

Positions: to the North or West?

Findings of public opinion surveys

(comparative data of repetitive research)

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In August 2016, **Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor**, involving the '**Advanced Public Research Group**' (**APR Group**) NGO, carried out a sociological survey in all the marzes (regions) of Armenia and capital Yerevan; one of the objectives of the survey was to find out the public position on Armenia's orientation to the North or West. The Survey was carried out among 1200 respondents (95% reliability, $\pm 2.8\%$ margin of error) by the method of semi-structured interviews using the CAPI techniques. The obtained data were compared with the findings of similar surveys carried out in the previous 2 years (2014 and 2015).

Below are the respondents' opinions on Armenia's desirable membership of international organizations: 41% believe that Armenia should join European organizations (EU), 25%: Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), 6%: both the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union, and 9% are against Armenia's joining any of those organizations.

As compared with the findings of the surveys carried out in the previous 2 years of research, a shift of preferences becomes clear. Thus, in 2014 and 2015, the number of proponents of Armenia's joining the EU made 25% and 24%, those of EEU: 38% and 36%, those of both the European Union and the EEU: 12% and 13%, and those against Armenia's joining any of the organization made 10% and 8%, respectively. The findings show a clear shift of preferences from the EEU to the European Union. The rate of the proponents of the European Union is the highest in the age group of 18-25 and among females.

By the way, note that the rate of the proponents of the European Union prevails regardless of the type of residence areas.

To find out whether the preferences for joining international organizations are well-grounded, the survey has revealed the respondents' opinions on the positions the member states of those organizations have on Armenia. The list of the countries with a friendly attitude to Armenia starts

with France (78.8%), followed by Russia (61.1%), Germany (53.8%), Greece (48.9%) and China (44.8%).

Among the countries with the most hostile attitude to Armenia are Azerbaijan (96.6%) and Turkey (91.3%). The estimate of the average results of perceptions on friendly and enemy states shows that positive perceptions on the member states of the European Union prevail, as compared to those of EEC (Russian Federation, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).

Interestingly, 39.3% of the respondents considering Russia a friendly country prefer joining the European Union, and 29.7% prefer joining the EEU.

The membership preferences were also considered in terms of the public expectations for the future of the country taking into account that today Armenia is an EEC member state. 72% of the respondents think that the situation in Armenia is getting worse and worse. The majority of the respondents pessimistic about Armenia's future spoke for Armenia's joining the European Union. The survey also considered the respondents' plans for migration. When asked whether they would permanently leave Armenia, if possible, 42% of the respondents answered "definitely yes" and 17% - "probably yes". Note that in 2014, 2015 and 2016, the rate of the respondents willing to emigrate tends to grow. The rate of those willing to emigrate is the highest among the proponents of joining the European Union.

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The views in the Survey are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the funding organization.