the left-right axis and preference for different values**




** Values represent the average of evaluations (on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is total agreement with the statement on the left, and 10 total agreement with the one on the right) the preferences of subjects that positioned themselves in each of the five classes of the left-right axis.*

*** Example of data reading: Those who positioned themselves on the left agree more with the statement "The state should take more responsibility for everyone's welfare" while those who positioned themselves on the right agree more with the statement "Each individual should take more responsibility in their own welfare".*

For certain aspects we have greater overlap, while for others the overlap is small or none at all (work vs. luck and connections). Thus, the data shows a greater preference of those who position themselves on the left for values, policies and beliefs such as: social equality (in general, or in particular with respect to income), maintaining the state's role (at general economic level or through social protection), limiting competition, social exploitation as a means of obtaining welfare, a fatalist view of life. Those on the right are characterized more by a preference for freedom, differentiated income, private ownership, responsibility of individuals, competition, the belief that social welfare can increase fore everybody, self determination.

# Political Leaders and the Voters

**Andrei Gheorghita**

The landscape of political figures of the moment is dominated by president Traian Basescu. He is the political leader amassing the most significant capital of notoriety (99.5%, as only 0.5% of the respondents declare that they do not know him), surprisingly enough higher than that of the former president, Ion Iliescu (99.1%), and significantly higher from the third place, Corneliu Vadim Tudor (97.5%). If for notoriety differences between the political leaders in the first three places are relatively small and within the tolerated error margin, when it comes to trust differences are much more evident (Table 1). Traian Basescu dominates the top of political leaders, at a great distance to the next places, regardless of the trust indicator that is used. Trust indicators for Traian Basescu are much less antagonistic than for other politicians (53.3% of the total valid answers indicate high and very high trust, while a total absence of trust is expressed by only 8.2% of the answers). Surprisingly, coming second among the most trusted politicians is George (Gigi) Becali, who confirms his constant upward trend during the last period. It must be stressed that Gigi Becali is the only politician – besides president Traian Basescu – for whom the category "much or very much trust" (30.6%) is more populated than the category "no trust" (27.5%). Furthermore, Becali has a remarkable notoriety capital (95.4%), comparable with personalities with high-ranking political offices. Third we have Mona Musca, on a downward trend after her past of Securitate collaboration was revealed. In her case, approximately a quarter (25.6%) of the respondent's appreciations express high and very high trust.

| **How much do you trust… ?** | Much and very much trust | Little and very little trust | No trust |
|---|---|---|---|
| Traian Basescu | 53.3% | 39.6% | 8.2% |
| George Becali | 30.6% | 41.9% | 27.5% |
| Mona Musca | 25.6% | 48.6% | 25.7% |
| Theodor Stolojan | 24.3% | 49.2% | 26.5% |
| Sorin Oprescu | 21.1% | 50.3% | 28.6% |
| Mircea Geoana | 20.4% | 52.2% | 27.4% |
| Monica Macovei | 17.7% | 53.0% | 29.3% |
| Corneliu Vadim Tudor | 16.5% | 42.3% | 41.2% |
| Calin Popescu Tariceanu | 15.6% | 54.6% | 29.8% |
| Emil Boc | 14.2% | 51.2% | 34.6% |
| Ion Iliescu | 14.0% | 47.7% | 38.3% |

| **How much do you trust… ?** | Much and very much trust | Little and very little trust | No trust |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adriean Videanu | 9.9% | 47.9% | 42.1% |
| Cozmin Guşa | 8.7% | 49.7% | 41.6% |
| Gheorghe Flutur | 8.6% | 53.2% | 35.1% |
| Markó Béla | 5.6% | 33.2% | 61.2% |
| Dan Voiculescu | 4.6% | 43.0% | 52.5% |
| Vasile Dâncu | 3.2% | 43.0% | 53.8% |

**Table 1: Trust in political personalities**

*Note: Percentages are calculated on the total of valid answers, after excluding answers of "don't know" and "no answer".*

From the perspective of voting intentions expressed in the eventuality of presidential elections, the rankings suffer a few changes (Table 2). Answers were collected with an open question, which favors over-representation for visible leaders, for whom there are fundamental expectations for a future candidacy for president. We expect that this explains the poor positioning of important political leaders (Calin Popescu Tariceanu, Mircea Geoana), for whom running for president is an unclear idea and hard to activate in answers to an open question. We must also underline the large number of undecided persons regarding the vote for president (34%), a situation that is specific to being close to the middle of an election cycle.

| *If next week there would be elections for President of the country, who would you vote for?* | Voting intention (expressed spontaneously) |
|---|---|
| Traian Basescu | 61.0% |
| Corneliu Vadim Tudor | 13.1% |
| George Becali | 10.5% |
| Mircea Geoana | 6.1% |
| Adrian Nastase | 3.9% |
| Markó Béla | 1.7% |
| Theodor Stolojan | 0.9% |
| Calin Popescu Tariceanu | 0.8% |
| Gheorghe Ciuhandu | 0.5% |
| Dan Voiculescu | 0.3% |
| Other | 1.1% |

**Table 2: Voting intention for President of Romania**

*Note: Percentages are calculated on the total of valid answers, after excluding answers of "don't know" and "no answer".*

President Traian Basescu cumulates an overwhelming percentage of voting intentions (61.0%), which would make him winner from the first round of the hypothetical elections. Second in the voters' preferences is Corneliu Vadim Tudor, with 13.1% of the expressed voting intentions. Corneliu Vadim Tudor manages to maintain a relatively faithful voting base throughout time, despite disastrous trust scores. However, the PRM leader's success in converting his positive trust indicators into voting intentions is remarkable (78.9% of those who declare that they have very much trust in Corneliu Vadim Tudor and 40.3% of those who declare much trust). Gigi Becali is third in the voting intentions, mentioned by 10.5% of those who expressed an option. The leader of PNG has a consolidated upward trend for the last year, a trend that is consistent with the positive evolution of trust indicators.

A special case is that of the leaders of the Social Democrat Party (PSD). If the voting intention for the party seems to have stabilized around 20% of the expressed choices, transformations and turmoil within the party prevent voters to identify with a single leader and associate their intention of vote for presidential elections. To a certain extent this is a normal situation, as there is no pressure of imminent elections for the presidency. On the other hand, it is obvious that none of the visible leaders is managing to function as a vessel for the party's message and image. In voting intentions for president, Mircea Geoana would cumulate 6.1% of the votes, while Adrian Nastase 3.9% of the votes. We must note that their individual scores are much lower than the party's score (20.3%), even added together they are less than half of the party. The situation of PSD is even more confused as 39.7% of the PSD voters would vote for Traian Basescu in the presidential elections and then only 33.3% would vote for Mircea Geoana and 13.5% for Adrian Nastase. As for trust indicators, Sorin Oprescu is the PSD leader with the highest percentage of positive appreciations (21.1% with much and very much trust), but he has the real handicap of a rather low notoriety (79.9%), which turns him into an invisible character in voting intentions.

**What should the President of Romania look like?**

A component of the section regarding "Personalities and political leaders" in the Public Opinion Barometer is dedicated to identifying the most important traits that, in the vision of Romania's population, would shape the ideal profile of the person who holds the highest office in the state. In short, respondents were given a list of 14 traits and were asked to select those that they think *the President of Romania should have* and then rank them by the importance they give to that trait. This is the second attempt to build such a profile as part of the Public Opinion Barometer (after October 2004), and the changes that occurred in the trait list are of little significance. The set of questions was based on a series of previous exploratory studies from the authors of this work, and the list of traits that is presented covers, in our opinion, the most frequent answers given by citizens in the

context of similar questions, formulated as open questions. Behind this approach there is an idea that is quite widely spread among voting theoreticians (originating most likely from the area of cognitive psychology) according to which voters do not evaluate each candidate for a public office *de novo* – as if there was no past – but in relation with certain traits that they feel are representative (in fact pre-existing cognitive categories) for that office.[6] These categories of traits help voters in building representations of the future behavior and performance of the candidate. In other words, according to this model, individuals filter information about candidates through the lens of the features/traits that they think are relevant for the political office at stake.

Table 3 records the traits mentioned by respondents as important for the President of Romania. For each trait, we decided to present two indicators: frequency of mentioning that trait (what percentage of respondents mentioned that trait as important), and an average score of the importance given (with values between 1 and 5, the importance being higher as the score is closer to 1 – in other words, a score of 1 would mean that all who selected that trait considered it as the most important for the future president).

| **Please choose the cards with the traits you feel that the President of Romania should have …** | **Percentage of people who selected the trait** | **Tell me first which is the most important trait, then the second, etc.** | **Average importance score** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. To fight corruption in Romania | 67.8% | 1. To be a good Romanian | 2.66 |
| 2. To be a good organizer | 66.8% | 2. To believe in God | 2.67 |
| 3. To impose order and discipline | 65.0% | 3. To be a good organizer | 2.86 |
| 4. To be a good Romanian | 58.2% | 4. To be educated | 2.89 |
| 5. To speak so that people understand | 54.5% | 5. To impose order and discipline | 2.90 |
| 6. To be educated | 53.0% | 6. To be rich | 2.90 |
| 7. To believe in God | 48.9% | 7. To fight corruption in Romania | 2.92 |
| 8. To admit his mistakes | 45.0% | 8. To speak so that people understand | 2.98 |
| 9. To have political experience | 44.6% | 9. To have political experience | 3.05 |
| 10. To be a good family man | 41.5% | 10. To be a good family man | 3.05 |
| 11. To not have been a collaborator of the former Securitate. | 32.3% | 11. To not have been a collaborator of the former Securitate. | 3.15 |
| 12. To be supported by the party you sympathize with | 19.9% | 12. To have the same religion as you | 3.17 |

[6] Max Visser, „Five Theories of Voting Action. Strategy and Structure of Psychological Explanation", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Trente, 1998, p. 52. See also Arthur H. Miller, Martin P. Wattenberg and Oksana Malanchuk, „Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates", in *American Political Science Review*, vol. 80, no. 2, June 1986, pp. 521-540.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. To have the same religion as you | 18.2% | | 13. To admit his mistakes | 3.32 |
| 14. To be rich | 17.9% | | 14. To be supported by the party you sympathize with | 3.57 |

**Table 3: Which are the traits that the President of Romania should have**

*Example of reading 1: 67.8% of the respondents think that it is important that the President of Romania should "fight corruption in Romania". The trait "to fight corruption in Romania" was selected as important for President of Romania by 67.8% of the respondents.*
*Example of reading 2: The average importance score given by respondents to the trait "to be a good Romanian" for the President of Romania is 2.66. A trait is deemed to be more important as the average importance score is closer to 1.*

What do we see? First of all, there is a relatively low overlap between the frequency of mentioning the traits and the importance they are given. Following the traits selected as necessary for the future president, we notice that the most frequently mentioned fall under what we would call *leadership*, but not necessarily democratic leadership. There is a strong focus on the *actional-executive component* (to fight corruption - 1, to impose order and discipline - 2), while the *expertise/experience component* (to have political experience - 9, to be educated - 6) is found only in the middle of the chart. Traits related to the *traditional-symbolic dimension* of the evaluation are dissipated on various positions in the frequency of traits (to be a good Romanian - 4, to believe in God - 7, to be a good family man - 10).

The order of importance given to traits of the future president is somehow different. We notice that the first two positions are taken by *traditional-symbolic* traits (to be a good Romanian - 1, to believe in God – 2), which suggests a strong preference for them. Although they are mentioned less often than other categories of traits, respondents who mention these traits constantly give them an importance position in their preferences. We have next a compact block of features related to the same leadership component, regarded in a complex manner: expertise/experience (to be educated - 4, to have political experience - 9, to be rich - 6), organization capacity (to be a good organizer - 3, to impose order and discipline - 5, to speak so that people understand - 8) and action capacity (to fight corruption– 7, to *impose* order and discipline - 5).

Remaining at the profile of the ideal president, we should notice two other things. Only 18.2% of the respondents considers important that the president should come from their favorite party. Moreover, this trait is last in the importance score (3.57). Normally, this would indicate a strong separation of the voting intention for president and for party, or at least it would not leave room for claims of electoral capital transfer from the party to the presidential candidate. Nevertheless, the relationship between the voting intention for president and for parliament remains very strong, as shown by other indicators (Pearson contingency quotient C=0.862 with a probability P=99.9).

A second aspect that deserves attention is the significance of collaboration with the former Securitate. In both charts, having not collaborated with the former Securitate is relatively marginal among the criteria for evaluating potential presidential candidates. However, when asked to give a clear answer on their willingness to vote for a candidate that was proven to be a collaborator of the former Securitate, 57.1% of those who answered (49.3% of the total sample) declare that they would categorically not vote for that person. It is likely that in this second case we have certain effects of social desirability, in other words a social pressure (especially shaped by the media) to reject collaborators of the former Securitate, a pressure that would radicalize the position of the respondents. Nevertheless, that trait (not to have collaborated with the former Securitate) seems to be more significant that Table 3 would show at first sight.

**Structure of the electorate for the main political leaders**

Naturally, different categories of society show different voting preferences. In other words, candidates draw their electoral support in different proportions from different social categories. In general we speak of an "electoral fief" of a party or candidate (Moldavia as an electoral fief of PSD etc.), the concept being defined on cultural and geographic criteria. However, we can speak of social categories that support a candidate/party "rather than others". When we describe the voters of a party/candidate from the perspective of social categories that would "rather vote for them" than others, we speak of the profile of the electorate of that party/candidate. In this section we shall focus on the electorate profile for the main political leaders.

We must underline that such an approach remains valid and has analytical significance if our sample includes a sufficient number of voters for a candidate, but also a sufficient number of members from one social category or another. In these conditions, our approach analyses the electorate profiles of political leaders that obtain relatively high scores in the voting intention indicator for presidential elections. Furthermore, we decided not to give any space to analyzing the electorate of the UDMR leader, Markó Béla, as this profile is defined almost exclusively on ethnic criteria.

**Electorate structure for Traian Basescu**

As we have discussed before, the declared voting intention for Traian Basescu is 61.0% at entire population level. If we follow the voting indicators for the main socio-demographic population categories, we notice that president Basescu is *more popular* among women (67%[7]), people who live in large urban settlements (66.1%), in Bistrita-Nasaud (86.4%), Brasov (80%) or Bucharest (79.4%). The voting intention for Traian Basescu is higher among people with secondary school (66.5%), post-secondary school (75%) or university (75%) education. Basescu is *less popular* with

[7] Read: 67% of female respondents declare that they would vote for Traian Basescu. Percentages in brackets in this sub-chapter are voting intentions for Traian Basescu within that population category.

men (55.6%), people who live in villages that are not commune centers (56.7%), in counties such as Bacau (42%), people with less education – no school (30%), graduates of primary education (52.3%) or gymnasium (51.9%).

| Category of respondents | Vote for Basescu within the category | Difference to the total sample |
|---|---|---|
| Women | 67.0% | +6.0 |
| Students | 75.9% | +14.9 |
| Graduates of university | 75.0% | +14.0 |
| Large cities, with more than 200,000 inhabitants | 66.1% | +5.1 |
| Read newspapers/magazines everyday | 70.8% | +9.8 |
| Read books everyday | 79.4% | +18.4 |
| Get political information from TV | 74.5% | +13.5 |
| Believe that communism is not a good idea | 70.7% | +9.7 |
| Think that there should be more than one political party | 65.2% | +4.2 |
| Think that homosexuality should not be illegal | 69.7% | +8.7 |
| Supporters of Rapid Bucharest | 76.2% | +15.2 |
| Whole sample | 61.0% | |
| Men | 55.6% | -5.4 |
| No school | 30.0% | -31.0 |
| Graduates of primary school | 52.3% | -8.7 |
| Village, not commune centre | 56.7% | -4.3 |
| Never read books | 57.2% | -4.8 |
| Believe the country is headed in the wrong direction | 50.2% | -10.8 |
| Think there should be only one political party | 48.0% | -13.0 |
| Think communism was a good idea, well applied | 46.4% | -14.6 |
| Think homosexuality should be illegal | 56.2% | -4.8 |
| Mention that they wouldn't want neighbors of another nationality | 52.1% | -8.9 |
| Left wing (1-3) | 36.4% | -24.6 |

**Table 4: Vote for Traian Basescu within various categories of respondents**

*Example of reading: Of the female respondents, 67% have declared the intention to vote for Traian Basescu. The percentage of Traian Basescu voters amongst women is 6 percents higher than in the entire population.*

As regards political information, support for Traian Basescu is higher among population with a high information level, who read newspaper or magazines every day (70.8% of them would give him their vote), read books every day (79.4%), who get political information from Realitatea TV (74.5%) or Evenimentul Zilei (74.5%). Traian Basescu manages to a great extent to secure the voting intention of active citizens, involved in the community life and strongly supporting

democratic values. Thus, he obtains voting intention scores that are significantly higher than the entire sample from people who trust non-government organizations a lot (69.9%), have very high trust in the European Union (71.9%) and NATO (72%), believe that communism is not a good idea (70.7%) and that it is good to have more political parties (65.2%), but also that access to files of the former Securitate is very important (68.4%). Also, support for Traian Basescu is higher among people who are tolerant and constructive towards other, whether they are defined by ethnic, sexual or moral criteria. The president would get the vote of 64.1% of those who think that it is important to teach tolerance to children, 69.7% of those who believe that homosexuality should not be illegal, 64.4% of those who are against capital punishment.

On the other hand, president Basescu is less popular with those who have very little or no trust in state institutions or international organizations, whether this means the Government (48.5%), Parliament (53.1%), justice (53.5%), European Union (46.7%) or NATO (50%). Moreover, voting intentions for Traian Basescu are significantly lower among less civic respondents or with weak democratic values (tolerance, free elections, anticommunism): 48.5% of those who did not vote in the first round in 2004, 43.4% of those who did not vote in the second round in 2004, 46.9% of those who think that communism is a good idea that was well applied, 48.9% of those who support the existence of a single political party, 52% of those who wouldn't want neighbors of a different race or nationality. With respect to ideology, Basescu would obtain a lot fewer votes from respondents that declare to be left wing (36.4%).

When asked about what they liked most about Traian Basescu, about 66.3% of the respondents gave an answer, with the most frequent positive traits mentioned being: **popular/open/sociable** (16.7% of the total respondents), **direct/no-nonsense** (5.6%), **determined/firm** (5.6%). The most frequent negative traits mentioned in connection with him are: **not keeping promises** (7.9%), then **smile/laughter/jokes** (4.4%) and **does nothing for the country** (2.7%).

**Electorate structure for Corneliu Vadim Tudor**

The voting intentions for Corneliu Vadim Tudor are 13.1% of the total of those who spontaneously expressed a voting preference. With respect to socio-demographic, Corneliu Vadim Tudor is more popular among men (15.3% of the men would vote for him), of people over 55 (16.9%), from small rural communities (18.4%). The voting intentions for the president of PRM are significantly lower among women (10.6%), people with age between 18 and 34 (4.3%), living in cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants (8.9%).

Corneliu Vadim Tudor's electorate is rather poorly informed, animated by an acute feeling of dissatisfaction about how things are evolving in the country and deeply conservative. The leader of PRM successfully mobilized the category of the unsatisfied, obtaining the voting intention of 21.7% of those who are not at all satisfied with how they live, 20.1% of those who think that the economy

is worse now than in 2004, 19% of those who believe that the country is headed in the wrong direction. Punctual indicators (following satisfaction with government actions in fields such as justice, health, living standard, fighting corruption), confirm the mobilization by Vadim Tudor of 16 to 21% of the unsatisfied. As regards the information degree, the leader of PRM obtains significantly higher scores among people who do not listen to the radio (18.4%), do not read books (16.2%), rarely read magazines and newspapers (17.8%), i.e. poorly and very poorly informed categories of public.

| Category of respondents | Vote for C.V. Tudor within the category | Difference to the total sample |
|---|---|---|
| Men | 15.3% | +2.2 |
| Over 55 years old | 16.9% | +3.8 |
| Village, not a commune centre | 18.4% | +5.3 |
| Never listen to the radio | 18.4% | +5.3 |
| Never read books | 16.2% | +3.1 |
| Not at all satisfied with how they live | 21.7% | +8.6 |
| Think the country is headed in the wrong direction | 19.0% | +5.9 |
| Think there should be only one political party | 18.4% | +5.3 |
| Think that communism was a good idea, well applied | 24.8% | +11.7 |
| Think that military service should be mandatory | 19.1% | +6.0 |
| Think that homosexuality should be illegal | 16.6% | +3.5 |
| Think that sexuality is not at all important | 17.8% | +4.7 |
| Mention that they would not want people with AIDS as neighbors | 17.3% | +4.2 |
| Left (1-3) | 19.5% | +6.4 |
| Total sample | 13.1% | |
| Women | 10.6% | -2.5 |
| Graduates of secondary school (9-12 grades) | 8.7% | -4.4 |
| Cities with over 200,000 inhabitants | 8.9% | -4.2 |
| 18-34 years old | 5.9% | -7.2 |
| Read newspapers/magazines everyday | 8.0% | -5.1 |
| Think that the country is headed in the good direction | 8.2% | -4.9 |
| Think that communism is not a good idea | 7.8% | -5.3 |
| Think that homosexuality should not be illegal | 6.8% | -6.3 |
| Think that the economy is going better now than in 2004 | 6.4% | -6.7 |

**Table 5: Vote for Corneliu Vadim Tudor within various categories of respondents**

*Example of reading: Of the male respondents, 15.3% have declared the intention to vote for Corneliu Vadim Tudor. The percentage of Corneliu Vadim Tudor's electorate among men is 2.2 percent higher than for the entire population.*

Moral conservatism is the defining feature of Corneliu Vadim Tudor's voters. The leader of PRM manages to a greater extent to attract the voting intention of those who think that pornography should be forbidden (15.6% of them would vote for him), that relations outside of marriage are immoral (15.3%), that homosexuality should be illegal (16.6%), that sexuality is not important (17.8%), or that religion classes should be mandatory (14.9%). The picture is complete with ingredients such as a patriarchal and intolerant – without ethnic orientation – vision and communist nostalgia: the president of the Great Romania party would be supported to a greater extent by those who support that military service should be mandatory (19.1%), who would reject as neighbours people with AIDS (17.3%) or homosexuals (16.1%) or who believe that communism was a good idea that was well applied (24.8%). It must be stressed that the morally conservative portrait of Corneliu Vadim Tudor's electorate is caused in a significant measure by the fact that it overlaps with an older age profile, as the average age of people who expressed their preference for the PRM leader is over 51.

The positive traits remarked most frequently about Corneliu Vadim Tudor refer to: **intelligent/cultivated** (7.2%), **direct/no-nonsense** (3.9%) and **good orator** (2.4%), but 21.7% of the respondents declared that they did not like anything about him and 45.6% did not give an answer. The negative traits that were mentioned most frequently about the president of PRM were **speaks a lot and rubbish/excessively talkative** (7.1%), **vulgar expression** (5.1%) or presumption of **insanity** (3.7%).

**Electorate structure for George (Gigi) Becali**

With an overall score of 10.5% voting intention, George Becali is probably the most interesting case of this analysis. The voting intentions for him are distributed much less uniformly among various social categories than in the previous cases. In other words, he manages to speculate in his favour the various social antagonisms, obtaining significantly higher scores "from one side than the other".

Following the socio-demographic features of his electorate, Gigi Becali is significantly more popular amongst young people (20.8% of them would vote for him), men (12,2%), people who have worked abroad at least once (24.2%), are unmarried (19.5%) and live in cities with 100,000 to

200,000 inhabitants (16.7%). Becali would also get 45% of the voting intentions of respondents who declared to be Roma nationals, but the significance of this conclusion is questioned by the small number of cases (respondents) that support it. If we were to identify a typical social category as voters for the PNG leader, it would be that of men aged between 18 and 34, of which 26.1% would vote for him. On the other hand, Gigi Becali is unpopular with persons over 55 (just 2.2% would vote for him) and women (8.6%).

If we were to search the attitudinal vectors that shape the voting intentions for Gigi Becali, they would be four: a chronic feeling of mistrust in state institution, TV coverage, moral liberalism and passion for football in general, and the club Steaua in particular. I will detail these preliminary conclusions next.

Mistrust in state institutions is far from being an isolated feeling, and converting this phenomenon into votes is natural for a politician/party from the opposition. However, the leader of PNG manages to consistently obtain a double or almost triple score (compared to the score with the entire population) among all categories whose mistrust in institutions has extreme values, bordering anarchism: 28.6% of those with very little or no trust in the army, 21.3% of those with very little or no trust in the presidency, 20.1% of those with very little or no trust in the police, 16.5% in the Government, 16% in justice, 15.5% in the Parliament. The portrait becomes more consistent as we speak of a prevailingly young electorate, the *new voters* – Becali is extremely popular amongst voters who did not have the right to vote in 2004 because of age reasons, whether it was round I (24.1% of those who did not have the right to vote in the first round would support Becali today) or round II (28.6%). Practically, among new voters, Gigi Becali is the second voting choice, surpassed only by president Traian Basescu.

| **Category of respondents** | **Vote for Becali within the category** | **Difference to the whole sample** |
|---|---|---|
| Men | 12.2% | +1.7 |
| Cities with 100,000 to 200,000 inhabitants | 16.7% | +6.2 |
| 18-34 years old | 20.8% | +10.3 |
| Very little/no trust in the army | 28.6% | +18.1 |
| Very little/no trust in the presidency | 21.3% | +10.8 |
| Get their political information from OTV | 32.1% | +21.6 |
| Get their political information from ProTV | 14.5% | +4.0 |
| Did not have the right to vote in the first round of | 24.1% | +13.6 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| the general elections of 2004 | | |
| Did not vote in the first round of the general elections of 2004 | 27.9% | +17.4 |
| Think that there should be only one political party | 16.3% | +5.8 |
| Go to church once a year or less often | 17.3% | +6.8 |
| Think that sexuality is very important | 23.6% | +13.1 |
| Think that pornography should not be forbidden | 13.2% | +2.7 |
| Love football very much | 16.6% | +6.1 |
| Supporters of Steaua Bucharest | 16.7% | +6.2 |
| Total sample | 10.5% | |
| Women | 8.6% | -1.9 |
| Pensioners | 3.9% | -6.6 |
| Over 55 | 2.2% | -8.3 |
| Get their political information from TVR 1 | 4.3% | -6.2 |
| Get their political information from Radio Romania Actualitati | 4.6% | -5.9 |
| Think there should be more than one political party | 6.7% | -3.8 |
| Voted in the first round of the general elections of 2004 | 8.2% | -2.3 |
| Think that faith/religion is very important | 8.7% | -1.8 |

**Table 6: Vote for Gigi Becali within various categories of respondents**

*Example of reading: Of the male respondents, 12,2% declared the intention to vote for Gigi Becali. The percentage of Gigi Becali voters among men is 1.7 percent higher than for the entire population.*

Moral liberalism is correlated to a great extent with the socio-demographic that we discussed above. Despite the approach centered on traditional Christian values promoted by Gigi Becali, the value profile of the social categories with which he is most popular is essentially incompatible with that approach. The leader of PNG is significantly more popular with social categories that are relaxed and somewhat detached from traditional values: go to church once a year or less (17.3% voting intention among them), never went to confession (15.4%), do not find sexual relations outside marriage immoral (13.8%), think that sexuality is very important (23.6%), do not believe that pornography should be forbidden (13.2%). We estimate that it is to be expected that, as the change of generations and, implicitly, of values is consolidated, the political model brought forward by Gigi Becali finds increased support in the categories of persons defined in this type of value profiles.

It has been written many times about Becali that he is a media product, in other words that his popularity is a reflection of over-representation, especially on TV. Our conclusion support this

view. Support for the leader of PNG is much stronger among respondents that get their political information mainly from ProTV (14.5% of them would give their vote to Becali) or OTV (32.1%), stations where Gigi Becali is a constant presence, being over presented in sports shows or talk shows. On the other hand, Becali is much less popular with those that choose TVR 1 or Radio Romania Actualitati as their main source of political information, the voting intentions for Becali in their case being 4.3% and 4.6%, respectively. Obviously, these findings should again be considered in the context of the socio-demographic and cultural profile of the typical watcher/listener of these stations.

Football is probably the most important image leverage for the leader of PNG. Football is a popular sport[8], and Becali successfully uses it to transmit an image of managerial competence, a dimension that is relevant – as we have shown in a previous sub-chapter – in the process of evaluating candidates for an executive political office.[9] From this point of view, football is a much better image vehicle than business, for instance. If success in business is hard to appreciate and ultimately uninteresting to most of the population, success in football is easier to communicate and more obvious for voters. Thus, Gigi Becali is more popular among those who love football very much (16.6% of them would vote for him), of those who have a very good opinion about the team Steaua Bucharest (16.9%) or declare to be supporters of Steaua (16.7%). Football does not seem to influence directly the voting intentions for Gigi Becali, but it is the lever that opens the door to politics for him and allows him to take position (sometimes implicitly, other times explicitly) in relation with various conflicts of values and attitudes that divide the Romanian society.

What do respondents appreciate the most about Gigi Becali? Answers are related mainly to the fact that he comes across as **giving/charitable** (22.1%), then **hearty/sympathetic** (8.2%) and **believer** (4%). These appreciations suggest additional dimensions worth investigating in relation with voters for the PNG leader, especially about charitable behavior. The negative traits mentioned most often about Gigi Becali are **lack of culture/no studies** (6.3%), **vulgar expression** (5.7%) and **boisterousness** (5.2%).

**Electorate structure for Mircea Geoana**

To speak of the electorate profile for Mircea Geoana is a real challenge, as the voting intentions for him (6.1%) are extremely evenly distributed across all social categories. Furthermore, the data tends to build Mircea Geoana the portrait of a *non-leader*, as he only marginally manages to mobilize

[8] Although not as popular as one might expect: only 35.1% of the respondents answered that they liked football much or very much.
[9] See also, for further details, Andrei Gheorghiță and Raluca Soreanu, „Mechanisms of Candidate Evaluation in Local Elections", in the *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2004.

social antagonisms or convert the dissatisfaction of population into voting intentions. The picture is complete with a few important findings. First of all, although he should be the electoral engine for his party, the leader of PSD obtains less than one third of the voting intentions for the party (6.3% of 20.3%). The situation is explainable to a certain extent by the unclear situation that exists in the leadership of the Social Democrat Party, as its voters are divided among at least three aspiring leaders of the party (Mircea Geoana, Adrian Nastase and Sorin Oprescu). However, voting options for Sorin Oprescu are still insignificant, and cumulated scores for Mircea Geoana and Adrian Nastase barely reach 10%.

Secondly, Mircea Geoana fails to be the first choice for presidential elections among PSD supporters. Mircea Geoana only gathers a third (33.3%) of the options of people who would vote for PSD in October 2006. The first choice for presidency among voters of the Social Democrat Party is, as we mentioned in the beginning of this text, Traian Basescu. It is at least surprising that 39.7% of the social-democrat voters would go with Traian Basescu for the presidential elections, given the fact that PSD defines itself as the "main opposition party".

Thirdly, Mircea Geoana manages to convert trust into voting intention to a very little extent. Only 63.6% of those who have very much trust in Mircea Geoana and only 15.9% of those who have much trust would vote for him for president. Furthermore, he only keeps 22.2% of the voters that declare that they voted for Adrian Nastase in the first round of the 2004 presidential elections.

Next, we will try to find the social categories among which the voting intentions for Mircea Geoana are higher than for the overall population. It must be noted that because of the small number of cases, our conclusions about the PSD leader's voters are not always as "strong" as those expressed for the previous leaders.

Socio-demographically, Mircea Geoana is significantly more popular among pensioners and persons over 55. In the first category, the voting intentions for the leader of PSD are 9.7%, and in the second 9.4%. At the intersection between the gender and age variables we can identify the socio-demographic category that typically provides the most consistent support for Mircea Geoana, that of men over 55, among which the voting intention is 12.9%.

From an attitudinal perspective, Geoana would obtain more votes from respondents that declare to be left wing (13.6%), those who believe that communism is a good idea that was well applied (9.6%), but also those who believe that the life of people in their settlement or the entire country is much worse than it was a year ago (18.2% and 12.8%, respectively). The leader of PSD is

significantly less popular with respondents that consider that communism was not a good idea (only 4.2% of them would vote for him), those who declare to be ideologically on the right wing (3.2%) or those who support that priests should not influence political decisions (5.2%).

| Category of respondents | Vote for Geoana within the category | Difference to the total sample |
|---|---|---|
| Over 55 | 9.4% | +3.3 |
| Male over 55 | 12.9% | +6.8 |
| Pensioners | 9.7% | +3.6 |
| Think that communism was a good idea that was well applied | 9.6% | +3.5 |
| Think that the life of people in their settlement is much worse than it was a year ago | 18.2% | +12.1 |
| Have voted with Adrian Nastase in the first round of the 2004 presidential elections | 22.2% | +16.1 |
| Left wing (1-3) | 13.6% | +7.5 |
| Entire sample | 6.1% | |
| Think that the country is headed in a good direction | 4.7% | -1.4 |
| Think that communism is not a good idea | 4.2% | -1.9 |
| Think that priests should not influence political decisions | 5.2% | -0.9 |
| Right wing (7-10) | 3.2% | -2.9 |

**Table 7: Vote for Mircea Geoana within various categories of respondents**

*Example of reading: Of the respondents above 55, 9.4% have declared the intention to vote for Mircea Geoana. The percentage of Mircea Geoana voters among persons above 55 is 3.3 percent higher than for the entire population.*

When asked about the traits that they appreciate most about Mircea Geoana, POB respondents mentioned most often the following three positive traits: **diplomat** (4.9%), **intelligent/cultivated** (2.7%) and **good politician** (2.7%). The negative traits mentioned most often about the leader of PSD are: **liar** (1.8%), **arrogant/self-conceited** (1.7%), **too calm/dull** (1,5%) and **does nothing for the country** (1.5%).

# From “Father State” to “Father Becali”

**Mircea Comsa**

In the general elections of 2004 for the presidential office, the candidate Gigi Becali obtained 184,560 votes at national level, i.e. 1.8% of the total validly expressed votes. In 2006, all opinion polls credit Becali with 5% or even more of the voting options expressed at national level (% of those who indicated a candidate). How can this spectacular upward evolution be explained? What led to this mutation or, in other words, what fuelled the pro-Becali votes? We will attempt next to identify a few “vote ways” and the causes for which they took place, in order to explain Becali’s success. Before that, we shall analyze (in connection with Becali) the provenance of the new votes, the evolution of political indicators during the last two years and the structure of the electorate.

**Re-orientation of marginal electorates (2004-2006)**

In the general elections of 2004, Becali obtained 1.8% of the votes and Vadim 12.6%. Their votes added together meant a little over 14% of the total votes. In 2006, according to the POB data, if there would be elections next Sunday, 10% would vote for Becali and 13% for Vadim, i.e. 23% in total (% of the total of those who expressed a voting option). Given the fact that the two candidates have a similar profile on some aspects, we can consider that the electorate oriented towards easy and miraculous solutions served ready by a champion of justice and struggle against the mafia has increased overall, finding in Becali the catalyst. Where do these electorates (plural, because there are several, partially different by united by this “providential solution” feature) come from?

First of all, Becali has managed to conserve the votes he received in 2004, in that most of those who voted for him then would still vote for him. But, more importantly, Becali has managed to draw new votes from his main counter-candidates and convert a part of the non-voters or attract those who gained the right to vote (turned 18) in the mean time. The data shown below are only for indicative purposes, given the trend of voters to remember/declare that they voted for the winner even if they voted for someone else. As percentage of votes taken from the total of votes for a certain candidate in the general elections, Becali has around 10% of Vadim’s votes, 9% of Nastase ‘s votes and 7% of Basescu's. In absolute value, the most important “suppliers of votes” are Basescu (40%), Nastase (20%) and Vadim (10%).

Another source, not as important in quantity for the moment but with a potential for growth, consists of the votes of non-voters in 2004 and those of new voters. Although there are few cases in a regular sample, we consider that data stability (the analysis was replicated on another database) gives increased confidence to the conclusions. Of those who did not vote in the general elections of 2004, Becali has managed to attract around 8% (Basescu 14%, most would continue not to vote) and of those who did not have the right to vote in 2004, 13% (Basescu 28%). In both cases, Becali obtains proportionally much more votes compared with the other candidates (except Basescu).

## Notoriety, trust and voting intentions

Study data on the politician Becali are largely absent for the period 2004-2005. Only starting with 2006 such data appear more frequently (or start to be published). Between November 2005 and October 2006, Becali's notoriety has increased a little, from 88% to 95%. Most likely, in early 2005, he was known by less of the population (probably around 80%). During the same period, trust in Becali has increased a lot (from 20% to 28%) and mistrust has decreased slightly (from 68% to 64%). Voting intentions have an even more spectacular evolution: 1% in May 2005, 6% a year later and 10% in October 2006. Also in October 2006, the potential vote (the percentage of those who declare that it is very likely for them to vote for Becali) reaches 20%. Therefore, during the following period (a year) we can expect voting intentions for Becali to increase up to 20% at most. The different slope of trust and voting intentions signifies that Becali has managed to convert trust into votes in a very high extent. In other words, those that trusted only Becali have decided to give him their vote, and those who trusted Becali and other candidates (for whom they would vote or not) changed their option to Becali. Synthetically, at this moment, Becali's notoriety has reached its maximum limit, trust is around 30% and will probably increase a little in the future, voting intentions are around 10% set to increase during the following period, stabilizing around 10-15%. In short, we expect the process of conversion of trust into votes to continue (up to a probable, indicative threshold of 15%).

**Table 4 Evolution of certain political indicators for Gigi Becali**

| Indicator (%) | May 05 (POB-OSF) | Oct. 05 (CURS) | May 06 (POB-OSF) | Oct. 06 (POB-OSF) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| notoriety | - | 88 | 94 | 95 |
| trust (high + very high) | - | 20 | 26 | 28 |
| voting intention | 1 | 2 | 6 | 10 |
| potential vote (likely + very likely) | - | - | - | 20 |

## Electorate structure

The analysis of the electorate structure for a candidate is only possible if two prerequisites are met: (1) the volume of the investigated sample is sufficiently large and (2) the sample contains enough voters for that candidate. "Sufficiently large" can mean very different things according to the number of variables and answer classes according to which we are analyzing (and whether we want to consider several variables at the same time or not). When we look at the electorate of a candidate we can see it in two ways: (1) how he is voted within certain categories of population (for instance, what percentage of men vote for him) and (2) which is the share of a certain category in the total of voters (what percentage of the people who vote for him are men). Both types of analyses are useful and give us pieces of information that complement each other, so we shall use them both.

The study data indicate that preference for Becali is significantly higher for young men with medium studies at most and women of average age with medium studies at most.

**Table 5 Votes for Becali according to various socio-demographic groups (INSOMAR-MMT exit poll, November 2004, declared vote; POB-OSF, October 2006, declared voting intentions)**

| Gender | Age | Education | 2004 | 2006 | Preferred? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| male | 18 - 34 | max. 10 grades / vocational | **5** | **31** | **YES** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | **4** | **29** | **YES** |
| | | higher education | **6** | **25** | **YES** |
| | 35 - 54 | max. 10 grades / vocational | **3** | **16** | **YES** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 1 | **29** | **NS** |
| | | higher education | 1 | 9 | **NS** |
| | over 55 | max. 10 grades / vocational | 2 | 8 | **NS** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 1 | 5 | **NO** |
| | | higher education | 0 | 1 | **NO** |
| female | 18 - 34 | max. 10 grades / vocational | 0 | 0 | **NO** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 0 | 3 | **NO** |
| | | higher education | 1 | 0 | **NS** |
| | 35 - 54 | max. 10 grades / vocational | **2** | **21** | **YES** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | **3** | **23** | **YES** |
| | | higher education | **3** | 12 | **NS** |
| | over 55 | max. 10 grades / vocational | 1 | 0 | **NS** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 1 | 10 | **NS** |
| | | higher education | 1 | 10 | **NS** |
| Total voters | | | **2** | **10** | - |

**YES means that Becali obtains more votes among that electorate compared to his average on the entire electorate; DN shows that the difference is not statistically significant; NO means rejection.*

*** Example of reading: In 2006, 31% of the persons that met the conditions male, 18-34 and low education would vote for Becali.*

The fact that Becali is more popular among certain socio-demographic categories does not necessarily mean that these categories are the most important among pro-Becali voters. In order to determine the quantitatively relevant categories, we must look at the structure of Becali voters. This structure is shown in the following Table:

**Table 6 Electorate structure for Becali (INSOMAR-MMT Exit poll, November 2004, declared vote; POB-OSF, October 2006, declared voting intentions)**

| Socio-demographic variable | Category | **2004** | | | **2006** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Total voters | Becali voters | Difference | Total voters | Becali voters | Difference |
| Gender | Male | 55 | 69 | **+14** | 52 | 61 | **+9** |
| | Female | 45 | 31 | **-14** | 48 | 39 | **-9** |
| Age | 18-34 | 32 | 67 | **+35** | 30 | 59 | **+29** |
| | 35-54 | 40 | 26 | **-14** | 38 | 34 | -4 |
| | 55+ | 28 | 7 | **-21** | 32 | 7 | **-25** |
| Education | Max. 8 grades | 22 | 15 | **-7** | 30 | 29 | -1 |
| | 10 grades | 24 | 26 | +2 | 27 | 32 | **+5** |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Secondary/post-secondary | 39 | 49 | **+10** | 35 | 34 | -1 |
| | Higher education | 15 | 10 | **-5** | 9 | 5 | **-4** |
| Type of settlement | Urban large | 33 | 36 | +3 | 33 | 37 | **+4** |
| | Urban small | 19 | 23 | +4 | 23 | 20 | -3 |
| | Rural | 48 | 41 | **-7** | 44 | 43 | -1 |

** Example of reading: In 2006, 61% of Becali's voters are men; the percentage of men in the total of voters is 52%; therefore men vote for Becali to a greater extent.*

According to this data, Becali is voted much more but men and young people (18-34) and somewhat more by people with 10 grades (or perhaps secondary school) and by people who live in large cities. He is "rejected" by women, persons over 34, persons with higher education. Most of the differences are found in the same data sets, which increases the validity of conclusions (even if data from 2006 is more recent, in the case of the 2004 data we had 710 subjects that voted for Becali while in 2006 only 102, a situation that prompted us to present both sets). Data regarding the income of the subjects was available only for 2006 but no significant differences from the average were found.

If we take into account the three socio-demographic variables concurrently, the conclusions do not change significantly (
Table 7). For Becali's electorate we find a clear over-representation of four groups of voters (who add up to 62% of Becali's voters):

- male, age up to 34 and with 10 grades at most (18%)
- male, age up to 34 and with secondary school (26%)
- female, age up to 34 and with 10 grades at most (7%)
- female, age up to 34 and with secondary school (11%)

**Table 7 Electorate structure for Becali according to three variables concurrently, compared to the structure of voters (INSOMAR-MMT Exit poll, November 2004, declared vote)**

| Gender | Age | Education | Total voters | Becali voters | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| male | 18 - 34 | max. 10 grades / vocational | 7 | 18 | **+11** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 8 | 26 | **+18** |
| | | higher education | 3 | 4 | +1 |
| | 35 - 54 | max. 10 grades / vocational | 10 | 7 | -3 |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 9 | 8 | -1 |
| | | higher education | 3 | 2 | -1 |
| | over 55 | max. 10 grades / vocational | 10 | 2 | **-8** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 4 | 1 | -3 |
| | | higher education | 2 | 1 | -1 |
| female | 18 - 34 | max. 10 grades / vocational | 4 | 7 | **+2** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 7 | 11 | **+4** |
| | | higher education | 3 | 1 | -2 |
| | 35 - 54 | max. 10 grades / vocational | 8 | 5 | -3 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 8 | 3 | -5 |
| | | higher education | 3 | 1 | -2 |
| | over 55 | max. 10 grades / vocational | 8 | 2 | **-5** |
| | | secondary/post-secondary | 3 | 1 | -3 |
| | | higher education | 1 | 1 | -1 |
| Total | | | 100 | 100 | 0 |

*** Example of reading: Of the total voters for Becali, approximately 18% are male aged 18-34 and with low education.*

On the other hand, significant contributions to Becali's electorate are brought by persons (male or female) aged between 35 and 54, with medium studies at most (another 23% overall). Repeating the analysis on more recent data (POB-OSF, October 2006) supports the previous findings (although the number of available cases is much lower and the values are only indicative), the percentage of the segments being the following (57% overall):

- male, age up to 34 and with 10 grades at most (23%)
- male, age up to 34 and with secondary school (15%)
- female, age up to 34 and with 10 grades at most (11%)
- female, age up to 34 and with secondary school (8%)

In addition to these categories, there are a few smaller segments of voters, i.e. male and female between 35 and 54 years old with medium studies at most (another 33% overall) and elderly women with primary school at most (approximately 4%).

The conclusion of these analyses is that there are several electorates for Becali, electorates that have similarities but also differences (most likely not only in terms of age and education). Consequently (as will be seen later) we expect Becali's public political message to be focused around two or three main subjects, addressing mainly young people with medium studies at most and with specific accents for secondary voter categories. The fundamental condition for these messages is that they need to be easy to decode (given the level of education of Becali's voters, medium at most).

### Direction of the country and personal living standard

An important dimension according to which the population gives the vote or not is at individual (family) level by the satisfaction with the living standard, its evolution during the last period and the expected future evolution, and at national level by the evaluation of the direction in which the country is headed and of the evolution of the economy and of the government actions.

**Table 8 Relationship between voting for Becali and evaluating the direction of the country and personal living standard**

| Evaluation | Total voters | Becali voters | Percentage of Becali voters |
|---|---|---|---|
| the country is headed in the wrong direction | 45 | 51 | 12 |
| not at all satisfied with their life | 19 | 23 | 13 |
| not at all satisfied with their money | 38 | 43 | 12 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| their current life is worse than one year ago | 28 | 33 | 12 |
| believe that they will live worse a year from now | 26 | 32 | 13 |
| believe that the economy is worse than two years ago | 28 | 39 | 15 |
| believe that the economy will be worse two years from now | 17 | 28 | 17 |

** Example of reading 1: Of those who vote for Becali, 51% consider that the country is headed in the wrong direction; the average voter has this opinion at 45%; therefore Becali's voters have this opinion to a greater extent.*

*** Example of reading 2: Those who think that the country is headed in the wrong direction would vote for Becali at a percentage of 12%; for all voters votes for Becali are only 10%; therefore those who think that the country is headed in the wrong direction are more likely to vote for Becali.*

Regardless of the considered aspects, evaluations from Becali voters are relatively more negative. Thus, they consider, more than the other voters, that the country is headed in the wrong direction, they are unsatisfied with their living standard and money, their life has worsened during the last year, next year will be worse, the economy is worse than two years ago and will be worse two years from now. As expected Becali's electorate is relatively more dissatisfied with the government. However, this statement needs to be qualified:

- dissatisfaction is higher only with respect to housing, jobs, fighting corruption, justice and public order;
- dissatisfaction is similar with respect to education, health and agriculture.

This situation is explained by the "youthfulness" of Becali's voters. Younger persons who form a large part of this electorate have higher expectations and needs about the first category (looking for a job, a house, and the difficulties they face make them more sensitive to corruption, public order and justice) and less interested in the second (do not work in the agriculture, are healthy, no longer have a relation with the school).

**Communist heritage (past)**

Even if a large part (around 60%) of Becali's electorate have turned 18 after 1990, the rest have lived during the communist period. For this category, one of the sources of the pro-Becali vote lies in the communist heritage. We are talking about the perpetuation in the current social space of values, attitudes and opinions (ideological orientations) that are specific to communism and find an expression outlet in Becali. Of course, they only affect to a greater extent certain segments of the population. These are somewhat older persons, with medium studies at most, traditionalists, who have lost relatively or absolutely from the transition to democracy and market economy, persons who blame their failures on the society (external "control locus"), more exactly on the corruption of leaders or more generally the society in which they live. Two of such "roots" are analyzed here: the desired number of parties and evaluation of communism (Table 9, Table 10). Both sides have two types of data shown: how Becali voters answer these questions versus all respondents and what is the percentage of Becali voters among each category of response versus the total population. Both types of data lead to similar conclusions:

- ❖ Compared to the average of the population, Becali voters prefer that Romania should have either one party or two at most (one in power and one in opposition) and believe less that there is need for more parties (24% compared to 34%);
- ❖ Those who are in favor of one party or none vote more for Becali, compared with the total of voters; those who are in favor of more parties vote relatively less for Becali (7% compared to 10%);
- ❖ Becali voters think more than the total of voters that communist ideology was a good idea, well applied (17% compared to 12%), and less that it was not a good idea (28% compared to 34%);
- ❖ Those who think that communist ideology was a good idea, well applied vote more for Becali (14% compared to 10% of the total subjects).

**Table 9 Relationship between vote for Becali and the desired number of parties (%)**

| Do you think that it would be better for Romania ... ? (%) | Total voters | Becali voters | Percentage of those who vote for Becali |
|---|---|---|---|
| To have several political parties | 34 | 24 | 7 |
| To have only two political parties, one in power and one in the opposition | 34 | 43 | 12 |
| To have only one political party | 14 | 22 | 16 |
| To have no political parties | 3 | 4 | 22 |
| DN | 13 | 7 | - |
| NA | 1 | 0 | - |
| Total (population) | 100 | 100 | **10** |

** Example of reading 1: Of those who vote for Becali, 22% think that only one political party should exist in Romania; at national level, only 12% have this opinion; therefore voters of Becali are more in favor of a single party.*

*** Example of reading 2: Those who think that there should be no political parties vote for Becali in a percentage of 22%; at the level of all voters votes for Becali are only 10%; therefore those who are against the existence of political parties tend to vote more for Becali.*

Even if they are more favorable, compared to the average of the population, to the single party solution, most of Becali's electorate are in favor of multiple parties and through this in favor of a democratic government. However, this electorate wants a less complicated political space, consisting of only two parties that alternate in power. Most likely, this need has three important sources: (1) the need to simplify the political space to increase the degree of information without too much effort (interest for politics is lower among voters of Becali, also due to over-representation of young people), (2) the need for order and tightly linked to it (3) clarity of functions and accountabilities in the political and administrative leadership.

**Table 10 Relationship between vote for Becali and evaluation of communism (%)**

| In your opinion, communism...? (%) | Total voters | Becali voters | Percentage of those who vote for Becali |
|---|---|---|---|
| is a good idea that was well applied | 12 | 17 | 14 |
| is a good idea that was badly applied | 42 | 41 | 10 |
| is not a good idea | 34 | 28 | 9 |
| DN | 11 | 14 | 19 |
| NA | 1 | 0 | - |
| Total (population) | 100 | 100 | **10** |

As we have anticipated before, the preference for the old system is found more among older voters of Becali, as shown by the following figures:

- 74% of the voters with aged 35 to 54 prefer a system with two or more parties (54% two parties, 20% more) while only 43% of those over 55 have a similar preference (with net preference in favor of two parties);
- 60% of Becali voters aged over 34 consider that communism is a good idea that was badly applied (younger persons only 28%).

**Ideal president (present)**

Another reason for which Becali has grown in voting intentions is the resemblance between his profile and that of the ideal president. The chances of a candidate to become president are directly related with their closeness or remoteness from the ideal profile for a president that exists in the voters' minds. In the voters' opinions, the most important requirements for a president of Romania include the following, in order (POB-OSF, October 2006):

- to impose order and discipline;
- to fight corruption in Romania;
- to be a good organizer;
- to be a good Romanian;
- to believe in God;
- to be educated;
- to speak so that people understand.

To what extent does Becali's profile overlap this image of the ideal president? The data presented in this article shows that Becali fulfils to a great extent, at least in the perception of citizens, most of these requirements. Some suggestive data is shown below.

When asked an open question about what they like most about Gigi Becali, 60% of the subjects gave an answer. Of the tested candidates, only president Basescu has obtained characterizations from more respondents (67%). Therefore we can say that Becali's "image" has reached its goal, reaching the population more than the images of the other candidates.

The most frequent positive traits associated with Becali were **"giving, charitable nature"** (19% of the total population), **"hearty, sympathetic"** (7%) and **"believer"** (3%). All three are found among those found necessary by the population for a good president. Furthermore, the first two are equally distributed among population regardless of age (the believer trait appears more frequently for people over 34). Differences of image according to education are relatively higher (better image among those with 10 grades or secondary school), but the same traits are dominant regardless of the educational level (the percentage of the believer trait does not vary with education).

However, there are negative traits associated to Becali's image. Their percentages are somewhat lower, focusing on a few main aspects: **lack of studies** (6%), **vulgarity** (5%), **boisterousness** (5%), **arrogance** (4%), **excessive talking** (4%). The lack of studies is found in the list of the ideal president ("to be educated") which is a minus for Becali. On the other hand, what does "to be

educated" mean for a population of which 60% have graduated from secondary school at most? As expected, "lack of education" is a trait that is mentioned more by people with secondary school or higher education. The share of this segment in the total population is lower (approximately 40%) but it compensates with its vote attendance rate (higher than for less educated persons).

Compared to the other politicians, Becali has the lowest percentage of the total rejection segment (7%) i.e. the group of persons that declare that they do not like anything about him. Furthermore, the percentage of total supporters (declaring that they like everything) is relatively high (7%), Becali is second only to Basescu by this criterion, but very close to him.

The distribution of positive traits associated with Becali shows low dispersion compared with the other leaders, as the perceived image is focused on a few essential, well-defined elements, presented often in the public space and important for the population. For instance the trait "giving, charitable nature" mentioned by one out of five respondents (19% of the total population!) about Becali, is by far the most frequent trait (not even Basescu manages to have a labeling with the same frequency).

During the last years, in the eyes of the population, the main subjects of the national agenda (main issues that need to be addressed in Romania) obstinately include the following: jobs, prices, pensions, health and **corruption**. From one period to the next and under different contexts, politicians have focused on one or the other of these subjects. Thus, Traian Basescu won the second round of the 2004 general elections by focusing largely on the fight against corruption. Due to this public discourse, the population's expectations about "solving the problem of corruption" increased very much in early 2005. At the same time, a perception of reduced corruption increased due to alternation of power. As it was to be expected, things turned out rather poorly in this respect during the next period (in population perception), despite anti-corruption actions with high media coverage. While in May 2005 the percentage of those who perceived increased corruption compared to the beginning of the DA governing was only 9%, in October 2006 it reached 37% (Table 11), despite the fact that the population still has great expectations about a decrease in corruption (33% expect it to decrease, POB-OSF, October 2006).

**Table 11 Perceived evolution of corruption in Romania (POB-OSF)**

| Has corruption … (%) | May 05 | Oct. 05 | Oct. 06 |
|---|---|---|---|
| decreased | 23 | 16 | 13 |
| remained the same | 51 | 52 | 41 |
| increased | 9 | 22 | 37 |
| DN/NA | 17 | 11 | 10 |

What is the link between these changes in the perception of corruption and Becali's success? We think that it is rather simple and obvious. The high expectations produced by the DA Alliance and president Basescu about eradicating corruption, due to which they won the elections, have not been

satisfied during their first two years in power, and are now turning against them. The niche created by the **"fight against corruption"** can now be claimed by other actors, too. Thus we have a reorientation of the population to other politicians with greater credibility potential (also because they are "new") and who could solve this problem. It seems that the one that has taken over this the most is Becali (this against the background of over-saturation with Vadim's anti-corruption discourse). Data regarding the evaluation of corruption in Romania, segmented by voting intentions support this idea (
Table 12). Thus, compared with the average of the voters, Becali voters consider in a greater percentage that corruption is very widespread in Romania, that it has increased during the last two years and that it will keep increasing (the next two years).

**Table 12 Compared evaluations of corruption in Romania (POB-OSF)**

| Corruption evaluations (%) | Total voters | Becali voters | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Corruption is very widespread in Romania | 45 | 53 | **+8** |
| Corruption has increased during the last two years | 37 | 49 | **+12** |
| Corruption will increase during the next two years | 18 | 25 | **+7** |

## "Warrior of Light"

In societies where the State "does not exist" or is weak, there is a tendency to replace it in the social imaginary (symbolically speaking "brought to life", "personified") with certain exemplary figures, with mythological overtones of savior heroes. Despite a difference in concept (Iliescu competent and accommodating, Vadim justice-seeking and fair, Basescu popular and determined, Becali giving and sympathetic), all the actors that have had success in Romanian politics after 1990 have largely met this requirement.

Often in his television speeches Becali referred to himself as the **"warrior of light"**. What does this self-labeling mean? Its ramifications certainly seem to lead to religious aspects, support for the needy, fight for truth, against injustice and, why not, fight against corruption. Some of these features have been discussed before and others will be presented next.

One of the traits associated by the population with Becali is **religiousness**. This feature is underlined by him whenever he has the occasion. Given the fact that they prefer Becali, we would expect his voters to be more religious than the rest of the population. Surprisingly, this is not true (not in religious practice, not in religious belief). How is this explained. A possibility would be that Becali's message did not reach the voters, but this is rather unlikely. The explanation is much simpler and revealed by analyzing Becali's voters by age and religiousness. The data shows that approximately two thirds of them are young persons (under 34). As youth is associated with lower religiousness, the average religiousness of Becali's voters decreases. Indeed, the "believer" trait

associated with Becali comes 80% from persons above 34. The young structure of the electorate explains why in case of religious practice indicators (going to church) Becali's voters have lower values than the overall average of voters. Therefore, the message that aimed to transmit the image of a religious person has reached its target (it was aimed at the electoral segment over 34 years old).

Following the same type of analysis we can also identify other axes of Becali's image (indirectly, by means of the attitudes of his voters). Thus, Becali's voters are on average oriented towards a more **punitive** society (prohibiting homosexual relations, death penalty, imprisoning drug users). However, given the high percentage of young persons in Becali's electorate, sexual relations outside marriage are morally accepted in a relatively higher extent. The orientation **for authority and order** has somewhat less support in the data but it appears as a preference for public order at the expense of public freedoms. With respect to the **values** that children should learn, we found differences between Becali's voters and the average of the voters in just two situations. Thus, Becali's voters would choose more rarely as important values tolerance and respect for the others (the young segment is the main responsible for this difference), moderation and money saving (this does not necessarily mean that they are more intolerant or less moderate, although it can be true, but rather that these values are less important than the others).

**Table 13 Preference for certain values according to vote**

| Attitudinal-axiological orientation | Total voters | Becali voters | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| homosexuality should be illegal (% yes) | 63 | 72 | **+9** |
| drug users should be imprisoned (% yes) | 49 | 56 | **+7** |
| people who commit serious crimes should be punished by death (% yes) | 40 | 45 | **+5** |
| sexual relations outside marriage are immoral (% yes) | 59 | 51 | **-8** |
| things would be much better if everyone would always obey the authorities (total agreement) | 34 | 34 | 0 |
| keeping public order is more important than respecting individual freedom (total agreement) | 28 | 35 | **+7** |
| Romania needs a strong leader, to put order in the country (total agreement) | 60 | 61 | +1 |
| children should learn tolerance and respect for other persons (% yes) | 62 | 44 | **-18** |
| children should learn moderation and money saving (% yes) | 54 | 44 | **-10** |
| only he who risks wins (total agreement) | 30 | 44 | **+14** |

For Becali voters success in life is rather a matter of **luck and connections** and less of intelligence and education. Somehow along the same lines, completing this, almost half of them agree fully with the statement "only he who risks wins" (compared to 30% of the total voters).

**Table 14 Determinants of success in life by vote**

| What is important to have success in life? (%) | Total voters | Becali voters | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Work | 57 | 56 | -1 |
| Luck | 47 | 53 | **+6** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Faith | 29 | 29 | 0 |
| Connections | 20 | 26 | **+6** |
| Intelligence | 24 | 20 | **-4** |
| Education | 18 | 14 | **-4** |

**"The Way of Football"**

The media have often attributed Becali's growth (trust, voting intentions) to the successes of the Steaua football team. To what extent is this assumption correct? In other words, is there a connection between politics and football, does performance in sports or more widely performance in another field with a high impact on the masses impact success in politics? Examples for this appear more rarely in connection with sports but rather frequently in connection with acting (mostly in USA, though). To answer this question, we made a few analyses to see if Becali's voters have different attitudes and behaviors than the average voter in relation with football. The data obtained is shown in the next Table:

**Table 15 Different aspects related to football by vote**

| Aspect | Total voters | Becali voters | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| a perfect Sunday is spent with beer and barbeque | 51 | 60 | **+9** |
| a perfect Sunday is one with football/sport (watched or played) | 27 | 35 | **+8** |
| love football very much | 19 | 30 | **+11** |
| watch football at least a few times a week | 29 | 41 | **+12** |
| go at least a few times a year on a stadium to watch a football game | 15 | 28 | **+13** |
| think of themselves as supporters of a football teams | 51 | 60 | **+9** |
| are supporters of Steaua (% of those who are supporters of a team) | 63 | 85 | **+22** |
| have a very good opinion about Steaua | 31 | 50 | **+19** |
| the success of a football team is mainly due to the owner | 9 | 14 | **+5** |

The data is unequivocal on the existence of a link/association. Regardless of the considered indicator, Becali's voters are, compared to the average of all voters, more favorable to football in general (a perfect Sunday is one with beer, barbeque and football, love football very much, watch football often, go on a stadium, are supporters of a football team) and especially more pro-Steaua (supporters, very good opinion). Furthermore, they agree to a greater extent that the success of a team is due to its owner (Becali in this case).

On the other hand, the data does not show the causal direction (this must be induced). The order of events helps us here. Steaua's success precedes and only then accompanies Becali's growth in voting intentions. While in the autumn of 2005 Becali was voted by 2%, after Steaua's good performance in the Champions' League (autumn of 2005) and then in the UEFA Cup (spring of 2006), Becali reached 6%. His growth continued in the autumn of 2006 (10%), the link with sports performance being obvious (even if it only accounts for a part of his electoral success).

**A few conclusions**

- Voting intentions for Gigi Becali increased from almost 2% in the general elections of 2004 to approximately 10% now. Most of the growth occurred in 2006.
- The votes obtained in 2004 were almost all kept. The increase in voting intentions was achieved by converting the trust accumulated in 2005 and 2006.
- Approximately 60% of Becali's voters are persons under 34. The probability to vote for Becali is highest for young males with medium studies from large cities.
- The image of Becali as a candidate among voters is focused on a few simple, clearly defined traits, with major impact ("giving, charitable nature", "hearty, sympathetic", "believer").
- The main sources of votes for Becali gained by him during the period 2005-2006 can be summarised as follows: "communist heritage", "ideal president", "warrior of light", "the way of football".