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HUNGARIANS TOP EUROPEAN SURVEY ON URGENCY OF HEALTHCARE REFORM

A new survey of public attitudes to the future of healthcare, conducted by Populus for the Stockholm Network think tank, shows that more people in Hungary believe their healthcare system needs reforming than in any other country surveyed.

| Does your health system need reforming? | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------|----------|--------------------------------|
| (REFORM INDEX) | | | | |
| | Yes (Urgently) | Yes | No | Yes (Urgently)/Yes minus No |
| HUNGARY | 85 | 10 | 2 | 93 |
| Poland | 86 | 7 | 4 | 89 |
| Germany | 76 | 14 | 7 | 83 |
| Czech Republic | 64 | 22 | 6 | 80 |
| Slovakia | 62 | 22 | 6 | 78 |
| Britain | 63 | 24 | 10 | 77 |
| AVERAGE | 65 | 21 | 9 | 77 |
| France | 65 | 20 | 11 | 74 |
| Italy | 60 | 24 | 10 | 74 |
| Sweden | 58 | 24 | 11 | 71 |
| Spain | 46 | 35 | 14 | 67 |
| Netherlands | 54 | 24 | 15 | 63 |

Despite this, Hungarians claim to be less pessimistic than any other nation surveyed about the prospects for their healthcare system in the absence of reform over the next ten years. Half of Hungarians believe that the quality of healthcare in their country will get worse in the absence of reform. However, more than a quarter (27%) believe that healthcare will actually improve in the absence of reform, while 19% say standards will remain the same. This gives Hungary a 'Pessimism Ranking' of 42%, the lowest level of net pessimism among any of the countries in the study. Hungarians are also reluctant to travel for treatment abroad relatively speaking. Though a majority would do so by 59% to 38% it is a slimmer one than in any country surveyed other than Germany and France (where a majority would choose to stay at home).

On specific, key performance measures:

- 99% of Hungarians rate being treated at a time and place to suit them as being important – the highest proportion of any country surveyed and above the average of 91%.
- Yet only one in five (20%) say their system is good on the time taken between diagnosis and treatment, and only (28%) say it actually performs well on treating people at a time and place to suit them

Asked which specific measures would improve the quality of care, more people in Hungary than in any other country believe that increasing the number of medicines and treatments available to patients will improve things. Four out of five (79%) people say this, including 84% of 15-24 year olds. The next most popular reform is increasing the number of doctors and hospitals, by a two to one majority (65% to 31%)

| Reforms most likely to increase the quality of care | | | |
|--|--------|------------|-----|
| | Likely | Not likely | Net |
| Increasing number of medicines and treatments | 79 | 16 | 63 |
| Increasing range of doctors and hospitals | 65 | 31 | 34 |
| Giving patients more information about their illness | 62 | 33 | 29 |
| Making it easier for patients to spend their own money on health | 53 | 36 | 17 |
| Giving patients more control over public spending on health | 38 | 55 | -17 |

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

- *Poles Apart? Eastern European attitudes to healthcare* by Helen Disney (ed.) is published by the Stockholm Network priced £10. The Stockholm Network is a unique service organisation for Europe's market-oriented think tanks and thinkers. A full PDF file of the survey can be downloaded at: www.stockholm-network.org.
- The survey findings for Hungary will be launched to the media on Tuesday 7 June at 11.00am at the Budapest Hilton Westend Hess A. ter 1-3, Budapest, Hungary H-1014. The event is jointly hosted by the Institute for Transitional Democracy and International Security (ITDIS) and the Stockholm Network. RSVP to Sebestyén Gorka.
- Populus conducts monthly polls for *The Times* among other clients. It interviewed 1000 people representative of age, gender and region in each of Poland, Hungary and Slovakia over the phone between 17 January and 7 February 2005, and in each of the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden over the phone between 26 January & 22 February 2004.