

SPECIAL EUROBAROMETER 568

# Protecting and promoting democracy

EUROBAROMETER SUMMARY  
MAY 2025



This survey has been requested by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST)  
and co-ordinated by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication  
(DG COMM 'Public Opinion & Citizens Engagement' Unit)

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

**Project title** Protecting and promoting democracy – Summary

**Language version** EN

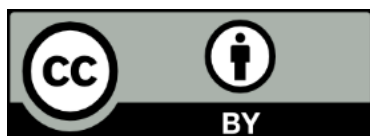
**Media/Volume** PDF Web

**Catalogue number** DS-01-25-150-EN-N

**ISBN** 978-92-68-31107-3

**DOI** 10.2838/8935884

© European Union, 2025



The Commission's reuse policy is implemented under Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2011/833/oj>). Unless otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed, provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

Photo credit: Getty Images and Shutterstock.

<https://www.europa.eu/eurobarometer>

## Table of Contents

---

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>I. Citizens' participation and engagement in decision-making processes in the EU</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>II. Democratic resilience and electoral integrity in the EU</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>III. Perceptions of media freedom and pluralism in the EU</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>IV. Disinformation, information manipulation and foreign interference</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>V. Europeans' practices in verifying and sharing online information</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>VI. Role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and challenges</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>51</b>





# Introduction



## Introduction

Democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights are founding values of the European Union. They underpin EU's achievements in fostering peace, prosperity, economic competitiveness, social cohesion and stability. The essence of democracy is that citizens can freely express their views and participate in democratic life, choose their political representatives, and have a say in their future. Citizens should be able to form their own opinions in a public space where they have access to reliable information from a plurality of sources, where different views can be expressed, where they have a right to disagree and to cast their votes in elections that are free from interference. Democracies in the EU are facing significant challenges, and there has been a rise in the number of threats from hostile actors taking various forms, including foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI)<sup>1</sup> and disinformation<sup>2</sup>, as well as threats to the integrity of elections and democratic processes, such as cyber-attacks, covert political funding or manipulated boosting of specific political content, actors or parties online.

In December 2020, the European Commission presented its European Democracy Action Plan (hereafter 'EDAP'<sup>3</sup>) to empower citizens and build more resilient democracies across the EU by:

- promoting free and fair elections;
- strengthening media freedom and pluralism;
- countering disinformation.

In the Political Guidelines for 2024-2029<sup>4</sup>, President von der Leyen announced a new European Democracy Shield to respond to the most serious challenges and increase the resilience of our democratic systems and societies. The initiative will build on the European Democracy Action Plan (2020) and the Defence of Democracy Package<sup>5</sup> (2023) and respect democratic values and fundamental rights, including the EU's enduring commitment to preserving and promoting freedom of expression.

In this context, a Special Eurobarometer survey was commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) to explore a range of topics associated with strengthening societal resilience in democratic societies, as well as fostering citizens' active participation and engagement in decision-making processes in the European Union.

It explores how Europeans perceive disinformation, their involvement in decision-making processes in the EU, including the role and involvement of civil society organisations, and the most important elements of free and fair elections. The topics covered include perceptions about the following:

- Citizens' involvement in decision-making processes in the EU, e.g., citizens' assemblies or youth dialogues.
- Fact-checking of news, and source trustworthiness when sharing content online.
- Spread of disinformation, and citizens' skills to tackle it.
- Democratic processes, and challenges to democracy in the European Union.
- The role of civil society organisations in strengthening democracies across the EU, including against the threats they are facing.

This summary report outlines the key findings of the Eurobarometer survey; detailed results are provided in the analytical report.

---

<sup>1</sup> FIMI is a pattern of behaviour that threatens or has the potential to negatively impact values, procedures and political processes. Such activity is manipulative in character, conducted in an intentional and coordinated manner. Actors of such activity can be state or non-state actors, including their proxies inside and outside of their own territory. In the survey, we frequently refer to FIMI also as "foreign interference" or "other forms of information manipulation".

<sup>2</sup> False or misleading content that is spread with an intention to deceive or secure economic or political gain, and which may cause public harm.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-new-push-for-european-democracy/file-european-democracy-action-plan>

<sup>4</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/documents-european-democracy-action-plan\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/documents-european-democracy-action-plan_en)

<sup>5</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Defence of Democracy

## Methodology

This Special Eurobarometer 568 on protecting and promoting democracy was part of the Eurobarometer wave 103.4 and was conducted between 5 May 2025 and 29 May 2025. Some 26,410 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed in the appropriate national language. This survey was commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST).

The methodology used was that of the Standard Eurobarometer surveys carried out by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Public Opinion & Citizens Engagement" Unit)<sup>6</sup>. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, either physically in people's homes or through remote video interaction in the appropriate national language. Interviews with remote video interaction ("online face-to-face" or CAVI, Computer Assisted Video Interviewing) were only conducted in Czechia, Denmark, Malta, the Netherlands and Finland. A technical note concerning the interviews conducted by the member institutes of the Verian network is annexed to this report.

**We would like to thank the people across the European Union who have offered their time to take part in this survey.**

**Without their active participation, this study would not have been possible.**

Note: In this report, EU countries are referred to by their official abbreviations, as listed below:

Belgium	BE	Lithuania	LT
Bulgaria	BG	Luxembourg	LU
Czechia	CZ	Hungary	HU
Denmark	DK	Malta	MT
Germany	DE	The Netherlands	NL
Estonia	EE	Austria	AT
Ireland	IE	Poland	PL
Greece	EL	Portugal	PT
Spain	ES	Romania	RO
France	FR	Slovenia	SI
Croatia	HR	Slovakia	SK
Italy	IT	Finland	FI
Republic of Cyprus	CY *	Sweden	SE
Latvia	LV		
European Union – weighted average for the 27 Member States			EU27

\* Cyprus as a whole is one of the 27 European Union Member States. However, the *acquis communautaire* has been suspended in the part of the country not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. For practical reasons, only the interviews carried out in the part of the country controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are included in the 'CY' category and in the EU27 average.

<sup>6</sup> The Eurobarometer methodological approaches:  
<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/about/eurobarometer>



# **I. Citizens' participation and engagement in decision-making processes in the EU**



## 1. Decision-making processes in the EU

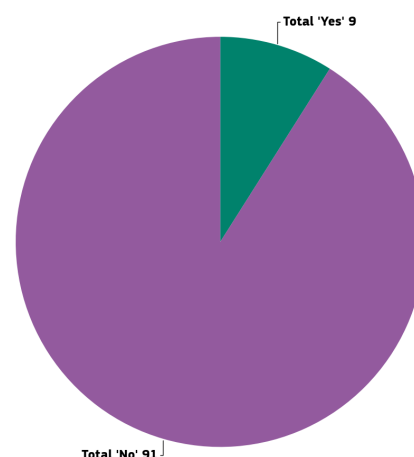
Over nine in ten Europeans have never been directly involved in decision-making processes in the European Union

Respondents were asked whether they had been directly involved in decision-making processes in the EU in the last five years<sup>7</sup>.

Over nine in ten (91%) reported that they have **not been directly involved in decision-making processes in the European Union over the last five years**, such as participation in citizens' assemblies, panels, youth dialogues, juries, or similar events. Conversely, less than one in ten (9%) indicated having direct involvement in these types of decision-making activities in the EU.

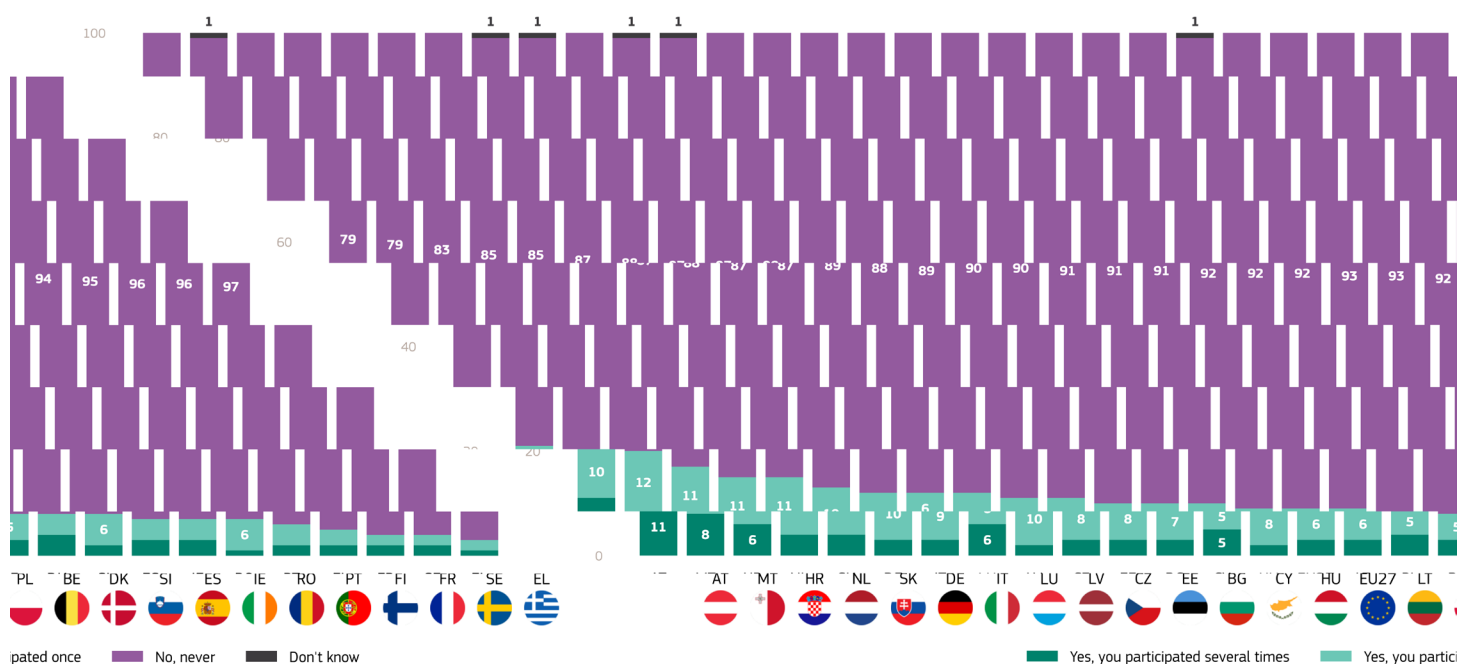
Looking at the national level, at least one in ten respondents **have been involved in decision-making processes in the EU over the last five years** in 14 Member States. The highest levels of participation are seen in Austria (21%), followed by Malta (20%), and Croatia (17%), while the lowest participation rates are observed in Greece (3%), France and Sweden (4%).

QCSQ: In the last five years, have you been directly involved in decision-making processes in the European Union, e.g., in citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, youth dialogues, citizens' juries, or other events related to the decision-making in the EU? (%)



May 2025

QCSQ: In the last five years, have you been directly involved in decision-making processes in the European Union, e.g., in citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, youth dialogues, citizens' juries, or other events related to the decision-making in the EU? (%)



May 2025

<sup>7</sup> QCSQ. In the last five years, have you been directly involved in decision-making processes in the European Union, e.g., in citizens' assemblies,

citizens' panels, youth dialogues, citizens' juries, or other events related to the decision-making in the EU?

## 2. Familiarity with decision-making processes in the EU

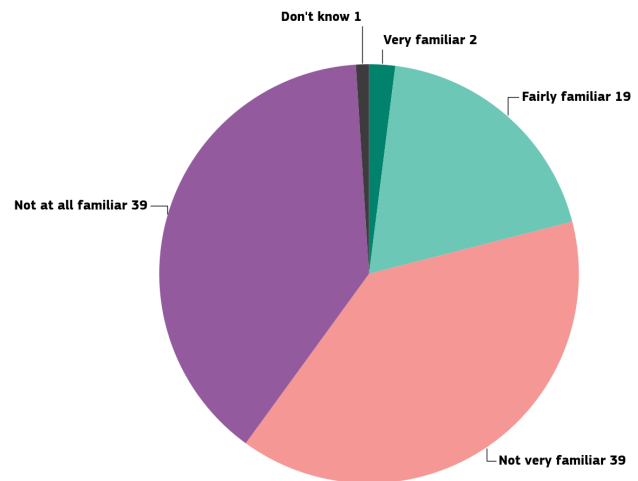
Nearly eight in ten Europeans are not familiar with activities involving people directly in decision-making processes in the EU.

Respondents were asked how familiar they are with activities that involve people directly in decision-making processes in the European Union, such as citizens' assemblies or participatory planning.<sup>8</sup>

Across the EU, nearly eight in ten citizens report low or no familiarity with activities involving direct citizen participation in decision-making in the European Union (78%). Nearly two in five say they are '*not at all familiar*' (39%), with an equal share (39%) saying that they are '*not very familiar*'. Conversely, slightly over one in five indicate some degree of familiarity, with 19% being '*fairly familiar*' and only 2% being '*very familiar*'.

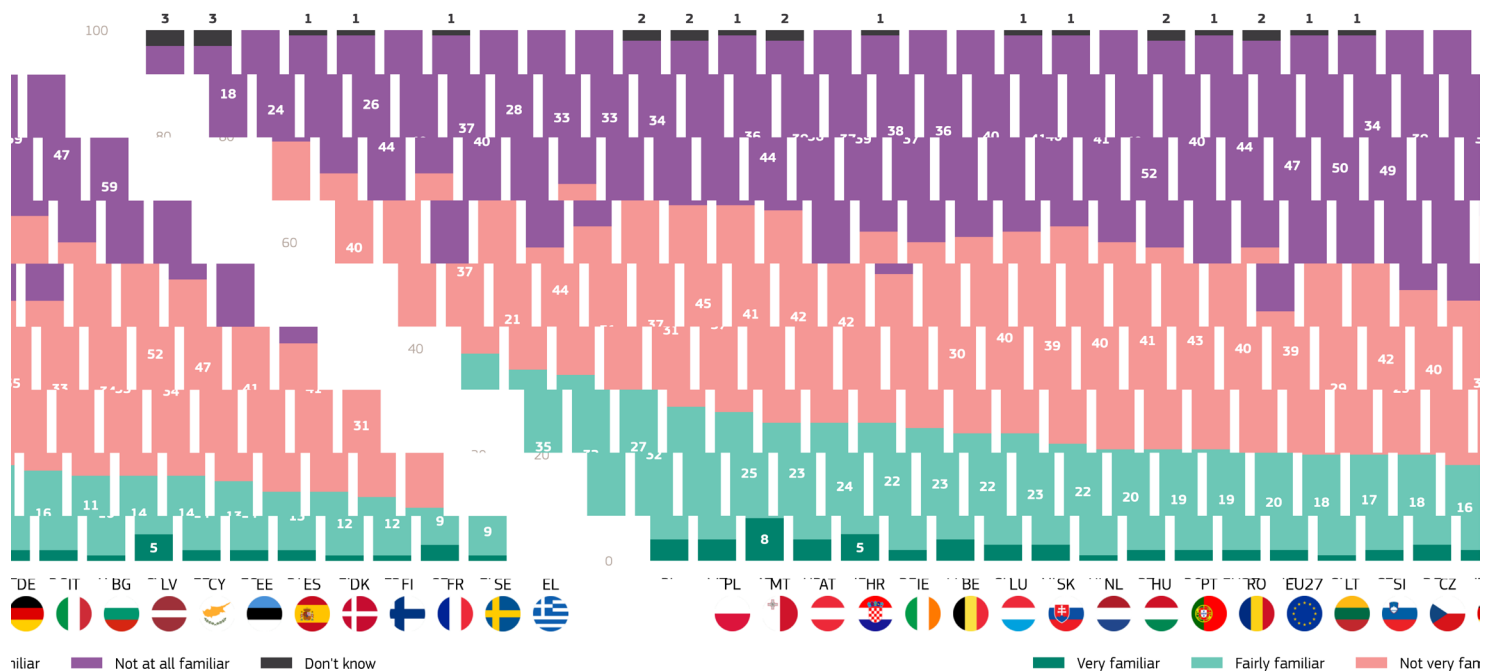
Looking at the national level, over a third of respondents are familiar with these processes in three countries: Poland (39%), Malta (36%), and Austria (35%). Conversely, the lowest familiarity is seen in Greece (10%), Sweden (12%) and France (13%).

QC4: How familiar are you with activities that involve people directly in decision-making processes in the European Union? (e.g. citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, citizens' juries, participatory planning, participatory budgeting, scenario workshops) (%)



May 2025

QC4: How familiar are you with activities that involve people directly in decision-making processes in the European Union? (e.g. citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, citizens' juries, participatory planning, participatory budgeting, scenario workshops) (%)



May 2025

<sup>8</sup> QC4. How familiar are you with activities that involve people directly in decision-making processes in the European Union? (e.g. citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, citizens' juries, participatory planning, participatory budgeting, scenario workshops)

assemblies, citizens' panels, citizens' juries, participatory planning, participatory budgeting, scenario workshops)

### 3. Measures fostering participation

More transparency and access to information on ways to participate in policymaking is the measure most encouraging citizens' direct involvement in decision-making initiatives in the EU

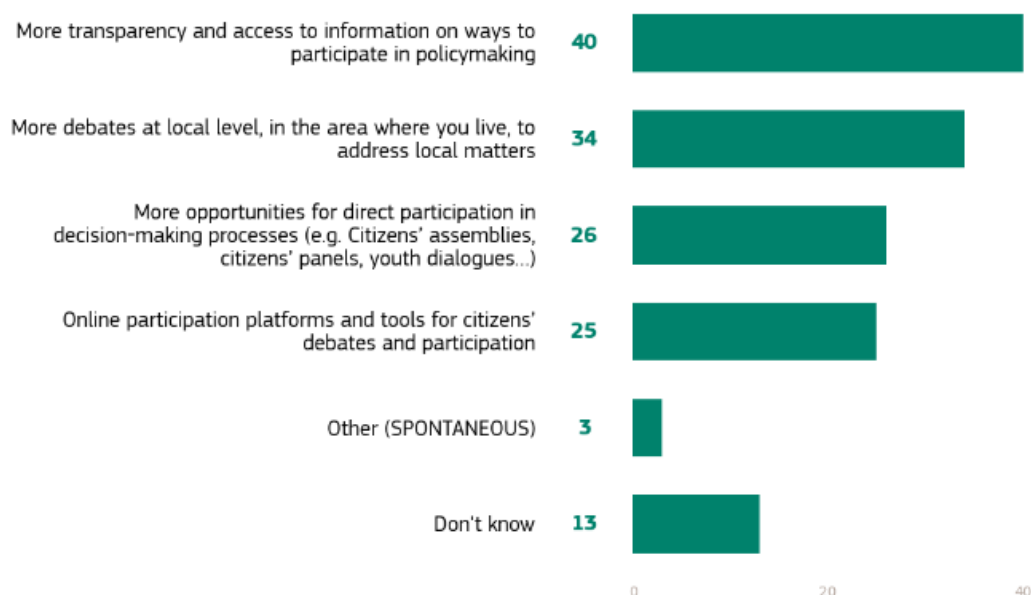
Respondents were asked which of the following four measures would encourage them the most to get directly involved in decision-making processes in the European Union: more transparency and access to information on ways to participate in policymaking, more debates at local level to address local matters, more opportunities for direct participation in decision-making processes, and online platforms and tools for citizens' debates and participation.<sup>9</sup>

Four in ten (40%) respondents reported that **more transparency and access to information on ways to participate in policymaking** would encourage them the most, closely followed by **more debates at local level to address local matters** (34%).

**Greater opportunities for direct participation in decision making processes** ranked third (26%), slightly higher than the existence of **online platforms and tools for citizens' debates and participation** (25%).

Finally, over one in ten respondents (13%) didn't know which measures would encourage them the most, and a small percentage (3%) mentioned other measures.

QC5: Which of the following measures would encourage you the most to get directly involved in decision-making processes in the European Union? (e.g. in citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, citizens' juries, participatory planning, participatory budgeting, scenario workshops, etc.) (MAX. 2 ANSWERS) (EU27) (%)



May 2025

<sup>9</sup> QC5. Which of the following measures would encourage you the most to get directly involved in decision-making processes in the European Union?

(e.g. in citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, citizens' juries, participatory planning, participatory budgeting, scenario workshops, etc.)



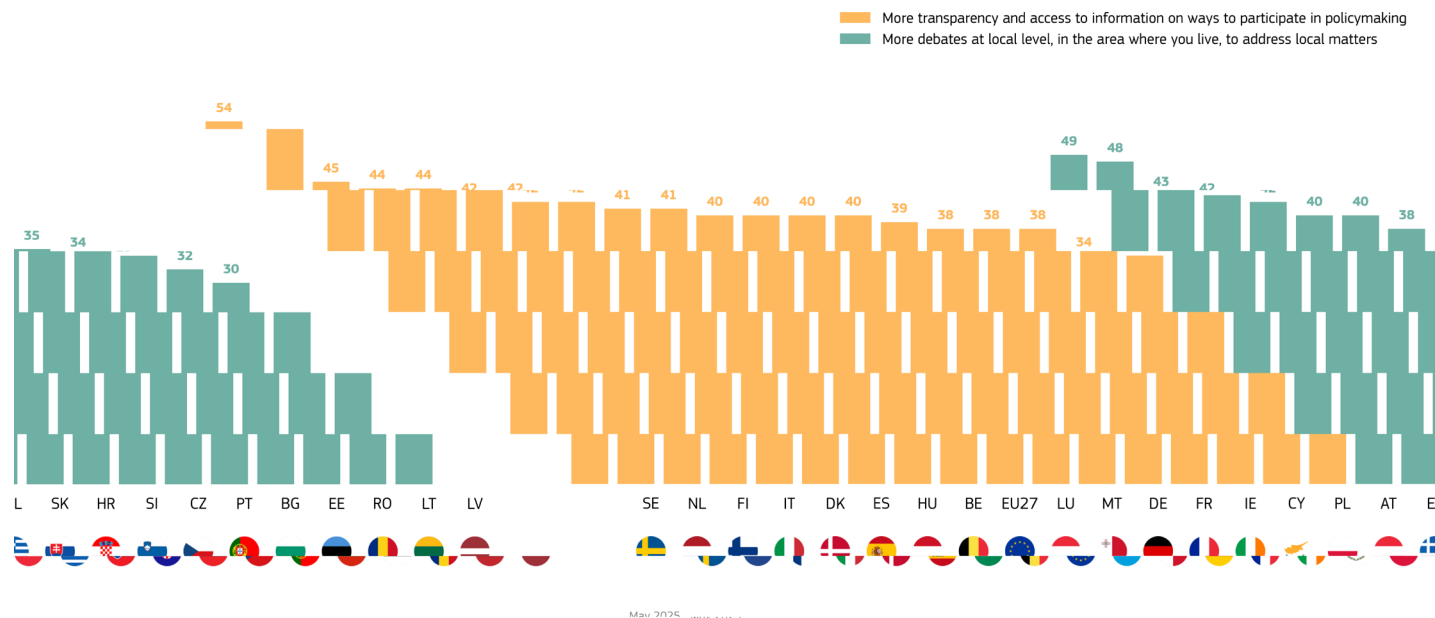
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

Looking at the national level, **more transparency and access to information on ways to participate in policymaking in the EU** ranks as the top choice in 16 Member States, with the highest share observed in Sweden (54%), the Netherlands (45%), Finland and Italy (both 44%), the Netherlands (45%), Finland and Italy (both 44%).

**More debates at local level, in the area where respondents live, to address local matters** is the most frequently chosen statement in 11 Member States, particularly Greece (49%), Slovakia (48%), and Croatia (43%).

QC5: Which of the following measures would encourage you the most to get directly involved in decision-making processes in the European Union? (e.g. in citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, citizens' juries, participatory planning, participatory budgeting, scenario workshops, etc.) (MAX. 2 ANSWERS) (%)





## **II. Democratic resilience and electoral integrity in the EU**

## 1. Most serious challenges to democracy in the EU

Growing public distrust towards democratic institutions and processes is seen as the most serious challenge to democracy in the EU, followed by foreign information manipulation

Respondents were asked about the most serious challenges to democracy in the European Union.<sup>10</sup>

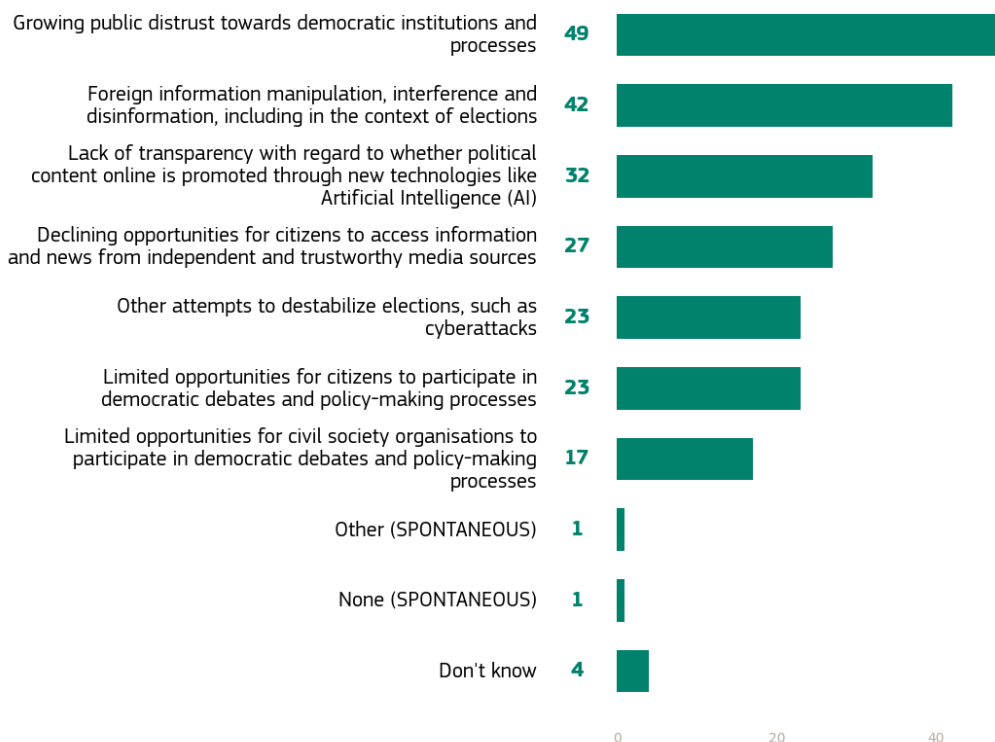
Nearly half (49%) of respondents reported a **growing public distrust towards democratic institutions and processes** as the most serious challenge to democracy.

**Foreign information manipulation, interference, and disinformation, including in the context of elections** (42%) ranked second, followed by the **lack of transparency regarding political content promoted through new technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI)** (32%).

**Other destabilisation attempts, such as cyberattacks** and **limited opportunities for citizens to participate in democratic debates and policy-making processes** are viewed as serious challenges by slightly more than fifth of EU citizens (all 23%).

Finally, **limited opportunities for civil society organisations to participate in democratic debates and policy-making processes** is cited by almost one in five (17%).

QC7: Which of the following are the most serious challenges to democracy in the European Union? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (EU27) (%)



May 2025

<sup>10</sup> QC7. Which of the following are the most serious challenges to democracy in the European Union?



## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

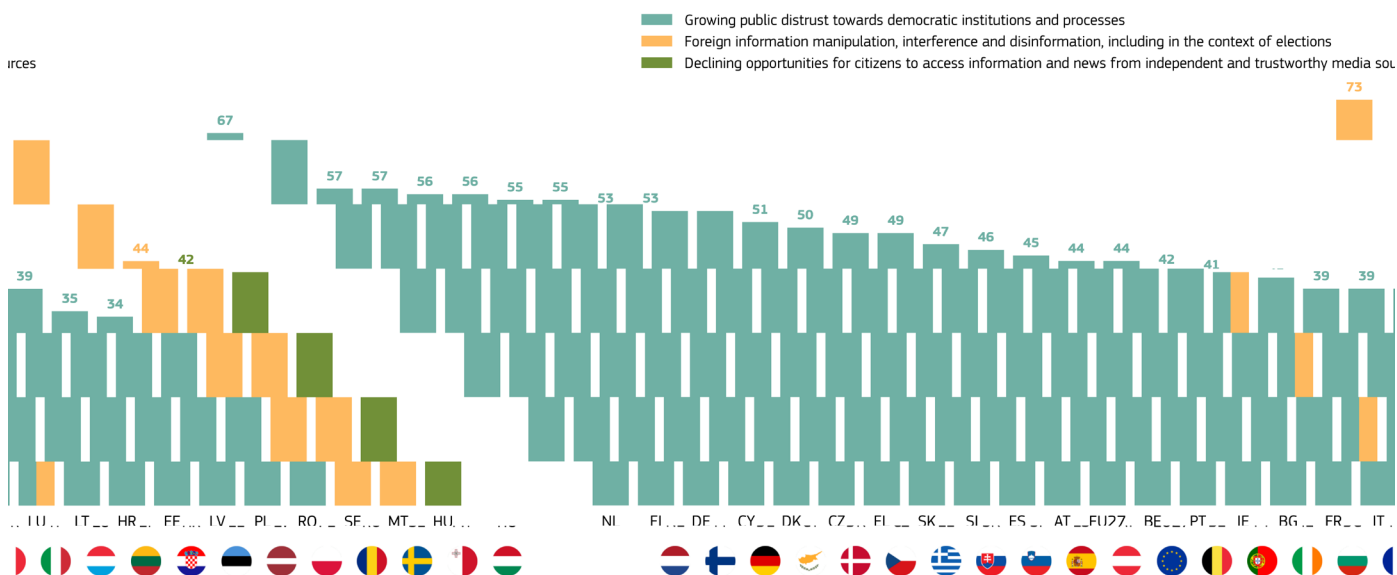
Looking at the national level, there is consensus on the most serious challenge to democracy in the European Union.

In 24 countries, **growing public distrust towards democratic institutions and processes** is the most frequently cited challenge. The highest shares are found in the Netherlands (67%), Finland and Germany (both 57%), Cyprus and Denmark (both 56%), Hungary (55%), Sweden (53%), Malta (53%), France (51%), Italy (50%), Czechia (49%), Slovakia (49%), Slovenia (47%), Estonia (46%), Austria (45%), Bulgaria (44%), Luxembourg (44%), Belgium (42%), Portugal (41%), Ireland (39%), Romania (39%) and Greece (39%).

In three countries, **foreign information manipulation, interference, and disinformation, including in the context of elections** is the most frequently cited challenge, from Sweden (73%) to Malta (44%) and Luxembourg, where it shares first place with growing public distrust towards democratic institutions and processes (42% for the two items).

Lastly, **declining opportunities for citizens to access information and news from independent and trustworthy media sources** is the most frequently mentioned challenge in Hungary (42%).

QC7: Which of the following are the most serious challenges to democracy in the European Union? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (%)



May 2025

## 2. Most important elements of free and fair elections

Voters' access to accurate and accessible information to make informed choices on the electoral process is seen as the most important element of free and fair elections

Respondents were asked about the most important elements of free and fair elections.<sup>11</sup>

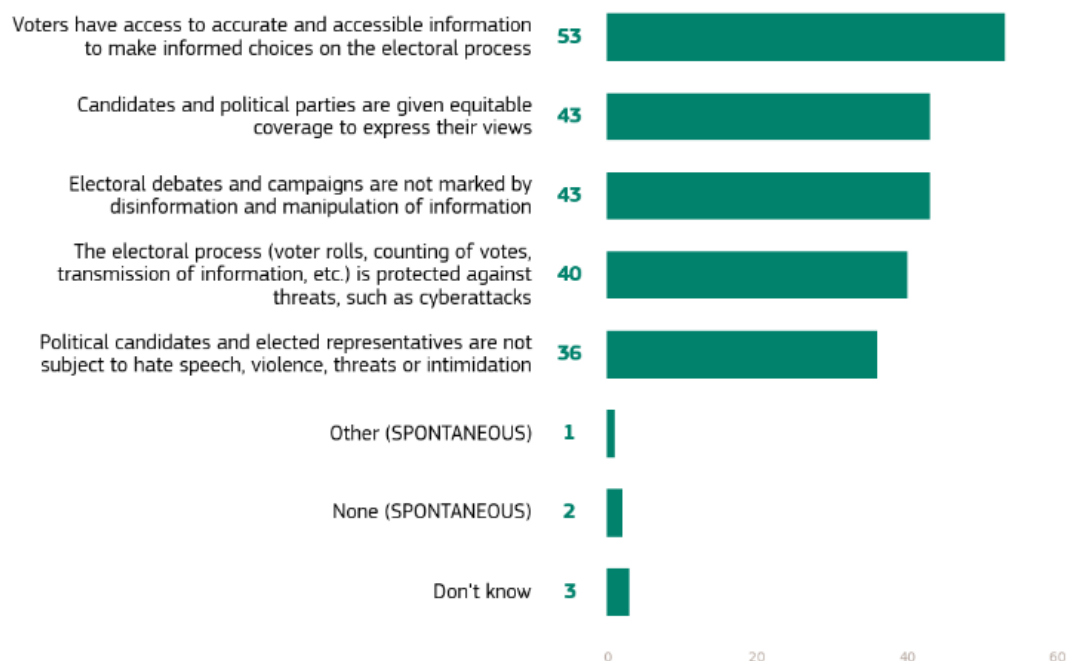
Over half (53%) of respondents mentioned **access to accurate and accessible information to make informed choices on the electoral process** as the most important element of free and fair elections.

Over four in ten (43%) mentioned **candidates and political parties being given equitable media coverage to express their views** and **electoral debates and campaigns are not marked by disinformation and manipulation of information**.

Similarly, four in ten (40%) mentioned **the electoral process being protected against threats such as cyberattacks**.

Finally, over a third (36%) of respondents mentioned that **political candidates are not subject to hate speech, violence, threats, or intimidation**.

QC8: In your view, what are the most important elements of free and fair elections? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (EU27) (%)



May 2025

<sup>11</sup> QC8. In your view, what are the most important elements of free and fair elections?

## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

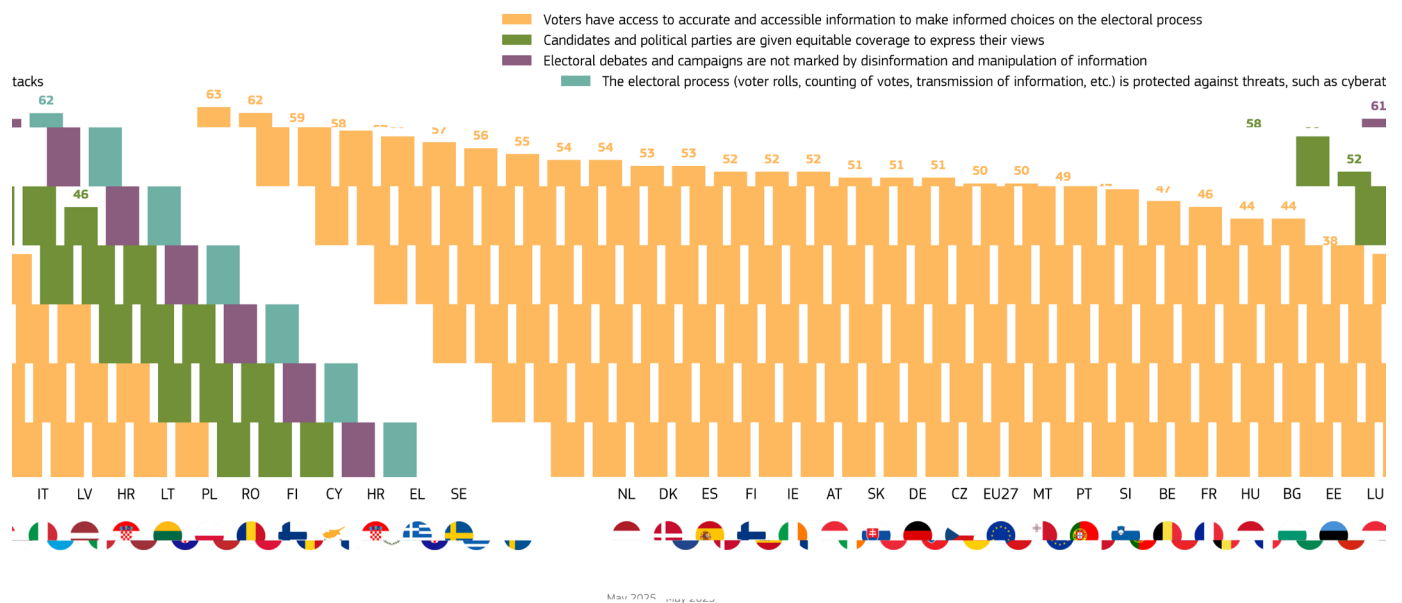
Looking at the national level, there is consensus on the most important element of free and fair elections.

In 24 countries, voters having **access to accurate and accessible information to make informed choices** is the most frequently selected answer. The highest shares are seen in the Netherlands (63%), Denmark (62%), and Spain (59%).

In three countries, **equitable coverage for candidates and political parties** is the mostly selected answer, from Finland (58%) to Cyprus (52%) and Croatia (46%).

**Electoral debates and campaigns not being marked by disinformation and manipulation of information** is selected as the top answer in Greece (61%), and the **electoral process being protected against threats, such as cyberattacks**, is selected as the top answer in Sweden (62%).

QC8: In your view, what are the most important elements of free and fair elections? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (%)





### 3. Measures to ensure the fairness of online electoral campaigns

Over eight in ten Europeans consider all measures important to ensure the fairness of electoral campaigns carried out online

Respondents were asked about the degree of importance they would give to each of the following measures to ensure the fairness of electoral campaigns carried out online.<sup>12</sup>

**The origin and source of political messages are transparent**, (46% 'very important'), **online platforms working to avoid manipulation via fake accounts or AI-generated bots**, (48% rating 'very important'), **equal opportunities for political parties and candidates to access online services** (43% 'very important'), **transparency regarding political opinion polls** (43% 'very important'), **online platforms are transparent about how their services could support political parties and campaigns** (40% 'very important') are seen as important by over eight in ten respondents.

QC9: How important or not do you think the following measures are to ensure the fairness of electoral campaigns carried out online? (%)

The origin and source of political messages is transparent (e.g. paid political advertising, involvement of influencers in political campaigns)



Online platforms work to avoid the possible risks of manipulation of their services, for example via fake accounts or bots generated by artificial intelligence (AI) aiming to disturb democracy



Equal opportunities are provided to political parties and candidates to access online services to compete for voters' attention



Political opinion polls are transparent, notably about the methods used to conduct them and the person or entity requesting the poll



Online platforms are transparent about how their services could be used to support political parties, candidates and campaign organisations



Very important      Fairly important      Not very important      Not at all important      Don't know  
May 2025

<sup>12</sup> QC9. How important or not do you think the following measures are to ensure the fairness of electoral campaigns carried out online?

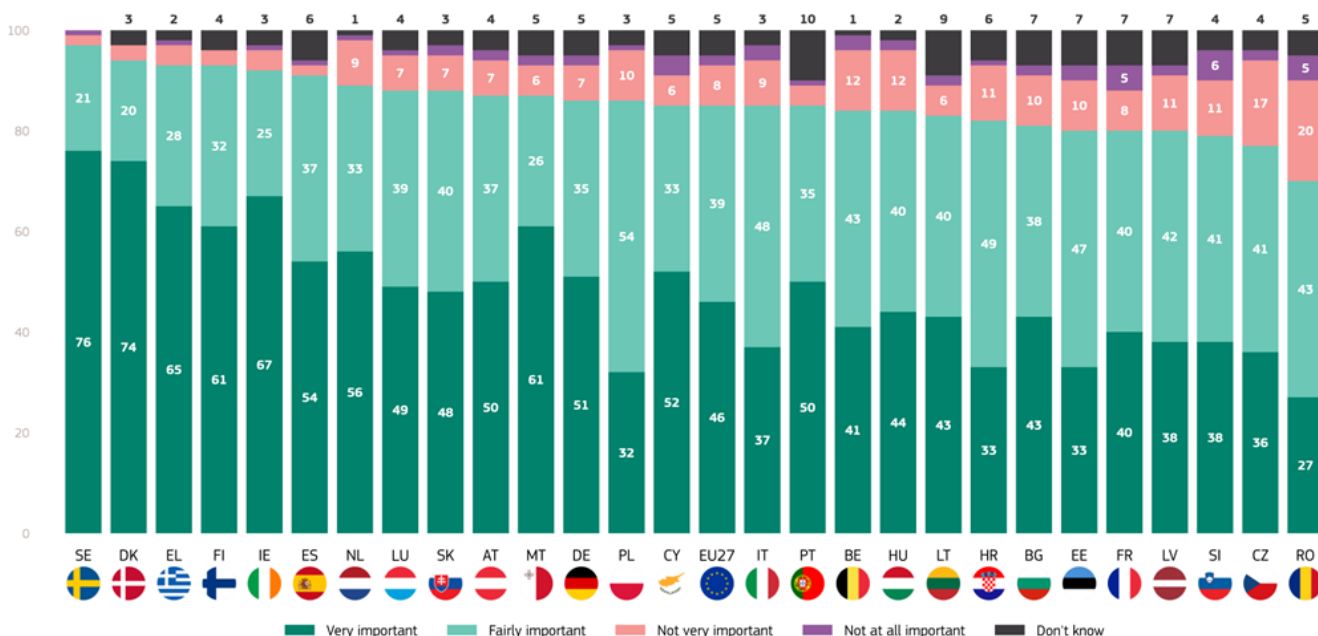
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In all 27 Member States, at least seven in ten respondents deem **transparency of the origin and source of political messages** to be important to ensure fair online electoral campaigns.

Over nine in ten respondents find it important in Sweden (97%), Denmark (94%), Greece and Finland (both 93%). On the other side, Romania (70%), Czechia (77%) and Slovenia (79%) show the lowest shares of importance.

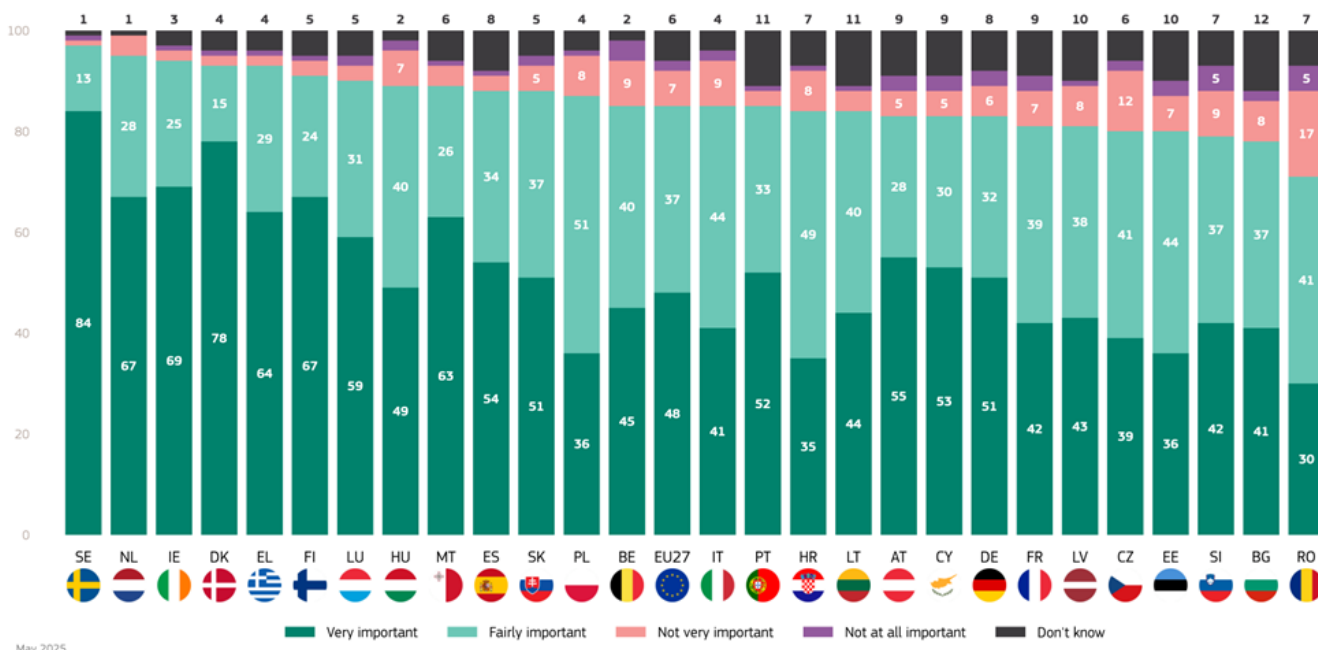
QC9.1: How important or not do you think the following measures are to ensure the fairness of electoral campaigns carried out online? - The origin and source of political messages is transparent (e.g. paid political advertising, involvement of influencers in political campaigns) (%)



In 24 Member States, at least eight in ten respondents deem **online platform's work to avoid possible risks of manipulation** of their services important to ensure the fairness of electoral campaigns carried out online.

Over nine in ten respondents find it important in Sweden (97%), Netherlands (95%), and Ireland (94%). Conversely, the lowest importance is recorded in Romania (71%), Bulgaria (78%), and Slovenia (79%).

QC9.3: How important or not do you think the following measures are to ensure the fairness of electoral campaigns carried out online? - Online platforms work to avoid the possible risks of manipulation of their services, for example via fake accounts or bots generated by artificial intelligence (AI) aiming to disturb democracy (%)

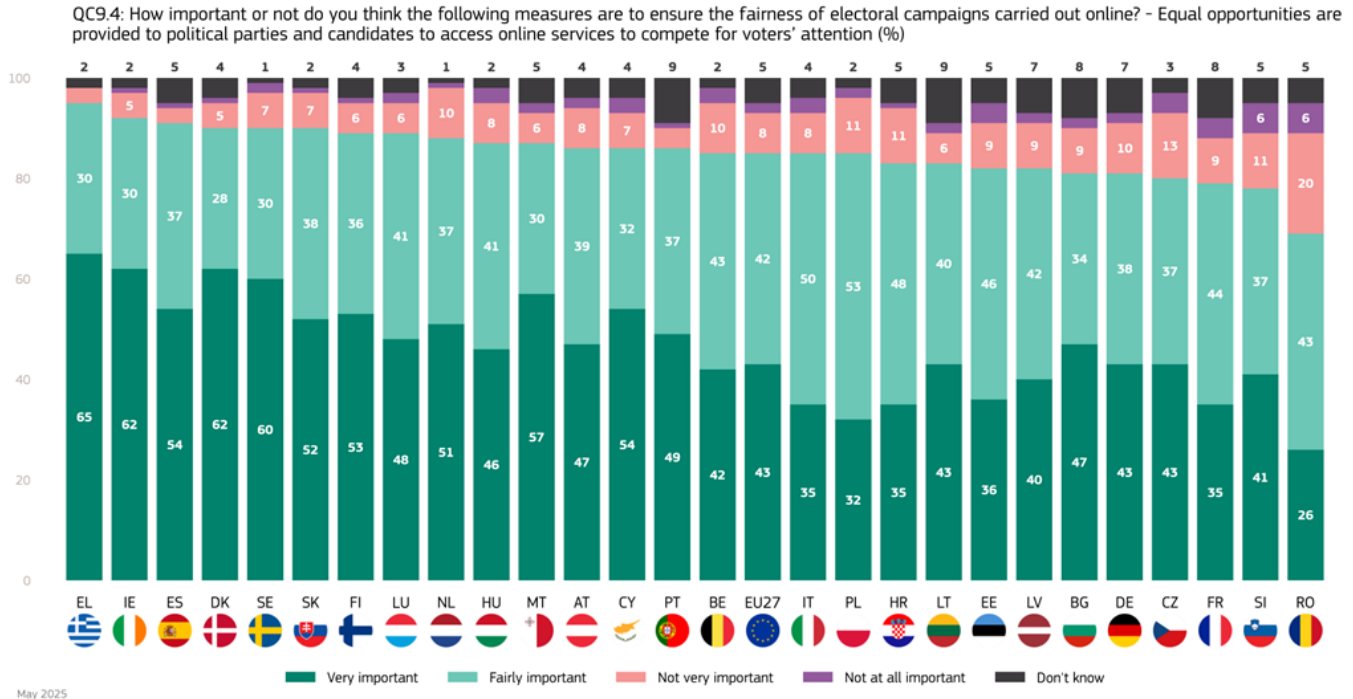


## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

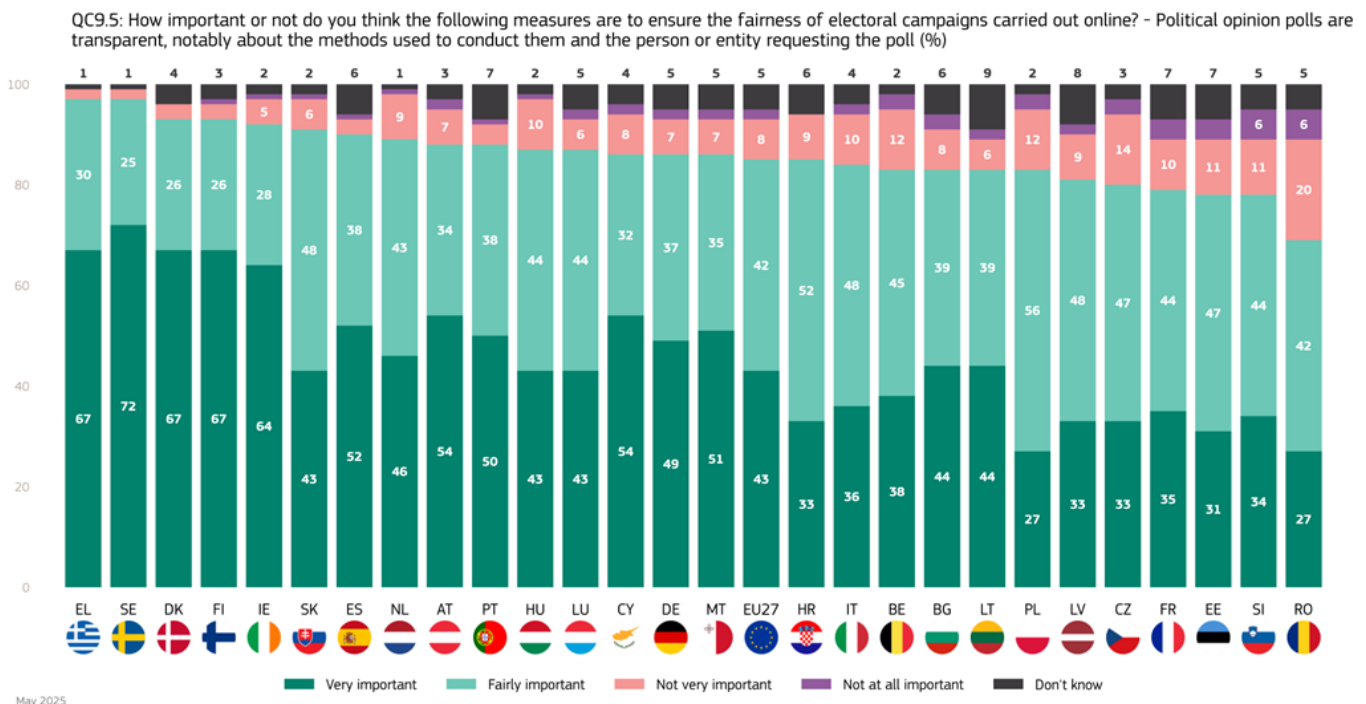
In 24 Member States, at least eight in ten respondents reported that **political parties and candidates being provided equal opportunities to access online services** is important to ensure fair online electoral campaigns.

Over nine in ten respondents find it important in Greece (95%), Iceland (92%), and Spain (91%), while the lowest share of respondents finding it important is recorded in Romania (69%), Slovenia (78%), and France (79%).



In 23 Member States, at least eight in ten respondents deem the **transparency of political opinion polls** important to ensure the fairness of online electoral campaigns.

Over nine in ten respondents find it important in six Member States, most notably in Greece and Sweden (both 97%), Denmark and Finland (93%). In contrast, the lowest importance scores are found in Romania (65%), Slovenia (68%), and Estonia (68%).

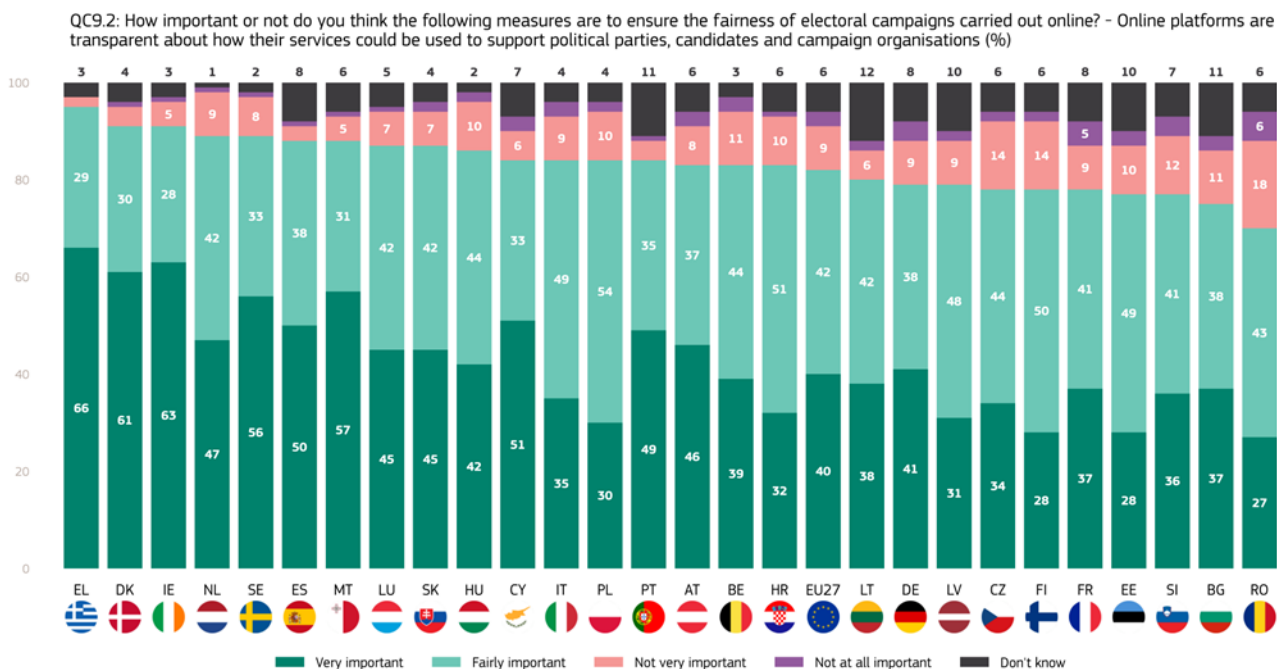


## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In 18 Member States, at least eight in ten respondents think that **the transparency of online platforms on how their services could be used to support political parties, candidates and campaign organisations** is important to ensure fair online electoral campaigns.

Over nine in ten respondents find it important in Greece (95%), Denmark (91%), and Ireland (91%). In contrast, the lowest shares of importance are seen in Romania (70%), Bulgaria (75%), and Slovenia (77%).



## 4. Concern about electoral integrity in Europe

Voters basing decisions on disinformation, or cyberattacks influencing elections are the most concerning issues regarding elections in Europe

Respondents were asked about their concern regarding the following issues on elections in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

Nearly eight in ten (79%) of citizens are concerned about **voters basing decisions on disinformation**, (37% 'very concerned' and 42% 'fairly concerned').

Over seven in ten (71%) express concern about **cyberattacks influencing elections** (30% 'very concerned', 41% 'fairly concerned'), closely followed by those concerned about **foreign countries influencing elections** (70%, 28% 'very concerned' and 42% 'fairly concerned').

Two third of respondents (67%) are concerned about **election results being manipulated**, (30% 'very concerned' and 37% 'fairly concerned').

Finally, over six in ten (64%) are concerned about **voters being pressured in their decisions** (25% 'very concerned' and 39% 'fairly concerned').

QC16: Regarding elections in Europe, how concerned are you about the following? (%)

Voters basing decisions on disinformation



Cyberattacks influencing elections



Foreign countries influencing elections



Election results being manipulated



Voters being pressured in their decisions



Very concerned Fairly concerned Not very concerned Not at all concerned Don't know

May 2025

<sup>13</sup> QC16. Regarding elections in Europe, how concerned are you about the following?



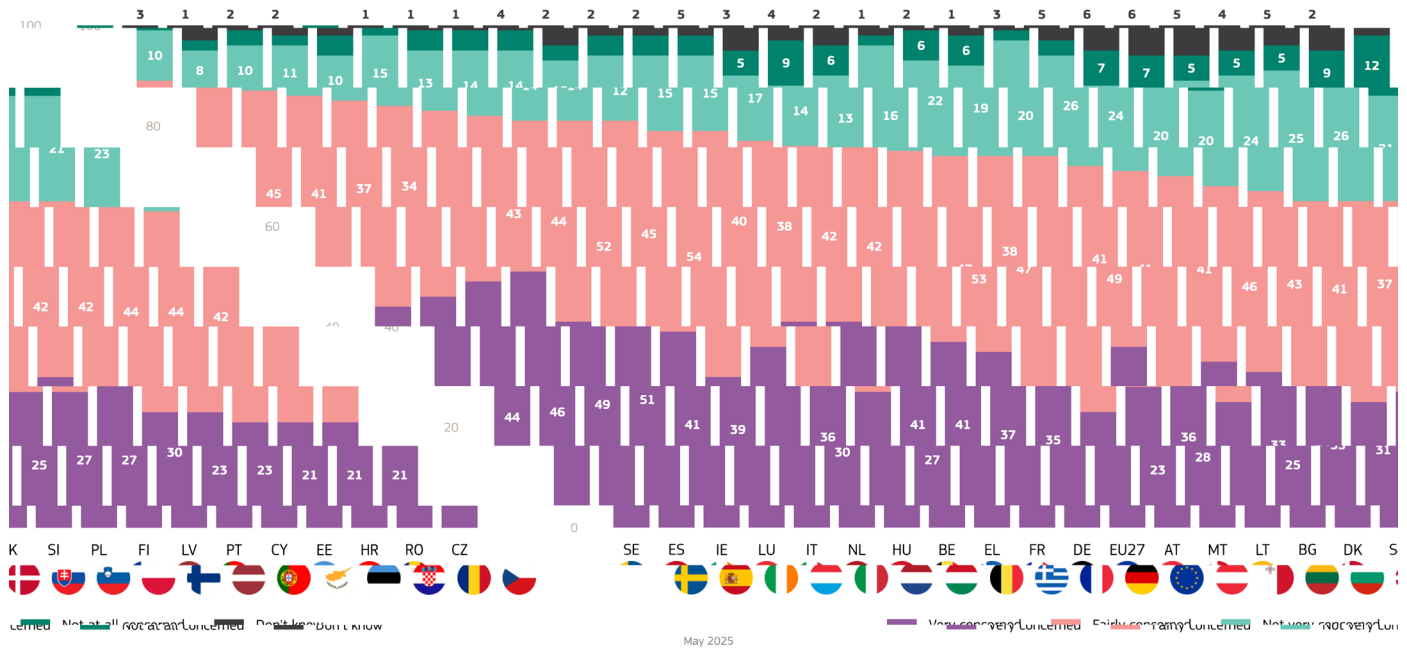
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In ten Member States, at least seven in ten respondents are concerned about **voters basing decisions on disinformation**, most notably, in Sweden (89%, including 44% 'very concerned'), Spain (87%, 46% 'very concerned') and Ireland (86%, 49% 'very concerned').

In contrast, at least a quarter of respondents are not concerned about this issue in 11 Member States, most notably in Czechia (35%, including 12% 'not at all concerned'), and Croatia (31%, 5% 'not at all concerned').

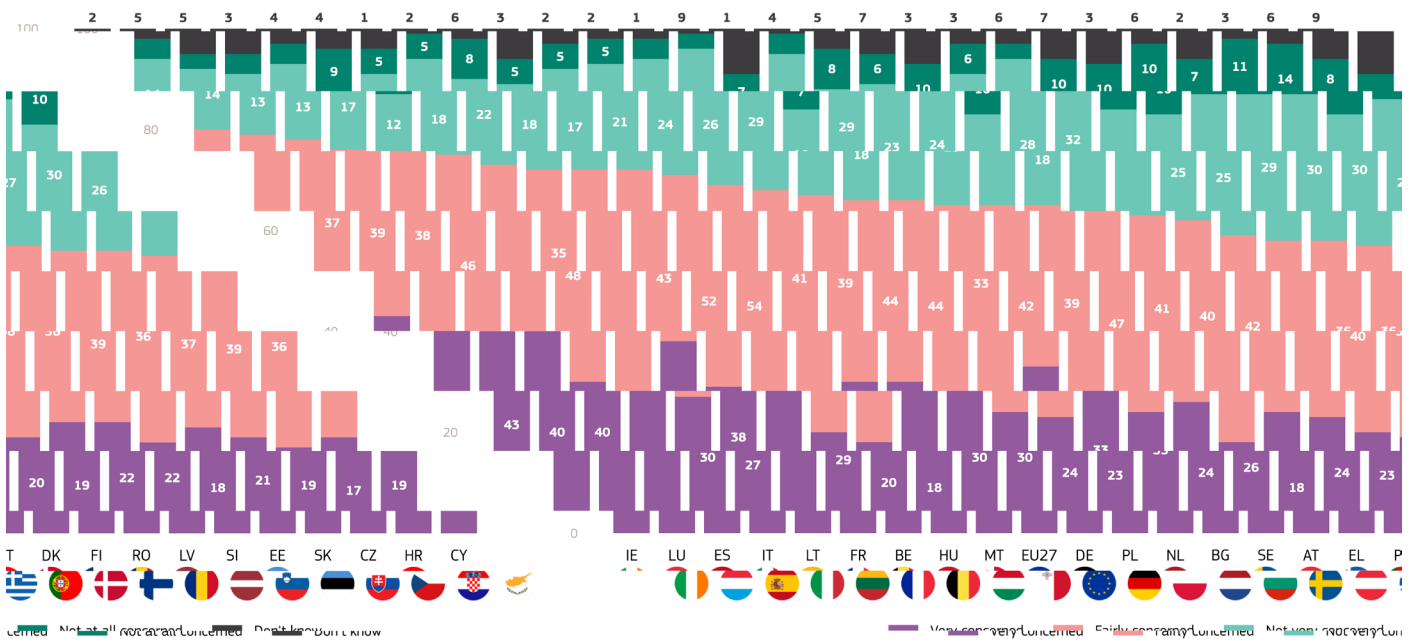
QC16.4: Regarding elections in Europe, how concerned are you about the following? - Voters basing decisions on disinformation (%)



In nine Member States, at least seven in ten respondents are concerned about **cyberattacks influencing elections**, most notably in Ireland (80%, 43% 'very concerned'), Luxembourg (79%, 40% 'very concerned') and Spain (78%, 40% 'very concerned').

Conversely, at least a third of respondents are not concerned in 11 Member States, most notably in Czechia (41%, 14% 'not at all concerned'), Slovakia (41%, 11% 'not at all concerned') and Slovenia (39%, 10% 'not at all concerned').

QC16.2: Regarding elections in Europe, how concerned are you about the following? - Cyberattacks influencing elections (%)



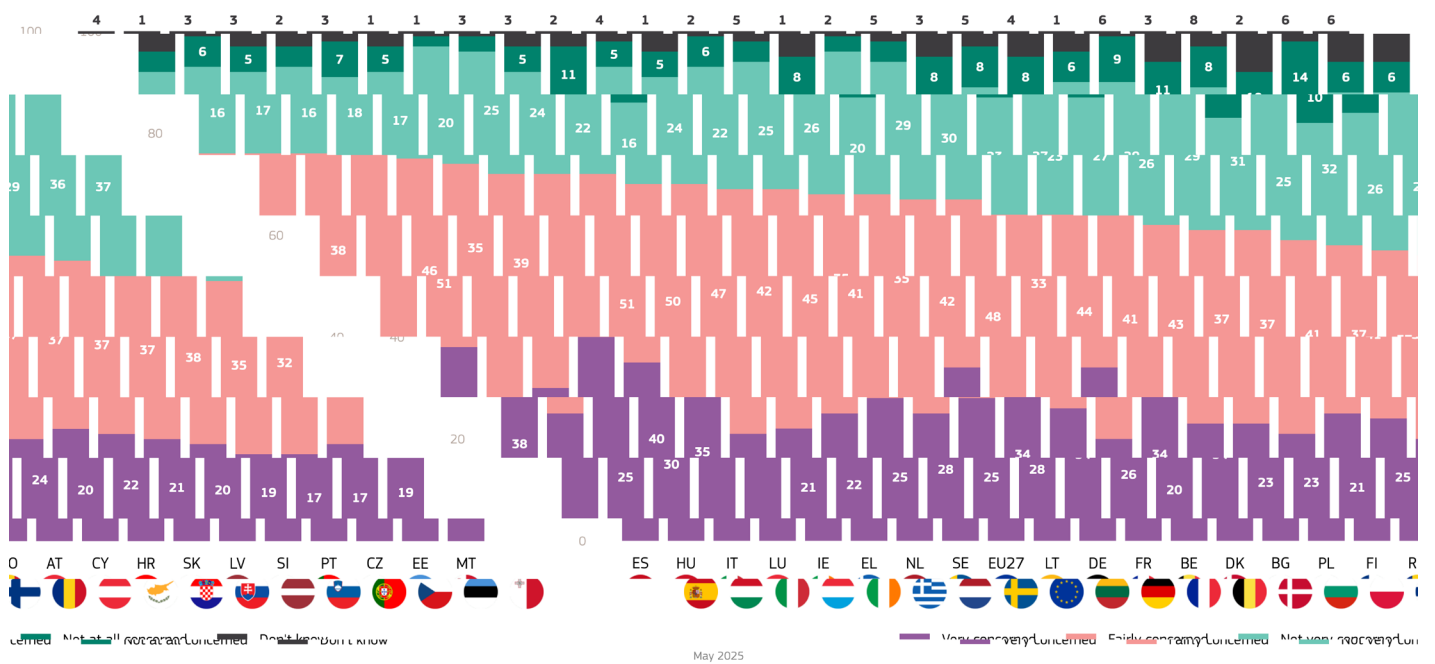
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In 15 Member States, at least two thirds of respondents seem to be concerned about **foreign countries influencing elections**, most notably in Spain (76%, 38% 'very concerned'), Hungary (76%, 25% 'very concerned') and Italy (76%, 30% 'very concerned').

In contrast, at least four in ten respondents are not concerned about this issue in five Member States, most notably in Malta (43%, 6% 'not at all concerned'), Czechia (43%, 14% 'not at all concerned') and Estonia (42%, 6% 'not at all concerned').

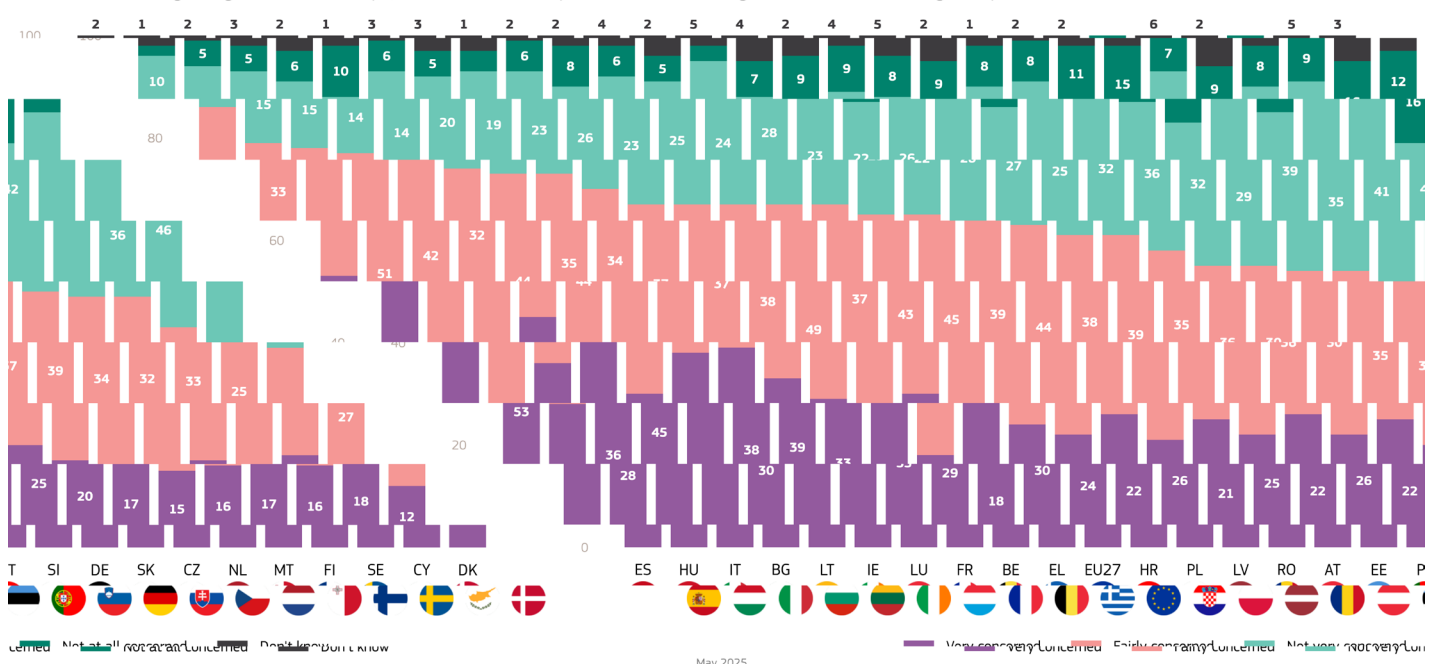
QC16.5: Regarding elections in Europe, how concerned are you about the following? - Foreign countries influencing elections (%)



In 17 Member States, at least six in ten respondents are concerned about **election results being manipulated**, most notably in Spain (86%, 53% 'very concerned'), Hungary (79%, 28% 'very concerned') and Italy (78%, 36% 'very concerned').

In contrast, at least four in ten respondents are not concerned about this issue in ten Member States, most notably in Denmark (58%, 12% 'not at all concerned'), Cyprus (52%, 16% 'not at all concerned') and Sweden (51%, 9% 'not at all concerned').

QC16.1: Regarding elections in Europe, how concerned are you about the following? - Election results being manipulated (%)



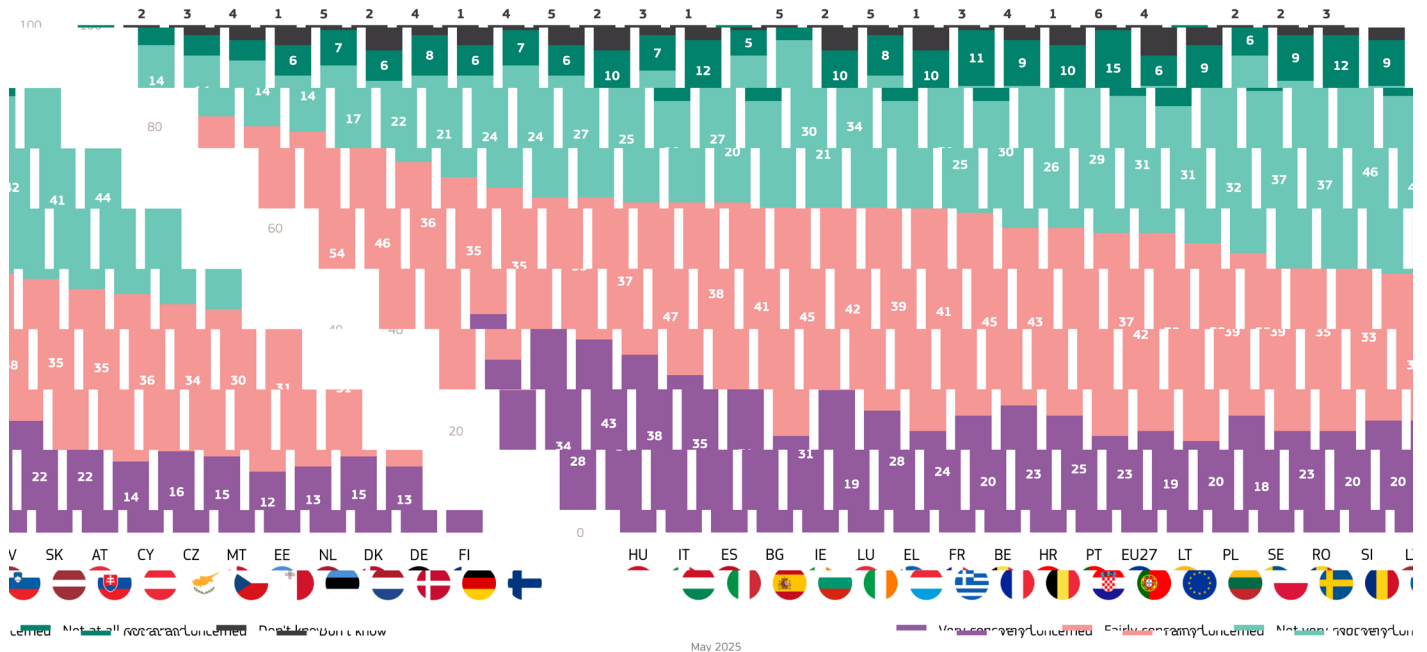
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In 23 Member States, at least half of respondents are concerned about **voters being pressured in their decisions**, most notably in Hungary (82%, 28% 'very concerned'), Italy (80%, 28% 'very concerned'), Italy (80%, 28% 'very concerned') and Spain (79%, 43% 'very concerned').

In contrast, over four in ten respondents are not concerned in eight Member States, most notably in Finland (53%, 9% 'not at all concerned'), Germany (53%, 12% 'not at all concerned') and the Netherlands (52%, 6% 'not at all concerned').

QC16.3: Regarding elections in Europe, how concerned are you about the following? - Voters being pressured in their decisions (%)





### **III. Perceptions of media freedom and pluralism in the EU**

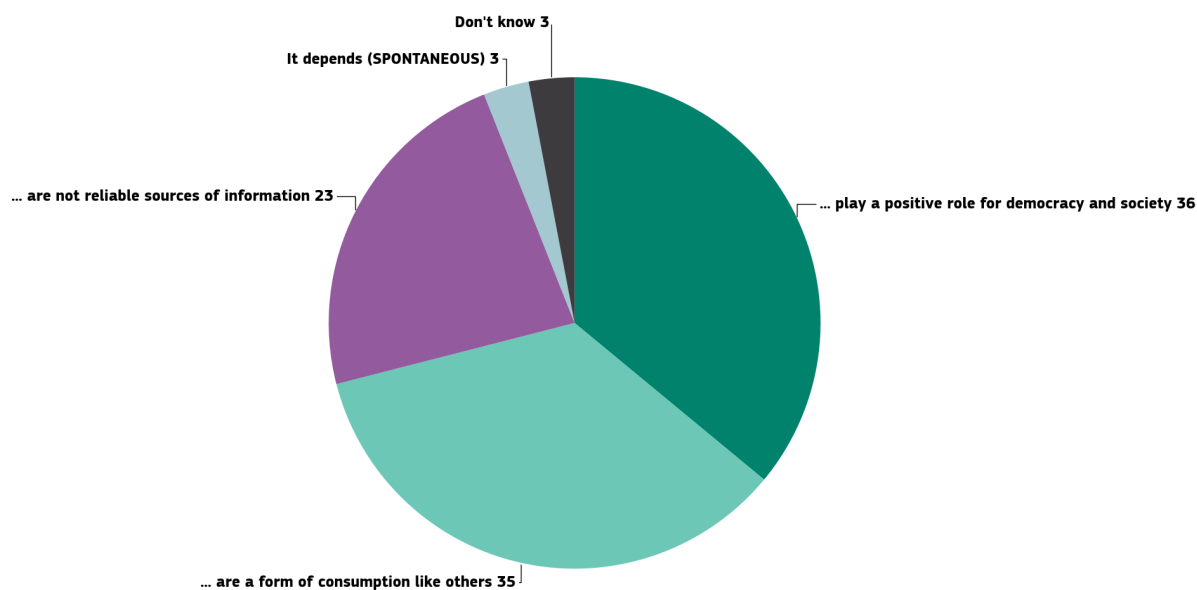


## 1. Views on the role of journalism and professional news content in the EU

Nearly four in ten Europeans think that journalism and professional news content play a positive role for democracy and society in the EU

Over one third (36%) of individuals believe journalism and professional news content play a **positive role** for democracy and society. A similar share (35%) sees it as a **form of consumption like any other**, while over one fifth (23%) consider it **an unreliable source** of information. Finally, a small share (3%) of respondents say *spontaneously* that their opinion **depends on the situation**<sup>14</sup>.

QC13: Which of the following statements best reflects your views on news reporting and professional media: In the European Union, journalism and professional news content, which is news produced by professional journalists... (%)



May 2025

<sup>14</sup> QC13. Which of the following statements best reflects your views on news reporting and professional media: In the European Union, journalism

and professional news content, which is news produced by professional journalists...

## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

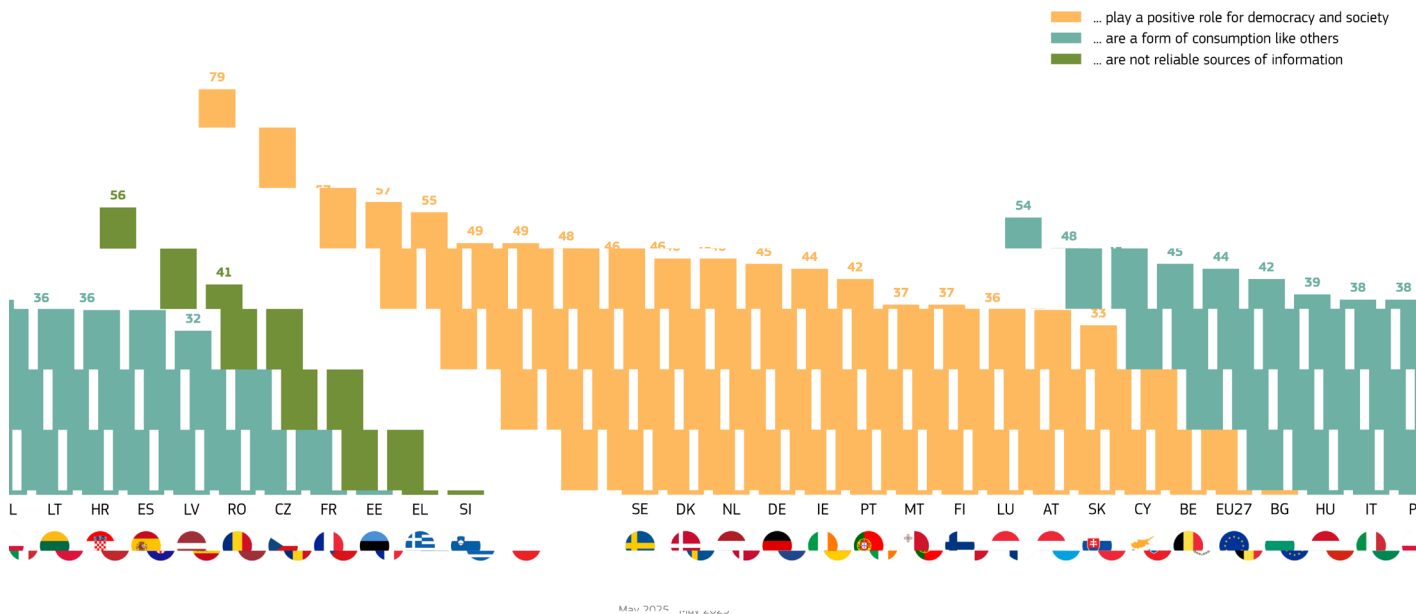
Looking at the national level, there is a spread of opinions on the role of news reporting and professional media in the European Union.

In 14 countries, the view that journalism plays a **positive role** is the most common response, notably in Sweden (79%), Denmark (57%), and the Netherlands (55%).

In 11 countries, the most common response is that journalism is a **form of consumption like any other**, notably in Hungary (54%), Italy (48%), and Poland (45%).

In two Member States, the most frequent view is that journalism is **not a reliable source**: Greece (56%) and Slovenia (41%).

QC13: Which of the following statements best reflects your views on news reporting and professional media: In the European Union, journalism and professional news content, which is news produced by professional journalists... (%)



## 2. Satisfaction with the state of media freedom, independence and pluralism in the EU

Nearly six in ten Europeans are satisfied with the state of media freedom, independence and pluralism in the European Union

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the state of media freedom, independence and pluralism in the EU.<sup>15</sup>

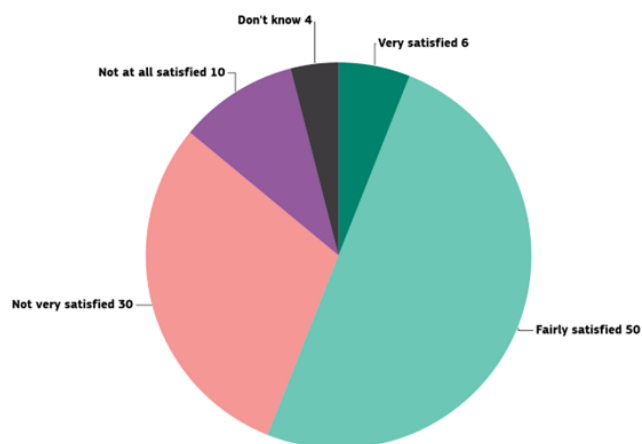
Over half (56%) of respondents are **satisfied** with the state of media freedom, independence, and pluralism in the EU, (6% *very satisfied* and 50% *fairly satisfied*).

Four in ten (40%) of respondents are **not satisfied** (30% not very satisfied and 10% not at all satisfied).

Finally, a small share of respondents answer that they don't know (4%).

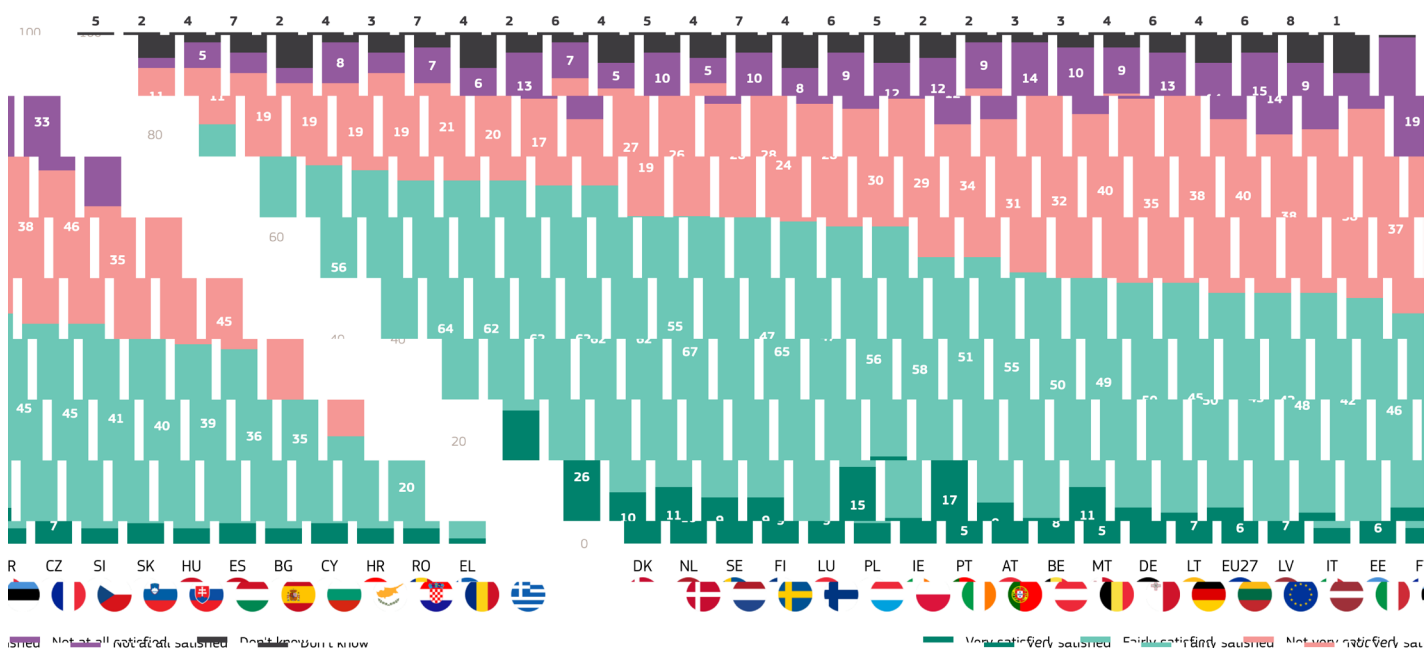
Looking at the national level, over half of respondents are **satisfied** with the state of media freedom, independence and pluralism in the EU in 17 Member States, most notably in Denmark (82%), the Netherlands (74%) and Sweden (73%). Conversely, the lowest levels of satisfaction are recorded in Greece (21%), Romania (38%), and Croatia (39%).

QC14: How satisfied are you with the state of media freedom, independence and pluralism in the EU? (%)



May 2025

QC14: How satisfied are you with the state of media freedom, independence and pluralism in the EU? (%)



May 2025

<sup>15</sup> QC14. How satisfied are you with the state of media freedom, independence and pluralism in the EU?



## **IV. Disinformation, information manipulation and foreign interference**

## 1. Citizens' actions to tackle disinformation

The education systems and other critical-thinking programmes, or fact-checking by independent and trustworthy organisations are the most spread actions or resources to enhance citizens' skills in tackling disinformation and information manipulation

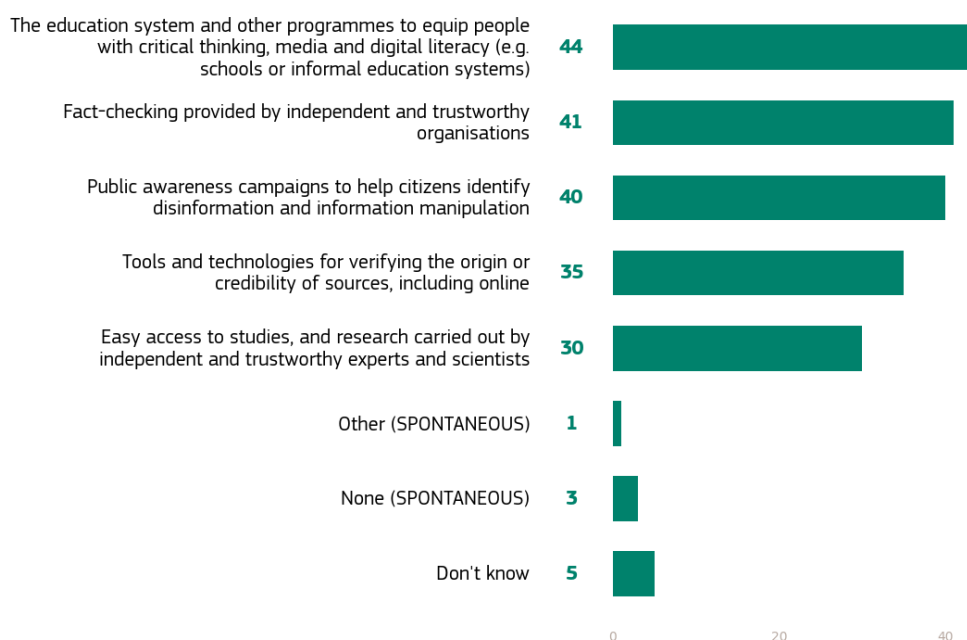
Respondents were asked about the actions or resources that would best enhance citizens' skills to effectively tackle disinformation and information manipulation.<sup>16</sup>

Over four in ten (44%) view the **education system and related programmes that equip people with critical thinking, media, and digital literacy** as the best response to strengthening citizens' skills against disinformation and information manipulation.

Following, there is **fact-checking provided by independent and trustworthy organisations** (41%) and **public awareness campaigns to help citizens identify disinformation and information manipulation** (40%).

Over a third (35%) mentioned **tools and technologies for verifying the origin or credibility of sources**, while three in ten (30%) mentioned **easy access to studies and research from independent and trustworthy experts and scientists** as a useful resource.

QC3: What actions or resources do you believe would best enhance citizens' skills to effectively tackle disinformation and information manipulation? (IF NECESSARY: Disinformation is false information deliberately spread with the intention of influencing public opinion.) (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (EU27) (%)



May 2025

<sup>16</sup> QC3: What actions or resources do you believe would best enhance citizens' skills to effectively tackle disinformation and information manipulation?



## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

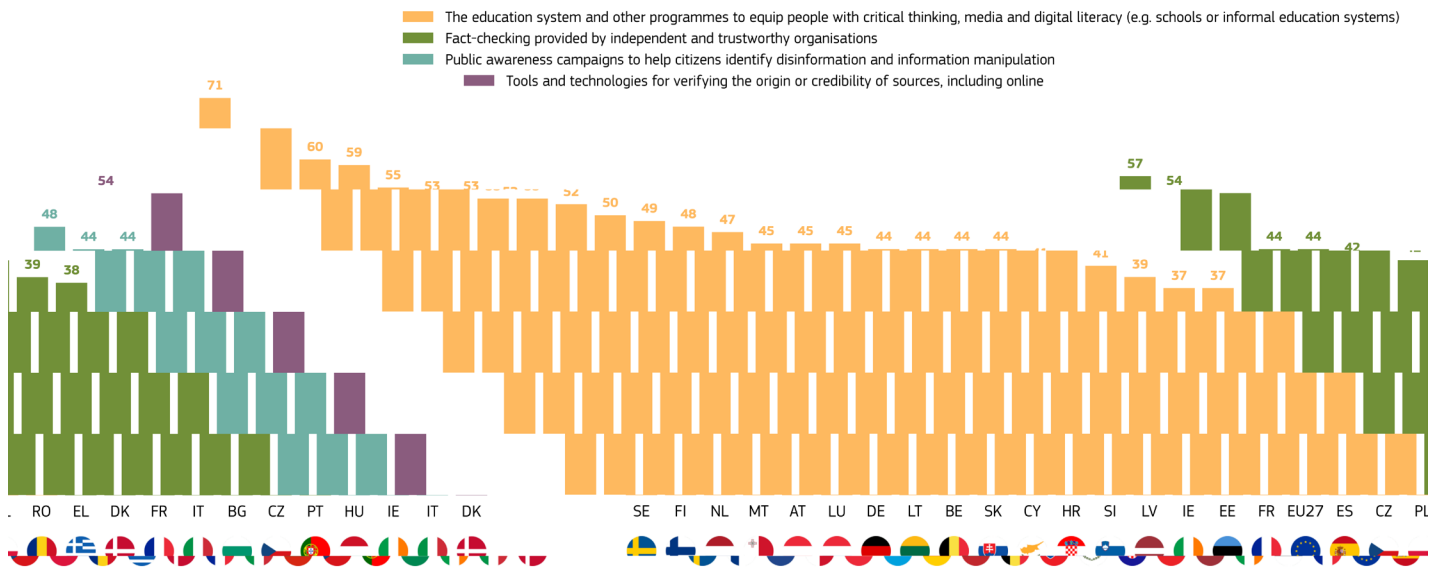
**Educational systems and other programmes aimed at developing critical thinking, media awareness, and digital skills** is the most cited measure in 21 Member States, most notably in Sweden (71%), Finland (60%), and the Netherlands (59%).

**Fact-checking by independent and trustworthy organisations** ranks first in seven Member States, with Greece (57%) and Denmark (54%) showcasing the highest results, followed by France and Italy (44% each).

**Public awareness campaigns to help citizens identify disinformation and information manipulation** are the top choice in three Member States: Hungary (48%), Ireland and Italy (both 44%).

Finally, **tools and technologies for verifying the origin or credibility of sources** are ranked as the top priority in Denmark (54%).

QC3: What actions or resources do you believe would best enhance citizens' skills to effectively tackle disinformation and information manipulation? (IF NECESSARY: Disinformation is false information deliberately spread with the intention of influencing public opinion.) (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (%)



## 2. Exposure to disinformation or other forms of information manipulation

Nearly three in ten Europeans feel exposed to disinformation or other forms of information manipulation every day or almost every day

Respondents were asked how often they felt personally exposed to disinformation or other forms of information manipulation.<sup>17</sup>

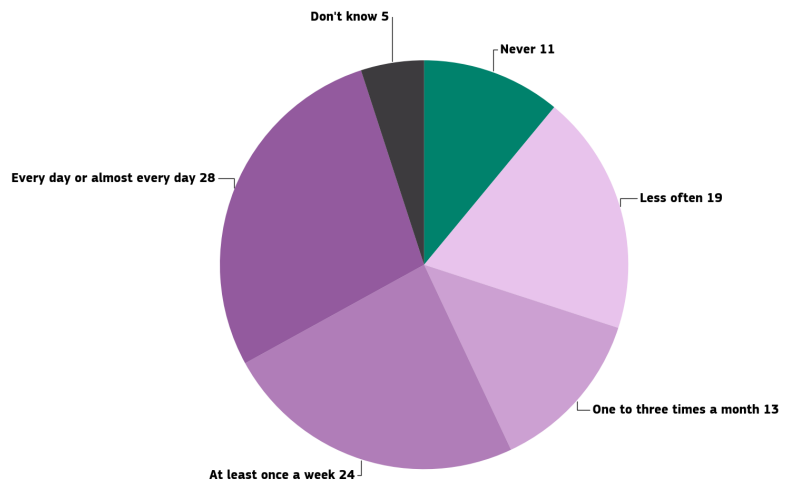
Nearly two in three Europeans (65%) feel exposed to disinformation or other forms of information manipulation at least once a month.

Over a quarter (28%) of citizens report being exposed to disinformation or other forms of information manipulation **every day or almost every day**. Similarly, almost a fourth (24%) report it **at least once a week**, and nearly two in ten (19%) **less often**.

Over one in ten (13%) feel exposed **between one to three times a month**. Finally, slightly over one in ten (11%) **never** feel exposed to disinformation or other forms of information manipulation.

Looking at the national level, the frequency of respondents feeling exposed **every day or almost every day** is highest in Spain (45%), Denmark (37%), Ireland and the Netherlands (both 36%). The highest percentages of citizens feeling exposed **one to three times a month or less**

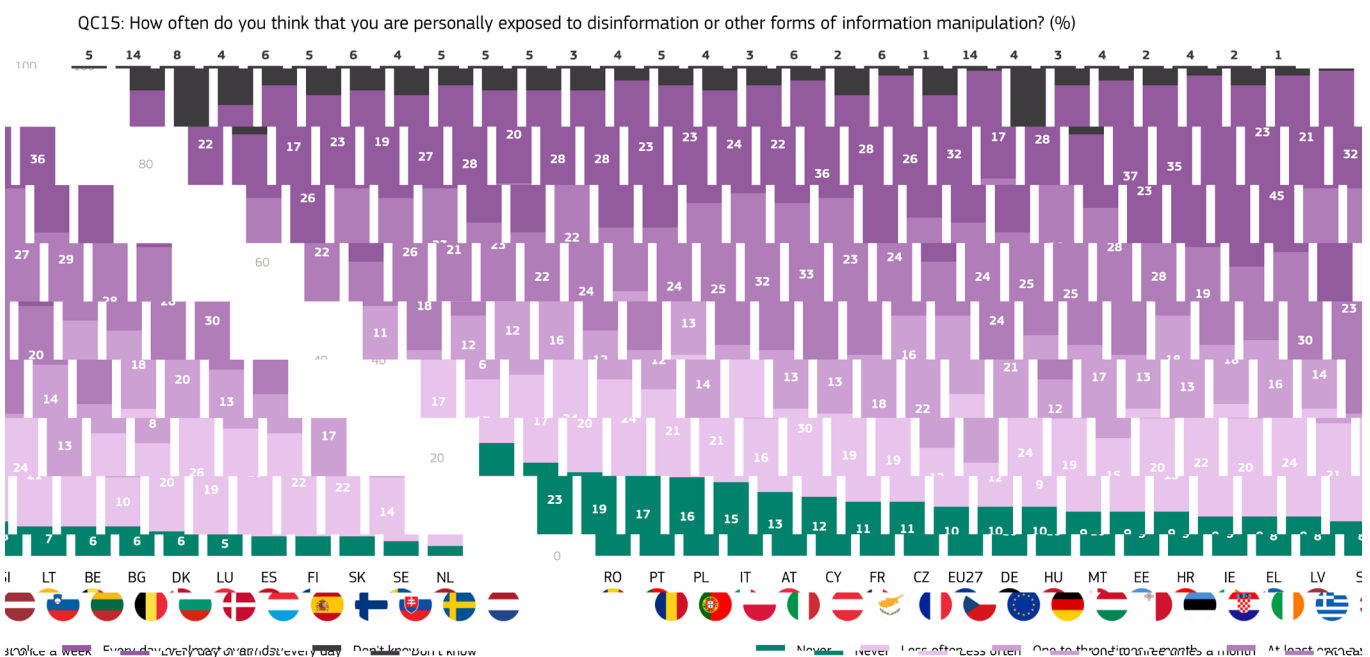
QC15: How often do you think that you are personally exposed to disinformation or other forms of information manipulation? (%)



May 2025

**often** are seen in Finland (44%), Czechia (43%), Lithuania and Slovakia (both 42%).

On the contrary, the share of respondents **never** personally exposed to disinformation, is higher in Romania (23%), Portugal (19%) and Poland (17%).



### 3. Foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics

#### Over half of Europeans agree with each of the five statements on foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with five statements about foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics.<sup>18</sup>

Nearly six in ten (56%) respondents agree that **the EU and Member States cooperate sufficiently to tackle foreign interference and disinformation** (13% *'totally agree'* and 43% *'tend to agree'*). One third (33%) disagree (26% *'tend to disagree'* and 7% *'totally disagree'*).

Similarly, over five in ten (55%) agree that the **EU is sufficiently equipped to tackle foreign interference** (12% *'totally agree'* and 43% *'tend to agree'*). In contrast, over a third (35%) disagree (27% *'tend to disagree'* and 8% *'totally disagree'*).

Over half (53%) of citizens agree that **national authorities can handle foreign interference effectively** (11% *'totally agree'* and 42% *'tend to agree'*). Conversely, nearly four in ten (38%) disagree (29% *'tend to disagree'* and 9% *'totally disagree'*).

A slightly lower share of respondents (52%) agree on the **ability of national authorities to handle disinformation effectively** (11% *'totally agree'* and 41% *'tend to agree'*). In contrast, four in ten (40%) disagree (30% *'tend to disagree'* and 10% *'totally disagree'*); the same share of respondents (52%) agree that the **EU is sufficiently equipped to tackle disinformation** (11% *'totally agree'* and 41% *'tend to agree'*), while nearly four in ten (38%) disagree (29% *'tend to disagree'* and 9% *'totally disagree'*).

QC17: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics? (%)

The EU and Member States cooperate sufficiently to tackle foreign interference and disinformation



The EU is sufficiently equipped to tackle foreign interference



(NATIONALITY) authorities can handle foreign interference effectively



(NATIONALITY) authorities can handle disinformation effectively



The EU is sufficiently equipped to tackle disinformation



Legend: Totally agree (dark green), Tend to agree (light green), Tend to disagree (red), Totally disagree (purple), Don't know (black)

May 2025

<sup>18</sup> QC17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics?

## Special Eurobarometer 568

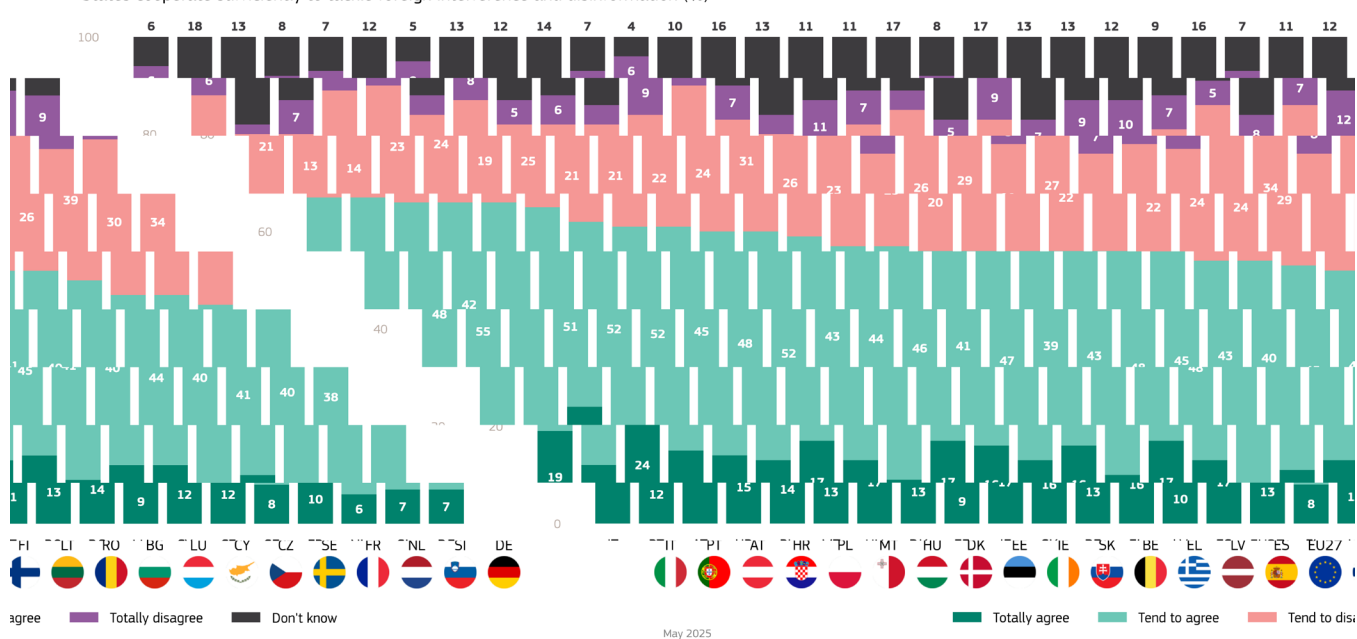
### Protecting and promoting democracy

In nine Member States, over six in ten respondents agree that **the EU and Member States cooperate sufficiently to tackle foreign interference and disinformation**, most notably in Italy (67%, 19% *'totally agree'*), and Portugal (67%, 12% *'totally agree'*).

In contrast, over a third of respondents disagree with the statement in nine Member States, most notably in the Netherlands (46%, 7% *'totally disagree'*), Germany (43%, 9% *'totally disagree'*) and Slovenia (42%, 12% *'totally disagree'*).

However, the majority of respondents in all the EU Member States still agree with the statement.

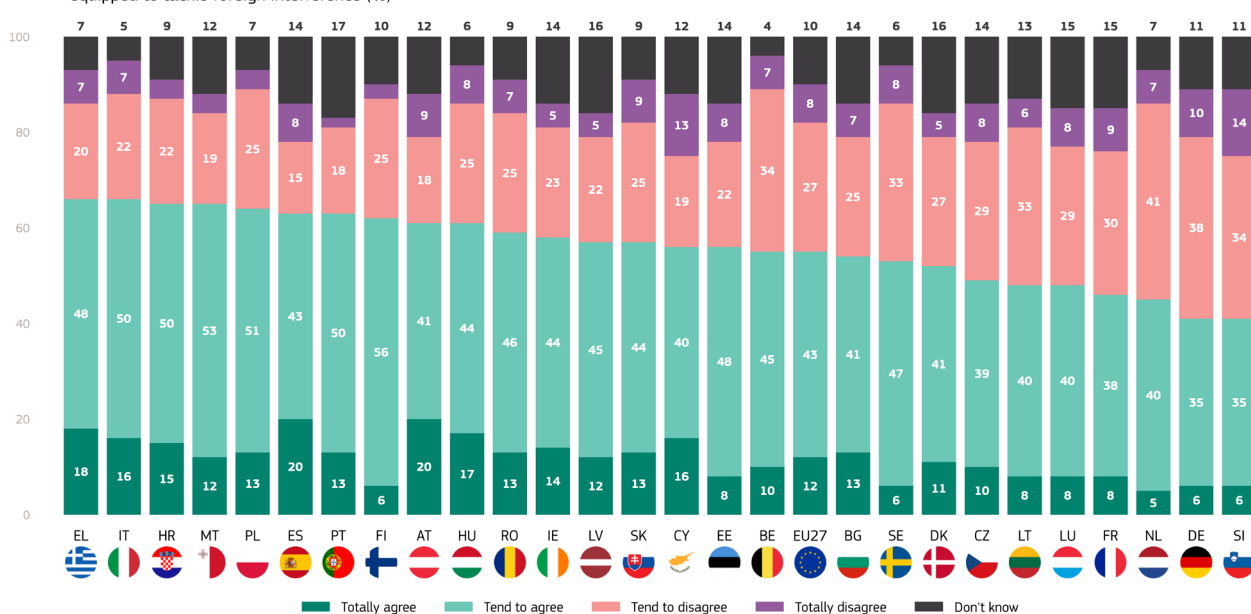
QC17.5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics? - The EU and Member States cooperate sufficiently to tackle foreign interference and disinformation (%)



In ten Member States, over six in ten respondents agree that **the EU is sufficiently equipped to tackle foreign interference**, most notably in Greece (66%, 18% *'totally agree'*), Italy (66%, 16% *'totally agree'*), Croatia (65%, 15% *'totally agree'*), and Malta (65%, 12% *'totally agree'*).

In contrast, over four in ten respondents disagree with the statement in five Member States, most notably in Slovenia (48%, 14% *'totally disagree'*), Germany (48%, 10% *'totally disagree'*) and the Netherlands (48%, 7% *'totally disagree'*).

QC17.3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics? - The EU is sufficiently equipped to tackle foreign interference (%)



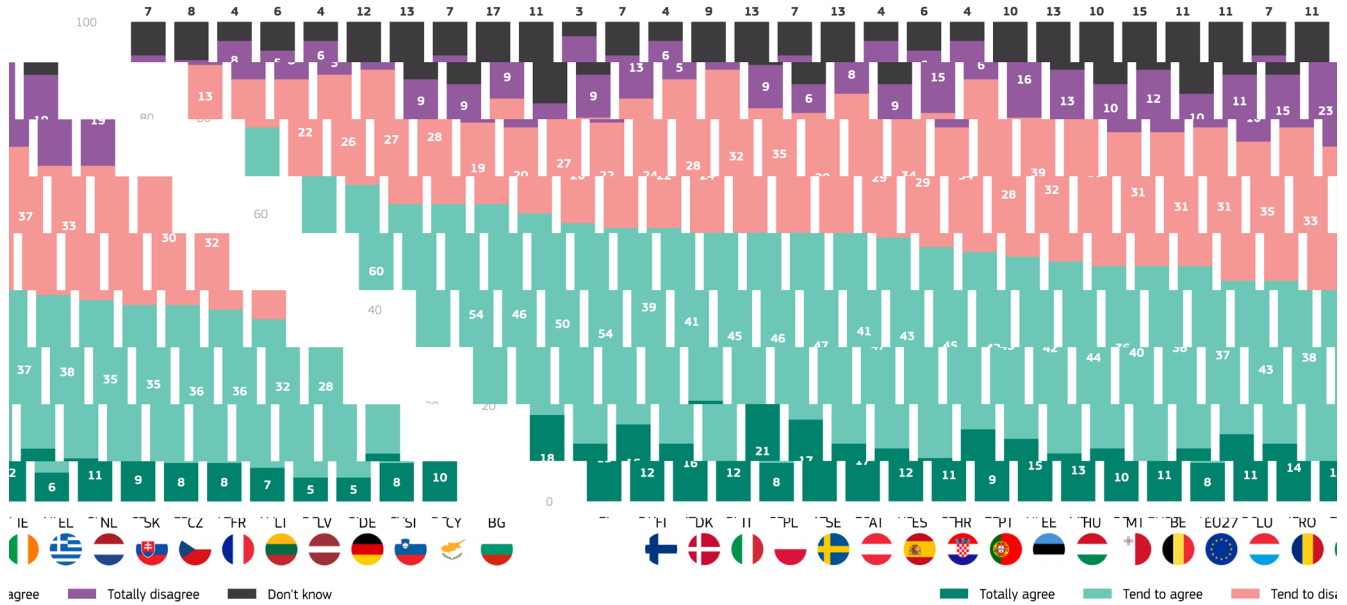
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In five Member States, over six in ten respondents agree that their **national authorities can handle foreign interference effectively**, most notably in Finland (78%, 18% *'totally agree'*), and Denmark (66%, 12% *'totally agree'*). In contrast, over four in ten respondents disagree

with the statement in 15 Member States, most notably in Cyprus (53%, 23% *'totally disagree'*), Bulgaria (51%, 19% *'totally disagree'*), Germany (48%, 11% *'totally disagree'*) and Slovenia (48%, 15% *'totally disagree'*).

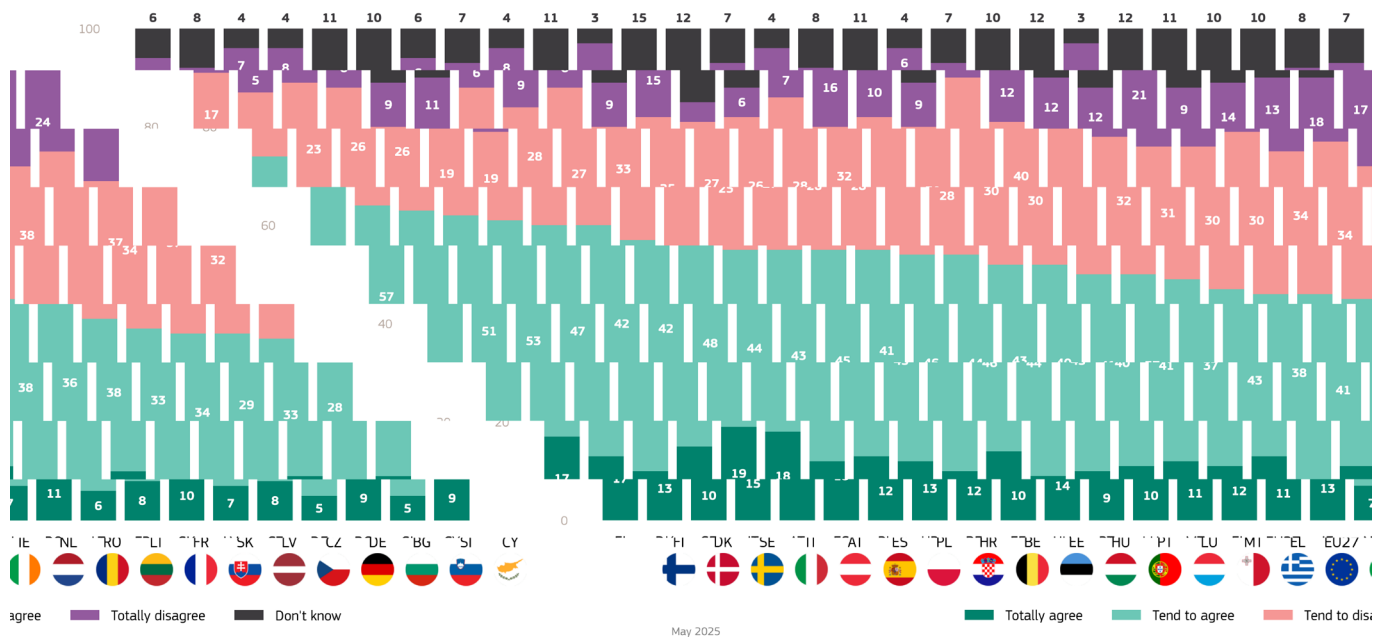
QC17.1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics? - (NATIONALITY)  
authorities can handle foreign interference effectively (%)



In five Member States, over six in ten respondents agree that their **national authorities can handle disinformation effectively**, most notably in Finland (74%, 17% *'totally agree'*), Denmark (64%, 13% *'totally agree'*) and Sweden (63%, 10% *'totally agree'*).

In contrast, over four in ten respondents disagree with the statement in 15 Member States, most notably in Cyprus (56%, 24% *'totally disagree'*), Bulgaria (51%, 19% *'totally disagree'*), Slovenia (54%, 17% *'totally disagree'*) and Bulgaria (52%, 18% *'totally disagree'*).

QC17.2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics? - (NATIONALITY)  
authorities can handle disinformation effectively (%)





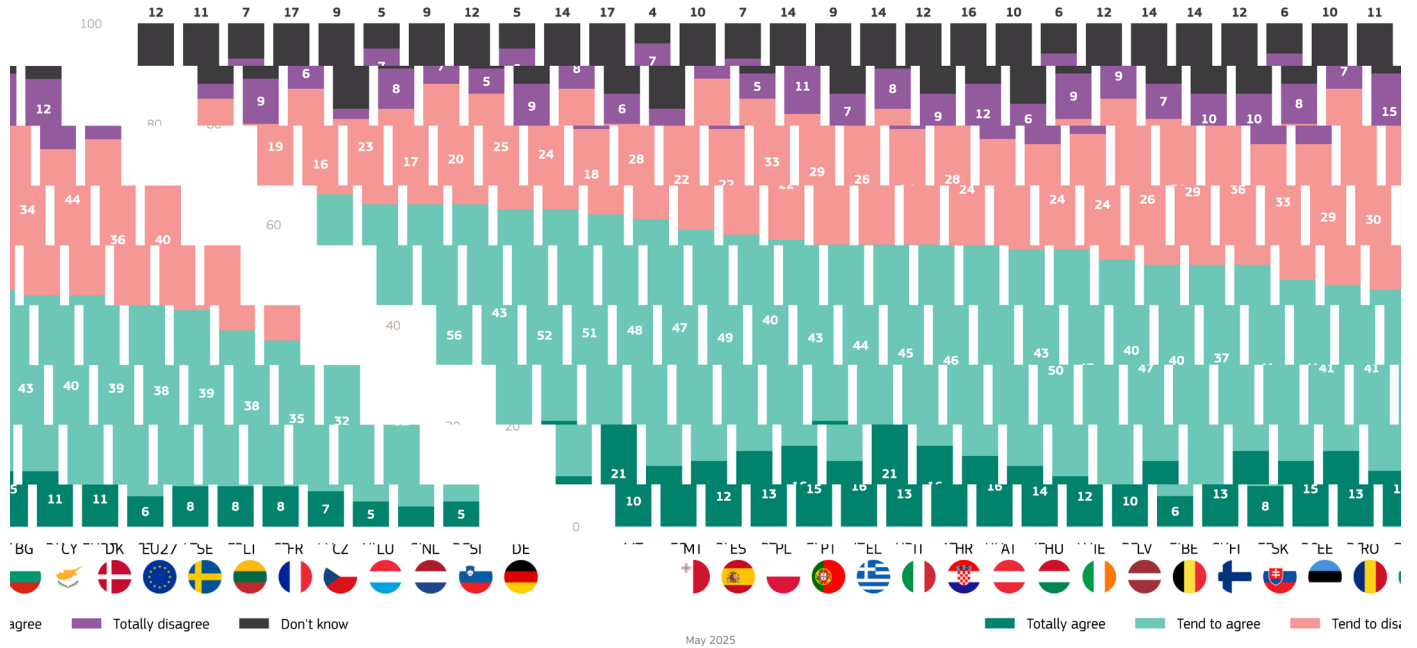
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In eight Member States, over six in ten respondents agree that **the EU is sufficiently equipped to tackle disinformation**, most notably in Malta (66%, 10% *'totally agree'*), Spain (64%, 21% *'totally agree'*), Poland (64%, 12% *'totally agree'*) and Portugal (64%, 13% *'totally agree'*).

In contrast, over four in ten respondents disagree with the statement in five Member States, most notably in Germany (52%, 12% *'totally disagree'*), Slovenia (51%, 15% *'totally disagree'*) and the Netherlands (51%, 7% *'totally disagree'*).

QC17.4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about foreign interference and disinformation in EU politics? - The EU is sufficiently equipped to tackle disinformation (%)



## 4. Perception of democratic values and media pluralism at national level

The statement most agreed to is that covert foreign financing of political actors, campaigns or messages is a serious challenge at national level

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with some statements about their own countries.<sup>19</sup>

Over seven in ten (72%) respondents agree that **covert foreign financing of political actors or messages is a serious challenge in their countries** (29% 'totally agree' and 43% 'tend to agree'). In contrast, two in ten (20%) disagree (16% 'tend to disagree' and 4% 'totally disagree').

Nearly two-thirds agree that **citizens have access to information from independent and pluralistic media**, 64% agree (19% 'totally agree' and 45% 'tend to agree'), while over three in ten (31%) disagree (23% 'tend to disagree' and 8% 'totally disagree').

Similarly, 64% of respondents agree that **citizens have the possibility to participate in democratic processes and policymaking in their countries**, (20% 'totally agree' and 44% 'tend to agree'). Nearly a third (32%) disagree (24% 'tend to disagree' and 8% 'totally disagree').

Over half (56%) agree that **all parties and political candidates can campaign on equal footing** (18% 'totally agree' and 38% 'tend to agree'), while four in ten (40%) disagree (27% 'tend to disagree' and 13% 'totally disagree').

A slightly lower proportion (51%) agree that **there is transparency and accountability in political funding**, (15% 'totally agree' and 36% 'tend to agree'), while over four in ten (44%) disagree (29% 'tend to disagree' and 15% 'totally disagree').

Finally, slightly under half of respondents (49%) agree that **elections are free from any interference** (14% 'totally agree' and 35% 'tend to agree'), while over four in ten (45%) disagree (30% 'tend to disagree' and 15% 'totally disagree').

QC6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about (OUR COUNTRY)? (%)

Covert foreign financing of political actors, campaigns or messages is a serious challenge in (OUR COUNTRY)



Citizens have access to information and news provided by independent and pluralistic media



Citizens have the possibility to take part in democratic processes, debates and policy making



All parties and political candidates can campaign on equal footing



There is transparency and accountability as regards funding in politics (parties, campaigns, the spread of political messages...)



Elections are free from any interference



May 2025

<sup>19</sup> QC6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about (OUR COUNTRY)?

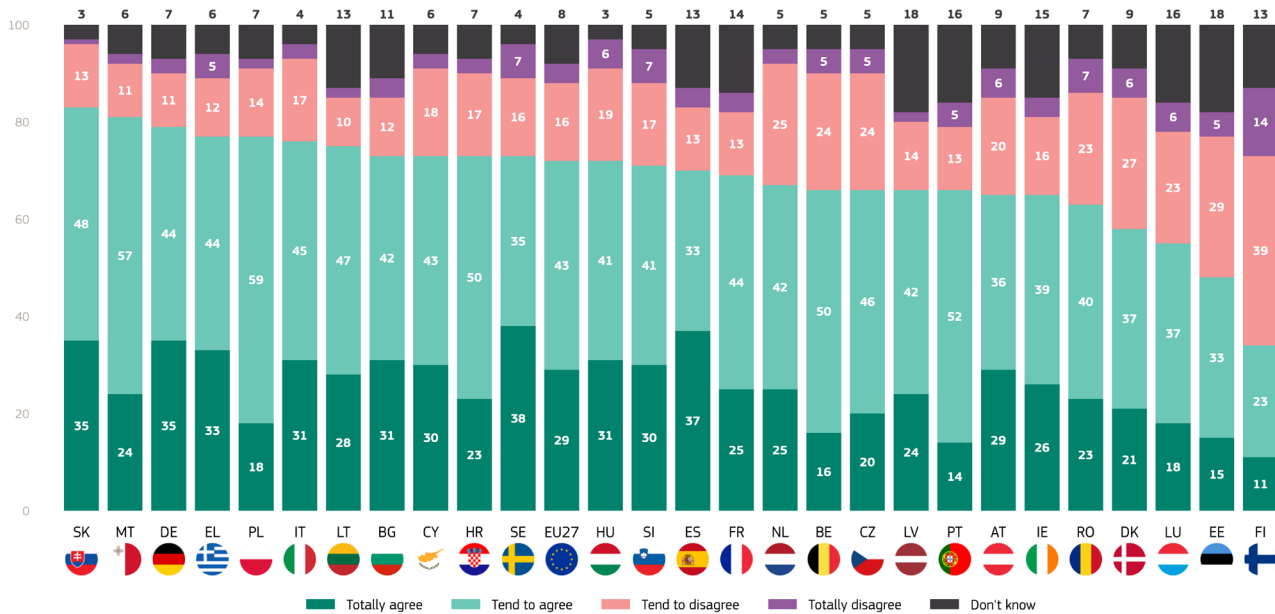
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In 13 Member States, over seven in ten respondents agree that the **covert financing of political actors, campaigns or messages is a serious challenge in their countries**, most notably in Slovakia (83%, 35% *'totally agree'*), Malta (81%, 24% *'totally agree'*) and Germany (79%, 35% *'totally agree'*).

In contrast, at least three in ten respondents disagree with the statement in five Member States, most notably in Finland (53%, 14% *'totally disagree'*), Estonia (34%, 5% *'totally disagree'*) and Denmark (33%, 6% *'totally disagree'*).

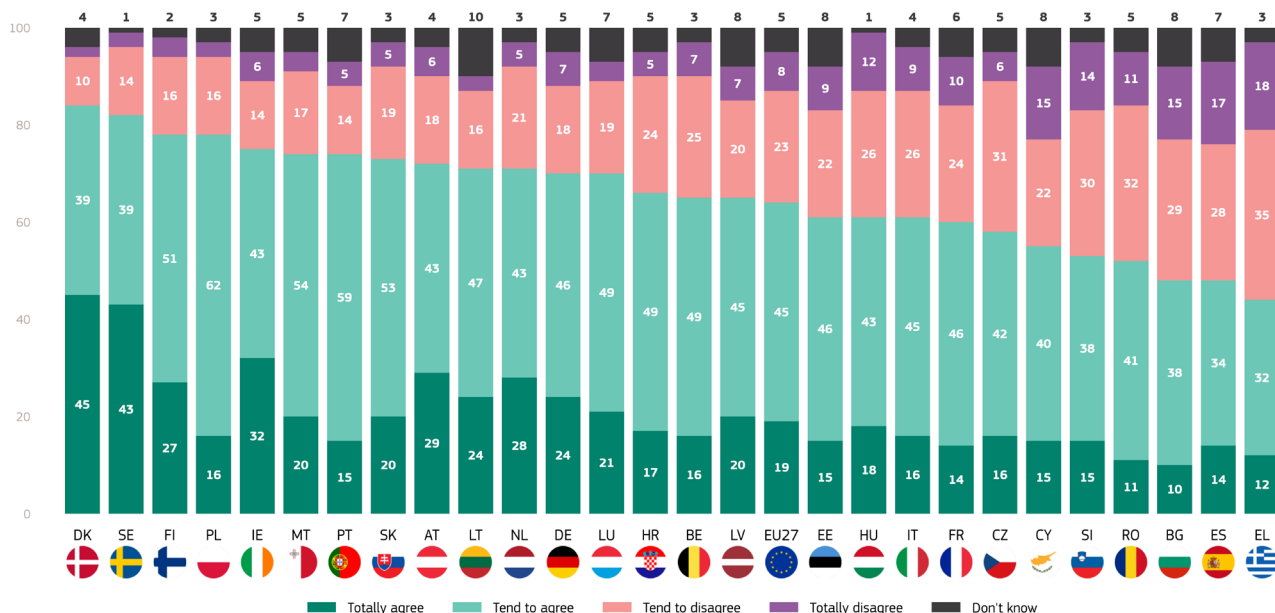
QC6.6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about (OUR COUNTRY)? - Covert foreign financing of political actors, campaigns or messages is a serious challenge in (OUR COUNTRY) (%)



In 11 Member States, over seven in ten respondents agree that the **citizens have access to information and news provided by independent and pluralistic media in their countries**, most notably in Denmark (84%, 45% *'totally agree'*), Sweden (82%, 43% *'totally agree'*), Finland (78%, 27% *'totally agree'*) and Poland (78%, 16% *'totally agree'*).

In contrast, at least three in ten respondents disagree with the statement in 13 Member States, most notably in Greece (53%, 18% *'totally disagree'*), Spain (45%, 17% *'totally disagree'*), Bulgaria (44%, 15% *'totally disagree'*) and Slovenia (44%, 14% *'totally disagree'*).

QC6.4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about (OUR COUNTRY)? - Citizens have access to information and news provided by independent and pluralistic media (%)



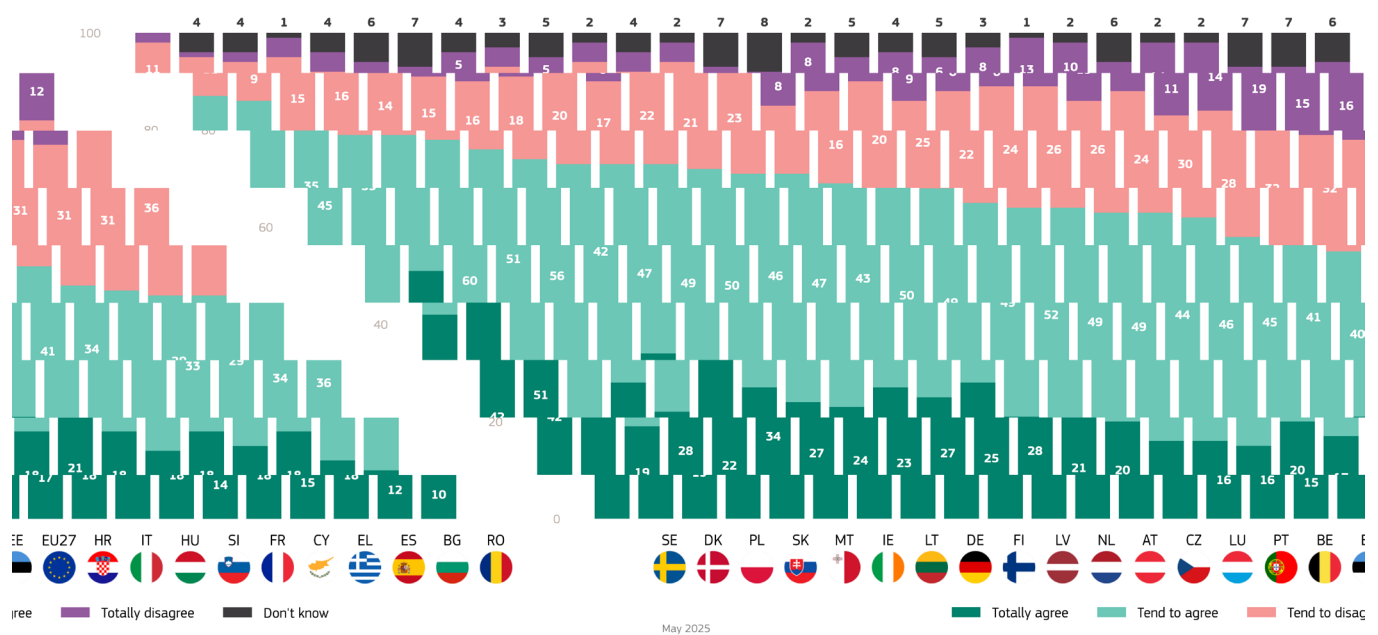
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In 13 Member States, over seven in ten respondents agree that the **citizens have the possibility to take part in democratic processes, debates and policy making in their countries**, most notably in Sweden (87%, 42% 'totally agree'), Denmark (86%, 51% 'totally agree'), Poland (79%, 19% 'totally agree') and Slovakia (79%, 28% 'totally agree').

In contrast, at least three in ten respondents disagree with the statement in 13 Member States, most notably in Greece (50%, 19% 'totally disagree'), Romania (48%, 12% 'totally disagree'), and Bulgaria (47%, 16% 'totally disagree').

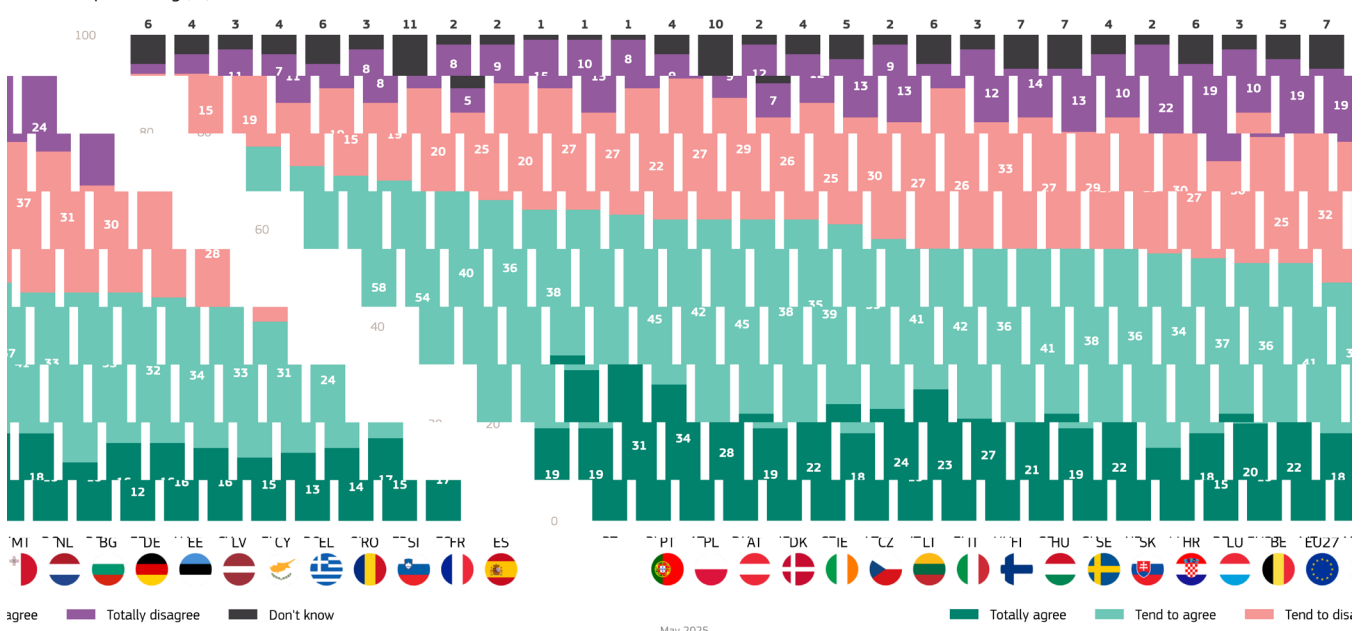
QC6.5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about (OUR COUNTRY)? - Citizens have the possibility to take part in democratic processes, debates and policy making (%)



In 13 Member States, over six in ten respondents agree that **all parties and political candidates can campaign on equal footing in their countries**, most notably in Portugal (77%, 19% 'totally agree'), Poland (73%, 19% 'totally agree'), and Austria (71%, 31% 'totally agree').

In contrast, at least four in ten respondents disagree with the statement in 12 Member States, most notably in Spain (52%, 24% 'totally disagree'), Greece (51%, 19% 'totally disagree'), and Slovenia (50%, 19% 'totally disagree').

QC6.2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about (OUR COUNTRY)? - All parties and political candidates can campaign on equal footing (%)



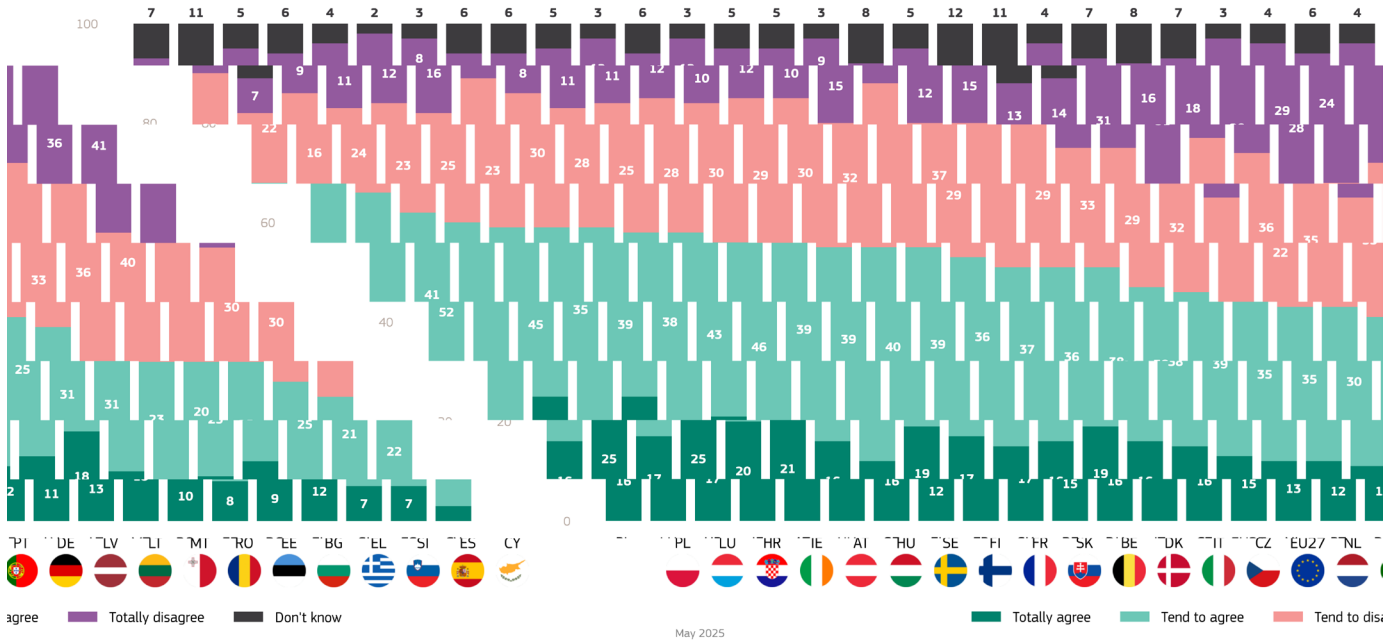
## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

In 16 Member States, over half of respondents agree that **there is transparency and accountability as regards funding in politics in their countries**, most notably in Poland (68%, 16% *'totally agree'*), Luxembourg (66%, 25% *'totally agree'*), and Croatia (62%, 17% *'totally agree'*).

In contrast, at least four in ten respondents disagree with the statement in 17 Member States, most notably in Cyprus (71%, 41% *'totally disagree'*), Spain (66%, 36% *'totally disagree'*), and Greece (65%, 29% *'totally disagree'*).

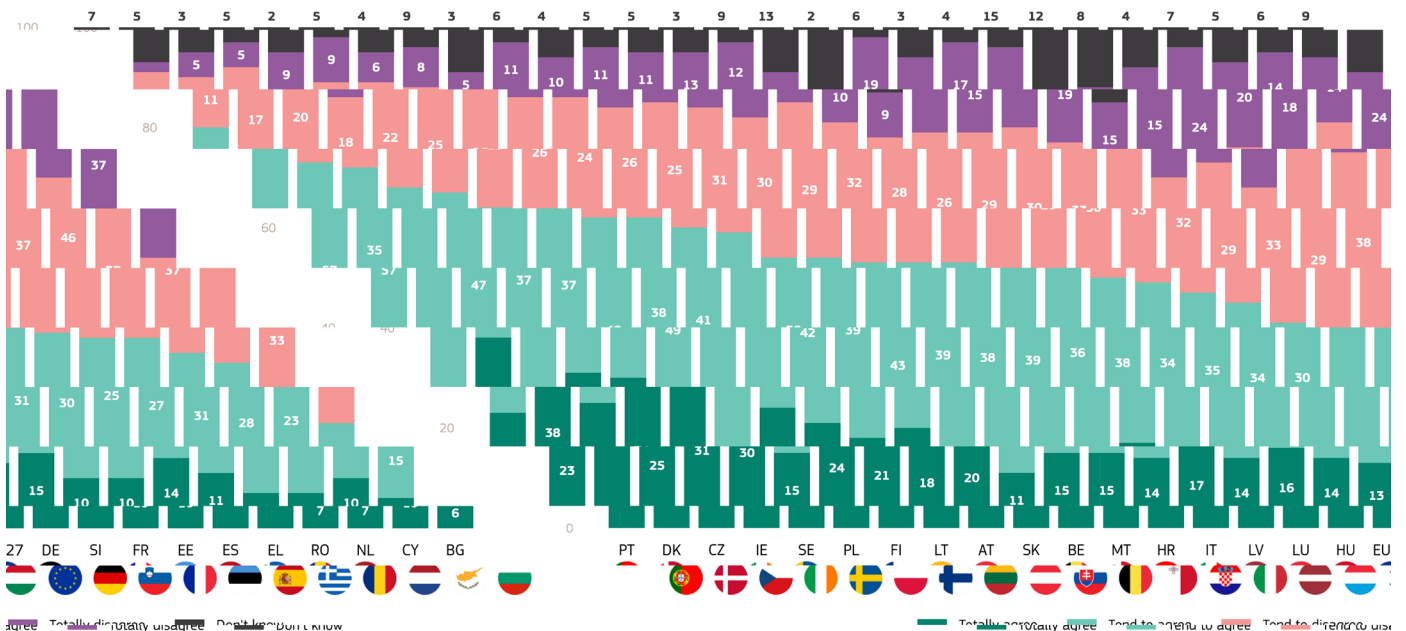
QC6.3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about (OUR COUNTRY)? - There is transparency and accountability as regards funding in politics (parties, campaigns, the spread of political messages...) (%)



In eight Member States, over six in ten respondents agree that **elections are free from any interference in their countries**, most notably in Portugal (80%, 23% *'totally agree'*), Denmark (73%, 38% *'totally agree'*), and Czechia (72%, 25% *'totally agree'*).

In contrast, at least four in ten respondents disagree with the statement in 15 Member States, most notably in Bulgaria (70%, 37% *'totally disagree'*), Cyprus (61%, 24% *'totally disagree'*), and the Netherlands (60%, 14% *'totally disagree'*).

QC6.1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about (OUR COUNTRY)? - Elections are free from any interference (%)







## **V. Europeans' practices in verifying and sharing online information**

## 1. Verifying information when using online platforms

### Slightly over half of Europeans verify information when using online platforms, at least sometimes

Respondents were asked about their habit of verifying information when using online platforms.<sup>20</sup>

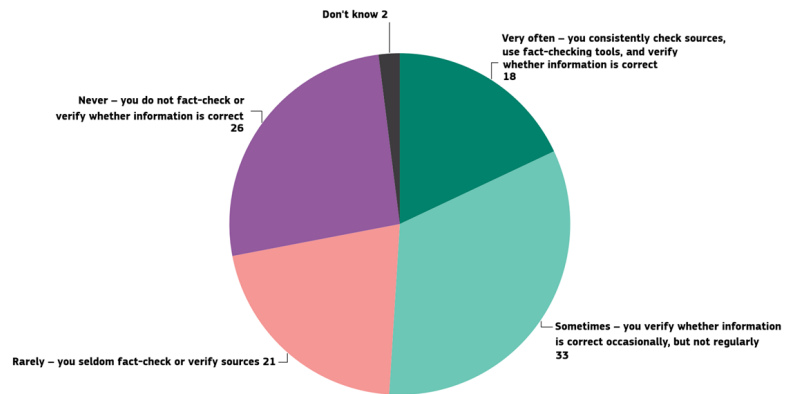
Nearly two in ten of respondents verify **very often** (18%), one third (33%) verify at least **sometimes**, while over two in ten (21%) **rarely** verify.

Finally, over a quarter (26%) **never** verify information when using online platform.

Looking at the national level, at least half of citizens report verifying information **very often** and **sometimes** in 14 Member States, most notably in Sweden (81%), the Netherlands (71%), and Denmark (70%).

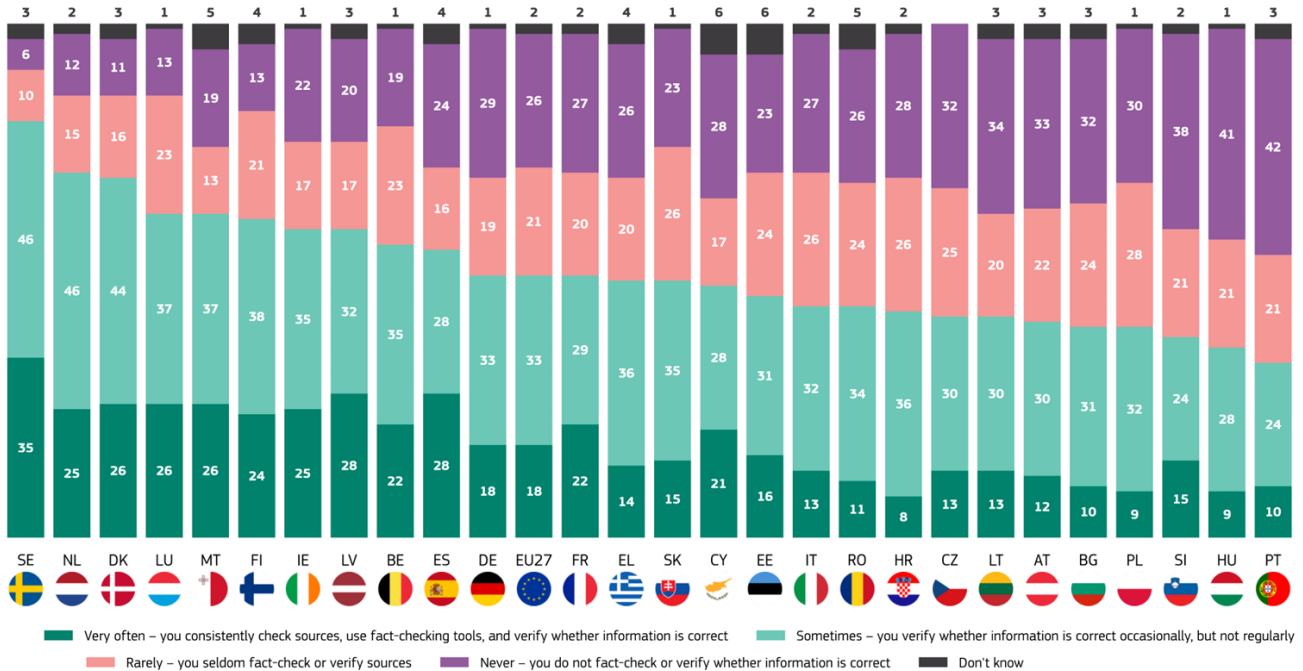
In contrast, at least a third of respondents **never** verify information when using online platforms in five Member States, most notably in Portugal (42%), Hungary (41%), and Slovenia (38%).

QC1: Which of the following statements most accurately describes how often you personally verify information when using online platforms? (%)



May 2025

QC1: Which of the following statements most accurately describes how often you personally verify information when using online platforms? (%)



May 2025

<sup>20</sup> QC1. Which of the following statements most accurately describes how often you personally verify information when using online platforms?

## 2. Sharing information online when unsure of its trustworthiness

Slightly less than half of Europeans never share information online when unsure about its source or its trustworthiness

Respondents were asked how often they share information online when unsure about the source or its trustworthiness.<sup>21</sup>

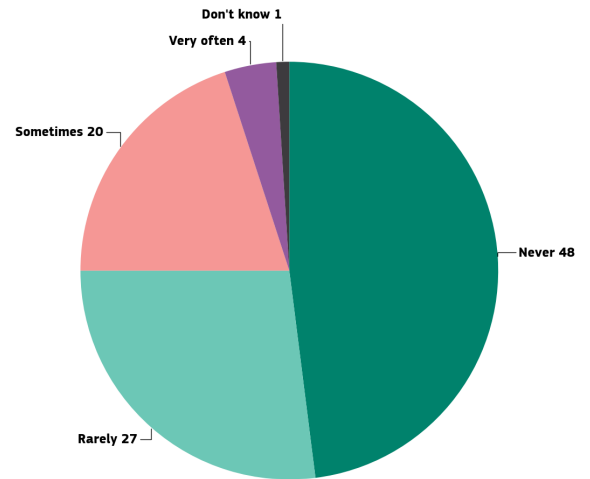
Nearly half (48%) of respondents say they **never** share information online when unsure about its source or trustworthiness.

Over a fourth (27%), **rarely** do, followed by two in ten (20%), who do it **sometimes**. Finally, 4% of respondents share information **very often**, even if they are unsure about the source and its trustworthiness.

Looking at the national level, at least half of respondents **never** share information when unsure about the source or its trustworthiness in 13 countries. Most notably in Sweden (68%), Denmark (64%), and Slovenia (62%).

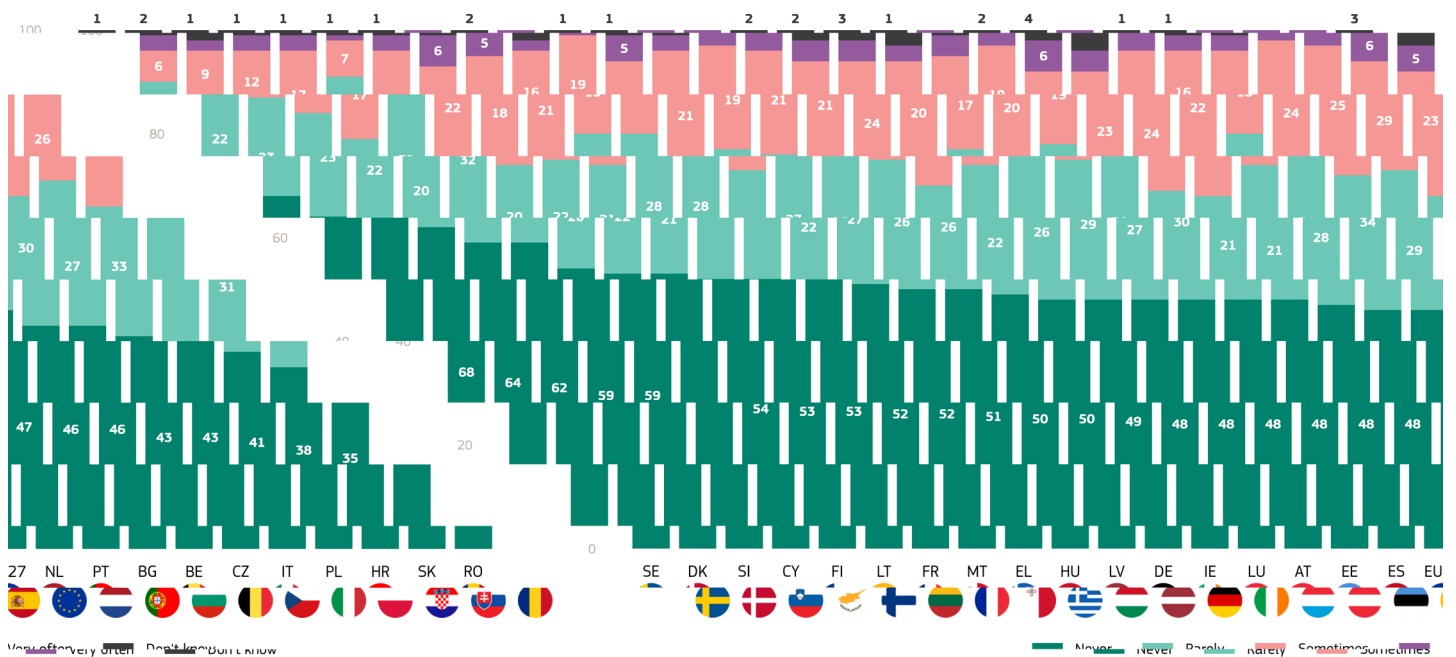
On the contrary, over two in ten respondents share this information at least **sometimes** in 16 countries, most notably in Croatia (32%), Romania (31%), and Portugal (29%).

QC2: How often do you share information online when you are unsure about the source or its trustworthiness? (%)



May 2025

QC2: How often do you share information online when you are unsure about the source or its trustworthiness? (%)



May 2025

<sup>21</sup> QC2. How often do you share information online when you are unsure about the source or its trustworthiness?



## **VI. Role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and challenges**

## 1. Familiarity with the roles and activities of CSOs

Nearly a third of Europeans are familiar with the different roles and activities of civil society organisations in their countries

Respondents were asked about their familiarity with the different roles and activities of civil society organisations in their countries.<sup>22</sup> Examples of roles and activities included advocacy, monitoring government actions, exposing corruption, representation of different groups, defending rights of individuals, delivering services such as education or healthcare, informing citizens.

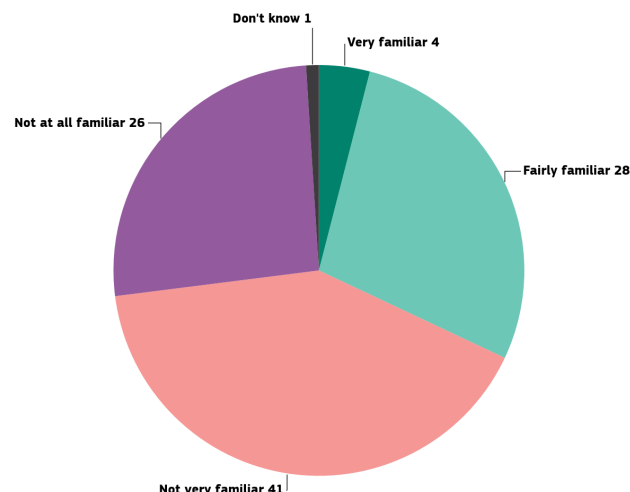
Almost a third (32%) of respondents are **familiar** with the roles and activities of civil society organisations, including advocacy, monitoring government actions, defending rights, or providing services. (4% 'very familiar' and 28% 'fairly familiar').

In contrast, two thirds (67%) are **not familiar** (41% 'not very familiar' and 26% 'not at all familiar').

Finally, 1% of respondents don't know.

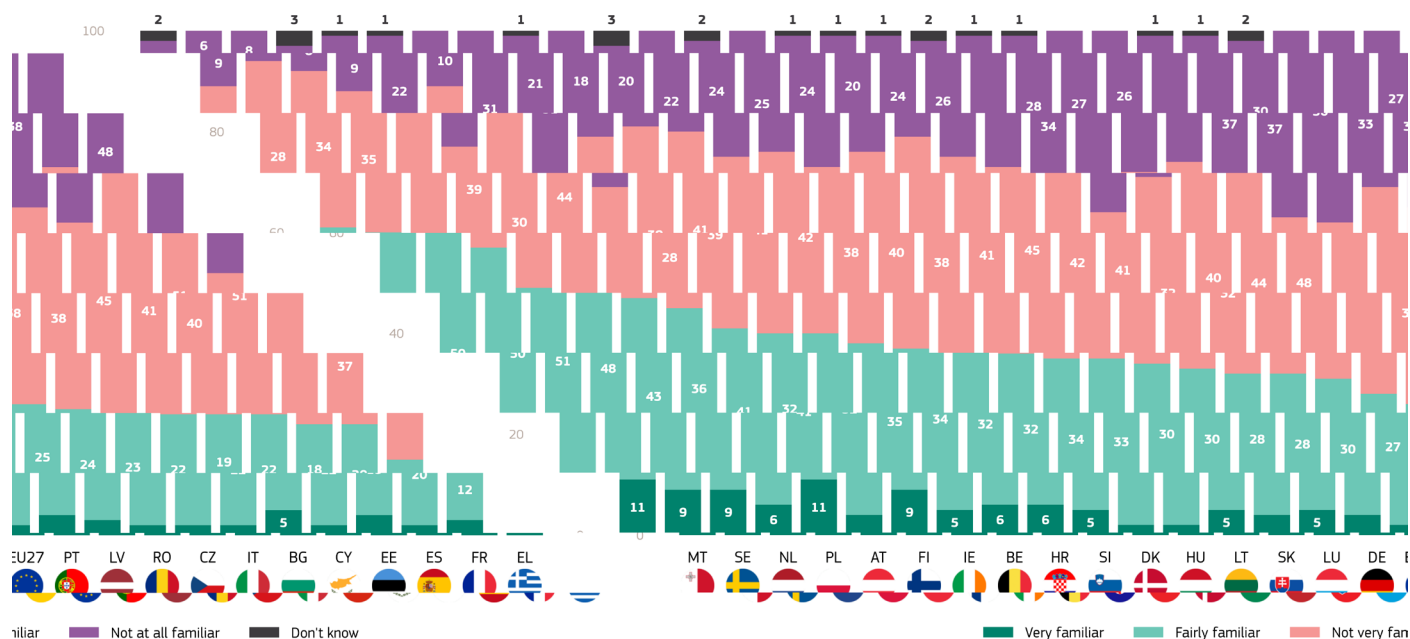
Looking at the national level, the countries in which the majority of respondents are familiar to very familiar with the roles and activities of CSOs are Malta (61%), Sweden (60%), and the Netherlands (57%).

QC10: How familiar are you with the different roles and activities of civil society organisations in (OUR COUNTRY) (e.g. advocacy, monitoring government actions, exposing corruption, representation of different groups, defending rights of individuals, delivering services such as education or healthcare, informing citizens)? (%)



May 2025

QC10: How familiar are you with the different roles and activities of civil society organisations in (OUR COUNTRY) (e.g. advocacy, monitoring government actions, exposing corruption, representation of different groups, defending rights of individuals, delivering services such as education or healthcare, informing citizens)? (%)



May 2025

<sup>22</sup> QC10. How familiar are you with the different roles and activities of civil society organisations in (OUR COUNTRY) (e.g. advocacy, monitoring government actions, exposing corruption, representation of different

groups, defending rights of individuals, delivering services such as education or healthcare, informing citizens)?



## 2. Direct involvement in the work of CSOs

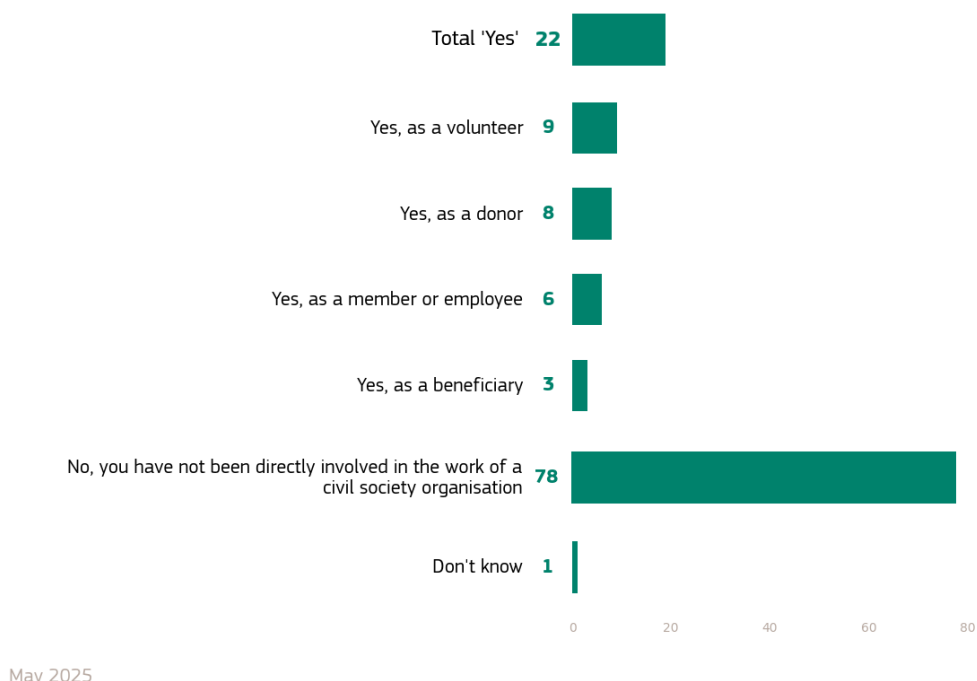
Nearly eight in ten Europeans have not been directly involved in the work of a civil society organisation. Out of those involved, volunteers are the most common, followed by donors

Respondents were asked whether they had been directly involved in the work of a civil society organisation, and if so, in what capacity.<sup>23</sup>

Nearly eight in ten (78%) respondents have **not been directly involved in the work of a civil society organisation**. Over two in ten (22%) respondents have **been directly involved in the work of a civil society organisation**. Among these, involvement as volunteers is the most frequent (9%), closely followed by donors (8%), members or employees (6%), and beneficiaries (3%).

The **degree of involvement** widely differs across countries, from the Netherlands (51%), by Sweden (38%), Austria and Denmark (both 34%), to Greece (6%), Romania (9%), Bulgaria and Portugal (both 11%).

QC10b: Have you been directly involved in the work of a civil society organisation, if so, in what capacity? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (EU27) (%)



<sup>23</sup> QC10b. Have you been directly involved in the work of a civil society organisation, if so, in what capacity?

### 3. Most significant areas of work of CSOs

Exposing corruption, defending rights of individuals and delivering services as education or healthcare are seen as the most significant areas of work of civil society organisations

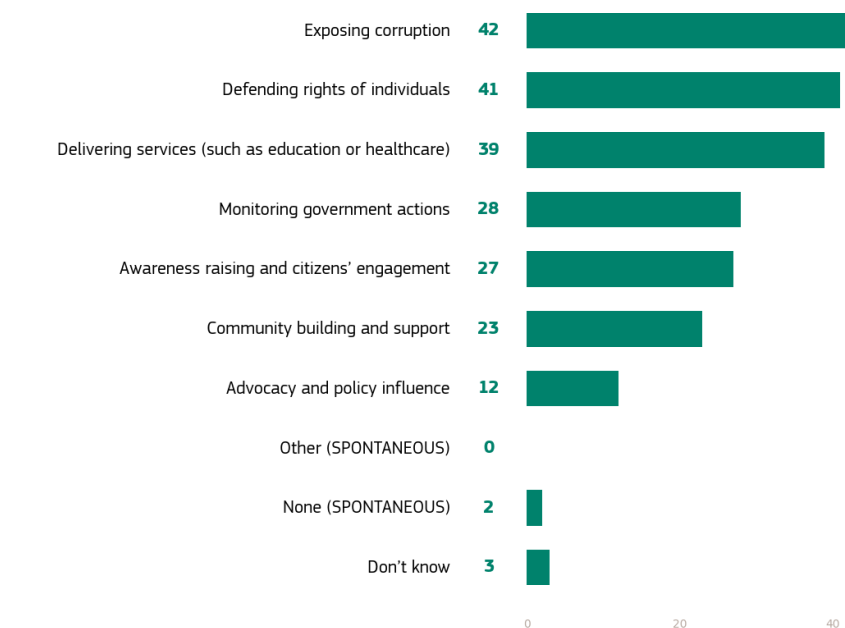
Respondents were asked about the most significant areas of work of civil society organisations for them.<sup>24</sup>

Over four in ten (42%) of respondents mentioned **exposing corruption** as the most significant area of work for civil society organisations, closely followed by **defending the rights of individuals** (41%) and **delivering services, such as education or healthcare**. (39%)

Nearly three in ten mentioned **monitoring government actions** (28%) and **awareness raising and citizen engagement** (27%).

Finally, over two in ten mentioned **community building and support** (23%), while over one in ten mentioned **advocacy and policy influence** (12%).

QC11: Which of the following areas of work of civil society organisations is the most significant for you? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (EU27) (%)



May 2025

<sup>24</sup> QC11. Which of the following areas of work of civil society organisations is the most significant for you?

## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

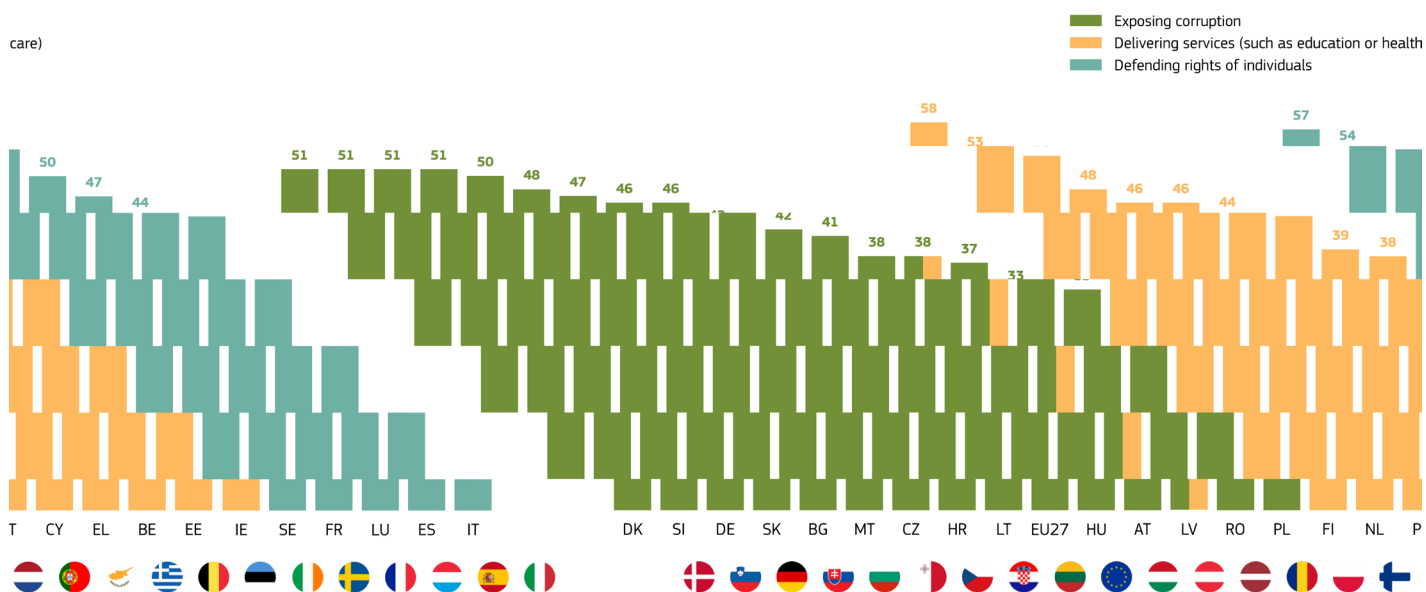
Looking at the national level, respondents are split on the most significant areas of work of civil society organisations.

**Exposing corruption** is the most selected area in 14 Member States, with the highest shares in Denmark, Germany, Slovakia, and Slovenia (all 51%),

**Delivering services (such as education or healthcare)** is the top issue in nine Member States, particularly in Finland (58%), the Netherlands (53%) and Portugal (47%).

**Defending the rights of individuals** ranks highest in five countries, namely in Sweden (57%), France (54%) and Luxembourg (51%).

QC11: Which of the following areas of work of civil society organisations is the most significant for you? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (%)



May 2025

## 4. Difficulties faced by CSOs

Excessive administrative barriers, lack of funding, and verbal or physical threats or attacks are seen as the most significant difficulties faced by civil society organisations at national level

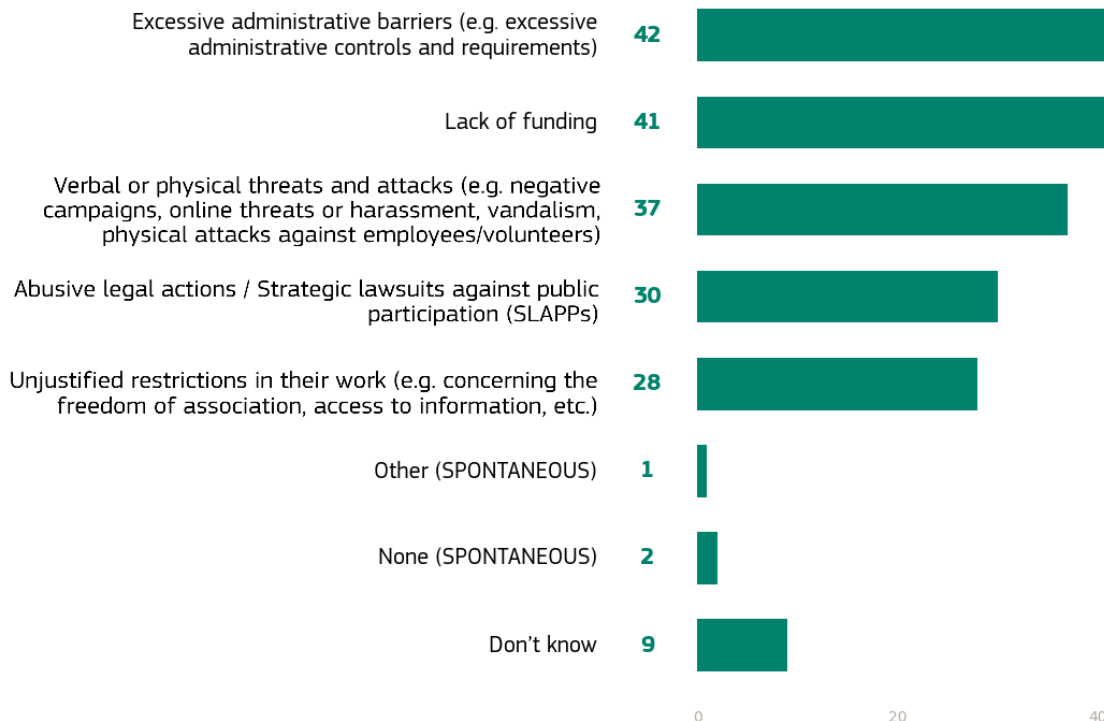
Respondents were asked about the most significant difficulties faced by civil society organisations in their countries.<sup>25</sup>

Over four in ten (42%) of individuals mentioned **excessive administrative barriers, such as controls and bureaucratic requirements**, as one of the main difficulties faced by civil society organisations, closely followed by the **lack of funding** (41%) and **verbal or physical threats and attacks, such as online harassment or vandalism** (37%).

Three in ten (30%) mentioned **abusive legal actions or SLAPPs**, followed by nearly three in ten (28%) mentioning unjustified **restrictions on the work of civil society organisations, such as barriers to association or limited access to information**.

Finally, nearly one in ten (9%) respondents don't know, while small shares of respondents mentioned other or none (1% and 2% respectively)

QC12: In your view, what are the most significant difficulties faced by civil society organisations in (OUR COUNTRY)? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (EU27) (%)



May 2025

<sup>25</sup> QC12. In your view, what are the most significant difficulties faced by civil society organisations in (OUR COUNTRY)?

## Special Eurobarometer 568

### Protecting and promoting democracy

Looking at the national level, respondents mention different ideas as the most significant difficulties faced by CSOs in their countries.

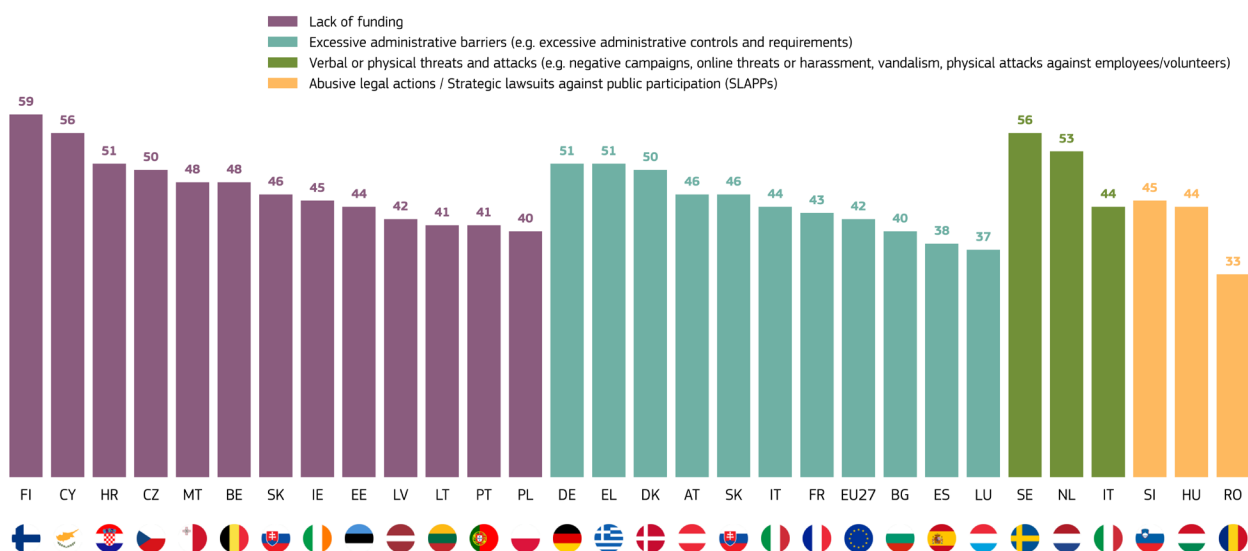
**Lack of funding** ranks as the top issue in 13 countries, most notably in Finland (59%), Cyprus (56%), and Croatia (51%).

**Excessive administrative barriers, such as controls and bureaucratic requirements** is the most selected issue in ten Member States, with the highest shares in Greece and Germany (51%) and Denmark (50%).

**Verbal or physical threats and attacks, such as online harassment or vandalism** rank as the top difficulty in three Member States: Sweden (56%), the Netherlands (53%), and Italy (44%).

**Abusive legal actions or SLAPPs** is the main issue in three Member States: Slovenia (45%), Hungary (44%) and Romania (33%).

QC12: In your view, what are the most significant difficulties faced by civil society organisations in (OUR COUNTRY)? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (%)



May 2025





# Conclusion



The findings of this Special Eurobarometer survey 568 reveal that **direct involvement and familiarity with decision-making processes in the EU are generally low among Europeans**. More than nine in ten citizens have not participated in decision-making in the EU in the last five years, and nearly eight in ten report little to no familiarity with such activities. Additionally, when asked about what would encourage participation in such processes, more transparency and access to information emerge as the top measures.

**Participation in decision-making in the EU and familiarity with activities that involve people directly in decision-making process in the EU vary widely between EU Member States**, with Austria, Malta, and Croatia showing the highest rates, and Greece, France, and Sweden the lowest. **Transparency and access to information are key motivators for engagement**, especially in Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, and Italy, while local debates to address local matters are preferred in Greece, Slovakia, and Croatia. Overall, results among Member States differ notably in both their direct involvement of citizens and the measures citizens value to encourage participation.

**Across the European Union, citizens have concerns about challenges to democracy**. The most commonly cited challenge is the growing public distrust toward democratic institutions and processes, with nearly half of the respondents seeing it as the most serious challenge. Other prevalent concerns include foreign information manipulation and disinformation and lack of transparency with regard to whether political content is promoted online through new technologies. The integrity of elections is also a major issue of interest, with large shares of Europeans expressing concern about voters basing decisions on disinformation, cyberattacks influencing elections and foreign countries influencing elections.

The countries where respondents consider the growing public distrust toward democratic institutions and processes as the most serious challenge to democracy are the Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Cyprus, and Denmark. In a few countries like Sweden, Malta, and Luxembourg, foreign information manipulation, interference and disinformation rise to the top. In Hungary, declining opportunities for citizens to access to information from independent and trustworthy media sources is the most frequently mentioned challenge (42%).

**When it comes to the most important elements for free and fair elections, respondents in most Member States prioritise access to accurate and accessible information for voters**, especially in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Spain. In Finland, Cyprus, and Croatia,

equitable media coverage of candidates and political parties to express their views is highlighted, while respondents from Greece place top importance on electoral debates that are not marked by disinformation, and respondents from Sweden on protection of the electoral process against threats as cyberattacks. Similarly, within each measure for ensuring the fairness of electoral campaigns online, respondents from Sweden, the Netherlands and Ireland report the highest support for transparency and measures to avoid possible risks of manipulation of online services, while the lowest importance attached to these aspects is recorded in Romania, Bulgaria and Czechia.

**Concerns about voters basing their decisions on disinformation, cyberattacks influencing elections, foreign countries influencing elections, manipulation of election results, and pressure on voters also vary**, with Spain, Ireland, Sweden, and Hungary expressing the highest levels of concern, and Denmark, Finland, Czechia, and Malta often reporting much lower levels of concern.

**Satisfaction with media freedom, independence, and pluralism is rather high, with a majority of respondents expressing contentment with the current state of the media landscape**, while the situation varies considerably among Member States. The belief that journalism and professional news content play a positive role for democracy is shared by just over a third of respondents, while another third sees it as a form of consumption like others, illustrating that views on the reliability and importance of journalism are diverse.

**There are marked differences in attitudes across Member States regarding the role of journalism**. In Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, a clear majority of respondents view journalism as playing a positive role in democracy and society. In contrast, seeing journalism as a non-reliable source of information dominates in Greece and Slovenia. Satisfaction with media freedom, independence, and pluralism exceeds 50% in 17 Member States, peaking in Denmark (82%), the Netherlands (74%), and Sweden (73%). At the opposite end, Greece (21%), Romania (38%), and Croatia (39%) record the lowest satisfaction levels.

**In summary, while concern about disinformation and related issues is high across the EU, satisfaction with media freedom and the perceived democratic value of journalism varies considerably by country.**

Overall, **the respondents consider covert foreign financing of political actors as the most serious national challenge**. However, two-thirds also agree that citizens have access to information from independent and pluralistic media and the possibility to participate in democratic processes and policymaking in their countries. At

a national level, perceptions vary widely: respondents from Portugal, Denmark, Sweden and Poland show higher agreement that elections are free from interference and that citizens have the possibility to take part in democratic processes, while in Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Spain, respondents tend to disagree with the statements that there is transparency and accountability as regards funding in politics, that citizens have access to information and news from independent and pluralistic media and elections are free from any interference.

Respondents from Sweden, Finland, and Denmark are most likely to view educational initiatives as effective against disinformation and also report robust access to independent media; by contrast, in Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Poland, concerns about foreign interference and uneven campaign conditions are more pronounced.

**While a majority of respondents recognise the importance of verifying information online and behave cautiously when sharing unverified content, there remains a notable share who seldom or never check sources of information or who occasionally circulate information of uncertain trustworthiness.** At the national level, significant variations exist: respondents in Sweden, the Netherlands, and Denmark show the highest rates of regular verification of information verification and cautious sharing, whereas those in Portugal, Hungary, and Slovenia report the lowest verification habits and higher instances of sharing unverified content.

**Across the European Union, familiarity and involvement with civil society organisations (CSOs) remain low, with most respondents neither directly engaged nor fully aware of the roles CSOs play,** though significant minorities report to have knowledge of the activities of CSOs or their direct participation. Nationally, levels of engagement and awareness vary widely: respondents in Malta, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Poland show the highest levels of familiarity, while those in Romania and Greece stand out for their low direct involvement. The functions of CSOs considered to deliver the most important contributions are exposing corruption, defending rights, and delivering essential services. However, there are notable differences between Member States among the contributions cited, reflecting distinct local priorities. The most significant perceived challenges faced by CSOs are excessive administrative barriers and lack of funding which are notably pronounced in Finland, Cyprus, Croatia, Germany, Greece, and Denmark.

**In summary, the survey reveals widespread and nuanced concern among EU citizens about aspects of democracy, including elections integrity, media freedom, disinformation, and challenges faced by civil society organisations.** While transparency, access to information, and democratic institutions and processes are valued across the Union, confidence levels vary markedly in their effectiveness and participation levels vary markedly between Member States.



Publications Office  
of the European Union

ISBN 978-92-68-31107-3