The 2009 European Elections: main issues

Summary of the results of a recent Eurobarometer survey

July 2008

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EUROBAROMETER

1. Methodology

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1. Methodology

- **Face-to-face surveys in respondents' homes**
- **The advantages of a face-to-face survey such as the Eurobarometer:**
  - F2F ensures a more representative sample (on the one hand, problem of countries where the fixed line telephone penetration rates are too low and, on the other hand, "mobile only" countries)
  - The data collection method is homogeneous across all the countries polled in the Eurobarometer, which ensures the comparability of results
  - Respondents can be shown materials
  - Certain difficult questions sometimes require the use of show cards
  - Sensitive questions can be asked in a self-administered way

1. Methodology (cont.)

- **Dates of fieldwork: 25/03/2008 – 04/05/2008**
- Total number of interviews: 26 661 (around 1000 per country)
  - Population: representative sample of the population aged 15 or over resident in the country and EU citizens
  - Selection of respondents : random (“next birthday rule”), after geographical (by region and size of locality)
  - Coverage: the 27 European Union Member States

2. The themes addressed

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2. Themes addressed

- Contextual elements
- Interest in the 2009 European elections
- Probability of voting
- Voting criteria
- Campaign themes

3. Main findings

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3. Main findings

- **This Eurobarometer wave does not escape the pervading gloom. An economic feel-bad factor is perceptible which influences the answers of respondents.**

- **The European elections are clearly not yet at the forefront of citizens' thoughts even if certain campaign themes emerge (in particular those relating to the economic situation):**
  - Unemployment
  - Economic growth
  - Purchasing power

- **Consequently, it is not surprising to see national dimensions mingled in the voting criteria for the 2009 elections.**

- **This therefore raises the question: are these elections truly "European"?**

4. Contextual elements

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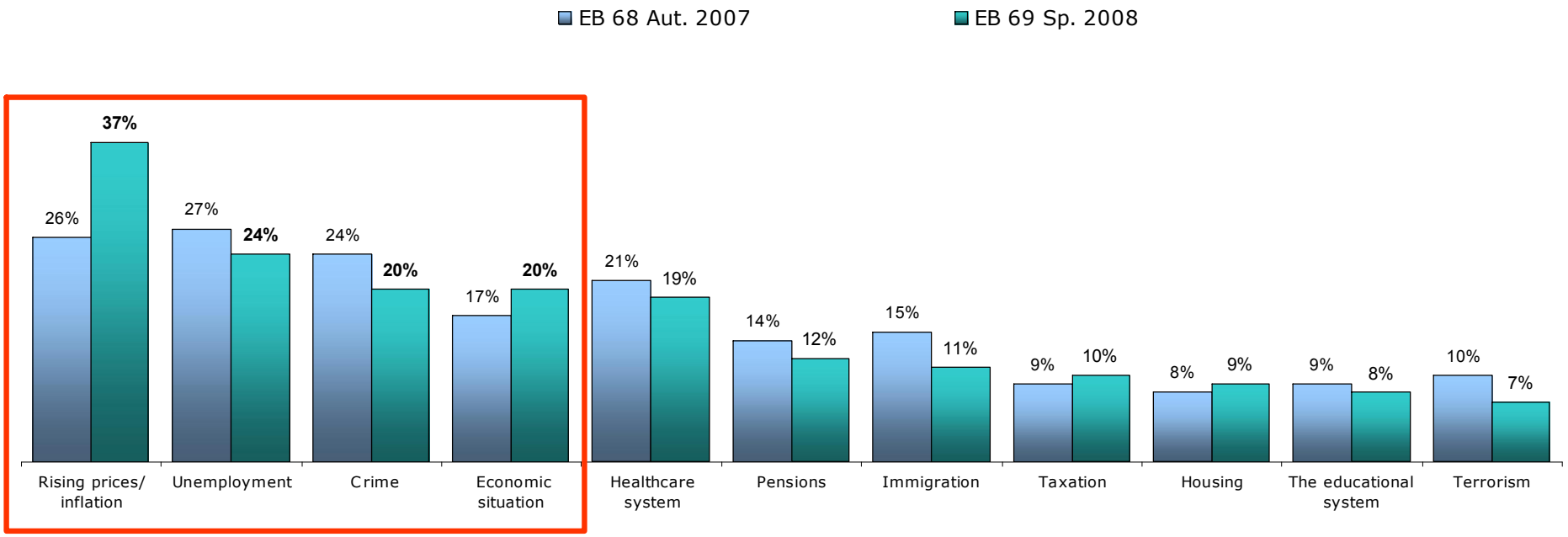
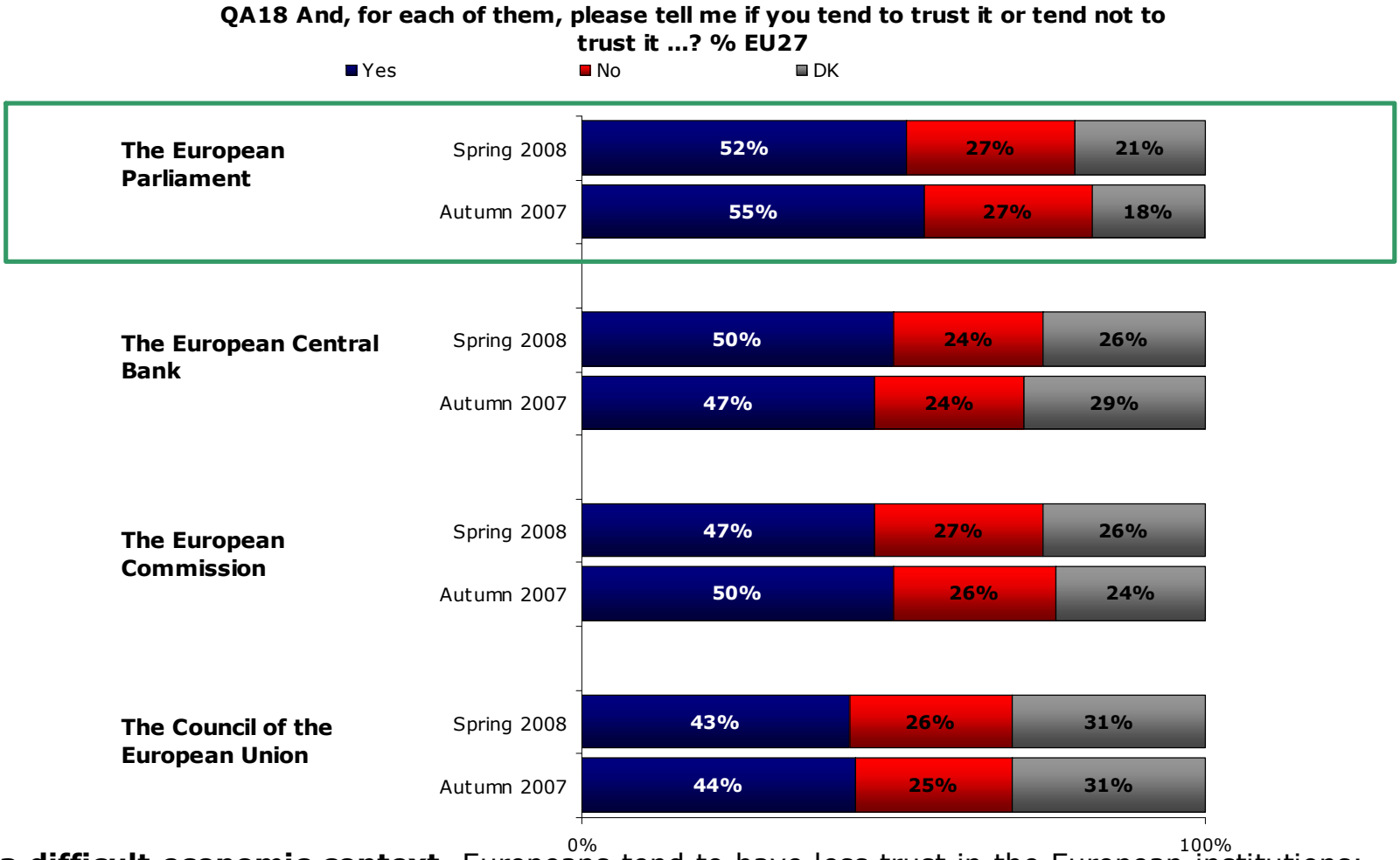
4.1. Contextual elements: the concerns of Europeans

QA6 What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment? - % EU



- **The main concerns of Europeans are economic:** rising prices/inflation (37%), unemployment (24%), the economic situation (20%). 20% also mentioned crime.
- For the first time, rising prices/inflation was mentioned as the main problem by Europeans. This item has increased by **11 percentage points** since autumn 2007, i.e. from 26% to 37%.

4.2. Contextual elements: the institutions



- **In a difficult economic context**, Europeans tend to have less trust in the European institutions: -3 percentage points for the European Parliament and the Commission, -1 percentage point for the Council. Only the Central Bank's trust rating has improved: +3 percentage points.

- Nevertheless, **the Parliament is still the European institution in which Europeans place the greatest trust**: **52%** trust it.

5. Interest in the European elections

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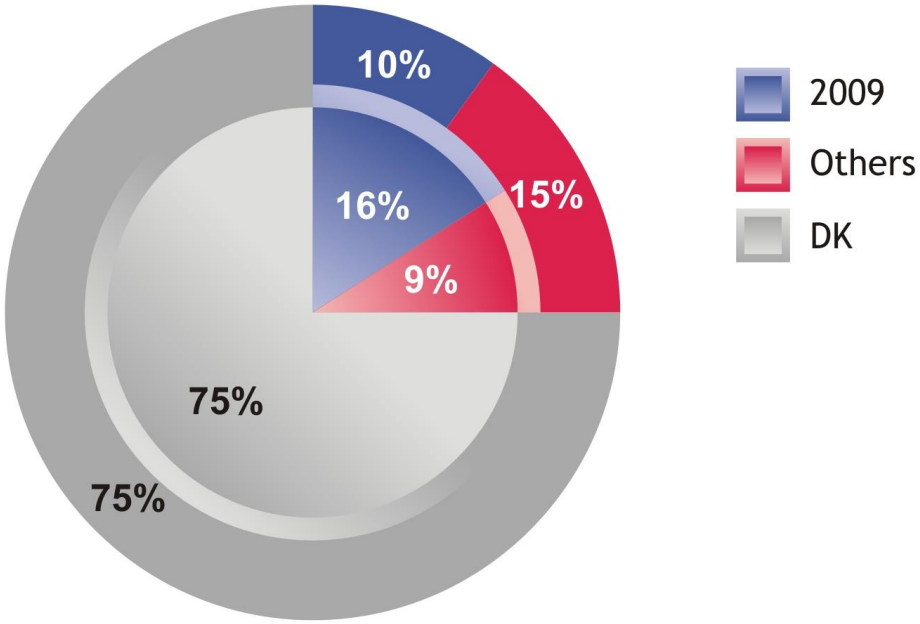
5.1. The date of the European elections: EU results

Question: QC1. In your opinion, when will the next European elections be held, here in (OUR COUNTRY)?

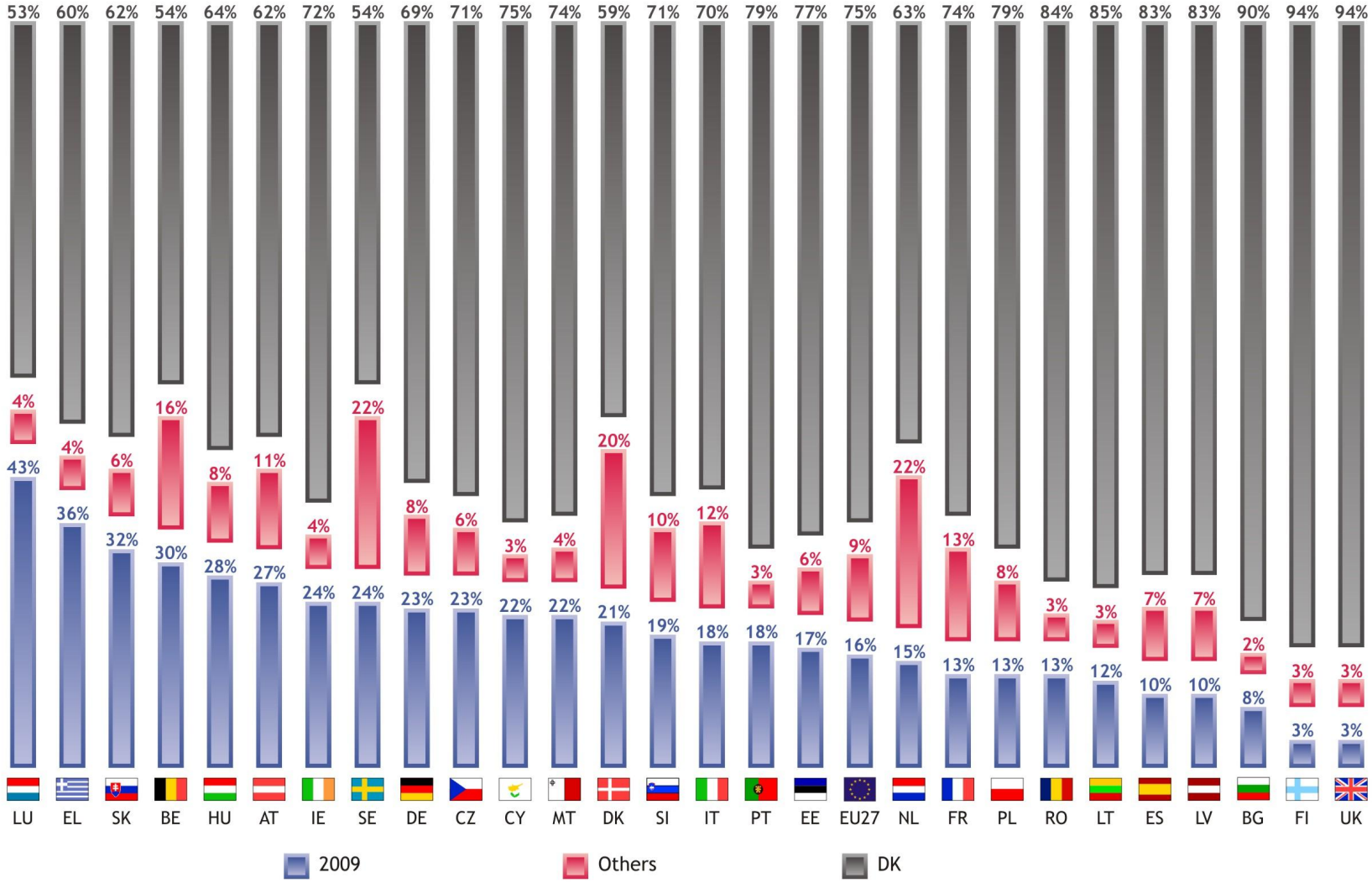


Inner pie: EB69.2 Sp. 2008
Outer pie: EB68.1 Aut. 2007

- **16%** of respondents are aware that European elections will be held in 2009, compared with 9% who think that they will be held in another year and 75% who did not answer the question.
- The number of respondents who know the year in which the next European elections will be held has therefore increased by **6 percentage points** since the previous wave (10% in autumn 2007).

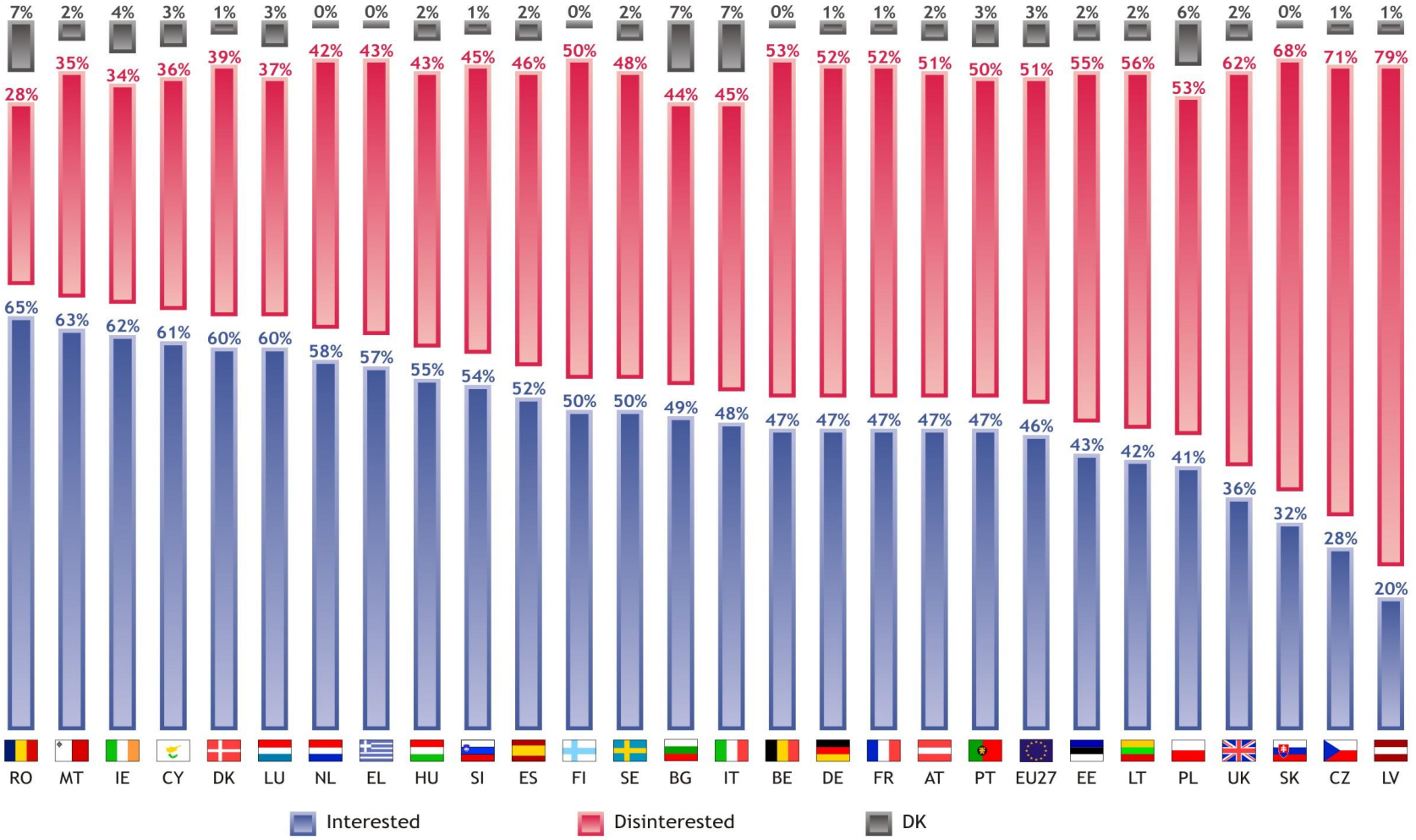
5.2. The date of the European elections: country results

Question: QC1. In your opinion, when will the next European elections be held, here in (OUR COUNTRY)?



5.3. Interest in the European elections

Question: QC2. The next European elections will be held in June 2009. How interested or disinterested would you say you are in these elections?



5.4. Interest in the European elections

The date of the elections

- There are significant differences between the Member States as regards knowledge of the date of the European elections:
- In Luxembourg, more than 4 out of 10 respondents know the year of the next European elections (43%).
- More than a quarter of respondents in Greece (36%), Slovakia (32%), Belgium (30%), Hungary (28%) and Austria (27%) know the year, compared with only 3% in the United Kingdom and Finland.

Interest in the elections

- 46% of respondents declared that they are interested in the upcoming European elections, but **51% declared that they are not interested in them.**
- In **11 European Union Member States** an absolute majority of respondents are interested in the European elections.
- More than 7 out of 10 respondents are not interested in these elections in the Czech Republic (71%) and in Latvia (79%).

5.5. Interest in the European elections

QC2 The next European elections will be held in June 2009. How interested or disinterested would you say you are in these elections?

	Interested	Disinterested	DK
EU27	46%	51%	3%
Sex			
Male	51%	47%	2%
Female	44%	53%	3%
Education (End of)			
15-	36%	61%	3%
16-19	46%	52%	2%
20+	60%	38%	2%
Still Studying	47%	49%	4%
Trust in EU			
Tend to trust	62%	36%	2%
Tend not to trust	31%	67%	2%

- Men seem more likely than women to be interested in these elections.
- The proportion of respondents interested in the 2009 European elections increases in line with levels of education.
- People who trust the EU are those that are the most interested in the 2009 elections. On the other hand, a majority of those that do not trust the EU are not interested in these elections.

6. Probability of voting

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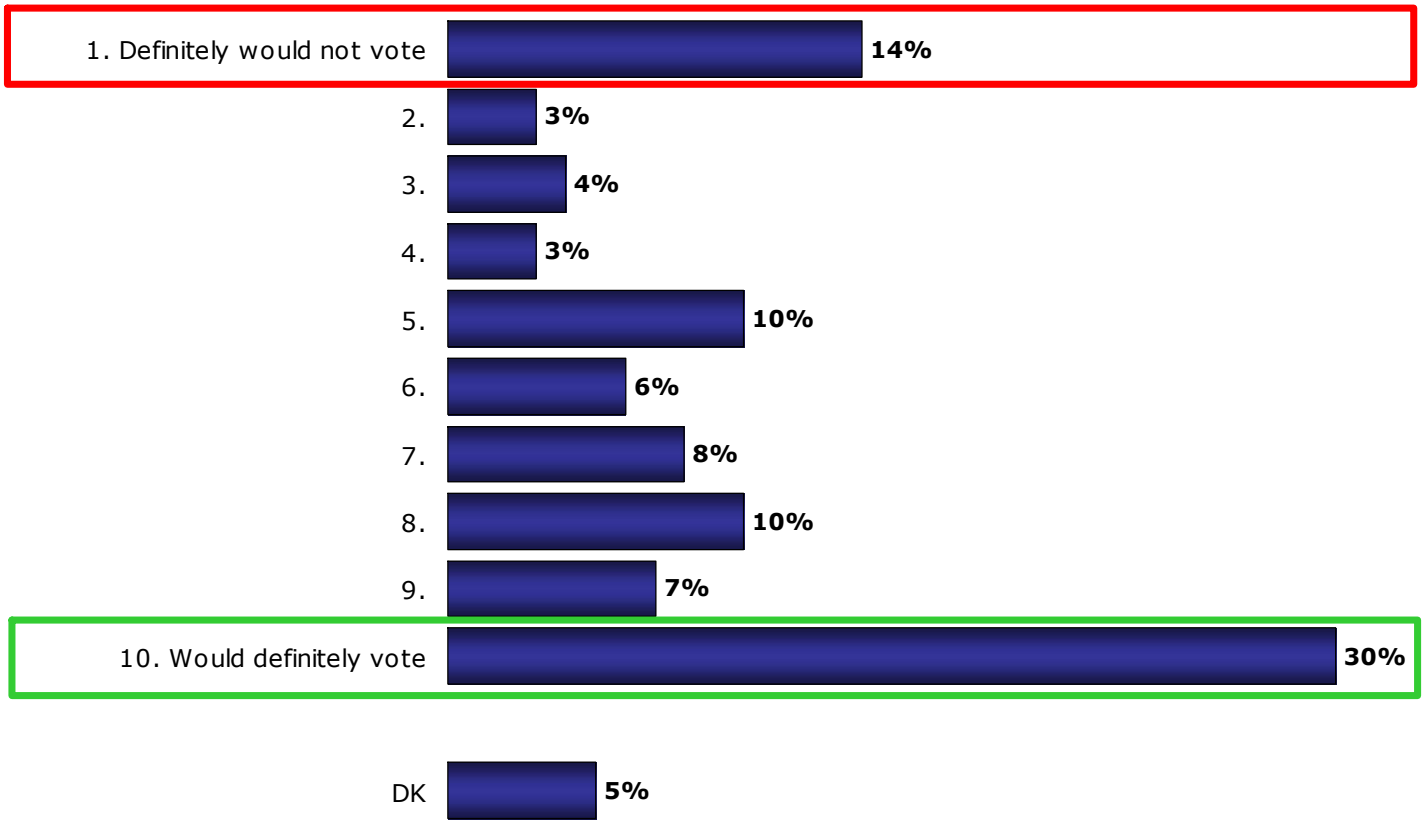
6.1. Probability of voting

QC3 Can you tell me on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely it is that you would vote in the next Europeans elections in June 2009?



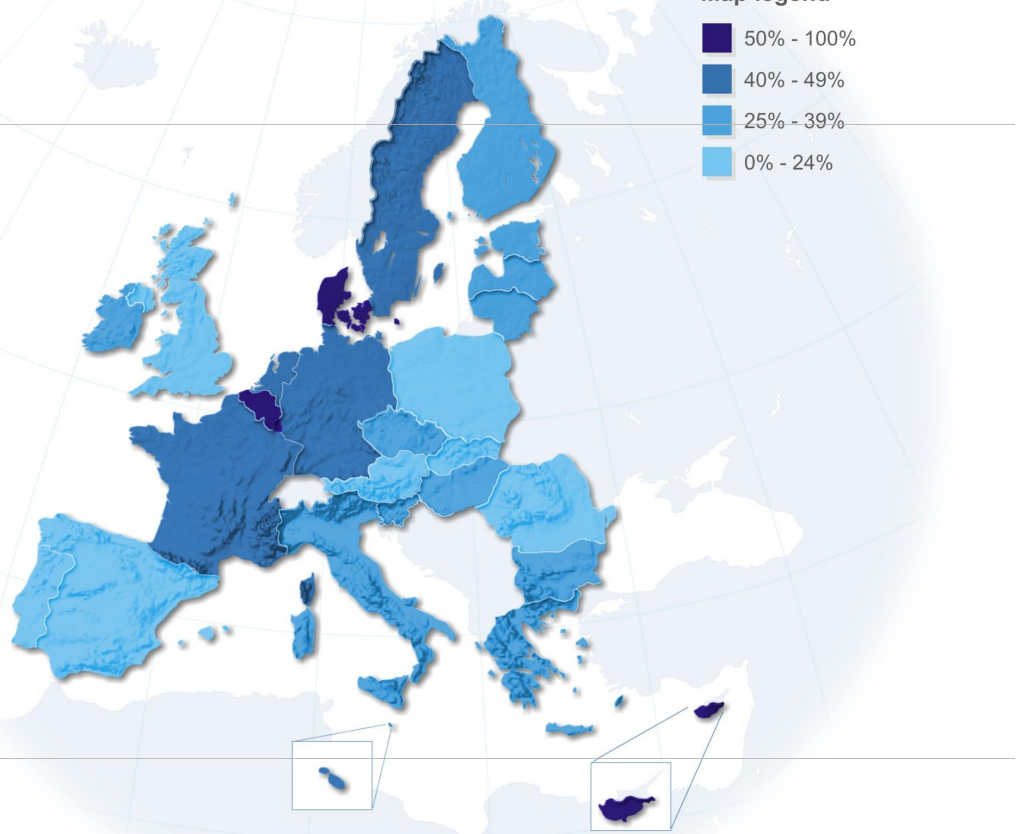
- With over a year to go to the European elections **30% of respondents declared that they would definitely vote** compared with 14% who declared that would definitely not vote.
- These are the two hard-core groups of those who are likely to vote in June 2009 and those who are unlikely to vote.
- However, in no event should any voter turnout rate be deduced from these data: **with more than a year to go before voting, the results indicate simply an initial trend.**

6.2. Probability of voting: results by country

LU	68%
DK	59%
BE	58%
CY	51%
MT	47%
SE	46%
FR	45%
NL	43%
DE	40%
IE	37%
SI	37%
EL	36%
EE	35%
EU 27	30%
LT	30%
HU	29%
BG	27%
IT	26%
FI	26%
CZ	26%
LV	26%
PL	21%
ES	19%
UK	19%
RO	19%
AT	17%
SK	15%
PT	14%

Question: QC3 Can you tell me on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely it is that you would vote in the next Europeans elections in June 2009? Please place yourself at a point on this scale where "1" indicates that you would definitely not vote, "10" indicates that you would definitely vote and the remaining numbers indicates something in between these two positions.

Answers: 10 - Would definitely vote



6.3. Probability of voting

QC3 Can you tell me on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely it is that you would vote in the next Europeans elections in June 2009?

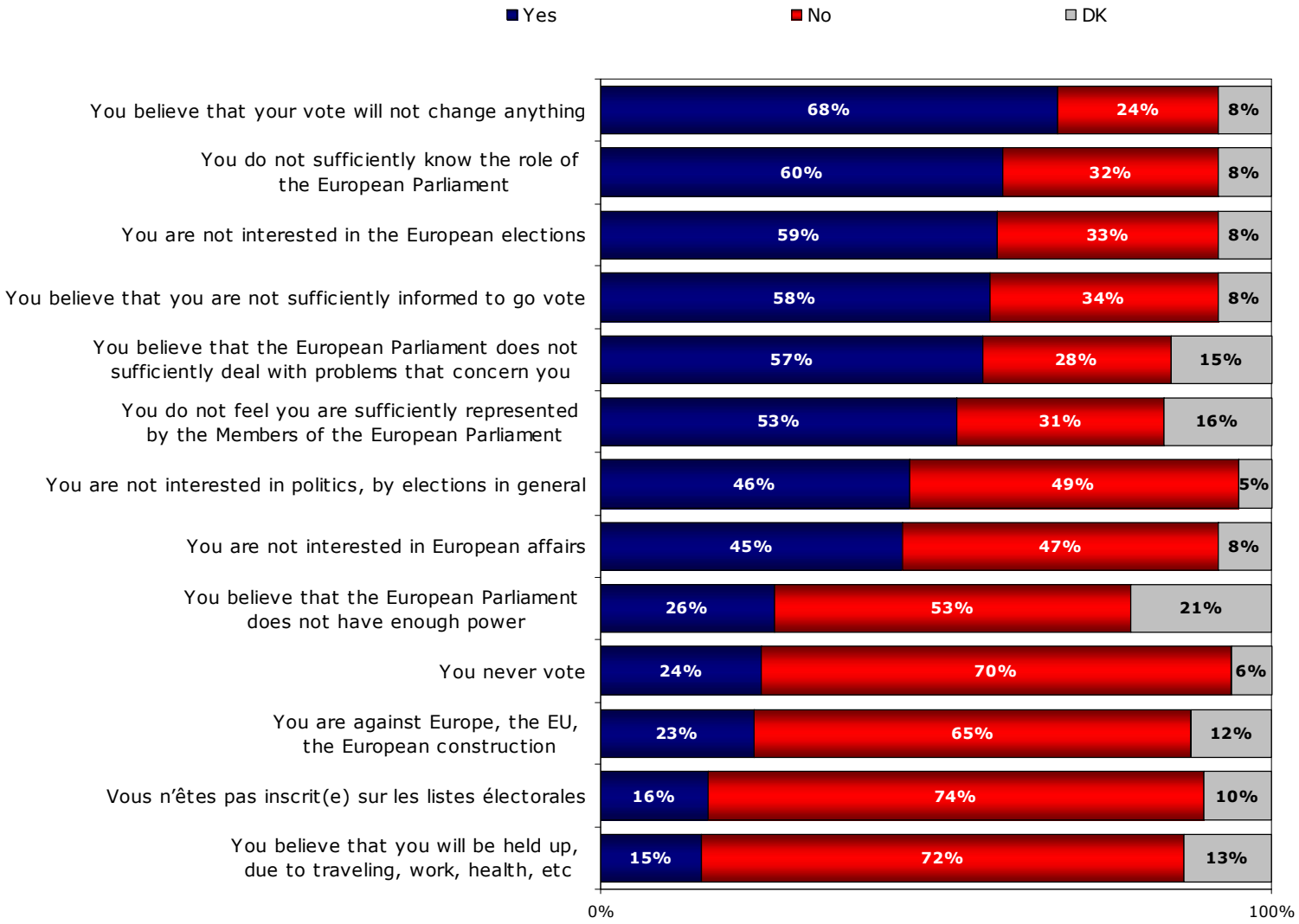
	1. Definitely would not vote	10. Would definitely vote
EU27	14%	30%
Education (End of)		
15-	20%	25%
16-19	12%	29%
20+	7%	41%
Still Studying	21%	22%
Left-Right scale		
(1-4) Left	10%	36%
(5-6)	13%	30%
(7-10) Right	9%	35%
Respondent occupation scale		
Self- employed	8%	36%
Managers	8%	39%
Other white collars	8%	32%
Manual workers	13%	26%
House persons	16%	23%
Unemployed	19%	22%
Retired	17%	35%
Students	21%	22%

- The longer respondents studied the more likely they are to declare that they would definitively vote in the 2009 elections.
- Political leanings are not a very distinguishing criterion**: those who consider themselves to be in the centre of the left-right political spectrum are however the least likely to declare that would definitively vote**.
- Just under 4 out of 10 senior managers (39%) declared that they would definitively vote compared with only 22% of students and unemployed people, and 23% of people responsible for looking after the home.

6.4. Probability of voting: reasons for not voting

Base: persons who have a low probability of voting (codes 1 to 5 QC3 = 34% of the sample)

QC5 If you do not go to vote in the European elections of June 2009 will it be because…?



7. Voting criteria

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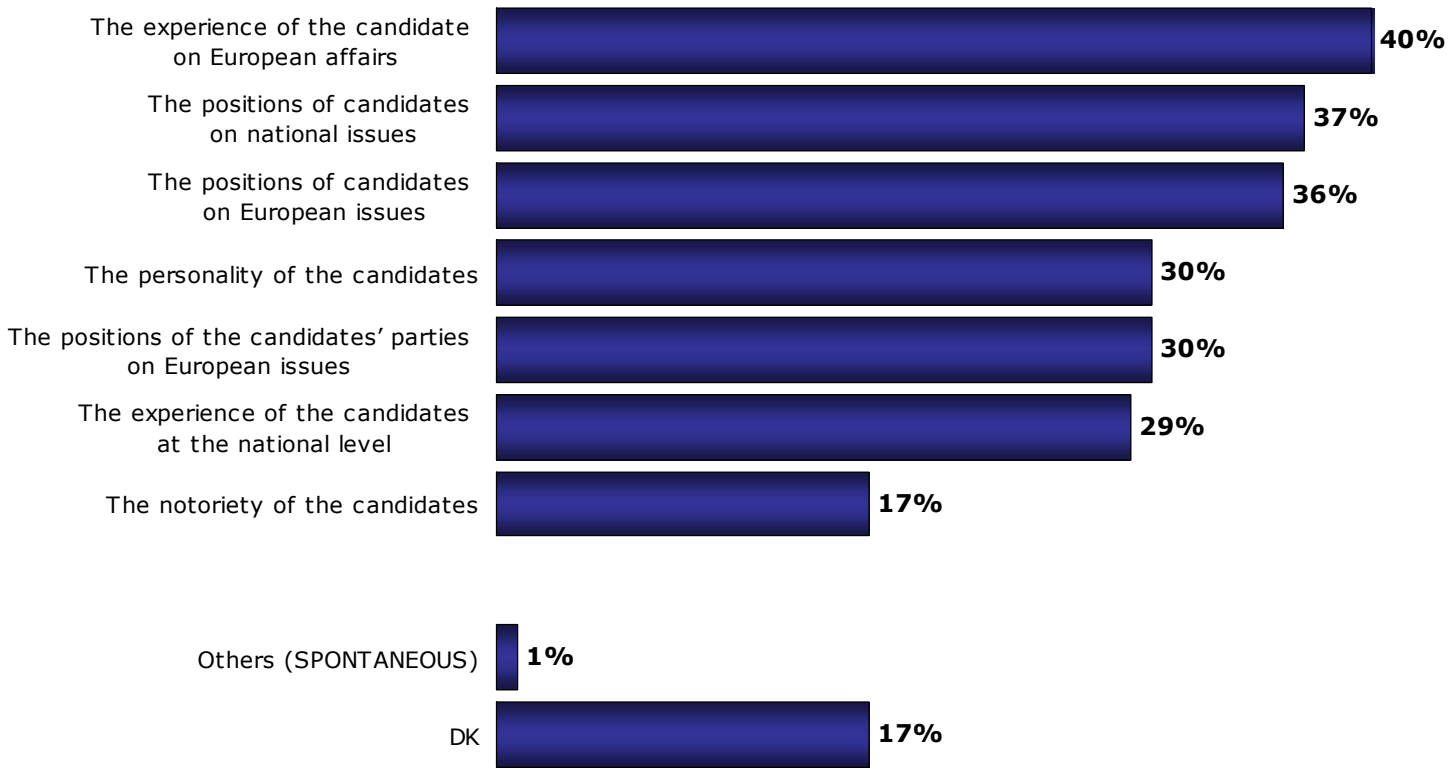
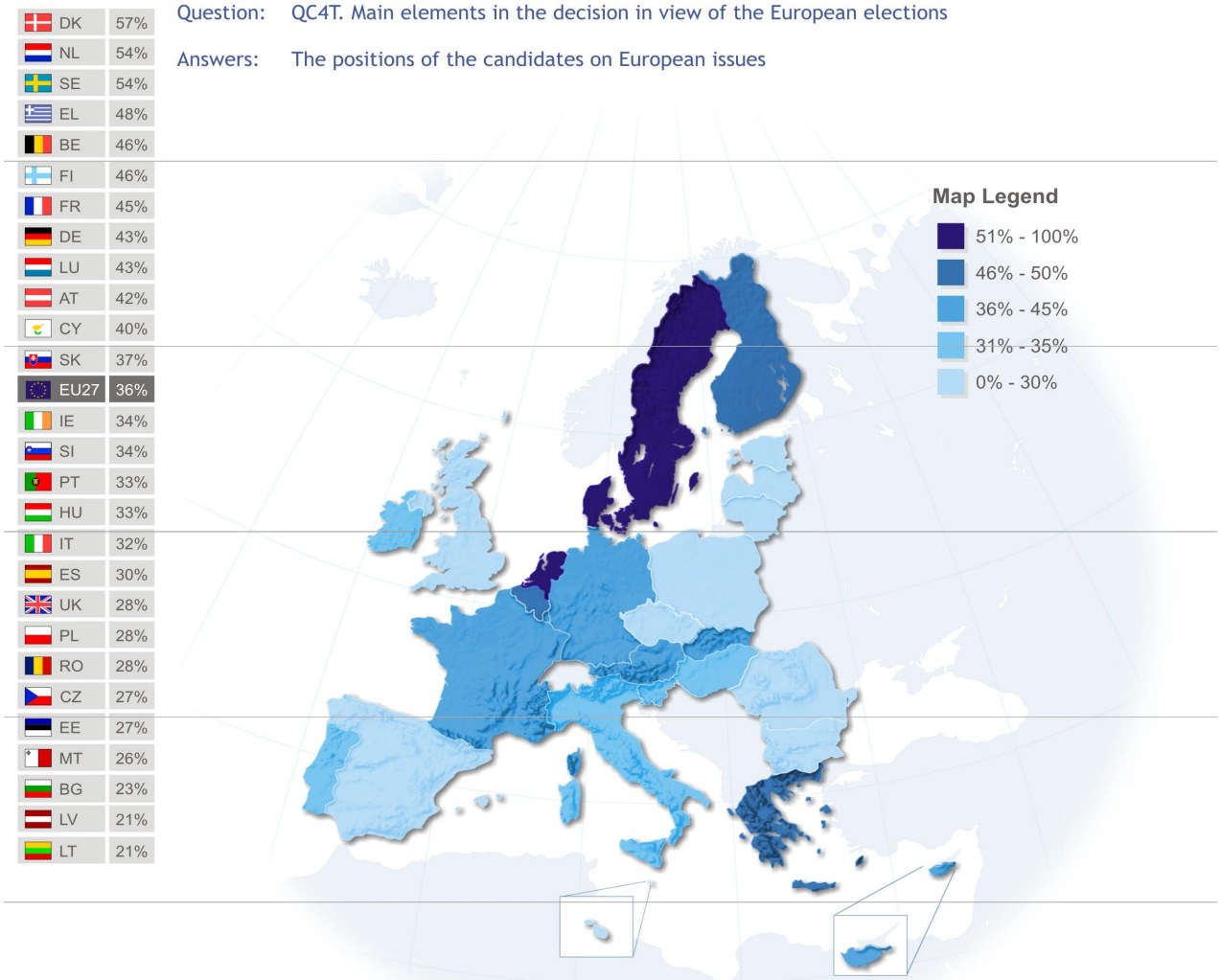
7.1. Voting criteria

QC4T Main elements in the decision in view of the European elections - % EU27



- The main voting criteria are linked to Europe, but also concern national issues.
- The reputation of candidates is a criterion for only 17% of respondents.

7.2. Voting criteria: results by country



- In a majority of the new Member States, this criterion was mentioned by less than 30% of respondents: Poland (28%), Romania (28%), the Czech Republic (27%), Estonia (27%), Malta (26%), Bulgaria (23%), Latvia (21%), Lithuania (21%). In these countries, national issues are seen as more important than European issues (except in Estonia, where the two aspects were mentioned by similar proportions of respondents).

7.3. Voting criteria

The three main elements in the decision in view of the European elections

	The experience of the candidate on European affairs	The positions of candidates on national issues	The positions of candidates on European issues
EU27	40%	37%	36%
Age			
15-24	40%	35%	37%
25-39	39%	40%	39%
40-54	44%	39%	40%
55 +	37%	35%	31%
Education (End of)			
15-	30%	32%	26%
16-19	40%	38%	35%
20+	49%	43%	48%
Still Studying	43%	35%	41%
Left-Right scale			
(1-4) Left	42%	39%	43%
(5-6) Center	43%	40%	38%
(7-10) Right	44%	43%	35%

- "The experience of the candidate on European affairs" and "the positions of candidates on European issues" are mentioned by a lower proportion of respondents aged 55 or over (37% and 31% respectively).
- The longer respondents have remained in full-time education the more likely they are to define European issues as a voting criterion.
- 43% of respondents on the left of the political spectrum mentioned "the positions of candidates on European issues" compared with 35% of respondents on the right. On the other hand, respondents on the right of the political spectrum are slightly more likely to mention "the positions of candidates on national issues" than those on the left (43% versus 39%).

8. Campaign themes

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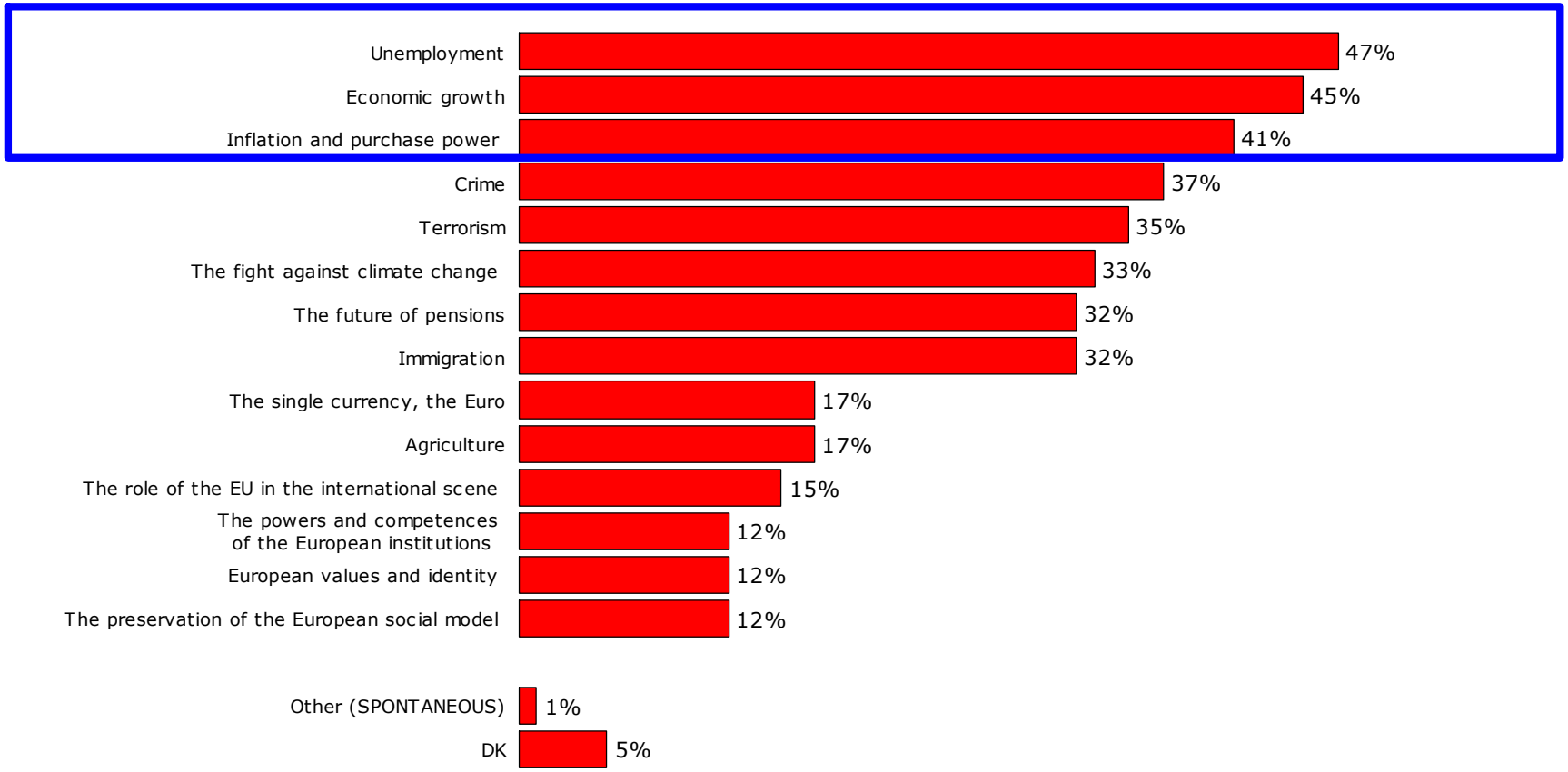
8.1 Campaign themes

QC6T Themes for the next European elections - % EU27



- The three main campaign themes which stand out are **economic themes**: more than 4 out of 10 respondents mentioned "unemployment" (47%), "economic growth" (45%) and "inflation and purchasing power" (41%).

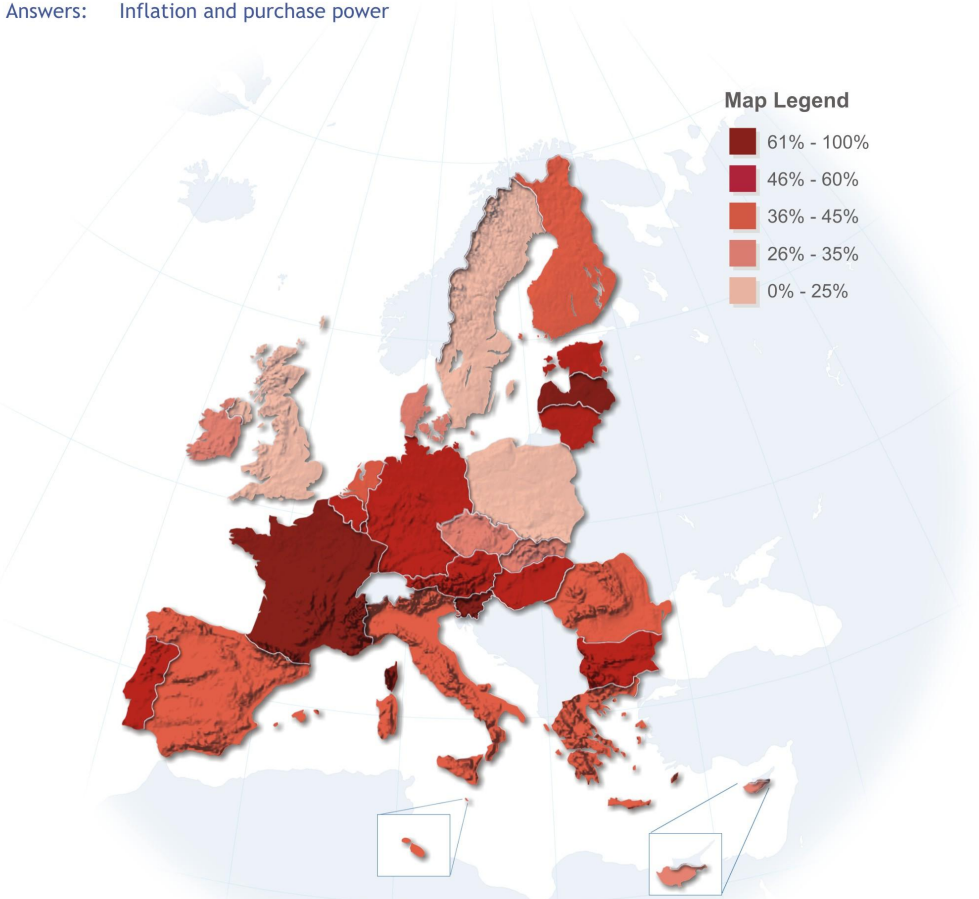
- Those three themes are followed by global and security related themes: "crime" (37%), "terrorism" (35%) and "the fight against climate change" (33%).

8.2. Campaign themes: inflation

SI	69%
FR	68%
LV	65%
LU	55%
BE	54%
AT	54%
LT	53%
HU	52%
DE	51%
BG	48%
EE	47%
PT	46%
ES	42%
EU27	41%
FI	41%
RO	41%
IT	40%
MT	40%
EL	37%
NL	37%
IE	33%
CZ	33%
SK	32%
DK	27%
CY	26%
SE	25%
UK	21%
PL	15%

Question: QC6T. Themes for the next European elections

Answers: Inflation and purchase power



- Almost 7 out of 10 citizens in Slovenia (69%) and France (68%) want "inflation and purchasing power" to be a major campaign theme.
- However, less than one in four respondents mentioned "inflation" in the United Kingdom (21%) and Poland (15%).

8.3. Campaign themes

QC6T Themes for the next European elections

	Unemployment	Economic growth	Inflation and purchase power
EU27	47%	45%	41%
Left-Right scale			
(1-4) Left	49%	43%	44%
(5-6)	48%	46%	43%
(7-10) Right	42%	51%	41%
Respondent occupation scale			
Self- employed	43%	55%	41%
Managers	38%	48%	38%
Other white collars	45%	49%	47%
Manual workers	52%	47%	46%
House persons	51%	39%	38%
Unemployed	62%	41%	40%
Retired	43%	41%	40%
Students	50%	43%	36%

- 49% of respondents who consider themselves to be on the left of the political spectrum want unemployment to be a key campaign theme versus 42% of respondents with right-wing leanings.
- On the other hand, more than half of Europeans on the right of the political spectrum (51%) want economic growth to be one of the campaign themes compared with 43% of Europeans on the left.
- More than six out of ten unemployed people (62%) want unemployment to be one of the key campaign themes. Half or just over half of manual workers (52%), people looking after the home (51%) and students (50%) also share that view compared with 43% of retired people and 38% of senior managers.
- An absolute majority of self-employed people (55%) want economic growth to be at the heart of the campaign compared with only 39% of people looking after the home and 41% of retired people and unemployed people.
- Inflation is given as a prominent issue most of all by people in an employed position (of whom 47% give this answer) and manual workers (46%).

thank you!

Vielen Dank!

merci!

bedankt!

tack!

muchas gracias!

kiitos!

grazie mille!