PARLEMETER 2019

HEEDING THE CALL BEYOND THE VOTE
A STRONGER PARLIAMENT TO LISTEN TO CITIZENS VOICES

Eurobarometer Survey 92.2 of the European Parliament
A Public Opinion Monitoring Study
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Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Parliament
Directorate-General for Communication
Public Opinion Monitoring Unit
PE 645.471
IMPRESSUM

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Manuscript completed in November 2019
Brussels, © European Union, 2019
Cover photo: Emma Espejo/Getty Images

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LINGUISTIC VERSION
Original: EN

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CONTEXT

As with every survey of this kind, understanding context at a national, European and international level is key to proper placement and thus understanding of the results. At the time of fieldwork for this survey (8 – 22 October 2019), several important events took place – such as the agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom government under Prime Minister Boris Johnson on a revised Brexit deal, a new wave of climate action, the European Commission candidate hearings as well as national elections in Austria, Poland and Portugal.

Economy

From an economic point of view, eleven years after the beginning of the economic and financial crisis in 2008, the European Union has globally moved on positively. According to Eurostat\(^1\), the EU28 unemployment rate was at 6.3% in September 2019, the same result as in August 2019 and down from 6.7% in September 2018. Unemployment figures therefore remain at their lowest rate for the EU28 since the start of the EU monthly unemployment series in January 2000.

Among Member States, the lowest unemployment rates in September 2019 were recorded in Czechia (2.1%) and Germany (3.1%). The highest unemployment rates were observed in Greece (16.9% in July 2019) and Spain (14.2%). Compared with a year ago, unemployment rates fell in 22 Member States, remained stable in Belgium, Portugal and Romania while increasing in Lithuania (from 6.3% to 6.5%), Denmark (from 5.0% to 5.3%) and Sweden (from 6.3% to 7.3%). The largest decreases were registered in Greece (from 19.1% to 16.9% between July 2018 and July 2019), Cyprus (from 8.0% to 6.6%) and Estonia (from 5.3% to 3.9% between August 2018 and August 2019).

Brexit

On October 17, following difficult negotiations, the United Kingdom and the European Union reached an agreement on the conditions for the Brexit process. Both the British Parliament and the European Parliament still must approve this agreement before it can enter into force. On Saturday October 19, in one of the largest public demonstrations in British history, a crowd estimated at around one million marched outside the British Parliament to demand Members grant them a second referendum on membership in the EU.

On October 22, the United Kingdom Parliament agreed to consider the Brexit legislation, but also decided more time was needed than proposed by the UK Prime Minister. Because of this decision, UK withdrawal from the EU with an agreement was no longer feasible on the intended date of 31 October.

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\(^1\) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10064439/3-31102019-CP-EN.pdf/20825ac8-e75f-6ca4-59ea-6b09e8d04f07c](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10064439/3-31102019-CP-EN.pdf/20825ac8-e75f-6ca4-59ea-6b09e8d04f07c)
Climate change

In October 2019, average temperatures across the globe were the warmest on record for that month according to the EU’s earth monitoring service Copernicus\(^2\). On a global level, October 2019 was 0.69°C warmer than the month’s average temperature from 1981-2010. In Europe, this month was 1.1°C warmer than the average temperatures for October in the same time span.

Late September, a fresh wave of climate strikes swept around the globe with an estimated 2 million people walking out of schools and workplaces. Young people from around the world were leading a massive co-ordinated strike from school to demand action be taken to address climate change. It was likely to be one of the largest environmental protests in history. Speaking at the beginning of the United Nations’ Climate Action Summit on Monday, 23 September, in New York City, 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg was unsparing in her criticism of world leaders.

Heavy rainfall affected north-western Italy from 20 to 22 October, causing floods and landslides, resulted in casualties and damage. The most affected regions were Piedmont, Liguria and Lombardy. Moreover, in October the north-east Spanish region of Catalonia suffered its second period of torrential rain in two months. Tarragona and Girona were the worst affected provinces, where flooding caused by the overflow of Francoli River and several landslides damaged houses, roads, and bridges.

Migration

According to Frontex\(^3\), in September the number of detected illegal border crossings on Europe’s main migratory routes rose by 14 percentage points (compared with August 2019) to more than 17200, due to higher arrivals on the Greek islands in the eastern Aegean. Despite these growing numbers over the past months, the total number of around 88200 detected illegal border crossings for all European migratory routes during the first three quarters of 2019 was 19% lower compared to the previous year.

European Commission Candidate Hearings

On September 30, Members of the European Parliament’s Legal Affairs Committee finally found that Hungary’s and Romania’s commissioner-designates (Rovana Plumb and Laszlo Trocsanyi) were unfit for office due to conflicts of interests.

A few days later, Members of the European Parliament’s internal market and industry committees voted in a secret ballot (by 82 votes to 29 with one abstention) not to approve Sylvie Goulard’s nomination to take up the internal market portfolio, spanning industrial policy, defence and technology.

\(^2\) [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/space/copernicus_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/space/copernicus_en)

France, Hungary and Romania are all required to present new nominees after the European Parliament thus had rejected their first-choice candidates, delaying the start of the von der Leyen Commission, which had been due to take office on November 1.

**Juncker Commission**

On Tuesday 22 October, outgoing Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker gave his farewell speech in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, as his five-year term as President of the European Commission ended. In his speech President Juncker underlined that his focus always had been on how the EU “could do better for its citizens” and he urged Europe to “fight ignorant nationalism with all your strength.”

**Terrorism**

On 3 October, a man stabbed five officers at the central police headquarters in Paris, France, killing four of them. The attacker, shot dead by other officers, was an administrative intelligence employee at the station.

On 9 October, a gunman killed two people and injured more on an attack at a synagogue in the East German town of Halle on one of the most holy days in Jewish faith.

**Elections and other political developments**

On 29 September, former Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz won a clear victory with his People’s Party (ÖVP, EPP) in Austria’s snap parliamentary election. The far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ, ID) suffered a worse-than-expected loss, down almost 10 percentage points to around 16%, in a clear sign that the party’s reputation has suffered badly after being embroiled in a corruption scandal earlier this year. The center-left Social Democrats (SPÖ/S&D) also lost five percentage points to around 22%, while the Greens (Greens/EFA) gained 10.2 points to reach 13.8%, raising the prospect of a coalition between the ÖVP and the Greens.

In Portugal, Prime Minister Antonio Costa’s Socialists (PS, S&D) came out first at the parliamentary elections held on October 6, winning 36.5% of the vote. The party managed to expand its number of mandates in the 230-seat assembly but fell short of winning an absolute majority.

In Poland, elections to the Sejm (parliament) and Senate took place on the 13 October 2019. With a record turnout in the election of 61.7%, the highest since the partially free elections in 1989, right-wing ruling party Law and Justice (PiS/ECR) won the elections by a large margin, obtaining 43.6% of the votes, while the main opposition bloc Civic Platform (KO/EPP) obtained 27.4%.

On 14 October, Protests have erupted in Barcelona after Spain’s Supreme Court sentenced nine Catalan separatist leaders to between nine and 13 years in prison. The separatists were convicted of sedition over their role in an illegal independence referendum in 2017.

**International stage**

Anti-government protests have rocked Hong Kong for months and the situation showed no sign of dying down in either September or October. Hong Kong’s protests started in June against proposals to allow extradition to mainland China. Critics feared this could undermine the city’s judicial independence and endanger dissidents.

On 20 October, Bolivian President Evo Morales was declared the winner of the presidential elections, despite disputed results, which have sparked riots and claims of fraud. Officials said Mr Morales had won 47.1% of the vote and beaten his closest rival by more than 10 percentage points, thereby avoiding a run-off.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberals took a narrow lead in the Canadian general elections on October 21, followed closely by Andrew Scheer’s Conservatives. The Liberal Party won the most seats in the 338-seat Parliament but fell short of an absolute majority, forcing them to form a coalition with an opposition party to stay in power.

Turkey’s military launched a cross-border operation against Kurdish-led forces in Syria in early October, after US troops who had been allied to the Kurds, withdrew from the area.

On 11 October, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Ahmed has helped end his country’s 20-year war with Eritrea.

On 19 October, Chile’s President declared a state of emergency over ongoing riots. Hundreds had taken to the streets to protest the rise of public transfer fees. Anti-government protests that have seen several deaths showed little sign of easing up.
FIRM SUPPORT FOR EU, CLEAR PRIORITIES FOR EP

A few months after the European elections, citizens’ positive attitude and support towards the European Union remain firm and sound, fed by a rising interest in European affairs and a steep increase in support for a stronger role of the European Parliament.

The level of optimism regarding the European Union’s future seems to improve, as does the general feeling of satisfaction with the way democracy works in Europe. Europeans have clear political priorities for the institution they just elected: A majority of citizens call for concrete European action against climate change, poverty, terrorism and unemployment. At the same time, most Europeans also strongly believe that human rights, the freedom of speech and gender equality must be preserved as the Union’s fundamental values, which should continue to set the frame for the European Union’s political action.

In this context, the role of the European Parliament becomes crucial to reply to the multitude of voices, expectations and hopes expressed in the 2019 European elections and to ensure that indeed each of them counts.

Sunlit uplands for EU support

After an almost continuous increase between 2011 and 2018, citizen support for European Union membership has settled on a stable high level. Nearly six in ten Europeans (59%, =) are in favour of their country’s EU membership, allowing this traditional Eurobarometer key indicator to enjoy the sunlit uplands already for the third year in a row (with levels varying between 57% and 62% since March 2017).

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q812
In October 2019, the level of support for EU Membership (59%) was the same as the one expressed a few months before the European elections. Despite the strong prevailing uncertainties around the future, including a never-ending discussion around Brexit and the prolonged formation of the new Commission, the proportion of citizens with a confident outlook towards the Union remains high and more than ever steady.

For a correct analysis of the current public opinion on the EU, it is important to understand the profound implications of national contexts. By no means are these any less important than the international context. For more information, please see the dedicated context chapter at the beginning of this report.

A majority of respondents in 25 Member States think that their country’s membership is a ‘good thing’. The level of support among these countries varies between 81% in Ireland as well as Luxembourg and 42% in the United Kingdom. In the remaining three Member States, Italy, Czechia and Slovakia, a majority of respondents believes that EU membership is neither good nor bad for their country.

On EU average, 11 percent of respondents believe that EU is a bad thing for their country. In four countries, a significantly higher share of people hold this view: nearly one in four respondents in the United Kingdom (24%), 17% in Italy, 16% in Austria and 15% in Romania. Compared to the last survey in June 2019 a clear rise in support for EU membership is expressed in France, where the share of positive views increased by 6 percentage points to 58%. In Greece, support rose by 5 points to 47% and in Latvia by 4 points to 59%. A significant deterioration of EU support registers in Lithuania (-8 pp), the United Kingdom (-7 pp), Poland and Cyprus (both -5 pp).
Against the backdrop of the Brexit scenario and its unclear future, it is interesting to observe that the United Kingdom is the only country with a massive increase in undecided opinions as to EU Membership. 31% of British respondents (an increase of 11 percentage points compared to June 2019) see EU membership as neither a good nor bad thing for the UK.

The post-electoral survey conducted by the European Parliament immediately after the European elections demonstrates the significantly higher mobilisation of young people in these elections in May 2019. Tracking the opinion of this population segment a few months later is key to gauge their volatility as well as the salience of the European Union for them, outside the electoral period.

Young people remain the biggest overall supporters of the European Union in comparison to other age ranges. This finding is not new and is widely backed by scientific research. According to the present survey, 64% of 15-24-year-olds believe that the EU membership is a ‘good thing’, compared to 54% of Europeans aged 55+. Yet, this survey also shows a 6-point decrease in support from young people compared to June 2019. A similar decrease registers with students: 75% of this socio-professional category were in favour of EU membership just after the European elections. They are 70% today.

It is too early to say whether this development is a first signal of youth detachment. Nevertheless, the decrease in EU support among young people is certainly evidence that their support, including electoral participation and overall interest specifically, cannot be taken for granted.

Are things going in the right direction?

While favourability towards EU membership remains stable, the overall feeling of optimism on the future of the Union continues to be a slow but steadily rising trend.

Thirty-two percent of citizens believe that the EU is on the right track. That is an increase of 5 percentage points compared to spring 2019 and a continuation of the positive trend observed since November 2011. The share of citizens feeling that things are going in the wrong direction in the EU is decreasing equally by 5 points, with a relative majority of 46% of respondents holding this view.

These changes with a view to the EU’s direction are not coupled with the opinions Europeans have on their specific national situation. In fact, compared to the European context, a higher share of respondents believe that things are not going in the right direction in their own country while no positive evolution is detectable over the last six months.

By bringing together the different trend lines, it becomes evident that the European elections, the increasing interest in European affairs and their related presence in the media have likely played a role on the way citizens look at the European future.

At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in... (OUR COUNTRY / the EU) (% - EU)

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), D73
Satisfaction with the EU democracy

At the same time, the recent European elections and active participation of the citizens in the latter have contributed positively to the increasing feeling of satisfaction with the way democracy works in the European Union. Signals indicating that citizens trust and appreciate the European democratic process were already emerging from previous Eurobarometer surveys and are confirmed, in particular, by the current Eurobarometer results on various features of European democracy.

The 2019 post-electoral Eurobarometer survey already highlighted the increase in satisfaction with a range of aspects of democracy in the EU, strengthening the impression of strong democratic values associated with citizen engagement in Europe. They appreciated in particular free and fair elections (75%), freedom of speech (74%) and respect of fundamental rights (73%), with clear improvements registering for the fight against disinformation in the media (48%, +8 pp) and against corruption (43%, +7 pp).

Fifty-two percent of Europeans are satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union and 56% share this opinion concerning their own country. Over the past twelve months, this feeling has improved with regards to the EU democratic process, while changes are less significant on the functioning of democracy at the national level.

Beyond these top line figures, a wide spectrum of national situations becomes visible, particularly showing a pronounced divide in assessing the functioning of the domestic political system.
The national share of citizens satisfied with the way EU democracy works roughly doubles across the 28 Member States. Ireland (77%), Denmark (77%) and Poland (73%) enjoy the highest level of satisfaction while Spain and the UK (both 45%), Italy (44%) and Greece (34%) are the countries where people are the least satisfied with the EU democratic process. Looking at national systems, the share of ‘satisfied’ responses almost triples, from Romania (34%), Croatia (33%) and Greece (32%) occupying the last positions on the scale of public satisfaction to Denmark (93%), Luxembourg (84%) and the Netherlands (83%) enjoying the highest percentages of citizen appreciation for the national democratic process.

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), QB13b

### Q And how about the way democracy works in the EU? (% - EU)

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total 'Satisfied'</th>
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Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), QB13a

### Q On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in (OUR COUNTRY)? (%)

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<th>Country</th>
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It is also worth noting that in 14 countries the overall degree of satisfaction with European democracy is greater than the one expressed for the national one. These differences are particularly striking for Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania.

Concerning the national changes, Hungary, Poland, Czechia and Spain show the highest increases in support for EU democracy since spring 2019 (+13 pp, +11 pp, +10 pp and +9 pp respectively). These increases should be put into context taking into account specific political developments such as for example the European Union’s position on compliance with the rule of law in Hungary and Poland or the uncertain political climate in Spain.

On a socio-demographic level, young people (61%), students (62%) and managers (63%) are most likely to be satisfied with the way the democracy is working in the EU (see graph on next page). Among young people alone, the share of those satisfied increased by 5 percentage points over one year.
On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU? (Total 'Satisfied')

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q613b
Increased interest in European affairs

Another factor that helps to better assess the evolution of public opinion on the European Union is the growing attention to European affairs, shared by citizens and the media over the last year.

Asked whether their interest in European affairs has changed over the past twelve months a large majority of respondents state that it had stayed the same (62%). However, 22% of Europeans say that it has increased, while only 15% state the opposite.

Nationally, rising interest in European matters is very significant in Ireland (45%) and in the United Kingdom (43%) – undoubtedly, this result echoes the national public discourse dominated by the Brexit debate.

At the other end of the scale, Italy and Romania stand out with 27% and 22% of citizens claiming respectively that their interest in European issues has dropped in the last year. In both cases, contextualisation is again crucial, as the unstable political situation around the time of the fieldwork may have distracted citizens’ attention from the European sphere.

A socio-demographic analysis shows that the categories with an increased interest in European affairs are largely coinciding with the groups with the highest turnout increases during the 2019 European elections: 28% of young people claim to have today a higher interest in European issues, as do 31% of students and 35% of managers. In addition, people holding a more positive opinion of the European Union and with a higher level of education are among the most likely ones to have declared a greater interest in European affairs.
In the last 12 months, would you say that your interest in EU affairs has increased, decreased or stayed the same? (% - EU)

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<td>Manual workers</td>
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<td>House persons</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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<td><strong>Difficulties paying bills</strong></td>
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<td>Most of the time</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>From time to time</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Almost never/ Never</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td><strong>Image of EU</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
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<td>69</td>
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<td><strong>Opinion about country’s membership of the EU</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A good thing</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bad thing</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither a good thing, nor a bad thing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Parlementer 2019 (92.2), OB1
People whose level of interest has not changed are more numerous among less educated respondents as well as among the ones who live in rural areas and have a rather neutral attitude towards the European Union. A very high proportion of house persons (71%), retired people (65%) and manual workers (65%) share this opinion too.

In a second question, respondents indicated whether they had noticed an increase or decrease in the presence of EU affairs in the media over the past twelve months. There is a clear correlation between restored public interest in EU matters and an increased discussion of the latter in the media.

Overall, more than every third European (36%) acknowledged that the amount of EU-related coverage has risen. 48% did not notice any change and one in ten respondents (11%) believe it had decreased.

Again, national results vary greatly. In seven countries, a majority of respondents confirm an increased presence of European issues in the media. Unsurprisingly Ireland (68%) and the United Kingdom (68%) top this list with the highest number of their citizens feeling that media coverage on EU matters has augmented.

Q And would you say that in general the presence of EU affairs in the media has increased, decreased or stayed the same compared to 12 months ago (%)
Stable image of the European Parliament

Against a background of rising confidence in European democracy and growing interest in EU-related issues, the European Parliament appears to be benefiting from trust recovery.

Parlemeter surveys measure citizens’ views on the European Parliament both by looking at the image they have of the institution and by questioning citizens’ views on Parliament’s future role. The reinforced support for European democracy does not have concrete implications on the way citizens see the institution, yet it does move their expectations for a stronger role of the Parliament.

According to the European Commission’s Standard Eurobarometer, the European Parliament is the European institution with the highest level of confidence expressed by Europeans: 51% of citizens tend to trust this institution, while 46% trust the European Commission and 42% trust the European Central Bank. Overall, 44% of respondents declare their trust in the European Union. Confidence expressed in the EU and the European Parliament is higher than for national parliaments (34%) or national governments (34%). Citizens’ trust in the European Parliament has been on a steadily growing trend since 2016, with an increase of 15 points alone since spring 2014.

Q In general, do you have a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image of the European Parliament? (% - EU)

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), QB3

Although the image of the European Parliament among citizens remains predominantly neutral (46%, +3 pp since September 2018), the trend shows an increasing gap between Europeans with a positive image (33%, +1 pp.) and those with a negative one (19%, -2 pp). The distance between the two curves is marking today its biggest result since October 2008 – therefore becoming more perceptible even on a seemingly stable trend.

Ireland shows the highest results for a positive image (52%), followed by Denmark (49%), Portugal (49%) and Sweden (48%). Czechia, France and Spain are at the other end of the scale with a ‘positive’ score of 20%, 24% and 25%, respectively.

An upward trend for the positive stance runs across a number of Member States. This is mostly notable in Denmark (+10 pp compared to October 2018), Finland (+8 pp), Malta (+7 pp) and in nine additional countries registering an increase of at least 3 percentage points. On the other end, a matching decrease of more than 3 percentage points is observed in five countries: Luxembourg (-7 pp), Czechia (-5 pp), Poland (-5 pp), Croatia (-4 pp) and Greece (-4 pp).

Neutral attitudes towards the European Parliament draw particular attention especially a few months after the European elections. The share of respondents with a neutral opinion about the European Parliament is indeed noteworthy in a number of countries. The Baltic States (Lithuania 60%, Latvia 60%, Estonia 59%) stand out, followed by Spain (58%), Croatia (56%), Slovenia (55%), Czechia (54%), Poland (53%), Cyprus (52%), Finland and Slovakia (both 51%). The neutral view also registers the biggest increases compared to one year ago. Two-digit increases are present in five countries: Czechia (+12 pp), Croatia (+12 pp), Greece (+12 pp), Poland (+11 pp) and Luxembourg (+10 pp).

**In general, do you have a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image of the European Parliament? (% )**

---

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), QB3
In general, do you have a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image of the European Parliament? (% - EU)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total 'Positive'</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Total 'Negative'</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU28</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
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<td>25-39</td>
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<td>40-54</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socio-professional category</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other white collars</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual workers</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House persons</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My voice counts in the EU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2, QB3)

Socio-demographic groups show some variation in the perceptions regarding the European Parliament. Citizens who hold a neutral opinion of the European Parliament are more frequently women, young people, people who have difficulties most of the time to pay their bills with a lower income and students. At the same time, managers, as well as those who think their voice counts in the EU, are holding the most positive image of the institution. In return, those who disagree that their voice counts in the EU are more negative than positive towards the European Parliament.

These findings allow for an important conclusion: The feeling that ‘one’s voice counts’ is a decisive factor in shaping public opinion on the European Parliament as a democratic and directly-elected institution, influencing the shift from negative to more positive views.
In general, do you have a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image of the European Parliament? (% - EU)

This resonates with the fact that respondents who voted in the EE19 have a more positive image of the EP (40% compared with 20% of those who did not vote) while a favourable attitude is less likely among citizens who feel that their participation and their vote do not have any impact.

Looking specifically at the abstainers in the 2019 European ballot, it is worth noting that – despite their decision to abstain – one in five of them holds a positive image of the European Parliament and 54% have neutral views.

This analysis opens up to new ways of looking at citizens’ engagement with the European Parliament. It seems that it may depend on the opinion they have of the institution in addition to, and even mainly on, the perception that things can change by voting; that European democracy can deliver adequate responses to their personal expectations.

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q83
Strongest call for a more influential European Parliament ever measured

These expectations for adequate responses in the European democratic sphere are also reflected in the call for a more powerful European Parliament, as citizens want to see the only EU institution they can directly vote for invested with a greater role. This is the position of most Europeans (58%, +7 pp), mirrored in 25 Member States, where a relative majority of citizens wants a more influential institution, ranging from 89% in Cyprus to 39% in Denmark. Only in Czechia (51%), Slovakia (48%) and the United Kingdom (45%) a majority of respondents would like the European Parliament to play a less important role in the future.

**Q** Would you personally like to see the European Parliament play a more important or less important role? (% - EU)

![Graph showing responses to the question](source)

**Q** Would you personally like to see the European Parliament play a more important or less important role? (% - EU)

![Heatmap showing responses to the question](source)
Compared to the 2018 Parlemeter, support for a more important role of the European Parliament has grown by at least three percentage points in 21 countries, with a steep increase in Finland (+15 pp), Latvia (+13 pp), Germany and Hungary (both +12 pp), Poland and Estonia (both +11 pp) as well as France (+10 pp). A significant rise among those backing a less important role can be found in Slovakia (48%, +13 pp), Poland (32%, +14 pp) and Austria (40%, +14%).

Socio-economic factors have a significant impact on all indicators related to the general perception of the EU and, as is the case here, on the role of the European Parliament. More educated respondents wish for a more important role for the European Parliament. Youth, students, managers and citizens who think that their voice counts in the EU share this view.

Knowledge of the European Parliament’s activities may be a determining factor in supporting a more powerful institution. In all countries – with the exception of only Cyprus and Romania – the proportion of citizens calling for a more important role is significantly higher among respondents with a high level of knowledge of the Parliament’s legislative activities.
In addition, the level of satisfaction with the way democracy works in the European Union may have an impact on the support for a more powerful institution: the more respondents express satisfaction with the democratic system in the EU, the more they would like to see the European Parliament have more influence. This connection exists in all Member States, although it is important to note that also among the unsatisfied respondents the call for a more important role may be quite strong, potentially expressing the wish for a better system.

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q84
Would you personally like to see the European Parliament play a more important or less important role?

('More important role')

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total 'Not Satisfied' with the way democracy works in the EU</th>
<th>Total 'Satisfied' with the way democracy works in the EU</th>
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<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>LU</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>78%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q84
Nearly seven in ten voters in the European elections 2019 would like to see the European Parliament play a more important role in the future – yet also a relative majority of those who did not vote (44%) share this view.

**Q Would you personally like to see the European Parliament play a more important or less important role?**

(\% - EU)

**Voted in EE2019**

- **More Important**: 67
- **No Change/As It Is Now**: 4
- **Less Important**: 23
- **DK**: 6

**Abstained in EE2019**

- **More Important**: 44
- **No Change/As It Is Now**: 6
- **Less Important**: 36
- **DK**: 14

Source: Parlement 2019 (92.2), QB4
Would you personally like to see the European Parliament play a more important or less important role? (% - EU)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More Important</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
<th>No change/As it is now (SPONTANEOUS)</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>Man</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>Woman</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<td>16-19</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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</table>

*Source: Parlemeter 2019 (62.2), Q84*
My voice counts

The call for a stronger role for the European Parliament combined with growing satisfaction with the way European democracy operates are grounds to assume that the European Parliament is continuously more entrusted by its citizens. Yet, this attitude towards Parliament might depend whether citizens feel that Parliament takes their voice into account and respects their wishes as expressed by voting. Against this backdrop, while citizens’ expectations for a stronger Parliament remain high, the feeling that their voice counts in the EU is going back to pre-election levels.

After a spike in June 2019, the share of those who believe their voice counts in the EU gets back to the level registered in February-March (49%, -7 pp compared to June 2019).

While this phenomenon may be partly seen as a sign of disenchantment, the trends of this indicator can be better understood when examined over a longer timeframe and by looking at the legislative life cycles.

Findings demonstrate that the perception that ‘my voice counts’ is strongly linked to the momentum of elections, which represent by definition the opportunity to express voices and expectations directly through the vote. The analysis of the most important positive scores on the trend line shows that European elections and their preceding campaigns have certainly helped to shape these curves.

A progressive strengthening of the feeling that ‘my voice counts’ is evident during the months preceding the European ballot both for the 2004 and 2009 elections, receding again after the votes. The case of 2014 is less striking, leading to the assumption that other important factors, including the consequences of the financial and economic crisis, undermined citizens’ confidence in institutions and politics, as well as in their own capability to make their voice heard.
By comparing the trend line on ‘my voice counts in the EU’ with the one showing citizens’ feelings on ‘my voice counts in my country’, it becomes clearer that election scenarios may influence everyday perceptions, regardless the geographical sphere under exam. Indeed, the proportion of respondents who believe that their voice counts at national level followed a similar trend than the one on my voice counts in the EU and decreased significantly a few months after the vote. While 65% felt that their voice counted in their country in June 2019, only 5% express this view in October 2019.

This parallel not only helps to illustrate the impact of the electoral framework on this indicator, but also hints at the intricate connection between national affairs and European vote as well as at the multilayer connotation that European elections take on in the eyes of the Europeans. Support for the European project on its own is not enough to move the feeling that ‘my voice counts’. Although in a good number of EU countries support for EU membership goes along with a relatively strong feeling that ‘my voice counts in the EU’, in some others, the link is less obvious.

The scatterplot on the next page presents some national examples of public opinion trends taking a different path: As an example, the overall feeling of ‘my voice counts in the EU’ is quite strong in Austria, Croatia and Slovakia (upper left quadrant), whereas the level of favourability towards EU membership in the same countries remains relatively low. In comparison, the lower right quadrant gathers those countries where overall positive views on the EU are not mirrored by similarly positive perceptions of citizens that their voice counts in Europe.
Naturally, the quite personal feeling whether one’s ‘voice counts’ is impacted by a number of additional factors, with national socio-political contexts framing these factors and helping to put them in perspective. Across the EU the feeling that ‘my voice counts in my country’ is stronger than the one towards the EU. The only exception is Romania, where 47% of respondents believe that their voice counts in the EU, while 44% share this view with regard to their country. Respondents in Denmark (78%) and Sweden (76%) are most likely to agree that their voice counts in the EU; those in Cyprus (23%) and Estonia (22%) agree the least.

The feeling that their voice counts in the EU varies considerably also by level of education and between socio-professional categories. There is a gap of 25 percentage points between those who stopped school at the age of 15 or below (35%) and those who stopped studying at 20 or above (60%). Differences of a similar degree also apply with regard to the respondents’ occupation levels, ranging from 65% among managers to 38% of unemployed respondents.
Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

- My voice counts in the EU
- My voice counts in (OUR COUNTRY)

DK: 78% (92%)
SE: 76% (91%)
FI: 62% (85%)
NL: 68% (83%)
AT: 65% (79%)
DE: 68% (77%)
HR: 61% (74%)
PL: 65% (72%)
SK: 60% (67%)
IE: 53% (67%)
BE: 57% (65%)
FR: 47% (64%)
LU: 52% (61%)
EU28: 49% (59%)
PT: 43% (57%)
CZ: 30% (56%)
SI: 45% (52%)
MT: 49% (50%)
HU: 47% (50%)
BG: 44% (49%)
UK: 35% (47%)
ES: 41% (46%)
RO: 22% (44%)
EE: 44% (47%)
LV: 25% (39%)
LT: 28% (35%)
IT: 33% (35%)
EL: 25% (33%)
CY: 23% (28%)

Source: Parlementer 2019 (2.2), D72.1
Changes over the past five-month time period illustrate a significant weakening of the perception that their voice counts among young people (48%, -12 pp), students (52%, -10 pp) and among those who think that things are going in the wrong direction in the EU (35%, -12pp).

These drops in numbers, specifically for the youth demographic, again point towards possible signs of a more rapid disengagement within those groups characterized by an unprecedented level of mobilization at the last European ballot.

Priorities and values

The findings of the present survey confirm the results of the post-electoral Eurobarometer survey that citizens’ expectations in the European Union and the European Parliament are strong, specifically with regard to tangible results in concrete policy fields.

This call for more tangible actions is also fully reflected in request of Europeans to receive more information on the concrete aspects of the European legislations and their direct effect on their daily life. Thirty-one percent of respondents ranked this option on top when discussing different ways of receiving more information from the EU (see chapter III of this report).

The ranking of priority issues for European citizens over the past year presents a clear development – best illustrated by the rise in salience of the fight against climate change versus the drop in importance of the migration issue.

These trends already showed clearly ahead of the European elections: Parliament’s Eurobarometer survey “Closer to citizens, closer to the ballot™ already showed the growing concern surrounding both economic and environmental issues against the relative decrease in interest for security-related topics. Looking at

Closer to the citizens, closer to the ballot™, Eurobarometer Survey 91.1, February-March 2019
the results of the 2019 post-electoral Eurobarometer survey\(^9\), the emerging pattern solidifies economy and growth, combating climate change as well as human rights and democracy were the main drivers for citizens to vote in the European ballot. The autumn 2019 Parlemeter continues to look for insight into public opinion with regard to priority policies. It should be noted that at the beginning of this new legislative period, the overall list of policy topics was modified to include new challenges and topics of public debate. A direct comparison with similar policy priority questions from the past years is therefore no longer possible, nevertheless a clear trend becomes visible.

In October 2019, combating climate change and preserving the environment, oceans and biodiversity tops the list of policy priorities citizens want the European Parliament to focus on. With 32% of respondents choosing this issue, climate change for the first time tops a Eurobarometer priority list. Tackling social exclusion and poverty comes second with 31% of replies, followed – at some distance – by combating terrorism and organised crime (24%) as well as combating youth unemployment and striving for full employment in all EU countries (24%). Investment in high-quality education and setting the right conditions for economic growth constitute the next chunk of important issues for 22% and 18% of respondents respectively.

As with nearly every indicator, policy priorities differ greatly both in terms of support and scale of importance between EU Member States, being impacted by national contexts and socio-demographic characteristics.

An overview of the first priority mentioned in each Member State results in a multi-colour chart with seven different priority groups. Tackling social exclusion and poverty is the first concern brought up in twelve EU countries, on an equal footing with other topics in six of them. In eleven countries combating climate change and protecting the environment comes first (with shared priorities in two Member States). Youth unemployment remains a key concern in five countries while the fight against terrorism and organised crime is the first national concern for three. Protecting external borders is a first priority only in Estonia although together with combating terrorism and tackling social exclusion and poverty. Improving consumer rights as well as the quality and access to health services for all citizens appears up in the list in Portugal and Romania, both on equal level with other items. Finally, Malta is the only country that cites the strengthening of a common migration and integration policy as the top-level concern to prioritise.

The EP makes decisions on European legislation which directly impacts every citizen’s life. In your opinion which of the following should be given priority by the European Parliament? Firstly? And then? (Max. 3 answers)

(%) - Combating climate change and preserving our environment, oceans and biodiversity)

Source: Parlementer 2019 (92,2), QBST
Similar variation appears also when looking at one single topic and its perceived importance across the EU: Even if climate change is the first topic mentioned in eleven countries, its level of importance can be very different.

The map above illustrates a gap of 48 points between the score registered in Sweden (62%) and the one in Bulgaria (14%). In general, Nordic countries are more likely to gather a higher response among citizens on this issue. Next to Sweden, this is also the case for Denmark (50%), the Netherlands (46%) and Finland (42%). On the opposite side of the scale, Greece (17%), Romania (17%), Latvia (15%) and Bulgaria (14%) are the countries with the lowest level of interest for combating climate change and preserving the environment, oceans and biodiversity. A similar spread is evident in citizens’ views on tackling social exclusion and poverty, where national differences range from 57% giving this issue priority in Lithuania to 19% in Czechia.

The EP makes decisions on European legislation which directly impacts every citizen’s life. In your opinion which of the following should be given priority by the European Parliament? Firstly? And then? (Max. 3 answers) (% - Tackling social exclusion and poverty)

A socio-demographic analysis reveals diverging patterns in particular with regard to the two top priorities, climate change and tackling social exclusion and poverty. Youth, students, managers and people with rather no economic issues are much more likely to mention climate change as a top concern. Tackling social exclusion and poverty in return resonate better with demographic groups experiencing difficulties to pay their bills as well as lower educated working classes.
A more uniform support across countries and stable trend is found when looking at the values that the European Parliament should defend as a matter of priority.

The protection of human rights worldwide remains by far the foremost value in citizens’ minds, according to 48% (+2 pp compared to September 2018) of respondents. Gender equality is in second place (38%, -2 pp), together with freedom of speech (38%, =).

One in three Europeans also mentions solidarity between EU Member States (33%, +3 pp), while international solidarity between the EU and poor countries in the world as well as intercultural or interreligious dialogue are seen as main values by more than one fifth of the population (respectively 23%, +1 pp, and 22%, -1 pp).

Finally, 18% (-2 pp) of Europeans mention the protection of minorities, while 10% (-2 pp) look at the abolition of the death penalty in the world as a pressing value to fight for.
National differences are less pronounced, with the different value options falling into four country groups. The protection of human rights worldwide is considered as most important value in twenty countries. Freedom of speech prevails in Finland, the Netherlands, Malta, the United Kingdom and Belgium, while gender equality stands out in France, Spain and Belgium (here on equal level with freedom of speech). Bulgaria is the only country where respondents mention first solidarity between EU Member States.

In terms of socio-demographic outlooks, the differences among categories are remarkable. Women are generally more likely to give a higher meaning to gender inequality and human rights, while men overall cite more often freedom of speech and solidarity between Member States. Young people are the most inclined to support gender equality, the protection of human rights worldwide and the freedom of speech. The oldest generations however are most prone to defend the solidarity between EU Member States.

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q6
CLIMATE CHANGE – A TOP PRIORITY FOR ALL EUROPEANS?

On August 20, 2018, Greta Thunberg sits alone outside the Swedish parliament to protest for more action against climate change. One year later, in August 2019, the total number of climate strikers reaches 3.6 million people across 169 countries.

Climate change and other issues related to the environment are becoming increasingly present in our everyday lives. From natural disasters and temperature records, to the youth-led #FridaysForFuture movement bringing millions to the streets or political debates focussing on these issues, Europeans show their concerns and demand concrete measures.

Parliament’s own Eurobarometer data have reflected this exponentially increasing sense of urgency in a number of surveys over this period: In April 2018\(^\text{10}\), only 35% of respondents chose climate change as their

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priority topic for the European elections campaign, ranking it on fifth place. In September 2018\textsuperscript{11}, climate change saw an increase of 5 points to 40\% of overall interest, while remaining in fifth place. In February-March 2019\textsuperscript{12}, the same item rose to fourth place with 43\% of overall mentions. More significantly, it was mentioned as their top priority by 55\% of respondents who said that they were likely to vote in the European elections.

Parliament’s post-electoral Eurobarometer survey\textsuperscript{13}, published in September 2019, showed that ‘combating climate change and protecting the environment’ had turned out to be indeed the second most important reason that pushed Europeans to vote in the European elections in May 2019. 37\% of voters on EU average chose this issue as their reason for voting, after economy and growth (44\%). For young people and students climate change even was the main driver to go to vote. Across Member States, a considerable variation can be observed. A clear majority in Denmark (70\%), Sweden (68\%) and the Netherlands (62\%)

\textsuperscript{11} Parlemeter 2018 – Taking up the challenge, Eurobarometer Survey 90.1, October 2018 (PE628.262) \url{https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ at-your-service/en/be-heard/eurobarometer/parlemeter-2018-taking-up-the-challenge}


said that combating climate change and protecting the environment was their prime reason for voting. By contrast, no more than one in five respondents gave this answer in Bulgaria (16%) and Greece (19%).

The present survey continues to explore citizens’ attitudes and concerns towards climate change. As described in chapter I of this report, Europeans place ‘combating climate change and preserving our environment, oceans and biodiversity’ in first position regarding the future priorities of the newly elected European Parliament (mentioned by 32%).

This chapter looks deeper into the individual environmental issues Europeans consider as most important and the degree to which they expect politicians in both the EU and their country to take action.
Europeans’ concerns over environmental issues

More than half of respondents on EU average consider climate change (52%) the most important environmental issue. Looking at the more specific issues, Europeans place air pollution (35%), marine pollution (31%), deforestation and the growing amount of waste (both 28%) on top of the issues of concern relating to the environment. On the lower end of this list range, according to Europeans, the environmental damage caused by tourism and noise pollution, both mentioned by less than one in ten respondents.

Although climate change tops the list on EU average, a deeper look on national level shows that in some countries respondents have bigger concerns about other environmental issues.
As we have seen in the previous chapter discussing citizens’ policy priorities for the European Parliament, the spread between EU Member States when it comes to the perceived importance of individual policy topics is significant. Just as ‘combating climate change and preserving our environment, oceans and biodiversity’ showed a range of importance between 62% in Sweden and 14% in Bulgaria, also individual environmental issues are perceived with a wide range of importance across the EU.

67% of Spanish respondents see climate change as the most important environmental issue, compared to only 26% of Slovaks. Air pollution is an issue for only 19% of Germans, while 69% see this issue as most important in Malta. The largest spread is seen with the issue of deforestation: Only 9% of Cypriots see this as most important environmental question compared to 63% of Lithuanians.
Climate change is the most important issue for respondents in 18 EU countries, with proportions ranging from 67% in Spain to 38% in Croatia. Since the term ‘climate change’ encompasses many other issues related to the environment and could thus easily be seen as ‘umbrella option’, it is interesting to also look at the second most mentioned issues in the countries where ‘climate change’ has been chosen as top priority.

Air pollution is the second most pressing environmental issue for respondents in Greece (47%), Belgium (42%), Cyprus, Italy (both 41%), France, the United Kingdom (both 40%), Croatia (37%) and Spain (33%, on par with marine pollution). Marine pollution is the second mentioned issue in Finland (50%), Germany (46%), Denmark, the Netherlands (both 38%), Austria (35%) and Spain (33%, on par with air pollution).
the remaining five countries, respondents give different answers regarding the second most important environmental issue. The pollution of rivers, lakes and ground water is of a major concern in Ireland (34%), deforestation comes second in Luxembourg (29%), the growing amount of waste in Hungary (42%), while the shortage of drinking water is the second-most pressing issue in Portugal (41%) and over-reliance on fossil fuels ranks second in Sweden with 46% of citations.

Some key characteristics emerge when looking at the socio-demographics of those who put climate change at the top of environmental issues. They are more likely to be young (60% are aged 15 to 24, compared to 48% aged 55+), students (62%), highly educated (57% compared to 47% of those with lower education levels) or managers (58%). They also tend to have positive views about the European Parliament and its role: 58% of those who have a positive image of the EP mention climate change as their key priority – compared to 44% of those who have a negative image of the EP. They are also likely to have voted in the 2019 European elections and to be more interested in EU affairs now than they were a year ago. Quite expectedly, 66% of Europeans who pick climate change as the top environmental issue also say that combating climate change and preserving our environment, oceans and biodiversity should be the European Parliament’s priority.

Other environmental issues seen as most important

Air pollution is the most important environmental issue for half or more citizens in Malta (69%) and Bulgaria (52%) and around half in Poland (49%). In these three countries, climate change is in turn the second most mentioned issue. Deforestation is the most important issue in Lithuania (63%), Estonia and Romania (both 54%). From these three countries, only respondents in Lithuania are putting climate change in second place (45%). In Estonia and Romania the second most pressing issues are the growing amount of waste (44%) and air pollution (40%), respectively. Respondents saying that deforestation is an important issue are likely to be young (35% aged 15–24 compared to 27% aged 55+), still studying and frequent Internet users. The final item considered as the most important issue by some Europeans is the growing amount of waste. It is picked first by respondents in Latvia (48%), Slovenia (42%), Slovakia (40%) and Czechia (39%). The second most important issues according to respondents in these countries are the shortage of drinking water in Czechia (34%), climate change and domestic and urban waste management in Latvia (both 31%), climate change in Slovenia (37%) and air pollution in Slovakia (36%). There is no clear profile emerging from the socio-demographic analysis of these respondents, but it appears that they are more likely to be older, contrary to the previous items (30% are 40 years old or more compared to 26% of 15 to 24 year-olds).
Youth-led protests for climate and their expected policy outcomes

The #FridaysForFuture movement as well as other similar protest activities have mobilised over the course of the past year millions of people throughout the EU and indeed globally, resulting in a lot of media coverage. The present Parlemeter survey has asked respondents whether these youth-led protests have actually contributed to more political measures being taken to fight climate change – both on European and national level. The results to both questions are significant, as close to six out of ten Europeans are confident, or even convinced, that the youth-led protests for climate indeed have a direct policy impact in both cases.

At EU level

An absolute majority of respondents in 25 Member States think that these youth-led climate change protests contribute to more political measures to fight climate change in the EU. Most convinced of this influence, with nearly three quarters of respondents are citizens in Ireland (74%), in Sweden (71%) and in Cyprus (70%). In fact, in Ireland and Cyprus over three in ten respondents believe that these actions will ‘definitely’ have a positive policy outcome in the EU (31% and 35%, respectively). In Estonia, there is a less obvious difference between those who think these protests could lead to more political measures taken to combat climate in the EU (49%) and those who do not think so (45%), and this is also the case in the UK (47% vs 42%). Czechia is the only country where more respondents believe that actions such as the youth-led protests would not contribute to more political measures taken in the EU to fight climate change (52% against 42% who think they could).
A clearer profile of the respondents who think that such actions influence political measures against climate change at the EU level can be drawn by looking at the socio-demographic data. Firstly, the younger the respondents, the more likely they are to think that such measures will be taken in the EU. This result is quite clear at the EU level, where 66% of youngsters think so compared to 55% of those aged 55+. In some countries such as Austria and Latvia the difference between young and older respondents’ positive answers to this question is very significant (26 pp and 22 pp, respectively). The same optimism can be observed in most other EU countries, with young respondents being more confident than the rest of the population that the EU will take measures to fight against climate change because of the youth-led climate protests. Respondents in this camp are also more likely to be highly educated (63%) or still be studying (71% compared to 47% of those with a lower education level), to be managers (66%) and frequent Internet users (61% compared to 50% who never use the Internet).

In recent months, a number of youth-led climate change protests have taken place, which have frequently been covered in the media across the EU. Overall, do you think that these actions contribute to more political measures being taken to fight climate change in the EU?

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Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q811.2
Another important characteristic drawn up from socio-demographic data is the positive attitude towards the EU and the European Parliament. 71% of those who think that measures at EU level are taken because of the protests also agree that their voice counts in the EU, compared to 46% who do not agree that their voice counts. In addition, 73% of these respondents have a positive image of the EU (versus 36% of those who have a negative one) and of the European Parliament (76% versus 38%). A determinant factor is the respondents’ subjective knowledge level about the work of the European Parliament: the higher the respondent’s knowledge about the EP’s work, the greater their expectation that the climate protests directly influence political action on EU level. Except Austria and France, this relationship holds in all European countries, with the most notable differences between high and low levels of knowledge in Poland (40 pp).

**Q** In recent months, a number of youth-led climate change protests have taken place, which have frequently been covered in the media across the EU. Overall, do you think that these actions contribute to more political measures being taken to fight climate change in the EU?

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
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</table>

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q811.2
Portugal (38 pp), Malta (32 pp), Bulgaria (30 pp) and Italy (25 pp). At EU level, there is a 22 pp difference between those who have a high knowledge about the EP’s work and those who have a low level of knowledge. Looking at the differences for this question between respondents who would like to receive more information or know more about what the European Parliament is doing and those who do not, another pattern emerges. Indeed, those who would like to know more about the EP’s work are much more likely to expect the EU to take measures to fight climate change than those who are not interested in knowing more. At EU level, the difference between these two categories of respondents is 22 pp (64% of those who would like more information compared to 42% of those who would not). Other large differences are observed among these respondents in Malta (45 pp) and Austria (33 pp).

In recent months, a number of youth-led climate change protests have taken place, which have frequently been covered in the media across the EU. Overall, do you think that these actions contribute to more political measures being taken to fight climate change in the EU?

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), QB11.2
Finally, having voted at the May 2019 European elections or not also plays a role in respondents’ opinion about whether actions such as the youth-led protests can lead to more measures taken in the EU to fight climate change. In general, respondents who voted are more likely to give a positive answer to the question.

In recent months, a number of youth-led climate change protests have taken place, which have frequently been covered in the media across the EU. Overall, do you think that these actions contribute to more political measures being taken to fight climate change in the EU?

Total ‘Yes’

<table>
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<td>DK</td>
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<td>LV</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Parlementer 2019 (92.2), Q811.2
At national level

A greater variance between Member States can be observed when looking at the respondents’ belief that political measures to fight climate change in their own country would be influenced by youth-led protests. In 19 European countries, an absolute majority of respondents believe so, in three more countries (Lithuania, Malta and the United Kingdom) a plurality of respondents share this belief.

In recent months, a number of youth-led climate change protests have taken place, which have frequently been covered in the media across the EU. Overall, do you think that these actions contribute to more political measures being taken to fight climate change . . . ?

In our country - %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q811.1

There are now several countries, all of them from Central or Eastern Europe, where more respondents believe that their national political level would not be influenced by youth-led climate protests to take measures against climate change: In Slovenia 52% see no such influence, compared to 44% who do, in Croatia 55% stand against 42% of respondents who would see such an impact. Other countries with a majority being sceptical about the direct impact of youth-led protest on national policy-making include Latvia (54% against 41%), Estonia (54% against 40%), Bulgaria (44% against 38%) and Czechia (58% against 37%).

As shown in the graph on the next page and based on the difference in the positive responses to these two questions, in 18 European countries respondents think that measures to fight climate change as a result of youth-led protests have more chances to be taken in the EU than in their country. The differences in favour of EU action range from 18 pp in Latvia and Cyprus to 2 pp in Spain, Portugal and Belgium. On the contrary, respondents in the Netherlands (-7 pp), Sweden, Germany (both -5 pp), Austria (-4 pp), Denmark, France (both -3 pp), Luxembourg (-2 pp) and Italy (-1 pp) believe that such measures are more likely to be taken in their country than in the EU. In Finland and in the United Kingdom there is no difference between the two answers.
Coming back to respondents with a positive outlook about climate measures being taken in their country and looking at their socio-demographic characteristics, a number of similarities arise with respondents who think the same about measures in the EU. They are mostly young (65% aged 15–24 compared to 55% aged 55+), students (69%) or highly educated (63%), managers (68%) and frequent Internet users (60% versus 49% who never use the Internet). They also have positive views of the democratic life in the EU, with 71% saying that their voice counts in the EU (versus 45% who do not think their voice counts), as well as their country’s voice in the EU (69% versus 43%). Over seven in ten have a positive image of the EU (71%) and of the European Parliament (73%). Finally, 68% of them believe that combating climate change and preserving our environment, oceans and biodiversity should be the European Parliament’s top priority.
The 2019 European elections have significantly reinforced the importance – and need – of constant interaction and engagement with European citizens. Voters have become more highly educated and informed – and they are willing to engage politically more than before. The 2019 post-electoral Eurobarometer survey\(^\text{14}\) also shows the general voter profile to be more pro-European, with more than two-thirds of voters (68%) agreeing that their voice counts in the EU, 13 points more than in 2014 (55%).

2019 voters are thus more confident, empowered and engaged. In addition, significantly more people voted because they believed that they ‘can make things change by voting in the European elections’. Next to the increased levels of empowerment and engagement, expectations in the positive consequences of voting rose – reinforcing the need for more engagement and debate from the side of the European Parliament.

The democratic power and influence of the European Parliament rests on the mandate of its voters from all EU Member States. It depends on their regular, continuing and active participation in its work on their behalf. Yet this participation is largely reliant on knowledge: the more citizens understand what the European Parliament is, what it does and what it stands for, the more likely they are to vote in European elections, in turn strengthening the European Parliament’s democratic legitimacy.

However, democratic engagement goes beyond just elections: it is about understanding well enough what is at stake to make informed decisions during this new legislature. It is about making ones voice heard beyond the act of voting; raising awareness about issues that concern all citizens’ future.

The 2019 Parlemeter survey asked respondents a series of questions measuring their current level of knowledge on the work of the European Parliament as well as their interest in receiving more information on the European Union and its institutions, specifically the European Parliament and its Members.

Knowledge about Parliament’s work

61% of respondents on EU average said that they have a medium or high level of knowledge about the work of the EP. Asked to position themselves on a scale of one to ten (with ‘10’ meaning that ‘you know a lot’) as to how much they think they know about the work of the European Parliament, 55% professed to a medium level of knowledge (scale range 4–7). With 6% only a marginal share of citizens claimed to have a ‘high level of knowledge’ (scale range 8–10), while 39% of respondents said that they have a ‘low level of knowledge’ (scale range 1–3). The EU average level of knowledge about the work of the European Parliament is therefore 4.2 on this scale from one to ten.

Looking back to similar, although not directly comparable questions from a 2012 Eurobarometer survey15 illustrate the improvements in overall knowledge in that time: the average level of knowledge about the functioning of the various European institutions (QP11.1) was 3.4 on a scale from one to ten. Asked about the allocation of roles played by the various institutions (i.e. who does what?), the average knowledge level of respondents was at 3.1 – on par with the average knowledge level on ‘the people who run the various EU institutions, the leaders of the EU’.

Despite this improvement of knowledge on EU average level, a closer look at the individual countries’ results is interesting. In Austria (5.0), Romania (4.8) and Poland (4.7) the average subjective level of knowledge about the EP is the highest. Overall, there is relatively small variance between Member States, with the spread ranging from 5.0 in Austria to a 3.4 average subjective knowledge in France.

France is also the only country with an absolute majority of respondents (54%) declaring to have a low level of knowledge on the work of the European Parliament, followed by the UK and Slovenia (both 47% low level of knowledge) and Estonia (46%). Overall, in 26 Member States a relative majority of citizens consider that they have a medium or high level of knowledge, whereas in twelve EU Member States more than four in ten respondents claim to have only a low level of knowledge.
Men declare to a higher degree to know more about the work of the European Parliament. In terms of age groups, young people from 15-24 years show with 3.9 the lowest average subjective knowledge level, followed by the age group of 55+ with an average level of 4.1. The highest average subjective knowledge level can be found in the age bracket between 25 and 54 years. Knowledge levels are higher among higher educated groups of the population as well as among the self-employed, managers and other white-col-

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**Table: Knowledge about the work of the European Parliament**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total 'Low level of knowledge'</th>
<th>Total 'Medium level of knowledge'</th>
<th>Total 'High level of knowledge'</th>
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<td>4.5</td>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
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Source: Parlementer 2019 (92.2), QB7R
Crossing the results with participation in the 2019 European elections, voters show with 4.6 average subjective knowledge level a better result than abstainers (3.5 average subjective knowledge level) do.

With a view to this relatively low average knowledge of abstainers in the 2019 European elections, it is interesting to recall the results on why citizens decided not to vote in the recent European Parliament elections. One of the options given in the post-electoral survey as to why one did not vote was because ‘[they] did not know much about the EU, the European Parliament or the European elections’. Compared to the 2014 elections, the number of respondents choosing this option increased by 2 points to overall 9%, which therefore is not one of the main reasons for not voting. In Sweden, the lack of knowledge about the EU or the European Parliament was the most often cited reasons for not voting. Moreover, the high variance in responses between Member States is of particular interest. Portugal (28%) and Sweden (26%) are leading by a large margin, followed by the Netherlands (18%) and Finland (15%). 21 countries returned results below 10% for this option.

After this self-assessment of respondents’ knowledge about the European Parliament’s work, the next question dealt with citizens’ potential interest in receiving more information on seven aspects of the new legislative period and the activities of the European institutions.

Results on this question clearly show the sustained interest of citizens in concrete outcomes of EU activity and the consequences for their immediate life situation, closely intertwined with the wish to know more about the work of the European Parliament and its Members. In total, more than three-quarters of EU citizens (77%) would like to receive more information about at least one of the proposed topics.

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On EU average, the highest interest is about the concrete consequences of European legislation on the respondent’s country. 31% of respondents chose this option, closely followed by information on ‘what the European Parliament is doing’ (29%), ‘what the EU has concretely done or changed in your city, region or country’ (28%) and ‘the activities of the national MEPs in the European Parliament’ (27%). Within a very small variance across the issues measured, interest in the activities of the European Commission or the positions of the national government on current EU topics range last with 24% each.

Q The new legislative period of the European Parliament has started. A new European Commission will soon take up its work. On which of the following aspects, if any, would you personally like to receive more information or know more about? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (% - EU)

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q88
A much more varied picture appears when looking at the dispersion between countries regarding what respondents want to know more about. In eleven countries, citizens would most like to receive more information about the concrete consequences of EU legislation on their country. Results are highest in Northern European countries, with 62% in the Netherlands and 60% in Sweden, followed by Finland (54%) and Denmark (50%).

Respondents in five countries, mostly from South-Eastern Europe, are interested in receiving more information about what the EU has concretely done or changed in their city, their region or their country. This segment is led by Greece (47%), followed by Romania (40%), Croatia (37%), Bulgaria (36%) as well as Slovakia (29%).

Citizens from Cyprus (44%), Latvia (39%), Lithuania (38%) and Poland (28%) would like to know more about what their MEPs are doing in the European Parliament, while respondents from six countries are most interested in receiving more information about the work and activities of the European Parliament in general, including France (36%) and Italy (35%).

Outliers are Spain and the United Kingdom. In both countries the most given answer was that respondents would not wish to receive more information (34%/ES and 31%/UK). Respondents in Ireland on the other hand mostly cite interest in their own government’s position on current EU topics (33%).

The new legislative period of the European Parliament has started. A new European Commission will soon take up its work. On which of the following aspects, if any, would you personally like to receive more information or know more about: (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (% - The most mentioned answer by country)

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), QB8
Going further from a country-level view to analysing socio-demographic differences between those who would like to receive more information and those who would not be interested in this, one can find that in all EU Member States the proportion of citizens not interested in more information is significantly higher among those who did not vote in the 2019 European elections: Twenty eight percent of 2019 non-voters are not interested in receiving more information, compared to only 15% of voters.

The new legislative period of the European Parliament has started. A new European Commission will soon take up its work. On which of the following aspects, if any, would you personally like to receive more information or know more about: You would not like to receive more information

![Bar chart showing the percentage of citizens not interested in receiving more information among those who voted and did not vote in the 2019 European elections across different EU Member States.]

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (Q2.2), Q88
Last, but not least the interest to receive more information is expressed both by voters (83%) and abstainers (68%) alike.

The new legislative period of the European Parliament has started. A new European Commission will soon take up its work. On which of the following aspects, if any, would you personally like to receive more information or know more about: (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

As the 77% of respondents interested in receiving more information cover nearly the full spectrum of the population, it is more interesting to take a closer look at the socio-demographic breakdown of the group of respondents not wishing to receive more information.
Looking at the different age brackets, in most countries citizens from older age groups tend to be least interested in more information. In Spain, 41% of the age group 55+ is not interested in any more information, compared to 26% from the age group 15–24. Large spreads can also be observed in Belgium, Bulgaria, Portugal, Hungary, Greece and Denmark. A different picture emerges in Belgium, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechia and Ireland, where the highest proportion of non-interested respondents was found among young people aged 15 and 24 years. Importantly, a significant spread can be observed when crossing the interest in receiving more information with the self-professed level of knowledge about activities of the

The new legislative period of the European Parliament has started. A new European Commission will soon take up its work. On which of the following aspects, if any, would you personally like to receive more information or know more about: You would not like to receive more information

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Country</th>
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<th>55+ years old</th>
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</table>

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (Q22), Q88
European Parliament. In 24 EU countries (except for Estonia), the disinterest in EU-related information is significantly higher among respondents with a low level of knowledge: While only 1% of Italian respondents with a high level of knowledge does not wish to receive more information, 30% of respondents with a low subjective knowledge level are not interested in this. A similar spread of disinterest can be observed in Poland (5% high/45% low), Spain (20% high/46% low) or Czechia (10% high/35% low). In 16 Member States overall, more than 30% of respondents with self-professed low level of knowledge is not interested in receiving more information.

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Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q88
Engagement with Members of the European Parliament

As third part of the engagement section of the 2019 Parlemeter, respondents were asked about options to get more engaged with the activities of their national Members within the European Parliament.

Three in ten respondents would be encouraged to get more engaged with the activities of their country’s MEPs if they were to receive more information about their roles and activities (30%), or see them more often in the media (29%). For one in five respondents, getting to address an MEP directly on a specific issue and receiving a concrete answer would be encouraging to engage more. Sixteen percent of respondents on EU average would wish to meet their MEPs at events in their city or region, while 13% of respondents would find visiting the European Parliament in Brussels or Strasbourg an attractive option. Last in this range is the option to interact with Members via social media (12%).

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q89
In total, 68% of respondents on EU average choose at least one activity which would encourage them to get more engaged with their MEPs, while 29% or respondents are not interested in getting more engaged. Four in five respondents or more choose at least one activity in Sweden (89%), the Netherlands (84%), Finland (83%), Romania (81%) and Austria (80%). The United Kingdom with 55% or respondents and Czechia and Spain (both 54%) bring up the rear of the list, with more than 50% of respondents in all 28 Member States therefore interested in getting engaged with their national MEPs in the one or the other way.

Like with the question on information topics, the preferred mean, if any, of getting citizens more engaged also varies largely between EU countries. Three large groups can be distinguished. In ten countries, citizens would find more information about their MEPs roles and activities in the European Parliament most encouraging to become more engaged. Sweden leads this group, where 53% of respondents most mention this answer, followed by the Netherlands (49%) and Greece (42%). In seven countries, citizens would find seeing, hearing or reading about their MEPs more often in the media the most attractive option to increase engagement. On the other hand, in eleven countries respondents most often cite that they would not wish to get more engaged with the activities of their MEPs. The spread in this group ranges from 45% of citations in Czechia to 28% in Lithuania.
Looking now at socio-demographic differences among respondents, one can observe that 74% of voters in the 2019 European elections name at least one way of getting more engaged with their MEPs, with only 24% of them not being interested in further engagement. However, also more than half of citizens who did not vote in the last European elections give at least one way of getting more engaged, with the wish to receive more information about the role and activities of their MEPs being the most cited engagement option.

Source: Parlement 2019 (92.2), Q89
Among the different engagement options, two stand out as showing significant differences between age groups: When it comes to following and interacting with MEPs on Social Media, young people between 15 and 24 years are almost consistently and significantly more interested in this engagement option compared to older parts of the population. In sixteen countries across the EU, the young generation would also find the possibility of visiting the European Parliament in either Brussels or Strasbourg as a more attractive alternative than other age groups.

Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), Q89
Which of the following, if any, would encourage you to get more engaged with the activities of (NATIONALITY) MEPs within the European Parliament? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

Following them on social media

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<th>55+ years old</th>
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Source: Parlemeter 2019 (92.2), QB9
Which of the following, if any, would encourage you to get more engaged with the activities of (nationality) MEPs within the European Parliament? (Multiple answers possible)

Visiting the European Parliament in Brussels or Strasbourg and meeting them

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<th>55+ years old</th>
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<tr>
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<td>11%</td>
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Source: Parlemeter 2019 (Q2.2), Q89
TECHNICAL NOTE ON THE IMPACT OF THE GDPR

In May 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force. The GDPR imposes strict obligations on Kantar and its supply chain. GDPR implementation also impacts the implementation of Eurobarometer studies in several ways.

**Higher standard for consent**

Consent to participate in a survey and to process personal data must be unambiguous and by a statement or clear affirmative action – and capable of withdrawal at any time: inactivity, silence and pre-ticked boxes cannot constitute consent (Art. 7). For this reason, for all Eurobarometer surveys, explicit consent is now sought from the respondents on the basis of a privacy policy (in the language of the respondent) and reassuring them that “the collected responses will be thoroughly anonymised, and all identifiable information will be removed”.

**Age of respondents and parental consent**

The universe for Eurobarometer studies covers people aged 15 years old and over. The upcoming GDPR regulations state that for all respondents aged under 16 there is a need for consent from their parents or legal guardian to proceed with the contact, though Member States can lower this age requirement to 13 if they choose to do so (Art. 8).

**Consent for processing ‘sensitive’ personal data**

Under the new GDPR, “processing of personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership”, as well as “the processing of genetic data, biometric data, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation” are prohibited, unless the data subject has given explicit consent to do so (art. 9). For all Eurobarometer questionnaires, Kantar identifies in advance so-called ‘sensitive questions’ that are related to political opinions, religious beliefs, racial or ethnic origin, health, sex life or sexual orientation. During the screener phase, the interviewer informs the respondents that the questionnaire includes some questions that might be considered ‘sensitive’ and asks them whether or not they would agree to be asked these questions. In case the respondents refuse, then these questions will be skipped for them. The consent is asked in a way that allows respondents to selectively agree or refuse to be asked questions about a certain category of ‘sensitive’ data (e.g. they can give consent to be asked questions about their political views, but refuse to be asked questions related to their health). This means that the response rate for the questions that are considered ‘sensitive’ might be lower than for the rest of the questions. The refusal to answer sensitive questions is recorded into a special category, so that we can measure the impact of the new GDPR on our questionnaires and to take it into account for future studies.
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Between the 8th and the 22nd of October 2019, Kantar on behalf on Kantar Belgium carried out the wave 92.2 of the EUROBAROMETER survey. The wave 92.2 includes the Eurobarometer “Parlemeter 2019” and covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union Member States, resident in each of the 28 Member States and aged 15 years and over. This Eurobarometer survey was commissioned by the European Parliament Directorate-General for Communication, “Public Opinion Monitoring” Unit.

The basic sample design applied in all states is a multi-stage, random (probability) one. In each country, a number of sampling points was drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and to population density. In order to do so, the sampling points were drawn systematically from each of the “administrative regional units”, after stratification by individual unit and type of area. They thus represent the whole territory of the countries surveyed according to the EUROSTAT NUTS II (or equivalent) and according to the distribution of the resident population of the respective nationalities.

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in terms of metropolitan, urban and rural areas. In each of the selected sampling points, a starting address was drawn, at random. Further addresses (every Nth address) were selected by standard “random route” procedures, from the initial address. In each household, the respondent was drawn, at random (following the “closest birthday rule”). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people’s homes and in the appropriate national language. As far as the data capture is concerned, CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interview) was used in those countries where this technique was available.

For each country a comparison between the sample and the universe was carried out. The Universe description was derived from Eurostat population data or from national statistics offices. For all countries surveyed, a national weighting procedure, using marginal and intercellular weighting, was carried out based on this Universe description. In all countries, gender, age, region and size of locality were introduced in the iteration procedure. For international weighting (i.e. EU averages), Kantar applies the official population figures as provided by EUROSTAT or national statistic offices. The total population figures for input in this post-weighting procedure are listed here.

Readers are reminded that survey results are estimations, the accuracy of which, everything being equal, rests upon the sample size and upon the observed percentage. With samples of about 1,000 interviews, the real percentages vary within the following confidence limits:

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Statistical Margins due to the sampling process (at the 95% level of confidence)
This 2019 Parlemeter was conducted as Eurobarometer survey 92.2 for the European Parliament by Kantar.

The fieldwork took place from 8 to 22 October 2019 in all 28 EU Member States. 27,607 respondents, drawn as a representative sample from the general population aged 15+, were interviewed face-to-face.

The Parlemeter 2019 examines European citizens’ opinions on EU membership, on their attitudes towards European democracy and the role of the European Parliament. Questions on priority policies for the European Parliament at the beginning of the new legislative term, with a special focus on climate change and environmental issues, complete the survey together with a dedicated set of questions on citizens’ expectations as to more information from and engagement with the European Parliament and its Members.