



Directorate General for Communication
Direction C - Relations with citizens
PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING UNIT

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EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2009

Standard Eurobarometer (EB 71): January-February 2009 First results: European average and major national trends

Population: EU 15+

Coverage: EU 27 (27.218 European citizens)

Date of fieldwork: mid January - mid February 2009

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I. ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN THEMES

QC6 For you, among the following themes, which are the ones that the electoral campaign for the next European elections should concentrate on? Firstly? Which others?

CAMPAIGN THEMES	EB 69	EB 70	EB71
Unemployment	47%	49%	57%
Economic growth	45%	51%	52%
Inflation and purchasing power	41%	47%	40%
The future of pensions	32%	33%	32%
Crime	37%	33%	29%
The safety of energy supply (N)	-	-	27%
The fight against climate change	33%	29%	26%
Immigration	32%	29%	24%
Terrorism	35%	28%	24%
Food safety (N)	-	-	23%
Agriculture	17%	17%	19%
The single currency, the Euro	17%	17%	13%
The preservation of the European social model	12%	13%	11%
The powers and competences of the European institutions	12%	13%	10%
European values and identity	12%	13%	10%
Don't know	5%	6%	3%
Other	1%	1%	1%

*Sum of answers for all choices

*N = new theme, added in EB71

❖ National variations for the three main campaign themes:

➤ **Unemployment:**

- Top three countries: Ireland (84%), Greece (83%) and Portugal (80%)
- Bottom three countries: Denmark (39%), the Netherlands (42%) and the UK (47%)

➤ **Economic growth:**

- Top three countries: Greece (77%), Lithuania (72%) and Cyprus (70%)
- Bottom three countries: the UK (41%), Finland (43%) and Austria (44%)

➤ **Inflation and purchasing power:**

- Top three countries: France (66%), Malta (61%) and Portugal (60%)
- Bottom three countries: Poland (14%), the UK, Denmark and Sweden (16%)

❖ Demographic variations:

➤ **Unemployment:**

- More women cite it as a priority than men (59% vs. 52%),
- Frequency of choice decreases with age, 62% of respondents aged 15-24 name it as priority theme, compared to 54% of people aged 55 years or more,
- More important for respondents from the left side of the political scale (61%) than for the ones on the right (52%).

➤ **Inflation and purchasing power:**

- It is chosen more often as priority by manual workers (45%) and least often by the retired (37%).

II. AWARENESS OF THE ELECTIONS

A. Knowledge of the date

QC1 In your opinion, when will the next European elections be held, here in (OUR COUNTRY)?

	EB69	EB70	EB71
2009(total)	16%	26%	32%
June 2009	4%	8%	16%
Others 2009	9%	18%	16%
Other	9%	7%	6%
Don't know	75%	67%	62%

**EB69: spring 2008; EB70: autumn 2008*

❖ National variations:

- Respondents are most aware that the elections will take place in 2009 in Luxembourg (66%), Malta (64%), Cyprus and Slovakia (61%).
- The share of "don't know" answers is highest in Finland (86%), the UK (84%) and Spain (75%).

❖ Demographic variations:

- The difference between men and women in the knowledge of the date of the elections remains (57% of men don't know it, 66% of women) but both groups' knowledge increased from the previous wave of EB.
- The youngest group of respondents (aged 15-24 years old) is still least aware of the date (69% "don't know" answers).

B. Interest in the elections

QC2 The next European elections will be held in June 2009. How interested or disinterested would you say you are in these elections?

	EB69	EB70	EB71
Interested	46%	44%	44%
Disinterested	51%	54%	53%
DK	3%	2%	3%

Interested: sum of answers "very interested" and "somewhat interested"

Disinterested: sum of answers "somewhat disinterested" and "very disinterested"

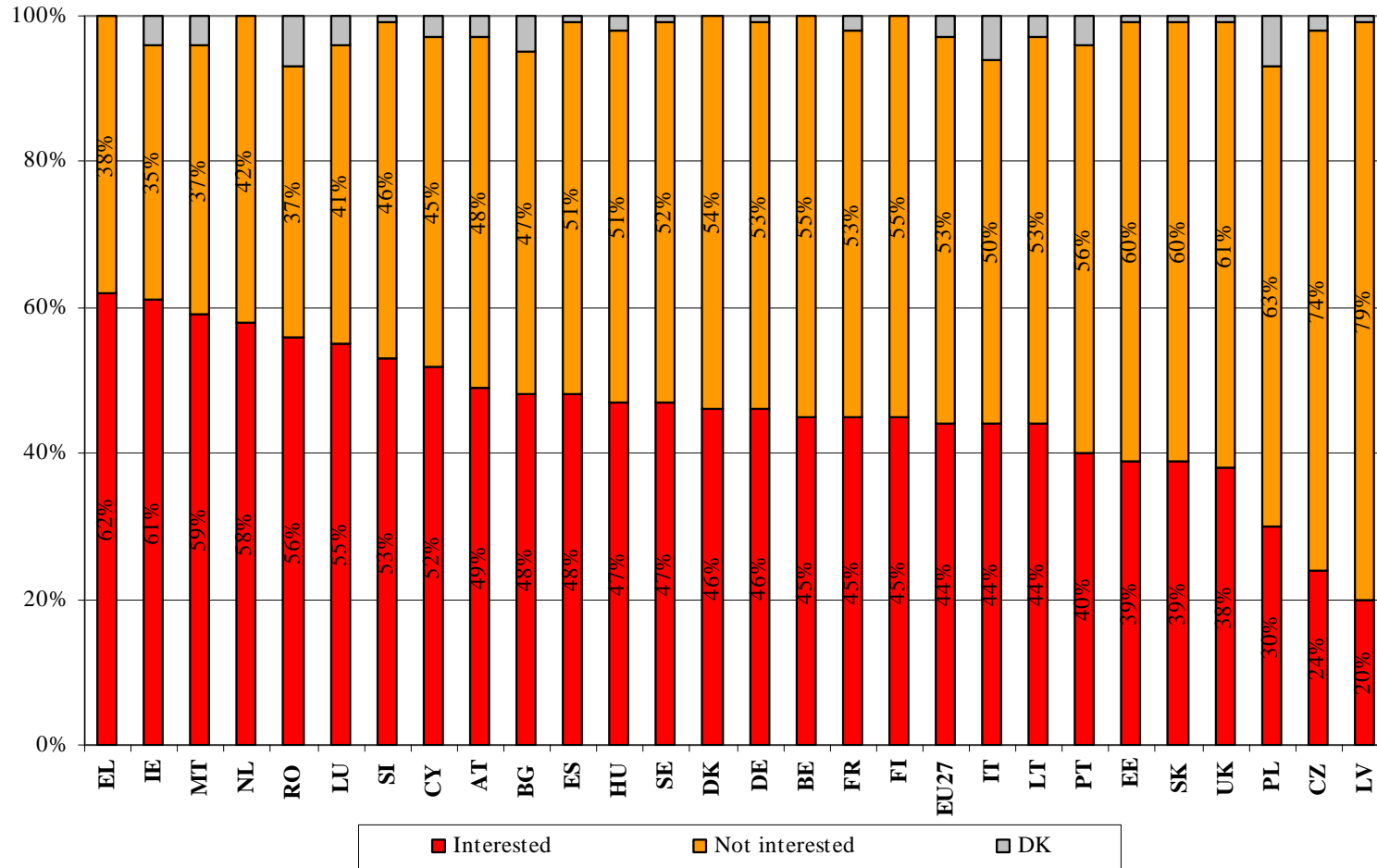
❖ National variations:

- The highest interest for the European elections is recorded in Greece (62%), Ireland (61%) and Malta (59%).
- It is lowest in Latvia (20%), Czech Republic (24%) and Poland (30%).

❖ Demographic variations:

- The interest remains higher amongst men (48%) than women (41%).
- It increases with the age and the terminal age of education.
- Respondents on the left and on the right side of political orientation scale show the same interest (52%) but those in the centre are less interested (44%).

QC2 Interest in the next European elections - by country



C. Voting probability

QC3 Can you tell me on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely it is that you would vote in the next European elections in June 2009? Please place yourself at a point on this scale where '1' indicates that you would "definitely not vote", '10' indicates that you would "definitely vote" and the remaining numbers indicates something in between these two positions.

	EB69	EB70	EB71
1. Definitely would not vote	14%	15%	15%
2.	3%	4%	4%
3.	4%	5%	5%
4.	3%	4%	4%
5.	10%	10%	10%
6.	6%	6%	6%
7.	8%	7%	8%
8.	10%	9%	9%
9.	7%	6%	6%
10. Would definitely vote	30%	28%	28%
Don't know	5%	6%	5%
Average	6,6	6,3	6,4

*QC3 Highest and lowest probability of voting on the scale**

	EB 69	EB70	EB71
Would definitely not vote (1)	14%	15%	15%
Will probably vote (9-10)	37%	34%	34%

**Previous research indicates that only people who evaluate their voting probability with levels 10 and 9 on the 10-level scale are indeed likely to actually show up at the voting polls.*

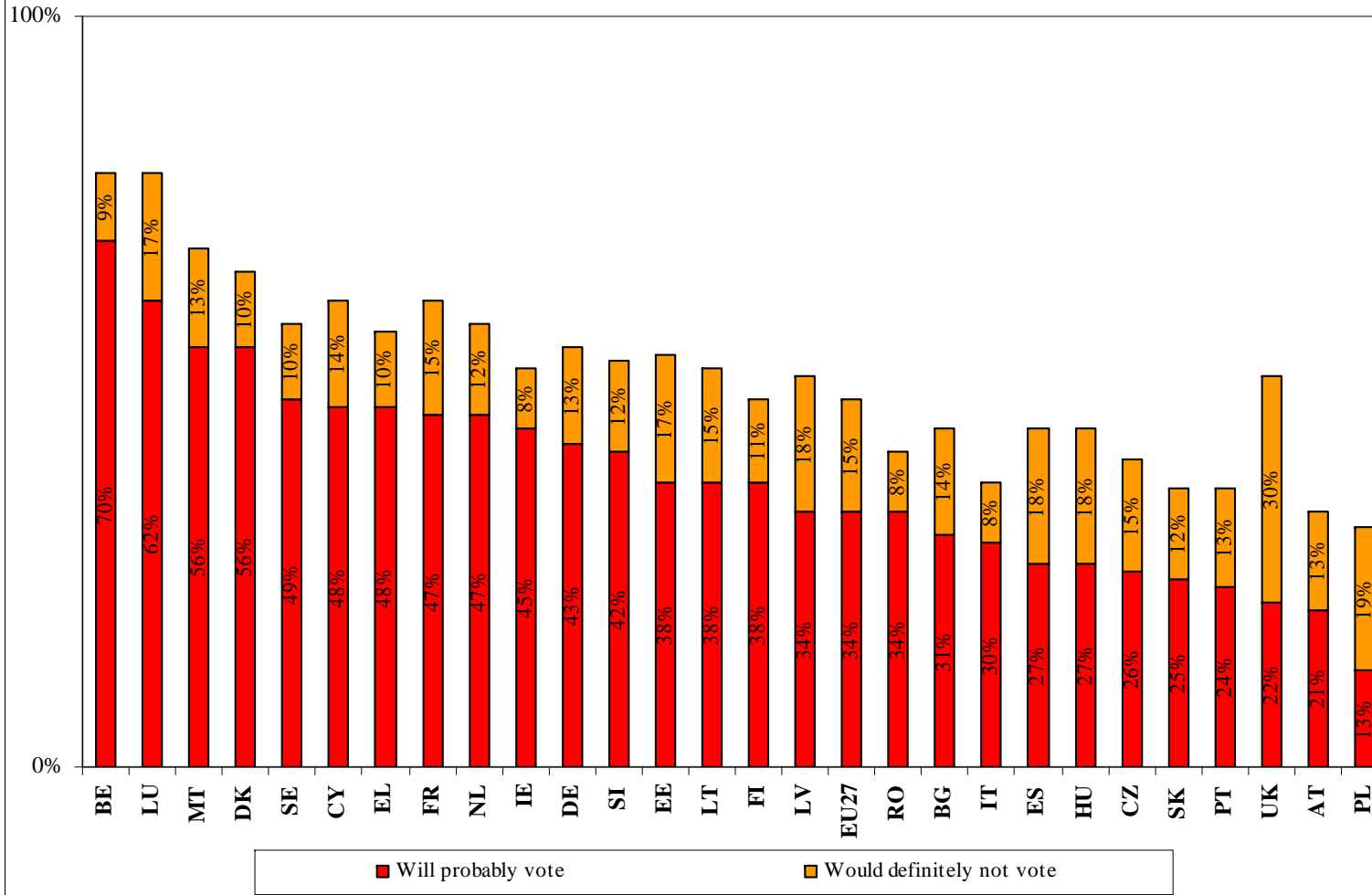
❖ National variations:

- The share of respondents who are most likely to vote is the highest in Belgium (70%), Luxembourg (62%), Denmark and Malta (56%).
- The share of respondents who say they will definitely not vote is the largest in the UK (30%), Poland (19%), Latvia, Spain and Hungary (18%).

❖ Demographic variations:

- The age group that is the least likely to vote are students (27% will definitely not vote) and in general respondents aged 15-24 (25%).
- The probability of voting is highest for respondents who were 20 or more years old when they finished education (40% will definitely vote), managers (38%) and retired (36%).

QC3 Probability of vote



D. Criteria for choosing a candidate

QC4 Main elements in the decision in view of the European elections

	EB69	EB71
The experience of the candidate on European affairs	40%	39%
The positions of candidates on national issues	37%	35%
The positions of candidates on European issues	36%	35%
The experience of the candidates at the national level	29%	32%
The positions of the candidates' parties on European issues	30%	31%
The personality of the candidates	30%	30%
The notoriety of the candidates	17%	16%
Others	1%	1%
DK	17%	10%

**maximum 3 answers, % is the sum of all answers presented*

❖ National variations for the main three criteria:

- **The experience of the candidate on European affairs:**
 - Top three countries: Slovenia (60%), Sweden (58%) and Luxembourg (57%)
 - Bottom three countries: Portugal (25%), Romania and Italy (28%)

- **The position of candidates on national issues:**
 - Top three countries: Cyprus (65%), Bulgaria (57%), Slovakia and Greece (55%)
 - Bottom three countries: Czech Republic (27%), Italy and Poland (28%)

- **The position of candidates on European issues:**
 - Top three countries: Sweden (58%), the Netherlands (54%), Denmark (50%)
 - Bottom three countries: Latvia (20%), Lithuania (21%) and Bulgaria (24%)

E. Reasons for not voting

QC5 If you do not go to vote in the European elections of June 2009, will it be because...?

	EB69	EB71
I don't know enough about the role of the EP (M)	60%	64%
My vote will not change anything	68%	62%
I am not sufficiently informed to go to vote	58%	59%
I believe that the EP does not sufficiently deal with problems that concern me	57%	55%
I am against Europe, the European Union, the European construction	23%	20%

**Yes/No/DNK for each possible answer, % given of Yes answers*

(M) modified item

❖ National variations:

- **I don't know enough about the role of the EP:**
 - Top three countries: Sweden (73%); Estonia (72%); Portugal and the UK (71%)
 - Bottom three countries: Malta (37%); Romania (41%), Italy (46%).
- **My vote will not change anything:**
 - Top three countries: Bulgaria (79%), Austria (79%) and Latvia (76%).
 - Bottom three countries: Malta (34%), Denmark (39%) and the Netherlands (41%).
- **I am not sufficiently informed to go to vote:**
 - Top three countries: Sweden (75%), Portugal (72%) and Latvia (69%).
 - Bottom three countries: Malta (34%), Belgium (41%), Finland and Romania (44%).
- **I believe that the EP does not sufficiently deal with problems that concern me:**
 - Top three countries: Greece (75%), Latvia (73%), Bulgaria and Germany (67%).
 - Bottom three countries: the Netherlands (24%), Denmark (30%), Romania (38%).
- **I am against Europe, the European Union, the European construction:**
 - Top three countries: Austria (35%), Greece and Sweden (28%).
 - Bottom three countries: Luxembourg (5%), Bulgaria (7%), Romania (8%).

❖ Demographic variations:

- **I don't know enough about the role of the EP:**
 - more often quoted by women than by men (67% vs. 60%),
 - particularly often cited as a reason by manual workers.

- **My vote will not change anything:**
 - this reason for not voting decreases with the increase in the terminal age of education
- **I am not sufficiently informed to go to vote:**
 - an important difference between men and women: 56% vs. 61%
- **I believe that the EP does not sufficiently deal with problems that concern me:**
 - The age group 40-57 years cites this reason much more often than others (62% compared to 55% EU average).
 - The same is true for self-employed and manual workers (both 61%)
- **I am against Europe, the European Union, the European construction:**
 - 3% points difference amongst men and women (22% vs. 19%)
 - increases in frequency with the age of respondents, decreases with the higher terminal age of education
 - only 10% of students give it as the reason for not planning to vote

III. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEDIA RECALL AND KNOWLEDGE OF DECISION MAKING IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

A. Media recall and impression

QB1 Have you recently read in the press, seen on the Internet or heard on the radio or television something about the European Parliament?

	EB68	EB70	EB71
Yes	42%	44%	36%
No	54%	53%	60%
Don't know	4%	3%	4%

❖ National variations:

- The results show the **highest media recall about European Parliament** in Slovenia (69%), Slovakia (63%) and Finland (59%).
- This **media recall is lowest** in the UK (22%), France (24%) and Italy (26%).

QB2 Has what you read or heard given you a generally favourable or unfavourable impression of the European Parliament?

	EB38*	E71
Generally favourable	46%	44%
Neither favourable nor unfavourable (spontaneous)	27%	32%
Generally unfavourable	21%	21%
DK	6%	3%

*EB38 from 1992

❖ National variations:

- The highest **shares of respondents who got a generally favourable impression** about the EP from the media are in Cyprus (68%), Romania (64%) and Lithuania (62%).
- The share of citizens who got a **generally unfavourable impression is by far the highest** in the UK (49%), followed by Belgium and France where the value is much closer to the EU average (27%).

B. Knowledge of decision making in the European Parliament

QB3 For each of the following statements about the European Union could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false.

	EB68			EB71		
	True	False	DK	True	False	DK
The members of the EP are directly elected by the citizens of each Member State (M)	48%	31%	21%	53%	23%	24%
The EU's budget is determined jointly by the EP and the Member States	60%	10%	30%	54%	12%	34%
Within the EU, decisions in legislative terms (laws and directives) are taken jointly by the EP and the Member States (N)	-	-	-	53%	16%	31%
Each Member State has the same number of members of the EP (N)	-	-	-	20%	48%	32%

**N = new statement, added in EB71*

QB3 For each of the following statements about the European Union could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false.

	EB71
Average of correct answers	52%
Average of wrong answers	18%
DK	30%

❖ National variations:

- Respondents are **most aware** that the EP members are elected directly in Cyprus (84%), Malta (84%) and Greece (81%).
- The **share of correct answers is lowest** in France (39%), the UK (44%) and Latvia (45%).

- The fact that the EU's budget is determined jointly by the EP and Member States is **most known** in the Netherlands (72%), Finland (70%) and Greece (67%).
- **Least** people know about that in Italy (42%), Romania and Bulgaria (44%).

- **Highest shares** of respondents who say that it is true that within the EU, decisions in legislative terms (laws and directives) are taken jointly by the EP and the Member States are in Finland (69%), the Netherlands (67%), Denmark and Hungary (66%).
- **Least respondents** know this fact in Ireland (43%), the UK (44%) and Romania (45%).

- **Most respondents** realise that each Member State does not have the same number of members of the EP in Finland (79%), the Netherlands and Sweden (78%).
- **Smallest shares** of respondents who are aware that the number of seats is not the same are in Romania (23%), Portugal (29%) and Spain (32%).

- The average share of correct responses for all four statements together is **highest** in Finland (72%), Cyprus (71%), Greece and the Netherlands (67%).
- It is **lowest** in the UK, Romania and Italy (44%).

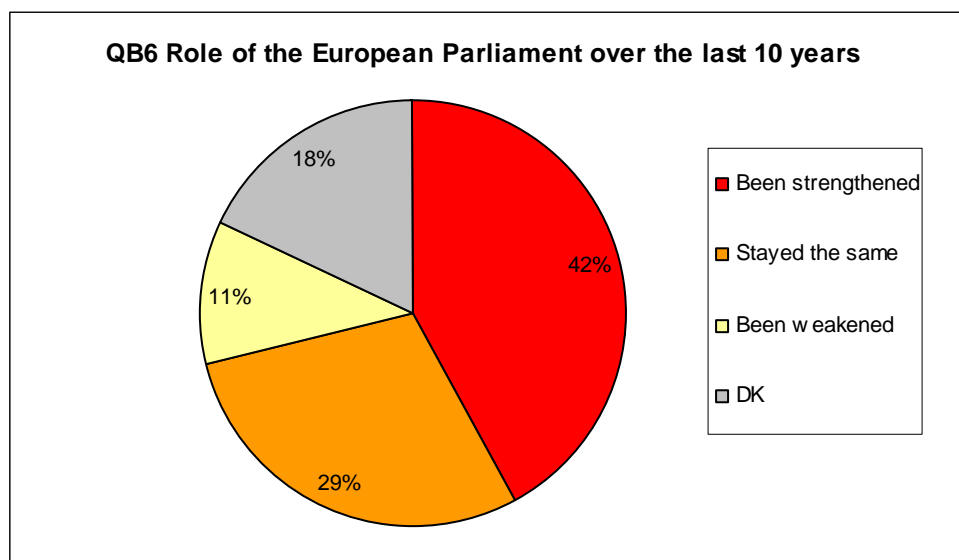
QB4 And, in your opinion, do MEPs sit in the European Parliament according to...?

	EB68	EB71
Their nationality	44%	36%
Their political allegiance	33%	36%
DK	23%	28%

❖ National variations:

- The correct assumption that MEPs sit according to their political allegiance is confirmed as true by the **largest shares** of respondents in Cyprus (61%), Slovenia (58%) and Belgium (55%).
- On the other hand 59% of respondents in Czech Republic, 54% in Greece and 49% in Slovakia think that the members sit in the EP according to their nationality.
- The highest "don't know" share of answers is recorded in Bulgaria (49%), the UK, Romania and Malta (37%).

IV. PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



QB6 Would you say that over the last 10 years the European Parliament's role within the European Union has...?

	EB68	EB71
Been strengthened	45%	42%
Stayed the same	26%	29%
Been weakened	8%	11%
DK	21%	18%

❖ National variations:

- The opinion that **the role of the EP has been strengthened in the last 10 years** is most widespread in the Netherlands (64%), Cyprus (62%) and Czech Republic (61%).
- The biggest shares of respondents who believe that its **role has been weakened** are in Austria and Greece (19%) and Belgium (18%) but such opinion remains a minority in those countries too.

QB5 Would you personally like to see the European Parliament play a more important or less important role than it currently does?

	EB68	EB70	EB71
More important	48%	44%	48%
Less important	12%	14%	22%
The same (SPONTANEOUS)	22%	24%	16%
Don't know	18%	18%	14%

❖ National variations:

- **The biggest shares respondents who believe the role of the EP should be more important** are in Greece and Cyprus (75%) and Malta (61%).
- On the other hand, **the highest shares of answers "less important"** are obtained in the UK (37%), Sweden (29%) and Denmark (27%).

V. CONFIDENCE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OTHER EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

QA11 For each of the following European bodies, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.

	European Parliament		European Commission		European Central Bank	
	EB 70	EB71	EB 70	EB71	EB 70	EB71*
Tend to trust	51%	45%	47%	42%	48%	39%
Tend not to trust	31%	37%	30%	36%	30%	40%
DK	18%	18%	23%	22%	22%	21%

This question features in the general part of the EB Standard questionnaire.

❖ **National variations**

- The share of respondents who tend to trust European Parliament is highest in Belgium and Slovakia (64%), and Cyprus (63%).
- On the opposite side, the share of citizens who tend not to trust European Parliament is highest in the UK (59%), Greece and Austria (42%).

VI. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT PRIORITY POLICIES AND VALUES

QB7 The European Parliament promotes the development of certain policies at European Union level. In your opinion, which of the following policies should be given priority?

EU POLICIES	EB70	EB71
Improving consumer and public health protection	33%	36%
Coordinating economic, budget and tax policies	26%	32%
A security and defence policy that enables the EU to face up to international crisis	36%	32%
Combating effectively climate change (M)	31%	30%
A common energy policy intended to ensure the EU's energy independence	30%	30%
An agricultural policy that is environmentally friendly and contributes to the global food balance	25%	29%
Combating terrorism while respecting individual freedoms	29%	29%
An immigration policy implemented in consultation with countries of origin	19%	24%
A foreign policy that enables the EU to speak with one voice on the international stage	29%	23%
A research and development (R&D) policy that ensures competitiveness and innovation	14%	18%
The assertion of a European social model	11%	14%
Don't know	9%	6%

**the item was slight modified from the previous wave*

❖ National variations for three highest priority policies:

- **Improving consumer and public health protection:**
 - This criterion is most important in Greece (64%), Cyprus (63%), and Slovenia (48%).
 - This criterion is least important in Sweden (21%), the UK (23%), and Finland (27%).
- **Coordinating economic, budget and tax policies:**
 - This criterion is most important in Lithuania (63%), Latvia (59%) and Hungary (56%).
 - This criterion is least important in Denmark (10%), Sweden and Malta (18%).
- **A security and defence policy that enables the EU to face up to international crisis:**
 - This criterion is most important in Cyprus (48%), Slovakia (47%) and Romania (45%).
 - This criterion is least important in Malta (18%), Slovenia (22%), Portugal and Ireland (23%).

QD8 In your opinion, which of the following values should the European Parliament defend as a matter of priority? (max. 3 answers)

VALUES	EB71
The protection of human rights in the world	57%
Solidarity between EU Member States	31%
Equality between men and women	31%
Freedom of speech	30%
Solidarity between the EU and poor countries in the world	27%
The dialogue between cultures and religions	24%
The protection of minorities	20%
The abolition of the death penalty throughout the world	15%
Don't know	5%
None of these (SPONTANEOUS)	2%

**maximum 3 answers, % is the sum of all answers presented*

❖ National variations for three highest priority values:

- **The protection of human rights in the world:**
 - This criterion is most important in Cyprus (80%), Lithuania (73%) and Greece (71%).
 - This criterion is least important in the Malta (41%), the UK and Finland (44%)

- **Solidarity between EU Member States:**
 - This criterion is most important in Slovakia (63%), Bulgaria (58%) and Greece (52%).
 - This criterion is least important in the UK (16%), Spain and Sweden (21%).

- **Equality between men and women:**
 - This criterion is most important in Sweden (50%), France (48%) and Spain (42%).
 - This criterion is least important in Latvia (14%), Greece (16%) and Lithuania (18%).