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Directorate-General for Communication  
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## 2009 POST ELECTION SURVEY

### European Parliament Eurobarometer (Standard EB 71.3) - Spring 2009 Analysis summary

**Population:** EU 18+ (in Austria 16+)  
**Coverage:** EU 27 (26 830 European citizens)  
**Fieldwork:** 12 June - 6 July 2009  
**TNS opinion**

#### Context

This survey was conducted one week after the European elections of June 2009, in order to clarify the reasons for European electors voted or abstained in these elections.

Similarly to all these types of surveys, it should be compared to the background of the international situation at the time: the events in Iran following the presidential election, the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi and the continuing economic and financial crisis.

Interpretation of this summary is based primarily on socio-demographic factors, as these offer the best means to establish an elector's profile (the key factors affecting the way people vote are gender, socio-occupational status and age). For national variations, please refer to the note on the raw results.

The sample was weighed to ensure that it was **politically** and **socio-demographically** representative.

## Main trends

- ⇒ The **turnout** was 43%. However, this EU 27 average must be considered on the basis of **individual country results**, which show a significant increase in turnout in eight countries, very little change in eight others and a very sharp downfall in the final 11 countries.
- ⇒ The survey was once again striking due to the **genuine divisions between different types of voter profiles**:
  - There were fewer women voters than male voters,
  - Fewer young voters than elderly voters,
  - Fewer unemployed voters than senior management voters,
  - Fewer voters who had left school early than voters who had continued an education program,
  - And slightly fewer voters in big cities than in rural areas.
- ⇒ **67% of Europeans remembered seeing a broadcast or printed media campaign before the elections, encouraging them to vote.** Unfortunately, there was no way to distinguish exposure to the various different campaigns, either European or national: the important factor here is that there was a significant exposure.  
On the other hand, **one third of the voters who said they voted in the national elections also stated that they did not vote in the European elections.** Should that be interpreted as a sign that European elections are still considered as being 'second-order elections'?
- ⇒ It is also worthwhile noting that **out of the 57% who abstained, one third did so at the last minute**: they decided not to vote just a few weeks, or a few days, before the election, or even on the day of the election itself. That group is consequently the most unpredictable one, hence, as a matter of priority, the group whose vote one should try to pin down in advance.
- ⇒ The analysis also showed that, contrary to all expectations, **most of the abstainers decided not to vote primarily because of a lack of confidence in politics in general** and not because of a lack of confidence or information from the European Institutions. Consequently, 50% of these abstainers also declared their support to Europe.
- ⇒ In regards to reasons for voting, **the most important factor for electors to vote was out of civic duty by far.** In fourth position comes the European dimension as a reason to vote, after supporting a political party with whom voters had an affinity.

## I. TURNOUT

### A. Developments concerning turnout

⇒ Less than one in two Europeans went to the polls

43% of Europeans voted in the June 2009 elections.

57% of Europeans did not vote.

Excluding the three countries where voting is mandatory, the highest turnouts were in Malta (78.8%), Italy (65%) and Denmark (59.5%).

The highest abstention rates were in Slovakia (80.4%), Lithuania (79%) and Poland (75.5%).

### B. Stagnation in the turnout downfall

⇒ Even though **the turnout in the EU 27 fell by two percentage points this year, it was a smaller downfall compared to previous elections.** Moreover, the EU average must be analyzed with the statistics of each individual Member States.

⇒ **Overall analysis:**

	1994	1999	2004	2009
Turnout	56,67%	49,51%	45,47%	43%
Abstention rate	43,33%	50,49%	54,53%	57%

⇒ **National analysis:**

In comparison to 2004, the changes were as follows:

- **Significant turnout increase in eight Member States (percentage increase of over 2.5 percentage point):**

The turnout has risen in decreasing order and by percentage points, in: EE (+17.07), LV (+12.36), DK (+11.65), BG (+9.77), SE (+7.68), PL (+3.66), AT (+3.54) and SK (+2.67).

- **Minor turnout variation in eight Member States (less than one percentage point increase or decrease):**

- Increase: FI (+0.87), DE (+0.30) and IE (+0.06).
- Decrease: LU (-0.59), BE (-0.42), ES (-0.27), CZ (-0.10), SI (-0.02).

- **Turnout decrease in 11 Member States:**

The scope of the turnout decrease varied greatly among those countries:

- Four countries experienced a fall between 27 and 6 percentage points: LT (-27.40), CY (-13.10), EL (-10.61), IT (-6.67),
- In seven countries, the turnout fell to less than 4 percentage points: UK (-3.82), MT (-3.60), NL (-2.51), HU (-2.19), FR (-2.13), PT (-1.82), RO (-1.80).

### C. National and European turnouts

⇒ *A third of the electors voting in national elections do not vote in European elections*

The profile of the voters and abstainers was very similar to the year 2004.

The table below shows that over one third of the respondents said they voted both in national and in European elections, whilst another third said they fulfilled their right to vote in national elections but not in the European elections.

	EU 27		EU 15 (‘Established’ MS)		NMS12 (‘New’ MS)	
<b>Voted in the national and the European elections</b>	2009	<b>39%</b>	2009	<b>43%</b>	2009	<b>26%</b>
	2004	<b>40%</b>	2004	<b>44%</b>	2004	<b>23%</b>
<b>Voted in the national elections, but not in the European elections</b>	2009	<b>33%</b>	2009	<b>32%</b>	2009	<b>35%</b>
	2004	<b>31%</b>	2004	<b>30%</b>	2004	<b>33%</b>
<b>Did not vote in the national nor in the European elections</b>	2009	<b>22%</b>	2009	<b>19%</b>	2009	<b>33%</b>
	2004	<b>23%</b>	2004	<b>20%</b>	2004	<b>39%</b>
<b>Did not vote in the national elections, but voted in the European elections</b>	2009	<b>3%</b>	2009	<b>3%</b>	2009	<b>2%</b>
	2004	<b>5%</b>	2004	<b>5%</b>	2004	<b>4%</b>

Wouldn't the group of Europeans who vote in the national elections but not in European elections (shaded here below in the table) be the easiest target voters to mobilize?

<b>Only vote in the national elections</b>	<b>Vote in the national and the European elections</b>	<b>Only vote in the European elections</b>
33%	39%	3%

The people of that group have a very similar profile, whether they come from the ‘ancient’ Member States or whether they come from ‘new’ Member States.

## **D. Voters' profile**

The socio-demographic variables determine very precisely the voters' profile. These latter confirm the tendencies that had already been underlined in previous pre-electoral surveys and surveys conducted during previous European ballots:

⇒ **Gender: 44% of the voters were men and 42% were women.** Similarly to 2004, there was little difference between men and women with regards to their attitudes towards voting.

⇒ **Age: the most significant differences were between different age groups.** The older the group is, the higher the participation rate is.

- 29% of 18-24 year-olds voted, which represents 14 percentage points under the European average and 4 percentage points lower than in 2004.
- There was a difference of 21 percentage points between the 18-24 age group (29%) and the 55+ age group, 50% of which went to the polls. (In 2004, 33% of the 18-24 age group voted).

⇒ **Education: the higher the level of education, the higher the participation rate:**

- Respondents who have pursued an education beyond the age of 20 were the most numerous to go to the polls (52%).
- The respondents that are still in the middle of their studying years were on their part 34% to vote.

⇒ **Activities:** There is a **very distinctive cleavage** between respondents according to their activities. The professional criteria breaks down the respondents into various categories:

• Categories where the **participation rates are the lowest:**

- 28% of the unemployed voted
- 33.9% of the students voted
- 35.9% of the manual workers voted.

• Categories with the **highest participation rates:**

- Executives Directors and Managers: 53.5%
- Self-employed: 51%
- When it comes to pensioners, 49% of them went to the polls, thus confirming a trend noticed at the beginning of the survey: elders mobilize more for the elections.

⇒ **Place of residence:** turnout decreases when the electors live in a big city: rural villages – 44.1%; towns and small cities – 43.0%; big cities – 41.4%.

⇒ **Financial situation:** respondents declaring that they generally find it **difficult to pay their bills at the end of the month form a group with the most important abstention rate (66.1% abstention rate).**

Lets recall that in the EB 71 wave concerning the elections conducted in January 2009, **unemployment** was by far the leading campaign issue that Europeans wanted to see addressed in the European electoral debate.

This result confirms the one observed in the survey on the economic and financial crisis (EB 71), which revealed that Europeans were very concerned about the current and upcoming situation.

⇒ **Attachment to Europe: on** contrary to all expectations, the **‘anti-Europe’ electors did not mobilize into a huge group.**

- Indeed, out **of the 32% of people who felt no attachment to Europe, only one third of them voted (33.5%)**. The remaining 66.5% did not come to the polls, and therefore did not use of their votes, favouring indifference to using their vote as a mean of protest.
- On the other hand, out **of the 64% of respondents who said they felt attached to Europe, 49% voted** and 51% did not.

## II. AWARENESS OF THE CAMPAIGN

⇒ *Campaigns encouraging people to vote had an important impact on the Europeans*

Do Europeans recall having heard, read or seen a media campaign encouraging them to go to the polls in June 2009? Yes, in a big majority: **67% of respondents said they recalled** such a campaign, as opposed to 30% who said they did not.

➤ Socio-demographic analysis:

- The **age bracket** does not influence the results to this question: 66% of the 18-24 year-olds remember this campaign, versus 67% of the 55+ year-olds;
- The **type of media** did not matter either: 71% of daily Internet users recalled a campaign, as did 68% of respondents who never use the Internet;
- 73% of the **voters in the European elections** (43%) remember a campaign, against 25% who declare they do not remember;

As for **the abstainers**, 61% recalled a campaign versus 36% who did not.

## III. VOTERS AND ABSTAINERS: PROFILE AND BEHAVIOUR

Europeans were asked about their choice of moment to vote or not to vote.

### A. Voters' attitudes

⇒ **70% had decided a long time ago in advance who they would vote for (question put to 43% of electors)**

In fact, one in two voters (50%) declare that they *always* vote for the same political party or the same candidate. One fifth (21%) had made their decision several *months* before the election.

Therefore, it is a **minority of the electorate who decide in the weeks** (13%) or *days* (9%) preceding the election, or on the day of the *election itself* (6%).

One can estimate that it is these **28% of voters** that are the most sensitive to electoral campaigns, with the media coverage increasing in the days preceding the ballot.

➤ Socio-demographic analysis:

- **Age** was the most determining factor in the responses. **59% of respondents aged 55 years and over** who went to the polls said that they always voted the same way. This percentage decreases proportionally with the respondents' age: **only 30%** of voters aged **18-24 years** systematically vote for the same party or candidate.
- **Occupation:** the first category of electors **whose decision to vote was taken on the day of the elections were the unemployed (12%);**
  - the leading category of electors whose decision to vote was taken several days (18%) or several weeks (20%) before the elections were the students;

- those who declare to vote always the same way came predominantly from the following categories: pensioners (60%), housewives (57%) and the self-employed (52%).

## **B. Abstainers' attitudes**

⇒ *A third of the abstainers (57% of the electorate) decided not to vote at the last moment.*

32% of these abstainers said they had decided not to vote either several *days* before the election (16%) either *on the election day itself* (16%).

We can therefore deduce that, for this group, everything is still to be decided in the week prior to the election, meaning this could make them a mobilisable group of voters.

Finally, one abstainer in five (22%) said that they never vote.

⇒ *The fact that some abstainers do not feel an attachment to Europe, while others do, raises the question of the absence of a European debate.*

Within this **abstaining group** (57%),

- **22% said they never vote.** Out of these:
  - 27% said they did not feel attached to Europe;
  - 18% said they feel attached to Europe.
- **One abstainer in two said they felt an attachment to Europe.** Out of these:
  - 18% decided to abstain on the day of the election;
  - 18% decided to abstain several days before the election.

One wonders whether the abstainers declaring that they are in favour of Europe might also constitute a group of electors who could be persuaded to vote.

### III. PARTICIPATION AND ABSTENTION: MOTIVES AND ISSUES

#### A. Motives

⇒ *The abstention rate is primarily a reflection of a lack of confidence in politics in general*

The main reasons for 57% of abstainers to refuse to vote come primarily from a **lack of confidence in politics in general, rather than to a lack of confidence in, or a lack of knowledge of, the European Institutions and the EP.**

- Motives on a political point of view in the broad scheme:
  - lack of confidence in, or dissatisfaction with, politics in general (28%);
  - feeling that one's vote is inconsequential (17%);
  - disinterest in politics (17%).
- Motives relating to the EU:
  - lack of knowledge of the EU and the EP and about the elections (10%);
  - disinterest in European matters (9%);
  - dissatisfaction with the EP as an institution (8%);
  - lack of electoral campaigning (6%).

⇒ *The decision to vote was primarily motivated by factors such as civic duty rather than the European dimension of the event*

Out of all the motives expressed by the 43% of the voters, civic duty was essentially the first motive to vote compared to political nature. The vote was therefore civic in tone, rather than being a protest against, or a demonstration of support for, Europe. The so-called "vote of discontent" is very weak.

- Civic duty:
  - 47% of voters said they vote out of civic duty;
  - 40% said they systematically vote for the elections.

As seen above, if the participation rate increases with age, it should be noted in this case, that neither age nor occupational status influence the feeling that voting is a civic duty to be fulfilled.

- Political support:
  - 24% said they had voted in support of a political party with which they felt an affinity;
  - 9% had done so to support their government.

- Vote of discontent:
  - 11% said they have voted to express their discontent;
  - 5% voted this way to sanction to their government.
  
- Vote for Europe: the European dimension is less present in the voters' motives analysis.
  - 19% voted because they believe that their vote for the European elections can change things;
  - 16% voted because they are in favour of the EU;
  - 13% voted because they consider themselves Europeans;
  - 5% voted because they feel closely concerned by European matters;
  - and 5% voted because they considered the information they had received during the campaign had convinced them to vote.

*NB: Since more reasons could be cited, the total of the responses is higher than 100%.*

**B. Voting issues**

The most important stakes that spurred voters to express themselves through their votes were primarily of an economic nature. We find here once again the same priority campaign themes expressed by the Europeans in the various pre-election surveys.

<b>Voting issues</b> July 2009		<b>Priority campaign themes</b> March 2009	
41%	Economic growth	52%	Economic growth
37%	Unemployment	57%	Unemployment
22%	Future of pensions	32 %	Future of pensions
22%	Role of the EU on the international scene		

#### IV. OPINION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

##### A. Towards the EP:

⇒ *A majority of respondents felt that the information provided was sufficient for them to be able to vote.*

53% of the respondents felt that they had enough information to make their choice during the elections in June 2009, against 42% who felt this was not the case.

➤ Socio-demographic analysis:

- 50% of **women** said they were sufficiently informed, against 57% of men;
- The **youngsters** formed the largest group to declare that they did not have enough information (50%);
- 62% of respondents feeling **attached to Europe** said they were sufficiently informed, against 35% who thought they did not have all the information needed to make a decision;
- 69% of **voters** said they had all the information needed to make a decision;
- 56% of **abstainers** said that they did not have sufficient information to vote.

⇒ *Does the European Parliament seriously take into account the European citizens' preoccupations? Results are mixed.*

46% of the respondents felt that their concerns were taken into close account by the EP, whilst 41% thought the opposite and 13% did not reply.

➤ Socio-demographic analysis:

- The **age of the end of education** has an impact on electoral behaviour: 55% of those who continued their education past the age of 20 thought that the EP takes the public's concerns into close consideration, as did 60% of those still in education, against 38% of those who had left education before the age of 15.
- Out of those who said they **feel attached to Europe**, 61% think that the EP takes the public's concerns into account, against 28% who felt the opposite.
- 69% of those who stated that they **do not feel attached to Europe** think that the EP does not take the public's concerns into account.
- 56% of **the European elections' voters** think that the EP takes the public's concerns into account, against 34% who think otherwise.
- 48% of **abstainers** think that the European Parliament does not take the public's concerns into account. 37% of abstainers think the opposite.

## B. Towards the EU in general:

⇒ *One European out of two trust the European Institutions*

50% of all respondents say they trust the European Institutions, against 40% who do not trust them.

### ➤ Socio-demographic analysis:

- **Women have slightly less confidence** in the European Institutions than men (48% as against 53%);
- The **youngsters** are the biggest **group to express their trust** in the European Institutions (54%);
- The **age of the end of education is significant: the longer voters studied, the higher the trust in the European Institutions they have.** 60% of people who studied beyond the age of 20 trust the Institutions, so did 69% of those still in education. On the other hand, only 43% of people who had left education before the age of 15 trust the Institutions.

### ➤ National analysis:

- The Finnish are the Europeans **with the most important trust** in the EU Institutions (65%), followed by the Belgians, Estonians and Cypriots (all 66%), and the Maltese (65%);
- The British are the Europeans **with the least important trust** in the Institutions (60%), followed by the Latvians (52%) and Czechs (50%).

⇒ *More than six Europeans out of ten feel European*

64% of the respondents feel like EU citizens, against 32% who do not.

### ➤ Socio-demographic analysis:

- This parameter is correlated to the **age of the end of education**: the longer voters have studied, the more they feel European:
  - left education before the age of 15: 54% feel European
  - left education after the age of 20: 75% feel European
  - still in education: 77% feel European

⇒ *Analysis on the feeling of belonging to the EU and the attachment to Europe*

**69% of Europeans feel that their country's membership to the EU is a good thing.** 22% do not. This question was asked to all the respondents of the survey.

➤ National analysis:

- Luxembourgish (85%), Dutch (84%) and Belgians (83%) are the first to think membership to the EU is a good thing.
- On the opposite side, we find Latvians (49%), British (45%) and Hungarians (36%).

⇒ *Attachment to one's country surpasses their attachment to Europe*

➤ Attachment to one's country:

91% of Europeans feel **attached to their country**, against 7% who stated the opposite. Out of those 91%, 96% of respondents said they **do not feel attached to Europe**.

➤ Attachment to Europe:

64% of the respondents **feel attached to Europe**, against 32% who stated the opposite. Out of those 64%, 67% said they **feel attached to their country**.

## V. IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO THE FINDINGS OF THE ELECTION RESULTS

The results of the survey show that interrogated citizens attach a certain importance to the findings of the elected candidates and winning political parties.

### ⇒ Candidates elected:

49% of all respondents consider it is very important to know which candidates have been elected Members of the European Parliament in their countries. **44% think otherwise.**

Throughout the European elections' voters, 68% (43% of the electorate) think it is important to know who has been elected, against **28% of voters who do not think it's important to know who has been elected.**

### ⇒ Winning parties:

50% of the respondents consider it is very important to know which political parties in their countries have won the most seats in the European elections. **43% do not think this is important.**

71% of the **voters** in the European elections (43% of the electorate) think it is important to know which party has won the most seats, against **25% of the voters who do not think it is important to know which party has won the most seats.**

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