

“How to Make MEPs Talk to Citizens?”

Nordic Hotel Forum

Tallinn, April 15, 2014

#EP2014: Re-connecting citizens
and EU institutions?



ProInfo

Stefano Braghioli

stefano.braghioli@ut.ee



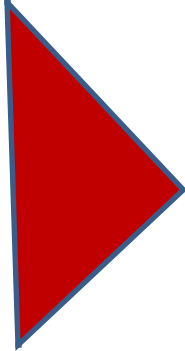
UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Institute of Government and Politics

The European Parliament


Why relevant?

- The only directly elected EU institution
- (almost) The only directly elected transnational assembly
- The only representative EU institution
- Real decision-maker (co-legislator)
- Special nature: multi-language / multi-national
- Special nature: political/ideological vs. national


Why need to re-connect voters and elected?

- Distance
 - Lack of accountability
 - Lack of knowledge
 - No voice
- 
- Democratic deficit
- Impact of exogenous factors (i.e. economic crisis -> legitimacy crisis, identity crisis)
 - Performance vs. democracy?

Possible types of changes

- Soft changes (in treaty) 

Using Lisbon at best

- Hard changes (treaty change) 

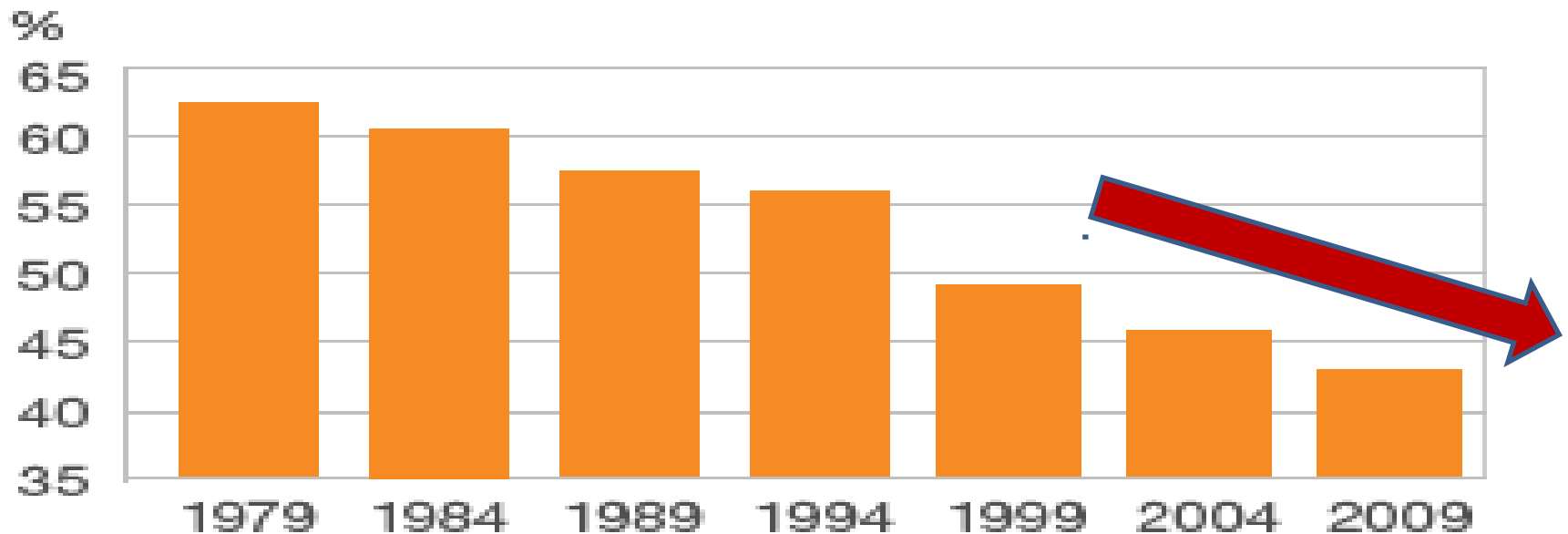
Going beyond Lisbon

- **Whatever the option, the European Parliament has to be THE protagonist**

Decline in participation

- EU average (-20% in 30 years)

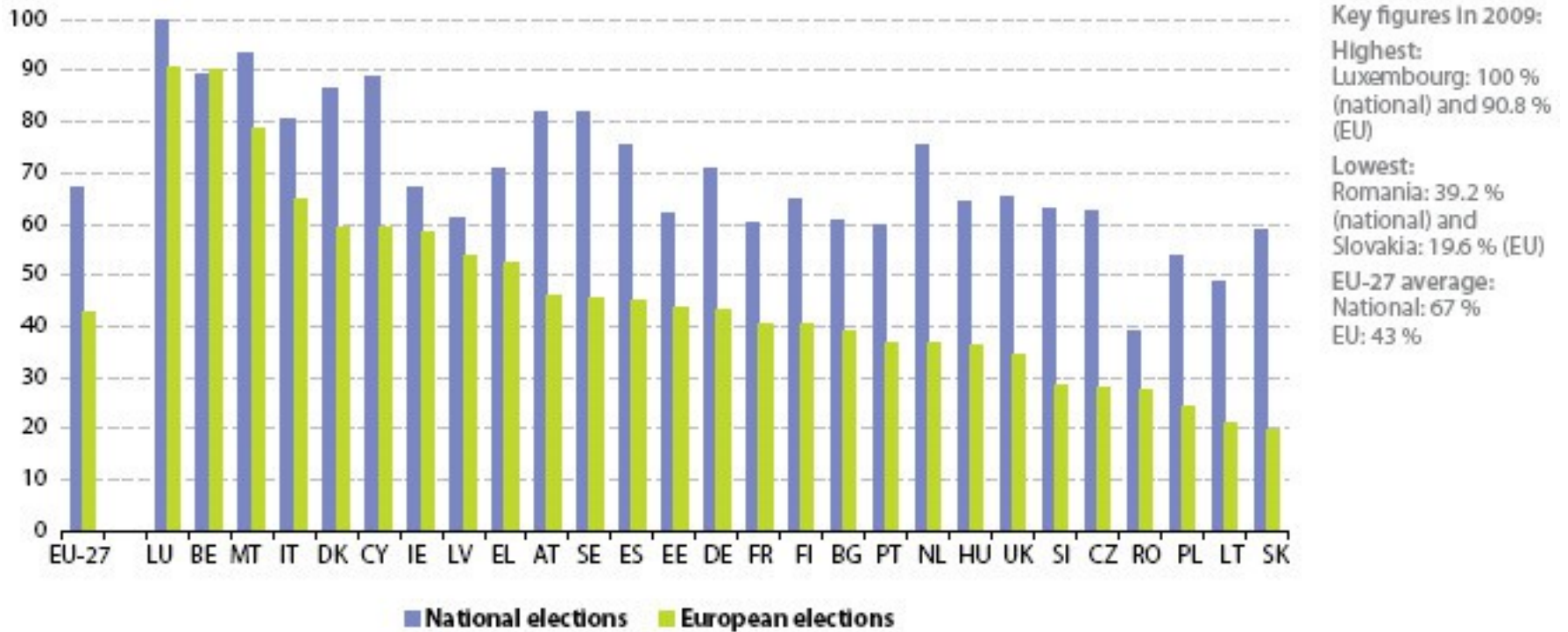
Turnout since 1979



Source: European Parliament

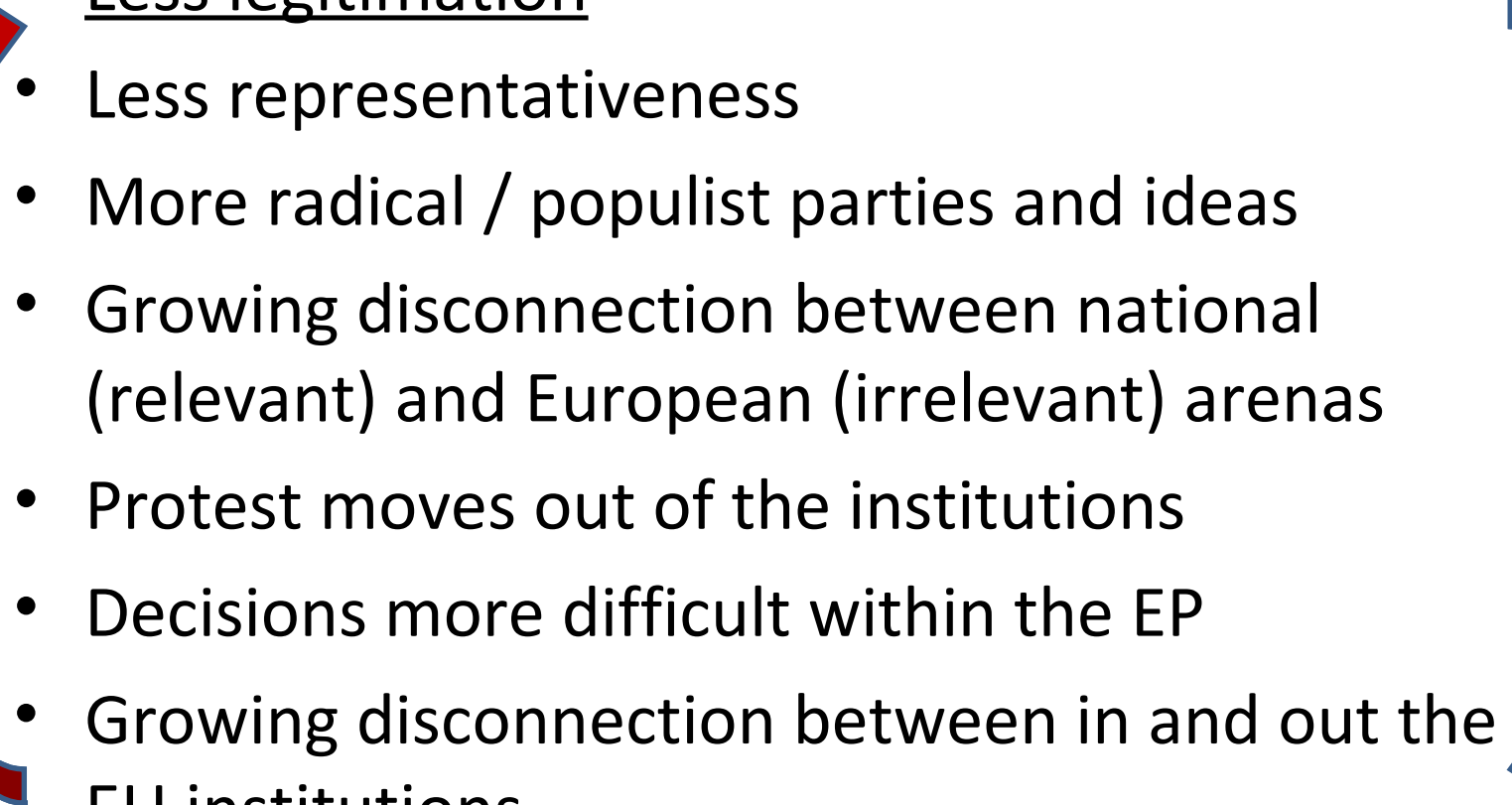
Decline in participation

- By member state

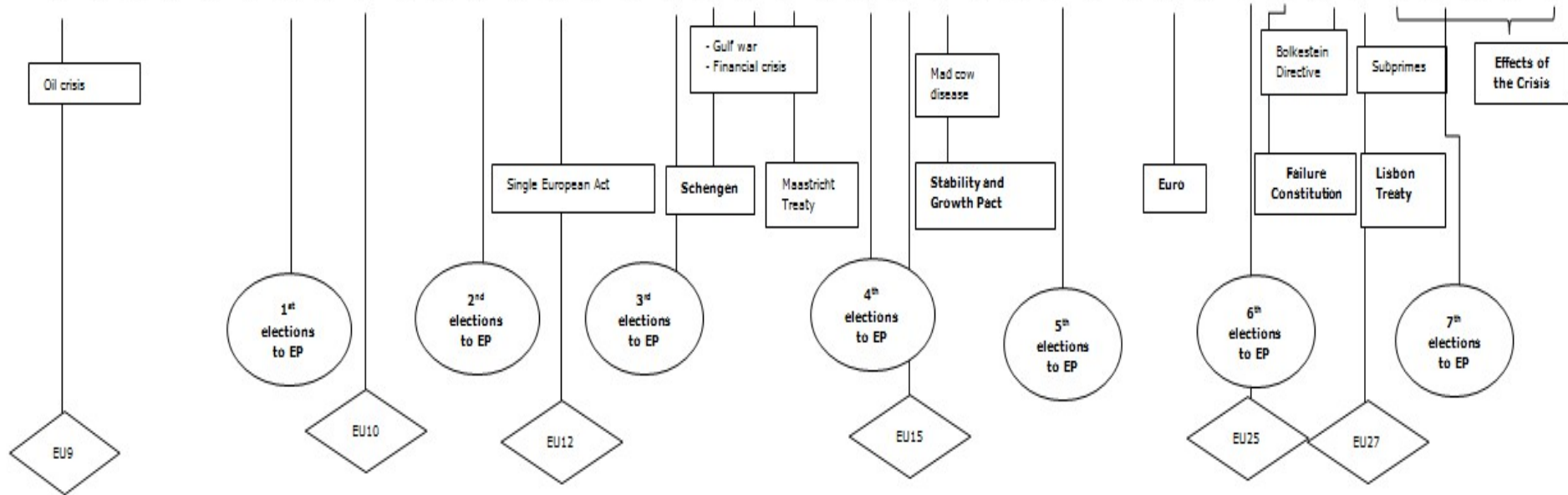
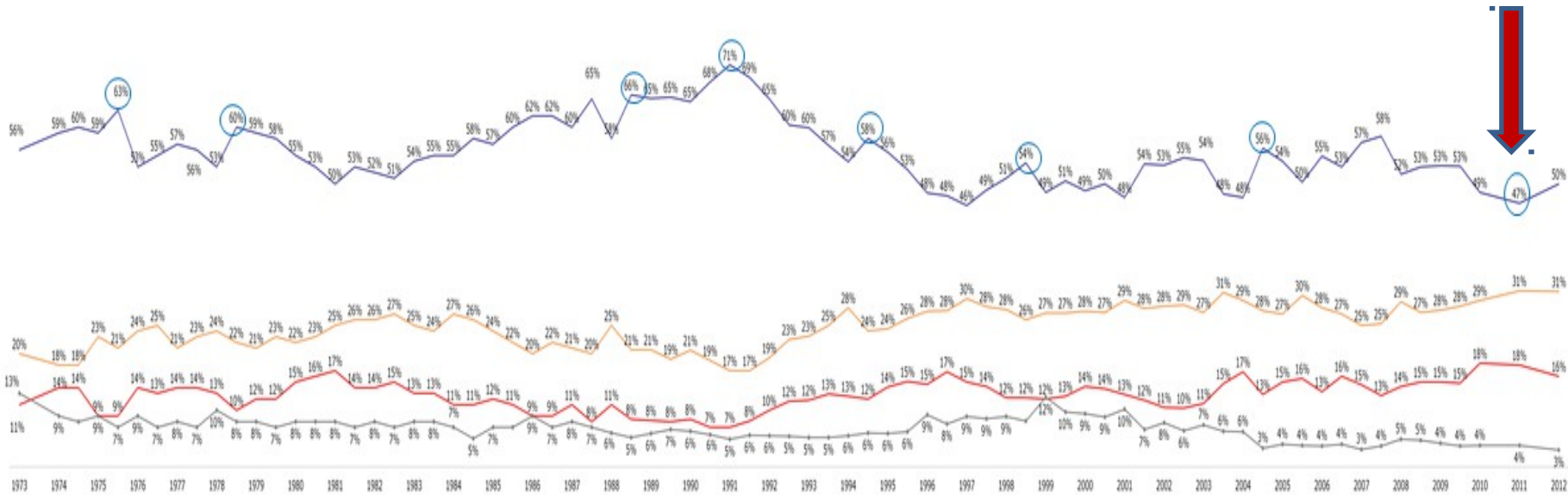


NB: The EU-27 figure for national elections is a Eurostat estimate. Data for national elections refer to the latest year in which national parliamentary elections were held. For all countries, this year lies between 2006 and 2010.

Why is it relevant to invert the trend?




- Less legitimization
 - Less representativeness
 - More radical / populist parties and ideas
 - Growing disconnection between national (relevant) and European (irrelevant) arenas
 - Protest moves out of the institutions
 - Decisions more difficult within the EP
 - Growing disconnection between in and out the EU institutions
- 

-A good thing -A bad thing -Neither a good thing nor a bad thing -Don't know







Who does vote and who does not?

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

	Interested	Disinterested	DK
EU27	46%	51%	3%
Sex			
 Male	51%	47%	2%
Female	44%	53%	3%
Age			
 15-24	42%	54%	4%
25-39	49%	49%	2%
40-54	50%	48%	2%
55 +	45%	52%	3%
Education (End of)			
 15-	36%	61%	3%
16-19	46%	52%	2%
20+	60%	38%	2%
Still Studying	47%	49%	4%
Trust in EU			
Tend to trust	62%	36%	2%
Tend not to trust	31%	67%	2%

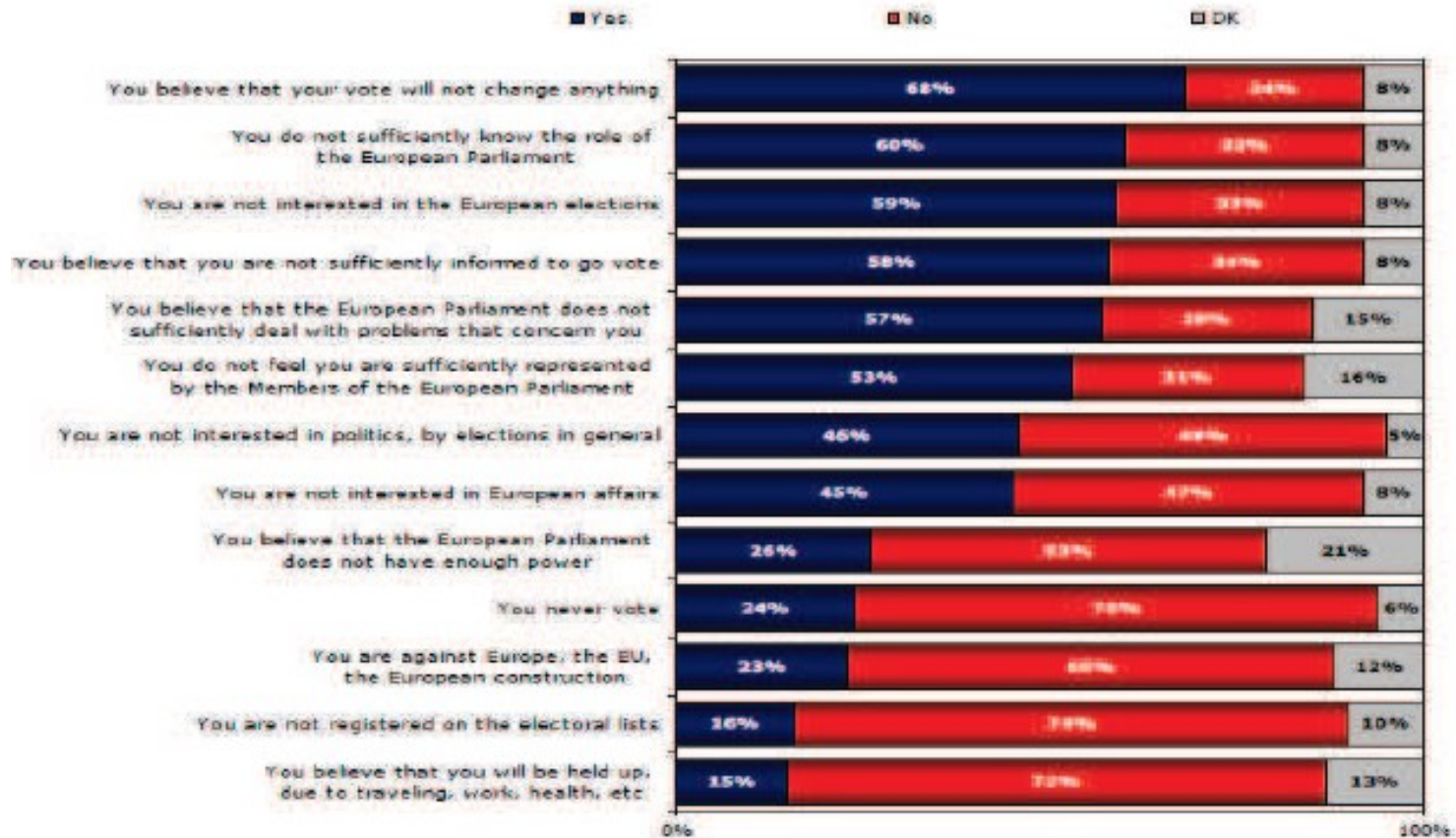
Who does vote and who does not?

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

	1. Definitely would not vote	10. Would definitely vote
EU27	14%	30%
Age		
 15-24	20%	22%
25-39	11%	26%
40-54	11%	32%
55 +	16%	35%
Education (End of)		
 15-	20%	25%
16-19	12%	29%
20+	7%	41%
Still Studying	21%	22%
Left-Right scale		
 (1-4) Left	10%	36%
(5-6) Center	13%	30%
(7-10) Right	9%	35%
Respondent occupation scale		
 Self-employed	8%	36%
Managers	8%	39%
Other white collars	8%	32%
Manual workers	13%	26%
House persons	16%	23%
Unemployed	19%	22%
Retired	17%	35%
Students	21%	22%

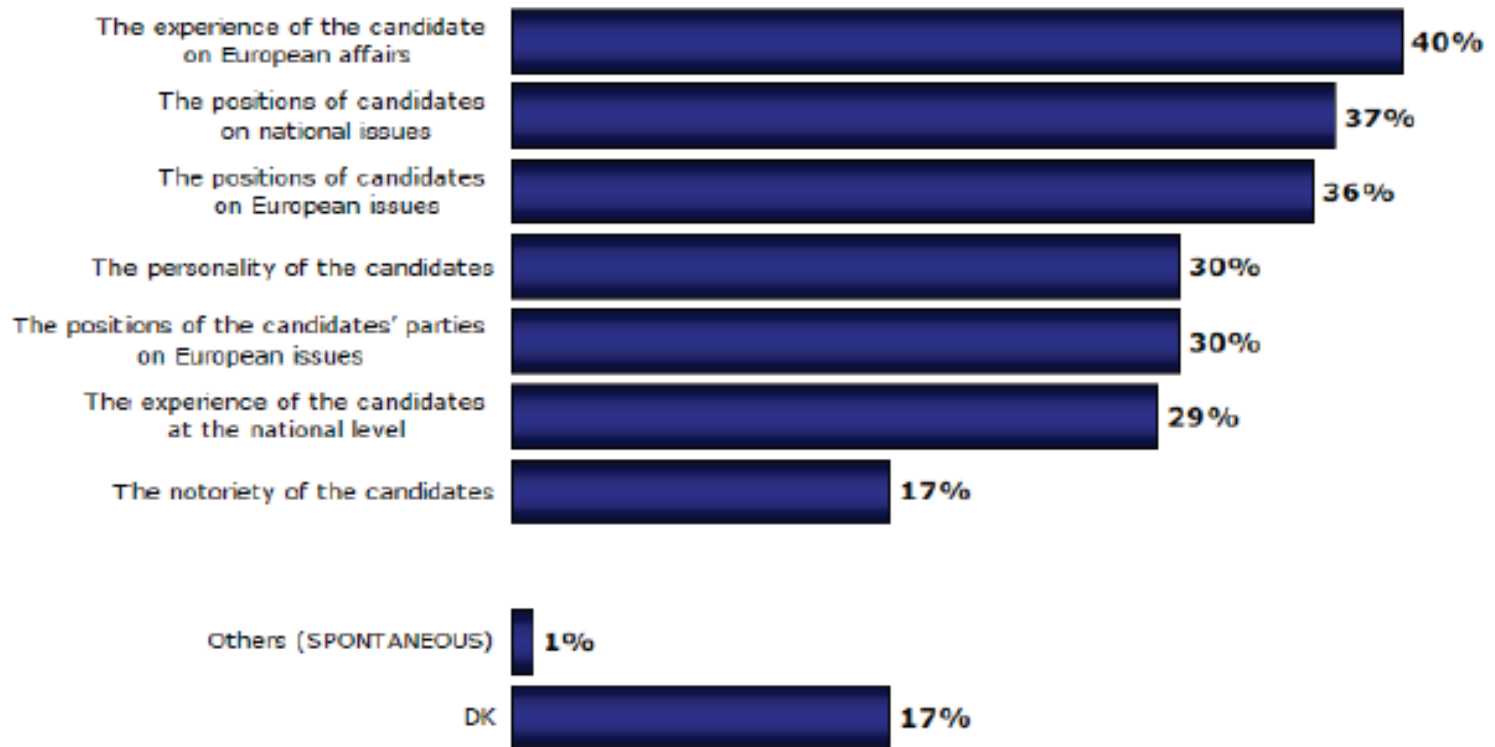
Why do voters decide not to participate?

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

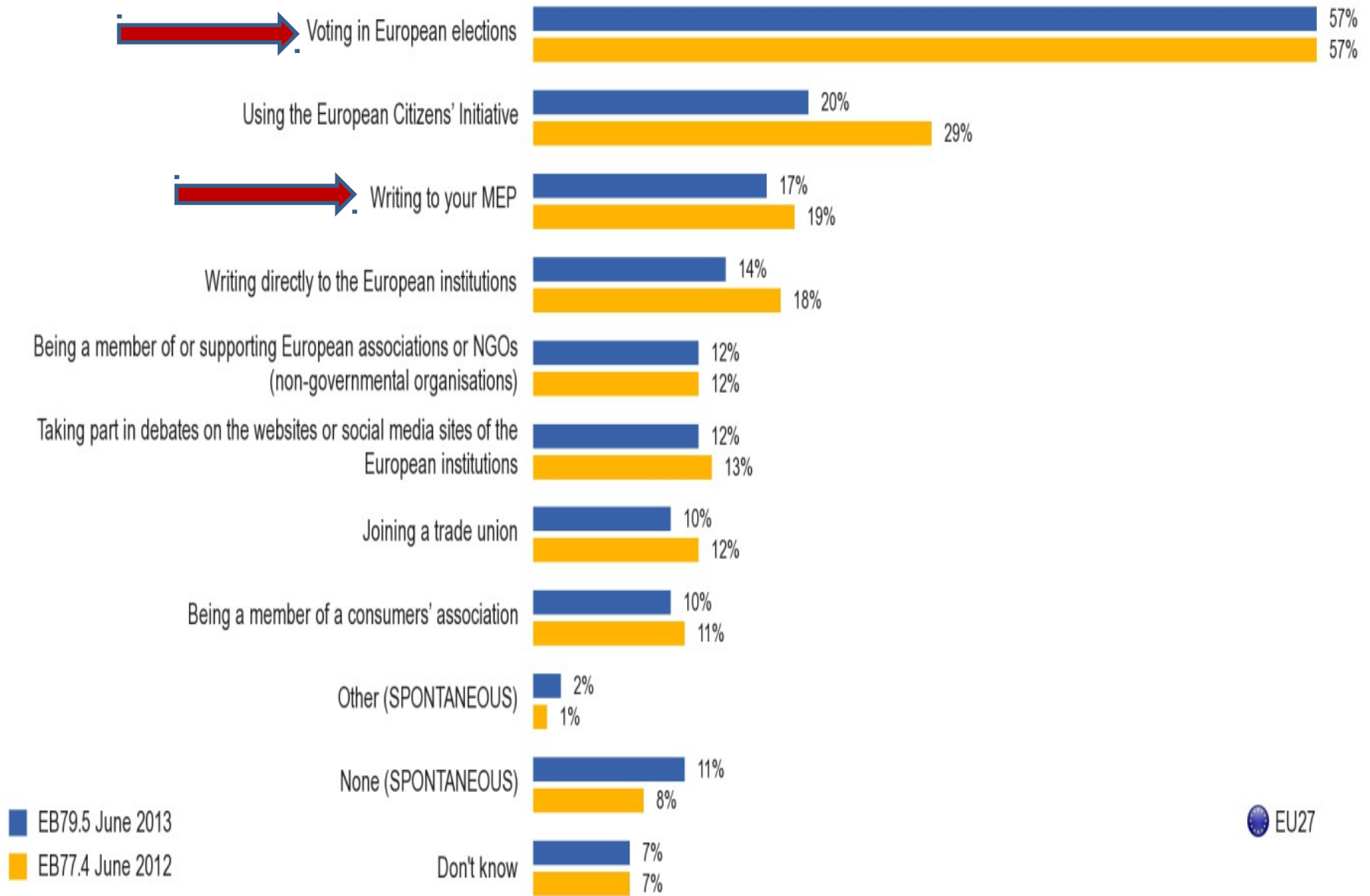


How do you chose your candidate?

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



Q25. Which of the following are the best ways of ensuring that your voice is heard by decision-makers in the EU? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS)



Impact of Lisbon

Art. 5 TEU:

1. The limits of Union competences are governed by the principle of conferral. The use of Union competences is governed by the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.
2. Under the principle of conferral, the Union shall act only within the limits of the competences conferred upon it by the Member States in the Treaties to attain the objectives set out therein. Competences not conferred upon the Union in the Treaties remain with the Member States.
3. Under the principle of subsidiarity, in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union shall act only if and insofar as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level.
4. Under the principle of proportionality, the content and form of Union action shall not exceed what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaties.

New forms of participation in Lisbon

- Citizens' initiative (1 million from ¼ MS)
- Involvement and dialogue with civil society in EU decision-making (art. 11 TEU)
- Dialogue and public debates (arts. 15 and 16 TFEU)
- Citizens' democratic rights
- Role of national parliament
- *Information*
- *Subsidiarity control*

#EP2014: Reducing „second-orderness“

- National electoral programmes
- Debate and vote focussed on national issues
- List of candidates defined by national parties
- Lower relevance than „first order elections“ – no govt. (turnout)
- Protest vote and retrospective judgement
- Sanction towards govt. parties (no consequences)

Two cases of soft changes involving the European elections

Before #EP2014

- Definition of the Euro-party programmes

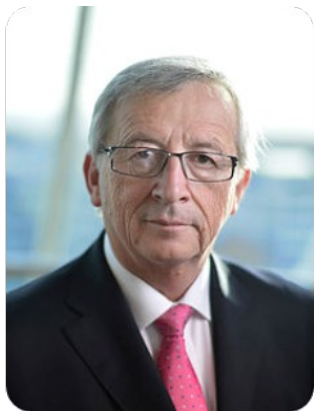


After #EP2014

- „Presidentialization“ of the Commission

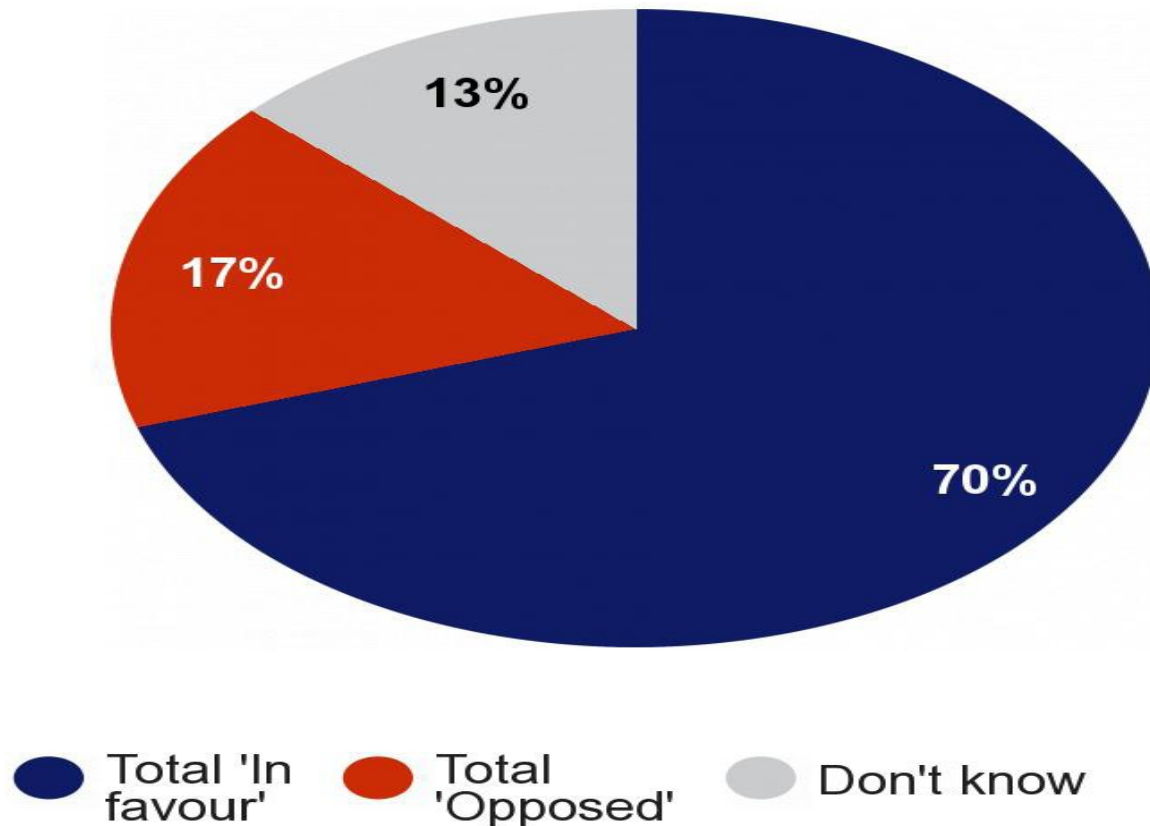
Using Lisbon at best...

Art. 17 – TEU: „Taking into account the elections to the European Parliament and after having held the appropriate consultations, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall propose to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission“.



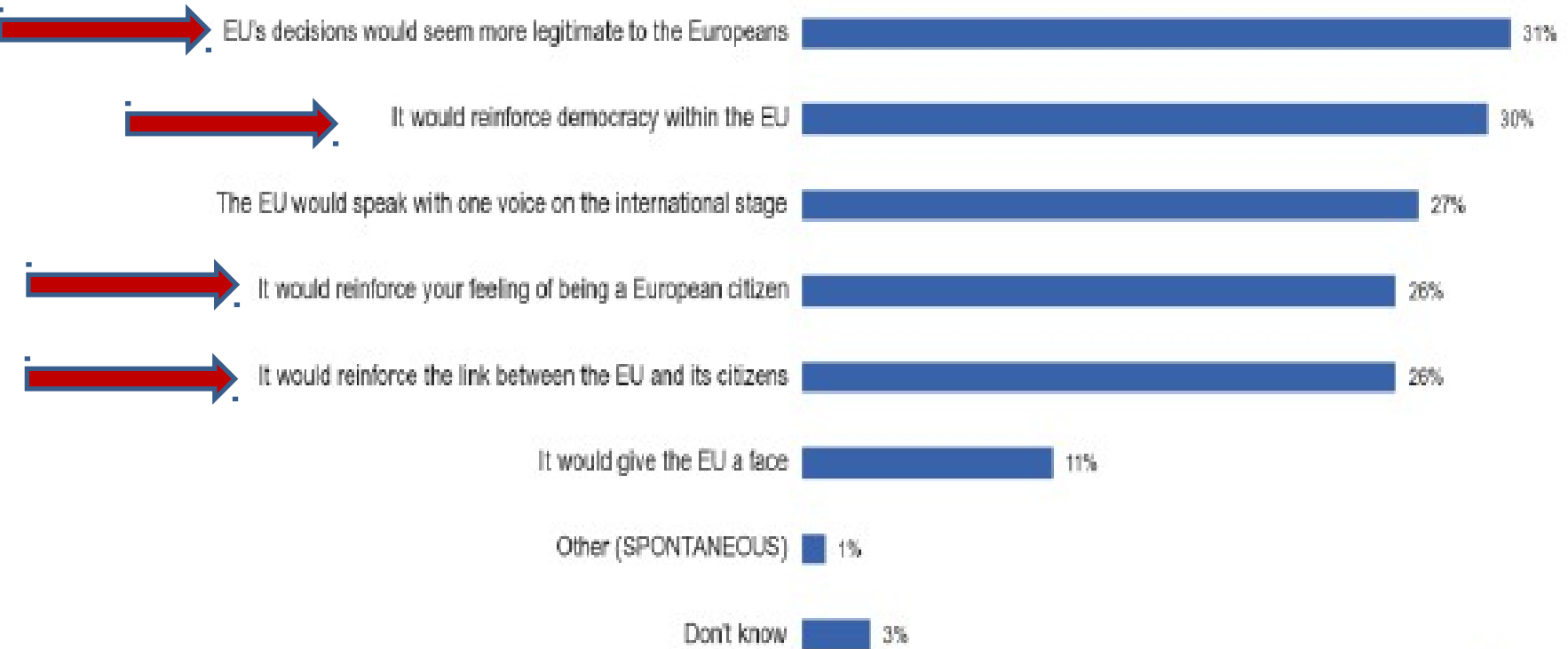
Direct election of the EC President

Q32. Would you be in favour or opposed to the President of the European Commission being elected directly by the European citizens in a near future?



Why? Legitimacy, democracy, closeness

Q33. What are the main reasons why you would be in favour of the President of the European Commission directly elected by the European citizens in a near future? Because... (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)



EU28

Base: those in favour of the President of the European Commission being elected directly

Response of national parties

- Moderate acceptance
- Low publicity
- Limited europeanization
- Functional use
- Attempt to keep the election national



Europarties' programmes & mobilization

- EPP / PES /ALDE manifesto
- Party congresses (Dublin, Rome, Vienna)
- Presidentialization/personalization of the campaign
- Transnational „Electoral tour“
- Media

Key risk: reducing participatory spaces for votes

Key benefit: visibility, awareness, mobilization, legitimacy

Case from #EP2009

PES Manifesto: “People first, A new direction for Europe”

The manifesto was drawn up following a nine-month consultation involving over 300,000 visits to the consultation website, some 120 meetings across Europe, over 500 written contributions on-line, and more than 60 formal submissions from NGOs, trade unions, foundations and member parties.

Involvement beyond the elections... the case of AGORA

- With the framework of *PLAN D* (Democracy, Dialogue, and Debate), 2005
 - strengthening the electoral link and making the elections “more European”
 - giving some right of scrutiny to the national parliaments
 - favouring the citizenry’s involvement at some level of the parliamentary deliberation

As a result the EP launched citizens’ Agoras to involve “citizens in a permanent dialogue” and “not just to communicate with citizens, but genuinely to listen to them”, through a “concerted and balanced dialogue”.



AGORA



The case of AGORA

- Three sessions (2007, 2008, 2011); citizens vs. associations
- Source:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00567de5f7/Agora.html>
- Very ambitious goals
- References to „Athenian direct democracy“
- Voice of the citizens before voting on Lisbon: “an essential means of enlightening Members of Parliament”



AGORA



The case of AGORA

Table 1. – 2007, 2008, and 2011 Agoras

	1st Agora	2nd Agora	3rd Agora
Topic	Future of Europe	Climate change	Crisis and forms of poverty
N. of workshops	5	5	3
N. of participants	319	519	Around 500
Organizing institution(s)	EP	EP	EP / EESC
Availability of sources, material and documents*	Limited availability	Limited availability	Very limited availability

* Available at <http://forum.agora.europarl.europa.eu/>.

- Participating organizations chosen by EP committees and individual MEPs
- Not clear selection method
- Preponderance of pro-European organizations

The logo for AGORA features the word "AGORA" in a bold, red, serif font. The letter "O" is replaced by a circle of twelve red stars, similar to the flag of the European Union. The logo is centered at the bottom of the slide, with faint, light-colored architectural drawings of classical columns visible in the background on either side.

The case of AGORA: evaluation

Phase of the debate	Key dimensions at stake in the assessment	Focus / indicators
Preliminary phase	Inclusiveness Transparency	Selection of participants based clear rules and criteria; ● Fair representation of different groups and opinions; ● List of participants reflecting the issues to be debated; ● Rapporteurs and moderators, chosen according clear rules and criteria; ● Information and publicity by the press service of the European Parliament; ● Efficiency of the website of the Agora in collecting contributions prior to the debate. ●
Progress of the debate	Inclusiveness Transparency	Quality of debates, are they truly participatory and deliberative? ● Equal opportunities of representation for the different positions; ● Neutrality of rapporteurs and moderators; ● Participation of the institutions; ● Quality of the final documents. ●
Results of the Agora	Impact Coverage Transparency Legitimacy	Monitoring the institutions and their taking into account of the results of the Agora; ● Level of match between results and future legislative activity; ● Resonance by the media of the Agora and its results; ● Participation of civil society in the implementation and monitoring of the ultimately adopted provisions (feedback); ● Satisfaction / frustration of participants at the Agora; ● Future of Agora. ●