



Communications Directorate
PUBLIC OPINION UNIT

15/09/2008

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2009

Standard Eurobarometer (EB 69) - Spring 2008 First results: European average and major national trends

Population: EU 15+

Coverage: EU 27 (26 661 European citizens)

Date of fieldwork: March - April 2009

I. CAMPAIGN ISSUES

In your opinion, on which of the following issues should the election campaign for the next European elections focus? Which is the most important? (QC6T)

| Campaign issues – 2009 elections | EU27 |
|---|------|
| Unemployment | 47% |
| Economic growth | 45% |
| Inflation and purchasing power | 41% |
| Crime | 37% |
| Terrorism | 35% |
| Combating climate change | 33% |
| Future of pensions | 32% |
| Immigration | 32% |
| Agriculture | 17% |
| The single currency, the euro | 17% |
| The EU's role on the international stage | 15% |
| The powers and competences of the European institutions | 12% |
| European identity and values | 12% |
| Preserving the European social model | 12% |
| DK | 5% |

❖ National variations:

➤ **Unemployment:**

- Citizens are most concerned about unemployment in Greece (83%), Hungary (69%) and Portugal (65%).
- Citizens are least concerned about unemployment in Denmark (21%), the Netherlands (25%) and the United Kingdom (29%).

- **Economic growth:**
 - Citizens are most concerned about economic growth in Greece and Cyprus (70%) and Hungary (66%).
 - Citizens are least concerned about economic growth in Austria (28%), the United Kingdom (31%) and Denmark (34%).
- **Inflation and purchasing power:**
 - Citizens are most concerned about inflation and purchasing power in Slovenia¹ (69%), France (68%) and Latvia (65%).
 - Citizens are least concerned about inflation and purchasing power in Poland (15%), the United Kingdom (21%) and Sweden (25%).
- **Crime:**
 - Citizens are most concerned about crime in Cyprus (73%), Ireland (70%) and Bulgaria (61%).
 - Citizens are least concerned about crime in France and Malta (both 21%) and the Czech Republic (27%).
- **Terrorism:**
 - Citizens are most concerned about terrorism in Spain (53%), Denmark (52%) and the United Kingdom (46%)².
 - Citizens are least concerned about terrorism in Slovenia (13%), Latvia (15%) and Lithuania and Greece (19%).
- **Climate change:**
 - Citizens are most concerned about climate change in Sweden (72%), Denmark (66%) and Finland and Cyprus (53%)
 - Citizens are least concerned about climate change in Latvia (17%), Bulgaria, Italy, Poland and Portugal (all at 18%).
- **Future of pensions:**
 - Citizens are most concerned about the future of pensions in Greece (54%), Latvia (53%) Hungary (48%).
 - Citizens are least concerned about the future of pensions in Denmark (7%), the Netherlands (14%) and Sweden (15%).

¹ Slovenia – a member of the euro zone since January 2007.

² Spain and the United Kingdom have both experienced terrorist attacks (ES/UK). In Denmark this issue is the subject of important ideological debates.

II. VOTING CRITERIA

Which of the following criteria will be the main criterion that helps you to decide during the European elections? (QC4T)

| Voting criteria for the 2009 elections | EU27 |
|---|-------------|
| Candidates' experience of European issues | 40% |
| Candidates' positions on national issues | 37% |
| Candidates' positions on European issues | 36% |
| Positions of the candidates' parties on European issues | 30% |
| Candidates' personality | 30% |
| Candidates' experience at national level | 29% |
| Candidates' reputation | 17% |
| Other | 1% |
| DK | 17% |

❖ National variations:

➤ **Candidates' experience of European issues:**

- This criterion is most important in Sweden (60%), Slovenia and Luxembourg (59%) and Finland (57%).
- This criterion is least important in Portugal (25%), Romania and Italy (30%) and Spain (31%).

➤ **Candidates' positions on national issues:**

- This criterion is most important in Cyprus (70%), Greece (61%) and Slovakia (53%).
- This criterion is least important in Estonia and Luxembourg (27%), Latvia (28%) and Poland and the United Kingdom (both 31%).

➤ **Candidates' positions on European issues:**

- This criterion is most important in Denmark (57%), Sweden and the Netherlands (54%) and Greece (48%).
- This criterion is least important in Lithuania and Latvia (21%), Bulgaria (23%) and Malta (26%).

➤ **Positions of the candidates' parties on European issues:**

- This criterion is most important in the Netherlands (56%), Denmark (51%) and Sweden (45%).
- This criterion is least important in Lithuania (11%), Latvia (14%) and Estonia (15%).

III. TRUST AND REPUTATION (Standard EB 69 questions - Spring 2009)

NB: These questions were not asked as part of the survey on the EP. They are part of the traditional questions asked in the Standard EB.

A. Level of trust in the European Parliament

For [the European Parliament], please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it? (QA18.1)

| Level of trust in the EP | EU27 | Change since autumn 2007 (EB 68) |
|--------------------------|------|----------------------------------|
| Tend to trust | 52% | -3 |
| Tend not to trust | 27% | = |
| DK | 21% | +3 |

❖ National variations:

- The citizens with most trust in the EP are in Belgium (71%), Slovakia (69%) and Portugal (66%).
- The citizens with least trust in the EP are in the United Kingdom (27%), Latvia (39%) and Austria (43%).

→ **Reasons given by the 52% of respondents who trust the EP**

Which of the following are the main reasons for trusting the European Parliament? (QA19a)

- 36% The European Parliament's decisions are taken in a democratic manner
- 28% The European Parliament defends the interests of all European citizens
- 23% The Members of the European Parliament are best placed to take decisions on issues concerning the EU as a whole
- 17% The European Parliament's decisions contribute to economic growth in (OUR COUNTRY)
- 15% You trust the Members of the European Parliament
- 15% You are generally in favour of the EU (SPONTANEOUS)
- 12% The European Parliament closely represents your opinion on Europe
- 6% You are well informed of the activities of the European Parliament
- 4% You generally trust the political institutions/political representatives (SPONTANEOUS)
- 1% Other
- 5% DK

→ **Reasons given by the 27% of respondents who do not trust the EP**

Which of the following are the main reasons for not trusting the European Parliament? (QA20a)

- 41% The European Parliament is too distant from ordinary citizens
- 25% You do not have enough information on the European Parliament
- 17% The European Parliament's decisions have a negative effect on economic growth in (OUR COUNTRY)
- 16% You do not trust the Members of the European Parliament

- 16% You generally do not trust the political institutions/political representatives (SPONTANEOUS)
- 13% The European Parliament does not closely represent your opinion on Europe
- 11% The Members of the European Parliament are not the best placed to take decisions on issues concerning the EU as a whole
- 9% The European Parliament's decisions are not taken in a democratic manner
- 8% You generally are not in favour of the EU (SPONTANEOUS)
- 2% Other
- 3% DK

→ **Key information:**

- 25% (of the 27% who do not trust the EP) state that they do not have enough information on the EP, while only 6% (of the 52% who do trust it) say that they do.
- 16% (of the 27% who do not trust the EP) state that they do not trust the Members of the European Parliament, compared with 15% (of the 52% who do trust it) who state that they do trust them.

NB: Level of trust in the other institutions:

| Question | Other institutions | Tend to trust | Tend not to trust | DK |
|----------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| QA18.2 | EC | 47% (-3 ¹) | 27% (+1) | 26% (+2) |
| QA18.3 | Council of the EU | 43% (-1) | 26% (+1) | 31% (=) |
| QA18.4 | ECB | 50% (-3 ²) | 24% (-1) | 26% (+4) |

B. Reputation of the European Parliament

Have you ever heard of the European Parliament? (QA16)

| | EU27 |
|-----|------|
| Yes | 87% |
| No | 11% |
| DK | 2% |

❖ National variations:

- Most citizens have heard of the EP in: Sweden and Denmark (97%) and Finland (96%).
- Fewest citizens have heard of the EP in: Italy and the United Kingdom (79%) and Latvia (82%).

→ **Key information:** This figure is very high and far exceeds those of the other institutions.

¹ Differential compared with autumn 2007.

² Differential compared with spring 2007.

NB: Reputation of the other European institutions:

| Question | Other institutions | YES | NO | DK |
|-----------------|---------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>QA16.2</i> | <i>EC</i> | 78% | 20% | 2% |
| <i>QA16.3</i> | <i>Council of the EU</i> | 62% | 34% | 4% |
| <i>QA16.4</i> | <i>ECB</i> | 73% | 25% | 2% |

C. EP's role in the life of the EU

Do you think that the EP plays an important role or not in the life of the EU? (QA17)

| | EU27 |
|-----|-------------|
| Yes | 75% |
| No | 11% |
| DK | 14% |

❖ National variations:

- The citizens who are most likely to think that the EP plays an important role in the EU are in Greece and Cyprus (both 90%) and Slovakia (88%).
- The citizens who are least likely to think that the EP plays an important role in the EU are in the United Kingdom (55%), Austria and Latvia (71%).

VI. AWARENESS

A. A slight improvement in awareness of the date

In your opinion, when will the next European elections be held (in your country)? (QC1.1)

| Date of the elections | EU27 | Change since spring 2007 |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| 2009 | 16% | + 6 |
| of which: 'June 2009' | 4% | + 2 |
| Others | 9% | - 4 |
| DK | 75% | = |

→ **Key information:**

- Knowledge of the date of the elections is increasing (+6%), particularly with regard to the exact date (June 2009, +2%), compared with autumn 2007.
- The date is slightly better known among those who already stated that they knew it during the last survey.
- **Note: the number of DK (do not know) remains stable at 75%.**

❖ National variations:

➤ Countries where the date of the elections is best known:

| | June 2009 | | 2009 | | DK | |
|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| | EB 69 | EB 68 | EB 69 | EB 68 | EB 69 | EB 68 |
| LU | 27% | 8% | 43% | 27% | 53% | 61% |
| IE | 10% | 3% | 24% | 16% | 72% | 68% |
| AT | | 1% | 27% | 15% | 62% | 65% |
| MT | 9% | 1% | 22% | 11% | 74% | 78% |
| SK | | 1% | 32% | 11% | 62% | 79% |
| RO | | 34%* | 13% | 37%* | 84% | 61% ¹ |

➤ Countries where the date of the elections is least known: (higher DK)

| | June 2009 | | 2009 | | DK | |
|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | EB 69 | EB 68 | EB 69 | EB 68 | EB 69 | EB 68 |
| FI | 0% | 0% | 3% | 4% | 94% | 89% |
| UK | 1% | 0% | 3% | 2% | 94% | 94% |
| BG | 2% | 0% | 8% | 3% | 90% | 81% |

B. Interest to be developed

The next European elections will take place in June 2009. To what extent are you interested or not in these elections? (QC2)

| | EU27 | Degree of interest |
|----------------|------|--|
| Interested | 46% | of which 8% are very interested |
| | | of which 38% are quite interested |
| Not interested | 51% | of which 29% are not interested |
| | | of which 22% are not at all interested |

¹ RO - EB 68 - date of the next elections: November 2007

❖ National variations:

➤ **The citizens that are most interested in the elections are in:**

- Romania 65% *of which very interested (13%) and quite interested (52%)*
- Malta 63% *of which very interested (22%) and quite interested (41%)*
- Ireland 62% *of which very interested (16%) and quite interested (46%)*

➤ **The citizens that are least interested in the elections are in:**

- Latvia 79% *of which not interested (49%) and not at all interested (30%)*
- Czech Republic 71% *of which not interested (40%) and not at all interested (31%)*
- Slovakia 68% *of which not interested (44%) and not at all interested (24%)*

C. Voting intentions to be encouraged

Could you tell me how likely you are to vote in the next European elections in June 2009? Please use a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means that you are completely certain that you are not going to vote and 10 means that you are completely certain that you are going to vote. You can choose a number between 1 and 10 to reflect your response. (QC3)

| Likelihood of voting | | EU27 |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------|
| Completely certain of voting | | 30% |
| Completely certain of not voting | | 14% |
| Undecided | | 51% |
| Of which | 'probably' | 31% |
| | 'probably not' | 20% |
| DK | | 5% |

→ **Key information:**

Under no circumstances should the 30% figure be considered to correspond to a turnout rate. One year before the elections these figures are merely representative of opinions not actions.

❖ National variations:

1. Of the 30% of citizens who say that they are certainly going to vote:

➤ Most certain of voting:

| | EB 69 | Turnout at 2004 elections |
|-------------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| Luxembourg ¹ | 68% | 91.34% |
| Denmark | 59% | 47.9% |
| Belgium* | 58% | 90.8% |

➤ Least certain of voting:

| | EB 69 | Turnout at 2004 elections |
|----------|-------|---------------------------|
| Portugal | 14% | 38.8% |
| Slovakia | 15% | 16.96% |
| Austria | 17% | 42.43% |

2. Of the 34% of citizens who say that they are completely certain (14%) or quite certain (20%) that they are not going to vote, the reasons for this are:

¹ BE-LU: Obligatory vote.

| a. 'Voluntary' absenteeism | | | | | |
|--|--|------------|-----------|-----------|---|
| | REASON | YES | NO | DK | NATIONAL VARIATIONS |
| QC5.1 | <i>You are not interested in politics, in elections generally</i> | 46% | 49% | 5% | Mentioned most frequently: CZ 59%, IR 58%, BG 57% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: NL 28%, DK 30%, SV 36% |
| QC5.2 | <i>You are not interested in the European elections</i> | 59% | 33% | 8% | Mentioned most frequently: FI 72%, RU 71%, AT 68% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: NL 47%, BE 52%, RO/LV 53% |
| | REASON | YES | NO | DK | NATIONAL VARIATIONS |
| QC5.3 | <i>You think that your vote will not change anything</i> | 68% | 24% | 8% | Mentioned most frequently: GR 83%, BG 81%, AT 81% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: DK 46%, MT 48%, ES/IT 54% |
| QC5.4 | <i>You are not interested in European affairs</i> | 45% | 47% | 8% | Mentioned most frequently: RU 59%, IR 52%, LT 52% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: DK 29%, SK 30%, SV 32% |
| QC5.5 | <i>You are opposed to Europe, the EU, European integration</i> | 23% | 65% | 12% | Mentioned most frequently: AT 40%, SV 37%, RU 36% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: BG 8%, ES 9%, LT/SK/RO 12% |
| QC5.6 | <i>You do not know enough about the EP's role</i> | 60% | 32% | 8% | Mentioned most frequently: LT 71%, LT 68%, DE 68% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: RO 42%, IT 46%, MT 48% |
| QC5.7 | <i>You think that the EP does not have enough powers</i> | 26% | 53% | 21% | Mentioned most frequently: AT 46%, GR 41%, DE 35% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: MT 14%, RO 17%, BG 18% |
| QC5.8 | <i>You think that the EP does not pay enough attention to the problems that concern you</i> | 57% | 28% | 15% | Mentioned most frequently: AT 75%, GR 74%, LT 72% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: RO 28%, MT 35%, NL 37% |
| QC5.9 | <i>You think that you are not well enough informed to vote</i> | 58% | 34% | 8% | Mentioned most frequently: CZ 66%, DE 66%, RU 65% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: MT 37%, RO 41%, IT 43% |
| QC5.11 | <i>You never vote</i> | 24% | 70% | 6% | Mentioned most frequently: ES 37%, LU 37%, RU 32% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: CY 6%, IT 12%, RO 14% |
| QC5.12 | <i>You do not feel that you are well represented by the Members of the European Parliament</i> | 53% | 31% | 16% | Mentioned most frequently: AT 68%, HU 66%, DE 66% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: LU 25%, MT 25%, RO 33% |
| b. 'Circumstantial' absenteeism | | | | | |
| QC5.10 | <i>You think that you will be prevented from voting because of travel arrangements, work, health, etc.</i> | 15% | 72% | 13% | Mentioned most frequently: PT 25%, PL/LT/BE/ES 20% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: MT 3%, CY 5%, ES 7% |
| QC5.13 | <i>You are not on the electoral register</i> | 16% | 74% | 10% | Mentioned most frequently: LU 55%, MT 36%, BE 32% |
| | | | | | Mentioned least frequently: BG 6%, LV 10%, HU 10% |

Public Opinion Unit