

# PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING *at a glance*

*The European Parliament and the expectations of European citizens*

**Plenary - December 2020**



Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, DG Communication has commissioned three consecutive surveys measuring European public opinion during this pandemic. The full results of the [last survey](#), conducted from 25 September until 7 October, were published last month.

The results provide **insights on citizens' recall of and satisfaction with the measures taken by the EU and national governments to fight the virus**. They shed light on the **level of satisfaction of the Europeans with the solidarity between EU Member States**, their support for more **EU competences** and their stance regarding the **EU budget and the Rule of Law conditionality**. The results also give insights on how **limitations to individual freedoms** are perceived as well as on **people's state of mind in the midst of the crisis**.

For the **December plenary session**, relevant survey data is available on:

- **Conclusions of the European Council meeting of 10-11 December 2020, especially on the EU's long-term budget:** vast citizens' support for EU to provide funds to Member States conditional upon their government's implementation of the rule of law and of democratic principles; EU should have greater financial means to tackle the pandemic; number one spending priority according to citizens is public health.
- **Award of the Sakharov Prize:** 'the protection of human rights worldwide' is the number one value the EP should defend, according to Parlemeter 2019 survey.
- **Preparation of an EU strategy on COVID-19 vaccination, including its external dimension:** According to citizens, EU's top priorities in its response to Coronavirus should be to ensure that sufficient medical supplies are available for all EU Member States. However, despite encouraging news regarding vaccines, many citizens seem reluctant to be vaccinated. The number of people sceptical towards taking a jab is even on the rise.
- **European Citizen's Initiative - Minority Safepack:** According to the Parlemeter 2019, nearly one in five EU respondents (18%) mention 'the protection of minorities' as a pressing value to fight for.

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

**Philipp M. Schulmeister**

Head of Public Opinion Monitoring Unit

[philipp.schulmeister@ep.europa.eu](mailto:philipp.schulmeister@ep.europa.eu)

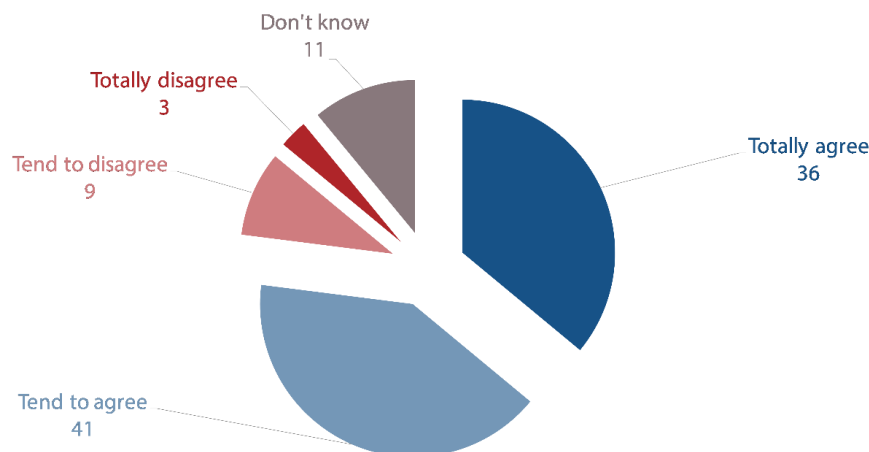
[dgcomm-pom@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:dgcomm-pom@europarl.europa.eu)

@EP\_Trends

On Wednesday morning, Members will discuss the [Conclusions of the European Council meeting of 10-11 December](#) which focused i.a. on the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU budget, climate change, security and external relations. As regards the budget in particular, EU leaders unblocked the €1.8 trillion budget and the Covid-19 recovery fund after having reached an agreement on ways to link EU funds to the respect for rule of law. On Thursday, the plenary agenda will likely feature a fast-tracked procedure to vote on the MFF, the rule of law regulations and the Budget 2021.

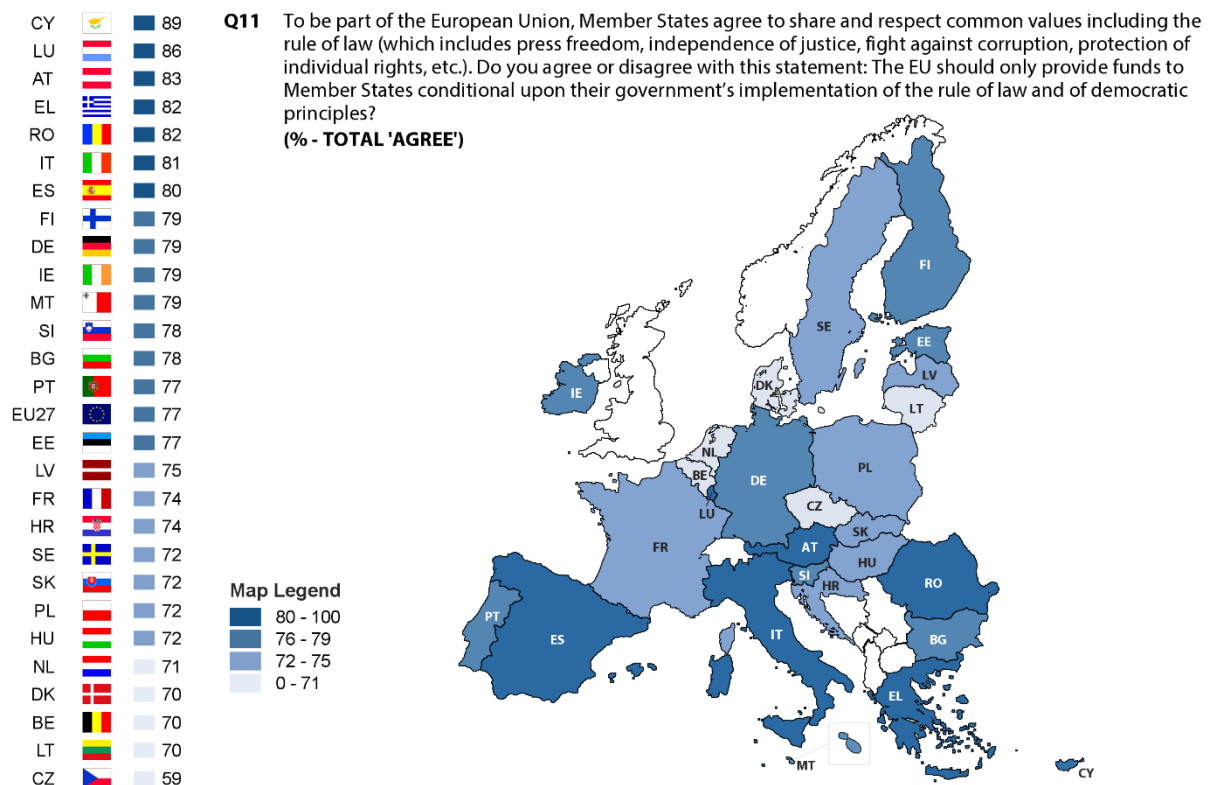
According to [the Parliament's third special survey on European citizens' attitudes and opinions over the course of the Covid-18 pandemic \(October 2020\)](#), around three-quarters of respondents (**77%**) agree that the **EU should only provide funds to Member States conditional upon their government's implementation of the rule of law and of democratic principles**. This includes more than a third (36%) who 'totally agree' with the statement. A minority (12%) disagree, including 3% who 'totally disagree', while 11% do not know.

**Q11** To be part of the European Union, Member States agree to share and respect common values including the rule of law (which includes press freedom, independence of justice, fight against corruption, protection of individual rights, etc.). Do you agree or disagree with this statement: The EU should only provide funds to Member States conditional upon their government's implementation of the rule of law and of democratic principles?  
(% - EU27)



For more detailed information: [Public opinion in the EU in times of coronavirus crisis 3 \(October 2020\)](#)

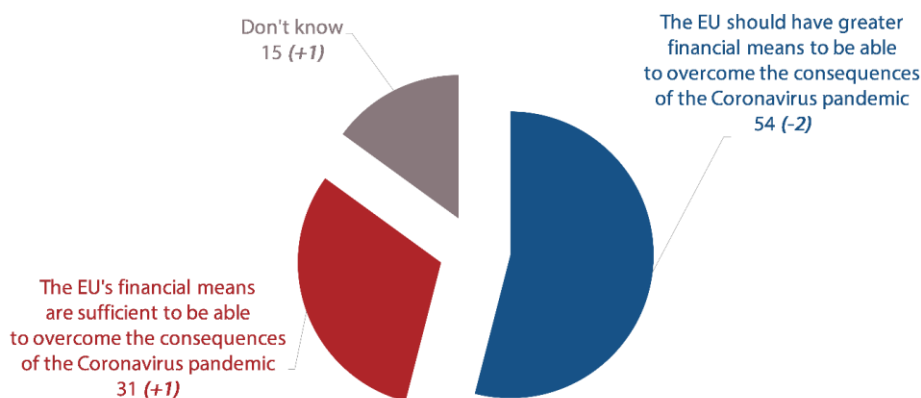
In all countries except Czechia, at least seven in ten respondents agree that the EU should only provide funds to Member States conditional upon their government's implementation of the rule of law and of democratic principles. Agreement is highest in Cyprus (89%), Luxembourg (86%), Austria (83%), Greece, Romania (both 82%) and Italy (81%), and is lowest in Czechia (59%), Belgium, Denmark and Lithuania (all 70%).



For more detailed information: [Public opinion in the EU in times of coronavirus crisis 3 \(October 2020\)](#)

Furthermore, the majority of respondents in the EU27 (54%) think that the **EU should have greater financial means** to tackle the pandemic, with only three in ten (31%) saying that the EU's current financial means are sufficient. The remaining 15% do not express an opinion.

**Q9** Which of the following statement is closest to your opinion?  
(% - EU27)

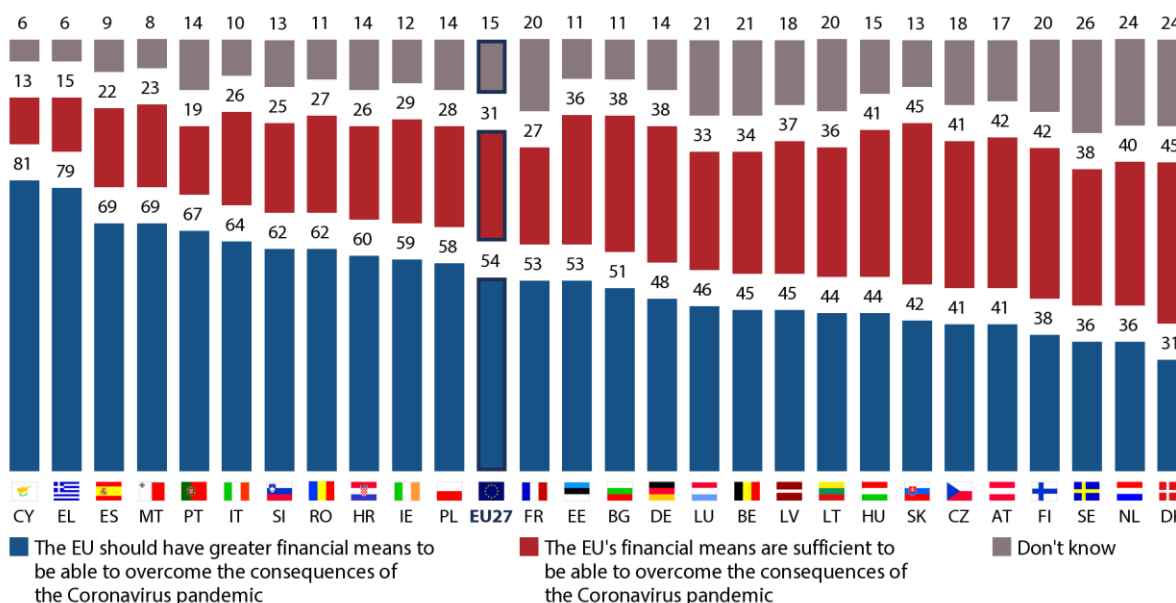


(Wave 3 (09-10/2020) - Wave 2 (06/2020))

For more detailed information: [Public opinion in the EU in times of coronavirus crisis 3 \(October 2020\)](#)

The findings vary considerably by country. In twenty countries, a majority of respondents agree that the EU should have greater financial means, led by Cyprus (81%), Greece (79%), Spain, Malta (both 69%) and Portugal (67%). Public opinion is divided in Czechia (41% agree, 41% disagree), while a majority say that the EU's financial means are sufficient in Denmark, Slovakia (both 45%), Austria, Finland (both 42%), the Netherlands (40%) and Sweden (38%).

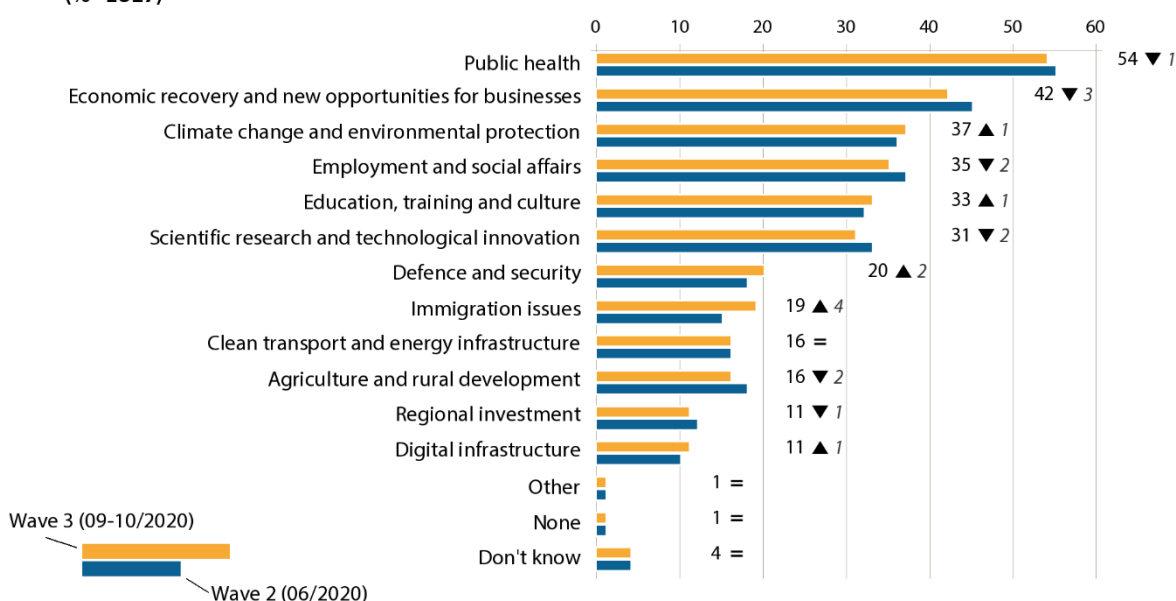
**Q9** Which of the following statement is closest to your opinion?  
(%)



For more detailed information: [Public opinion in the EU in times of coronavirus crisis 3 \(October 2020\)](#)

Respondents were asked **how they thought the EU budget should be spent**, choosing up to four policy areas from a list of twelve. More than half (54%, -1 pp compared to wave 2) say that public health should be a priority, and this ranks highest ahead of economic recovery and new opportunities for businesses (42%, -3 pp), climate change and environmental protection (37%, +1 pp) and employment and social affairs (35%, -2 pp). Around a third would like to see spending on education, training and culture (33%, +1 pp) or on scientific research and technological innovation (31%, -2 pp). The other policy areas are less likely to be seen as a priority: defence and security (20%, +2 pp), immigration issues (19%, +4 pp), clean transport and energy infrastructure (16%, =), agriculture and rural development (16%, -2 pp), regional investment (11%, -1 pp) and digital infrastructure (11%, +1 pp).

**Q10** Given the current context, on which of the following would you like the EU budget to be spent? (MAX. 4 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU27)



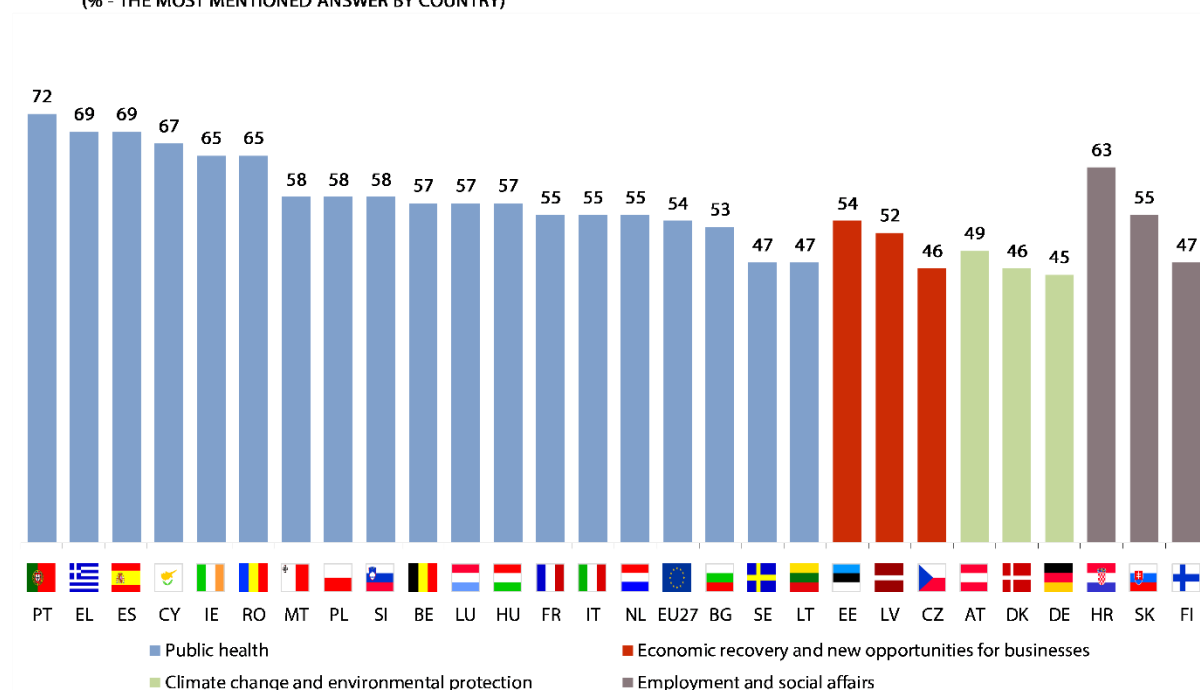
For more detailed information: [Public opinion in the EU in times of coronavirus crisis 3 \(October 2020\)](#)

Public health ranks highest as a spending priority for the EU in 18 of the 27 Member States, while in three countries (Estonia, Czechia and Latvia) economic recovery and new opportunities for businesses is seen as the most important area for spending. Employment and social affairs is the top priority in Slovakia, Croatia and Finland, while Austria, Denmark and Germany are the three countries where climate change and environmental protection rank highest.

Looking at the top three priorities in the various Member States, public health is one of the three top priorities in every country, while economic recovery and new opportunities for businesses is among the three highest priorities in 23 countries. Employment and social affairs features among the three main priorities in 14 countries, education, training and culture in 10, and climate change and environmental protection in eight countries.

In addition, scientific research and technological innovation is included in the top three priorities in Sweden, and immigration issues is one of three top priorities in Malta.

**Q10** Given the current context, on which of the following would you like the EU budget to be spent? (MAX. 4 ANSWERS)  
(% - THE MOST MENTIONED ANSWER BY COUNTRY)



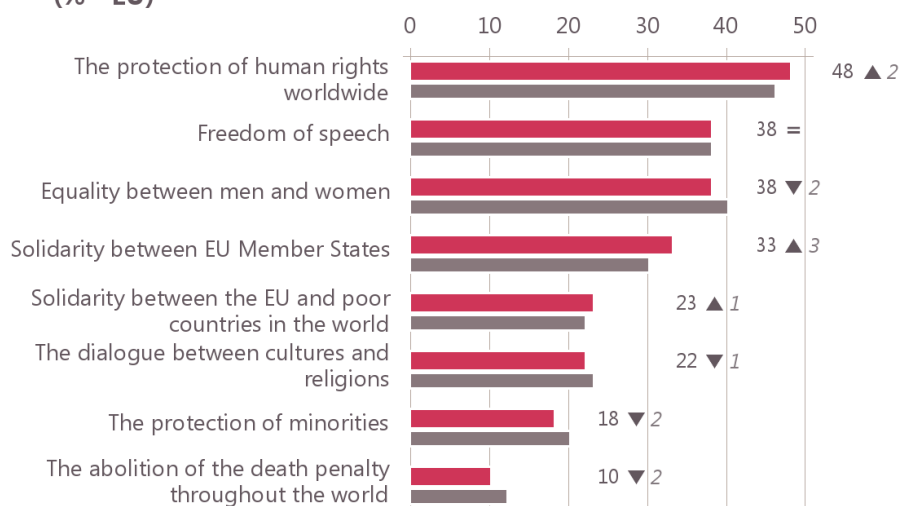
For more detailed information: [Public opinion in the EU in times of coronavirus crisis 3 \(October 2020\)](#)

## 2

## Award of the Sakharov Prize

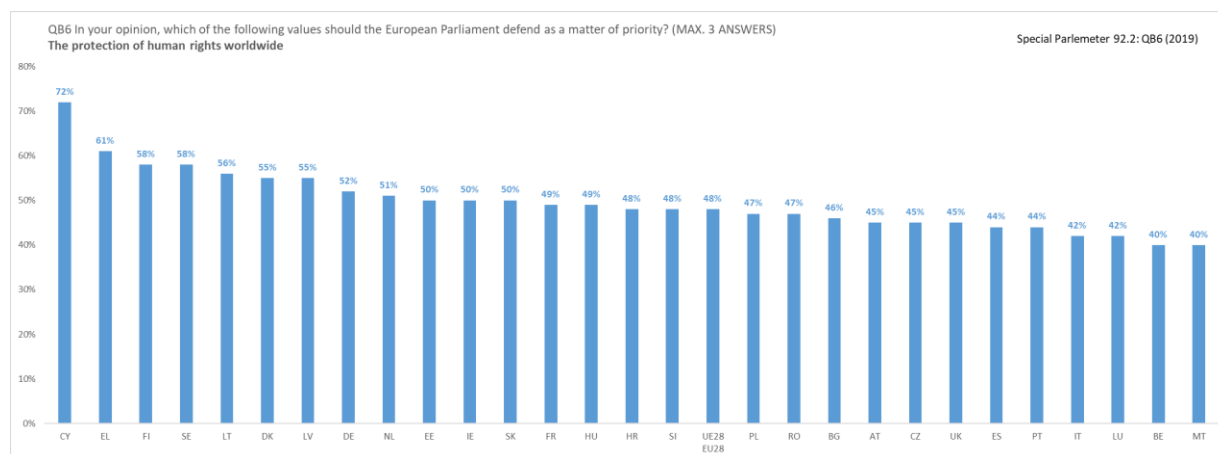
On Wednesday, the democratic opposition in Belarus will receive the [European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2020](#). The European Parliament has a well-recognized reputation as a dedicated defender of people's fundamental rights and democracy, both within the European Union and worldwide. Members do not believe that people's basic rights end at the EU's borders. Are these concerns shared by European Union citizens? The answer is clearly "yes", according to [the Parlemeter 2019](#), 'the protection of human rights worldwide' remains by far the foremost value in citizen's minds (48%, +2 pp compared to September 2018).

**QB6** In your opinion, which of the following values should the European Parliament defend as a matter of priority?  
(% - EU)



For more detailed information: [Parlemeter 2019: Heeding the call beyond the vote \(October 2019\)](#)

The protection of human rights worldwide is considered as most important value in twenty countries.



For more detailed information: [Parlemeter 2019: Heeding the call beyond the vote \(October 2019\)](#)

## 3

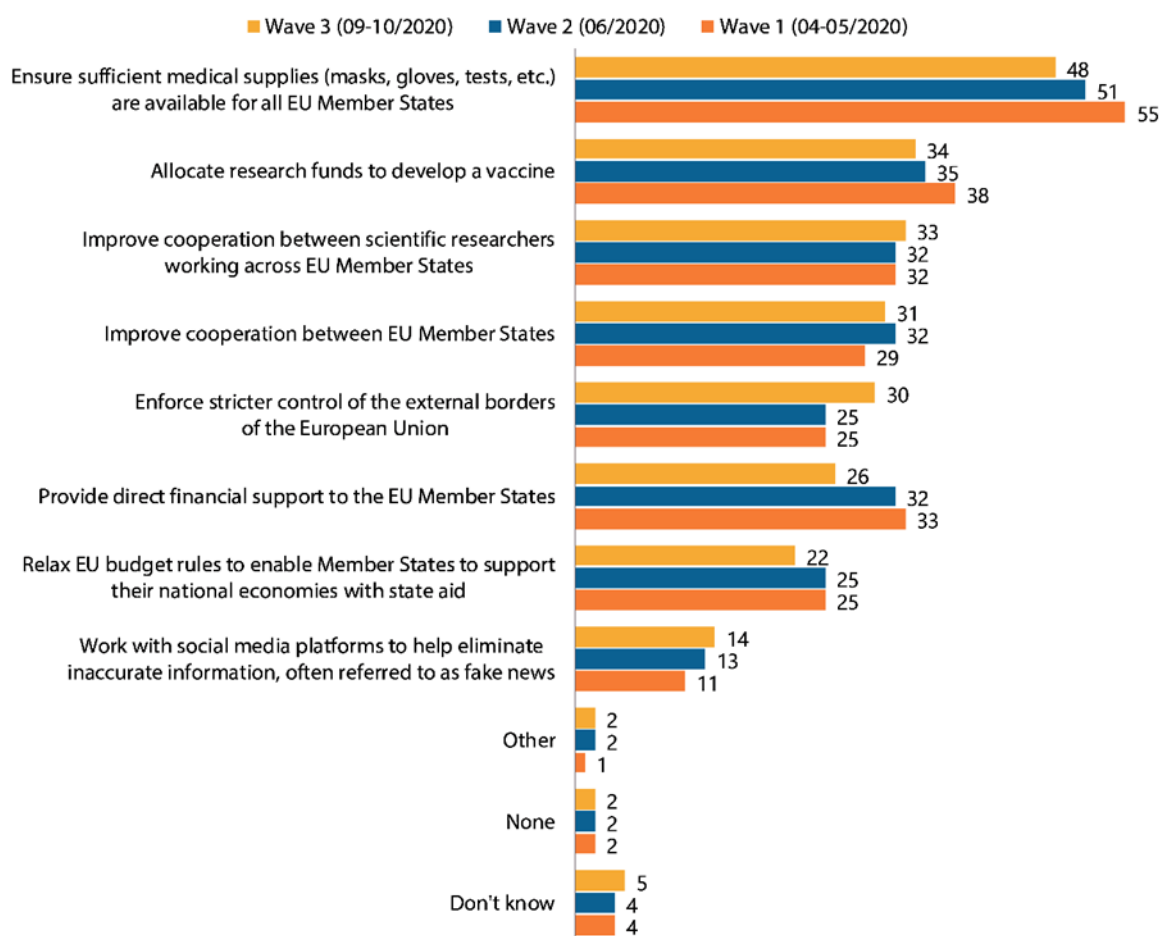
## Preparation of an EU strategy on COVID-19 vaccination, including its external dimension

On 17 June, the European Commission presented a European strategy to accelerate the development, manufacturing and deployment of vaccines against COVID-19. [The EU Vaccines Strategy](#) intends to ensure the production in Europe of qualitative, safe and efficacious vaccines, and to secure swift access to them for Member States and their populations. On Wednesday afternoon, the Commission and the Council will discuss with Members the state of play of this strategy while the first vaccines were found.

In the [last European Parliament survey, published last month](#), EU citizens were asked to identify what they think should be the **EU's top priorities** in its response to Coronavirus, by choosing up to three answers from a list of eight. The top priority (mentioned by 48% of respondents) is to ensure that sufficient medical supplies are available for all EU Member States.

There then follow several items that are each chosen by around one in three respondents: **allocate research funds to develop a vaccine (34%)**, improve co-operation between scientific researchers working across EU Member States (33%), improve co-operation between EU Member States (31%) and enforce stricter control of the external borders of the EU (30%).

**Q8** Choosing from this list, please select up to three which you feel should be the European Union's top priorities in its response to coronavirus. (MAX. 3 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU27)

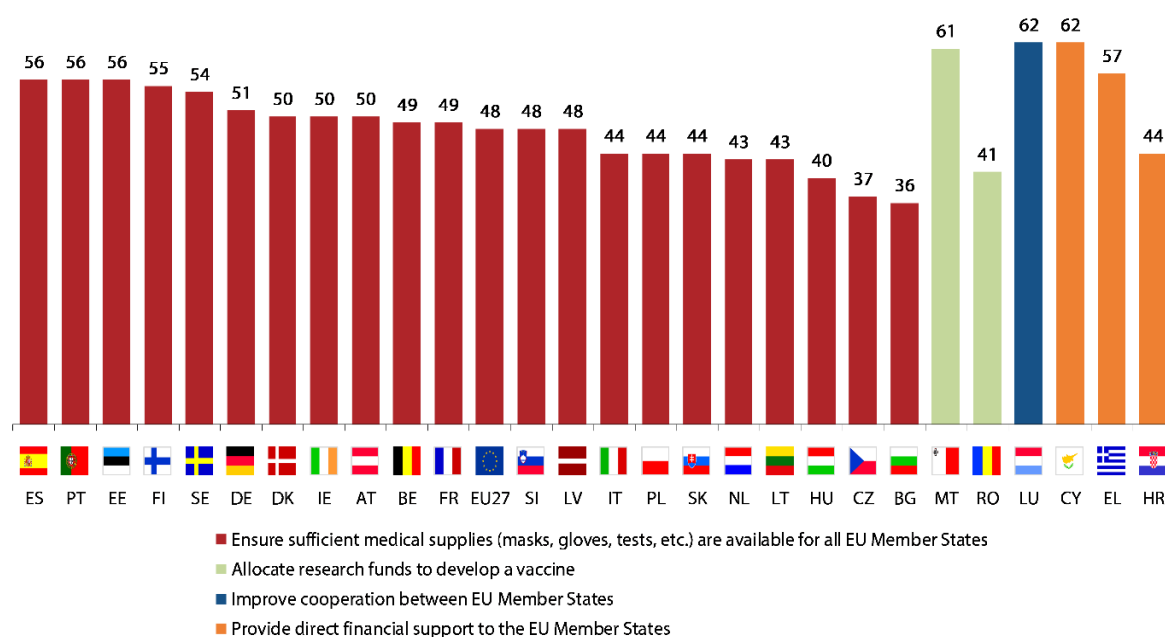


For more detailed information: [Public opinion in the EU in times of coronavirus crisis 3 \(October 2020\)](#)

In 21 countries, the main priority for the EU in its response to Coronavirus is ensuring that sufficient medical supplies are available for all EU Member States. In three countries (Cyprus, Croatia and Greece), respondents' highest priority for the EU is providing direct financial support to Member States. **Respondents in Malta and Romania are most likely to prioritise allocating research funds to develop a vaccine.** In Luxembourg, the highest priority is improving co-operation between Member States. Ensuring the availability of sufficient medical supplies is among the top three priorities in all Member States. The top three priorities in each country also include the following items:

- improve co-operation between scientific researchers working across EU Member States: 13 countries;
- **allocate research funds to develop a vaccine: 12 countries;**
- provide direct financial support to Member States: 12 countries;
- improve co-operation between EU Member States: nine countries;
- enforce stricter control of the external borders of the EU: eight countries;
- relax EU budget rules to enable Member States to support their national economies with state aid: three countries.

Q8 Choosing from this list, please select up to three which you feel should be the European Union's top priorities in its response to coronavirus.  
(MAX. 3 ANSWERS)  
(% - THE MOST MENTIONED ANSWER BY COUNTRY)



For more detailed information: [Public opinion in the EU in times of coronavirus crisis 3 \(October 2020\)](#)

## EXTERNAL INSIGHTS:

Only a minority of the public across major economies say they would 'definitely' take a vaccine for coronavirus when it becomes available, a [Kantar research study](#) has found. The study, conducted after a vaccine presenting as 90% effective in stage three clinical trials was announced by Pfizer, also indicates an increasing hesitancy among the general population to commit to any new vaccine.

Across the USA, UK, France Germany and Italy, the rate at which the public are committed to participating in vaccination efforts correlates to the rate at which the public strongly believe in the



safety of vaccines in general. These findings present a major challenge for governments around the world aiming to control the COVID-19 pandemic and get their economies back on track in 2021.

If a vaccination is made available to protect against Coronavirus (Covid-19), how likely would you be to get such a vaccination for yourself?

	GB		USA		France		Germany		Italy		Australia		Singapore	
	Nov 2020	June 2020	Nov 2020	June 2020	Nov 2020	June 2020	Nov 2020	June 2020	Nov 2020	June 2020	Nov 2020	June 2020	Nov 2020	June 2020
Definitely	43%	50%	30%	47%	21%	29%	35%	39%	38%	43%	42%		28%	
Probably	32%	28%	36%	23%	33%	30%	32%	28%	40%	31%	34%		45%	
Probably not	11%	9%	14%	10%	19%	14%	15%	11%	10%	9%	11%	NA*	16%	NA*
Definitely not	8%	5%	11%	9%	14%	10%	12%	12%	6%	8%	6%		5%	
Don't know	6%	8%	9%	11%	14%	18%	6%	10%	6%	9%	7%		6%	

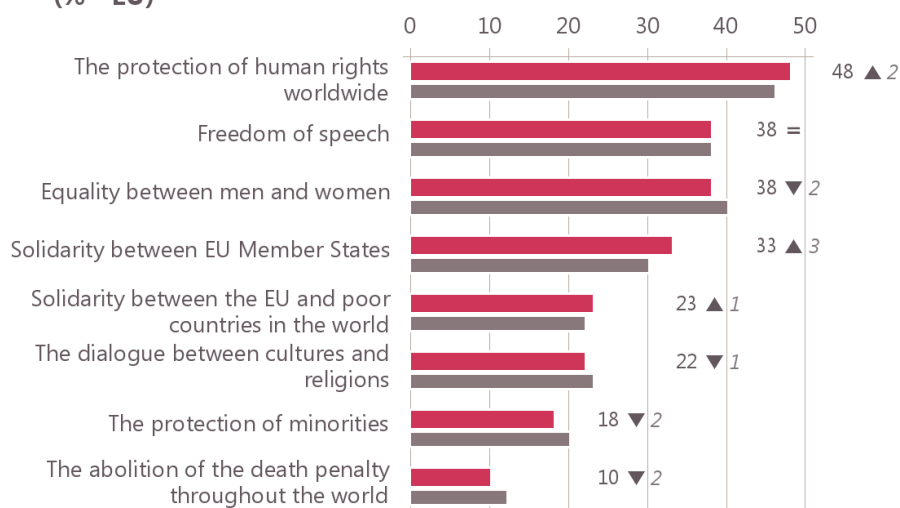
Similar findings are also available for other Member States. For more detailed information: [Public opinion monitoring in the time of COVID-19](#)

## 4

### European Citizens' Initiative - Minority Safepack

The European Parliament held a public hearing on [the European Citizens' Initiative \(ECI\) entitled 'Minority Safepack](#) – one million signatures for diversity in Europe', on 15 October. The initiative has gathered the support of 1,123,422 signatories in 28 Member States. Members will have a plenary debate and a resolution on the MSPI on Monday. According to [the Parlemeter 2019](#), nearly one in five EU respondents (18%) mention 'the protection of minorities' as a pressing value to fight for.

**QB6** In your opinion, which of the following values should the European Parliament defend as a matter of priority?  
(% - EU)



For more detailed information: [Parlemeter 2019: Heeding the call beyond the vote \(October 2019\)](#)