

**National Democratic Institute for International Affairs  
Montenegro**

**Key Findings  
Tracking Poll – February 2004**

**February 26, 2004**

## INTRODUCTION

The following report is a presentation and analysis of key findings from NDI's second tracking survey. It follows a baseline survey conducted in April 2003 and an initial tracking survey in September 2003. The report represents the third in a series of NDI political research in Montenegro in 2003 and 2004. The project will continue with the conduct of additional quarterly tracking polls throughout the coming year.

This series of public opinion surveys follows on from a series of eight polls conducted by NDI between March 2001 and April 2002. The baseline questionnaire for this new series that began in April 2003 was substantially changed to reflect current issues of the day. Since then, the basic framework of the questionnaire has been maintained. Therefore, when possible and relevant, this analysis will make comparisons with results from the April 2003 baseline and September 2003 tracking poll.

The current research is the property of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and is supported financially by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Its primary purpose is to assist NDI's partners – the political parties in Montenegro – to improve their ability to represent the interests of and communicate with the people of Montenegro. The research project is part of a political party assistance program conducted by NDI whose goal is to support the development of a democratic multi-party political system.

Between 12 and 18 February, 1,231 residents in Montenegro participated in face-to-face interviews designed to measure their attitudes about current government institutions, reform initiatives, the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, the political parties and other issues of importance to voters. The interviews were conducted in each of Montenegro's 21 municipalities. Prism Research, a polling firm established in Australia with offices throughout the former Yugoslavia, conducted the fieldwork.

The margin of error on a sample of 1,200 is +/- 3 percent.

In the United States, Canada and Western Europe, political parties conduct public opinion surveys in order to test the public attitudes regarding topical issues of the day. Results are then used to develop plans to communicate with the public. If the planning is done effectively and implemented properly, a political party can successfully compete in elections. In this context, public opinion surveys are not used as a means of predicting the outcome of upcoming elections. **This report should equally be viewed as an assessment of public attitudes in Montenegro at the moment and not as a predictor of the outcome of any future elections.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Most Important Concern: Living Standards and Jobs**

In February 2004, 81 percent of respondents described the current economic situation in Montenegro as bad or very bad; and, as was the case in September 2003, 89 percent identified “improved living standards” as the most important or second most important issue when deciding for which party to vote. This priority was ahead of all other choices by 31 percent. When asked which of the government’s economic reform goals respondents considered most important, 45 percent identified job creation. Meanwhile, 21 percent of respondents identified lower unemployment as the most significant government achievement in 2003.

### **Governing Institutions and Reforms**

After a year of governing, 69 percent of respondents declare themselves to be dissatisfied with the current government. Asked to explain why they are dissatisfied, 48 percent said that the current government had done practically nothing in the last year and another 25 percent did not think that the government’s initiatives addressed the key problems in society. Of the 31 percent who were satisfied with the current government, 59 percent believed that the government had laid a good foundation for future reforms in the past year. From a limited list of ministries, the Ministry of Agriculture (28 percent) and Ministry of Health (11 percent) were considered to have achieved the most results in the past year.

Since April 2003, trust in the *elected* republic and union institutions has fallen about 15 percent to an average of 40 percent trust. Dissatisfaction with municipal governments has decreased in the last four months, especially in Podgorica and Niksic.

In the coming year, respondents identify reform of state administration, the provision of affordable credit and reducing the tax burden as the most necessary policy reforms. When fully implemented, 16 percent believe that the privatization laws will yield the most significant results for Montenegro’s future development, followed by VAT, the Labor Law and the Tourism Law. In the future, 32 percent and 25 percent, respectively, consider the Law on Extra Profit and Law on Restitution as priorities for adoption and implementation.

As the government continues to push ahead with reforms, which will most certainly require a reduction in state expenditures and stimulation of private initiative, it is interesting to note that 80 percent of respondents believe that it is the government’s responsibility to guarantee all residents’ basic living needs, whereas only 14 percent believe that individuals alone determine their basic living needs based on their willingness to work hard.

## **Vote Intention**

Almost two-thirds of respondents (64 percent) believe that political parties put their own party interests in front of the needs of Montenegro most of the time. Given this assessment, it is not surprising that, when asked for whom they would vote if elections were held this week in Montenegro, almost one-third of respondents (30 percent) said they would not vote, were undecided or gave no answer. Among decided voters, 28 percent said they would vote for the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), 14 percent for the Socialist People's Party (SNP) and 8 percent for Liberal Alliance (LSCG). In the event that Group for Changes (GZP), a nongovernmental organization that has advocated repeatedly and publicly for alternative reform measures, were to register as a political party, 24 percent of respondents said that they would probably vote for it.

## **The Defining Division**

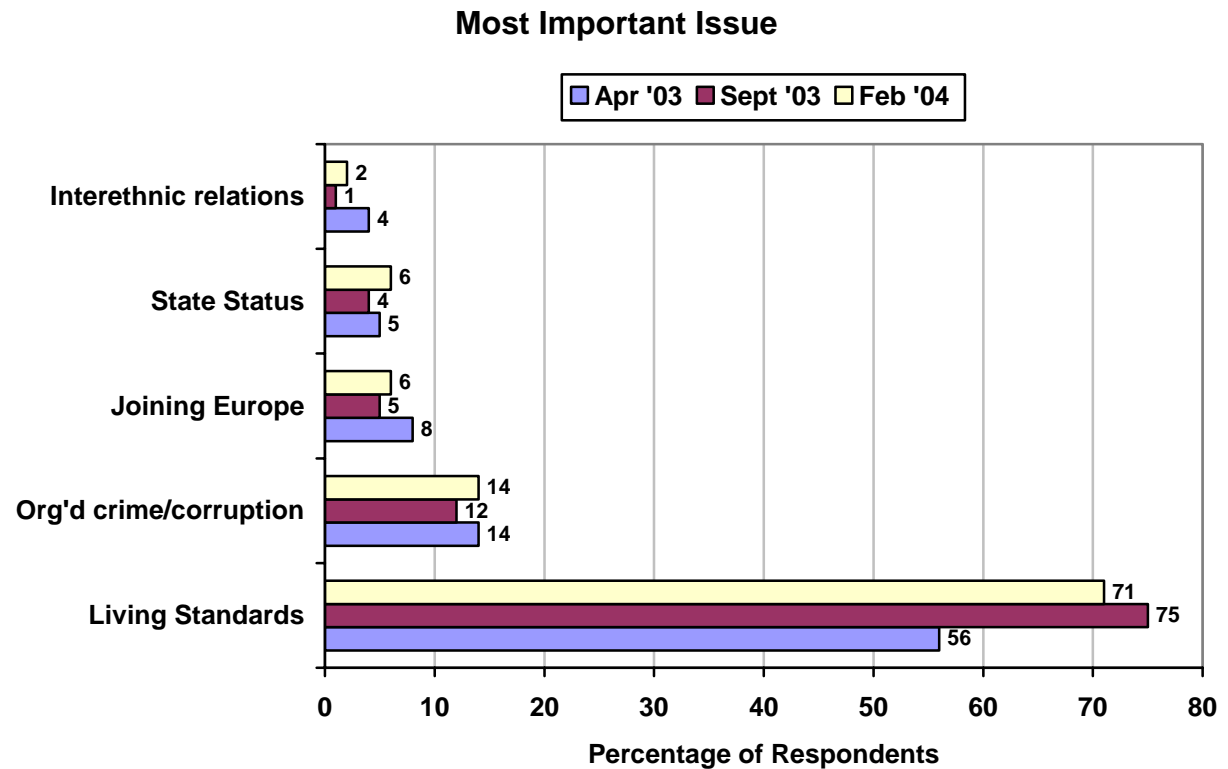
The defining division in Montenegro continues to be one's ethnic identification. Self-identified Montenegrins, Bosniaks and Muslims tend to trust the government, the parties that make up the government and its reform initiatives, while self-identified Serbs are distrustful of the ruling bodies and its initiatives. It is interesting to note in the February 2004 poll that those who identify themselves as Albanian, Croat or something else exhibit, through their answers to questions, a disappointment with the current governing bodies. Self-identified Serbs, Albanians, Croats and others are most likely to be unable to consider any government achievements as positive.

As was seen in September, those living in Coastal municipalities have a generally more negative opinion about the current direction of Montenegro, as do those living in Niksic, Pljevlja, Pluzine, Savnik and Zabljak. Respondents living in Central municipalities (Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica) are more likely to be uncertain about the best direction for Montenegro, rather than to reject the current direction.

## MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

From the following list, respondents were asked to name the issue they consider most important when deciding for which party to vote:

- Improved living standards (better and more regular salaries, more work places, etc.);
- Struggle against organized crime and corruption;
- Joining Europe;
- State status of Montenegro (independence or maintenance of state union with Serbia); and,
- Interethnic relations in Montenegro.

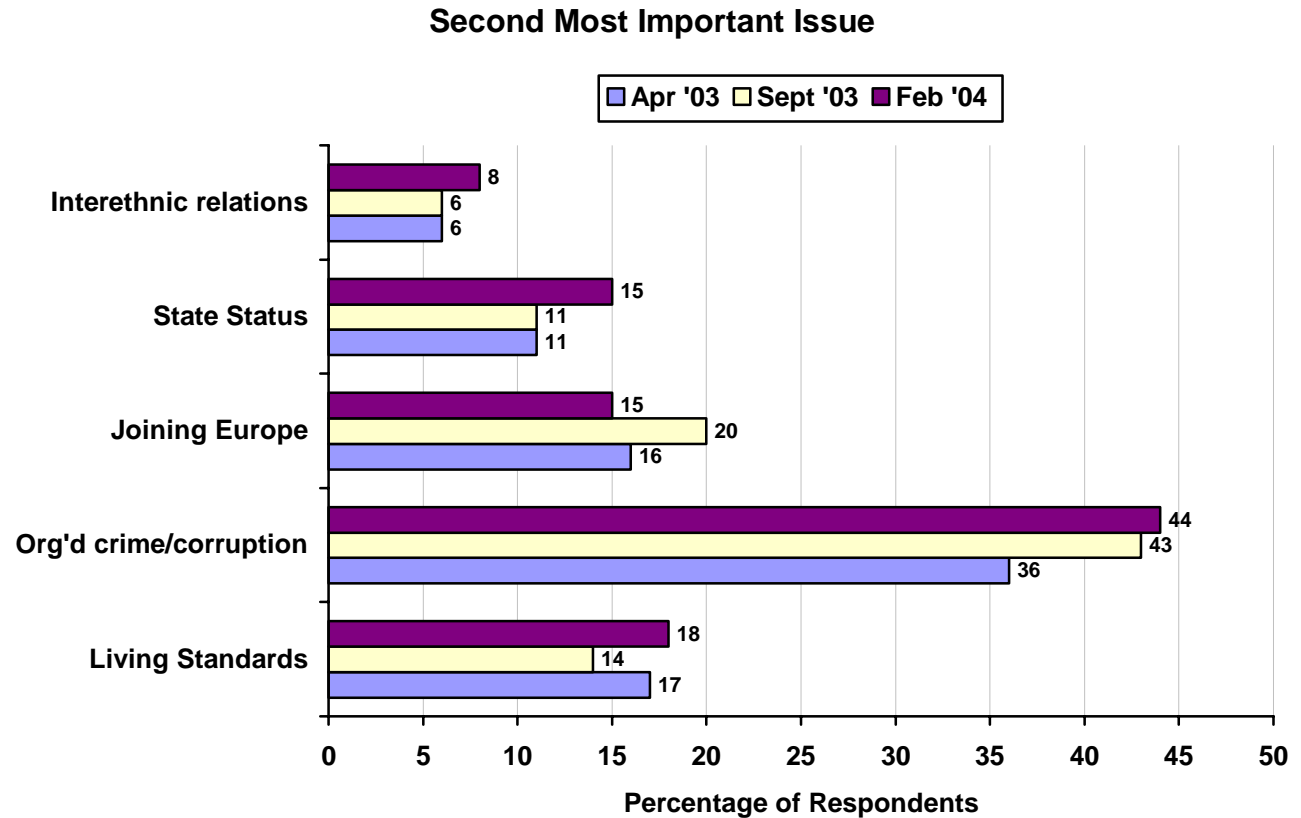


As a first choice, the importance to voters of a party's ability to *improve living standards* continues to be ahead of all other issues by 57 percent.

## SECOND MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

Respondents were then asked to name the second most important issue in making their electoral choice. The options remained the same and were:

- Improved living standards (better and more regular salaries, more work places, etc.);
- Struggle against organized crime and corruption;
- Joining Europe;
- State status of Montenegro (independence or maintenance of state union with Serbia); and,
- Interethnic relations in Montenegro.

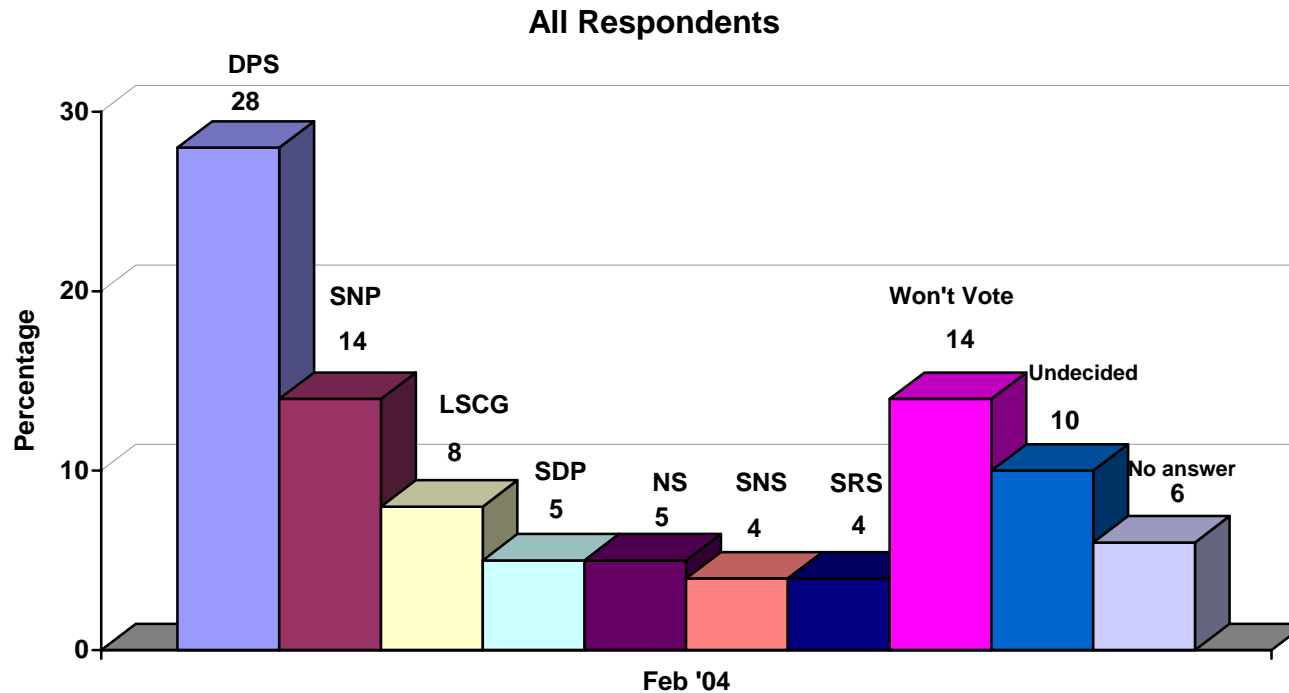


The *struggle against organized crime and corruption* continues to be the most dominant issue as a second choice, followed by *improved living standards*, *joining Europe* and *state status*.

## VOTE INTENTION

Respondents were asked: “If parliamentary elections were held again this week, for which party would you probably vote?” The chart below illustrates the answers received. As was seen in September, there is a relatively large percentage (30 percent) who won’t vote, are undecided or choose not to answer this question.

In a follow-up question, respondents were asked if they would consider voting for Group for Changes (GZP) if it transformed itself into a political party. Twenty-four (24) percent responded that they would probably vote for GZP – compared to 30 percent in September 2003.

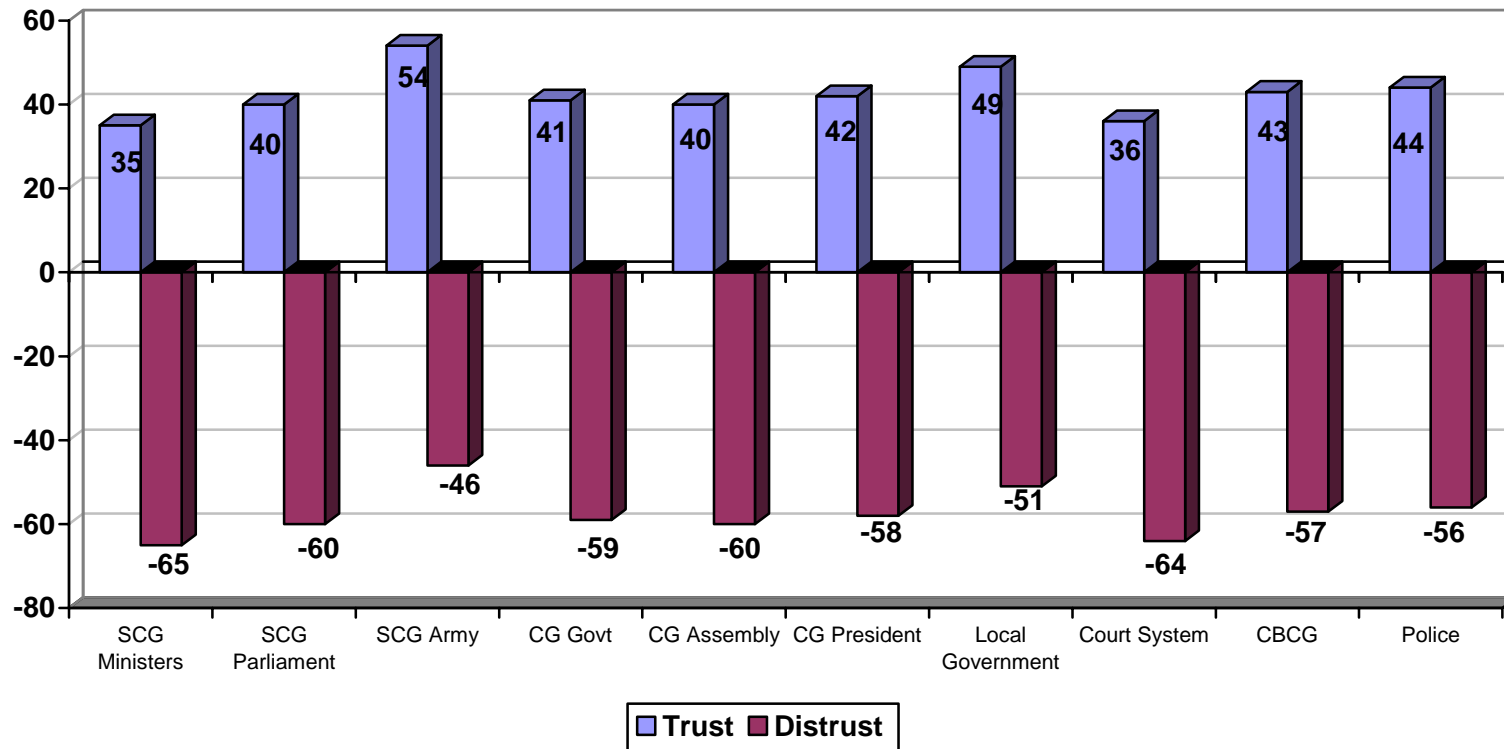


\* All other parties received less than 2 percent of support among respondents sampled.

## TRUST IN STATE INSTITUTIONS

Respondents were asked how much they trusted the following state institutions. Since April 2003, trust in *elected* state institutions at the union and republic levels has fallen an average of 15 percent. With the exception of the Army, trust in state institutions is less than 50 percent. The most significant decline in trust since September 2003 is a 7 percent decline in the prosecutors and the courts.

Trust in Institutions





## **AFTER A YEAR IN OFFICE, ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT**

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the current Montenegrin government. Thirty-one (31) percent said they were somewhat satisfied or very satisfied, while 69 percent said they were somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Satisfaction is highest among those who identify themselves as Montenegrin, Muslim and Bosniak, while dissatisfaction is highest among those who identify themselves as ethnic Serbs, ethnic Albanians and ethnic Croats.

The 31 percent of respondents who are satisfied with the current government were asked which of the following statements best characterized their reason for satisfaction.

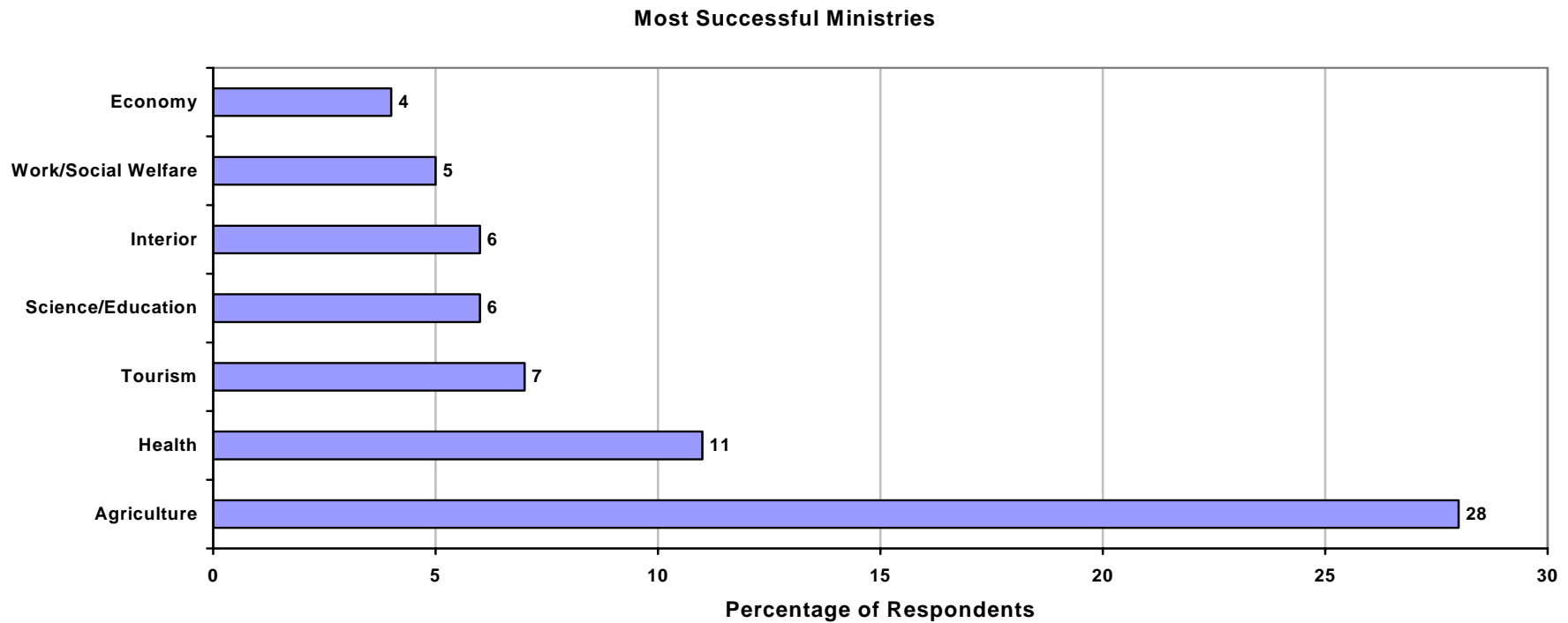
- The government has made significant progress in reviving the economy. 18%
- The government has laid a good foundation for future reforms. 59%
- The government has done a good job of protecting Montenegro's position within the union. 18%

The 69 percent of respondents who were dissatisfied with the current government were asked which of the following statements best characterized their reason for dissatisfaction.

- The government's initiatives do not address the key problems in Montenegrin society. 25%
- Because of the need to respond to scandals, the government is less effective than it could be. 21%
- The government has done practically nothing in the last year. 48%

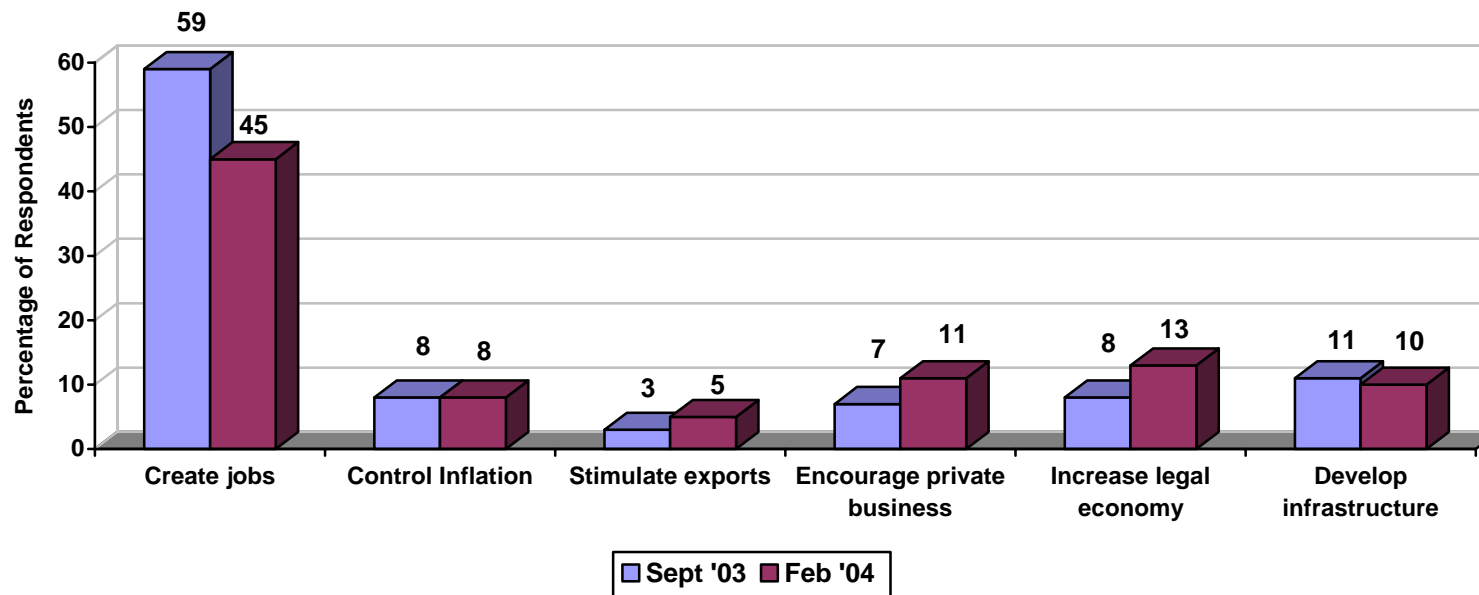
Of all the government's announced achievements during 2003, 21 percent of respondents considered lower unemployment to be the most significant result, followed by 9 percent who considered the results in the field of agriculture as significant and 7 percent who considered the successful tourist season and lower inflation as significant. One-third of respondents (32 percent) were unable to identify a most significant achievement.

**Assessment of Individual Ministries:** Respondents were asked to identify from a select list of ministries which one had achieved the most results in the past year. The chart below graphs the top responses. Other ministries were identified as most successful by 3 percent or less of respondents. These included the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning (3 percent), Ministry of Justice (2 percent), Ministry of Finance (1 percent) and Ministry of Maritime and Transportation (1 percent).



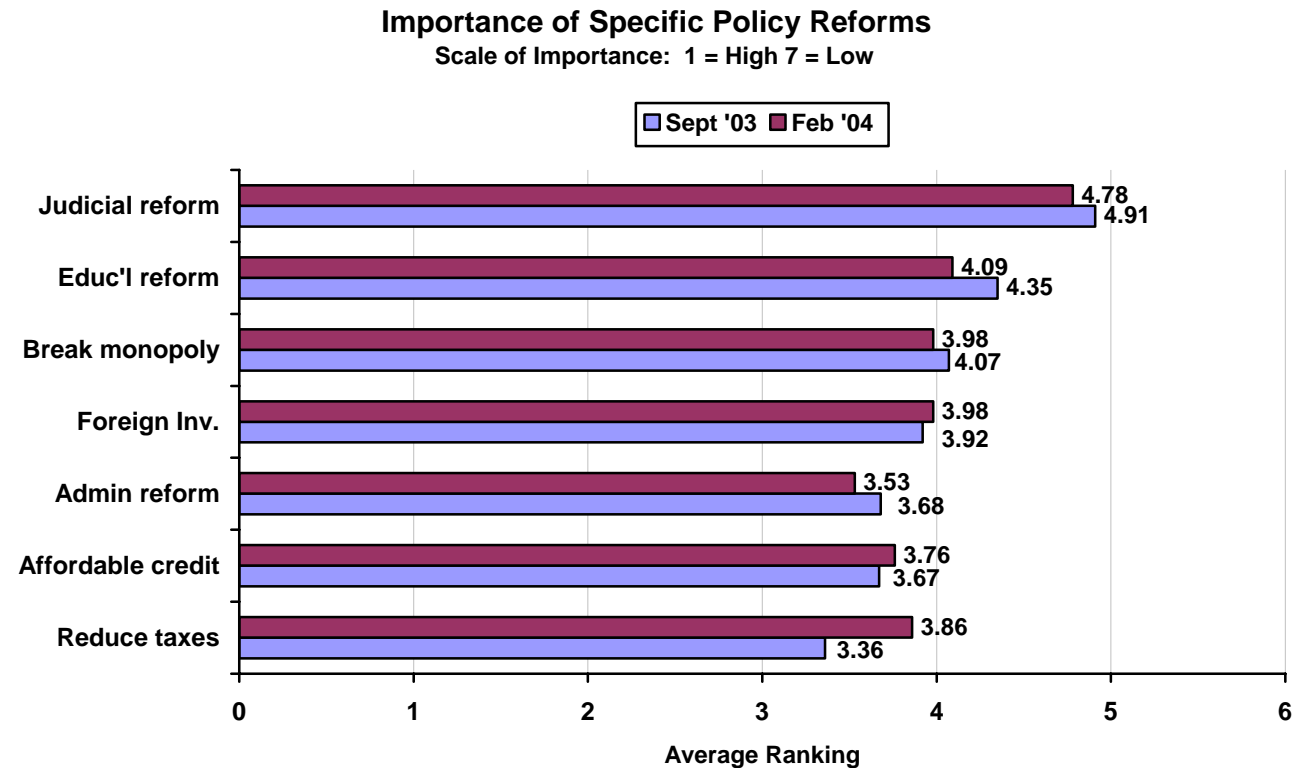
**ECONOMIC REFORM AGENDA:** In 2003, Prime Minister Djukanovic announced a four-year Economic Reform Agenda for Montenegro. The plan established a number of goals, and respondents were asked to choose the goal that was most important to them. Women and youth were more likely to identify job creation as the most important goal, while men and those over 50 years of age were more likely to identify development of infrastructure. Those living at the Coast were also more likely to choose development of infrastructure rather than creating new jobs as a priority goal.

**Importance of the Government's Economic Reform Goals**



Respondents were asked to rank the importance of the following policy reforms to the achievement of the government's economic reform agenda:

- Reform of the judiciary;
- Reform of the educational system;
- Breaking the power of monopoly businesses;
- Attracting foreign investment;
- Reform of state administration/public services;
- Providing credits at affordable interest rates; and,
- Reducing the tax burden.



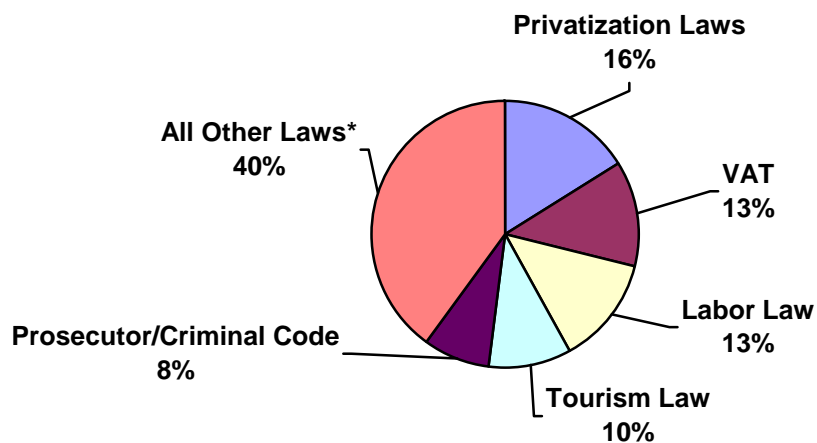
In comparison to September 2003, *reform of state administration* has taken the place of *reducing the tax burden* as the most important policy reform among respondents. *Reducing the tax burden* is now in third place.

In the last several months, there have been a number of labor actions (strikes, e.g.) precipitated by the restructuring plans of private, privatized or state-owned companies or by reforms in the public administration. As Montenegro transforms its formerly state-controlled economic system into a system that relies on market capitalism, the February poll explored respondents understanding of their role in that transformation process by asking them to choose from the following statements the one that was closest to their opinion.

<b>STATEMENTS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS</b>
The state has the responsibility to guarantee the basic living needs (employment, housing, health care, pension, etc.) of all residents.	80%
Citizens alone determine their basic living needs based on their willingness to work hard.	14%

**ALREADY ADOPTED LAWS:** From a select list of laws adopted in the last two years, respondents were asked to identify the one that they considered would yield the most significant results for Montenegro's future development when implemented. It is interesting to note that those living at the Coast consider the Tourism Law and the privatization laws as more significant, while those living in Niksic, Pljevlja, Pluzine, Savnik and Zabljak consider the Law on the Prosecutor and the Criminal Code to be relatively more important for Montenegro's future development. Additionally, a high proportion of those who identify themselves as Serbs identify no law as able to achieve significant results.

### Reform Law Expected to Yield the Most Significant Results



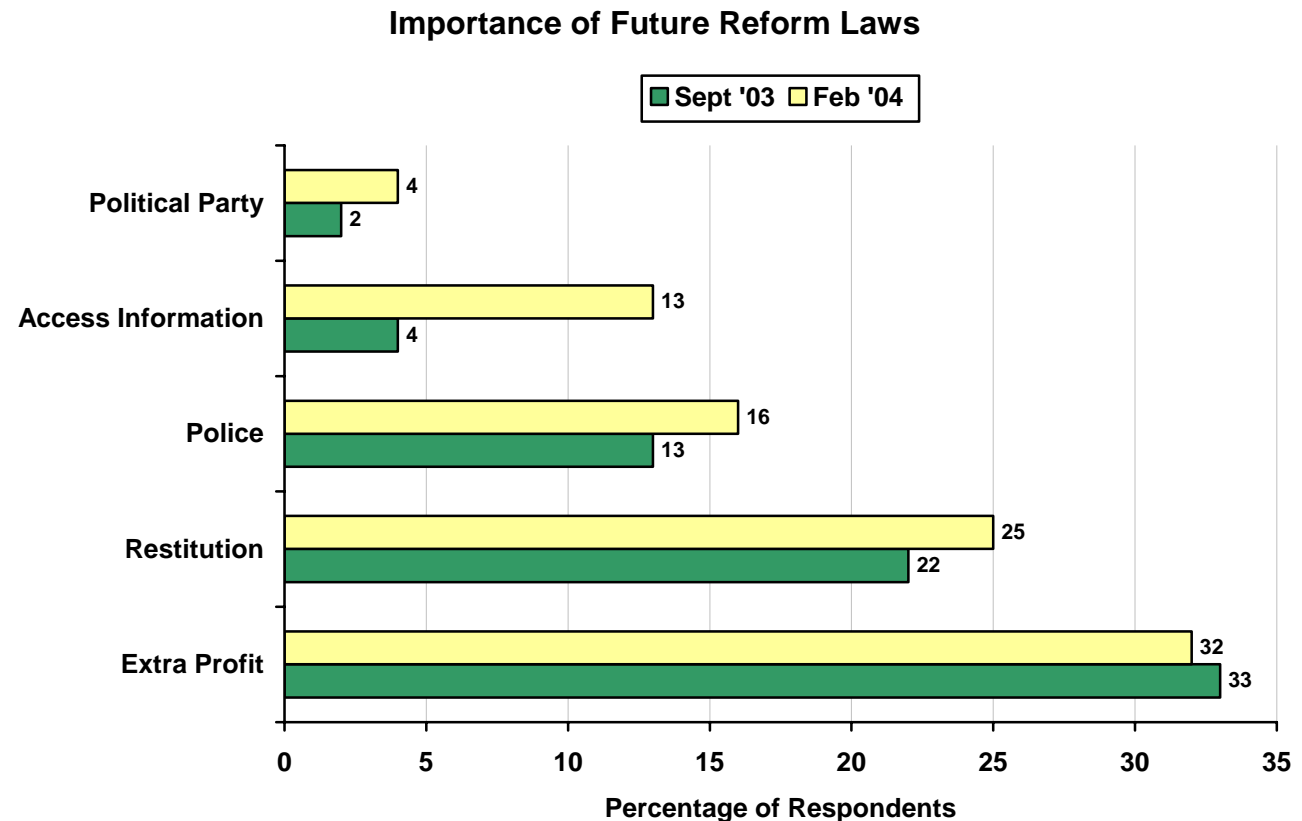
\* Other laws included:

- Law on Pension and Invalid Insurance (5 percent)
- Law on Courts (4 percent)
- Local Self-Government Laws (4 percent)
- Banking Laws (4 percent)
- Laws on Media Reform (4 percent)
- No law/No answer (19 percent)

## FUTURE REFORM INITIATIVES

Government, opposition and independent organizations have identified other reform laws as priorities. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of these envisioned laws. They were asked to make their selection from the following list:

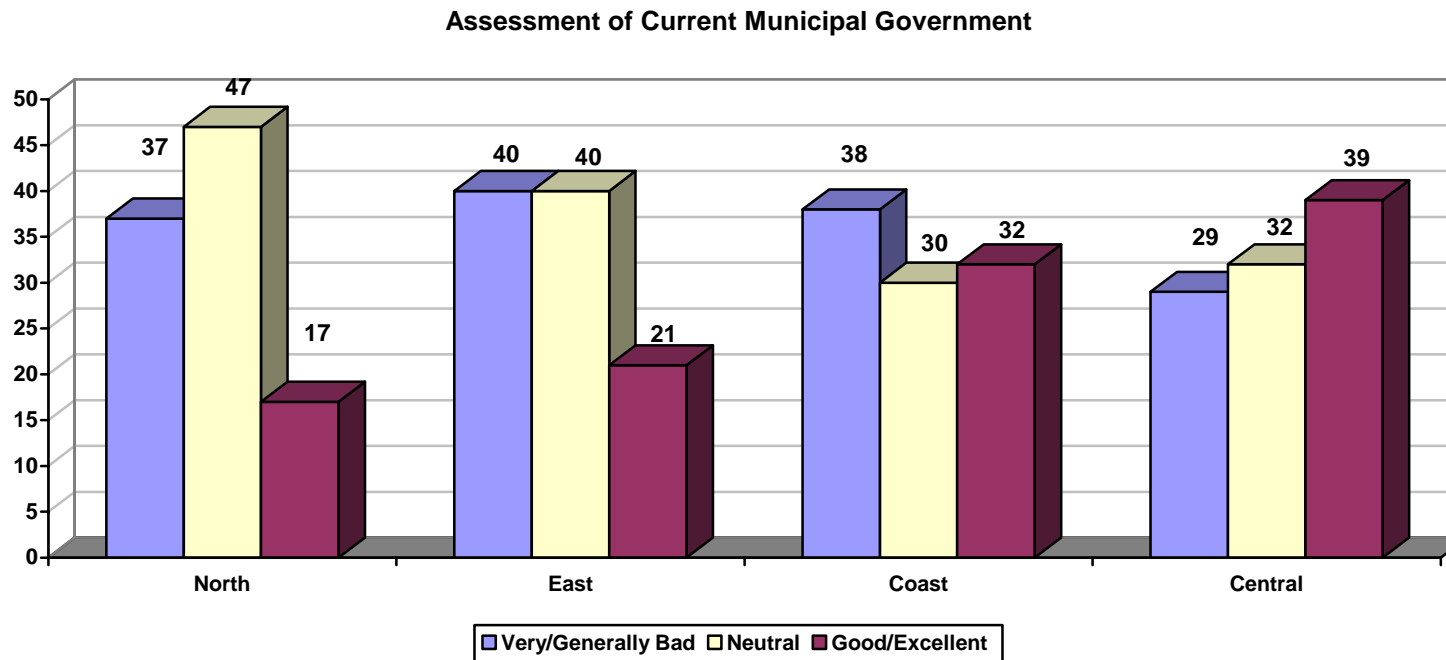
- Law on Extra Profit;
- Law on Restitution;
- Laws on Police and State Security;
- Law on Free Access to Information; and,
- Laws on Political Party and Party Financing.



The importance of the *Law on Free Access to Information* has increased 9 percent since September 2003. Those living in Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica have a relatively higher level of interest in the *extra profit law*, while those living at the Coast are more likely to choose the *Law on Restitution* or the *police laws*. Those living in Niksic, Pluzine, Pljevlja, Savnik and Zabljak are more likely to choose the *Law on Free Access to Information*.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Respondents were asked to rate the work of their municipal government. Overall, dissatisfaction with municipal governments has decreased 8 percent since September, falling as much as 13 percent in the “northern” municipalities. Satisfaction has also increased 13 percent in “central” municipalities.



- **North:** Niksic, Pljevlja, Pluzine, Savnik and Zabljak
- **East:** Andrijevisa, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Kolasin, Mojkovac, Plav and Rozaje

- **Coast:** Bar, Budva, Herceg Novi, Kotor, Tivat and Ulcinj
- **Central:** Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica



## ATTITUDES ABOUT THE POLITICAL SCENE IN MONTENEGRO

In this February 2004 poll, respondents were asked several questions regarding the political scene in Montenegro.

First, regarding the opposition's continuing boycott of parliament, respondents were asked which group of parties they believed had suffered more damage as a result of the eight-month boycott. Almost half of respondents (48 percent) identified the opposition parties as having suffered the most damage, while 27 percent said governing parties had suffered the most. One-quarter (25 percent) of respondents were unable to make a choice. Those living in Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica are less likely to identify the governing parties and more likely to be unable to provide an answer, while those living in Niksic, Pluzine, Pljevlja, Savnik and Zabljak are more likely to identify the governing parties.

Asked what opposition parties should focus on regardless of whether or not they return to parliament, 71 percent of respondents believe that the opposition should concentrate on offering alternative solutions for economic improvement and 23 percent believe that it should concentrate on revealing affairs in government.

Regarding the functioning of the SDP-DPS coalition government, respondents were asked which of the following statements best represented their opinion. Since September 2003, the opinion about the role that SDP plays in government is relatively unchanged.

STATEMENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS	
	Sept. 2003	Feb. 2004
1. As a coalition partner in the Montenegrin government, SDP plays an important and necessary role in controlling the work of the DPS.	36%	31%
2. DPS would work much better in government without the SDP as a coalition partner.	27%	27%
3. Do not know/No answer	36%	42%

Finally, respondents were asked to what degree they believed that political parties in Montenegro place the needs of Montenegro, most of the time, above their own party interests. Almost two-thirds of respondents (64 percent) believed that parties put their own interests in front of the needs of Montenegro, while only 36 percent believed that political parties place the needs of Montenegro, most of the time, before their own party interests.

## UNION OF SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

One year ago – on 4 February 2003 – the Federal parliament adopted the Constitutional Charter, establishing the state union of Serbia and Montenegro.

Respondents were asked, which of the following statements best represented their opinion about the state union and the Charter. Compared to April 2003, there is an insignificant change in attitudes toward what the Charter represents. Demographically, it is most interesting that those living in Cetinje, Danilovgrad and Podgorica are least able to decide what the Charter signifies to them.

STATEMENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS		
	Apr. '03	Sept. '03	Feb. '04
The Charter establishes the foundation for preserving the state of Serbia and Montenegro. In three years time, there will be no interest in splitting.	36%	38%	39%
The Charter protects the interests of Montenegro and preserves the right of its citizens to decide in three years time on independence.	48%	45%	42%
Do not know/No answer	17%	17%	19%

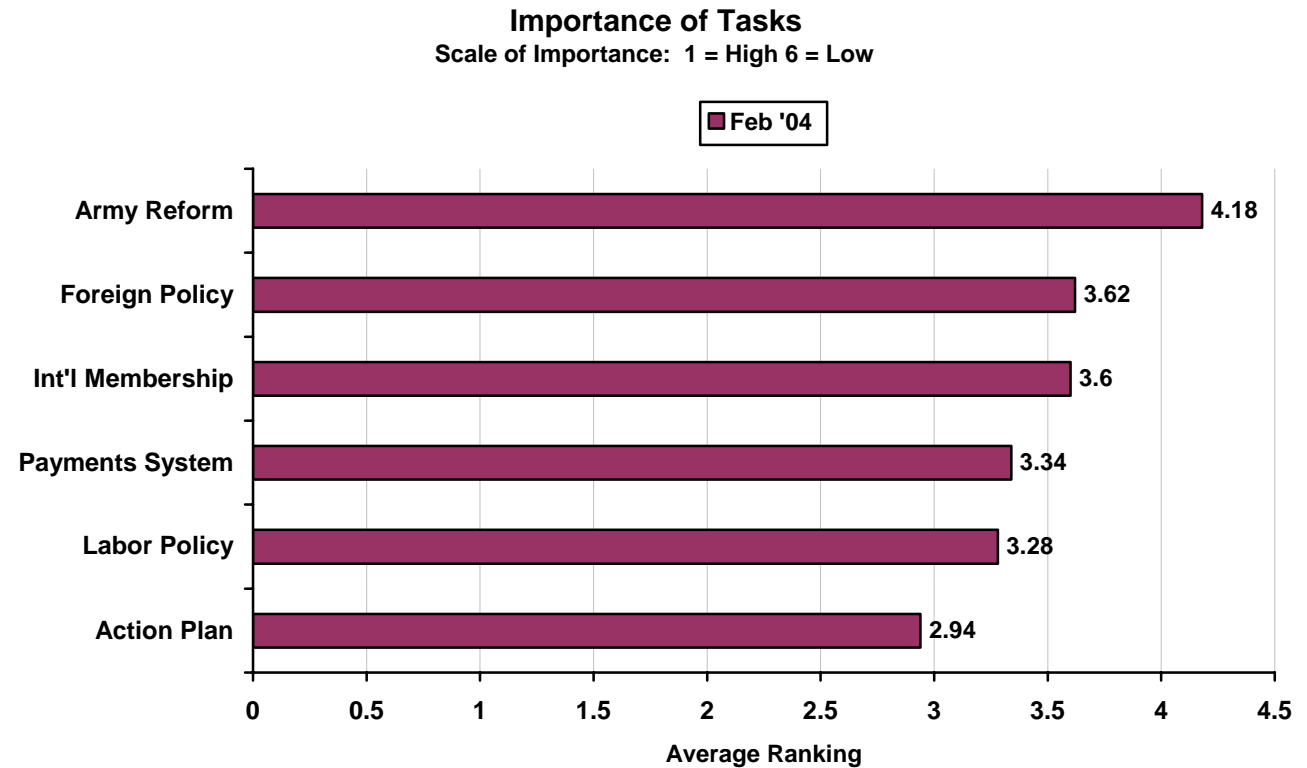
A number of deadlines established in the Constitutional Charter have been missed. Neither Serbia or Montenegro has harmonized its constitution with the Charter, the “union” Court has not been established and symbols for the new state have not been adopted. Asked who was most responsible for the stalled implementation of the Charter, 39 percent of respondents identified the Government in Montenegro and 23 percent the outgoing government in Serbia. The oppositions in Serbia (former) and in Montenegro were each blamed by 6 percent of respondents for the Charter’s stalled implementation, while 27 percent could not answer.

### *Importance of Upcoming Tasks for Establishing the State*

In order to establish a functioning state, the following are some of the tasks that still need to be completed. Respondents were asked to rank these tasks in order of importance.<sup>1</sup> According to respondents, the most important task is *adopting an action plan for harmonization of the internal market and foreign trade regime*, while the least important task is *reforming the army*.

Offered tasks were:

- Establishing an effective payment operations system between Montenegro and Serbia
- Reforming the Army
- Creating a harmonized foreign policy
- Adopting an Action Plan for harmonization of the internal market and foreign trade regime
- Harmonizing labor and employment policy
- Gaining admittance to international institutions such as the Council of Europe, NATO's Partnership for Peace, etc.



<sup>1</sup> In April and September, respondents were asked separately how important each of these tasks were. In general, 80 percent or more of respondents considered each task somewhat important or very important. In this poll, the question was changed in order to force people to identify priorities.

## **THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE STATE UNION**

The EU Summit in Thessaloniki in June 2003 welcomed the future integration of the countries of the former Yugoslavia into the European Union based on their willingness to implement political and economic reforms. Respondents were asked several questions about this process and Montenegro's responsibility in that process.

First, respondents were asked whose responsibility it was to bring countries like Serbia and Montenegro into the European Union. More than half of respondents (56 percent) identified the state union and its member states as the responsible parties, while 37 percent identified the European Union.

Regarding the EU's relations toward Serbia and Montenegro, 53 percent believed that the demands that the EU makes on Serbia and Montenegro are to be expected and 38 percent believed that the EU put a great deal of pressure on Serbia and Montenegro.

Those who identify themselves as Serbs are more likely to believe that EU integration is Europe's responsibility and that the EU is pressuring the state union too much, while those who identify themselves as Bosniak, Muslim, Albanian or Croat are more likely to believe that the EU's demands are reasonable.

**Benefits of EU Membership:** Respondents were then asked to select among the following options the one that best reflected their understanding of the benefits of becoming a member of the EU. The table below compares the responses from April 2003, September 2003 and February 2004.

The offered options were:

- Ability to Travel Freely;
- Access to a Larger Market;
- Use of a Common Currency;
- Access to European goods and investment;
- Adoption of European work standards; and,
- European salaries.

