

PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING *at a glance*

The European Parliament and the expectations of European citizens

Plenary - March 2019 (II)



DG Communication is continuously monitoring public opinion by conducting regular Eurobarometer surveys in all 28 EU Member States. **This newsletter aims at providing general public with the most recent Eurobarometer data on key topics of this week's plenary agenda.**

Although this service cannot be fully exhaustive, as not all items on the plenary agenda have been the subject of a recent Eurobarometer survey, we can offer fresh survey data on the following items of the plenary session:

- **Conclusions of the European Council meeting of 21 and 22 March 2019**
- **Reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment**
- **Supply of digital content and online sales of goods**
- **Report on financial crimes, tax evasion and tax avoidance**
- **'Erasmus': The Union programme for education, training, youth, and sport**

Parliament's Eurobarometer surveys cover a wide range of issues. They focus primarily on the European citizens' knowledge of the European Parliament and their perceptions of the EU and its main policy challenges. Expectations in view of the European elections, of the European Parliament and the European integration in general also form part of the face-to-face interviews conducted with more than 27.000 respondents. Together with the Eurobarometer surveys conducted by the European Commission, **the data available allows for a detailed and up-to-date insight into citizens' opinions, expectations and perceptions.**

For more information on the topics covered in this edition or on additional services offered to Members by DG COMM's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, please contact:

Philipp M. Schulmeister

Head of Unit

Public Opinion Monitoring Unit

philipp.schulmeister@ep.europa.eu

public.opinion.monitoring@ep.europa.eu

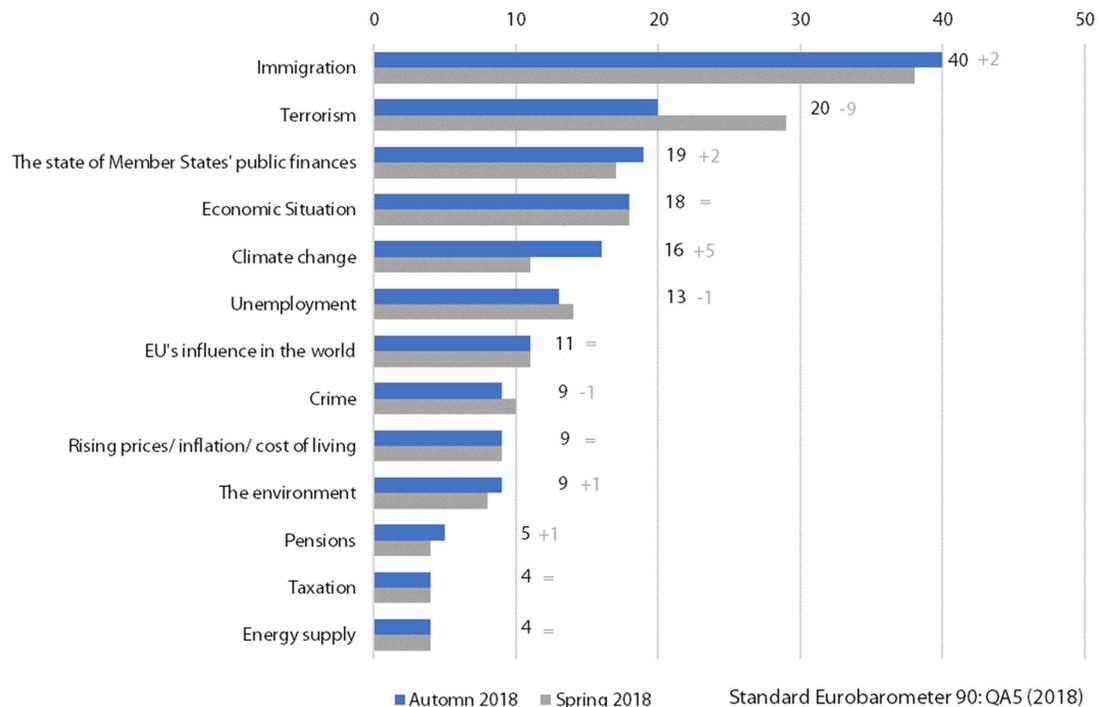
On Wednesday morning, Members will discuss the [Conclusions of the European Council meeting from 21/22 March](#), which focused among other issues on Brexit, the economy, climate change and the fight against disinformation.

According to the European Commission's [Standard Eurobarometer, published end of December 2018](#), for the third consecutive time immigration remains the citizens' main concern, with 40% of mentions on EU average (+2 percentage points since spring 2018). Terrorism remains in second position with 20% of mentions after a third consecutive decrease (-9 since spring 2018, -18 since autumn 2017 and -24 since spring 2017).

The state of Member States' public finances is in third position (19%, +2), reappearing in the top three concerns for the first time since autumn 2014 (EB82). The economic situation is in fourth place (18%, unchanged), falling out of the top three for the first time since autumn 2010.

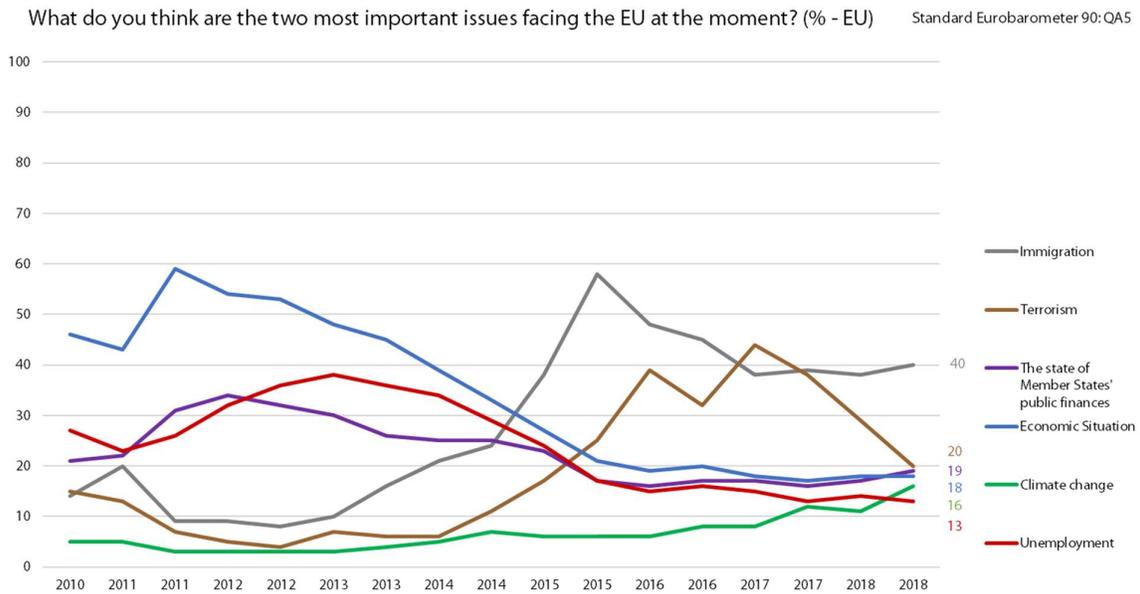
In fifth position, at 16%, climate change registers the largest increase (+5 percentage points), reaching a new high. Unemployment is in sixth position, at 13% (-1), the lowest level for this indicator since 2010. The EU's influence in the world follows with 11% of mentions (unchanged). Other items are cited by less than 10% of respondents, and are relatively stable.

What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment? (% - EU) -Two answers maximum-



For more detailed information: [Standard Eurobarometer \(November 2018\)](#)

Long-term trends

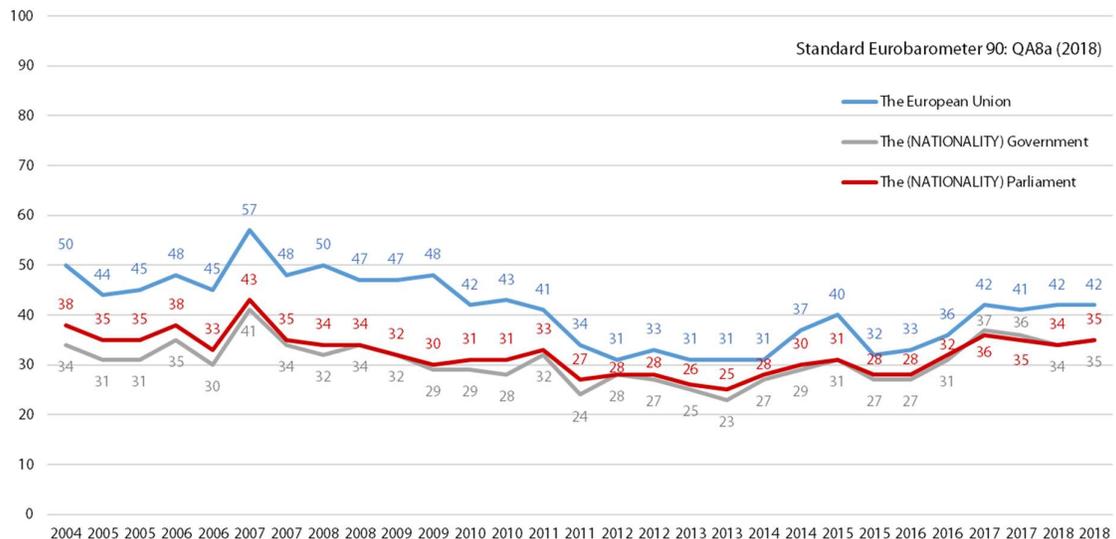


For more detailed information: [Standard Eurobarometer \(November 2018\)](#)

Besides, more than four in ten Europeans trust the European Union (42%, unchanged since spring 2018, the highest level since autumn 2010); in comparison, more than a third trust their national government (35%, +1 percentage point) and their national parliament (35%, +1).

Distrust in the national parliament (58% "tend not to trust", -2 percentage points since spring 2018) and in the national government (59%, -2) has decreased. Though still the majority, less than half of Europeans "tend not to trust" the European Union (48%, unchanged since spring 2018), and one in ten respondents answer that they "don't know" (10%).

I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it (in %)

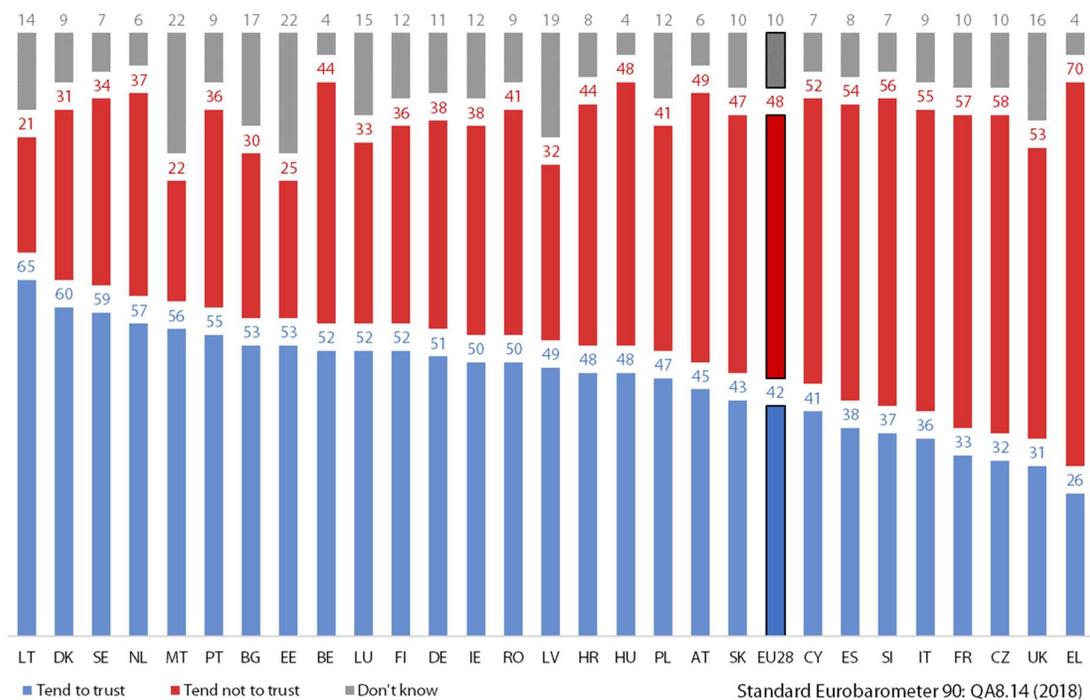


For more detailed information: [Standard Eurobarometer \(November 2018\)](#)

The continuing uncertainty about Brexit also puts the question about trust in the European Union in the spotlight. Citizens' trust in the EU is indeed the predominant attitude in 17 EU Member States (up from 15 in spring 2018), with the highest proportions registered in Lithuania (65%), Denmark (60%) and Sweden (59%). More than 50 % of respondents trust the EU in the Netherlands (57%), Malta (56%), Portugal (55%), Estonia and Bulgaria (both 53%), Luxembourg, Finland and Belgium (all 52%) and Germany (51%).

The lowest level of trust in the EU is seen in Greece (26%), the United Kingdom (31%) and Czechia (32%), with ten countries overall registering a majority not trusting the EU. respondents in Hungary are evenly divided (48% "tend to trust" vs. 48%).

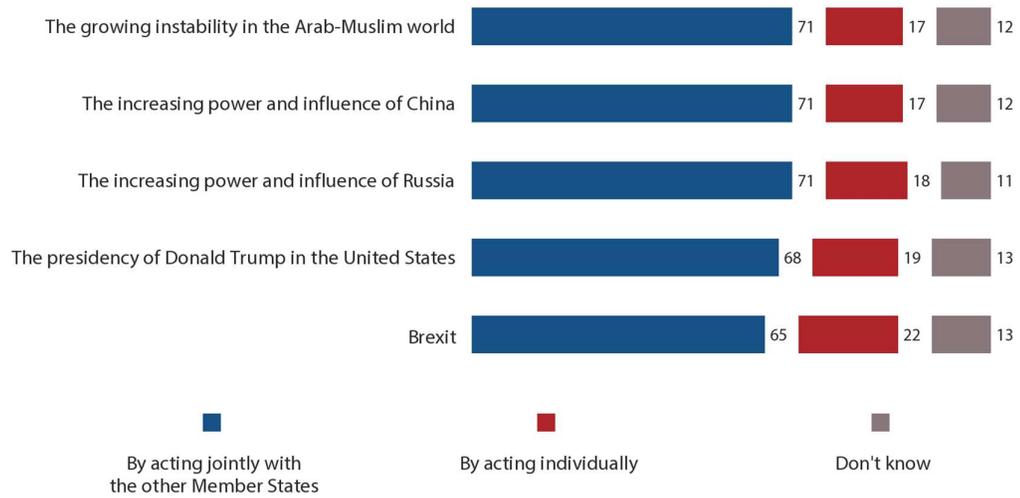
I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.
- The European Union (in %)



For more detailed information: [Standard Eurobarometer \(November 2018\)](#)

The European Council will also prepare the EU-China summit to be held on 9 April 2019. It will exchange views on overall relations with China in the global context. According to a special [Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Parliament from April 2018](#), 71% of Europeans believe, in the face of the increasing power and influence of China, that the interest of their country would be better taken into account by acting jointly with other EU Member States.

QA29 Several important events have been taking place in the world in recent years. For each of them, tell me whether the interests of (OUR COUNTRY) would be better taken into account by acting jointly with the other EU Member States or by acting individually.
(% - EU28)



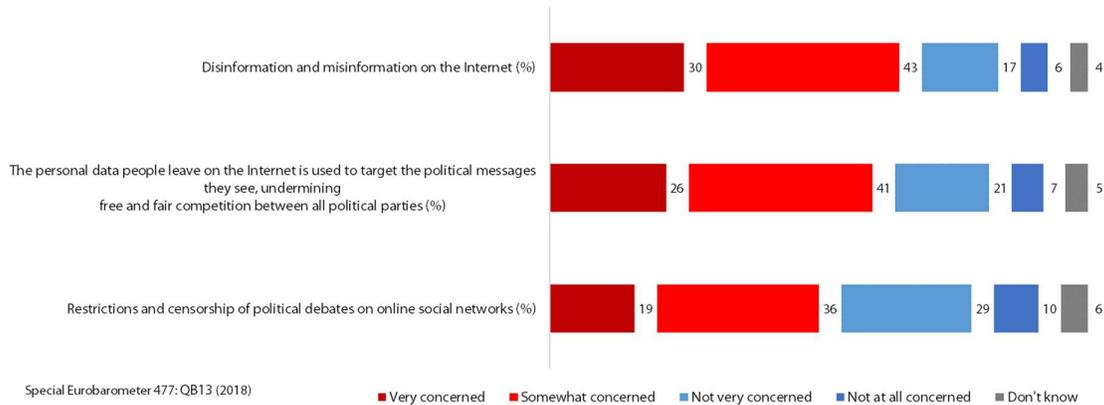
For more detailed information: [Citizens' Views on current and future EU action \(2018\)](#)

Concerning the fight against disinformation, a [Special Eurobarometer on Democracy and Elections from September 2018](#) shows that a majority of EU Internet-using respondents are concerned about misinformation, disinformation, targeting and censorship online during the pre-election period.

European respondents who use the Internet were asked to think about the pre-election period during local, national or European elections, and the use of the Internet and social networks during this time.

- Almost three quarters (73%) answered they are concerned about *disinformation or misinformation online*, with 30% 'very concerned' about this.
- More than two thirds (67%) said to be concerned that *the personal data people leave on the Internet is used to target the political messages they see, undermining free and fair competition between all political parties*: 26% were 'very concerned' about this.
- More than half (55%) answered they are concerned about *restrictions and censorship of political debates on online social networks*, with 19% 'very concerned'.

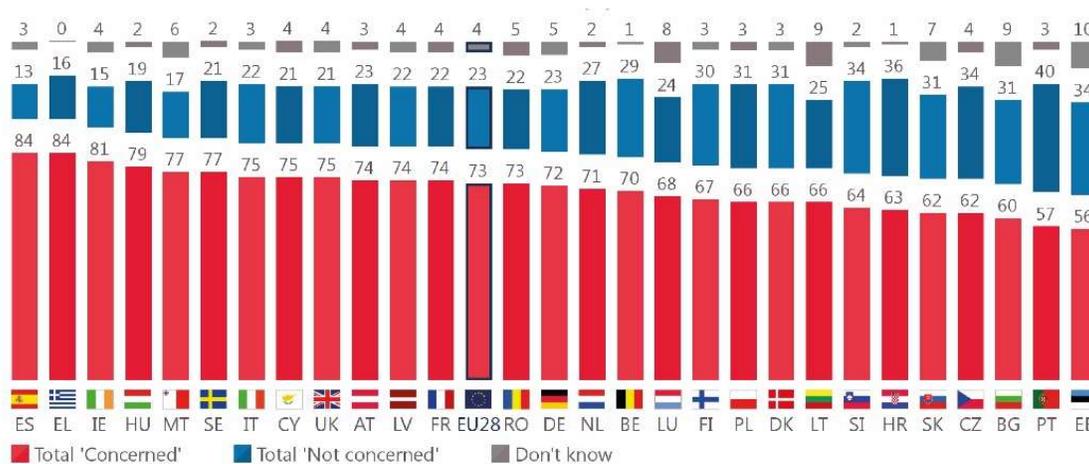
Turning now to the pre-election period, whether at the local, national or European level. How concerned or not are you about the following issues related to the use of the Internet and of online social networks? (% - EU)



For more detailed information: [Special Eurobarometer on Democracy and elections \(September 2018\)](#)

Amongst respondents who use the Internet, the majority in each country were concerned about disinformation or misinformation online, with proportions ranging from 84% in Greece and Spain and 81% in Ireland to 56% in Estonia, 57% in Portugal and 60% in Bulgaria.

Q Turning now to the pre-election period, whether at the local, national or European level. How concerned or not are you about the following issues related to the use of the Internet and of online social networks?
Disinformation and misinformation on the Internet (%)



Source: Special Eurobarometer 477, QB13.2

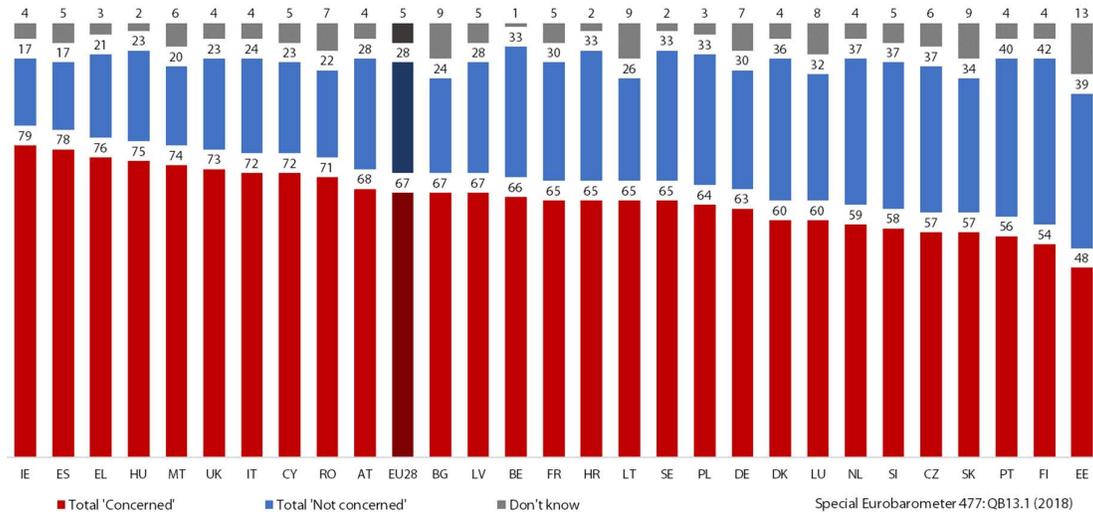
Base: Internet users (n=22,629)

For more detailed information: [Special Eurobarometer on Democracy and elections \(September 2018\)](#)

Amongst respondents who use the Internet, at least three quarters in Ireland (79%), Spain (78%), Greece (76%) and Hungary (75%) were concerned the personal data people leave on the Internet is used to target the political messages they see, undermining free and fair competition between all political parties. Estonia is the only country where fewer than half were concerned (48%), followed by Finland (54%) and Portugal (56%). However, it is worth noting that even in Estonia Internet-using respondents were more likely to be concerned than not concerned (39%).

Turning now to the pre-election period, whether at the local, national or European level. How concerned or not are you about the following issues related to the use of the Internet and of online social networks?

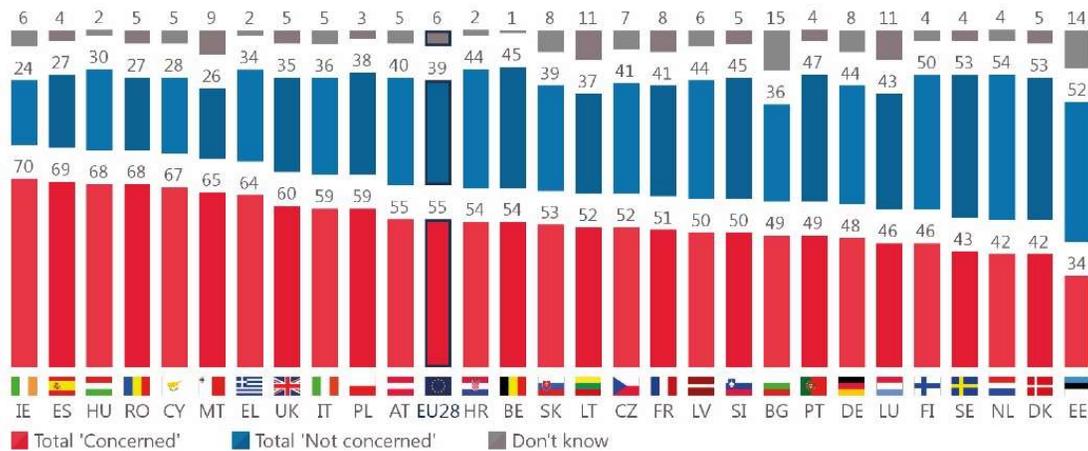
The personal data people leave on the Internet is used to target the political messages they see, undermining free and fair competition between all political parties (%)



For more detailed information: [Special Eurobarometer on Democracy and elections \(September 2018\)](#)

Finally, Ireland (70%), Spain (69%), Hungary and Romania (both 68%) have the highest proportions of internet-using respondents who were concerned about restrictions and censorship of political debates on online social networks. Estonia (34%), the Netherlands and Denmark (both 42%) have the lowest proportions.

Q Turning now to the pre-election period, whether at the local, national or European level. How concerned or not are you about the following issues related to the use of the Internet and of online social networks?
Restrictions and censorship of political debates on online social networks (%)



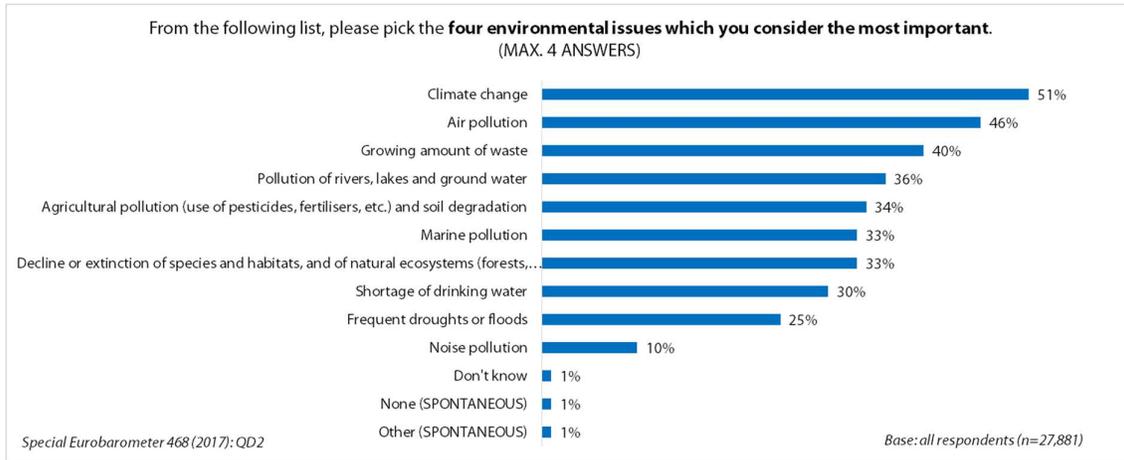
Source: Special Eurobarometer 477, Q813.3

Base: Internet users (n=22,629)

For more detailed information: [Special Eurobarometer on Democracy and elections \(September 2018\)](#)

2 Reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment

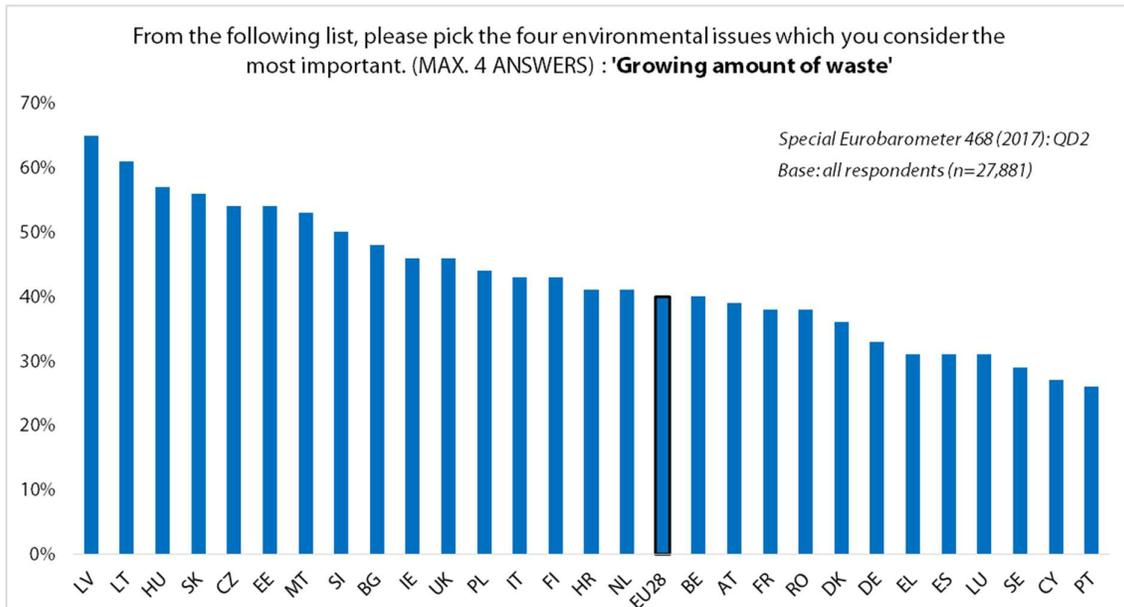
Plastic makes up 80-85% of marine litter, measured through beach counts. This constitutes a severe risk to marine ecosystems, biodiversity and, potentially, to human health. Against this backdrop, Plenary will discuss next Wednesday a directive which aims [to reduce the impact of certain plastic products on the environment](#). The proposal would introduce a series of measures regarding the top 10 single-use plastics found on European beaches with a view to reducing their impact on the environment and ensuring a functional internal market. According to a [special Eurobarometer on Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment from October 2017](#), citizens consider climate change (51%), air pollution (46%) and the growing amount of waste (40%) the most important environmental issues.



For more detailed information:

[Special Eurobarometer on Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment \(October 2017\)](#)

In seven countries, the growing amount of waste is considered as the most important environmental issue.

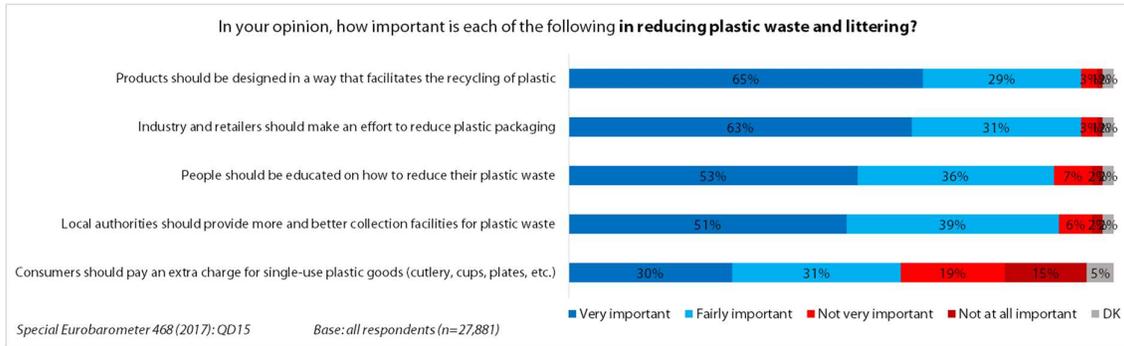


For more detailed information:

[Special Eurobarometer on Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment \(October 2017\)](#)

In addition, European Union citizens were asked how important they think a number of measures in reducing plastic waste and littering are - and at least half of respondents think that four of the measures are 'very important':

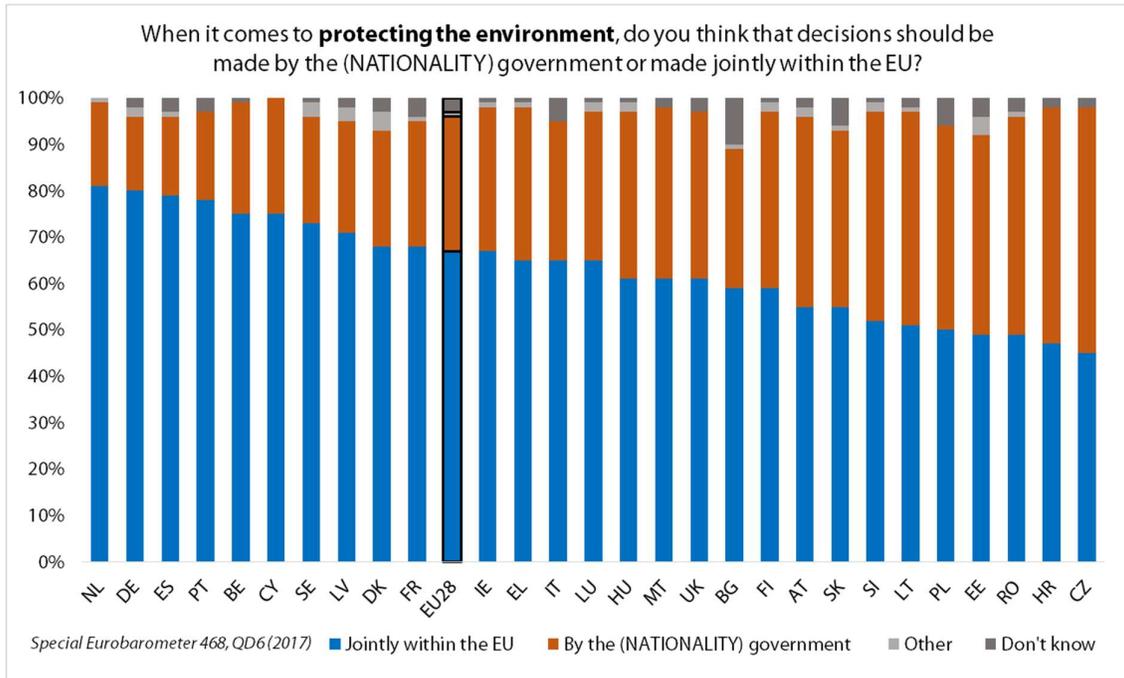
- products should be designed in a way that facilitates the recycling of plastic (65%)
- industry and retailers should make an effort to reduce plastic packaging (63%)
- people should be educated on how to reduce their plastic waste (53%)
- local authorities should provide more and better collection facilities for plastic waste (51%)



For more detailed information:

[Special Eurobarometer on Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment \(October 2017\)](#)

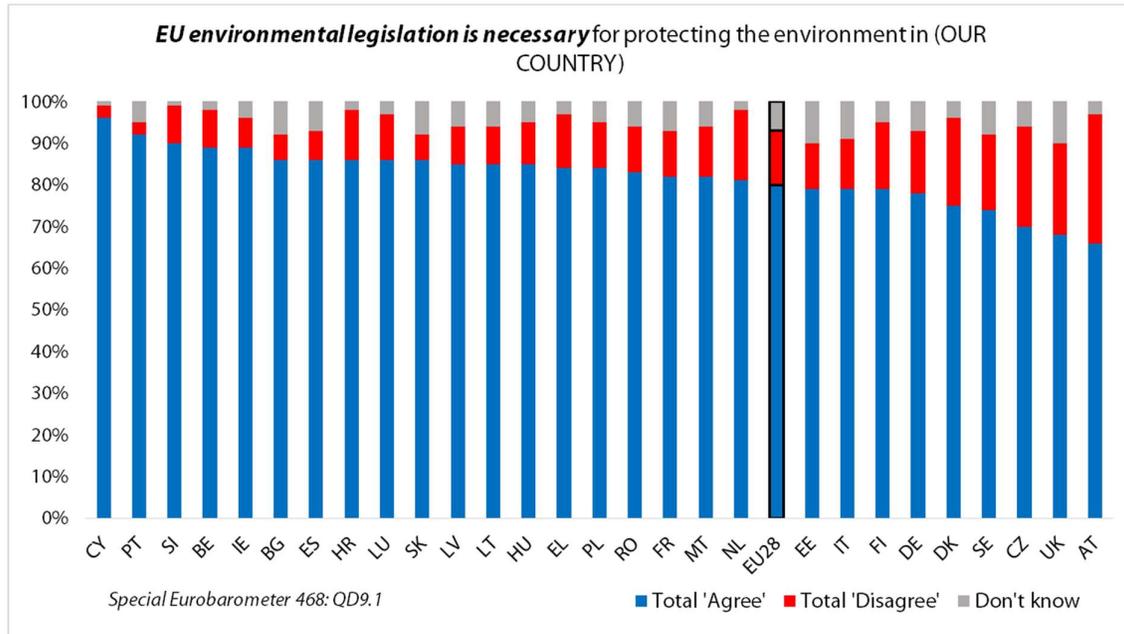
Furthermore, around two-thirds of Europeans (67%) think that environmental decisions should be taken jointly within the European Union. Less than a third (29%) believe that the national government should take such decisions for themselves.



For more detailed information:

[Special Eurobarometer on Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment](#)

Moreover, a large majority of Europeans agree that European Union environmental legislation is necessary for protecting the environment in their country.



For more detailed information:

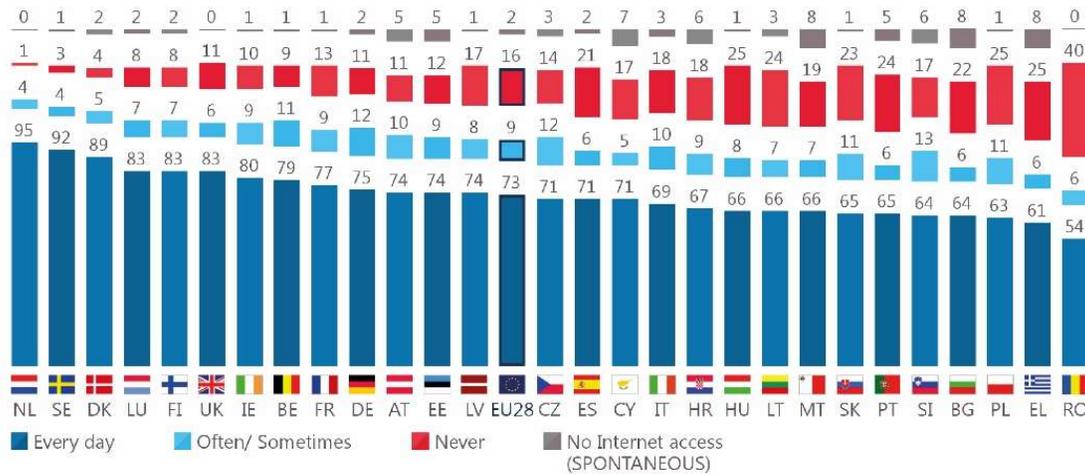
[Special Eurobarometer on Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment \(October 2017\)](#)

3 Supply of digital content and online sales of goods

In the digital economy, contracts for [the supply of both digital content and online sales of goods](#) are concluded on a daily basis by millions of European consumers. Next Tuesday, Members will discuss two directives which provides maximum harmonisation and a high level of consumer protection level during this type of transaction (Vote on Wednesday).

In a Special Eurobarometer on [Europeans' attitudes towards internet security, published last week](#), respondents were asked about the frequency with which they use the Internet at home, at their place of work, and in other locations. The answer was clear: a very huge proportion of respondents access the Internet daily. Nevertheless, at the country level, results vary significantly, although in all Member States at least a majority of respondents use the Internet daily.

Q Use of the Internet (%)



Source: Special Eurobarometer 480, QD62R

Base: all respondents (N = 27,339)

For more detailed information: [Special Eurobarometer on europeans' attitudes towards internet security \(November 2018\)](#)

Furthermore, the most popular online activity is sending and receiving e-mails, which is mentioned by eight in ten (80%) of those polled. The Internet is becoming an increasingly popular source of news, with nearly seven in ten respondents (69%) mentioning reading news as one of their online activities. Over six in ten (62%) of respondents use the Internet to access social networks. Slightly fewer respondents use the Internet for online banking (59%), buying goods or services (57%) or watching videos and listening to music (55%).

Q Which of the following activities do you do online? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (% - EU)



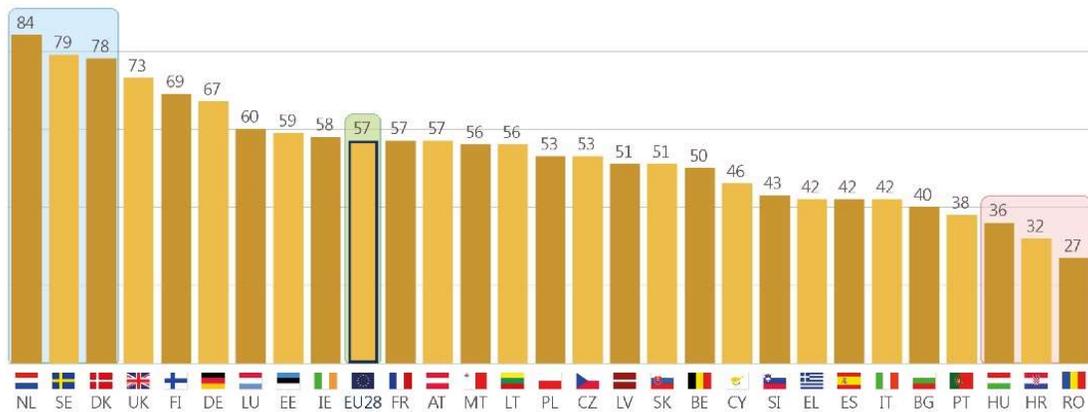
Source: Special Eurobarometer 480, QD2

Base: respondents who use the Internet (N = 22,466)

For more detailed information: [Special Eurobarometer on europeans' attitudes towards internet security \(November 2018\)](#)

There are very wide country differences in the case of buying goods and services. The proportions of respondents who mention this Internet activity range from less than three in ten (27%) of those polled in Romania to over eight in ten (84%) of respondents in the Netherlands. There is an approximate geographical divide on this question, with respondents in countries of Northern and Western Europe generally more likely to mention buying goods or services online than their counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe or Southern Europe.

Q Which of the following activities do you do online? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)
 (% - BUYING GOODS OR SERVICES (HOLIDAYS, BOOKS, MUSIC, ETC.))



Source: Special Eurobarometer 480, QD2

Base: respondents who use the Internet (N = 22,466)

For more detailed information: [Special Eurobarometer on europeans' attitudes towards internet security \(November 2018\)](#)

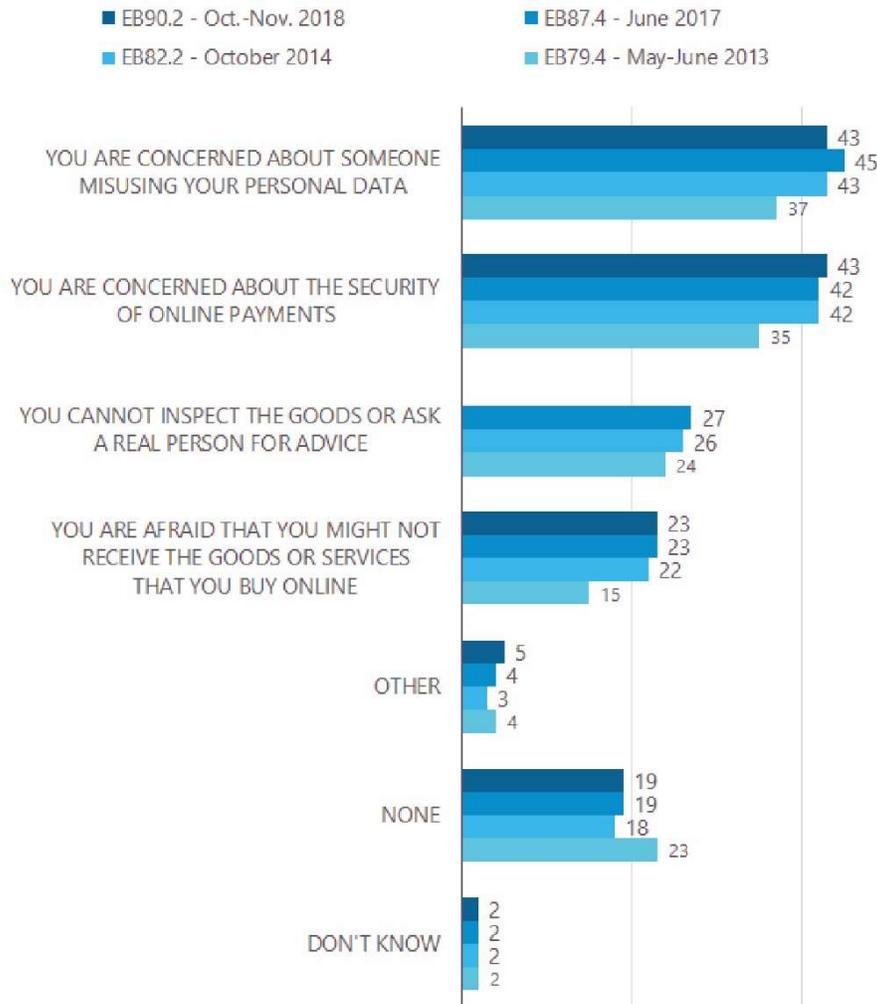
Finally, respondents who use the Internet were asked if they had any concerns about the security of their Internet transactions. While nearly a fifth (19%) of respondents have no such concerns, most mention being anxious about at least one of the listed answer options.

More than four in ten (43%) respondents are concerned about the possibility that their *data might be misused* by a third party. This figure is slightly smaller (-2 pp) than 2017, but larger than the number in May-June 2013 (+6 pp).

The same proportion (43%) are concerned about the *security of online payments*, a figure which has remained stable over the last three surveys (2015-2017) but has increased by eight points compared to 2013.

Other responses are mentioned by fewer respondents. Just under a quarter (24%) say that they are concerned that when using the Internet they *cannot inspect the goods or ask a real person for advice*, and a similar proportion (23%) are *afraid that they might not receive the goods or services they purchase*. Only one in twenty (5%) mention other concerns.

Q What concerns do you have, if any, about using the Internet for activities such as online banking or buying goods and services online? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (% - EU)



Source: Special Eurobarometer 480, QD3

Base: respondents who use the Internet (N = 22,466)

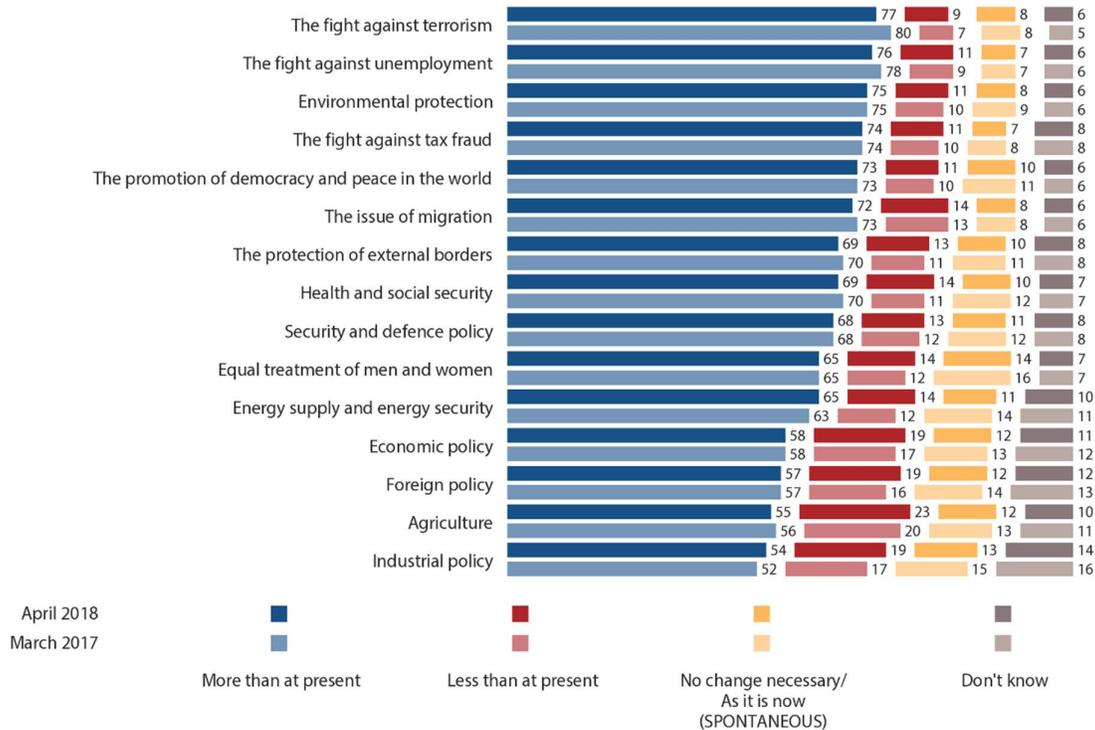
For more detailed information: [Special Eurobarometer on europeans' attitudes towards internet security \(November 2018\)](#)

4 Report on financial crimes, tax evasion and tax avoidance

Next Monday, Members will discuss a report [on financial crimes, tax evasion and tax avoidance](#) to adopt of a detailed roadmap, revamping taxation and tackling financial crimes, calling for, among other things, the set-up of an EU financial police force and an EU anti-money laundering watchdog. (Vote on Tuesday).

Are these concerns shared by European Union citizens? The answer is clearly “yes” according to a [Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Parliament from April 2018](#), 74% of all Europeans believe the European Union should do more to fight tax fraud.

QA27 For each of the following areas, would you like the European Union to intervene less than at present or more than at present? (% - EU28)



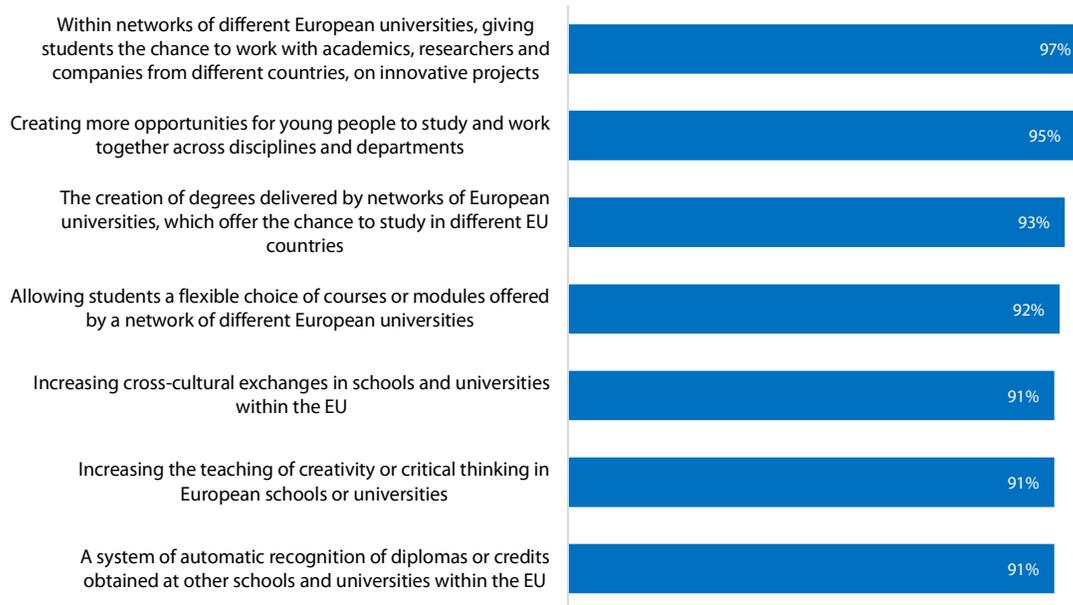
For more detailed information: [Citizens' Views on current and future EU action \(2018\)](#)

5 'Erasmus': The Union programme for education, training, youth and sport

[Erasmus+](#) is one of the most successful EU programmes and a strong European brand. It has played a vital economic and social role in fostering European identity, values and citizenship, integration, inclusive and sustainable growth, quality employment and social cohesion by making a positive contribution to the improvement of European education and training systems as well as lifelong learning. The future of this successful programme will be discussed by the Plenary next Thursday.

A [Flash Eurobarometer on the European Education area from April 2018](#) found that nine in ten young Europeans support the initiatives aimed at building a European Education Area supportive to teaching and learning. The vast majority of respondents (over 90% in all cases) agree that the proposed initiatives would be useful for young people in the European Union.

For each of the following options, please tell me **whether or not you think it would be useful for young people in the EU?**



Flash Eurobarometer 466 (2018): Q7T

For more detailed information: [Flash Eurobarometer on the European Education Area \(April 2018\)](#)