

LIESAP / Counterpart International, Inc.

Center for Strategic Studies and Reforms

Survey Research to Assess Public Acceptance of Possible Reforms in Social Assistance Targeting

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Contents

Abstract	3
Introduction.....	3
2. Population’s Assessment of Social and Economic Status in the State	7
3. Society’s Attitude towards Problem of Social Assistance to the Needy... 	14
4. Defects of Social Payments to the Population	16
5. Provision of Households with Electric Power as a Vital Social Service (Reliability, Price, Quality).....	18
6. Readiness of Population for Changes in the Social Assistance Program. The Most Preferable Criteria	22
7. Public Opinion on the Future Social and Economic Development of the State	25
Conclusions	40
Annex: Questionnaire “Public Attitude towards Social Assistance Reforms”	

Abstract

Republic of Moldova is a country that is reforming its social assistance (SA) system under hard budget constraints, unstable economic growth and poverty expansion. Since 2000 Moldova has accumulated three-year experience of operation of the Nominative Targeted Compensations (NTC) system based on principle of categories. It covers about 260 thou people in 11 categories (invalids, WWII participants, families with many children under 18, etc.). On the whole, the population regards NTC positively. The system is understandable to the people. It ensured more savings than the post-soviet system of privileges. At the same time, as the LIESAP/CISR have shown (December 2002 and April 2003), there are exclusion and inclusion errors in realization of the NTC program. This gives grounds to further reformation of the system. The given Survey Research was meant to reveal the public attitude towards possible reforms in this field, rather painful both for the population and the Government. 82.8% of the population think that SA is to be rendered based on needs; gradual transition from the category-based NTC to the needs-based SA is necessary (46.2%) and they are to be combined over a certain period of time (48.3%).

Introduction

The given work is a logical sequel of two previous LIESAP/CISR studies: *“Evaluation of Social Assistance to Population through the Nominative Targeted Compensations Program”* (October – December 2002) and *“Testing of the Unified Application Form and Exclusion Error of the Nominative Targeted Compensations Program”* (March – April 2003).

Based on results of the first study the main conclusion is that majority of the population evaluates the process of social assistance system reformation positively: refusal (since July 1, 2000) from the system of benefits introduced in soviet period (paid to circa 450 thou people – 37 categories – or 12% of Moldova’s population) and implementation of the system of targeted compensations (NTC) oriented at 11 categories of the population, mostly for payment of communal services and energy resources.

Most of 1200 NTC beneficiaries examined are satisfied both with order of setting categories (76.6%) and the way the National House of Social Insurance and Savings Bank territorial bodies deal with beneficiaries.

At the same time, there were flaws discovered: both “inclusion errors” (false invalids, old and new nomenclature, well-off families) and unjustified, from the point of view of social justice, differences in quintile distribution of compensations volume: 20% of the poorest households receive 4.5% of the total compensations, while 20% of best-off households – 39.2% of total compensations.

The second survey carried out on the basis of Cucuruzeni community (Orhei) as a common social totality (8 villages, 1,5 thou households, 4,5 thou inhabitants) was meant to provide for as thorough as possible evaluation of the welfare level of the community population, including NTC beneficiaries, discover main sources of their incomes and ways of expenditures, determine the “exclusion error” related to the NTC program. It was found that not every NTC beneficiary belongs to the poorest population. Average monetary income of 17.4% households receiving NTC is 1,8 times higher than monetary income of 62.9% households that do not receive NTC. It was established using the unified application form “Cerere pentru protectie sociala” as an instrument of thorough examination of the population

that the contingent with lower incomes (poverty zone) is much wider than the NTC beneficiaries' contingent.

Since the beginning of 2003 NTC program in the Republic of Moldova has covered 268 thousand persons or circa 10% of the country's households. There are about 14 million USD (54% of social budget funds) spent for these goals; mostly financed by foreign donors, including the European Commission, USAID and other.

Republic of Moldova is forced to reform the social assistance system under tough budget restrictions, under conditions of a slow recovering from economic depression and widening of the poverty zone.

The state budget draft for 2004 stipulates to assign 214,7 million MDL (about 15,0 million USD) for targeted compensations; this is at that sources of these means have not been determined yet. Meanwhile, according to estimate of the Department of Statistics and Sociology (July 2003), more than 78% of Moldova's population is found beyond the poverty line; 2/3 of them live in rural areas. Share of citizens whose incomes cover only a half of the subsistence wage (1220 MDL or 87,5 USD) is 42.2% (July 2003).

Under such difficult conditions the Parliament and Government is inevitably encountering the task to narrow gradually the sphere of utilization of the category-based social assistance that leads to inclusion and exclusion errors – “assistance is rendered to the wrong ones”, “assistance is not rendered to those who really need it”; and little by little, over the nearest 2-3 years, create legal, economic and organizational prerequisites for transition to the social assistance system based on needs, trustworthy evaluation of subsistence means, income and assets of candidates for NTC.

Is the Government ready for these changes? Its position will mainly depend on readiness of the population to such changes.

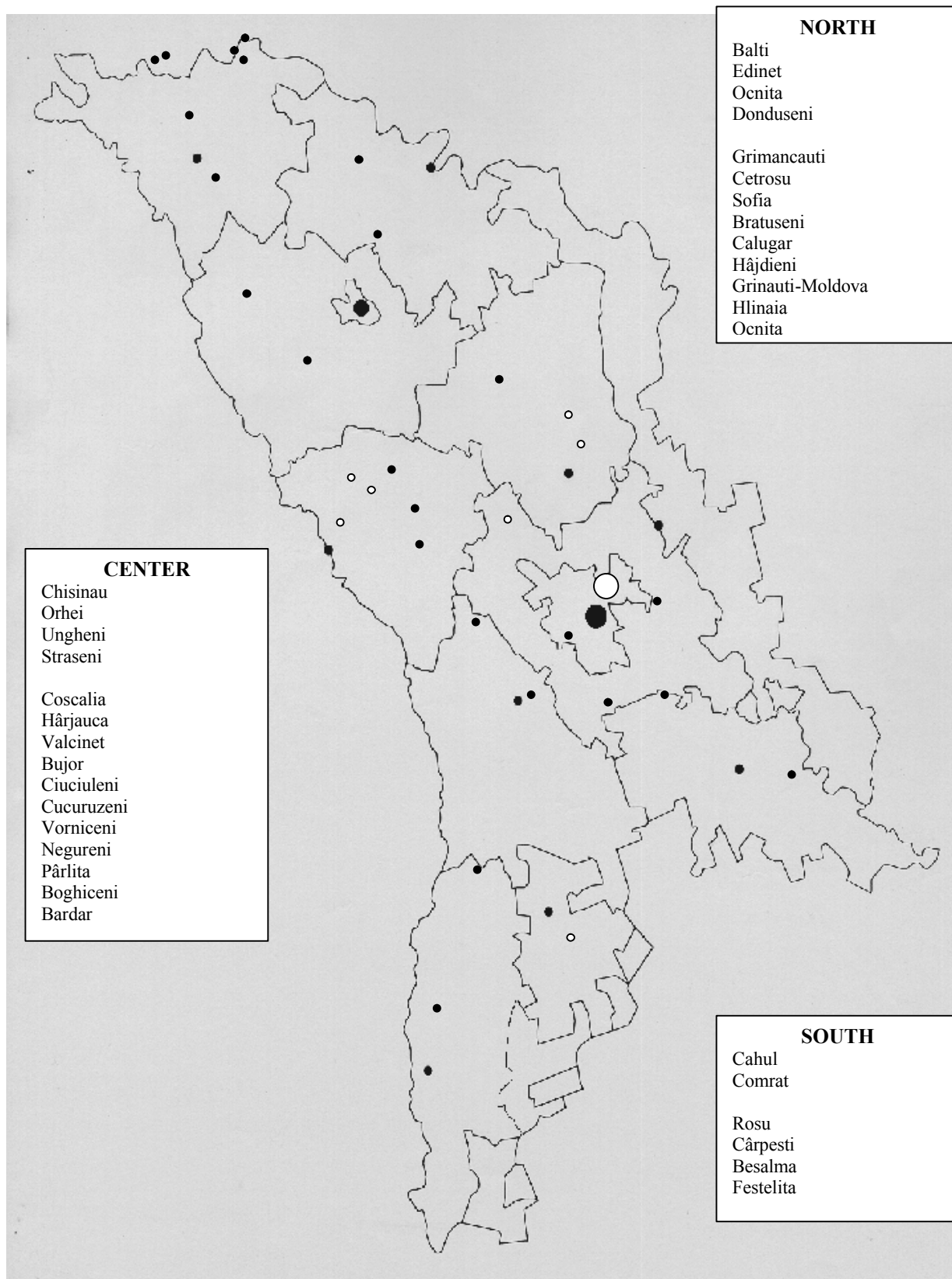
And it is examination of public opinion on eventual directions and rates of further improvement of Moldova's social assistance system that the current survey was meant for. The idea of such work belongs to the LIESAP (*Terry T. Campo, John Maxwell*). They also proposed structure and contents of the questionnaire “Public Attitude towards Social Assistance Reforms”.

The survey was carried out by the non-governmental organization – Center for Strategic Studies and Reforms (CISR) in association with the Department of Statistics and Sociology.

Terms of execution were July – August 2003. The examination covered 36 settlements in Moldova, including municipalities of Chisinau and Baltsi, 8 small towns (Orhei, Ungheni, Edinets, Dondiuseni, Ocnitsa, Straseni, Comrat and Cahul) and 26 villages of northern, central and southern regions of the country.

Executors are Anatol Gudim, Anatol Bucatca, Andrei Tsurcan (CISR), Yuri Brinister (LIESAP), Valentin Tsurcan and Ion Jigau (Moldovan State University), Tatiana Sobcovschi (Department of Statistics and Sociology).

Geography of Sample



Municipalities – 2 (Chisinau, Balti)

Towns – 8

Villages – 26

? localities included into the sample

? localities where control was performed

1. Methodology and Organization of the Survey Research

The survey of the population's attitude towards social assistance reforms was carried out based on random totality formed by the Department of Statistics and Sociology for periodic examination of households (monthly, quarterly – about 1,5 thou households and yearly – 6 thou households).

The sample construction basis was the 1996 president elections database. The sample model that was realized is a stratified sample formed based on the territorial principle. As a result of this approach there were 3 territorial zones of the country included into the sample: North, Center and South.

At the first stage, there were determined primary sample units (PSU) – electoral districts. In total, there were formed 1091 electoral districts in the Republic of Moldova.

Further, the sample was distributed based on type of settlement - “urban - rural”:

- Chisinau – municipality;
- Baltsi – municipality;
- small towns;
- rural settlements.

Stratification was realized with a view to reduce the evaluation error.

At the second stage, selection of PSU in every stratum was done through random lottery and, as a result, 36 settlements were selected (*see the Geography of Sample Scheme*).

At the third stage, as regards every settlement there was random selection of 2000 households based on the electoral register.

The fourth stage included selection of respondents. In households consisting of more than one person living there permanently, the one whose birthday was the latest as of date of the interview was chosen.

Methodology of sample used in the survey research allows obtaining representative characteristics related to the matter in question quite well.

The representation error does not exceed $\pm 3\%$.

The opinion poll was carried out by 45 interviewers of the Department of Statistics and Sociology under the direction of Tatiana Sobcovschi. The poll was preceded by workshop for interviewers and coordinators (who supervised the process).

Method of interview was standardized interview based on the Questionnaire consisting of 61 questions (of which 57 were closed and 4 were open).

The interview was realized at respondents' domiciles, in an environment usual to them, in their native language – Moldovan/Romanian or Russian at their request.

Control of data of the poll was done in two stages: visual control of accuracy of questionnaire carried out in presence of interviewers (? . Sobcovschi) and verification of interviewers' work

with respondents on the field. There were 15% questionnaires verified out of the total of 1803 (A. Bucatca and R. Gudim).

Data processing was done using the SPSS software by the programming group under the direction of Ion Jigau.

Work organization. The Survey Research was performed by the CISR working group in close collaboration with the Counterpart/LIESAP team (*Terry T. Campo*). Moreover, contacts were kept with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (*Sergiu Sainciuc*) and Department of Statistics and Sociology (*Tatiana Sobcovschi*). It was carried out by a) CISR working team assigned to work out methodology of the research, b) unit of field work coordinators and on-field operator-interviewers, c) programming and data processing group and d) creative teamwork for preparation of preliminary and final versions of the Report.

2. Population's Assessment of Social and Economic Status in the State

2.1. The Population Self-Assessment of Economic Status in State

Economic status in Moldova is the sphere of social life that underwent the most disastrous changes after 1991. The economic level of the major part of the population has decreased drastically. Only some of the members of state machine, business and a number of other areas turned out to be in a better position. Respondents' estimates identify a dramatic economic stratification of a once mainly economically homogeneous society.

Table 1

Assessment of Economic Status of Majority of Population of Moldova

<i>How would you estimate the economic status of the majority of Moldovan population today?</i>	<i>%</i>
Very good	0,2
Good	3,9
Satisfactory	36,2
Bad	48,1
Very bad	10,5
I do not know / No answer	1,1
Total	100,0

Apparently, in the public opinion, economic status of the majority of the population is very polarized. The minority (4.1%) of those who live well and very well is at one pole and the majority of those who live poorly and very poorly – 58.6% is at the other. Between two poles there is an intermediate group (36.2%) of those whose economic status, in the opinion of the respondents, is satisfactory.

Thus, people's ideas about the economic status of other people show a society where economic inequality prevails. The majority has nothing or almost nothing while the minority has everything or almost everything. The middle stratum exists but however does not prevail yet.

At the same time the assessment of economic status of the population of the state would be inadequate if one proceeds only from an assessment of "the others". For adequate

representation those data should be compared with the findings received by the method of self-assessment of the economic status of one's own household.

2.1. Assessment of Economic Status of One's Own Household

It was expected that self-assessment of some respondents would shift estimates of economic status from the lowest towards the higher part of a rating scale a bit due to self-esteem.

Table 2

<i>If your family were discussed, how would you characterize the economic status of your own household?</i>	%
Very good	0,5
Good	4,9
Satisfactory	53,6
Bad	34,1
Very bad	6,8
I do not know / No answer	0,1
Total	100,0

As evident from the table the findings confirm the above-mentioned assumption: the group that has good and very good economic status increased by 1.4%. The group with satisfactory economic status increased by 17.4%. The third group decreased by 17.7%. And the group of those who did not have an answer almost disappeared.

Comparing both tables we can make a better estimate of size of all three groups. The upper group has not changed greatly: its weight in the fabric of society varies from 4.1% to 5.4%. As for the middle and lower groups it can be assumed that their weight is a bit heavier than it was in the first case and a bit lighter than in the second one, - somewhere from 36.2% up to 53.6%.

The same situation is in the lower part of the scale: the number of households with poor and very poor economic status also lies within estimates of 58.6% and 40.9%.

2.3. Integral Assessment of Life in comparison with the period before 1991

Integral estimate of life includes assessment of all its facets: material, spiritual, political, social and economic without focusing on one separate aspect.

Table 3

Estimate of Family Life in comparison with Period before Independence (1991)	
<i>Considering your family and yourself and taking into account all the factors could you say that in comparison with period before independence you live:</i>	%
Better	17,0
Worse	66,0
The same	15,7
I do not know / No answer	1,3
Total	100,0

In the Republic of Moldova the life before 1991 though separated from the present by twelve years is still of vital importance. It is the past that the major part of the population whose years of discretion fell on the period before 1991 compares their today's life with. For the

present a small part of active population reckons their life not from the past but from the present without a 'backward glance' to that past.

If we compare the present with the past we will see that the major part of the population – 66.0% live worse. 15.7% - the same way. And only 17.0% of the families live better today than before 1991.

Evidently, positive changes touched a smaller part of the population. This is obviously not enough for the society to consider the changes that took place to be positive. All the more, the other part of the population has not noticed any turns for the better or for the worse.

2.4. Character of Use of Extra Income at 1000 MDL per year

Table 4

<i>What would you do if you had extra income at 1000 MDL per year?</i>	<i>%</i>
Spend it on food	55,2
Spend it partially on clothing, household goods, repair of the house / apartment	49,4
Spend it on medical treatment	49,1
Spend it for payment of public utilities	29,2
Change it into foreign currency	1,8
Deposit it in a bank at interest	3,6
I do not know / No answer	0,4
Total	188,7

From 49.1% to 55.2% of the population would spend extra income to satisfy their primary needs: food, clothing (home), and health. Needs satisfaction of this group has dropped down to a critical level for the last decade.

The production of prime foodstuff has fallen many times in the state during the decade. Import of food has increased. A network of grocery stores has widened which creates illusions of adequate foodstuff provision. Though, this is a mistaken belief: the majority of the population simply cannot afford to buy the necessary number of products because of their exorbitant prices.

The same situation appears with clothing and household appliances. The major part of the population either wear clothes out or use household appliances that were bought in Soviet time or buy them at relatively low prices in the second-hand markets.

When ill the population turns to medical assistance only in case of emergency if a real danger to life appears. Preventive consultation in healthcare institutions is beyond reach for the major part of the population.

Payment of public utilities is not included in the number of essential expenses only because of the following reason: most people prefer to use public utilities "on credit". The payment is put off till a later date or for the indefinite future.

2.5. Character of Expenses Decrease in case of Income Reduction by 1000 MDL per year.

Table 5

<i>What expenses would you have to reduce if your income decreased by 1000 MDL per year?</i>	%
Food	31,0
Public utilities payment	23,6
Medical treatment	10,0
Clothing, household goods, repair of house / apartment	70,8
Money to put aside 'for a rainy day'	16,6
I do not know / No answer	5,6
Total	157,6

Should income reduce, first of all, the population would prefer to keep expenses for clothing, household goods, repair of house / apartment – 70.8%. Every third person (31.3%) would reduce expenses for food. It is interesting that almost every fourth person would prefer to put off payment for public utilities – 23.6%. Expenses for treatment would be reduced only by 10.0% of the families.

Part of the population (16.6%) would decrease savings. Apparently, this part of families in Moldova can be referred to 'a third class'. Level of income of Moldovan middle class can be estimated in this case as rather low if the reduction of income by 1000 MDL per year impels to decrease savings.

2.6. The Population's Ways of Money Deposit

According to the survey findings most people, or almost half of the families, - 43.0% are able to put some money aside 'for a rainy day' in spite of the poverty. For some people this is their 'extra' money and for the others this is a result of saving of their daily expenses.

The population mainly applies the following three ways of deposit of their savings:

Table 6

Ways of Available Savings Deposit

<i>What way of money deposit do you prefer?</i>	%
Hiding it somewhere	46,6
To deposit it in a bank to a saving account	23,0
Invest it into a business / Lend to somebody	19,6
I do not know / No answer	10,8
Total	100,0

Main way of deposit of savings, 'to hide them somewhere', is applied by almost half of the population, - 46.6%. Money owners do not get any income from it and what is more the savings inevitably devalue. It is often that such way of keeping leads to their loss through fire, theft, etc.

The reason that the population prefer to hold money 'under a pillow' – is that people do not trust commercial banks and the state investment market is not developed yet.

Owing to this fact only 23.0% of the population that have savings keep the money on saving accounts, and just 19.6% invest and lend it.

2.7. Migration as a Way out of Poverty

Migration from the Republic of Moldova to other countries pervaded on a broad scale during the last decade. However, qualitative determination of migration makes from 200 up to 600 thousand persons by various estimates.

The following table includes information about the share of households in which some of its members went abroad for search of a job:

Table 7

Share of Households with Migrants	
<i>Has anybody from the members of your household gone abroad in search of a job?</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	22,2%
No	77,5
I do not know / No answer	0,3
Total	100,0

In 22.2% of households there are members who went abroad for search of a job. This means that every fifth household (or family) has labor migrants.

It is often when, for search of a job, the whole family including children goes abroad - in such cases information about them is not available. So we can assume that in this country the share of families-migrants in the total number of households is greater. Part of these families will never come back to Moldova.

2.8. Employers in the mind's eye of the Population

Attitude towards the employers is defined by two issues: on one hand, by a certain belief about employers as exploiters which was formed during 50 years of socialism and, on the other hand, by the fact that they often save on employees' salaries and conditions of work.

Table 8

Are Employers Greedy?	
<i>Employers are too greedy</i>	<i>%</i>
Agree	82,2
I do not agree	7,7
I do not know / No answer	10,1
Total	100,0

Thus, it is no wonder that 82.2% of the population consider employers to be greedy. The number of those who disagree with this statement is so small (7.7%) that employers' image in the public opinion could be considered negative.

2.9. Assessment of Corruption of State Machinery

Almost every adult in the country has to contact with employees of public services in order to settle different social, economic and everyday issues. The majority of the population – 90.6% considers public service employees to be bribe-takers.

Table 9

Assessment of Corruption and Bribery of Public Service Employees

<i>Many employees of public services are corrupt and take bribes</i>	%
I agree, it is true for the most of them	53,9
I agree, it is true for some of them	36,7
I do not agree	2,8
I do not know / No answer	6,6
Total	100,0

More than half of the population (53.9%) believes that most officials are bribable. Every third person considers that only some of the officials are contaminated by this social disease. Only 2.8% of the interviewed disagree with this opinion.

2.10. Poverty and Humanitarian Aid

The majority of the population shares the opinion that the state is poor. This is even more important because Moldova was considered to be one of the most well-to-do republics of the USSR only a decade ago. Under present conditions the Republic of Moldova turned into a steady recipient of social assistance from a number of foreign countries and organizations. The majority of the population is aware that foreign countries and international organizations aid Moldova.

Table 10

Share of Respondents who are Aware of Assistance from Foreign Countries and Organization to the Population of Moldova

<i>Are you aware that foreign countries and organizations aid the population of Moldova by sending humanitarian assistance?</i>	%
Yes	83,1
No	10,8
I do not know / No answer	6,1
Total	100,0

In accordance with the data of the survey 83.1% of the population are aware that the Republic of Moldova turned into a recipient of foreign humanitarian assistance. However every tenth inhabitant (10.8%) does not know anything about such aid. Insignificant part of respondents refused to answer this question for some reason or other.

Table 11

Countries that Render Moldova Humanitarian Assistance

<i>Country-Donor</i>	%
USA	62,3
EU	0,3
Germany	26,8
France	5,3
Russia	5,1
China	5,0
Romania	4,7
The Netherlands	4,5
Italy	3,4
Israel	1,7
Turkey	1,5
Great Britain	1,2
Japan	1,2
Spain	0,6
Canada	0,6

Belgium	0,4
Ukraine	0,3
Switzerland	0,3
Austria	0,2
Greece	0,2
Poland	0,2
Sweden	0,2
Ireland	0,17
Bulgaria	0,1
Norway	0,1
Byelorussia	0,05
Kazakhstan	0,05
Finland	0,05
I do not know	10,3
Total	147,12 ¹

In respondents' opinion there are 28 countries altogether that render humanitarian assistance to the Republic of Moldova.

The respondents consider USA to be the main country-donor that renders humanitarian assistance to the Republic of Moldova – 62.3% mentioned this country. Germany is next – 26.8%, then France – 5.3% and Holland – 4.5%. The EU was mentioned only by 0.3% of the respondents.

The neighboring countries Romania and Ukraine are also among those that send humanitarian assistance to Moldova. However, in respondents' opinion, the former USSR republics share in humanitarian assistance is insignificant: only 5.5% believe that they aid Moldova.

Only 4.5% of the respondents consider that Moldova gets help from Romania. However, taking into account historic and cultural ties that connect both countries one would expect higher estimates.

It is necessary to take into account that this is a public assessment but not a real share of the countries that participate in rendering humanitarian aid to the Republic of Moldova.

Religious groups are also among the donors providing humanitarian aid for Moldova. However 86.8% are not aware of this aid.

Table 12

Religious group that render humanitarian assistance to the population of Moldova

	%
Baptists (Evangelists)	9,0
Jehovah's Witnesses	3,5
Pentecostals	0,3
Catholics	0,2
Orthodox Church	0,1
I do not know	86,8
Total	100,0

Approximately every tenth respondent (9.0%) considers that humanitarian aid is rendered to Moldova by Baptists-Evangelists. 3.5% - by Jehovah's Witnesses. The remaining four religious groups got 0.7% of votes altogether.

¹ The sum exceeds 100% as respondents could mark 3 countries

The population lacks information about the participation of NGOs in rendering assistance as well: 83.9% of respondents are not aware of such aid.

Table 13

Non-governmental organizations that render humanitarian assistance to the population of Moldova

<i>NGO</i>	<i>%</i>
Red Cross	7,4
Little Samaritan	3,7
Salvation Army	1,6
Peace Corps	1,2
Soros Foundation	0,8
UNICEF	0,4
Sohnut	0,2
UNESCO	0,2
UNO	0,1
DFID	0,1
FISM	0,1
FMI	0,1
Doctors without Frontiers	0,1
Save the Children	0,1
I do not know / No answer	83,9
Total	100,0

Respondents included the following organizations that render humanitarian assistance to Moldova's population: Red Cross, Little Samaritan, the Salvation Army and Peace Corps. However for instance only 0.8% of respondents are aware of assistance rendered to Moldova by G. Soros Foundation. Apparently, the matter is that this foundation's activity mainly touches intellectual elite that, besides, lives in towns.

3. Society's Attitude towards Problem of Social Assistance to the Needy

In the republic rendering of social assistance is realized by tackling two issues: *how much* and *to whom*? In the situation of the Republic of Moldova the first problem is quite easily settled: how much? - up to the amount that can be allocated by the state for these needs. And it cannot afford allocating a lot because of its poverty. The second problem is more difficult. It is rather *social* than a financial issue. In other words it is necessary to determine *who* that needy one is. There are various methodological approaches that can be applied for this purpose.

At the same time it is very important to study the population's opinion on this matter. This approach is of interest for us first of all because both those who *receive* assistance (or are in need of it) and those at whose expense the state provides social assistance i.e. taxpayers take part in the assessment.

One of possible methods to find out opinion of both groups of the population about their needs is a method of assessment. This study applies the method of assessment in two aspects: a) *self-assessment* of need of social assistance and b) *assessment* of an extent of needs of others.

3.1. Determination of the Number of Needy of Social Assistance by Method of Self-Assessment

According to the household survey findings, three fourth of the population (75.4%) of the Republic of Moldova at the age of 18 and older said that they were in need of social assistance. These findings are quite close to the estimates of the Ministry of Economy and Department of Statistics and Sociology that state that 80% of the population of Moldova lives below the poverty line.

Table 14

Assessment of Need of Social Assistance

<i>Which of the following statements corresponds with your opinion about the state system of social assistance?</i>	<i>%</i>
I think I am in need of social assistance	48,9
I think I deserve social assistance	26,5
I think I get along without social assistance quite well	21,8
I do not know / No answer	2,8

Almost half of the respondents (48.9%) said that they need social assistance. Apparently, low standards of welfare of this group of the respondents serve as a basis for positive self-assessment of their need of social aid.

Another part - 26.5% - is not only in need but believes in deserving such assistance from the side of the state considering the state to be their debtor.

Relatively small part of the population does not expect the state to help them: **only** every fourth resident of Moldova either can dispense with social assistance (21.8%) or finds difficulty in determination whether they are in need of this assistance (2.8%). At the same time three out of four persons expect to get aid from the state that it cannot afford.

3.2. Assessment of Needs of Social Assistance of Others

The number of needy that was received by the method of assessment of **others** is a bit lower (64.9%) than it was gotten during self-assessment. The difference is 10.5%. This is apparently resulted by the degree of the respondents' awareness of the needy. They either should know such needy people in person or live close to them. Besides, the case in point is the "utter" degree of vulnerability, i.e. people who are in full view by their very poverty.

Table 15

Assessment of Other People's Needs of Social Assistance

<i>Are there persons whom you know or who live nearby and who will not survive if they do not receive social assistance?</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	64,9
No	24,4
I do not know / No answer	10,7
Total	100,0

As for those residents of Moldova who are able to dispense with social assistance (24.4%) quite well, this result adequately correlates with the findings received by self-assessment method (see § 3.1.).

3.3. Assessment of Sufficiency of Social Assistance

The findings of the survey prove that the Moldovan population is not satisfied with the financial volume of rendered social assistance. In the opinion of 65.0% of the respondents if state assistance does not increase, the beneficiaries will not be able to survive.

Table 16

Assessment of Degree (Level) of Sufficiency of Rendered Social Assistance

<i>Do you know people who will not be able to survive if the state assistance that they get does not increase?</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	65,0
No	22,6
I do not know / No answer	12,4
Total	100,0

Social assistance that is rendered by the state to particularly needy groups of Moldova population does not provide hand-to-mouth subsistence for the beneficiaries. Therefore, low-income strata either count on receiving aid from their relatives or from different public organizations.

22.6% of the respondents consider that the present volume of social assistance is quite enough for beneficiaries to survive.

3.4. Quantitative Limit of Sum of Social Payments per person

Respondents have different views regarding the quantitative limit of the sum of social assistance. However, on the whole their demands are very modest. Almost 40% of the respondents consider the assistance amount up to 300 MDL (US\$20.0) to be sufficient.

Table 17

Distribution of Assessments of Limit of Sum that can be received by a Person by Different Channels of Social Assistance

<i>Should a certain limit of sum of money be set that one person can get from different channels of social assistance and, if 'yes', then indicate the amount of it?</i>	<i>%</i>
40-100	6,7
120-200	12,8
220-300	17,8
320-400	9,7
430-500	20,1
550-1000	24,2
1100-5000	8,7
Total	100,0

Only 8.7% of respondent consider that the limit of the sum of social assistance should be at the level of basket of goods (about 1300 MDL or US\$100) or even more – up to MDL5000.

4. Defects of Social Payments to the Population

A category principle of social assistance rendering has been applied in Moldova from the middle of 2000. On the whole the population takes this approach positively. Still, there are

many violations of the established rules of rendering assistance in practice (see also surveys made by LIESAP/CISR October 2002 and April 2003).

4.1. Drawbacks of the State Authorities' Rules of Social Assistance Rendering

Drawbacks existing in the process of social assistance rendering to the population are different. However, most respondents – 62.6% consider that the main of them is that people who are not the most vulnerable get the major part of assistance, while those really poor are ignored.

Table 18

Assessment of Social Assistance Aiming

<i>Which of the following assertions corresponds with you opinion about the people you know or who live close to you?</i>	<i>%</i>
State social payments are good as they reach only the most vulnerable	25,6
State assistance is rendered to many people who are not really in need and those vulnerable are ignored	62,6
I do not know / No answer	11,8
Total	100,0

Only one fourth of the respondents – 25.6% - think that social payments are granted to the most needy. And this may serve as an incentive for the state to look for methods of further improvement of its social assistance system.

4.2. Population's Violations of Rules of Getting Social Assistance

Besides claims to the state there is a prevailing opinion that people themselves are to blame for the weakness of procedure of social assistance rendering. Thus, 76.2% of the respondents are convinced that some people receive assistance not because of their real need but simply because they are smarter in evidencing their merits or even their disability and get the social aid using their relatives' support in state structures or owing to their corruptibility.

Table 19

Unlawful Ways Use to Receive Social Assistance

<i>Do you believe that some people get social payments only because they are smarter but not because they are in real need?</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	76,2
No	10,3
I do not know / No answer	13,5
Total	100,0

In opinion of the majority the present system of social assistance granting is formal and closed by nature. Today, the main evidence of need of social assistance will be a certificate or another written document that is made without studying the real income level of households or an individual.

In this situation, in view of the respondents, there are 'many' rather than 'a few' smart fellows-beneficiaries.

Table 20

Assessment of Number of People who Unlawfully Received Social Assistance

<i>If this is true then are there many such people or some?</i>	<i>%</i>
Some	27,9
Many	68,0
No one	4,1
Total	100,0

As one can see, 68.0% of the respondents consider that social payments are received by 'smart fellows' and there are many of them, 27.9% think that there are a few of them. On the whole, granting social assistance to some strata provokes a mixed reaction in public opinion of the state. Some people consider beneficiaries of such assistance to be dependents of the society. Others knowingly place on themselves and the society an obligation to care for the needy.

One of the reasons of a negative attitude towards social assistance is the idea that the aid leads to a decrease in business activity of its beneficiaries.

Table 21

Attitude towards Social Assistance Granting

<i>Do you believe that social payments discourage people from work?</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	12,0
No	81,3
I do not know / No answer	6,7
Total	100,0

At present 12.0% of the respondents consider that social payments decrease people's incentives of self-employment. This opinion is typical for well-to do and business active population. And though in terms of numbers this group is small, it is not improbable that in public opinion in future the image of the beneficiaries as dependants that live at the expense of the society, i.e. its working part, will possibly prevail.

For now the majority of the population (81.3%) approve of rendering of social assistance to the really needy.

5. Provision of Households with Electric Power as a Vital Social Service (Reliability, Price, Quality)

5.1. Provision with electric power

Provision of electric power, its regular supply to consumers is the most important social service. 98% of Moldova's households are connected to electricity supply networks.

At the same time, as tariffs for electric power are constantly growing, payment for its consumption for many families becomes more difficult. And this is one of spheres where the state renders social assistance.

From the temporal point of view provision of the population with electric power can be divided into three groups: regular, partial (interrupted) and zero (absent). **Regular** provision with electric power means that it is being delivered to houses or apartments with no time limits. **Partial** provision means that house/apartment is supplied with electric power within a specific time period. As the research shows, some consumers do not consider interruptions of up to several minutes to be considerable and think that provision with electric power is regular. That is why certain differences in evaluation of regular and partial electric power provision are possible. **Zero** provision is total lack of electric power regardless of causes.

Table 22

Provision of the population with electric power

<i>How regular is the electric power supply to your house or apartment?</i>	%
24 hours a day, every day	73.2
24 hours a day usually, but interruptions once or twice a week happen	20.6
Interruptions of up to several hours most days	5.1
I have no electricity	1.1
Total	100.0

As the poll shows, 73.2% of consumers in the country estimated electric power supply as regular – it is delivered 24 hours a day, every day, without interruptions. 20.6% and 5.1% consumers noted regular supply, but with interruptions (once – twice a week) and during most days of the week. 1.1% respondents noted total lack of electric power supply to houses/apartments.

Thus, electric power provision of almost ¾ households is regular, while every fourth house/apartment has an uninterrupted supply of electric power.

5.2. Did electric power provision improve?

After privatization of electric power distribution networks electric power supply has changed for the better over the last three years. Fan disconnections of electric power stopped, which impacts upon the respondents' evaluation.

Table 23

Electric power provision as compared to 2000

<i>How would you compare provision with electric power now and three years ago – in 2000?</i>	%
Better	95.7
Worse	2.4
I do not know/ No answer	1.9
Total	100.0

Predominant part of consumers (95.7%) unambiguously mentions improvement of electric power provision as compared to 2000. and only 2.4% of them think the situation worsened. Number of uncertain answers is small – 1.9%, which points to the determined position of respondents as regards this issue.

5.3. Share of low-quality electric power delivered to consumers

From time to time there appears the problem of low-quality electric power in the country. Consumers complain of either excessively high voltage, or insufficient voltage, below the norm.

Table 24

Electric home appliances or electric lamps damaged due to power surges

<i>Did your electric lamps or home appliances happen to get damaged due to power surges over the last year?</i>	%
Yes	22.0
No	76.0
I do not know/ No answer	1.8
Total	100.0

Power surges damage electric lamps and home appliances. 22.2% of households experienced cases of this damage. But most consumers (76.0%) did not encounter such problems.

Partial provision with electric power on the one hand covers rather large part of the country's population, but on the other – is very diverse.

Table 25

Duration of interruptions in electric power supply

<i>If interruptions in electric power supply occur, how long are they?</i>	%
Only for several minutes or less	34.6
Many minutes, but less than an hour	32.1
More than an hour, but less than a day	32.6
More than a day	0.7
Total	100.0

As one can see, interruptions affect 73.3% of electric power consumers. 34.6% households suffer interruptions of up to several minutes and less. 32.1% mention that interruptions last more, but less than an hour. 32.6% of households experience inconvenience due to interrupted electric power supply to a greater extent – more than an hour, but less than a day. Besides, such situation is aggravated by the fact that interruptions fall on evening time. Electric power supply is recommenced at night and people start their “night shift”: launder and iron clothes, clean apartments, etc.

5.5. Attitude of population towards tariffs for electric power

Consumers of electric power in the Republic of Moldova worry about three problems: ?) **provision**, b) **quality** and c) **price**. Based on respondents' responses the first problem seems to be mainly solved. Problem of quality is not critical yet and just becomes object of speculation of official and public organizations. The third problem – **price of electric power** – not only maintains its actuality, but, on the contrary, turns into the main problem for all consumers of electric power. After 1991 tariffs for electric power in Moldova have changed several times and is now 0,82 MDL per Kwh.

The problem of the cost of electric power for public opinion of the country has two aspects: memory and financial (economic) aspect. The first aspect of tariff assessment regards the fact that population still retains remembrance of the 6 kopeck price per Kwh. The second one consists in the low purchasing power of the majority of the population and results in the fact that current cost of electric power appears to be excessive.

Table 26

<i>Do you think tariffs for electric power are too high?</i>	%
Yes	96.5
No	3.1
I do not know/ No answer	0.4
Total	100.0

Both factors result in that most respondents – 96,5% - estimate current tariffs for electric power to be *too* high. And only 3.1% of the best-off part of the population does not consider these tariffs to be excessive. Given high incomes tariff of 0,82 MDL may seem reasonable.

What is the cause, in the opinion of the country's consumers, of high tariffs for electric power?

Table 27

<i>Why in your opinion did tariffs for electric power increase?</i>		%
Fuel and other energy resources rose in price	722	40.0
Corruption	841	46.6
Maintenance costs increased	250	13.9
Equipment and power lines are obsolete	378	21.0
Other	199	11.0
I do not know/ No answer	145	8.0
Total		100.0

The causes of high tariffs in consumers' opinion are divided into three groups: *objective*, *subjective* and *mixed* (objective-subjective). The first group of causes does not depend either on producers, or electric power suppliers: fuel and energy resources are imported to Moldova; hence their price does not mainly depend on them. At least, that is what 40.0% respondents think. The second group – but it is the first as regards importance – 46.6% respondents consider the cause of high tariffs to be *corruption*. Apparently, in the case in question public opinion is that notion of corruption includes both bribery and profit out of consumers' money through unjustified increase of prices for electric power that has been already produced.

Increase of maintenance costs may also be added to this group – 13.9%. First of all, this increase is due to excessive wages of those who are responsible for this maintenance.

The third group – subjective-objective – includes, as 21.0% respondents think, obsolete equipment and power lines. On the one hand, respondents understand that equipment and power lines indeed became obsolete (morally and physically): everybody knows that little was renewed over the last decade. Such situation, in opinion of every fifth respondent, leads to increase of tariffs for electric power.

5.6. Correlation of tariffs and reliability of electric power supply

the economic distress of most people living in the country does not allow them choose the most rational solution of the problem of reliable electric power supply: to pay more and get a more reliable power supply.

Table 28

Correlation of prices for electric power and reliability of its supply

<i>What would you choose, if you had the opportunity?</i>	%
To pay a higher tariff and get a more reliable power supply	5.4
To pay less and get a less reliable power supply	4.4
You are satisfied with the current situation related to power supply	87.6
I do not know/ No answer	2.6
Total	100.0

Only 5.4% of the country's population agrees to such a condition of a more reliable power supply. On the other hand, there is also an insignificant minority – 4.4% - that agrees to a less reliable power supply through lower electric power costs.

The majority of the population though (87.6%) is basically satisfied (!) with the current situation related to power supply: tariffs are too high, but the power supply is rather reliable. This is paradoxical – despite complaints of high tariffs majority of the population is satisfied with the current state of affairs related to power supply.

6. Readiness of Population for Changes in the Social Assistance Program. The Most Preferable Criteria

6.1. Attitude of population towards eventual changes of the social assistance system

Estimating the best methods of future implementation of the social assistance program the country's population has unambiguously seconded the changing of the current system: 82.8% respondents endorsed the necessity to aim social payments at the most indigent. It appears that majority of the population considers the existing system of rendering assistance to possess considerable flaws. Every day people come across facts when a certain part of NTC beneficiaries lives much better than those who are not included into this group because they do not belong to any of 11 categories entitled to such right under the corresponding Law and Decision of the Government. But nobody, neither local authorities, nor local social assistance bodies cannot help the poor, as they have no formal right to receive such assistance.

Table 29

Evaluation of the existing social assistance system

<i>What is in your opinion the best method of implementing the social assistance program in future?</i>	%
The same as it is now	16.2
Social payments should be aimed at the most indigent	82.8
I do not know/ No answer	1.0
Total	100.0

A far smaller part (16.2%) suggest leaving everything as it is and rendering social assistance the way it is done now, i.e. based on categories approved through the Decision of the Government. It seems that there are people who prefer to decline change, either trusting the accuracy of the existing order, or thinking that any changes will only lead to the worse.

Thus, one can conclude that despite insignificant opposition, changes in the social assistance system will be supported by the majority of the population.

6.2. Evaluation of rates of social assistance program changes

Given that understanding of necessary changes predominates, there are differences of opinion on rate of these changes.

46.2% respondents suggest implementing changes gradually. And only 3.1% of them advocate immediate changing of the current social assistance system.

Table 30

Evaluation of rates of social assistance rendering changes	
<i>How do you think these changes should be realized – gradually or immediately?</i>	<i>%</i>
Social assistance program should be preserved as it is	50.7
Gradually	46.2
Immediately	3.1
Total	100.0

6.3. Social payments and the national healthcare program

Since state financial resources are limited, the necessity emerges of marking out priority spheres and directing available budget means to them namely. These competitive spheres that the state should allot funds to in the first place are social payments, education and healthcare.

As the poll demonstrated implementation of the national healthcare program (NHP) in public opinion looks as a higher priority as compared with social assistance.

Most respondents regard positively the idea of letting the Government use a part of social assistance fund means for implementation of the NHP.

Table 31

Attitude towards using a part of social assistance funds for NHP implementation	
<i>Do you advocate the idea of letting the Government use a part of social assistance fund means for implementation of the NHP or not?</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	61.0
No	21.0
I do not know/ No answer	15.0
Total	100.0

As we can see, the preference of the majority of public opinion is evidently not on the social assistance program side, when the matter concerns the health of the whole population. 61.0% of those interviewed think that such utilization is rather acceptable, although they understand that there is an evident deficit of funds for the necessary and ample social assistance.

Public opinion also quite frosty as regards the practice of the Government borrowing funds from the National House of Social Insurance to render social payments.

6.4. Attitude towards the Government borrowing funds from the NHSI to implement social assistance

Table 32

<i>As you may know, the Government experiences deficit of funds and borrows money from the NHSI to pay social allowances. What would you suggest in this situation?</i>	%
Nothing, it is not a problem	10.8
To improve the social assistance system through aiming at those really in need	58.7
To increase Government funds at the expense of taxes	14.2
I do not know/ No answer	16.3
Total	100.0

The question turned out to be a difficult one to comprehend. Nonetheless, only 10.8% respondents support the current practice of the Government. 58.7% of them propose to improve the social assistance system itself instead of borrowing money from the NHSI and aim payments at persons who are really in need. Public opinion of the country suggests looking for funds, first of all, in an improvement of the social payments system.

Reaction to the proposal to increase Government funds at the expense of taxes is also quite reserved. Only 14.2% respondents support this idea.

6.5. The most preferable criteria

It is a difficult problem to choose criteria for rendering social payments to the population, especially in post Soviet society. On the one hand, one should take into account the level of financial position of a candidate for social assistance and, on the other, if there are any “services” for the state.

Table 33

Criteria for rendering social assistance

<i>What should be grounds of rendering social assistance, in your opinion?</i>	%
Poverty	33.2
Candidate's part work or services	15,9
Everything mentioned above	48,3
None of the mentioned above	0,6
I do not know/ No answer	2,0
Total	100,0

Thus, social payments appear to play two roles: assistance and material reward for past services. Apparently, both criteria can be combined in a prosperous country, while such situation in a poor one can be devastating for the budget. Nonetheless, in modern Moldova both criteria are quite socially justified. And most respondents understand that. 48.3% of them think that both poverty and past services should be the basis for social assistance rendering.

Why does a significant part of the public opinion propose taking into account the past merits during the rendering of social assistance? *Possible reasons* are as follows: there may be a honored person within a family, which allows counting on additional income (self-interested reason); and a wide-spread opinion that welfare of honored elderly persons is practically very low (humane reason).

At the same time, circa half of respondents are more categorical and advocate *only* one of the above-mentioned criteria. Every third respondent (33.2%) thinks that such a criterion should be poverty, while 15.9% - past merits.

Based on results of the research, one can come to the conclusion that the majority of the population is ready for the transformation of the existing social assistance system (based on categories) through the method of “implantation” into it of members belonging to the poorest households. And, obviously, this is the most realistic variant for the nearest future.

7. Public Opinion on the Future Social and Economic Development of the State

7.1. Public Opinion of Priority Problems of Socio-economic Aspect in the State

Six following options were offered to the respondents in order to estimate the priority of socio-economic problems of the state during the transition period: a) social assistance, b) economy, c) education, d) territorial integrity, e) legal and f) foreign assistance. At the respondents’ discretion they might have mentioned other problems as well.

The distribution of opinions is given below.

Table 34

State Priority Problems of Socio-Economics Aspect

<i>What problem do you consider to be of the highest importance for the government leaders to solve now?</i>	<i>%*</i>
Increase of target assistance to the needy	46,0
Economic development	70,7
Improvement of children education	34,5
Reunification of Transnistria and Moldova	25,1
Elimination of obstacles for start of small business	9,2
Attraction of large foreign assistance	6,6
Other	1,4
I do not know / No answer	0,2

* Sum exceeds 100% because the respondents might have chosen more than one option as their answer

In public opinion the hierarchy of priority problems for the government is the following: a) economy, b) social assistance to the needy, c) education, d) territorial integrity, e) development of small businesses, f) attraction of foreign investment. respondents include four most important problems in first group, those problems concern interest of the majority of the population: from 25.1% to 70.7% of the respondents mentioned them in their answers.

The majority (70.7%) consider the economic development problem to be the most important. About half of the respondents (46.0%) include the increase of target assistance to the needy in priority problems, but more than half of the respondent do not consider this issue to be of priority.

The critical situation with education in the country draws attention of only 34.5% of the respondents. Most of them still think that situation of education does not require the government’s taking emergency measures.

Only 25.1% of the respondents consider the reunification problem of Transnistria and Moldova to be of priority to the government. Though it takes the fourth place among six problems it gives way to first three issues in a qualitative rating.

Problems of small business and foreign investments should be prioritized by the government in opinion of 9.2% and 6.6% of the respondents respectively. Small business, entrepreneurship still does not have confidence of Moldovan population, though it happens the same way in all the countries of former USSR. As for foreign investments, the majority of the population is aware of the state external debt, which exceeds 1 million US dollars, and they are suspicious of new credits. Besides, many people are convinced that any foreign assistance as it already was in the past will not be used efficiently and will not do any good for the country.

7.2. Problems that Gives Greatest Concern to the Population

The population does not only live for a present but makes a forecast for the nearest future at least. A scenario of such a future first of all refers to situations related to satisfaction of every-day needs: protection from cold, hunger, and against illnesses, assurance of constant power supply and chances to provide their children with education.

Table 35

Apprehensions and Concerns of the Population about the Nearest Future

	Index	Rank	have		Do not have		No answer
			apprehension	concerns	apprehension	concerns	
Not to be able to pay for the cure or medicine if somebody in the family falls ill	0,93	1	66,8	26,3	6,6	0,3	100,0
Not to have heating during cold season	0,91	2	57,0	34,2	8,6	0,2	100,0
Not to have electricity for lightning or not to use electric appliances because I cannot afford paying the electricity bill	0,60	5	35,0	39,3	25,2	0,5	100,0
To go to bed being hungry because there is no food	0,71	3	30,7	40,1	28,9	0,3	100,0
Cannot afford sending children to school because they have to work to sustain the family	0,65	4	33,5	31,4	33,1	2,0	100,0
Total	0,80		44,6	34,3	20,5	0,6	100,0

The future scenario scale consists of three levels: confidence, apprehensions and concerns. A scenario of the nearest future for 78.9% of the population is characterized by apprehensions and concerns. Only 20.5% have no apprehensions about the satisfaction of five vital needs in the nearest future. The society in which 80% of the population are concerned that they will not be able to satisfy their primary needs can be estimated as a society in extreme anxiety. Such high level of anxiety affects all the other spheres of social life, reduces the extent of social organism resistance, causes conflict situations both at the level of the society itself and at the level of a small group which is: a family, working team and in interpersonal relations.

The population is concerned about their health (payment of cure and medicine) and survival during a cold season. As the matter of fact they are apprehensive for their very lives.

7.3. Estimate of Human Freedoms (Rights) in the Republic of Moldova

Interpretation of estimates of human freedoms (rights) in the state will not be correct if we do not take into account the following important thing. Respondents do not evaluate the existing freedoms notionally as just a number of rights from the Constitution but as a real possibility to profit by them in their everyday life. Without taking this into consideration it is impossible to determine the real attitude of citizens of Moldova towards human freedoms (rights) on the basis of the received replies.

Table 36

Estimate of new freedoms (rights) gained by the citizens of Moldova with the independence

<i>How important are new human freedoms (rights) which the citizens of Moldova gained with independence?</i>	%
Very important	22,1
Relatively important	34,7
They are not important at all	31,1
I do not know / No answer	12,1
Total	100,0

Just taking into account this circumstance one can understand why 31.1% of the respondents i.e. every third person thinks that new human freedoms (rights) gained by the citizens with the independence to be ‘unimportant altogether’. This is an attitude of ‘realists’ who estimate not so much the very rights and freedoms in the state but difficulties of socio-economic, political and other nature that do not allow them to realize those rights and freedoms. Another group of respondents, which is almost equal in number to the first one, makes up 34.7% who separate the right for freedom from its exercise and therefore considers it to be relatively important, thus indicating the importance of existence of *the right* for freedom in particular. A small group of respondents – 12.1% do not have a definite opinion and are not able to estimate the new human freedoms (rights).

22.1% of respondents positively estimated the gained freedoms. It seems that in the Republic of Moldova only every fifth of its residents who are over 18 year-old is aware of his/her freedoms (rights) and is able to exercise them in practice.

7.4. Reunification of the Country as a Condition for Settlement of Socio-economic Problems

Restoration of territorial integrity of the country is considered by most respondents to be a necessary condition for settlement of socio-economic problems of the state. 69.35% out of the total number of the respondents agree with the opinion that Moldova will never become richer until reunification with Transdnistria takes place and integrity of the country’s economy is restored.

Table 37

<i>Moldova will never be richer until Transdnistria reunifies with the whole country</i>	%
Agree	69,3
I do not agree	18,5
I do not know / No answer	12,2
Total	100,0

At the same time this view is not shared by everyone. Every third respondent either does not agree with it (18.5%) or does not have a definite opinion about this problem (12.2%).

Lack of agreement on the problem of reunification is determined by various primary cultural and political orientations of the population. One part of the population that is oriented towards independent course of development finds the state reunification to be positive for strengthening statehood of the RM. On the contrary, the other part, though a smaller one, think that reunification with Transdnistria creates obstacles both for coming closer to Romania and entrance of RM into political structures of united Europe. For this part of the population the economic benefits from the country integrity restoration collide with their political aims.

7.5. Estimate of Rightness of Directions of Moldova Development

Although the general conception of socio-economic development of Moldova has not been still clearly planned after 12 years of independence, there are at least two points of view on this problem at the everyday level. One part of the population misses the past, the other has left the past far behind and for ever.

Apparently, it was proceeding from just such views that the population replied to the question about rightness of direction of the RM development. The breakdown of answers is given in the following table.

Table 38

<i>What is your opinion about general situation in Moldova, does it evolve into the right direction?</i>	<i>%</i>
Right direction	46,7
Wrong direction	41,4
I do not know / No answer	11,9
Total	100,0

The population is divided into two parts that are approximately equal in the number: 46.7% of the respondents consider the direction to be right and 41.4% - wrong. Every tenth respondent does not have a definite opinion on the issue. None of the groups prevails and that creates the atmosphere of social instability in many aspects of socio-economic development of the country.

7.6. Will the Republic of Moldova be Independent in the nearest 10 Years?

The estimate of probability whether Moldova will save its independence during nearest 10 years or not provides polar results though in a bit different proportion.

Table 39

<i>Do you believe that Moldova will remain an independent country in the nearest 10 years?</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	51,5
No	31,2
I do not know / No answer	17,3
Total	100,0

Only half the population (51.5%) believe that the RM will be independent for the nearest 10 years. The other half either categorically reject it – 31.2% or do not have a definite opinion on it – 17.3%.

This situation is rather typical for the former republics of the USSR. The independence received by former republics was not value obtained as a result of long struggle but rather a ‘stroke of good fortune’.

However, Moldova’s situation has its specifics. By different estimates 5-7% of the population advocate unification with Romania. The percentage is higher among the intellectuals. Therefore, besides social and economic problems due to the above there is uncertainty about the future of the RM.

Disbelief in the state stability creates adverse conditions for its socio-economic development..

7.7. Small Country Syndrome

The population of a small country feels insecure either due to founded or unfounded reasons. In Moldova this is aggravated as well by its historic memory of periods when the country formed a part of other countries. The weakness of a young country and its economy gives rise to certain suspicion from the side of its population towards all the other countries not only towards its neighbors.

Table 40

Do other countries take advantage of Moldova

<i>Other countries take advantage of Moldova because it is small and vulnerable</i>	%
Agree	66,6
I do not agree	15,2
I do not know / No answer	18,2
Total	100,0

The survey proves that most respondents (66.6%) believe that other countries take advantage of Moldova because it is small and vulnerable.

7.8. Public Opinion Orientation with regard to Moldova’s Future

The population orientation to the future of the country differs in a way from the forecasts given below in § 7.5.

Table 41

Breakdown of the respondents depending on orientation towards Moldova sovereignty type

<i>What would you like Moldova to be in 10 years?</i>	%
Independent	30,5
Independent, a member of EU	25,4
Independent, a member of CIS	18,0
Part of Romania	4,3
Part of Russia	19,7
Part of Ukraine	0,6
I do not know / No answer	1,4
Total	100,0

Approximately 75% of the population would like Moldova to be independent even being a member of regional union (EU or CIS). It is important to note that probably for the first time during the last decade the number of supporters of EU is by 7.4% greater than the number of those who support the idea of orientation towards CIS. Apparently, such a stand is a consequence of the active involvement of Moldovan migrants into European economies and recently greatly advocated orientation of the country towards its participation in European integration processes.

The uncertainty of a part of the population about the viability of the country is confirmed by the fact that almost one fourth of the respondents would like Moldova to form part of another state: Russia – 19.7%, Romania – 4.3% and Ukraine – 0.6%. It is interesting that the share of the respondents who would like the RM to form part of Russia is by 10% greater than the share of Russians in the country.

7.9. Orientation of the Population towards Types of Socio-Economic Set-up

The orientation of respondents towards types of socio-economic set-up of the RM is also of a dual nature. 42.2% of the respondents consider that it would be better to have it as it was under the USSR, and 57.6% orient themselves to the present-day realities.

Table 42

Respondents' Orientation towards Type of State	
<i>What would be better for Moldova?</i>	<i>%</i>
Be as it was during the USSR time	42,2
Be as Russia today	8,0
Be similar to Europe	40,5
Be similar to the USA	9,1
Other	0,2
Total	100,0

Nostalgia for the past still has a significant place in the public opinion in spite of the fact that all the previously concealed information about deportation, repression, hunger and other misfortunes of the soviet time was revealed. 40.5% would like Moldova to be similar to Europe that attracts the population by high level of economic development, social protection and social security. 9.1% of the respondents would like Moldova to be similar to the USA.

Though socio-economic level of the US is higher than European, this country is less known to an average person of Moldova. Acquaintance with American life by American movies does not give rise to wishes of the many to have it like in the US. The most curious is that 8.0% consider that it would be better for Moldova to have it like in the present-day Russia. While, as it is mentioned in (§ 7.7.), 19.8% want Moldova to form part of Russia. In other words, they would like to be part of Russia but not to be similar to Russia!

7.10. Local and World Elite in terms of Estimates of Public Opinion

Table 43

Rating of Political Leaders in Public Opinion

Is your opinion definitely favorable/unfavorable or only relatively favorable/unfavorable?	Attitude						Do not have a definite opinion		?	Rank
	Favorable			Unfavorable						
	?	?	Σ	?	?	Σ				
Vasile Tarlev	29,0	35,0	64,0	5,4	7,3	12,7	15,6	7,7	0,51	2
Vladimir Voronin	56,2	29,8	86,0	4,5	4,7	9,2	4,5	0,3	0,77	1
Dumitru Bragis	7,1	24,5	31,6	16,7	19,3	36,0	24,5	7,9	-0,04	3
Iurie Rosca	4,2	9,2	13,4	44,4	21,4	65,8	14,6	6,2	-0,52	4
Vladimir Putin	64,0	21,7	85,7	1,7	1,8	3,5	8,7	2,1	0,82	1
George W. Bush	19,7	22,4	42,1	12,9	9,0	21,9	26,6	9,4	0,20	2
Ronald Reagan	7,7	18,7	26,4	4,9	5,9	10,8	40,5	22,3	0,16	3
Michael Gorbachev	7,5	19,1	26,6	31,3	19,6	50,9	20,1	2,4	-0,24	4

Russian president V. Putin holds the lead in the group of eight politicians proposed at the survey – his index is 0.82. Next is president of the Republic of Moldova V. Voronin, his estimate index is 0.77. The third is prime-minister V. Tarlev – 0.51. The present US president G. Bush and former president R. Reagan are in 4-5th places. Their indexes are positive and make up 0,20 and 0.16 respectively. Rating of three politicians D. Bragis, M. Gorbachev and Iu. Rosca are negative, with -0.04, -0.24, and -0.52 respectively.

7.11. Degree of Stability of Political Preferences of Electorate

Since the new political life of the country is a bit more than 10 years old, it is obvious that most people have not formed stable political views, ideas and conceptions.

Table 44

Breakdown of Stability of Electorate Preferences (in respect to voting for one and the same Party or for Different Parties with every elections)

<i>Do you vote for one and the same party or for different parties with every elections?</i>	%
Always for the same party	53,6
For different parties	41,4
I do not know / No answer	4,8
	0,2
Total	100,0

The electorate in Moldova do not have stable views yet: only half of them – 53.6% always vote for one and the same party. A little less than a half – 41.4% change their political preferences with every election. Political vagueness is confirmed by the elections results when the winning party of previous elections was not elected to the new parliament (agrarians, socialists and democrats).

7.12. Who do People Vote for?

Any electorate in an answer to the question ‘Which political party do you usually vote for?’ as a rule gives a too high number of votes for the party that won the elections. And vice versa it diminishes the votes number for opposition, i.e. for the losers. It is obviously difficult for

some part of electorate to accept not only defeat of the party but his own as well. We can also find it in the results of this survey.

Table 45

<i>Which political party do you usually vote for?</i>	<i>%</i>
Communist Party	64,3
Social Democratic Alliance	9,9
Christian Democratic Party	5,6
Agrarian Party	1,4
Democratic Party	3,5
PSL	0,7
PSD	0,1
???	0,9
PS	0,7
Other	0,3
I do not vote	5,4
I do not know / No answer	7,2
Total	100,0

The number of respondents who usually vote for Communist Party is by 14.0% greater than the number of votes won by this party at the last parliament elections. The number of votes that usually are given to Social Democratic Party (SDA former AB) and Christian Democratic Party is depreciated, this is especially obvious in case of SDA (AB).

7.13. Forecast of Participation in Parliament Election of 2005

On analyzing the forecast of participation in parliament election one should take into account that the matter does not concern *actual* but *verbal* behavior of the electorate

Table 46

Electorate Orientations to Take Part in Voting

<i>What would you say about your intentions with respect to the next parliament elections?</i>	<i>%</i>
I shall be voting for sure	62,3
I shall probably vote	26,7
I shall not vote probably	3,5
I shall not be voting for sure	3,0
I do not know / No answer	4,4
Total	100,0

On the whole the majority of adult population – 89.0% show high willingness to take part in the next parliament election. Respondents' answers prove that most electors are ready to actively participate in political life of the country. Though, it does not depend only on the population but also on the other side - political parties, their political platforms and their consideration of electorate's interests whether this willingness turns into real participation in the elections.

The fact is that it is individual's internal, cognitive structure that to a great extent determines verbal behavior. In this case, situational elements have much less influence. As a result, the forecast of the population's participation in elections based only on verbal behavior exceeds by 15-20% the number of those who really come to ballot-boxes during elections.

At the same time it is very important to determine the nature of electoral verbal behavior: in this way we find out whether there are some internal impulses that lead to participation in

elections or their skipping. It is also important that we determine the weight of orientations towards participation in voting.

7.14. Attitude of the Population to Participation in Voting

Participation in free elections refers to new human freedoms (rights) gained by the citizens of Moldova with the independence. However, as in the case of new freedoms in general, the attitude to participation in elections differs. Along with positive estimates, the number of those who negatively assess participation in elections is quite big.

Table 47

Motivation of Participation in Voting	
<i>Would you consider participation in voting at elections to be very important or it is rather a way to get some benefits or simply a waste of time?</i>	%
Very important	60,7
It is mainly a way to get benefits	14,9
It is mainly a waste of time	18,9
I do not know / No answer	5,5
Total	100,0

A positive estimate of voting at the elections prevails among the electorate – 60.7% consider such participation to be very important. At the same time the share of those who estimate the participation as negative is big enough. A part of the electorate (18.9%) is indifferent and consider such participation to be a waste of time.

The third argument for taking part in voting is quite curious and requires closer examination. Apparently, respondents – 14.9% noticed a mercantile relation, a benefit that appeared between electors and candidates. Benefits for the candidates are to get desired places in government bodies; for the electors – material values: increase of salaries and pensions after the elections, granting material assistance, rush repair of roads, schools etc.

7.15. The Population's Attitude towards Change of Administrative and Territory Set-up of the Country

An example of such motivation (benefit from “the authorities that come close to people” and “reduction of state machinery expenditures”) is the population’s reaction to return to administrative and territory set-up with smaller territories (as it was in the USSR time).

Table 48

Respondents' Attitude towards Change-over from judets to raions	
<i>What is your attitude to the change-over from a county to a district system?</i>	%
I support it	72,5
I do not support it	18,6
I do not know / No answer	8,9
Total	100,0

The majority – 72.5% i.e. almost three third support return from a system of large counties to a system of small districts. Only 18.6% do not support the return to districts.

Apparently, both systems of administrative structure have positive and negative sides. Much if not everything depends on the quality of work of the authorities. It was the lack of qualitative changes in the process of administration during reorganization of territories into counties that caused negative reaction of the population. On the other hand, expectations of

qualitative changes determines the population's support of the return to districts. If these hopes are not justified the population will not back up this district administrative set-up of the state.

7.16. Degree of Confidence of the Population in Political Parties

The current political situation in Moldova is characterized by the following specifics: the majority of the population – 84.2% believe that political parties of the state are concerned about people's welfare. Discredit upon this fact is experienced only by 4.9% of the population, 12.6% have no opinion in this behalf.²

Table 49

Breakdown of Parties (b, a) depending on Estimate of their Concern for People Welfare

<i>In your opinion, which political party (block, alliance) takes greater care of people like you?</i>	%
Communist Party	63,2
Social Democratic Alliance	6,8
Christian Democratic People's Party	5,0
Agrarian Party	1,1
Democratic Party	3,3
PSL – PSD	1,6
PSL	0,4
PSD	0,1
AMN	0,6
PS	0,3
None of the above	4,9
I do not know / No answer	12,6
Total	100,0

The political parties can be divided into two groups by degrees of confidence in their concern for common people's welfare: a) parties with degree of confidence of 5% and higher, and b) parties with degree of confidence of less than 5% threshold.

First group includes three parliamentary parties: CPM –63.2%, SDA – 6.8%, ChDPP – 5.0%. Second group includes all the remaining parties with the received confidence from 3.3% by DP to 0.1% - PSD.

The majority of the population is convinced that CPM is concerned about people's welfare. High level of confidence in CPM was shown by the population at parliamentary elections of 2001. This confidence is most probably rooted in pleasant memories about the soviet past and measures to stir up the economy and rendering of social assistance taken by CPM as a majority party in the present parliament.

7.17. The Population's Assessment of Economic Platforms of Different Parties

A comparative assessment of political parties' platforms is characterized by a wide spread of opinions: from 65.8% of respondents that assess CPM's platform as the best one for the economy recovery to quite modest assessments of 0.1% got by PSD.

² The nature of wording should be taken into account at analysis of this problem. Respondents are put the questions not whether the political parties are considered about people welfare but which party takes greater care of them. In other words, the care can be modest but still be more significant than the care taken by the others.

Table 50

Comparative Assessment of Parties Platforms for Economy Recovery

<i>In your opinion which political party (block, alliance) has the best platform for recovery of the economy?</i>	%
Communist Party	65,8
Social Democratic Alliance	8,9
Christian Democratic People's Party	5,1
Agrarian Party	1,7
Democratic Party	3,1
AMN	0,7
PSL	0,5
PS	0,6
PSD	0,1
Other	0,3
No one	4,3
I do not know / No answer	8,9
Total	100,0

It is quite possible that these assessments mirror rather an emotional state, i.e. confidence than a rational analysis of economic platforms of one party or other. Such assessments refer more to wishes than to the reality.

However that may be, the majority of the population believe in the party in power as a political party that is able to recover the economy and concerned about people's welfare at present. Next parliamentarian elections will show how stable it is.

7.18. Affiliation with Political Parties

The authority of the political parties is extremely low in the country. The electorate is oriented more to the leaders than to parties in electoral situations. It is not rare when the electorate votes for a leader but not for his party. This results from both a reaction to a predominant position of one party in the past and disbelief in role and importance of political parties as organizations in the society life.

Table 51

Affiliation with Political Parties

<i>Are you a member of any political party, if 'Yes' than which party?</i>	%
CPM	1,3
SDA	0,7
ChDPP	0,4
AP	0,1
DP	0,1
I do not know / No answer	2,8
? ? ??????	94,2
Total	100,0

Lack of confidence in political structures determines the fact that only 3% of the population mentioned their affiliation with five main political parties. The majority (94.2%) is not affiliated with any party. It is not improbable though that part of the electorate holds back their political orientations.

7.19. Frequency of Use of Mass-Media by the Population

The adverse social and economic situation in the state affects confidence and frequency of contacts of the population with mass-media. First of all, the cost of TV and radio, newspapers and magazines proves to be too expensive for the majority of the population. Another strong reason is high cost of electricity for TV and delivery of the press.

Table 52

Frequency of Contacts of the Population with Mass-media

Mass-media Type	%		
	+	-	
TV	87,4	12,1	100,0
Radio	77,3	22,7	100,0
Press	66,9	33,1	100,0

TV is the most frequently used mass-media: 87.4% of the respondents watch it. Radio is next – 77.3%. 66.9% refer to the press.

High price for periodicals and their delivery made most of the people stop subscribing and buying newspapers and magazines. In most cases reading of newspapers and magazines is not regular.

TV. The population uses TV more often than other mass-media: 87.4% watch TV broadcast. The contacts of the population with TV are regular. Nowadays TV substitutes for almost everything: theatres, movie, newspapers, magazines, radio and even church. Some parts of the population do not go to church but watch religious TV broadcasts. TV is the main channel of exerting influence on the population it is the main channel for the population to obtain information.

A relatively small part of the population (7.8%) do not have TV sets or do not watch TV at all.

Table 53

Frequency of watching TV channels

<i>Which TV channels do you frequently watch?</i>	<i>%</i>
ORT (Russia)	67,3
TVM (Moldova)	64,7
TVR 1 (Romania)	27,6
RTR (Russia)	16,5
NTV (Russia)	13,6
PRO TV (Romania)	6,3
Other	18,0
I do not know / No answer	0,5
I do not have a TV set	7,8
I do not watch TV	4,3

First place is held by Russian channel that broadcasts only in Russian – ORT. Its programs are watched by 67.3% of TV viewers which considerably exceeds both the number of ethnic Russians (about 11.0%) and Russian-speakers. Second place occupies TV 1 of Moldova: its broadcast is viewed by 64.7% of the population. Program 1 of the Romanian TV is in the thirds place – 27.6%.

Ratio of TV broadcast languages is the following: 3 TV channels broadcast in Romanian and its total viewing weight comes to 98.4%, and 3 TV channels broadcast in Russian with total viewing weight of 97.4%.

Radio. Its part in broadcast of information and entertainment for the population is slightly smaller than the TV share. Radio is listened by 77.3% of the population. The rest either do not have a radio set – 14.9% or do not listen to radio broadcast at all.

Table 54

Frequency of Radio Listening

<i>Which radio stations do you listen more frequently?</i>	<i>%</i>
Radio Moldova	49,9
Russian Radio	26,9
Hit FM	20,7
Antena C	20,0
Radio Mayak	6,5
Radio Romania News	13,3
Other	20,5
I do not know / No answer	1,7
I do not have radio	14,9
I do not listen to the radio	7,8

First place is occupied by “Radio Moldova” – half of the respondents listen to its broadcast.

Radio effects the population to a lesser extent than TV and the press. Radio broadcasting is usually filled up with music and entertainment talks of radio-hosts and short news summaries. There is not much of political, economic and social information (except for Radio Moldova).

Russian radio stations prevail in Moldova radio broadcasting. They mostly broadcast in Russian with short, up to five minutes, news in Romanian that appear from time to time.

The Press. The press occupies a more modest place than TV and radio in terms of frequency of contacts with the population. Almost every third (!) resident of Moldova reads neither newspapers nor magazines.

Table 55

Frequency of reading the press

<i>Which newspapers and magazines do you frequently read?</i>	<i>%</i>
Makler	18,6
Arguments and Facts	17,2
Saptamâna	16,0
Flux	12,6
Moldova suverana	8,6
Nezaqvisimaya Moldova	5,6
Other ³	47,3
I do not know / No answer	0,0
I do not read the press	33,1

First place occupies newspaper “Makler” which is read by 18.6% of respondents. This periodical consists only of the information about various goods and their prices.

The social and political weeklies “Arguments and Facts”, “Saptamina” and “Flux” follow “Makler” – 17.2%, 16.0% and 12.6% respectively.

³ ”Other” includes: Komsomolskaya Pravda (1.4%), regional newspapers (6.2%), Communist (2%), Chance (1.4%), Jurnal de Chisinau (1.2%), Spros i Predlojenye (1.1%), Kishinevskye Novosty (0.8%) and without titles – 23.1% of the answers.

Official newspapers “Moldova suverana” and “? ??????? ? ? ?????? (Nezavisimaya Moldova)” are in fifth and sixth places – 8.6% and 5.6 They are mainly received by authorities at both central and local levels.

The break-down of the press depending on the language of periodicals is the following: Russian language press (M, AF, NM) – 41.4%, Romanian (S, F, MS) – 37.2%.

The real share of Russian language press is much greater because the following periodicals like KP, Moldavskye Vedomosti, Delovaya Gazeta, Logos-Press as well as various periodicals that go onto news-stalls directly from Moscow, Saint-Petersburg and other towns of Russia were not taken into account. There is almost no periodicals supplied to Moldova from Romania.

7.20. The Population Affiliation with Confession

Moldova, in comparison with its neighboring countries, is traditionally considered to be a region with high religiosity. Though during the soviet period all the population was subjected to concentrated propaganda of atheism, the share of religious persons remains high.

Table 56

Breakdown of respondents depending on their affiliation with confession

<i>Religion:</i>	<i>%</i>
Orthodox believer, Metropolis of Moldova	92,6
Orthodox believer, Metropolis of Bassarabia	2,0
Catholic	0,2
Protestant	0,4
Baptist	0,8
Jehovah’s Witnesses	0,8
Other	0,3
Atheist	2,6
I do not know / No answer	0,3
Total	100,0

According to the survey 97.1% of the respondents stated their affiliation with five main confessions. 0.3% mentioned some other confessions. In spite of an active atheism campaign held among the population in the latest past, only 2.6% of the respondents considered themselves atheists. Still, after half-a-century struggle with religion during the soviet period, it survived in Moldova. However, people’s religiosity in Moldova as in many other countries is to a great extent formal. It is rather a phenomenon of tradition and culture and the role of the church in the state life is insignificant. But it is necessary to mention that according to many sociological surveys the church holds lead with a great ‘breakaway’ in rating of confidence of the population towards various social institutions.

7.21. Home Language as Indicator of Ethnic and Cultural Orientation of the Population

A home language is the most accurate indicator of ethno-cultural orientation of individuals. In comparison with such indicator as ethnic affiliation, which is applied for determination of ethno-cultural orientation of individuals in statistical studies, the home language is more objective.

Breakdown of the respondents by home language

<i>What language do you prefer to speak at home?</i>	<i>%</i>
Moldavian / Romanian	73,6
Russian	19,1
Ukrainian	4,3
Bulgarian	0,1
Gagauzian	2,8
Other	0,1
Total	100,0

According to the received estimate 73.6% of the respondents speak Moldavian / Romanian at home, and obviously this shows an increase of the title nation share in the population structure (according to the census of 1989 it came to 65%). It is of interest that the share of Russian as home language noticeably exceeds the share of persons that consider themselves Russian. In accordance with the last census the share of Russian in population was 10%. But for the last decade the share of this group has reduced. However, the share of persons that speak Russian at home is 19.1%, that is two times more than the share of Russian in the state. According to the related studies, all ethnic groups existing in the state speak Russian at home. The difference is in the share of persons that speak both their native and Russian languages. So, in Moldova the Ukrainians are those who mainly speak Russian at home (there were 14.3% of them according to the latest census) and only 4.3% of Ukrainians speak their mother tongue at home.

A tendency to enhance the sphere of application of Moldavian / Romanian has been quite steady for the last decade both in official structures, business and everyday life especially among the young.

Conclusions

Initial positions that preceded the “Survey Research to Assess Public Acceptance of Possible Reforms in Social Assistance Targeting” and were coordinated in the LIESAP/CISR Memorandum (June 2003) are as follows.

The time is ripe for a formal proposal to substantially reform the Social Assistance system of Moldova which would “phase-in” the abolition of the Social Category basis of individual eligibility and replace it with a means-tested needs assessment based on households. A consensus is emerging that this is the best option. However, a critical information gap remains which must be closed before this proposal can move through the Government and to the Parliament. Given that Moldova is now an emerging democracy with at least 11 political parties, the risk posed to elected policymakers of such a substantial change must be assessed to determine the public’s acceptance of this change. Given the near-total importance of the ruling communist party over any other political party, it can be expected that the Government will consider the political costs of reforms before taking any action. Parliamentary elections are expected in the fall of 2005.

The Surveys already conducted by LIESAP/CISR (October 2002 and April 2003) have established:

- a) the Nominative Targeted Compensation (NTC) program of the Government of the Republic of Moldova (GoRM) is:
 - necessary to alleviate the impact of dramatic increases in the prices paid by households for communal services formerly provided by the GoRM at no or subsidized prices;
 - highly-popular with NTC beneficiaries, currently numbering 268,000 persons living in an estimated 10% of the country’s 1,3 mil households;
 - the NTC is second only to pensions in the number of beneficiaries;
 - the NTC is the most expensive social assistance program of the GoRM, consuming 54% of the total social protection budget;
 - NTC beneficiaries have, on average, higher incomes than the general population of Moldova, and therefore the NTC program may be said to have a high rate of Exclusion Error;
 - NTC payments, particularly in rural areas, are relatively high when compared with income earned from employment, and may therefore be said to aggravate – rather than alleviate, income inequality;
 - the reason for these rates of Inclusion and Exclusion Error, and their contribution to income inequality, is the Category-based system of eligibility carried-over from the Soviet era.
- b) Official sources document that the NTC program consumes almost \$14 mil per year, the costs of which are largely financed by foreign donors, including the European Commission, USAID and others;
- c) GoRM arrears to the NTC are chronic (in the first quarter of 2003, the GoRM was able to fund only 55% of the NTC payments);

- d) Moldova's population (excluding Transnistria) numbers between 3,2 mil and 3,6 mil persons: in total 43.5% of the population receive social assistance payments per year. Approximately 650 thou persons (20%) receive social insurance in the form of pensions. However, the National House of Social insurance has stated that 80% of pensioners are also recipients of NTC payments;
- e) A consensus has developed between several GoRM agencies and their key officials, as well as the international donor community that substantial changes in the GoRM's Social Protection policies must be made as part of the EG-PRSP. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection believes that both Inclusion and Exclusion Error exists in the Social Assistance portion of the Social Protection Budget, and seeks to address both with a goal of increasing the amount of benefits paid to a smaller number of persons.

Taking into account the above mentioned circumstances the current research's task was to obtain information directly from the population: how ready is it for further improvement of the existing social assistance system?

Methodology of the Survey Research was approved by the Low Income Energy and Social Assistance Project. Work organization was provided through association of the CISR, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and Department of Statistics and Sociology. The survey covered inhabitants of 36 Moldovan settlements, including 2 municipalities, 8 towns and 26 villages found in northern, central and southern regions of the country.

Main conclusions of the Survey Research are:

1. Respondents regard the socio-economic situation of most Moldovan people extremely negatively: in their opinion (method of evaluation of others) about 58.6% of the country's population fares "badly" and "very badly". Range of estimates from those who fare "very well" to those who fare "satisfactorily" is within 0.2% to 36.2% limits;
2. At present, majority of population (66.0%) fares worse as compared to the period before the declaration of independence (1991) and only 17.0% report that their life changed for the better. 15.7% of the country's population did not note any changes. Thus, as majority of Moldova's population sees it, changes that took place in the transition period are associated first of all with considerable worsening of their living standards;
3. Significant lowering of living standards of the country's population leads to problems in access to many social services. First of all, increase of tariffs affected electric power consumption. Most people (96.5%) consider electric power tariffs to be excessively overpriced;
4. One of the main problems for social stability is confidence of the population in viability of the state. This problem is very topical for the Republic of Moldova: 51.5% of those interviewed believe that Moldova will remain to be independent in the nearest 10 years. One third of them (31.2%) does not think this is possible. As regards socio-economic system of the country, the country's population split into two groups almost identical in number: 42.2% think Moldova should be as it was in soviet times and 40.5% consider that Moldova should resemble Europe;
5. Moldovan electorate has been showing stable pro-communist orientation lately. According to the poll, 64.5% respondents "usually" vote for the CPM. In opinion of 63.2% it is CPM that "cares for simple folks more than other parties" and 65.8% of them regard the CPM platform as the best for recovery of Moldovan economy;

6. Scenario prognosis for the country's nearest future includes three levels. The first and the highest one – state of confidence – is being expected by minority of those interviewed (from 6.6% to 20.5%). At the same time 34.3% are anxious and 44.6% respondents are alarmed about their nearest future;
7. Majority of the population (70.7%) consider economic development to be top-priority. At the same time, circa half of respondents (46.0%) place raising of the targeted assistance to poor strata of the population among top-priority problems;
8. In Moldova appeared a significant amount of people living on the verge of survival. Data of the research allow presenting number of the indigent in two aspects: as evaluation of poverty of others and evaluation of own poverty. Based on the first method there are 64.9% of those requiring social assistance. Based on the second – 57.4% of Moldovan population. These estimates are rather smaller than the official data (Department of Statistics and Sociology) under which 78% of Moldova's population live below the poverty line (July, 2003);
9. Public opinion of the country (81.3%) to rendering social assistance to the poor strata of the population is positive. Only 12.0% of respondents think that social payments induce people not to work;
10. At the same time, volume of social assistance rendered to the poorest is estimated by respondents to be insufficient. Two thirds of them – 65.0% - consider that “if this assistance is not raised, its beneficiaries will just be unable to survive”;
11. Respondents think that the main defect of the social assistance system existing since 2000 is that it is rendered to many people who do not need it (inclusion error), while those really poor are ignored and lack necessary assistance (exclusion error). The current system contains many gaps that allow its illegal obtaining. That is the opinion of 76.2% of respondents, while 95.9% of those interviewed think that number of those who obtain social assistance illegally is “large” and “very large”;
12. The population shows understanding of the necessity to change the current social assistance system: 82.8% of the interviewed persons agree that social payments are to be aimed at the most indigent population first of all. At that, 46.2% think that such changes are necessary to be implemented gradually and only 3.1% - immediately. Needs are considered to be the main criterion of rendering social assistance (33.2%). 15.9% consider that past merits and services should be the main criterion. 48.3% of the country's population advocate combination of both criteria.

How quick the impending reformation of the social assistance system will be is up to the Government. It is most likely that decisive phase will ensue after the next parliamentary elections of 2005. Taking this into account the Government disposes of time for the preparatory stage, to implant the principle “needs-based assistance” into the current social assistance system based on categories. In the course of time, after 2005, importance of this “embryo” will turn out to be decisive during transition, to the mixed system at first (categories + needs), and later to the needs-based system of social assistance, i.e. to the system fully oriented at persons who really need assistance of the state.