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](#)).
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.

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to the question: Would you say that over the past years the role of the European Union in the world has become...? (EU27) (%)](image)

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

- **More Important**: 40%
- **Stayed the same**: 35%
- **Less Important**: 22%
- **Don't know**: 3%

For more detailed information: [EP Spring Eurobarometer 2024](http://example.com) (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%).

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.

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?
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” (%)

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" (%)
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%.

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).
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.

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.
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.

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

In the 2023 Autumn Parlementer, 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%).
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.

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%).
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.

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