

PLENARY INSIGHTS

Public opinion at a glance

April 2024



Each plenary session, DG Communication's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit (POMU) provides Members with relevant public opinion data on key agenda topics.

Many of the findings of the current edition stem from our brand-new [Spring 2024 Eurobarometer survey](#), released last week. Conducted in all Member States in February and March this year, the Parliament's Spring 2024 Eurobarometer reveals strong interest among citizens in the upcoming European elections (6-9 June) and awareness of their significance in the current geopolitical context. The survey sheds light on Europeans' voting behaviour, their attitudes towards campaign topics as well as on preferences for the priority values for the next term of the European Parliament. It focuses also on citizens' perception of the EP and EU and the bloc's role in the world.

- **Recent European Council conclusions:** A relative majority of citizens (40%) believe that over the past years, the role of the EU in the world has become more important. Priority areas for the EU to focus on to reinforce its position in the world are defence and security, which was underscored by 37% of respondents, as well as energy issues, and food security and agriculture (both 30%). ([EP Spring 2024 Eurobarometer survey](#)).
- **20th anniversary of the largest ever EU enlargement:** Trend data from Eurobarometer surveys show that the people in the 10 Member States that joined the EU in 2004 increasingly recognize that EU membership has benefited their country. Over the past two decades, the image of the EU in these countries has varied depending on how the citizens perceived the EU's reaction to various challenges. ([Socio-demographic trends in national public opinion](#)).
- **Agricultural policy:** The issue of agricultural policy has risen sharply in importance for Europeans: 23% now say that agricultural policy should be discussed with priority during the EP election campaign ([EP Spring 2024 Eurobarometer survey](#)).
- **Packaging waste:** People rate the EU's efforts for the sustainable use of natural resources, such as reducing waste, as one of the two most significant EU initiatives – 86% rate it as important ([Eurobarometer survey on EU challenges and priorities in 2023](#)). Waste reduction and recycling is also an action that citizens are likely to take themselves – 70% say they do ([Eurobarometer survey on Climate change](#)).

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: dgcomm-pom@europarl.europa.eu

 @EP_Trends

Recent European Council conclusions

On Tuesday 23 April, MEPs will discuss the [conclusions of the recent European Council meetings](#), in particular on a new European Competitiveness deal and the EU strategic agenda 2024 – 2029.

According to the findings of the [EP's Spring 2024 Eurobarometer survey](#), a relative majority of citizens (40%) believe that over the past years, the role of the EU in the world has become more important. Comparatively, 35% think that its role in the world has remained stable, while 22% consider that it has become less important.

Would you say that over the past years the role of the European Union in the world has become...? (EU27) (%)



● More important ● Stayed the same ● Less important ● Don't know

Feb/Mar 2024

For more detailed information: [EP Spring Eurobarometer 2024 \(April 2024\)](#)

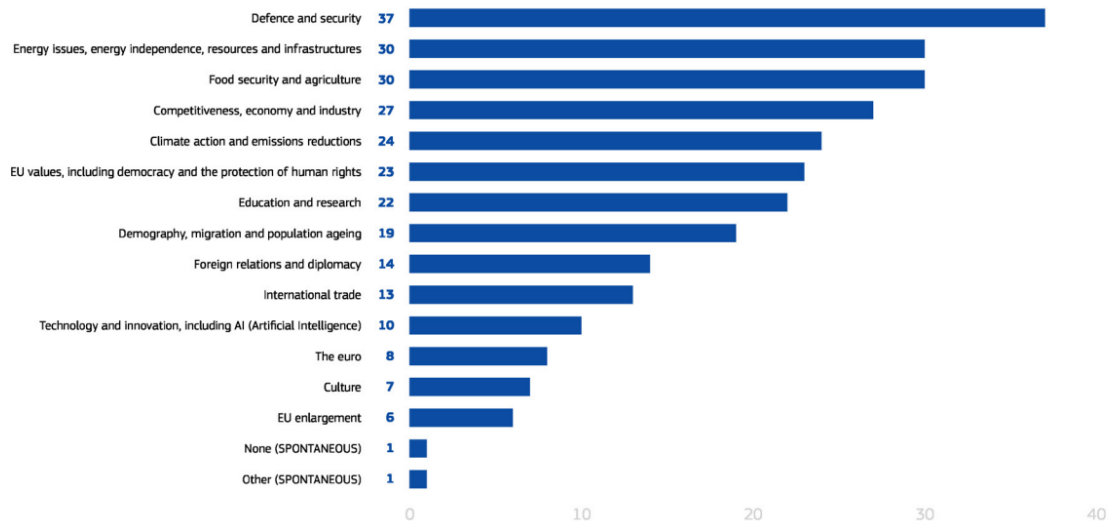
In 15 countries, majorities believe that the role of the EU in the world has become more important over the years, with highest proportions being reached in Sweden (67%), in Portugal (63%) and in Denmark (60%). In ten countries, relatively more think that the EU's role across the world has stayed the same, with the highest shares recorded in Czechia and Greece (both 43%) as well as France (42%). When looking at the prevalence of the opinion that the role of the EU has rather become less important, there are two Member States where more than three in ten hold the opinion – Slovenia (32%) and Czechia (30%).

The respondents were also asked to select the topics the EU should prioritise to reinforce its position in the world. Several of the areas stood out as the most critical for Europeans, particularly defence and security, which was underscored by 37% of respondents, as well as energy issues, energy independence, resources and infrastructure and food security

and agriculture (both 30%). Other priority areas for the EU to focus on to reinforce its position in the world were competitiveness, economy and industry (27%) and climate action and emissions reductions (24%).

QA11ab

Thinking about the future, which of the following aspects should the EU focus on in order to reinforce its position in the world? Firstly? And Then? (EU27) (%)



Feb/Mar 2024

For more detailed information: [EP Spring Eurobarometer 2024 \(April 2024\)](#)

In 15 countries, the majority of respondents answered that the EU should prioritise ‘defence and security’ as a focus area to reinforce its position in the world. In six other countries, the highest shares suggested that the EU should focus on ‘energy issues, energy independence, resources and infrastructure’. In five more countries, the main priority is considered ‘food security and agriculture’. However, ‘climate action and emissions reduction’ comes in first place in Sweden (57%) and Ireland (33%), while ‘education and research’ tops the list in Spain (37%).

From a socio-demographic perspective, the youngest respondents are more likely to say that education and research, climate action and emissions reductions, as well as technology and innovation, including AI should be the areas of focus for the EU.

20th anniversary of the largest ever EU enlargement

The key debate on Wednesday 24 April will focus on the **20th anniversary of the largest ever EU enlargement** in 2004, when 10 new Member States joined the Union.

This enlargement is widely seen as a political and economic success story. What do the people in the 10 new countries think about their experience of living in the European

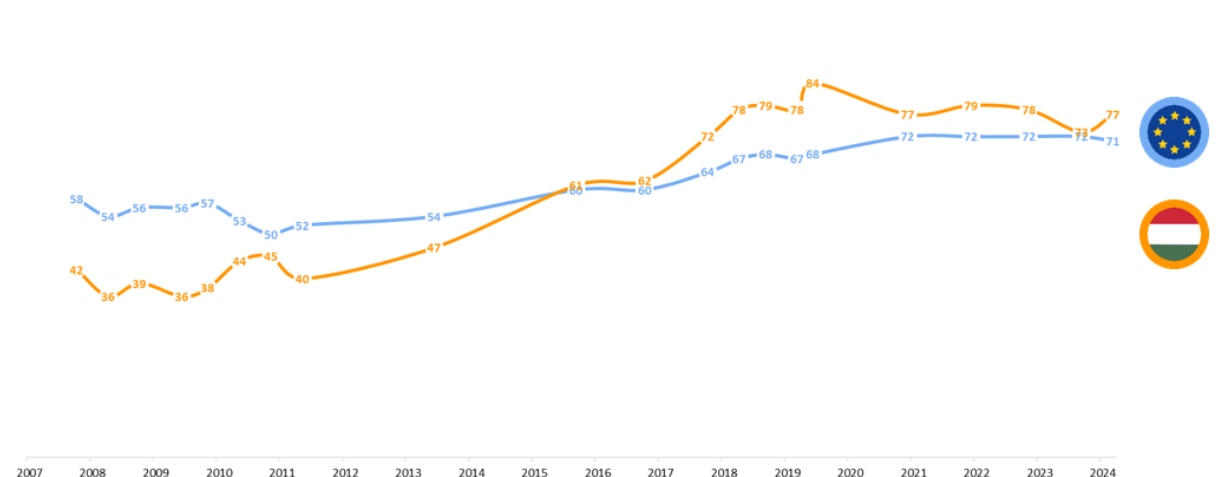
Union? How have perceptions of the EU and the EP changed over the last two decades? Are there any common trends across these countries?

In order to answer these questions, Eurobarometer information is available for analysis, tracking trends in several key indicators relating to the European Union, the European Parliament and the overall satisfaction with the democratic process over time since 2007 ([Socio-demographic trends in national public opinion](#)). With some degree of generalisation, two patterns can be identified:

- The first observation is that attitudes towards the EU in the new Member States started out with a honeymoon period of high levels of approval in the early years, as Europe faced various crises declined in the course of the 2010s, often remaining below the EU27 average. However, the indicators partly recovered with the successful management of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The second finding is that output-related indicators are holding up well in each of the 10 new Member States. "EU membership is a good thing" and "My country has benefited from EU membership" are statements that either had high levels of approval right from the start and have remained at that level, or have gradually improved over time.

All the new Member States of 2004 have one characteristic in common: a majority of citizens say that their country has **benefited from EU membership**. This opinion is largely independent of other indicators, and it is visible even in those countries where the image of the EU is below the EU average. The trend is most positive in **Hungary**, where only 36% agreed with this statement in 2008, but 84% did so in 2019. Agreement has remained at a high level since then.

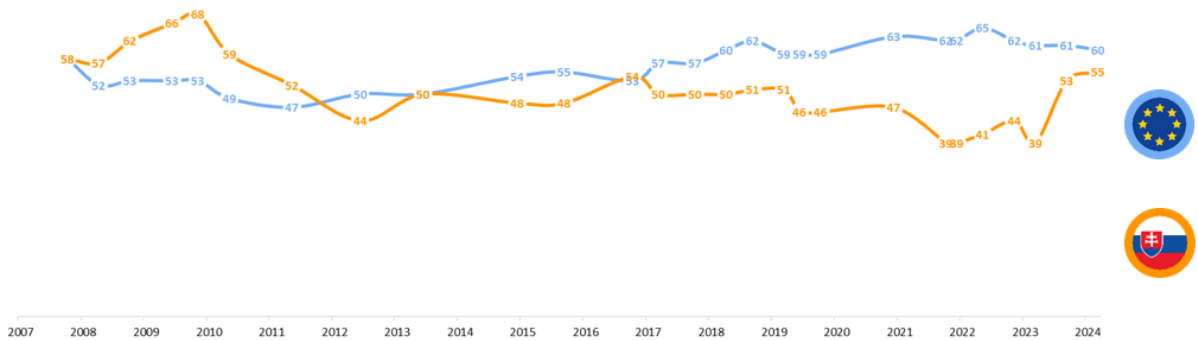
Taking everything into account, would you say that [OUR COUNTRY] has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the EU?
Answer: Total "Benefited" (%)



Source: [Socio-demographic trends in national public opinion](#)

Slovenia, Czechia and Slovakia differ from Hungary in that the feeling that the country has benefited from membership has been consistently high from the very start and has always remained above or at least close to the EU average. Other EU- and EP-related indicators, such as the image of the EU and the EP, tend to be less positive than in other EU countries. Interestingly, in **Slovakia** the indicators show a strong recovery in the last 12 months. After 20 years of steady decline, agreement with the statement that **EU membership is a good thing** rose from 39% in spring 2023 to 55% in spring 2024.

Generally speaking, do you think that [OUR COUNTRY]'s membership of the EU is...?
 Answer: Total "a good thing" (%)

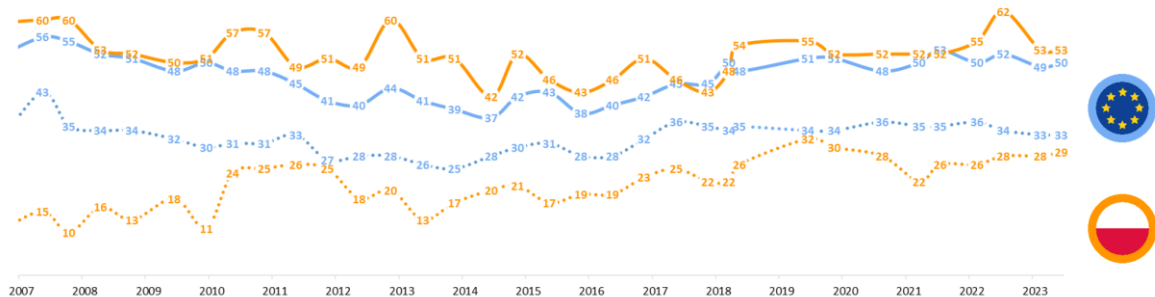


Source: [Socio-demographic trends in national public opinion](#)

Poland, the largest country in the group of 2004, also has the most positive attitudes towards the EU and the EP among them. To take just one example, the **trust in the European Parliament** has been above the EU average for most of the time. This contrasts with the low level of trust in the national parliament, which has been consistently *below* the EU average since 2007.

Please tell me if you tend to trust or tend not to trust these European institutions: the European Parliament
 Please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it: [OUR COUNTRY]'s parliament
 Answer: Total "trust" (%)

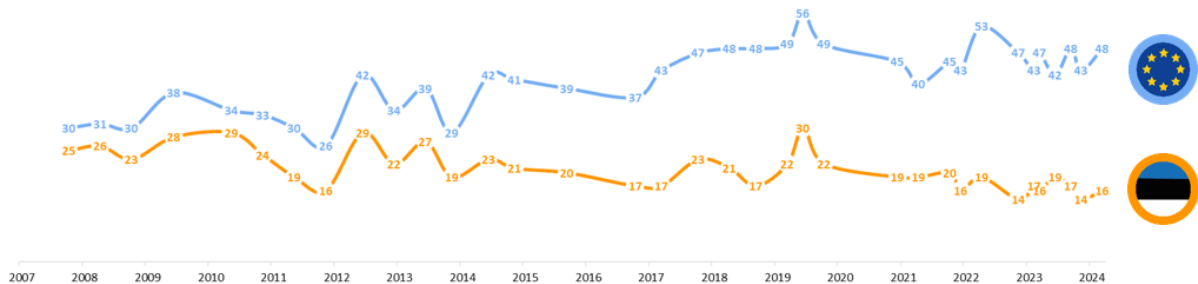
— Europeans trust the European Parliament
 Europeans trust their national parliament
 — Poles trust the European Parliament
 Poles trust their national parliament



Source: [Socio-demographic trends in national public opinion](#)

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia show a different set of similar patterns. Most people in the Baltic countries agree that EU membership is a good thing and that their country has benefited from it, and they report a generally high levels of satisfaction with EU democracy. The striking finding is that the citizens in these countries feel a lack of opportunities to make an impact: the percentage of people agreeing with the statement **"My voice counts in the EU"** is well below the European average. **Estonia** consistently ranks lowest of all EU countries, with currently only 17% agreeing with the statement; **Latvia** (25%) and **Lithuania** (33%) are slightly ahead, but still well below the EU average of 48%.

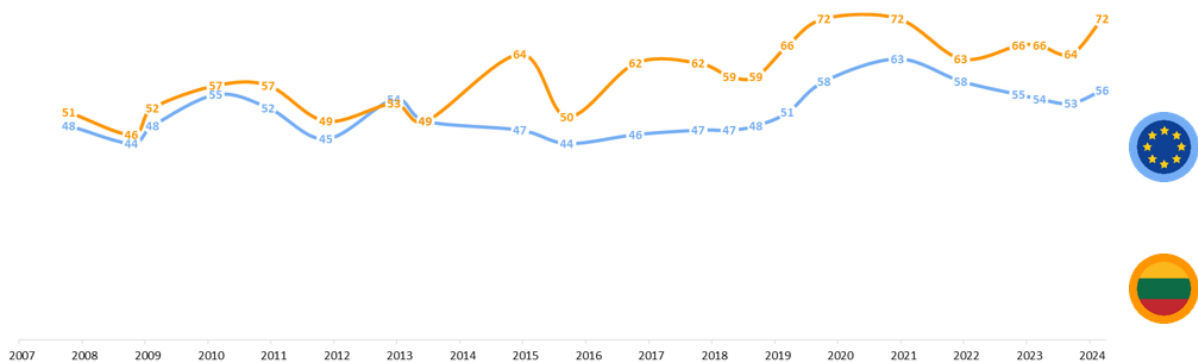
Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: My voice counts in the EU
 Answer: Total "Agree" (%)



Source: [Socio-demographic trends in national public opinion](#)

This feeling of under-representation also may also explain the pattern in which the people in the area evaluate the European Parliament. Many people there **want the EP to play a more important role** and thus strengthen the democratic aspect of European integration. In **Lithuania**, for example, the agreement with this statement has been consistently above the EU average since 2014 and currently stands at 72%.

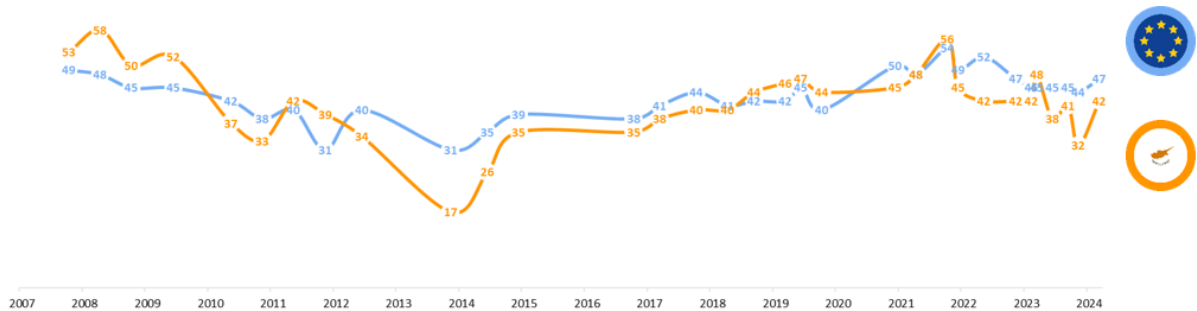
Would you personally like to see the European Parliament play a more important or less important role than it currently does?
 Answer: "More important" (%)



Source: [Socio-demographic trends in national public opinion](#)

The evolution of the **image of the EU** over time shows that the perception of the European Union and its institutions in the new Member States tends to be as good or bad as the perceived handling of the latest crisis. In **Cyprus**, for example, the graph below shows that 58% of the people had a positive image of the EU in 2008. This figure fell to 17% in the course of the euro crisis of 2013, rose up again to 54% during the COVID crisis, only to fall back to 32% during the war on Ukraine and increased migration. Recent Eurobarometer results ([EP Spring 2024 Eurobarometer Survey](#)) show that Cyprus is the country in which people are least satisfied with EU's handling of these two issues among all Member States (20% are satisfied with the response to the war on Ukraine and 11% with the response to migration).

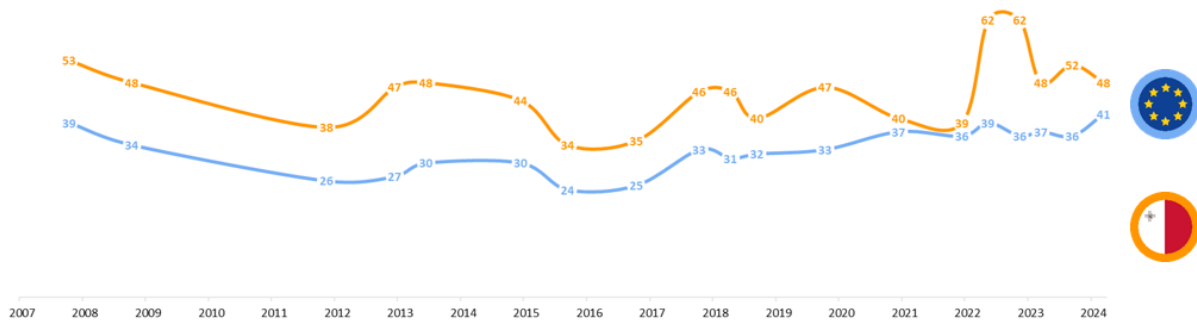
In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?
 Answer: Total "Positive" (%)



Source: [Socio-demographic trends in national public opinion](#)

An example of how single events can have a large positive impact on public opinion can be seen in **Malta**, where the election of Roberta Metsola as President of the EP in 2022 increased the image of the European Parliament by 23 p.p. within a few months.

In general, does the European Parliament conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?
 Answer: Total "Positive" (%)



Source: [Socio-demographic trends in national public opinion](#)

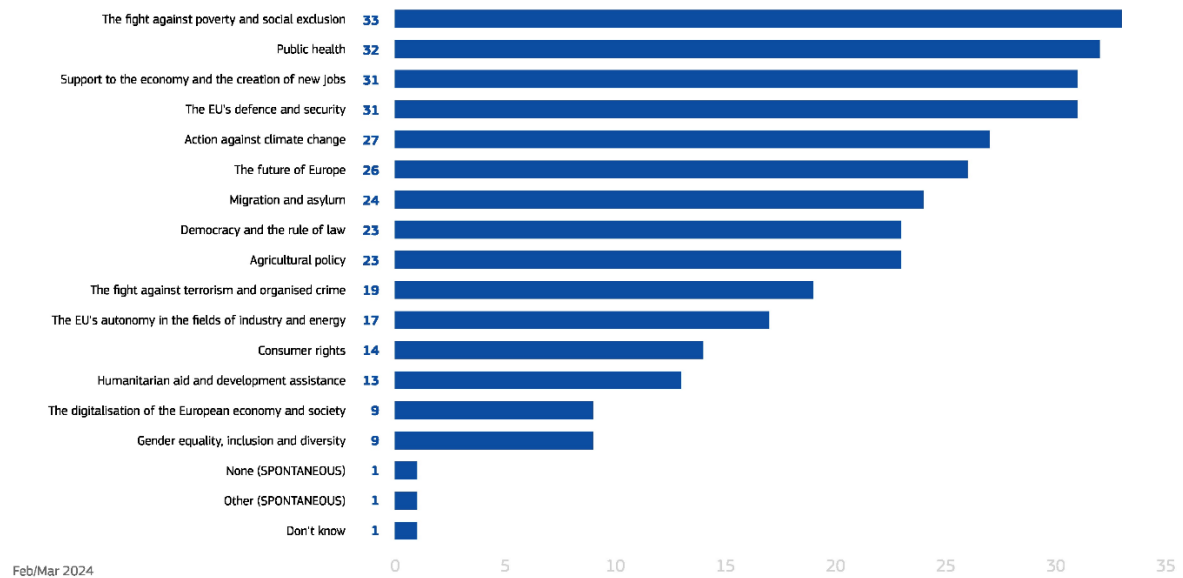
If you find this kind of trend information useful, you can access the Eurobarometer Socio-demographic Trends [here](#). You will find further analysis of trends by gender and age groups, for each of the 27 Member States.

Agricultural policy

On Thursday 25 April, MEPs will vote on a targeted review of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to reduce the administrative burden and increase flexibility for farmers.

The results of the recently published [EP Spring 2024 Eurobarometer Survey](#) show that this issue has gained in importance for the citizens of Europe: 23% say that agricultural policy should be discussed as a priority during the EP electoral campaign. This puts agricultural policy in a joint rank 8 out of 15 policy areas.

QA14ab. Which of the following topics should be discussed as a matter of priority during the electoral campaign for the next European Parliament elections? Firstly? And then? (EU27) (%) (MAX 4 ANSWERS)

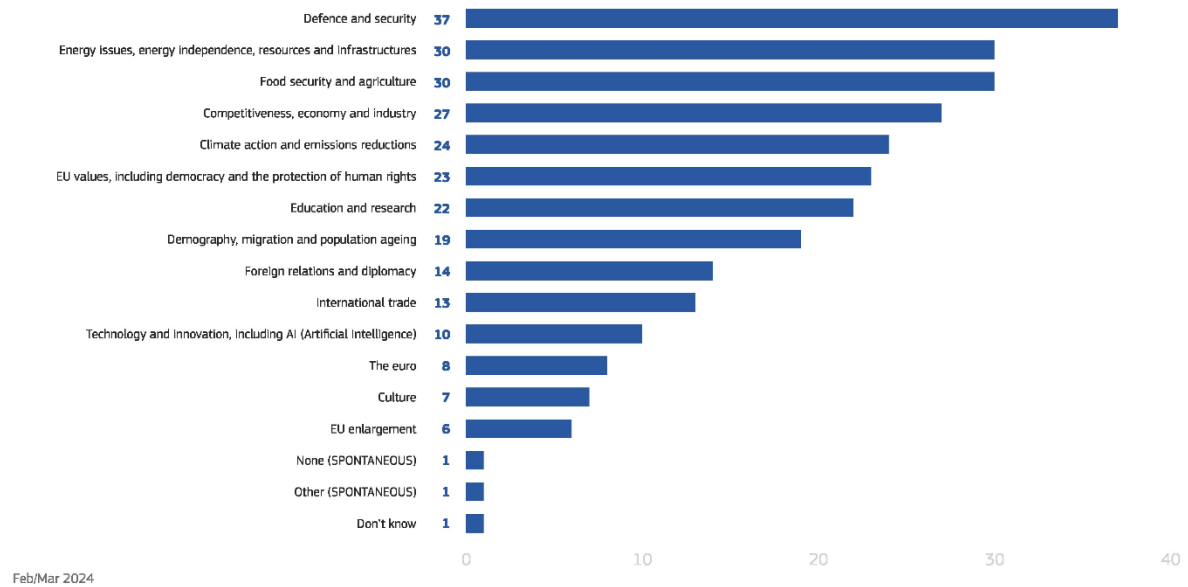


For more detailed information: [EP Spring Eurobarometer 2024](#) (April 2024)

In the 2023 Autumn Parlemeter, the question was worded differently, then asking about the priorities for the current EP to address, with the same list of topics given as answer categories to choose from agricultural policy was then ranked 14th of 15, with only 13% of the people choosing this option. Although this result is not directly comparable, the rise of six places shows the increased significance of the issue. The countries for which agricultural policy is particularly important according to the new Spring Eurobarometer are Slovenia (38%), Slovakia (37%) and Greece (35%).

Another question in the Spring Eurobarometer asked what areas the EU should focus on to reinforce its position in the world. "Food security and agriculture" came second in the list, sharing this rank with "energy issues, energy independence, resources and infrastructure", both at 30%. (The most mentioned area was defence and security with 37%).

Q11ab. Thinking about the future, which of the following aspects should the EU focus on in order to reinforce its position in the world? Firstly? And Then? (EU27) (%)



For more detailed information: [EP Spring Eurobarometer 2024 \(April 2024\)](#)

The proportion of citizens that want the EU to focus on food security and agriculture ranges from 41% in Slovenia and Slovakia, 37% in France, Spain, and Malta, to 13% in Denmark and 20% in Germany.

Packaging waste

Revamped rules to reduce, reuse and recycle packaging will be put to a final vote by MEPs on Wednesday 24 April. The legislation, which has been provisionally agreed on with the Council, aims to make packaging used in the EU safer and more sustainable. The rules require all packaging to be recyclable, minimise the presence of harmful substances, reduce unnecessary packaging, boost the uptake of recycled content, and improve collection and recycling.

Eurobarometer studies show that people consider waste reduction to be an important issue. In the [Eurobarometer survey on EU challenges and priorities in 2023](#), respondents were given a list of initiatives taken by the EU during the past year to respond to current challenges. "Promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, e.g. reducing waste, increasing recycling and encouraging the re-use and repair of goods" came second here with 86% of respondents rating it as important, just after "taking measures at European level to limit the immediate impact of rising energy prices" (87%).

Q4 To what extent do you consider each of the following EU initiatives taken during the last year to be important? (% EU27)



Base: all respondents (n=26 514)

For more detailed information: [Eurobarometer survey on EU challenges and priorities in 2023](#) (September 2023)

In the [Eurobarometer survey on Climate change](#) of July 2023, people were asked what actions they were taking themselves to help combat climate change. The most given answer in all but one country (Bulgaria) was "trying to reduce waste and regularly separating it for recycling" (EU average: 70%). However, this answer has lost 5 p.p. of its share since spring 2021.

QC6 Which of the following actions, if any, apply to you? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (%)

	EU27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE
You try to reduce your waste and you regularly separate it for recycling	70	73	26	69	78	75	67	85	74	72	82	68	69	67	57	73	62	58	91	76	66	49	70	36	81	71	79	93
You try to cut down on your consumption of disposable items whenever possible (e.g. plastic bags from the supermarket, excess packaging)	53	59	32	49	63	65	61	52	64	49	57	49	40	54	48	48	66	55	78	71	57	36	49	31	65	57	69	81
When buying a new household appliance (e.g. washing machine, fridge or TV), lower energy consumption is an important factor in your choice	37	43	19	46	46	41	40	28	40	34	38	34	31	46	41	37	48	37	67	54	38	24	31	27	51	40	42	52
You buy and eat less meat	31	39	19	18	46	47	24	26	14	15	41	22	26	21	17	13	53	18	22	58	39	11	13	14	27	19	41	53
You regularly use environmentally-friendly alternatives to your private car such as walking, cycling, taking public transport or car-sharing	28	42	17	24	43	43	29	28	23	27	14	14	17	26	22	47	19	42	56	33	12	16	16	37	31	45	63	
You buy and eat more organic food	28	28	14	15	47	39	21	21	16	21	28	32	29	16	24	24	60	11	26	38	41	12	17	17	56	25	22	52
You have insulated your home better to reduce your energy consumption	17	28	32	20	22	10	26	22	19	11	21	20	13	27	16	17	28	19	13	43	11	12	11	20	32	24	19	17
You consider the carbon footprint of your food purchases and sometimes adapt your shopping accordingly	15	22	3	10	27	21	9	22	3	9	24	7	3	8	10	7	30	13	10	41	20	6	8	4	22	12	32	46
You have installed equipment in your home to control and reduce your energy consumption (e.g. smart meter)	11	17	2	7	18	9	12	15	2	8	18	6	4	7	12	13	20	9	33	44	19	8	7	8	18	7	17	17
You consider the carbon footprint of your transport when planning your holiday and other longer distance travel and sometimes adapt your plans accordingly	11	15	3	6	21	16	4	12	2	4	16	3	4	7	5	3	25	8	10	32	19	3	5	6	10	6	30	43
You have switched to an energy supplier which offers a greater share of energy from renewable sources than your previous one	10	14	1	4	15	15	8	13	6	5	9	5	9	3	6	8	16	4	1	19	11	4	7	6	16	4	17	25
You have installed solar panels in your home	9	19	3	8	7	9	4	6	17	6	5	5	6	25	3	13	4	21	43	14	5	5	4	12	6	6	9	
You have bought a new car and its low fuel consumption was an important factor in your choice	7	10	7	11	15	6	11	9	2	5	11	4	6	12	8	8	16	4	14	12	9	4	4	4	16	6	13	17
You have bought a low-energy home	4	6	3	2	8	2	5	6	1	3	6	1	3	10	2	2	19	6	9	12	4	3	2	4	6	2	4	4
You have bought an electric car	3	3	1	2	9	3	2	5	1	2	2	3	5	1	2	1	8	2	6	9	7	1	2	2	3	1	7	9
Other (SPONTANEOUS)	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
None (SPONTANEOUS)	7	4	18	9	5	5	8	5	9	10	4	3	6	16	9	8	2	7	0	2	6	12	12	15	2	6	4	1
Don't know	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Total 'At least one action'	93	96	80	91	95	95	92	93	90	90	96	96	94	83	89	92	98	93	100	98	94	87	87	85	98	94	95	99
1st MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM	You try to reduce your waste and you regularly separate it for recycling																											
2nd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM	You try to cut down on your consumption of disposable items whenever possible (e.g. plastic bags from the supermarket, excess packaging)																											
3rd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM	When buying a new household appliance (e.g. washing machine, fridge or TV), lower energy consumption is an important factor in your choice																											

For more detailed information: [Eurobarometer survey on Climate change](#) (July 2023)