



# **Public Opinion and the Climate Crisis: What does the Eurobarometer say?**

**Research Paper, October 2019**

**Robin Maillard**

Disclaimer:

*This publication received financial support from the European Parliament. Sole liability rests with the author and the European Parliament is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein*

With the financial support of the European Parliament



## ABSTRACT

Climate change and the environment could become one of the new dividing points in our democracy. The last school strike for the climate all over the world or the results of Green parties in the last European elections have shown that an increasing part of the population is calling for what has been recently named the “European Green Deal” by the new European Commission. Nevertheless, as the diversity of the results of the European elections and the political debate across the EU tend to show, the views on this topic seem to be quite diverse among Europeans. Furthermore, if we take the school strike for climate, the views were spread unevenly in terms of geography and socio-demographics, with the participants of those manifestations being mainly young Europeans and students.

Our hypothesis in this paper, taking into account that those actively promoting climate change as a political priority seem to be students or highly educated individuals and that the category in difficulty would tend to focus more on the socio-economic problems they are facing every day, is as follows: the more you declare to be “left behind” by the system, the less you identify climate change as a political priority. Geometrically, the more you are satisfied by the political and economic situation, the more likely you are to mention climate change as one of the main issues.

In this article, we propose to put this hypothetical fragmentation at the center of our research. To do so, we propose to question the Eurobarometer data on that issue, focusing on the flagship questions of these surveys such as the main issues questions. By analysing the composition of the answers on the climate-related items by country, socio-demographics and attitudes toward the economy and the political system, we will try to identify *ideal type* of respondents mentioning the climate crisis as one of the main issues.

In this paper, we first focus our analysis on the Eurobarometer surveys, their purpose and role as well as their limits for the researcher. This will allow us to analyse the results in the second part of the paper, taking into account the limits of those surveys.

When looking at the respondents we find that there is a geographical pattern: the respondents from the north and west of Europe are more inclined to answer the climate-related items in the main issues questions. Focusing on socio-demographics, the more educated citizens, the managers, the students and the youngest individuals tend to mention climate change as one of the main issues. Lastly, as shown by other questions of the survey as well, it seems that the respondents with a more positive view on the economy and a more positive attitude toward the political institutions declare climate change more often as one of the main issues.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>I. ABOUT THE PUBLIC OPINION IN EUROPE .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1) A single European public opinion? .....	5
2) The role of the Eurobarometer surveys at the European level .....	8
3) Eurobarometer: several types of surveys .....	14
4) Methodological limits/State of the art.....	17
<b>II. CURRENT STATE OF THE PUBLIC OPINION IN EUROPE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE .....</b>	<b>22</b>
1) Our method .....	22
2) Trend analysis .....	28
3) Country-level analysis .....	33
4) Socio-demographic analysis .....	52
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>78</b>

## INTRODUCTION

“It has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”

Winston S. Churchill

At first sight, it might seem strange to start an article on a project called “Young Europeans: How to Act on the Climate Crisis?” with this famous sentence from Winston S. Churchill. However, we do believe that one of the most important challenges we are facing in order to cope with the climate crisis is our political system, namely our democracy. In fact, in this kind of political organisation, a consensus of a major part of the population is needed in order to solve collective problems.

Climate change and the environment could become one of the new dividing points. The last school strike for the climate across the world or the results of Green parties in the last European elections have shown that an increasing part of the population is calling for what has been recently named the “European Green Deal” by the new European Commission.

Nevertheless, as the diversity of the results of the European elections and the political debate across the EU tend to show, the views on this topic seem to be quite diverse among Europeans. Furthermore, if we take the school strike for climate, the views were spread unevenly in terms of geography and socio-demographics, with the participants of those manifestations being mainly young Europeans and students.

Our hypothesis in this paper, taking into account that those actively promoting climate change as a political priority seem to be students or highly educated individuals and that the category in difficulty would tend to focus more on the socio-economic problems they are facing every day, is as follows: the more you declare to be “left behind” by the system, the less you identify climate crisis as a political priority. Geometrically, the more you are satisfied by the political and economic situation, the more likely you are to mention climate change as one of the main issues.

In this article, we propose to put this hypothetical fragmentation at the center of our research. To do so, we propose to question the Eurobarometer data on that issue, focusing on the flagship questions of this survey such as the main issues questions. By analysing the composition of the answers on the climate-related items by country, socio-demographics and attitudes toward the

economy and the political system, we will try to identify some *ideal type* of respondents mentioning the climate crisis as one of the main issues.

The interest of such a research is that, if the hypothesis is confirmed, it would be a strong base for a broader political communication aiming to convince the segment of the population mentioning climate crisis as a lower political priority that measures to tackle climate change are launching a transition in our society, creating jobs, growth and wealth in which that same segment of the population will contribute and take part.

In this paper, we first focus our analysis on the Eurobarometer surveys, their purpose and role as well as their limits for the researcher. This will allow us to analyse the results in the second part of the paper, taking into account the limits of those surveys.

## I. ABOUT THE PUBLIC OPINION IN EUROPE

### 1) A single European public opinion?

The idea of a European public opinion presents several difficulties. The main difficulty is, undoubtedly, the lack of available material. In fact, when trying to identify the condition of possibility of a common European public opinion, one can face a certain disappointment due to the lack of empirical research challenging this hypothesis. In this chapter, we will elaborate on this difficulty before analysing the material at our disposal to support our hypothesis. Such a chapter is needed as a premise to define the perimeter of our work on the attitude of Europeans toward climate change.

First, the idea of a single European opinion might be quite problematic. Reynié<sup>1</sup>, to identify if there is a common and specific European public opinion proposes the condition of possibility in which such an opinion might be developed. For him, it is problematic to search this idea in the observation that we share, in Europe, a common geography, history or cultural attributes which would render our various societies similar. The issue with such a culturalist approach is that the European countries would share as much with each other as with their American counterparts (United States, Canada), Australia and maybe other areas due to a complex history resulting from intense exchanges between them.

In fact, defining the limit of Europe is an endless discussion of several disciplines. Nevertheless, indubitably some European countries have been part of a common political union started in the second part of the XX century. Evolving now in the same political area, this union might be used as an anchorage point defining an area in which the inhabitants might share a common political experience. In fact, the establishment of the first European institutions after the Second World War makes a first particularity shared by their member states in Europe. This is the reason why, if a European public opinion might be defined, it is much more probable that the fact of sharing some political institutions could create a first common specificity.

With the intensification of the integration process since the Second World War, and the multiplication of shared experiences from voting to the European elections, Erasmus, the same fundamental rights and even for some countries the same currency, it seems that the European Union creates the condition of possibility and existence of a specific European public opinion.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dominique Reynié, “L’idée d’une « opinion européenne »,” *Raisons politiques* 19, no. 3 (2005): 99, <https://doi.org/10.3917/rai.019.0099>.

Such an idea of a European public opinion implies then that the Europeans share similar views within this political area. Nevertheless, if we stop the reflection here then we could face the same issue as the culturalist approach, observing that the Europeans might share the same opinion as other areas in the world and then not being able to find a specific European public opinion but a supranational, global or a western one. This is the reason why, like Reynié<sup>2</sup>, we believe that it is important to clarify the two Janus faces which might differentiate a European public opinion from a supranational or global public opinion. First, a European public opinion would face common and particular matters that are only relevant in the European union. Here, we can already notice that they are strictly related to the experience of living in a similar political union, as already mentioned. In that respect, as examples, we might say that the Europeans might have an idea of these institutions or about their common currency or rights. These opinions on political institutions could be classified as specifically European in that sense.

The second regime of specificity might be the existence of a common opinion on a general matter that is not exclusively European. In other words, talking about climate change, Europeans could have a unique opinion compared to the rest of the world, thinking that the entire system must be adapted to stop global warming. To do so, as explained by Reynié, a double verification is needed to identify a specific European public opinion<sup>3</sup>: the first one showing that there is a common European opinion and the second one showing that it differs from the opinions of the rest of the world, making this opinion specific.

The Eurobarometer surveys give sufficient information to make the first verification to identify a common European public opinion. It does so by providing information on the views and attitudes of the Europeans toward general issues as well as EU-specific issues. Other surveys, for example the Transatlantic Trends<sup>4</sup> or the European Values Surveys<sup>5</sup>, give insights on the second verification, comparing the European Union with other areas. Nevertheless, we face here one of the main issues of this kind of research on the possibility of existence of a European public opinion: in order to be conducted, such surveys require a huge amount of resources. Consequently, they are quite rare and not conducted very often, with the exception of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Reynié.

<sup>3</sup> Reynié.

<sup>4</sup> Website of the Transatlantic Trend: <http://www.gmfus.org/initiatives/transatlantic-trends---public-opinion>

<sup>5</sup> Website of the European Values Survey: <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu>

Eurobarometer. They are the privilege of some powerful institutions that might afford this kind of survey and have a certain interest in mobilising huge resources to do it.

Due to the rarity of the international surveys, the Eurobarometer enjoys a relative monopoly which is even bigger if we talk more specifically about the international surveys which evoke the climate crisis topic in their questions. Even though the Eurobarometer is a rich source of information and data, we must admit that there is a deficit of information on that matter.

Nevertheless, as mentioned by Reynié<sup>6</sup>, it would be an error to conclude that this relative lack of information indicates an absence of European public opinion. Attempts to evaluate a certain common opinion are still possible and can be achieved.

In the following chapter, we will examine the material at our disposal to analyse whether there is a European public opinion on climate change or not. We will see that the Eurobarometer is the main provider of data. In fact, due to a certain history and institutional organisation, the public opinion polls have been widely used to measure the opinion at the European level. *De facto*, the material at our disposal to answer our question is mainly quantitative and mostly based on Eurobarometer data.

---

<sup>6</sup> Reynié, “L’idée d’une « opinion européenne ».”



## 2) The role of the Eurobarometer surveys at the European level

In this chapter, we will briefly revisit the role of the Eurobarometer in the European institutional configuration prior to going through the different Eurobarometer surveys conducted, and we will explain our choice to use mainly the Eurobarometer Standard and some Eurobarometer Specials as our main material for this article<sup>7</sup>.

The Eurobarometer project started in the early 1960s by Jacques-René Rabier, a French European civil servant at the European Commission. The idea was to develop a study of the ideas, attitudes and positions of Europeans, with two aims: 1) better understand what Europeans think about Europe and the process of integration and 2) how they assess the same issue across national borders. Using surveys, the idea was to create certain knowledge in order to reduce the informational deficits on the European public opinion at the European level observed at the time. Several surveys were conducted in 1962, 1970 and July 1971 but with too few links between them<sup>8</sup>. This idea was supported by the European Parliament as well when in 1972 the *Rapport sur la politique d'information des Communautés européennes*<sup>9</sup> was presented by Wilhelmus Shuijt, a Dutch member of the European Parliament. Having the same thoughts as Jacques-René Rabier, he definitely paved the way for a systematic survey on public opinion in Europe. Following those recommendations, the European Commission decided to launch its first test survey in nine countries in 1973 and then the first wave of the Eurobarometer in the spring of 1974 (April and May)<sup>10</sup>. Since then, borrowing the name of a meteorological instrument, the Eurobarometer regularly provides data on European public attitudes and views. Historically, as polls have been used as a governance tool from the beginning by the first European institutions, the Eurobarometer has been used *de facto* as the first systematic measure of European public opinion. The choice of this tool might be explained by the organisation of

---

<sup>7</sup> As the methodology of the Eurobarometer is described in the reports and has widely been discussed we will not enter into the details in this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> Entretien avec M.Jacques-René Rabier, fondateur de l'Eurobaromètre Mardi, 21 octobre 2003, 2003, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinionmobile/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/81228>.

<sup>9</sup> Wilhelmus Schuijt, "Rapport Sur La Politique d'information Des Communautés Européennes" (Brussels, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> Entretien avec M.Jacques-René Rabier, fondateur de l'Eurobaromètre Mardi, 21 octobre 2003.

political life at the European level. In fact, as explained by Reynié<sup>11</sup>, the functioning and foremost the relationship between the ruler and the ruled did not and still does not share the same attributes as at the national level. When it comes to measuring European opinion, there were very few possibilities other than the poll. In fact, there were almost no street manifestations or political parties at a European level for instance and that is still the case today. We can mention here some exceptional situations, such as the manifestation during the Iraq crisis<sup>12</sup> or, more recently, the manifestation for the climate. Nonetheless, they are characterised by their exceptionality and such manifestations at a European level are still rare. Thus, the only feedback on which the European institutions might rely are the vote or the polls, and these still seem to be the only regular system of communication between the European citizens and the European institutions.

Nonetheless, both have been widely criticised. The first one has been characterised as a second order election<sup>13</sup> and the reliability of the polls at the European level have been widely criticised for their possible biases which are “immanent (inherent to the analysis of opinions through closed-ended questions), induced (generated by the conception and the administration of the questionnaires) and topical (linked to the specificities of the theme imposed and the public required to contribute)”<sup>14</sup>. These observations and, foremost, the comparison with the situation at the national level led to the observation of the difficult emergence, or even the absence, of a European public space of opinions. The European space of opinion, far from being completely public, seems to be limited to a certain ‘Eurobubble’<sup>15</sup> and the public opinion throughout Europe

---

<sup>11</sup> Reynié, “L’idée d’une « opinion européenne ».”

<sup>12</sup> On that aspect, see the work of Natalie La Balme: Natalie La Balme, “Opinion publique transatlantique et politique étrangère: le cas de l’intervention en Irak,” *Raisons politiques* 19, no. 3 (2005): 81, <https://doi.org/10.3917/rai.019.0081>.

<sup>13</sup> Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt, “NINE SECOND-ORDER NATIONAL ELECTIONS - A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN ELECTION RESULTS,” *European Journal of Political Research* 8, no. 1 (March 1980): 3–44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1980.tb00737.x>.

<sup>14</sup> Philippe Aldrin, “The Eurobarometer and the Making of European Opinion,” in *Perceptions of Europe. A Comparative Sociology of European Attitudes* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2011), 17–34.

<sup>15</sup> Didier Georgakakis, ed., *Le champ de l’Eurocratie: une sociologie politique du personnel de l’UE*, Études politiques (Paris: Economica, 2012); Daniel Gaxie, Hélène Michel, and Louis Weber, “Réflexions sur la sociologie de l’opinion: De la nécessité de faire le lien entre espace social et espace

seems to be closer to a ‘soft underbelly’<sup>16</sup> than to a concrete public opinion. Some qualitative studies validated this aspect as well, arguing that, for now, the attitudes and opinions on Europe are still far from being well distributed beyond the individuals and a large majority has almost no opinion at all on the European Union<sup>17</sup>.

Those studies tend to show that if a common European public opinion exists it would be of a different nature than the one observed at the national level mainly due to a particular institutional design. The relationship between the European political institutions and the supposed public opinion seems to be in one direction only and quasi exclusively top-down. The measurement by means of the Eurobarometer surveys allowed an institution to 1) see if the Europeans are knowledgeable about the institution, 2) measure if they have a positive opinion of the European Union and 3) react to this if it decided to do so. As the measurement of public opinion is mainly organised at the European level and by the European institutions, there are few possibilities to have a certain competition of opinions, or to be more exact, of the measurement of public opinions leading to a political and democratic debate such as that which we observe at the national level. Polemical points discussed in the media leading to the competition of various opinions and debates are almost absent at the European level. This quasi absence of public space of political debates has been widely overserved by scholars and it is now commonplace that the European Union enjoys a form of ‘democratic deficit’<sup>18</sup>.

Nonetheless, it does not mean that the European Union is undemocratic but that it may have a different regime of democracy in which public opinion plays a secondary role and where the

---

des représentations de l’Europe,” *Savoir/Agir* 9, no. 3 (2009): 65, <https://doi.org/10.3917/sava.009.0065>.

<sup>16</sup> Philippe Aldrin, “Les Eurobaromètres, Entre Science et Politique. Retour Sur La Fabrique Officielle de l’opinion Européenne,” in Daniel GAXIE et al., *L’Europe Des Européens. Enquête Comparée Sur Les Perceptions de l’Europe* (Paris: Economica, 2010), 27–47.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Gaxie and Nicolas Hubé, “Projet concorde: Les conceptions ordinaires de l’Europe. Une approche de sociologie politique compréhensive,” *Politique européenne* 23, no. 3 (2007): 179, <https://doi.org/10.3917/poeu.023.0179>.

<sup>18</sup> Giandomenico Majone, “Europe’s ‘Democratic Deficit’: The Question of Standards,” *European Law Journal* 4, no. 1 (March 1998): 5–28, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0386.00040>; Sandra Kröger, ed., *The Challenge of Democratic Representation in the European Union* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Simon Hix, *What’s Wrong with the European Union and How to Fix It*, Repr (Cambridge: Polity press, 2009).

feedback from society comes more from deliberation through spokespersons. This is what Michel observed when working on the consultation of the stakeholders at the European level<sup>19</sup>. The European Union might have as an ideal what we could call a deliberative democracy based on argumentation and justification aiming to find a consensus between the various stakeholders<sup>20</sup>. Compared to the representative democracy, public opinion has a quite different role. In fact, the concept of deliberative democracy has been conceived based, among other aspects, on the critique of the representative democracy and the critique of its demagogic or populist aspects due to the electoral competition. In the latter and foremost in their recent developments, public opinion is central in the sense that it represents both the output and the input or, in other words, the resources to gain or keep the power.

In a deliberative democracy, the results and the performance of the policies are much more central. In fact, ideally, the problem would be identified and solved by different stakeholders representing different parts of the society which try to find consensus to pose and solve the issues. In that theoretical system, public opinion is less central and only constitutes feedback to see if the consensus is well understood, if the decision taken is accepted and if said decision is perceived as efficient<sup>21</sup>. In this quite technocratic system, the expert identifies an issue and communicates it, then the stakeholders decide together with the ruler on a solution and finally the solution is implemented and communicated. At each step, public opinion might be consulted to validate, ignore or disapprove the measure. In that theoretical regime, public opinion does not govern directly but is regularly consulted, and the civil servants accompanied by their experts and the stakeholders overseen by political forces work together to find consensus. The

---

<sup>19</sup> Hélène Michel, “Au-delà du « déficit démocratique »,” *Savoir/Agir* 3, no. 1 (2008): 109, <https://doi.org/10.3917/sava.003.0109>; about the role of the lobbies in Brussels, see also: Sylvain Laurens, *Les courtiers du capitalisme: milieux d'affaires et bureaucrates à Bruxelles*, L'Ordre des choses (Marseille: Agone, 3).

<sup>20</sup> On this political philosophy concept see Habermas : Jürgen Habermas, *L'espace public: archéologie de la publicité comme dimension constitutive de la société bourgeoise*, Critique de la politique Payot (Paris: Payot, 1988); J. Habermas and R. Rochlitz, *Après l'Etat-Nation: Une Nouvelle Constellation Politique* (Fayard, 2000), <https://books.google.pl/books?id=DdYhQAAACAAJ>; Jürgen Habermas and Jürgen Habermas, *La constitution de l'Europe* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), <http://banq.prenumerique.ca/accueil/isbn/9782072467646>.

<sup>21</sup> On the recent development of our democracy see Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le bon gouvernement*, Les livres du nouveau monde (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2015).

democratic aspect is based on the consultation and the deliberation of multiple participants willing to take part rather than aiming at the participation of everybody through voting. In other words, the democratic aspect is more closely linked to the separation of power and checks and balances which are possible thanks to a high transparency. Of course, part of this democracy is still representative but is less central. It seems that in its recent developments the European Union followed this pattern of deliberative democracy<sup>22</sup>. This development pattern is key to understanding the development and the use of the Eurobarometer not as an element to create political controversies and feed the debate but rather as a governance tool in the hands of the institutions.

Indeed, the Eurobarometer is part of a wide range of tools created and provided by the institutions to communicate with the citizens. It allows the European institutions to take the “temperature” of the opinion and even adapt to that opinion building communication campaigns for instance<sup>23</sup>. The Eurobarometer must be first characterised, as mentioned by its founder Rabier, as a tool of governance giving information and communication in the sense that it creates, theoretically, a direct link between the institutions and the citizens<sup>24</sup>. In the bigger institutional context mentioned previously, it acts as a magnifying glass used by the institutions to observe the attitudes and views of the Europeans. The Eurobarometer also makes it possible to interpret those views as feedback from the citizens. Thus, Eurobarometer data are also often used as a source of legitimacy to show that the European Union, or a particular institution within the European Union, is the competent entity at the appropriate level to act on a certain policy<sup>25</sup>. The Eurobarometer, which is organised by the DG for Communication, is also a massive tool of interinstitutional communication to claim a certain legitimacy of a particular policy,

---

<sup>22</sup> Marc Abélès and Irène Bellier, “La Commission européenne : du compromis culturel à la culture politique du compromis,” *Revue française de science politique* 46, no. 3 (1996): 431–56; Rudy B. Andeweg, “Beyond Representativeness? Trends in Political Representation,” *European Review* 11, no. 02 (May 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798703000164>.

<sup>23</sup> Philippe Aldrin and Jean-Michel Utard, “The Ambivalent Politicisation of European Communication,” accessed September 10, 2017, <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00341294>.

<sup>24</sup> Entretien avec M.Jacques-René Rabier, fondateur de l’Eurobaromètre Mardi, 21 octobre 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Höpner and Bojan Jurczyk, “How the Eurobarometer Blurs the Line between Research and Propaganda,” MPIfG Discussion Paper 15/6, 2015; Markus Haverland, Minou de Ruiter, and Steven Van de Walle, “Producing Salience or Keeping Silence? An Exploration of Topics and Non-Topics of Special Eurobarometers,” LSE “Europe in Question” Discussion Paper Series, no. 88 (2015).

something that the European Union must do since its creation due to its relative competition with other levels of decision-makers in this multi-level governance system<sup>26</sup>.

It is by taking those aspects into account that we are going to analyse the measurement of public opinion on climate change made by different Eurobarometer surveys. To do so, we will first examine the most recent Eurobarometer surveys and the different questions asked regarding the climate crisis which will allow us to extract the data and analyse them in the last part of our article.

---

<sup>26</sup> Liesbet Hooghe, ed., *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-Level Governance* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996); Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration*, Governance in Europe (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

### 3) Eurobarometer: several types of surveys

Even though many people think that the Eurobarometer is strictly the Standard Eurobarometer, the well-known survey conducted by the European Commission, it actually exists in various versions. There are five types of Eurobarometer: the Standard, the Special, the Flash, the Qualitative and the more recent Parlemeters.

As we have already mentioned, the Standard Eurobarometer, the “mother” of the other Eurobarometer surveys, is conducted twice a year in spring and autumn. It is requested by the Commission DG COMM and coordinated by the “Media monitoring and Eurobarometer” Unit. The Eurobarometer questions address citizens’ attitudes toward European institutions, EU policies and the integration process in general. It is an important survey, with, in the recent waves, more than 60 questions<sup>27</sup> addressed to more than 25 000<sup>28</sup> respondents over fifteen years of age from the European Union, the candidate countries as well as the Turkish Cypriot Community. It consists of about 1000 face-to-face interviews per Member State - collected through Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) - except for Germany (1500 for the last EB Standards), the smaller Member States such as Luxembourg or the candidate countries (500 interviews for the last Eurobarometer surveys). The same methodology is now applied in every country covered by the survey<sup>29</sup>. The repetition of questions over time allows for comparison and creates trends, which is one of the major advantages of the Eurobarometer.

The Special Eurobarometer shares the same methodology but covers different topics. In that sense, with the first Eurobarometer Special made in the 1970’s, we might say it is the cousin of the Standard Eurobarometer. While the Standard Eurobarometer focuses mainly on general socio-political questions about the views and concerns of the citizens with respect to the European Union, the Special Eurobarometer, as its name indicates, is focused on more specific topics. It is actually commissioned by various services of the European Commission or other EU Institutions and coordinated by the “Media monitoring and Eurobarometer” Unit of the European Commission’s DG for Communication. Thus, in July 2019, the European Commission published, for instance, a survey commissioned by the European Anti-Fraud

---

<sup>27</sup> The last Eurobarometer Standard 91 consists of 61 questions including the socio-demographics ones. Our counting is based on the number of actual questions, i.e. if a question is comprised of a set of items it is nevertheless counted only once.

<sup>28</sup> The last Eurobarometer Standard 91 was addressed to 27 464 respondents.

<sup>29</sup> Some variation existed in the past, as mentioned in our methodological part.

Office on the “Public perception of illicit tobacco trade” or another one on “Rule of law” for the DG Justice and Consumers<sup>30</sup>.

The Flash Eurobarometer, introduced in the late 1980s, has quite a different methodology as it is conducted by telephone. It is a cheaper solution but also regarded as less reliable than the face-to-face interviews<sup>31</sup>. Nevertheless, it offers the advantage of obtaining results almost instantly and makes it possible to easily target specific groups, if necessary. The questionnaires are also shorter (5-10 minutes compared to around one hour for the Standard). They are coordinated by the DG for Communication alone or with various services of the European Commission or other EU institutions, similar to the Special Eurobarometer. However, it focuses mostly on specific topics, such as the view of the euro area<sup>32</sup> or citizens’ perception of competition policy<sup>33</sup>.

There is one last type of Eurobarometer with a qualitative methodology, called Qualitative Eurobarometer. In this article we will not use this type of Eurobarometer because it is not always published—the last publication is from 2015—and the most recent ones are not related to the topic covered in our article.

Last but not least, since 2007, the European Parliament, with the creation of the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, started to conduct its own surveys. In fact, the framework contract with the polling institutes is inter-institutional and enables the European Parliament to commission its own surveys without going through the Commission<sup>34</sup>. These surveys are called Parlemeter surveys and are quite similar to the Standard Eurobarometer ones as they cover the same overall topic, i.e. Europeans’ attitudes and perception of the European Union. They often add questions on the perception, image and role of the European Parliament. They are conducted every six months and some surveys might sometimes be added in the meantime which are often related

---

<sup>30</sup> “Rule of Law” Special Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> Joop Hox, Anja Mohorko, and Edith De Leeuw, “Coverage Bias in European Telephone Surveys: Developments of Landline and Mobile Phone Coverage across Countries and over Time” (Survey Methods: Insights from the Field (SMIF), 2013), <https://doi.org/10.13094/SMIF-2013-00002>.

<sup>32</sup> “The Views and Attitudes Related to the Euro in the 19 Euro Area Countries,” Flash Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2018).

<sup>33</sup> “Citizens’ Perceptions about Competition Policy,” Flash Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Salvatore Signorelli, “The EU and Public Opinions: A Love-Hate Relationship,” *Notre Europe - Studies & Reports* 93, November 2012.



to the European elections, such as, for instance, a pre-electoral and a post-electoral survey including more direct questions on voting.

For the purposes of this article, we will mainly focus on the Standard Eurobarometer, some Special Eurobarometers and the Parlemeters. The main reason behind this is that, due to their similar methodology, it is easier to compare their results, which is not the case with the Flash or the Qualitative Eurobarometers. Furthermore, regarding the Flash and the Qualitative, there are no recent relevant results regarding the topic covered here.

Prior to establishing the survey that we are going to use in our analysis, we will first review the methodological cautions we must take when using Eurobarometer data. In fact, several authors have gone over the methodological limits of the Eurobarometer and it is worth taking them into account before starting our analysis.

#### 4) Methodological limits/State of the art

Various types of research on the Eurobarometer surveys have been conducted over time. We can identify several research efforts, such as the socio-historical literature focusing on the roots and the current role of the Eurobarometer, studies on the reliability of the data produced, or studies using Eurobarometer data directly as research material. Even though this article belongs to the last category, we will not elaborate on that type of research in detail, as this has already been done by numerous researchers and it would be a research *per se* to produce a mapping of the use of the Eurobarometer in academia. However, the first and second school of research are important for the purpose of this article as they are going to help us identify the methodological limits of these surveys and, thus, take the right precautions prior to using them. The first category of research might be referred to as socio-historical literature, which aims at tracing the roots of these surveys and their current uses. Kruke<sup>35</sup> and Aldrin<sup>36</sup> highlight the various aims behind the Eurobarometer, including the purpose of justifying the integration by creating a symbolic ‘European’ public opinion, thus giving legitimacy to the European institutions, as mentioned earlier. These surveys are very useful as they remind the reader that the Eurobarometer is made with an institutional purpose, compared to a purely scientific one; thus one may choose to focus on the results of more impartial research efforts. As we have already discussed the institutional context of these surveys in a prior chapter, we will not revisit this aspect here.

Another type of research is more focused on the data quality and scientific reliability of the Eurobarometer results. Nissen is most likely the author who conducted one of the most complete reviews of the Eurobarometer surveys, relating several potential methodological

---

<sup>35</sup> Anja Kruke, “Aufmerksamkeit Für Europa. Eurobarometer, Empirische Sozialforschung Und Die Europäische Kommission, 1958–1979,” *Comparativ*, no. 21 (2017): 62–80.

<sup>36</sup> Philippe Aldrin, “L’Union européenne face à l’opinion : Construction et usages politiques de l’opinion comme problème communautaire,” *Savoir/Agir* 7, no. 1 (2009): 13, <https://doi.org/10.3917/sava.007.0013>; Daniel Gaxie and Philippe Aldrin, eds., *L’ Europe des Européens : enquête comparative sur les perceptions de l’Europe*, Études politiques (Paris: Economica, 2011).

issues<sup>37</sup>. It is worth taking into consideration her work to neutralise the limits of the Eurobarometer in our analysis of the data.

For this researcher, first, the Eurobarometer is not really a panel survey but rather a semi-annual cross-sectional study. In fact, the Eurobarometer does not interview the same people for each wave, therefore it cannot be qualified as a longitudinal study. In addition, there are significant changes among samples. For instance, until 1974, the sample selection was not harmonised through the different countries. The sample selection was also changed in 1993: from people who were citizens and residents of a particular country to individuals living in any country of the EU and who were citizens of any Member State. The sample selection also changed with each enlargement of the European Union. After such significant changes in the sample, one might ask if the results of the survey from one year to another may still be compared.

Second, Nissen identifies another potential issue in the wording of the questions. In fact, the formulation of some questions has changed over time in the Standard Eurobarometer. Again, this might have very negative consequences on the comparability of the results over time. Furthermore, even using a high standard of translation implementing the back-translation method, it does not ensure that the meaning of the questions is completely identical from one language to another. This might lead to differences in comprehension and understanding of the questions by the respondents with the corresponding consequences on the results. At the same time, intentionally or not, some questions are formulated in a scientifically poor or even suggestive manner, pushing the respondent to answer in a *euro-favorable* or *europessimist* way. Moreover, sometimes they are too broad, thus leaving room for different interpretations, with items that overlap or, worse, that are inadequate to be asked to every respondent as they might necessitate certain knowledge in order to be understood. In the latter situation, questions to ensure that the respondents have the knowledge to actually understand the question are clearly missing in the Eurobarometer surveys.

Last but not least, the validity of the Eurobarometer is further questioned due to the fact that the Commission is the contracting entity. In fact, as the contracting entity, the Commission maintains a certain monopoly on the Eurobarometer, having at the same time the authority to determine the questions to be asked, and to interpret and analyse the results before the

---

<sup>37</sup> Sylke Nissen, "The Eurobarometer and the Process of European Integration: Methodological Foundations and Weaknesses of the Largest European Survey," *Quality & Quantity* 48, no. 2 (March 2014): 713–27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-012-9797-x>.

publication. This is even more pronounced due to the rarity of this kind of European surveys created by the huge amount of resources required to set them up.

Having made the same observations as Nissen, some authors, such as Höpner and Jurczyk<sup>38</sup>, started to express doubts about the reliability of the Eurobarometer, as they observed an avoidance of certain topics or the disappearance of questions with unsatisfying results. For them, the Commission tries only to ask and publish questions that are favourable to it. In other words, the Eurobarometer is subjected to political influences which seems to steer the survey and its results in a certain direction. Hopen and Jurczyk reached this conclusion by reviewing the Eurobarometer survey using the ‘ten commandments’ or ‘guidelines’ of good scholarly practices of public opinion research.

They define those ten good practices as follows:

Survey questions:

1. must be simple and understandable;
2. must be non-hypothetical;
3. must require only knowledge that respondents actually have;
4. must avoid double stimuli;
5. must avoid unclear terminology;
6. must avoid inexact time references;
7. with multiple items must have both negative and positive response options;
8. must avoid insinuation and leading questions;
9. must have response options that are balanced, logically complete, and free of overlap;
10. must avoid contextual effects.<sup>39</sup>

They observed that the Eurobarometer survey does not respect some of the above rules, thus creating some issues as listed below:

- Incomprehensibility, hypothetical questions, and questions that do not match the respondent’s knowledge as we have already mentioned, leading to a ‘high risk that respondents will tend to give socially desirable answers’<sup>40</sup> rather than their actual thoughts,

---

<sup>38</sup> Höpner and Jurczyk, “How the Eurobarometer Blurs the Line between Research and Propaganda.”

<sup>39</sup> Höpner and Jurczyk.

<sup>40</sup> Höpner and Jurczyk.

- Negative and positive response options frequently used in the survey,
- Insinuation and leading questions which can tend to ‘acquiescence’<sup>41</sup> steering the result in a desired direction, mainly integrationist,
- Unbalanced response options, with often a lack of neutral response options or too many positive options,
- Contextual effects due to problematic question order, with questions ‘seeping’ to another question later in the interview on a similar topic which is a well-known and frequently demonstrated phenomenon.

The authors found that, in general, the Eurobarometers tend to ‘steer responses in a pro-European, integration-friendly direction’<sup>42</sup>. This converges with the analysis made by socio-historical research efforts mentioned above: in fact, we should take into account that, first of all, the Eurobarometer is, as assumed by Jacques-René Rabier, a tool of governance, part of an informational policy both in order to form a European political conscience and to take the “temperature” of the public opinion in order to correct the EU’s trajectory and achieve the first aim: improve awareness of the European Union<sup>43</sup>. Taking all those methodological recommendations into account, we might initially feel skeptical about the scientific integrity of the Eurobarometer surveys.

Nonetheless, without trying to defend any potential attempt to manipulate the results, which would be highly regrettable, we would like to temper any radical critique against the Eurobarometer that sees nothing but manipulation of the results by the European institutions and considers the Eurobarometer to be a propaganda tool and, thus, an impracticable source of knowledge.

In fact, we do think that analysing the Eurobarometer is still highly relevant in several aspects. First of all, the Eurobarometer surveys offer a lot of information on what the European institutions think and how they perceive their citizens and the future of the Union. In fact, as we have already mentioned, the aim of the questions is often to measure changes in mentality over time. In that aspect, they reflect the informational goal of the Eurobarometer as mentioned by Rabier<sup>44</sup>. This converges with the second interest of a study of the Eurobarometer surveys:

---

<sup>41</sup> Giuseppe Iarossi, *The Power of Survey Design: A User’s Guide for Managing Surveys, Interpreting Results, and Influencing Respondents* (Washington, D.C: World Bank, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Höpner and Jurczyk, “How the Eurobarometer Blurs the Line between Research and Propaganda.”

<sup>43</sup> Entretien avec M.Jacques-René Rabier, fondateur de l’Eurobaromètre Mardi, 21 octobre 2003.

<sup>44</sup> Entretien avec M.Jacques-René Rabier, fondateur de l’Eurobaromètre Mardi, 21 octobre 2003.

they help us to understand how the European institutions perceive themselves and their action in the future. In fact, as mentioned as well by Haverland, de Ruiter, and Van de Walle in a review of the topic of the Special Eurobarometers<sup>45</sup>, these surveys act as a source of ‘output legitimacy’ vis-à-vis the other institutions. In that aspect, the study of the questionnaires, even for biased questions, are already a useful indicator which helps to understand in which aspect the European institutions try to gain some weight vis-à-vis their institutional counterparts.

Finally, if some question are biased and thus lead to less reliable results, the Eurobarometer still offers important insights, and, with the right precautions, it is possible to mitigate its different limits identified above. In fact, some questions may not be as biased as some might argue, and may simply face the same issues as the “ideal” polls that respect the “ten commandments”. Indeed, these surveys face “immanent (inherent to the analysis of opinions through closed-ended questions)”<sup>46</sup> biases which are always present in even the best conducted surveys. Moreover, in terms of resources it is the most important survey at the European level<sup>47</sup>, and to ignore this insight for the researcher working on the European public opinion would be similar to wearing sunglasses at night to observe the stars. We do think that, albeit imperfect, the Eurobarometer is an invaluable tool for every researcher willing to observe the changes in the European public opinion over time and this is the reason why, taking into account those recommendations mentioned above, we are going to analyse the results of the Eurobarometer as well in this article.

---

<sup>45</sup> Haverland, de Ruiter, and Van de Walle, “Producing Salience or Keeping Silence? An Exploration of Topics and Non-Topics of Special Eurobarometers.”

<sup>46</sup> Aldrin, “The Eurobarometer and the Making of European Opinion.”

<sup>47</sup> It is the most important in terms of the size of the sample and its frequency. We should mention here that the Eurobarometer is not the only survey conducted at a European level. The European Value Study conducts a survey every nine years on what Europeans think about life, family, work, religion, politics and society. Nevertheless, due to its frequency and a broader aim, this survey is quite different from the Eurobarometer and does not measure the process of integration as the Eurobarometer does. This is the reason why it is not useful for our study. For more information: <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/evs/about-evs/>

## II. CURRENT STATE OF THE PUBLIC OPINION IN EUROPE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

### 1) Our method

The first task of our work on the public opinion on climate change measured by the Eurobarometer surveys is to make a mapping of the various surveys and questions relevant for us. In the following part we detail our methodology identifying the relevant surveys and questions to study.

Our method can be divided in several steps. First of all, we decided to focus on the most recent surveys which are the last surveys conducted in 2019. As already mentioned, we used the Standard Eurobarometer, some Special Eurobarometers and the Parlemeter for reasons of comparability, as they use a similar methodology.

Then we identified the various questions which might be interesting for us in these surveys. To do so, we made a mapping of the various questions containing the terms “climate” or “environment”.

Among those questions, we isolated the ‘main issues’ questions which are one the flagships of the Eurobarometer surveys. They ask the respondent to pick up the main issues from a list of items. These questions are asked at different levels: personal, national, European or, rarely, societal level. In the Eurobarometer Standard surveys, there are three levels of questions on main issues: the personal level, the country level and the EU level. They all contain items on climate change but are formulated differently.

**QA3a What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment?<sup>48</sup>**

(SHOW SCREEN – READ OUT – ROTATE – MAX. 2 ANSWERS)

Crime	1
Economic situation	2
Rising prices/ inflation / cost of living	3
Taxation	4
Unemployment	5
Terrorism	6
Housing	7
Government debt	8
Immigration	9
Health and social security	10
The education system	11
Pensions	12
The environment, climate and energy issues	13
Other (SPONTANEOUS)	14
None (SPONTANEOUS)	15
DK	16

---

<sup>48</sup> “L’opinion Publique Dans l’Union Européenne,” Standard Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2019).



**QA4a And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment?<sup>49</sup>**

(SHOW SCREEN – READ OUT – ROTATE – MAX. 2 ANSWERS)

Crime	1
The economic situation in (OUR COUNTRY)	2
Rising prices/ inflation / cost of living	3
Taxation	4
Unemployment	5
Terrorism	6
Housing	7
The financial situation of your household	8
Immigration	9
Health and social security	10
The education system	11
The environment, climate and energy issues	12
Pensions	13
Working conditions	14
Living conditions	15
Other (SPONTANEOUS)	16
None (SPONTANEOUS)	17
DK	18

---

<sup>49</sup> “L’opinion Publique Dans l’Union Européenne.”

**QA5     What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?<sup>50</sup>**

(SHOW SCREEN – READ OUT – ROTATE – MAX. 2 ANSWERS)

Crime	1
Economic situation	2
Rising prices/ inflation / cost of living	3
Taxation	4
Unemployment	5
Terrorism	6
EU's influence in the world	7
The state of Member States public finances	8
Immigration	9
Pensions	10
The environment	11
Energy supply	12
Climate change	13
Other (SPONTANEOUS)	14
None (SPONTANEOUS)	15
DK	16

---

<sup>50</sup> “L’opinion Publique Dans l’Union Européenne.”

A similar question is also asked in the post-electoral survey<sup>51</sup> but asking the respondent to identify the main issues which made them vote in the recent European Parliament elections.

**QG7      What are the issues which made you vote in the recent European Parliament elections? Firstly? And then?**<sup>52</sup>

*(SHOW SCREEN – READ OUT – ROTATE – ONE ANSWER ONLY – AND THEN FIVE ANSWERS MAXIMUM)*

Immigration	1
Economy and growth	2
Social protection of EU citizens	3
Consumer protection and food safety	4
Combating climate change and protecting the environment	5
Promoting human rights and democracy	6
Fight against terrorism	7
The way the EU should be working in the future	8
Combatting youth unemployment	9
Security and defence policy	10
Protection of external borders	11
Protection of personal data	12
Other (SPONTANEOUS)	13
None/ You are not interested in these elections (SPONTANEOUS)	14
Don't know	15

---

<sup>51</sup> Julien Zalc, Nicolas Bécuwe, and Alexandrina Buruiian, “The 2019 Post-Electoral Survey - Have European Elections Entered a New Dimension?,” Eurobarometer Survey 91.5 of the European Parliament (European Parliament, 2019).

<sup>52</sup> Zalc, Bécuwe, and Buruiian.

The Special Eurobarometer on Climate change asks a similar question as well but at the world level.

**Q1a Which of the following do you consider to be the single most serious problem facing the world as a whole?**

*(SHOW SCREEN – READ OUT – ROTATE – ONE ANSWER ONLY)*

**Q1b Which others do you consider to be serious problems?**

*(SHOW SCREEN – READ OUT – ROTATE – MAX. 3 ANSWERS)<sup>53</sup>*

	<b>Q1a</b>	<b>Q1b</b>
	Most serious problem	Other serious problems
Climate change	1	1
International terrorism	2	2
Poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water	3	3
Spread of infectious diseases	4	4
The economic situation	5	5
Proliferation of nuclear weapons	6	6
Armed conflicts	7	7
The increasing global population	8	8
Other (SPONTANEOUS)	9	9
None (SPONTANEOUS)	10	10
DK	11	11

We identified the main issues questions as those with the most interesting insights for this paper. In fact, they are, first, trend questions allowing us to see the evolution over time. Second, as they are asked quite differently and in various surveys, we can identify the solidity of the trends and a consistent pattern. Last, in light of the guidelines of good scholarly practices of public opinion research, they seem not to be so biased and hardly able to steer the respondents towards a more *euoptimist* answer.

---

<sup>53</sup> “Climate Change,” Special Eurobarometer (European Commission, September 2019).

In the following part we analyse those results in different aspects: trend over time, differences among countries, socio-demographics, perception of the economy and political attitudes.

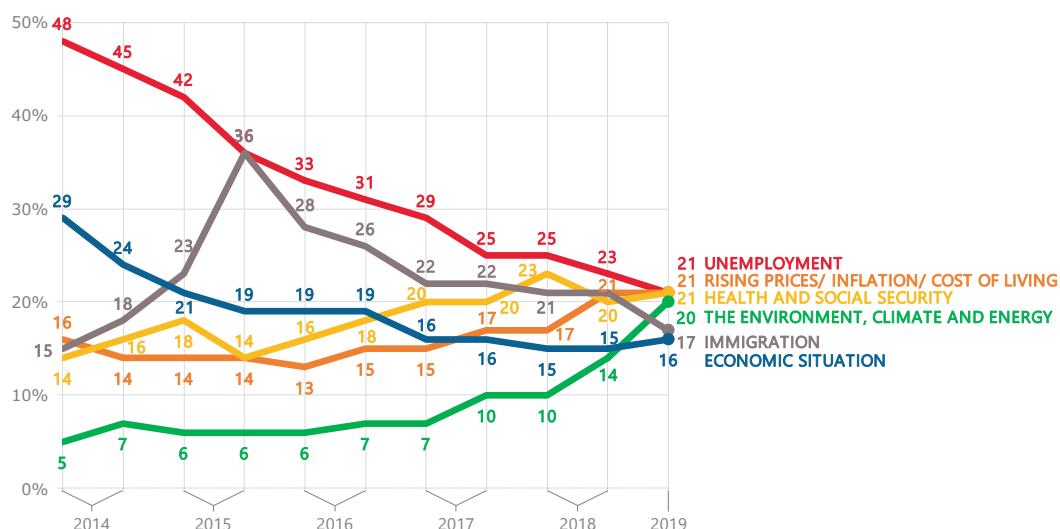
## 2) Trend analysis

One of the most emblematic questions of the Eurobarometer surveys is the question about the main concerns. This question is asked at several levels—country, personal, European and society—and includes an item on climate change.

A first observation shows that at every level asked, the items on climate issues are those which show the highest increases in number of respondents. The results of the EU28 for the question asked at the country level increased by six percentage points since Autumn 2018 and by ten since Spring 2018. ‘The environment, climate and energy issues’ is now, for the first time since this question was originally asked, in the top 3 of the most frequently mentioned items. As we can see in the chart below, it is now mentioned nearly as often as socio-economic items like ‘unemployment’, ‘rising prices/inflation/cost of living’ and more often than the ‘economic situation’. It is at a similar level as ‘health and social security’ and surpasses ‘immigration’. Last, it is the only item that shows a sharp increase since Spring 2017.

**Chart 1**<sup>54</sup>

**QA3a** What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment?  
(% - EU)



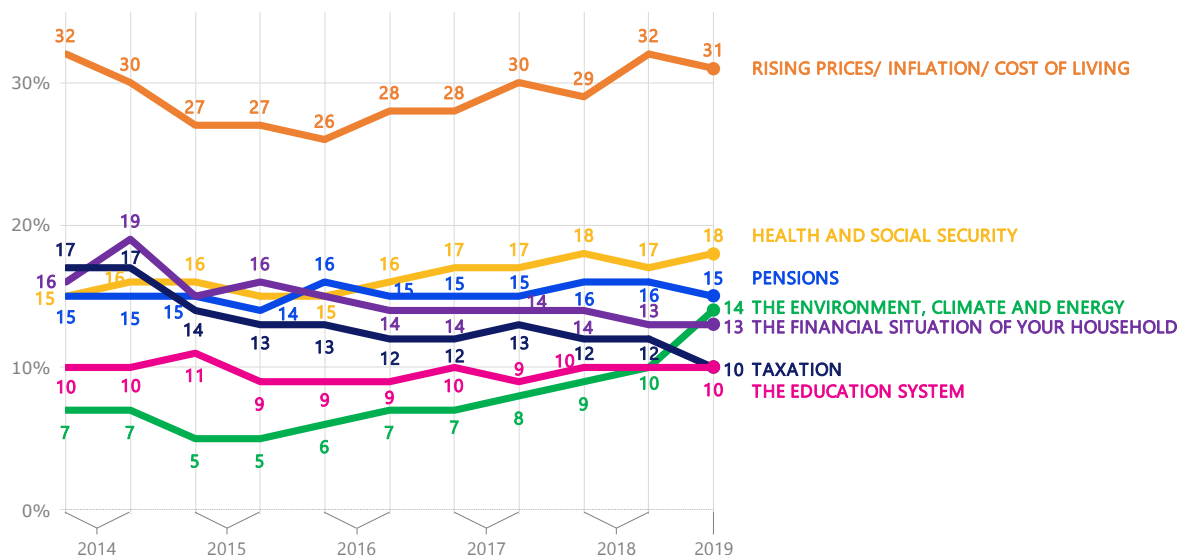
<sup>54</sup> “Public Opinion in the European Union - First Results,” Standard Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2019).

At the personal level, “the environment, climate and energy issues” has increased by four percentage points since Autumn 2018. It is now at the fourth rank of the most frequently mentioned items at the personal level. As for the question asked at the country level, it is the only item showing a sharp increase since the last survey.

It is quite surprising as, historically, for this question, the respondents tend to mention items that might have a direct and tangible impact on their life such as “rising prices/inflation/cost of living”, “health and social security”, “pensions”, “the financial situation of your household”, “taxation” or even “the education system”. The fact that “the environment, climate and energy issues” is now part of the most frequently mentioned issues at this level leads us to ask ourselves: what is the direct impact that pushed the respondent choose this item? The question might also be asked the other way around: are the people who mentioned unemployment—which is not even in the top seven of the most frequently mentioned items for this question—or taxation—which decreased by seven percentage points—now more inclined to mention “the environment, climate and energy issues” as a top priority? We try to answer this question in the last part of this article.

**Chart 2<sup>55</sup>**

**QA4a** And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment?  
(% - EU)

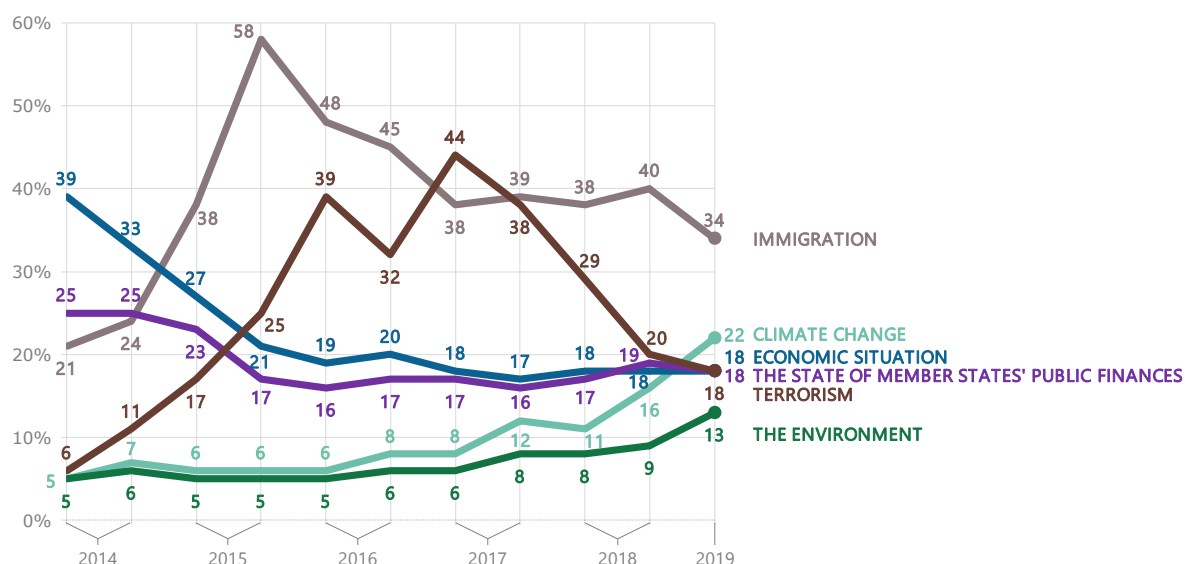


<sup>55</sup> “L’opinion Publique Dans l’Union Européenne.”

The question is asked slightly differently on the most important issues facing the EU at the moment. In fact, the item proposed is “climate change” only. Nevertheless, the results for this answer have significantly shown an increase as well by six percentage points since Autumn 2018 and by 11 percentage points since Spring 2018. These successive increases made ‘climate change’ the second most frequently mentioned item at the EU level behind ‘immigration’. As we might notice here, “climate change” and the “environment” are the only items that showed an increase in the last surveys. “Immigration” and “terrorism” both have sharply dropped while the “economic situation” and “the state of Member State’s public finances” have been quite stable since Spring 2017.

**Chart 3<sup>56</sup>**

**QA5** What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?  
(% - EU)



A similar question has also been asked at the world level in the Special Eurobarometer on Climate change<sup>57</sup>. The respondents were asked “which of the following do you consider to be the single most serious problem facing the world as a whole? Which others do you consider to be serious problems?” (up to four answers)”. We can notice here that, in the last few years “the economic situation” is cited less by the respondents (-18 pp since November-December 2013), and so is “international terrorism” (-8 pp since March 2017). In the meantime, the “climate change” item has rocketed by 17 percentage points since the last Special Eurobarometer survey

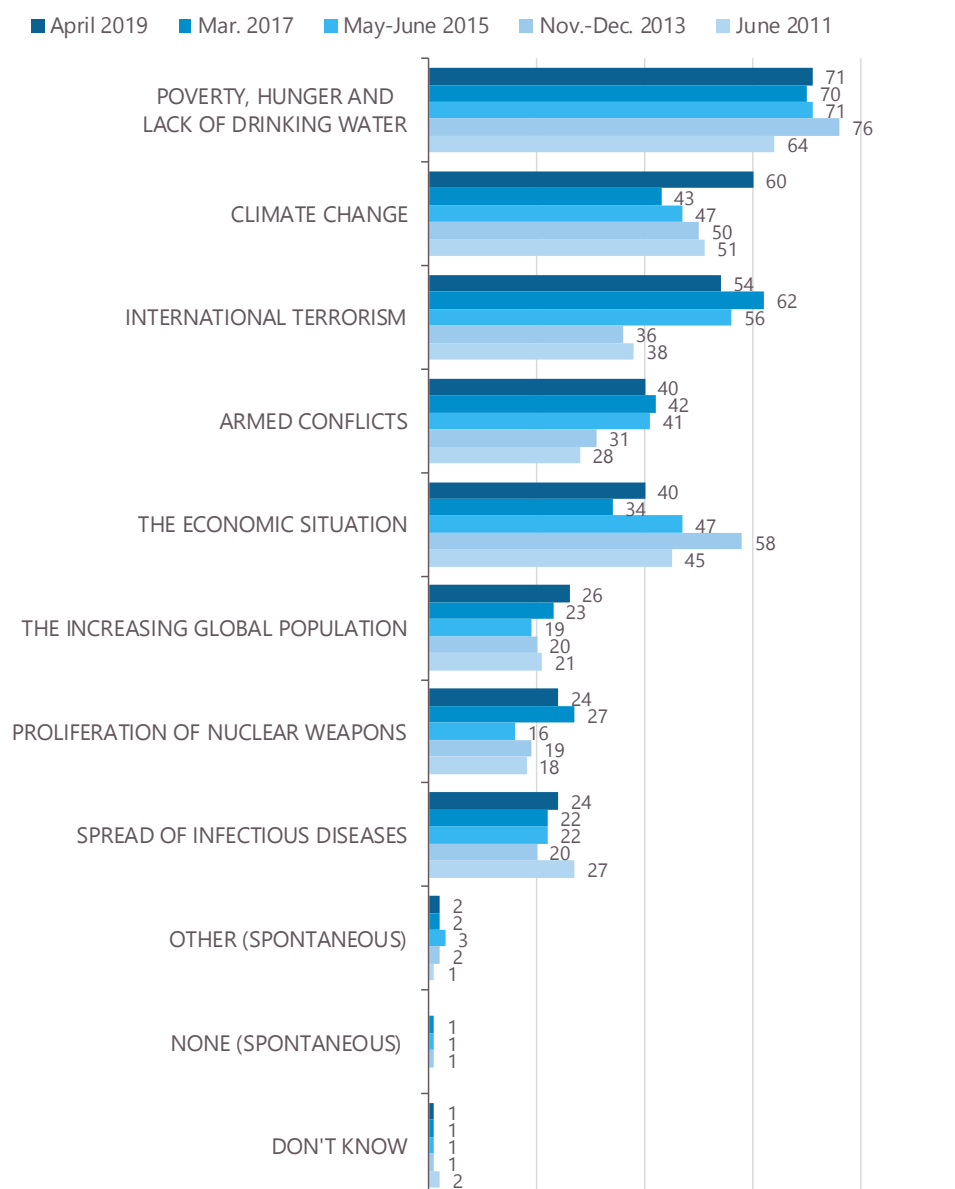
<sup>56</sup> “Public Opinion in the European Union - First Results.”

<sup>57</sup> “Climate Change.”

of March 2017 and is mentioned by six respondents out of ten. It is now the second most frequently mentioned item behind “poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water” which has remained stable and is still mentioned by more than seven out of ten respondents (71%) since the Special Eurobarometer on Climate change conducted in November-December 2013.

**Chart 4<sup>58</sup>**

**QB1T** Which of the following do you consider to be the single most serious problem facing the world as a whole? Which others do you consider to be serious problems? (MAX. 4 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU28)



<sup>58</sup> “Climate Change.”



At every level, the items on climate change have increased in the last surveys and have now reached their highest level since the first time they were asked. They are all now part of the most frequently answered issues, reaching second rank at the EU level in the last Eurobarometer Standard 91 and second most frequently mentioned problem the world is facing in the last Special Eurobarometer on Climate change. Furthermore, we notice that it is the only item to sharply rise while the others either stagnate or drop.

The same result might be observed in other Eurobarometer surveys as well. In fact, similar trends have been observed in March 2019 in the Eurobarometer Special ‘Europeans in 2019’<sup>59</sup> in which the same questions were asked: the item already reached 20% in the question asked at the country level and 20% at the EU level (the personal level was not asked in this survey).

Furthermore, with respect to the EU level, the 2019 Post-electoral survey<sup>60</sup> published in September 2019 asking ‘what are the issues which made you vote in the recent European Parliament elections’ (QG7T) measures also the fact that ‘combating climate change and protecting the environment’ is now one of the most important issues for the respondents: this answer comes in second with 37% of the respondents mentioning this item as the issue that made them vote, after ‘economy and growth’.

---

<sup>59</sup> “Europeans in 2019,” Special Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2019).

<sup>60</sup> Zalc, Bécuwe, and Buruian, “The 2019 Post-Electoral Survey - Have European Elections Entered a New Dimension?”

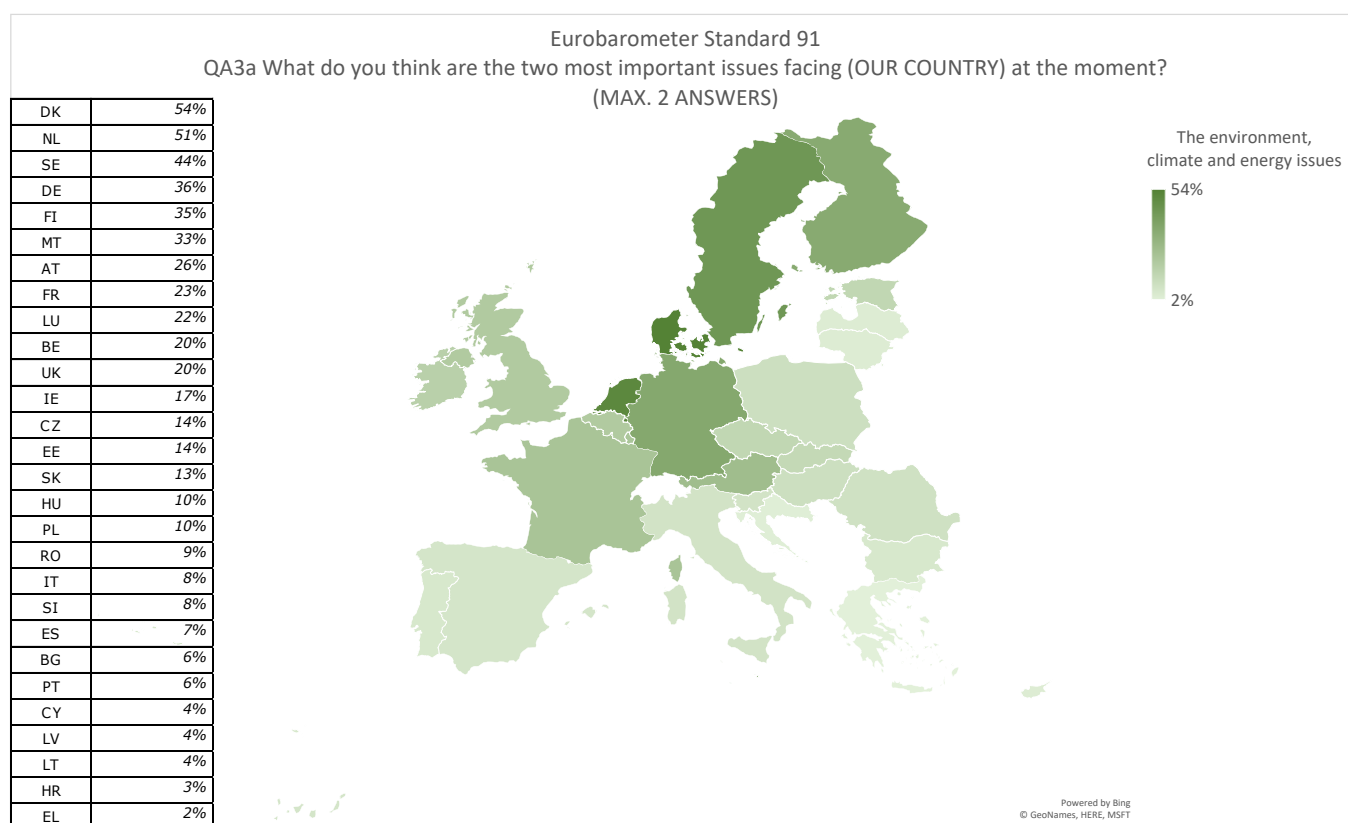
### 3) Country-level analysis

Climate-related issues are all the more frequently mentioned by respondents in the Eurobarometer surveys, in the questions about their main issues. Nevertheless, one of the main criticisms of the Eurobarometer surveys is that they remain at the water surface and do not enter in the complexity of the results. In fact, the reports tend to stay at the European level while some extremely useful findings might be found at national, socio-demographic levels or crossed with other questions.

An analysis of the results of these questions per country shows that even if the climate-related items show an increase in most of the EU28 countries, there is a significant variation among them. The maps below on the five questions mentioned in the previous part clearly show the pattern at the European level. We will first compare the results of the climate change items among countries with maps showing only those items. Then, in a second part, we will compare the different items among them per country. This analysis will help us to observe a particular pattern in Europe regarding the main issues mentioned by the respondents and the and the priority that climate-related items are given .

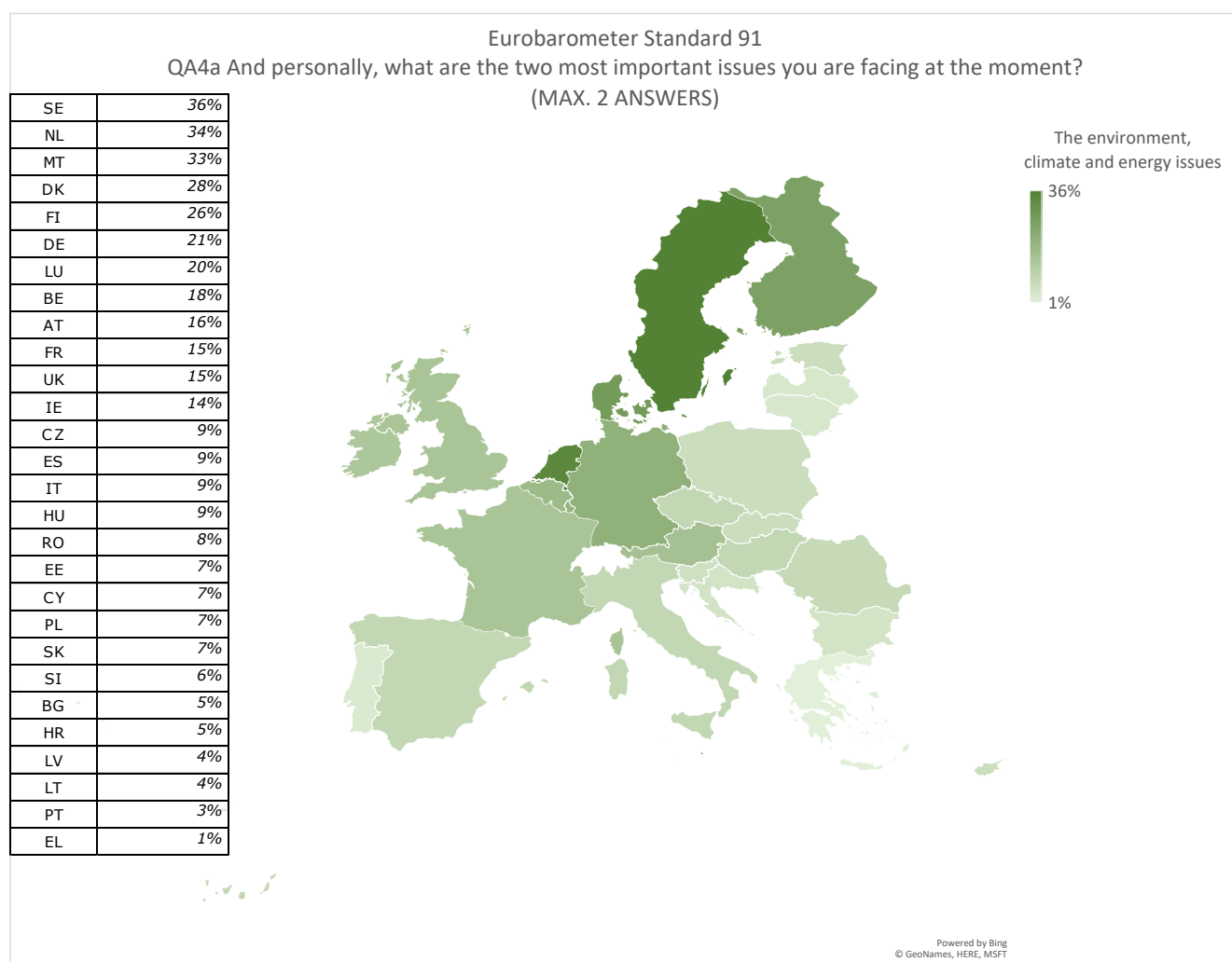
The question about the main issues asked at the country level shows, first, that there are significant differences from one country to another. In fact, “the environment, climate and energy issues” is mentioned by more than half of the respondents in Denmark (54%) and the Netherlands (51%) while it is mentioned by less than five percent in Cyprus (4%), Latvia (4%), Croatia (3%) and Greece (2%). We can clearly notice that countries in southern and eastern Europe do not tend to mention “the environment, climate and energy issues” as one of the main issues at the country level.

**Chart 5**



A similar pattern might be observed for the version of the question asked at the personal level as well. In fact, “the environment, climate and energy issues” is mentioned by more than a third of the respondents in Sweden (36%), the Netherlands (34%) and—more surprisingly—in Malta (33%) but by less than five percent in Latvia (4%), Lithuania (4%), Portugal (3%) and Greece (1%). Again, as with the country-level question, we can clearly notice that this item is more frequently mentioned in the northern and western Europe but less frequently in the eastern and Mediterranean countries.

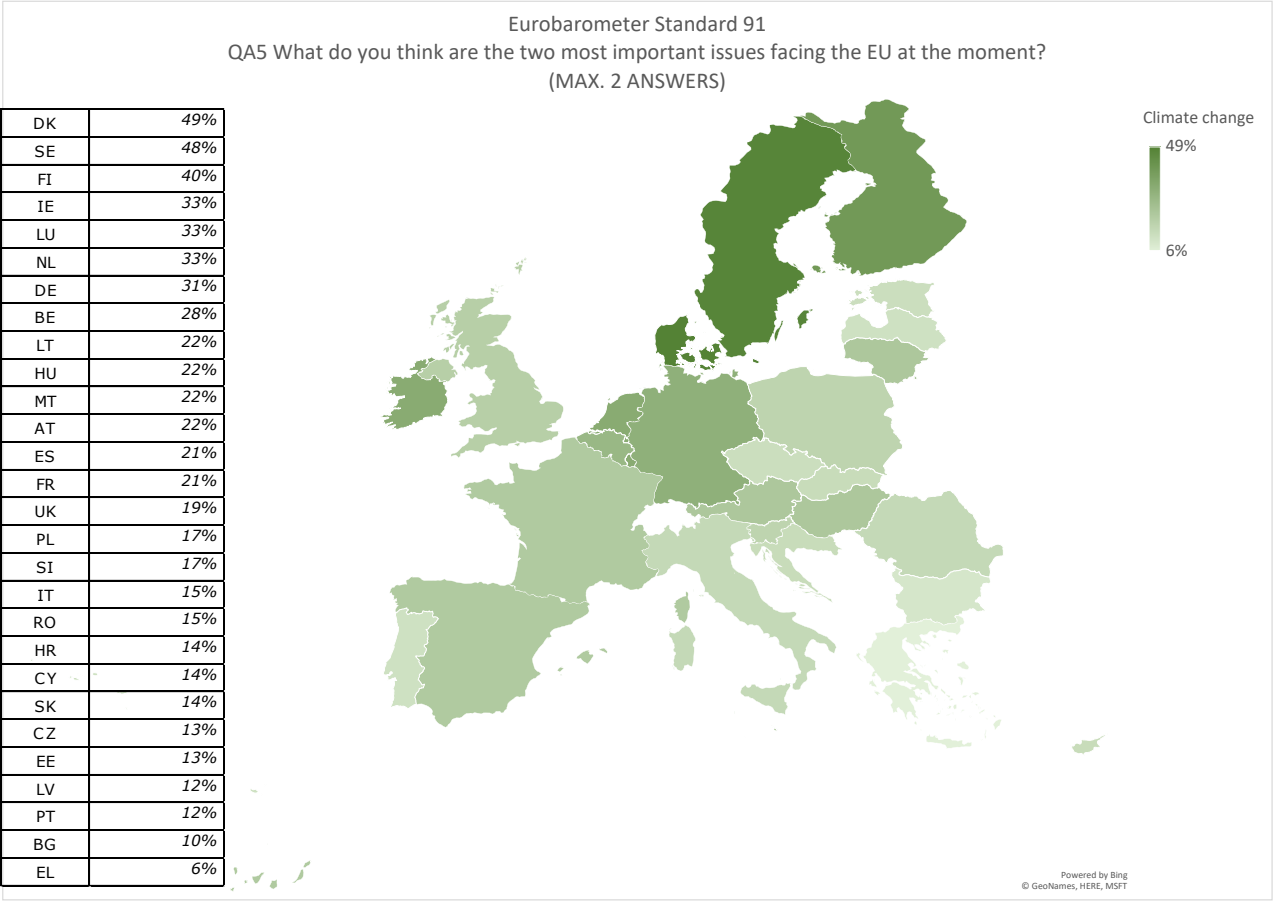
**Chart 6**



For the question asked at the EU level, the same pattern might be observed. However, the percentage of this answer is higher. Furthermore, we must keep in mind that the nature of the item is slightly different here. In the previous questions, the item is “the environment, climate and energy issues”, while in the EU-level version “climate change” and “the environment” are two distinct items. However, even when asked in that way, “climate change” is most frequently mentioned by EU28 respondents at the EU level of the question (22%) than at the country level (20%) or the individual level (14%). Furthermore, the item “the environment”, as already mentioned, has increased in the last surveys too, reaching 13% in the last Standard Eurobarometer 91. Even though we cannot artificially count them together, it is clear that when asked in the same way as at the other levels, i.e. merging “climate change” and “the environment”, the score would be at least the same or most probably even higher.

For the item “climate change” asked at the EU level, more than one respondent out of ten mention this item as one of the most important issues in every country except Greece. This last country is the one where the respondents mention climate related issues least frequently at the individual, country and EU levels while the Greek respondents seem to give this answer more frequently when asked about the main problems facing the world, as we will see below. However, some important disparities might be observed as well, as more than a third of respondents mention this item in six countries: Denmark (49%), Sweden (48%), Finland (40%), Ireland (33%), Luxembourg (33%) and the Netherlands (33%) while it is mentioned by less than 15% in nine countries, all in eastern and southern Europe. Again, as at the other levels, respondents from countries in northern Europe tend to mention this item more frequently than countries in eastern and southern Europe.

Chart 7



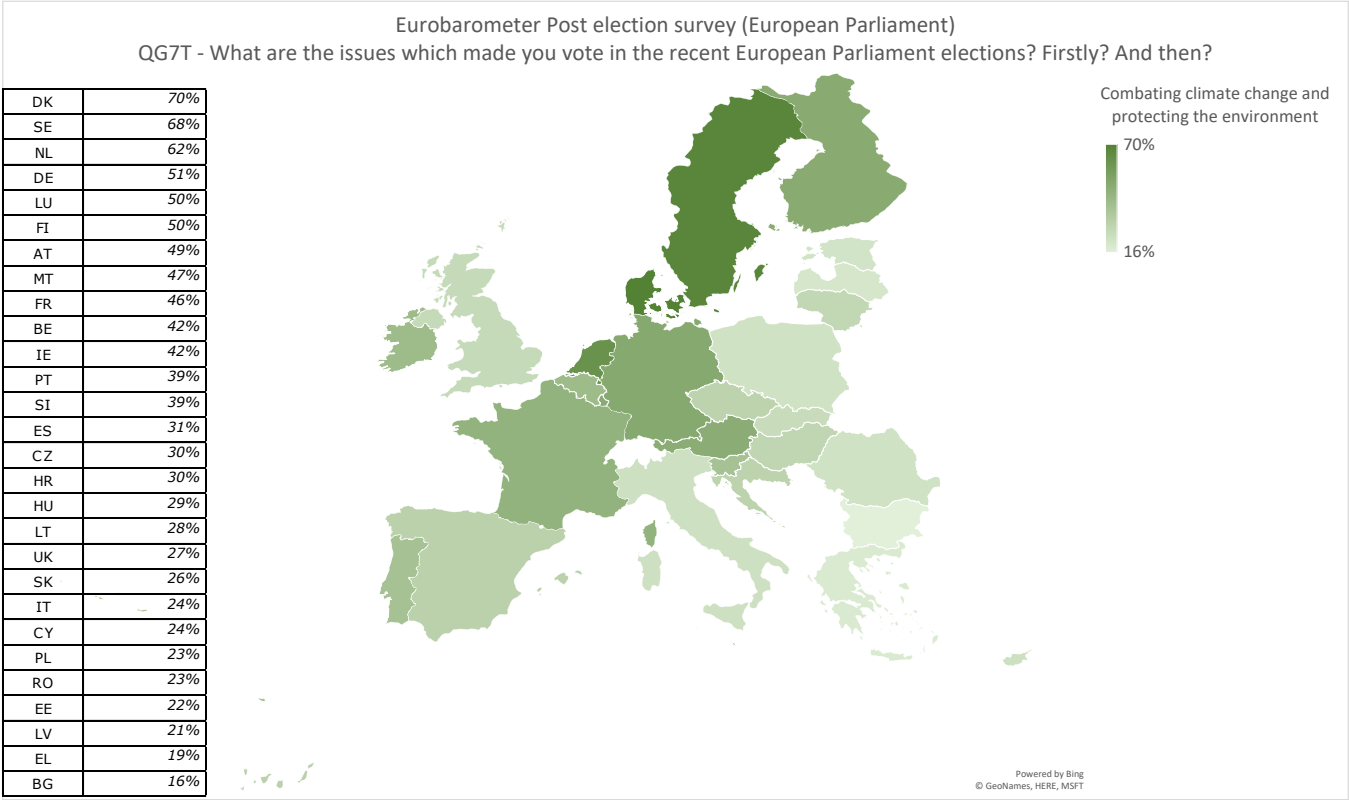
The fact that most respondents seem to identify climate change and environment issues as one of the most important challenges for the European Union might also be confirmed by the post-electoral Eurobarometer survey conducted by the European Parliament<sup>61</sup>. In fact, in the question already mentioned on “what are the main issues which made you vote in the recent European Parliament”, 37% of the respondents mentioned “combating climate change and protecting the environment”, bringing this item to second place among the most frequently mentioned issues. This supports our assumption that, put together in the Standard Eurobarometer survey in the main issues at the EU level question, the number of respondents could be even higher.

Nevertheless, this average hides the real picture at the country level where the disparities are huge. In fact, seven respondents out of ten mentioned this item in Denmark (70%), a similar percentage in Sweden (68%) and almost two thirds in the Netherlands (62%). While in every other country this item is mentioned by more than 20% of the respondents, it is one of the issues which made only 16% of the Bulgarian respondents vote and 19% of the Greek ones. As for the Standard Eurobarometer questions mentioned above, there is a clear pattern which can be observed on the map: countries in the north and west are more inclined to mention “combating climate change and protecting the environment” while it is less the case in southern and eastern Europe.

---

<sup>61</sup> Zalc, Bécuwe, and Buruian.

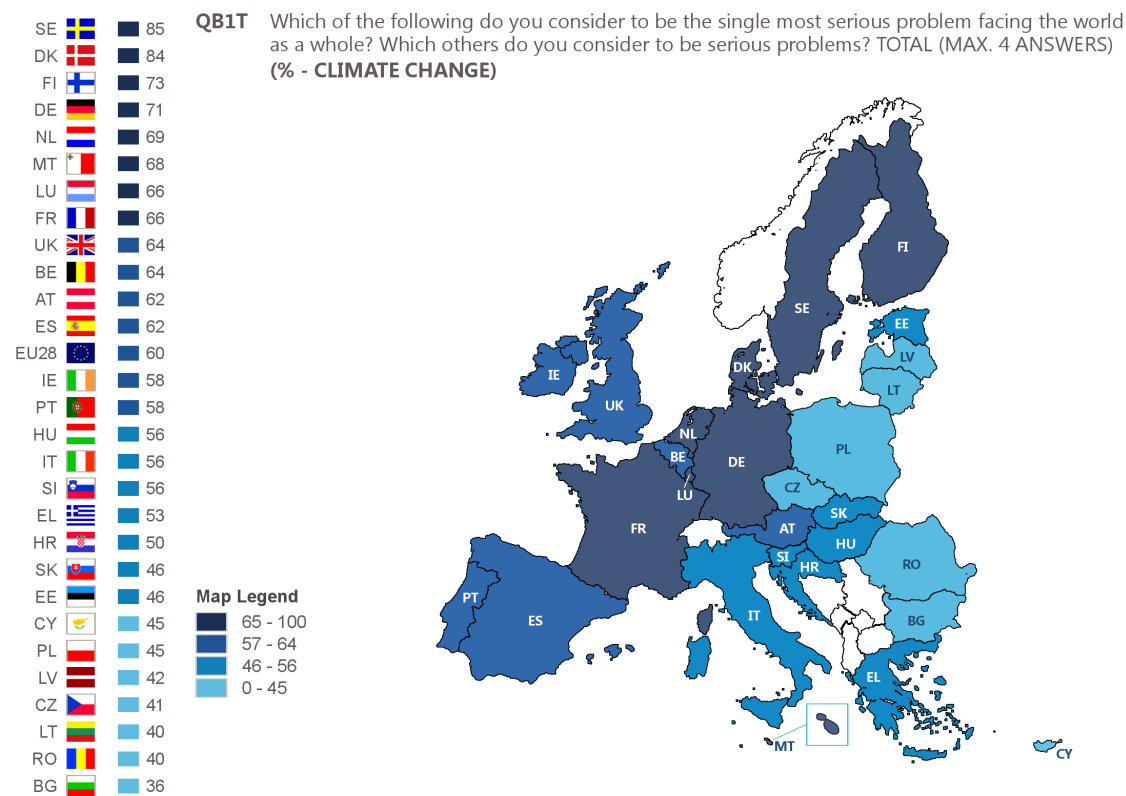
Chart 8





The question on the problem faced by the world as a whole asked in the Special Eurobarometer on Climate change<sup>62</sup> shows the same pattern. The map below, used in the report as well, shows an even bigger disparity among countries. Even though more than one third of the respondents everywhere in Europe mention “climate change” here, it ranges from more than eight respondents in Luxembourg and Denmark to 36% in Bulgaria. Furthermore, this is the case with more than two thirds of the respondents in ten countries in northern and western Europe except Malta. Again, a similar pattern might be observed here showing important disparities between the countries in northern and western Europe and those in the east and south.

Chart 9<sup>63</sup>



<sup>62</sup> “Climate Change.”

<sup>63</sup> “Climate Change.”

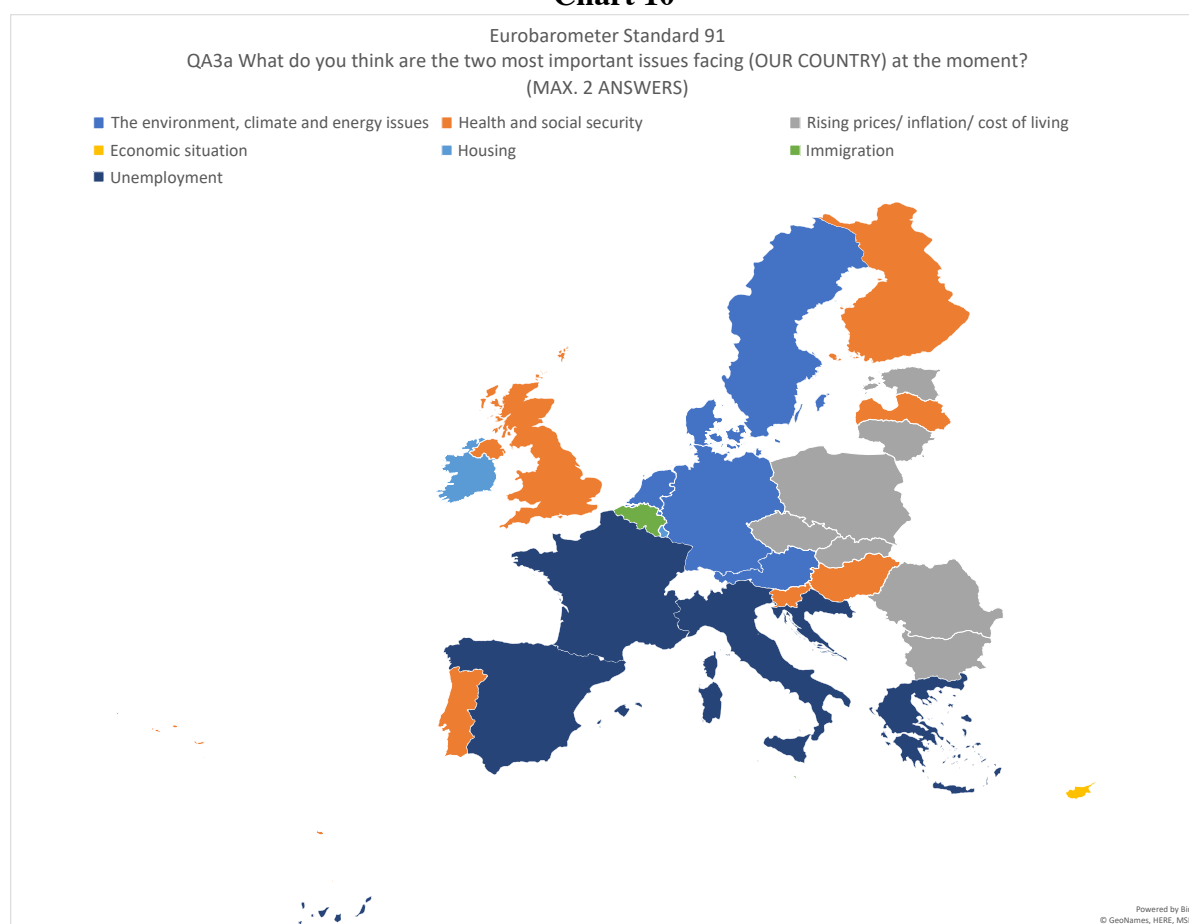
Putting those results on maps helps us to discover this pattern. In fact, it is clear that the respondents in northern Europe mention climate-related issues more frequently. Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland are systematically in the top five of the respondents mentioning climate-related items for the several questions examined. On the contrary, the respondents from the countries of southern and eastern Europe have a lower tendency to do so. It is particularly true for the respondents from Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Latvia for every question. However, without distinction of country, all the respondents tend to identify the climate-related items more as a main issue at the EU and world level than at the other levels. In fact, the score is higher in every country when this question is asked at an EU and world level, either asking the respondents to mention the issue that made them vote (Post-electoral Eurobarometer survey) or the main issues faced by the EU or the whole world.

This disparity among countries shows another finding: even if the percentage with respect to the climate-related items have increased a lot in the last surveys, they are not the most frequently mentioned items in most of the countries. To illustrate that, it is quite important to put them in perspective with respect to the other items proposed for those questions. In the following EU map charts, only the most frequently mentioned issue is shown per country for each question.

At the country level, “the environment, climate and energy issues” is the item mentioned as the most important topic in Denmark (54%), the Netherlands (51%), Sweden (44%), Germany (36%) and Austria (26%). It is the second most frequently mentioned item in Luxembourg (22%, same as “rising prices/inflation/cost of living”), far behind “housing” mentioned by 60% of respondents, and in Finland (35%) where “health and social security” is mentioned by a relative majority (48%).






























We notice that, for this question the main issues are quite diverse here. Nevertheless, an important majority of respondents in eastern Europe mention first “rising prices/inflation/cost of living” while several Mediterranean countries mention “unemployment”.

**Chart 10**



**Chart 11<sup>64</sup>**

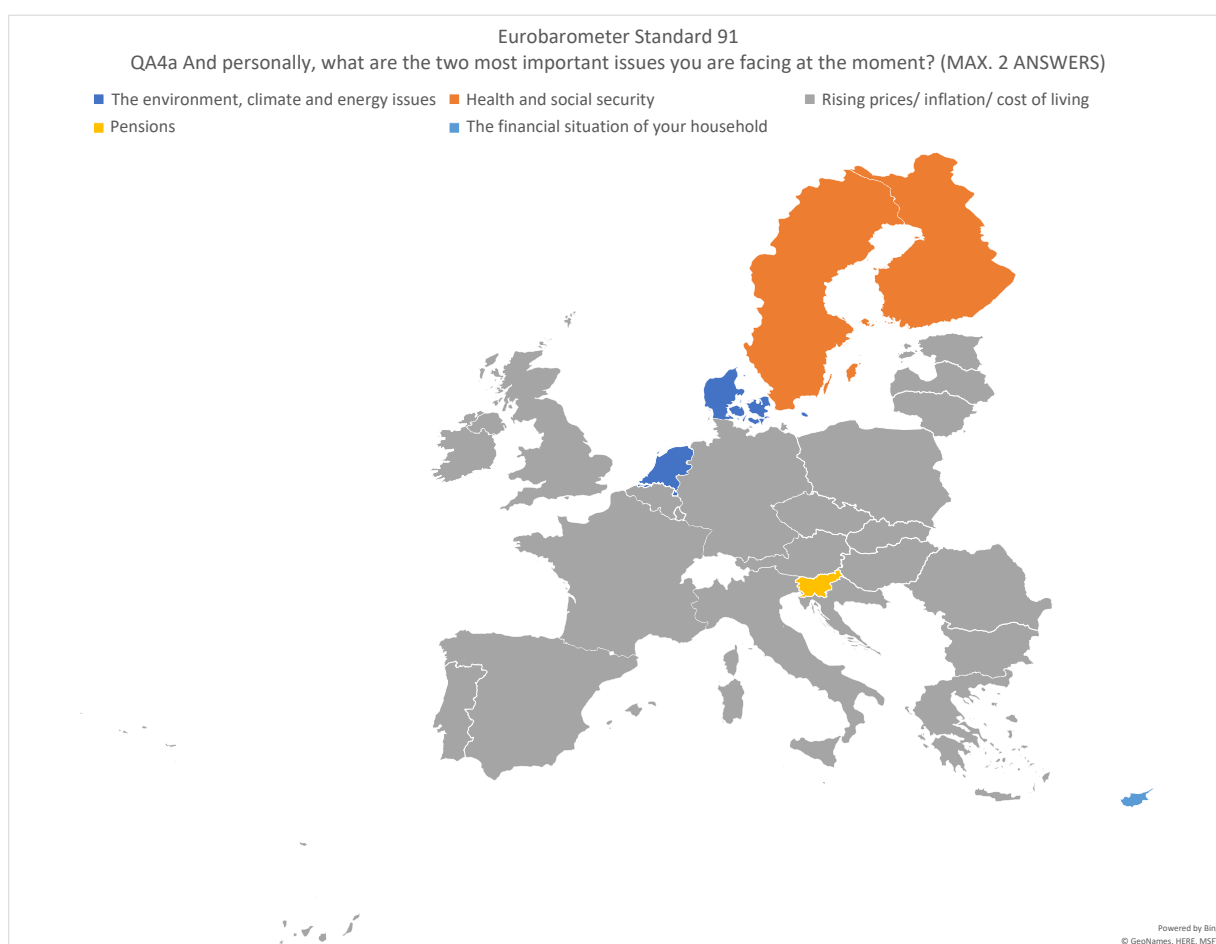
**QA3a** What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment?  
(%)

		Unemployment	Rising prices/ inflation/ cost of living	Health and social security	The environment, climate and energy issues	Immigration	Economic situation	Pensions	Housing	The education system	Crime	Government debt	Taxation	Terrorism
EU28		21	21	21	20	17	16	14	13	12	11	10	8	6
BE		15	20	13	20	28	12	22	5	11	11	22	11	4
BG		15	46	31	6	9	27	17	1	9	16	4	5	3
CZ		4	38	20	14	16	10	19	18	9	9	21	8	3
DK		2	4	40	54	24	6	9	2	16	8	1	12	4
DE		7	13	15	36	24	5	15	30	18	12	3	4	7
EE		15	38	30	14	11	17	16	1	13	2	6	17	1
IE		9	16	41	17	7	11	4	54	7	13	5	5	2
EL		49	9	9	2	18	45	9	1	6	8	22	16	1
ES		51	9	15	7	16	21	22	10	10	6	10	7	4
FR		33	28	12	23	17	11	15	7	11	9	11	7	13
HR		33	25	16	3	13	26	15	4	7	24	21	7	1
IT		44	12	7	8	22	31	12	4	4	9	19	17	6
CY		24	19	22	4	16	41	8	11	17	11	7	5	1
LV		17	31	32	4	7	15	22	4	14	2	6	31	0
LT		18	54	19	4	10	13	18	4	14	6	3	22	0
LU		10	22	8	22	12	3	7	60	17	3	1	7	3
HU		8	32	45	10	17	16	17	7	13	6	9	6	5
MT		1	20	4	33	49	1	8	43	6	10	1	2	1
NL		3	13	32	51	23	4	32	11	13	6	1	3	5
AT		16	21	21	26	18	11	14	12	18	12	11	5	4
PL		5	46	28	10	9	11	15	7	14	8	15	8	3
PT		18	27	34	6	4	22	18	7	7	3	13	11	1
RO		11	35	30	9	7	25	18	7	13	9	11	10	4
SI		15	12	47	8	24	13	22	8	6	6	10	10	1
SK		14	37	36	13	7	17	16	7	11	7	7	6	3
FI		15	9	48	35	16	17	9	3	17	3	15	7	2
SE		7	4	42	44	22	9	8	7	22	24	0	3	4
UK		10	17	29	20	13	15	4	20	13	26	4	4	9
1st MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM		2nd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM				3rd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM								

<sup>64</sup> “Public Opinion in the European Union - First Results.”






























The question asking about the most important issues faced personally shows an even more severe picture for “the environment, climate and energy issues” item: those are the main issues only in the Netherlands (34%) and Denmark (28%). Sweden (41%) and Finland (39%) declare “health and social security” as the main issue but “the environment, climate and energy issues” are the second most important issues there (respectively 36% and 26%). In Slovenia, the respondents indicate “pensions” first and in Cyprus the respondents seem more worried about the financial situation of their household. “Rising prices/inflation/cost of living” is mentioned as the most important issue they are facing personally in the 22 remaining countries.

**Chart 12**



**Chart 13<sup>65</sup>**

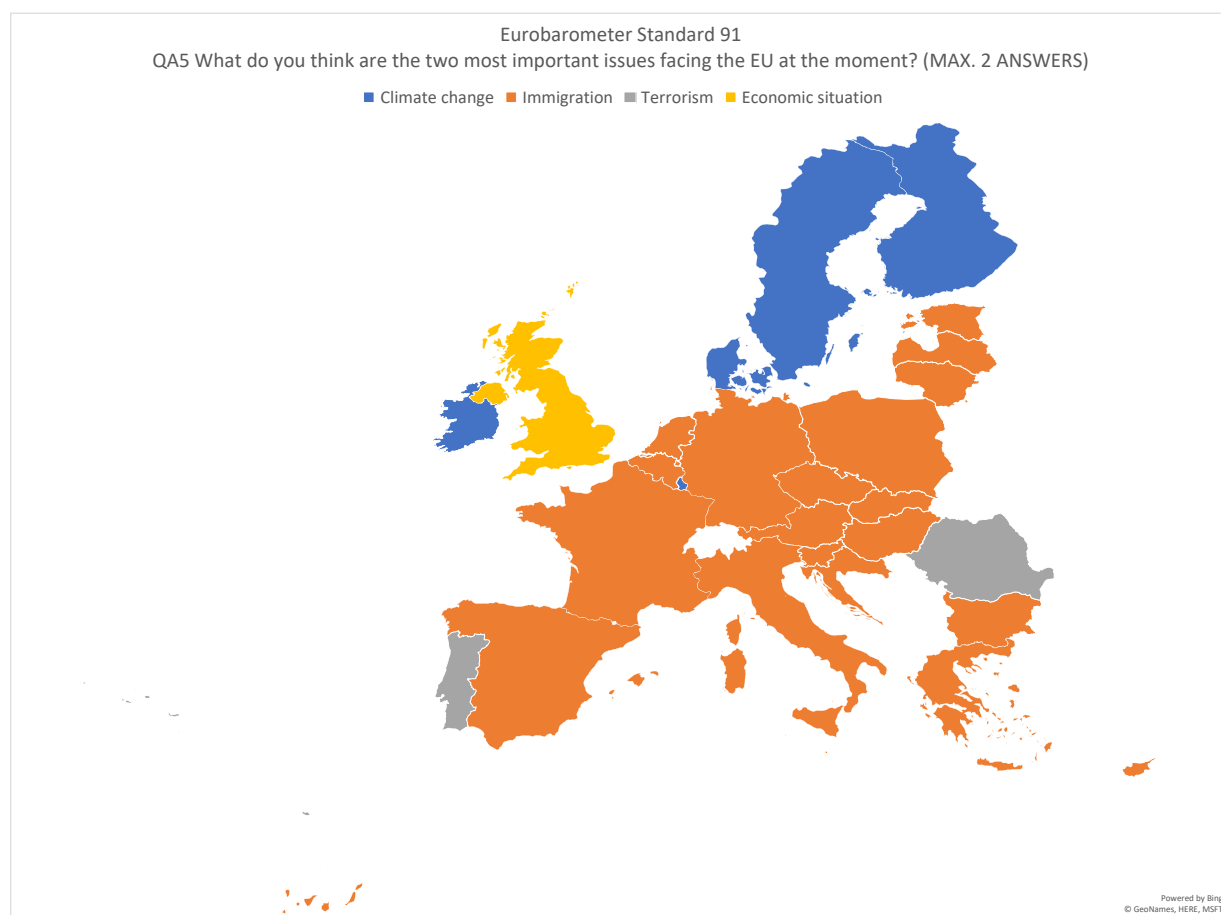
**QA4a** And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment?  
(%)

		Rising prices/ inflation/ cost of living	Health and social security	Pensions	The environment, climate and energy issues	The financial situation of your household	Taxation	The education system	Working conditions	Unemployment	Living conditions	The economic situation in (OUR COUNTRY)	Housing	Crime	Immigration	Terrorism
EU28		31	18	15	14	13	10	10	9	9	8	8	8	6	5	2
BE		33	11	19	18	14	17	11	8	6	8	5	7	10	11	3
BG		40	23	20	5	19	5	6	11	7	15	12	2	6	3	2
CZ		41	17	14	9	15	8	5	8	3	8	5	17	3	3	2
DK		8	22	10	28	7	5	10	7	3	3	5	6	3	6	3
DE		25	19	14	21	9	9	14	7	5	4	4	10	5	7	2
EE		38	27	19	7	16	13	11	7	7	7	6	4	1	3	0
IE		36	27	9	14	13	12	11	7	6	5	9	16	7	3	2
EL		29	14	19	1	25	28	8	11	18	11	19	0	7	4	0
ES		25	13	19	9	9	12	11	14	18	7	10	10	2	4	1
FR		40	9	18	15	17	8	7	10	9	10	6	7	7	4	2
HR		32	16	20	5	24	6	6	12	8	15	11	9	3	4	2
IT		25	14	14	9	13	22	7	13	18	9	11	4	7	9	3
CY		28	18	8	7	32	5	12	9	11	6	13	7	4	5	1
LV		36	29	20	4	9	22	10	5	7	5	12	9	1	1	0
LT		61	16	16	4	11	18	8	7	7	4	8	6	1	2	0
LU		28	7	4	20	7	9	14	7	5	4	2	21	5	4	3
HU		36	26	19	9	22	5	9	12	5	12	10	7	2	4	2
MT		36	8	15	33	5	1	8	5	2	6	2	10	7	13	1
NL		21	30	22	34	11	4	24	7	3	6	4	7	4	5	2
AT		30	18	13	16	11	5	13	9	6	14	6	12	7	6	2
PL		43	21	14	7	14	6	6	10	5	13	5	5	4	3	3
PT		42	19	17	3	9	21	7	13	9	9	5	5	1	3	1
RO		34	23	16	8	18	10	11	10	6	16	14	6	6	5	4
SI		18	19	20	6	14	8	8	15	7	17	4	6	1	5	1
SK		34	20	14	7	17	5	5	11	6	10	8	10	3	2	2
FI		12	39	14	26	22	10	15	9	6	12	13	10	2	5	1
SE		6	41	14	36	17	4	18	6	2	8	7	10	12	10	2
UK		32	23	10	15	13	6	9	5	7	6	11	11	14	3	3
		1st MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM				2nd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM				3rd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM						

<sup>65</sup> “L’opinion Publique Dans l’Union Européenne.”






























At the EU level, even if the EU28 average is higher than at the country level and the personal level, “climate change” is mentioned as the most important issue in five countries only: Denmark (49%), Sweden (48%), Finland (40%) and Luxembourg and Ireland (both 33%). In Portugal (29%) and Romania (26%) the majority of respondents mention “terrorism” while in the UK they mention “economic situation”. In the remaining countries, “immigration” is considered as the most important issue facing the EU at the moment. It must be noted that this item is also second in Denmark (46%), Sweden (35%), Finland (32%) and Ireland (28%) where “climate change” is mentioned as the main issue at this level, as well as in Romania (24%) and the UK (22%).

**Chart 14**



**Chart 15<sup>66</sup>**

**QA5** What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?  
(%)

		Immigration	Climate change	Economic situation	The state of Member States' public finances	Terrorism	The environment	Unemployment	EU's influence in the world	Rising prices/ inflation/ cost of living	Crime	Energy supply	Pensions	Taxation
EU28		34	22	18	18	18	13	12	12	10	9	5	4	4
BE		44	28	15	17	12	16	7	10	13	10	7	7	4
BG		46	10	15	8	36	6	5	8	13	10	6	3	2
CZ		53	13	11	17	32	11	3	10	11	12	3	5	2
DK		46	49	11	9	13	27	6	10	3	7	3	0	3
DE		37	31	12	27	11	15	10	15	6	8	6	3	2
EE		53	13	14	13	26	8	4	13	8	6	5	2	3
IE		28	33	17	10	21	17	10	10	14	7	7	4	4
EL		37	6	32	27	26	6	14	17	7	12	3	2	4
ES		37	21	23	14	15	12	18	8	7	5	4	6	6
FR		28	21	18	12	21	19	13	12	17	8	5	6	3
HR		42	14	13	18	33	5	7	14	12	16	6	4	4
IT		32	15	28	17	14	8	26	5	12	9	6	7	8
CY		47	14	20	16	25	6	18	6	9	14	1	1	3
LV		46	12	13	13	27	6	6	10	10	7	1	2	6
LT		38	22	11	10	30	4	4	10	12	11	3	2	7
LU		33	33	13	15	14	15	14	13	8	6	5	4	3
HU		49	22	14	20	23	7	5	13	9	8	8	5	4
MT		63	22	5	6	16	26	7	3	8	12	1	3	4
NL		50	33	12	33	13	15	3	20	4	3	4	2	1
AT		28	22	17	24	12	17	11	17	13	12	8	7	5
PL		36	17	10	13	24	11	3	9	16	10	8	5	3
PT		18	12	18	27	29	7	8	5	9	7	1	2	4
RO		24	15	16	16	26	12	8	10	16	11	8	8	7
SI		53	17	12	12	20	11	8	9	7	13	5	6	4
SK		35	14	12	18	20	11	6	10	18	15	6	7	3
FI		32	40	18	24	19	17	8	18	3	6	3	2	2
SE		35	48	12	14	13	26	5	13	1	11	9	2	1
UK		22	19	23	13	13	13	11	17	10	9	3	2	4
1st MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM		2nd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM				3rd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM								

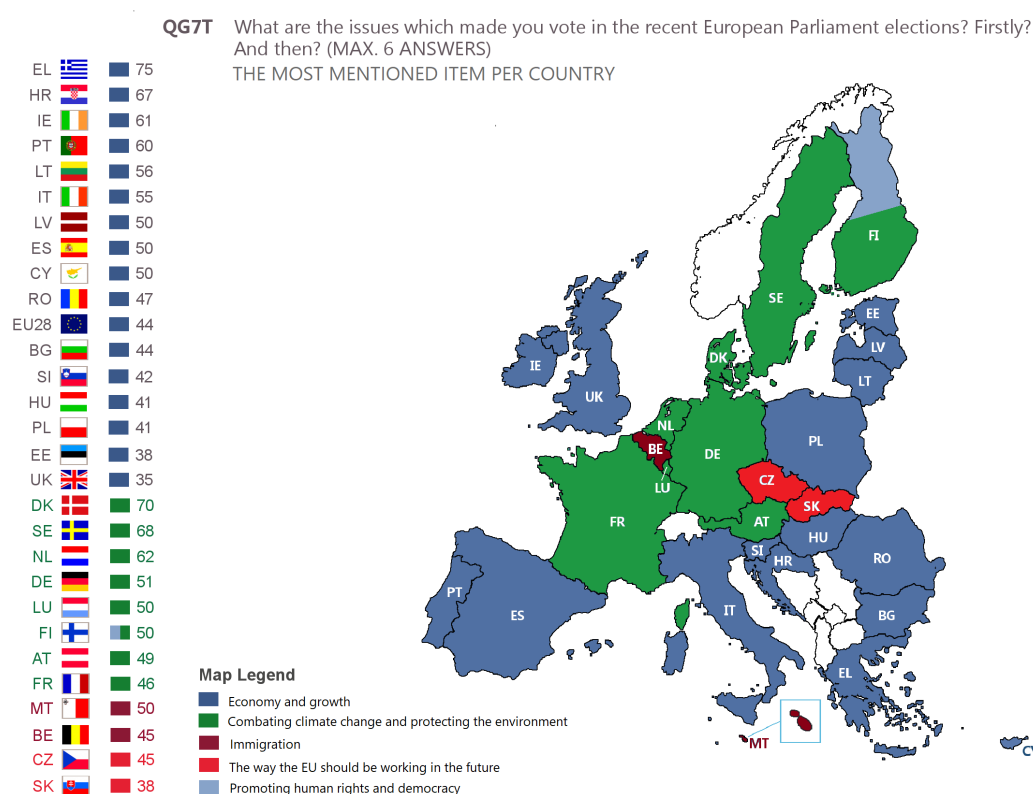
<sup>66</sup> “Public Opinion in the European Union - First Results.”



In the post-electoral Eurobarometer survey, in the question about what issues made the respondents vote in the recent European Parliament elections, the item “combating climate change and protecting the environment” arrives first in eight countries including Denmark (70%), Sweden (68%), the Netherlands (62%), Germany (51%) Luxembourg (50%), Finland (50%, same as “promoting human rights and democracy”), Austria (49%) and France (46%). “The way the EU should be working in the future” is answered most frequently in Czechia (45%) and Slovakia (38%) and “immigration” is the most frequently mentioned item in Belgium (45%). In the remaining 17 countries, “economy and growth” is the most frequently mentioned item in this question.

Here we notice quite an important divergence from the previous question analysed. The main issues identified at the EU level are not in line with the reason why the people went to the polling stations.

**Chart 16<sup>67</sup>**



<sup>67</sup> Zalc, Bécuwe, and Buruian, “The 2019 Post-Electoral Survey - Have European Elections Entered a New Dimension?”

**Chart 17<sup>68</sup>**

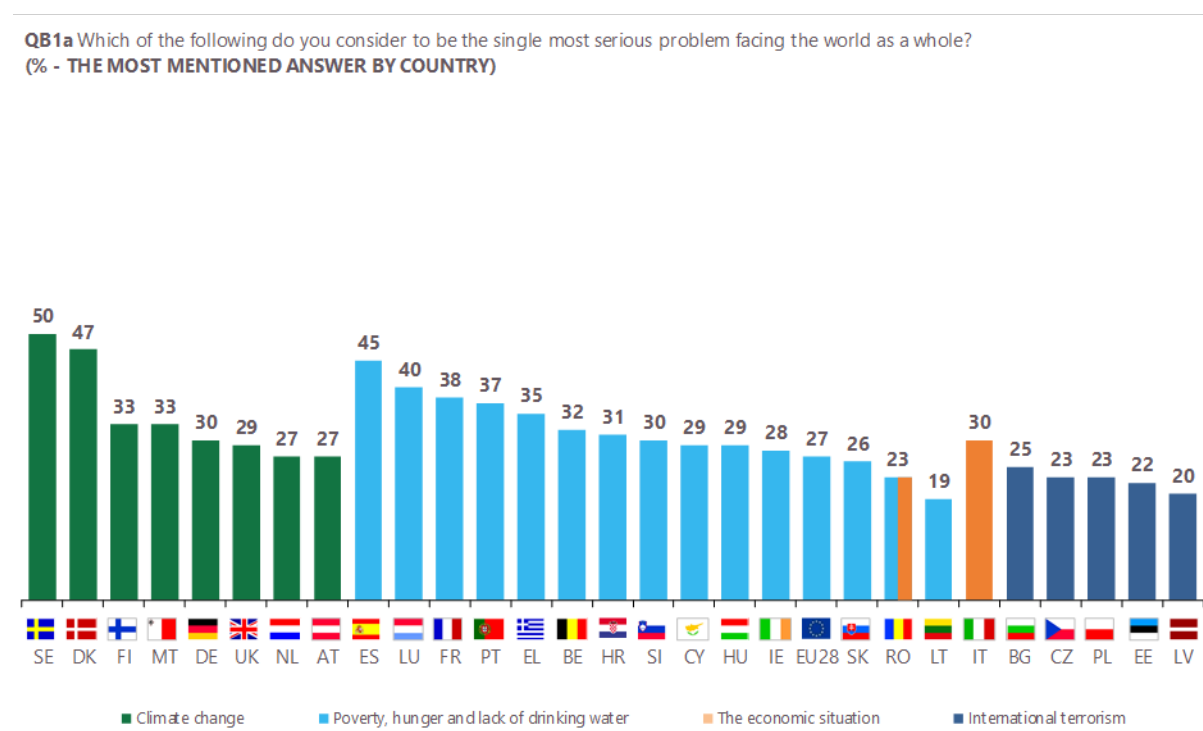
**QG7T** What are the issues which made you vote in the recent European Parliament elections? Firstly? And then?  
(MAX. 6 ANSWERS) (%)

		Economy and growth	Combating climate change and protecting the environment	Promoting human rights and democracy	The way the EU should be working in the future	Immigration	Social protection of EU citizens	Fight against terrorism	Combating youth unemployment	Security and defence policy	Protection of external borders	Consumer protection and food safety	Protection of personal data	Other (SPONTANEOUS)
EU28		44	37	37	36	34	29	26	25	25	21	20	12	8
BE		42	42	26	30	45	32	32	23	21	25	24	14	5
BG		44	16	26	39	24	43	27	21	21	20	28	12	6
CZ		35	30	38	45	39	22	34	12	33	27	37	13	6
DK		42	70	44	25	45	20	36	10	26	36	21	9	12
DE		36	51	42	42	39	39	24	15	23	24	23	14	8
EE		38	22	34	31	33	18	21	14	36	24	10	8	12
IE		61	42	38	40	32	29	31	24	25	22	25	23	5
EL		75	19	26	40	45	37	19	60	36	37	18	12	7
ES		50	31	37	27	27	31	20	29	19	12	15	7	10
FR		38	46	33	36	26	23	35	29	24	19	19	7	6
HR		67	30	35	29	34	37	34	55	22	22	37	11	6
IT		55	24	32	36	50	23	30	43	31	22	19	14	4
CY		50	24	39	22	20	30	22	47	40	14	20	12	11
LV		50	21	32	25	18	31	14	16	29	23	17	15	9
LT		56	28	35	33	21	47	13	32	34	11	20	13	4
LU		39	50	33	44	27	36	22	30	23	18	21	9	14
HU		41	29	39	39	37	30	27	25	31	32	25	17	1
MT		31	47	40	30	50	25	34	9	15	21	24	13	16
NL		43	62	50	52	47	27	35	7	35	21	16	10	9
AT		34	49	40	47	39	39	20	26	23	39	32	24	10
PL		41	23	32	38	20	21	19	12	29	18	21	13	4
PT		60	39	37	34	10	46	28	34	28	10	17	10	11
RO		47	23	41	26	20	30	23	35	24	19	33	16	5
SI		42	39	39	32	32	35	25	31	15	26	28	11	10
SK		35	26	34	38	32	37	24	26	32	23	36	15	4
FI		38	50	50	33	30	11	25	15	39	28	11	7	10
SE		33	68	61	47	42	20	40	8	32	29	14	8	9
UK		35	27	31	30	23	20	22	9	19	12	11	8	18
Highest percentage per country		Lowest percentage per country												
		Highest percentage per item						Lowest percentage per item						

<sup>68</sup> Zalc, Bécuwe, and Buruian.

Concerning the question asked in the Special Eurobarometer on Climate change<sup>69</sup> regarding the most serious problem that the world as a whole is facing, “climate change” is mentioned first in eight countries: Sweden (50%), Denmark (47%), Finland (33%), Malta (33%), Germany (30%), the UK (29%), the Netherlands (27%) and Austria (27%). “Poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water” is mentioned in 14 countries, “international terrorism” in five countries and “the economic situation” in two (it arrives first *ex aequo* with “poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water” in Romania).

**Chart 18**<sup>70</sup>
































<sup>69</sup> “Climate Change.”

<sup>70</sup> “Climate Change.”

Chart 19<sup>71</sup>

QB1a Which of the following do you consider to be the single most serious problem facing the world as a whole? (%)

		Poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water	Diff. April 2019 - March 2017	Climate change	Diff. April 2019 - March 2017	International terrorism	Diff. April 2019 - March 2017	The economic situation	Diff. April 2019 - March 2017	Armed conflicts	Diff. April 2019 - March 2017
EU28		27	▼ 1	23	▲ 11	15	▼ 9	12	▲ 3	8	▼ 1
BE		32	▲ 4	23	▲ 6	12	▼ 11	11	▲ 3	7	=
BG		23	▼ 4	10	▲ 3	25	▼ 4	15	▲ 6	11	=
CZ		22	▲ 3	15	▲ 9	23	▼ 16	6	▼ 1	10	▼ 1
DK		16	▼ 5	47	▲ 18	14	▼ 6	1	▼ 1	5	▼ 4
DE		24	▼ 8	30	▲ 16	14	▼ 7	4	▲ 2	10	▼ 2
EE		17	=	16	▲ 7	22	▼ 10	7	▲ 2	18	=
IE		28	▼ 6	26	▲ 13	17	▼ 6	11	=	4	▼ 2
EL		35	=	11	▲ 7	8	▼ 3	27	▼ 9	5	=
ES		45	▲ 5	18	▲ 5	7	▼ 7	16	▼ 2	7	▲ 1
FR		38	▲ 1	23	▲ 9	17	▼ 7	9	▲ 5	4	▼ 3
HR		31	▼ 3	11	▲ 3	15	▼ 7	20	▲ 7	10	=
IT		15	▼ 2	19	▲ 12	16	▼ 16	30	▲ 9	6	=
CY		29	▼ 7	14	▲ 6	14	▼ 6	18	▲ 1	9	▲ 1
LV		17	▼ 3	11	▲ 2	20	=	15	▲ 6	18	▼ 1
LT		19	▼ 5	14	▲ 6	16	▼ 6	12	=	14	▼ 1
LU		40	▲ 2	23	▲ 11	11	▼ 10	5	▲ 1	6	▼ 2
HU		29	▼ 6	17	▲ 7	12	▼ 8	12	▲ 6	5	▼ 2
MT		15	▼ 7	33	▲ 20	27	▼ 17	5	▲ 3	2	▼ 2
NL		24	▼ 6	27	=	16	▼ 1	3	▲ 2	9	▲ 1
AT		22	▼ 4	27	▲ 11	13	▼ 4	9	▼ 2	9	▼ 1
PL		18	▲ 2	15	▲ 9	23	▼ 7	7	▲ 3	16	▼ 2
PT		37	▲ 3	19	▲ 15	13	▼ 17	17	▲ 5	5	▼ 2
RO		23	▼ 3	11	▲ 2	16	▼ 4	23	▲ 9	7	▼ 2
SI		30	▼ 5	19	▲ 8	16	▼ 6	11	▲ 1	6	▼ 2
SK		26	▼ 5	13	▲ 5	13	▼ 10	14	▲ 6	11	▼ 2
FI		17	▼ 10	33	▲ 13	13	▼ 5	3	=	8	▼ 3
SE		18	▼ 5	50	▲ 12	9	▼ 5	3	▲ 1	6	▼ 4
UK		24	▼ 2	29	▲ 15	17	▼ 8	7	▲ 3	6	▼ 2

The analysis of the answers to these question per country shows two major things. First, these issues, even worded differently, seem to be more frequently mentioned in every question by countries in northern Europe, especially in Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland. On the contrary, they are mentioned less frequently by other countries in southern and eastern Europe, especially in Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Latvia. Furthermore, as we have seen, these climate-change-related items are far from being the most frequently mentioned in most countries. Thus, although it is undeniable that climate-change-related items are the only

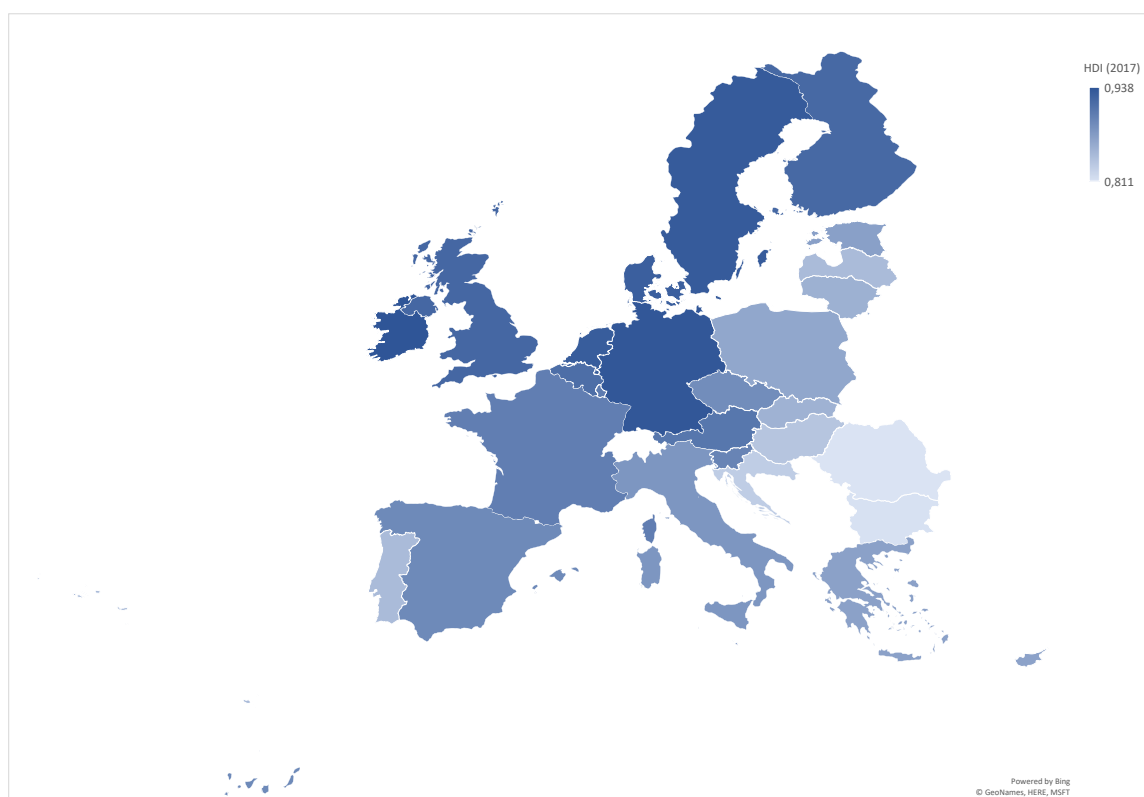
<sup>71</sup> "Climate Change."

ones on the rise, as we have seen, it must be noted that this evolution is not uniform. It is more prominent in some countries than in others.

#### 4) Socio-demographic analysis

The pattern observed is not trivial: it matches almost perfectly with a map on the Human Development Index, for instance (see Chart 20). In the following part, we are going to try to understand those differences among countries, focusing on the socio-demographics indicators of the respondents mentioning items related to climate issues in these questions.

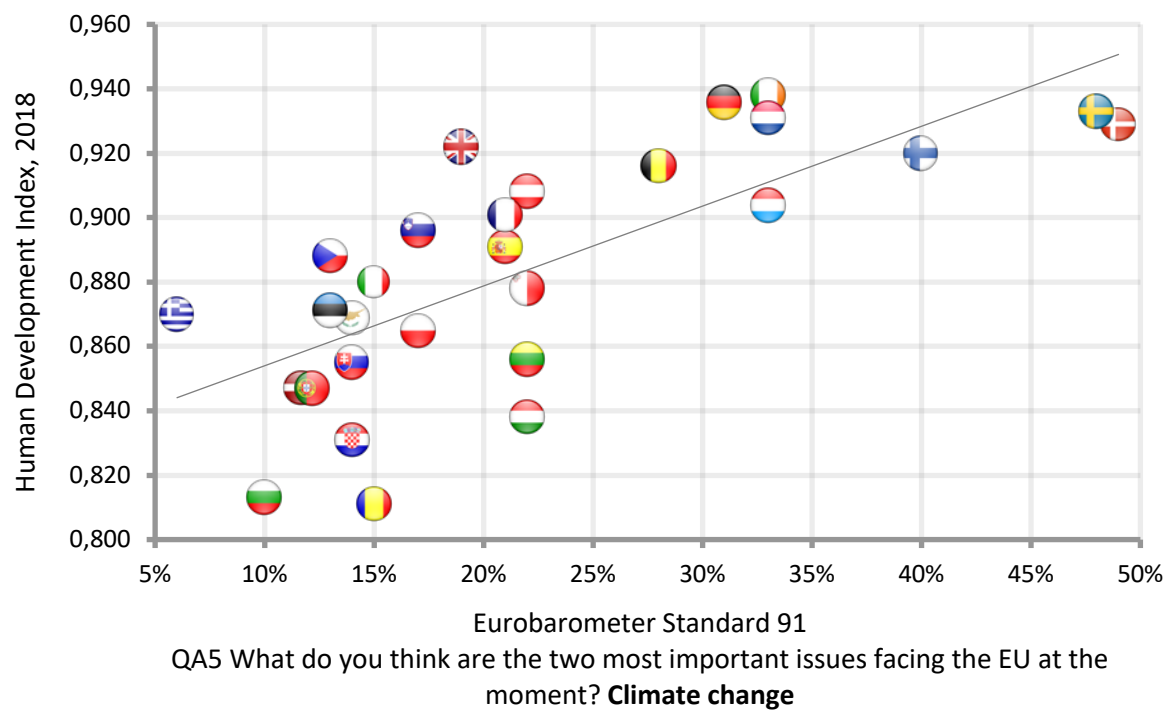
**Charts 20<sup>72</sup>:**



---

<sup>72</sup> “Human Development Indicators and Indices: 2018 Statistical Update Team” (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2018).

**Charts 21:** Correlation 0,73








Socio-demographics are not often discussed in detail in the Eurobarometer survey reports. Indeed, the accent is rather put on the differences among country, as we have done above. However, analyses per country often stay at the surface and avoid showing maps because they tend to cut the EU in two or more distinctive areas. However, as we have seen in the previous part, the countries situated in northern and western Europe have a higher level of respondents mentioning climate-change-related topics than the countries in eastern and southern Europe. Such divisions are not rare in the Eurobarometer results and are not trivial either. As we have already started to mention, those maps fit with the map of the HDI at the European level and introduce a possible division based on socio-demographic indicators. The results from a socio-demographic aspect will help us understand better this division at the European level.

In fact, in the question asked at the country level, “the environment, climate and energy issues” are most frequently mentioned by the youngest individuals aged 15-24 (26%), the more educated individuals (age at completion of education of 20 or above, 28%), the students (31%), the managers (31%), those considering themselves to belong to the upper middle class (36%) and the upper class (37%) and those answering that they almost never or never have difficulties paying bills (23%). It also arrives first for all those categories (for the respondents between 15 and 24 years old, it arrives *ex aequo* with “unemployment” and for those answering that they almost never or never have difficulties paying bills, it is *ex aequo* with “health and social security”).

**Chart 21<sup>73</sup>:**

**QA3a** What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)

	Rising prices\ inflation \ cos of living	Unemployment	Health and social security	The environment, climate and energy issues	Immigration	Economic situation	Pensions	Housing	The education system	Crime	Government debt	Taxation	Terrorism
EU28	21	21	21	20	17	16	14	13	12	11	10	8	6
 Gender													
Man	20	21	19	20	17	17	14	13	13	11	11	9	6
Woman	21	22	22	19	17	15	15	12	11	12	9	7	7
 Age													
15-24	21	26	14	26	16	15	8	12	17	12	9	8	6
25-39	23	22	20	20	15	17	9	14	14	10	11	9	6
40-54	22	21	20	19	17	17	13	14	12	11	11	8	5
55 +	18	19	24	18	18	14	21	11	9	12	9	7	7
 Generation													
Before 1928	8	15	28	11	19	14	23	4	8	27	15	1	10
1928 - 1945	17	19	22	16	19	13	24	10	8	15	7	4	7
Total 'Before 1946'	17	19	22	16	19	13	24	10	8	15	7	4	7
1946 - 1964 'BB'	19	19	25	18	18	15	19	12	10	12	10	8	7
1965 - 1980 'X'	22	21	20	19	17	17	12	14	12	11	11	8	5
After 1980 'Millennials'	22	24	17	22	15	16	9	13	16	11	10	9	6
 Education (End of)													
15-	18	30	20	10	19	16	22	11	6	13	8	7	7
16-19	24	20	21	14	18	16	15	13	9	13	10	8	7
20+	18	17	23	28	15	15	12	14	16	9	11	8	5
Still studying	16	25	14	31	16	15	8	10	21	10	9	7	6
 Socio-professional category													
Self-employed	16	21	20	18	18	19	12	12	13	10	13	14	4
Managers	17	12	22	31	14	14	12	15	20	11	11	7	4
Other white collars	22	20	20	20	18	19	12	10	11	11	13	9	6
Manual workers	27	20	20	17	16	15	13	15	9	12	10	9	6
House persons	22	31	19	9	21	17	15	15	7	10	8	9	7
Unemployed	21	40	17	15	14	18	10	15	10	11	7	6	7
Retired	19	19	24	17	18	13	22	11	9	13	9	6	8
Students	16	25	14	31	16	15	8	10	21	10	9	7	6








<sup>73</sup> Table made by the author using the same layout as the EB reports for consistency.



The results are quite similar for the question asked at the personal level. In fact, the youngest (15-24, 17%), the more educated (age at completion of education of 20 or above, 20%), the students (20%), the managers (24%), those mentioning that they consider themselves to belong to the upper middle class, 28%) and the upper class (19%) and those who almost never or never have difficulties paying bills (17%) are above the EU28 results (14%) answering “the environment, climate and energy issues”. However, this item is the top mention only for those considering themselves to belong to the upper middle class.

**Chart 22<sup>74</sup>:**

**QA4a** And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)








	Rising prices\ inflation\ cost of living	Health and social security	Pensions	The environment, climate and energy issues	The financial situation of your household	The education system	Taxation	Unemployment	Working conditions	The economic situation in (OUR COUNTRY)	Living conditions	Housing	Crime	Immigration	Terrorism
EU28	31	18	15	14	13	10	10	9	9	8	8	8	6	5	2
 Gender															
Man	29	17	15	15	12	10	12	9	10	9	9	9	7	6	2
Woman	32	20	16	13	15	10	9	9	9	7	8	7	6	5	2
 Age															
15-24	24	8	3	17	10	28	7	13	11	8	9	11	6	5	2
25-39	34	12	4	14	16	12	12	11	14	9	10	13	6	5	2
40-54	32	16	8	13	15	10	14	10	13	11	8	8	7	5	2
55 +	30	27	31	13	12	3	9	5	4	6	8	4	7	5	2
 Generation															
Before 1928	20	47	58	1	3	0	2	1	1	0	15	2	0	2	0
1928 - 1945	29	30	35	11	8	2	6	4	1	5	5	3	7	5	3
Total 'Before 1946'	29	30	35	10	8	2	5	4	1	5	6	3	7	5	3
1946 - 1964 'BB'	31	26	29	14	13	4	10	6	5	6	8	4	7	5	2
1965 - 1980 'X'	32	16	7	13	15	10	14	10	13	11	8	8	7	5	2
After 1980 'Millennials'	30	10	3	15	14	18	10	12	13	8	10	13	6	5	2
 Education (End of)															
15-	33	23	30	6	13	3	9	11	5	7	9	5	6	6	2
16-19	34	18	15	11	16	6	11	9	10	8	9	8	7	5	2
20+	29	20	11	20	11	11	12	6	11	10	8	8	6	5	2
Still studying	19	8	3	20	8	39	5	11	10	7	8	11	4	5	2
 Socio-professional category															
Self-employed	28	14	10	14	11	9	27	5	9	12	8	6	8	6	2
Managers	28	15	8	24	9	16	13	4	12	10	6	10	6	5	2
Other white collars	35	16	9	15	13	9	14	5	15	10	8	8	7	6	2
Manual workers	36	15	8	11	17	7	11	7	15	8	11	10	7	5	3
House persons	33	19	15	8	20	7	10	15	6	8	8	9	7	6	3
Unemployed	24	12	5	7	25	6	4	49	11	10	9	12	4	3	2
Retired	31	29	35	12	11	2	7	3	2	5	8	3	7	5	2
Students	19	8	3	20	8	39	5	11	10	7	8	11	4	5	2
 Difficulties paying bills															
Most of the time	32	13	17	5	31	6	10	21	12	8	13	9	5	3	3
From time to time	33	16	15	8	20	8	11	13	12	9	11	9	8	6	3
Almost never/ Never	29	20	16	17	8	11	10	6	8	8	7	8	6	5	2
 Consider belonging to															
The working class	36	20	19	7	19	6	7	12	8	7	10	7	8	4	2
The lower middle class	33	17	18	11	17	7	10	12	11	8	9	10	5	4	2
The middle class	28	18	13	16	10	12	12	7	10	9	8	8	6	6	2
The upper middle class	20	16	11	28	5	19	16	4	7	9	5	7	7	7	2
The upper class	21	17	12	19	8	23	19	3	5	13	7	5	6	6	6

<sup>74</sup> Table made by the author using the same layout as the EB reports for consistency.

The same findings might be observed for the question on the main issues at the EU level. In fact, “climate change” is more frequently mentioned by the 15-24-year-old group (24%), the 25-39-year-old group (24%), the most educated (age at completion of education of 20 or above, 27%), the students (29%), and those considering themselves to belong to the upper middle class and the upper class (both 28%). The respondents answering that they almost never or never have difficulties paying bills tend to mention climate change more often as the most important issue the EU is facing (25%). However, it is not first in any of the categories mentioned. This might be due to the fact that for this question, as we have already mentioned previously, “climate change” and “the environment” are two different items.

**Chart 23<sup>75</sup>**

**QA4a** And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)

	Rising prices\ inflation\ cost of living	Health and social security	Pensions	The environment, climate and energy issues	The financial situation of your household	The education system	Taxation	Unemployment	Working conditions	The economic situation in (OUR COUNTRY)	Living conditions	Housing	Crime	Immigration	Terrorism
EU28	31	18	15	14	13	10	10	9	9	8	8	8	6	5	2
 Gender															
Man	29	17	15	15	12	10	12	9	10	9	9	9	7	6	2
Woman	32	20	16	13	15	10	9	9	9	7	8	7	6	5	2
 Age															
15-24	24	8	3	17	10	28	7	13	11	8	9	11	6	5	2
25-39	34	12	4	14	16	12	12	11	14	9	10	13	6	5	2
40-54	32	16	8	13	15	10	14	10	13	11	8	8	7	5	2
55 +	30	27	31	13	12	3	9	5	4	6	8	4	7	5	2
 Generation															
Before 1928	20	47	58	1	3	0	2	1	1	0	15	2	0	2	0
1928 - 1945	29	30	35	11	8	2	6	4	1	5	5	3	7	5	3
Total 'Before 1946'	29	30	35	10	8	2	5	4	1	5	6	3	7	5	3
1946 - 1964 'BB'	31	26	29	14	13	4	10	6	5	6	8	4	7	5	2
1965 - 1980 'X'	32	16	7	13	15	10	14	10	13	11	8	8	7	5	2
After 1980 'Millennials'	30	10	3	15	14	18	10	12	13	8	10	13	6	5	2
 Education (End of)															
15-	33	23	30	6	13	3	9	11	5	7	9	5	6	6	2
16-19	34	18	15	11	16	6	11	9	10	8	9	8	7	5	2
20+	29	20	11	20	11	11	12	6	11	10	8	8	6	5	2
Still studying	19	8	3	20	8	39	5	11	10	7	8	11	4	5	2
 Socio-professional category															
Self-employed	28	14	10	14	11	9	27	5	9	12	8	6	8	6	2
Managers	28	15	8	24	9	16	13	4	12	10	6	10	6	5	2
Other white collars	35	16	9	15	13	9	14	5	15	10	8	8	7	6	2
Manual workers	36	15	8	11	17	7	11	7	15	8	11	10	7	5	3
House persons	33	19	15	8	20	7	10	15	6	8	8	9	7	6	3
Unemployed	24	12	5	7	25	6	4	49	11	10	9	12	4	3	2
Retired	31	29	35	12	11	2	7	3	2	5	8	3	7	5	2
Students	19	8	3	20	8	39	5	11	10	7	8	11	4	5	2
 Difficulties paying bills															
Most of the time	32	13	17	5	31	6	10	21	12	8	13	9	5	3	3
From time to time	33	16	15	8	20	8	11	13	12	9	11	9	8	6	3
Almost never/ Never	29	20	16	17	8	11	10	6	8	8	7	8	6	5	2
 Consider belonging to															
The working class	36	20	19	7	19	6	7	12	8	7	10	7	8	4	2
The lower middle class	33	17	18	11	17	7	10	12	11	8	9	10	5	4	2
The middle class	28	18	13	16	10	12	12	7	10	9	8	8	6	6	2
The upper middle class	20	16	11	28	5	19	16	4	7	9	5	7	7	7	2
The upper class	21	17	12	19	8	23	19	3	5	13	7	5	6	6	6







<sup>75</sup> Table made by the author using the same layout as the EB reports for consistency.

In the question about which issue made the respondents vote in the recent European Parliament elections, the same pattern may be observed. The respondents mentioning “combating climate change and protecting the environment” are mostly:

- The youngest, aged between 15-24 (45%) and 25-39 (41%),
- The more educated, who have finished their studies and are over 20 years old (44%),  
and
- The students (52%) and the managers (49%) for whom it is the most frequently mentioned issue.







**Chart 24<sup>76</sup>**

**QG7T** What are the issues which made you vote in the recent European Parliament elections? Firstly? And then?  
(% - EU)

	Economy and growth	Combating climate change and protecting the environment	Promoting human rights and democracy	The way the EU should be working in the future	Immigration	Social protection of EU citizens	Fight against terrorism
EU28	44	37	37	36	34	29	26
 <b>Gender</b>							
Man	47	36	34	38	33	29	26
Woman	41	39	39	34	35	29	27
 <b>Age</b>							
15-24	46	45	44	34	29	29	21
25-39	43	41	41	42	35	27	22
40-54	46	37	35	37	34	30	27
55 +	43	34	34	32	34	29	29
 <b>Education (End of)</b>							
15-	45	27	28	24	35	27	28
16-19	42	32	33	34	36	29	29
20+	44	44	42	41	32	30	24
Still studying	46	52	47	42	32	31	18
 <b>Socio-professional category</b>							
Self-employed	45	31	31	36	35	29	26
Managers	45	49	45	49	32	28	21
Other white collars	45	40	37	43	38	27	27
Manual workers	44	34	35	31	32	31	26
House persons	45	24	37	28	36	28	33
Unemployed	44	31	34	29	30	26	24
Retired	42	34	33	31	34	29	30
Students	46	52	47	42	32	31	18
 <b>Subjective urbanisation</b>							
Rural village	45	35	34	32	32	28	24
Small/ mid size town	43	37	37	36	36	28	28
Large town	45	40	39	39	33	31	26
<b>My voice counts in the EU</b>							
Agree	46	44	41	38	32	33	26
Disagree	41	24	28	31	39	22	27
 <b>Left-right political scale</b>							
Left	42	47	46	39	29	36	21
Centre	46	39	36	34	32	29	28
Right	44	26	27	35	43	22	33

<sup>76</sup> Zalc, Bécuwe, and Buruian, “The 2019 Post-Electoral Survey - Have European Elections Entered a New Dimension?”

**QG7T** What are the issues which made you vote in the recent European Parliament elections? Firstly?  
And then? (% - EU)

	Combating youth unemployment	Security and defence policy	Protection of external borders	Consumer protection and food safety	Protection of personal data	Other (SPONTANEOUS)
EU28	25	25	21	20	12	8
 <b>Gender</b>						
Man	24	27	21	21	12	7
Woman	25	24	20	20	11	8
 <b>Age</b>						
15-24	31	24	14	19	15	7
25-39	23	24	16	21	13	8
40-54	24	25	21	19	11	6
55 +	24	26	24	21	11	9
 <b>Education (End of)</b>						
15-	31	26	20	19	10	9
16-19	25	26	24	22	12	8
20+	21	26	19	20	11	8
Still studying	32	22	12	20	17	7
 <b>Socio-professional category</b>						
Self-employed	24	26	24	21	14	6
Managers	16	25	16	17	11	7
Other white collars	27	28	23	20	13	6
Manual workers	23	26	20	22	13	7
House persons	39	28	24	22	10	4
Unemployed	29	22	17	20	10	12
Retired	23	25	24	21	9	9
Students	32	22	12	20	17	7
 <b>Subjective urbanisation</b>						
Rural village	23	22	20	22	10	8
Small/ mid size town	25	27	22	19	12	7
Large town	26	26	19	20	14	8
<b>My voice counts in the EU</b>						
Agree	25	25	21	22	13	6
Disagree	24	26	21	17	10	10
 <b>Left-right political scale</b>						
Left	26	19	13	22	13	8
Centre	23	28	21	20	12	8
Right	24	33	30	18	10	6

The same categories mention “climate change” in the question “which of the following do you consider to be the single most serious problem facing the world as a whole?” asked in the Special Eurobarometer on climate change<sup>77</sup>:

- The respondents aged between 15-24 (72%) and more surprisingly those between 40-54 (63%),
- The more educated (age at completion of education of 20 or above, 68%),
- The managers (72%) and more surprisingly the self-employed, and
- Those answering they almost never or never have difficulties paying bills.






---

<sup>77</sup> “Climate Change.”



**Chart 25<sup>78</sup>**

**QB1T** Which of the following do you consider to be the single most serious problem facing the world as a whole? Which others do you consider to be serious problems? TOTAL (MAX. 4 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)

	Poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water	Climate change	International terrorism	The economic situation	Armed conflicts	The increasing global population	Spread of infectious diseases	Proliferation of nuclear weapons
EU28	71	60	54	40	40	26	24	24
 <b>Gender</b>								
Man	70	62	51	41	40	29	22	24
Woman	73	59	56	39	39	22	26	24
 <b>Age</b>								
15-24	72	65	53	38	39	23	25	24
25-39	70	60	52	43	41	25	23	24
40-54	70	63	53	41	41	27	24	22
55 +	72	58	56	38	39	26	25	26
 <b>Education (End of)</b>								
15-	72	50	55	43	38	20	29	24
16-19	70	57	56	41	39	25	26	24
20+	73	68	51	37	42	30	21	25
Still studying	71	71	52	38	39	26	25	24
 <b>Socio-professional category</b>								
Self-employed	71	66	50	43	40	25	21	26
Managers	73	72	47	35	43	33	19	24
Other white collars	69	62	55	41	41	28	25	23
Manual workers	70	56	56	43	39	23	25	23
House persons	68	50	57	46	40	19	31	23
Unemployed	71	54	49	45	37	22	24	23
Retired	72	57	56	36	39	25	25	26
Students	71	71	52	38	39	26	25	24
 <b>Difficulties paying bills</b>								
Most of the time	76	50	53	56	33	21	28	26
From time to time	69	53	54	49	38	22	29	24
Almost never/ Never	71	64	54	35	41	27	22	24

<sup>78</sup> “Climate Change.”

In the questions studied here, the youngest, the more educated and those who have little or no difficulty paying bills are the respondents that have a bigger tendency to mention climate-change-related items. Thus, it is not surprising that students, managers and those who consider themselves to belong to the upper middle class or the upper class also have a greater tendency to mention those items as well.

Then, on the other end of the scale, those mentioning climate-related issues least frequently are the less educated and those who have difficulties paying bills. These groups tend to mention more frequently socio-economic issues such as unemployment, immigration or issues related to inflation.

The fact of mentioning climate change as one of the main issues has socio-demographic roots. The explanation of these differences from one part of society to another might be found in the perception of the economy and of the political system. In the following part we are going to have a closer look on the perception of the respondents of some political and economic indicators measured in the Standard Eurobarometer<sup>79</sup>.

In the Standard Eurobarometer surveys, the respondents are asked to answer, first, a question aiming at measuring their perception of the political and economic system. They are asked if they perceive that things are going in the right direction in their country and in the EU, their perception of the national and European situation in general, about the situation of the economy at different levels, their satisfaction with the democracy, the image of the EU and so on. In the following part, we are going to cross-check the results from these questions with those on the main issues that we started to analyse.


In the question on the most important issues facing their country at the moment, the respondents mentioning “the environment, climate and energy” are more likely than the EU28 respondents (20%) to perceive that the national situation (26%), the national situation of employment (28%) and the situation of the European economy are good (24%).

---

<sup>79</sup> To find the question in the Standard Eurobarometer 91.5 surveys, we suggest the reader to have a look at the last questionnaire of this survey as, due to space limitations, we do not present them in detail in this article.

## Chart 26<sup>80</sup>:

**QA3a** What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)

	Rising prices\inflation\cost of living	Unemployment	Health and social security	The environment, climate and energy issues	Immigration	Economic situation	Pensions	Housing	The education system	Crime	Government debt	Taxation	Terrorism
EU28	21	21	21	20	17	16	14	13	12	11	10	8	6
 Difficulties paying bills													
Most of the time	26	34	16	10	15	21	17	11	6	10	9	10	5
From time to time	24	28	17	13	17	20	14	11	8	12	11	10	6
Almost never/ Never	19	17	23	23	17	13	15	14	14	11	10	7	6
Things in country are going in...													
Right direction	18	17	22	23	17	12	16	14	13	10	11	7	7
Wrong direction	22	24	20	17	17	18	14	12	12	12	10	8	6
Neither	22	21	23	22	15	16	15	12	12	11	8	6	4
Things in the EU are going in...													
Right direction	21	19	22	21	16	15	15	13	14	10	11	8	7
Wrong direction	20	22	19	19	19	16	14	13	12	12	10	8	7
Neither	21	21	24	22	15	15	15	11	12	10	8	6	5
Nat. situation in general													
Good	19	14	22	26	17	11	14	16	15	11	9	7	7
Bad	23	29	19	13	17	21	14	9	9	12	11	9	6
Expectations nat. situation in general													
Better	20	24	19	17	17	17	13	11	12	12	12	10	7
Worse	19	20	21	18	19	18	13	12	13	13	10	9	7
Same	22	21	21	22	16	14	16	13	12	10	9	7	6
Nat. situation of employment													
Good	19	9	24	27	17	11	14	17	16	13	9	7	7
Bad	22	35	17	13	17	21	15	9	9	10	11	9	5
Expectations nat. situation of employment													
Better	20	23	19	18	16	16	14	12	12	11	13	10	7
Worse	18	23	20	17	18	18	13	13	11	14	10	9	7
Same	22	20	22	21	17	15	16	13	13	10	9	7	5
Situation of national economy													
Good	18	12	24	28	18	10	14	17	16	11	8	7	7
Bad	23	32	17	11	16	22	15	8	8	11	12	9	6
Expectations situation of national economy													
Better	20	24	19	17	17	17	13	11	11	11	13	10	7
Worse	20	20	21	19	17	18	13	13	13	13	10	8	7
Same	21	21	21	21	17	14	16	13	12	10	9	7	5
Situation of European economy													
Good	21	17	22	24	16	14	14	14	14	9	10	8	6
Bad	20	27	18	15	19	19	14	11	10	13	11	9	7
Expectations European economic situation													
Better	20	25	17	17	17	18	13	12	12	10	14	10	7
Worse	17	17	22	23	19	15	14	14	13	14	9	8	8
Same	22	23	21	19	17	16	15	12	12	10	9	7	5

<sup>80</sup> Table made by the author using the same layout as the EB reports for consistency.

They are also more likely than the EU28 total of respondents (20%) to declare that their voice counts in the EU (25%) and in their country (24%), and that they are satisfied with the democracy in their country (24%) and in the EU (22%). Furthermore, they tend to talk more frequently about European political matters (28%), have a positive image of the EU (25%), understand how the EU works (23%), disagree with the fact that their country will be better outside the EU and tend to position themselves on the left of the political scale (27%).

**Chart 27<sup>81</sup>:**

**QA3a** What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)


	Rising prices\inflation\ cost of living	Unemployment	Health and social security	The environment, climate and energy issues	Immigration	Economic situation	Pensions	Housing	The education system	Crime	Government debt	Taxation	Terrorism
EU28	21	21	21	20	17	16	14	13	12	11	10	8	6
My voice counts in the EU													
Agree	19	18	22	25	16	14	14	15	14	11	10	7	6
Disagree	23	26	19	13	18	18	15	10	10	12	11	9	6
My voice counts in (OUR COUNTRY)													
Agree	19	18	22	24	17	14	15	14	13	11	10	7	6
Disagree	23	27	19	12	17	20	14	10	10	11	10	9	6
Left-right political scale													
Left	18	22	23	27	12	14	15	15	15	10	9	6	5
Centre	19	19	21	21	17	15	15	14	13	13	10	7	7
Right	22	18	20	13	23	18	15	9	10	13	12	10	7
Talk about European political matters													
Frequently	13	12	21	28	18	15	12	18	18	11	10	6	7
Occasionally	20	20	22	22	17	15	14	12	13	11	10	8	6
Never	25	28	19	12	16	16	16	11	9	12	9	8	7
Image of EU													
Positive	20	18	22	25	14	15	13	14	15	9	10	7	6
Neutral	23	24	20	16	18	16	16	12	10	11	10	9	6
Negative	19	22	19	14	23	17	14	10	10	17	10	8	9
Satis. democracy in (OUR COUNTRY)													
Yes	18	18	21	24	17	14	14	14	13	11	10	7	7
No	24	25	20	14	18	18	15	10	10	12	10	9	6
Satis. democracy in EU													
Yes	21	19	22	22	16	15	14	13	14	10	10	8	6
No	19	24	19	17	19	16	15	13	11	13	10	8	7
Understand how the EU works													
Agree	20	18	22	23	16	15	13	13	14	11	11	8	6
Disagree	22	27	19	15	18	16	17	11	9	12	9	8	7
(OUR COUNTRY) better outside of EU													
Agree	23	22	18	11	20	17	14	11	9	14	12	9	9
Disagree	19	20	22	25	16	15	14	14	14	10	9	7	5

<sup>81</sup> Table made by the author using the same layout as the EB reports for consistency.

Regarding the question on the most important issues at the personal level; the findings are quite similar: the respondents mentioning “the environment, climate and energy” are more positive about the economy and the EU as a political system. The table below shows that the indicators mirror those mentioned above for the question asked at the country level. The respondents mentioning “the environment, climate and energy issues” declare more frequently that the national situation in general (18%), the national situation of employment (18%), the situation of the national economy (19%) and the European economy (17%) are good. Furthermore, they tend to mention that their voice counts in the EU (17%) and in their country (17%), they state that they talk about European political matters, have a more positive image of the EU (17%) and are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country (16%) and in the EU (15%).

## Chart 28<sup>82</sup>:


**QA4a** And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)

	Rising prices\ inflation\ cost of living	Health and social security	Pensions	The environment, climate and energy issues	The financial situation of your household	The education system	Taxation	Unemployment	Working conditions	The economic situation in (OUR COUNTRY)	Living conditions	Housing	Crime	Immigration	Terrorism
EU28	31	18	15	14	13	10	10	9	9	8	8	8	6	5	2
 Difficulties paying bills															
Most of the time	32	13	17	5	31	6	10	21	12	8	13	9	5	3	3
From time to time	33	16	15	8	20	8	11	13	12	9	11	9	8	6	3
Almost never/ Never	29	20	16	17	8	11	10	6	8	8	7	8	6	5	2
Things in country are going in...															
Right direction	27	18	15	17	10	11	10	6	9	7	8	9	5	5	2
Wrong direction	32	18	15	12	16	10	11	11	10	10	9	7	7	6	2
Neither	30	21	16	14	12	12	10	8	10	6	6	9	5	4	2
Things in the EU are going in...															
Right direction	30	18	14	16	10	12	11	8	10	8	9	8	6	4	2
Wrong direction	31	18	16	13	15	10	11	10	10	9	9	8	7	6	3
Neither	29	20	16	15	14	10	9	8	8	6	7	9	5	3	2
Nat. situation in general															
Good	27	19	14	18	11	13	10	6	8	6	7	9	6	5	2
Bad	34	18	16	10	16	8	12	12	11	10	10	7	7	5	2
Expectations nat. situation in general															
Better	29	16	14	13	11	12	11	10	11	7	9	9	7	6	2
Worse	32	19	16	14	15	10	12	10	9	11	9	7	8	6	3
Same	31	19	16	14	13	10	10	8	9	7	8	8	5	4	2
Nat. situation of employment															
Good	28	21	14	18	11	12	9	4	8	7	7	9	7	6	3
Bad	33	16	16	10	16	8	12	14	11	10	10	7	6	5	2
Expectations nat. situation of employment															
Better	31	16	13	14	11	12	11	11	11	8	9	8	7	6	2
Worse	29	18	16	12	16	10	12	11	10	11	9	8	8	6	4
Same	32	19	16	14	13	10	10	7	9	8	8	8	5	4	2
Situation of national economy															
Good	27	20	14	19	10	12	9	5	8	6	7	9	6	6	2
Bad	34	17	16	9	16	8	12	13	11	11	10	7	6	5	2
Expectations situation of national economy															
Better	30	16	13	12	11	11	11	10	11	8	10	9	7	6	3
Worse	30	19	16	14	15	10	11	10	9	11	8	7	8	6	3
Same	31	19	16	15	13	11	10	8	9	7	8	8	5	5	2
Situation of European economy															
Good	29	18	14	17	11	12	11	7	10	8	8	9	6	5	2
Bad	32	18	16	11	15	8	11	12	10	10	9	7	7	6	2
Expectations European economic situation															
Better	30	15	11	12	11	11	11	12	11	9	10	9	6	6	2
Worse	28	20	16	17	15	11	10	9	9	9	9	8	8	6	3
Same	32	19	16	13	13	10	11	8	10	8	8	8	6	5	2

<sup>82</sup> Table made by the author using the same layout as the EB reports for consistency.

**Chart 29<sup>83</sup>:**

**QA4a** And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)

	Rising prices\ inflation\ cost of living	Health and social security	Pensions	The environment, climate and energy issues	The financial situation of your household	The education system	Taxation	Unemployment	Working conditions	The economic situation in (OUR COUNTRY)	Living conditions	Housing	Crime	Immigration	Terrorism
EU28	31	18	15	14	13	10	10	9	9	8	8	8	6	5	2
My voice counts in the EU															
Agree	29	19	14	17	11	12	10	7	9	8	8	8	6	5	2
Disagree	33	18	16	9	17	8	11	11	10	8	9	8	7	6	2
My voice counts in (OUR COUNTRY)															
Agree	29	19	15	17	11	11	10	7	9	8	8	8	6	5	2
Disagree	33	17	16	9	17	8	12	13	10	9	9	7	7	6	2
 Left-right political scale															
Left	28	20	15	20	13	13	9	9	9	8	8	9	5	4	2
Centre	30	19	15	15	11	10	11	8	10	9	8	8	7	5	2
Right	32	19	18	10	13	9	13	7	9	9	8	7	8	7	3
Talk about European political matters															
Frequently	23	20	15	21	10	14	11	7	9	9	7	9	8	6	3
Occasio-nally	31	19	14	15	13	10	11	8	10	9	8	8	6	5	2
Never	33	17	17	8	15	8	9	11	9	6	9	7	7	4	2
Image of EU															
Positive	29	19	13	17	11	13	10	7	9	9	8	8	6	4	2
Neutral	31	18	16	12	14	9	11	10	11	7	9	8	6	5	2
Negative	32	18	19	10	17	8	10	11	8	9	9	8	9	7	3
Satis. democracy in (OUR COUNTRY)															
Yes	28	19	14	16	11	12	10	7	9	7	7	9	6	5	2
No	34	18	17	11	16	8	11	12	11	10	10	7	7	5	2
Satis. democracy in EU															
Yes	30	18	13	15	11	12	11	7	9	8	8	8	6	5	2
No	31	18	18	12	16	9	11	11	10	9	9	7	8	6	2
Understand how the EU works															
Agree	29	19	13	16	11	12	11	8	9	9	8	8	6	5	2
Disagree	33	18	19	9	17	7	10	11	9	7	9	8	6	5	2
(OUR COUNTRY) better outside of EU															
Agree	31	17	15	9	14	7	11	11	9	10	10	8	8	7	4
Disagree	30	19	15	17	12	12	10	8	10	7	7	8	5	4	2


<sup>83</sup> Table made by the author using the same layout as the EB reports for consistency.

Things are not very different in the question “what do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?”. In fact, respondents mentioning “climate change” are more inclined to mention that things are going in the right direction in their country (25%), that the national situation in general (25%), employment (25%) and the national economy (26%) are good, that they are more satisfied by the way democracy works in their country (24%), and that they believe that their voice counts in their country (25%). With respect to the EU, they tend to mention that the situation of the economy is good (26%), that things are going in the right direction in the EU (26%), that they are more satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU (24%), that they seem to understand it (24%), that they generally have a positive image of the EU (26%) and that they disagree with the assessment that their country would be better outside the EU (26%).



**Chart 30<sup>84</sup>**


**QA5** What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)

	Immigration	Climate change	The state of Member States' public finances	Economic situation	Terrorism	The environment	Unemployment	EU's influence in the world	Rising prices\ inflation \cos of living	Crime	Energy supply	Taxation	Pensions
EU28	34	22	18	18	18	13	12	12	10	9	5	4	4
 Difficulties paying bills													
Most of the time	29	14	13	22	20	10	17	8	14	9	4	8	7
From time to time	32	17	16	20	20	11	15	9	14	11	5	6	5
Almost never/ Never	35	25	19	16	16	14	10	14	9	8	6	3	4
Things in country are going in...													
Right direction	35	25	18	15	18	14	10	14	9	8	6	4	4
Wrong direction	33	21	18	20	17	12	14	10	12	9	5	5	5
Neither	34	19	19	18	17	15	11	14	9	8	5	3	4
Things in the EU are going in...													
Right direction	34	26	17	16	20	15	10	13	10	9	7	4	4
Wrong direction	36	20	19	20	16	12	14	12	11	9	5	5	5
Neither	35	21	19	17	18	14	11	12	9	7	5	3	4
Nat. situation in general													
Good	36	25	20	15	17	14	10	14	9	9	6	3	4
Bad	32	18	16	22	18	12	15	10	12	9	4	5	5
Expectations nat. situation in general													
Better	32	22	15	18	20	13	13	13	11	9	6	5	4
Worse	34	22	18	20	16	13	14	11	11	9	5	5	5
Same	36	22	19	17	18	13	11	12	10	8	5	3	4
Nat. situation of employment													
Good	35	25	20	14	17	15	8	14	9	9	6	4	4
Bad	33	19	16	22	18	12	16	10	12	8	5	5	5
Expectations nat. situation of employment													
Better	33	21	16	18	19	14	11	13	11	9	5	6	4
Worse	34	22	18	21	16	13	15	12	11	9	6	5	5
Same	35	22	19	17	18	13	11	12	10	8	5	3	4
Situation of national economy													
Good	36	26	20	14	17	15	9	14	8	9	6	3	4
Bad	32	18	16	22	19	11	15	10	13	8	5	5	5
Expectations situation of national economy													
Better	33	20	15	19	20	13	13	12	11	9	5	5	5
Worse	34	23	19	20	16	13	13	12	12	9	6	5	5
Same	35	23	19	16	18	13	11	12	10	9	5	3	4
Situation of European economy													
Good	35	26	19	15	19	15	9	13	10	9	6	4	4
Bad	34	19	19	23	16	11	16	11	13	9	5	5	6
Expectations European economic situation													
Better	31	22	16	19	19	14	12	12	12	10	6	6	5
Worse	35	22	22	20	14	13	14	13	10	10	6	5	5
Same	36	22	18	17	19	13	12	12	10	8	5	4	4

<sup>84</sup> Table made by the author using the same layout as the EB reports for consistency.

**Chart 31**<sup>85</sup>

**QA5** What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)

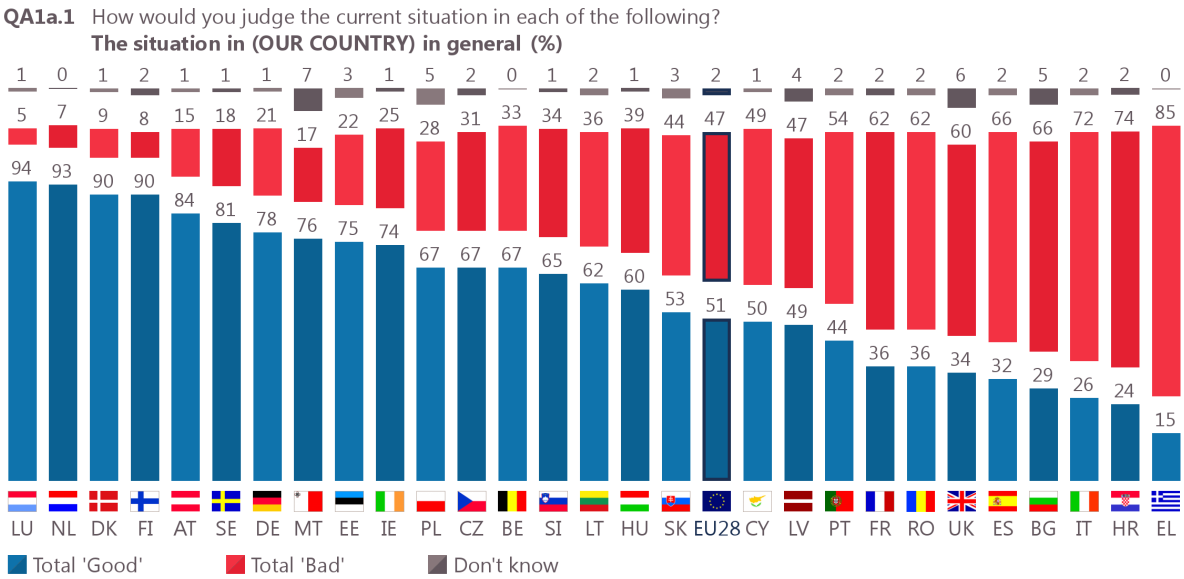
	Immigration	Climate change	The state of Member States' public finances	Economic situation	Terrorism	The environment	Unemployment	EU's influence in the world	Rising prices\inflation\cost of living	Crime	Energy supply	Taxation	Pensions
EU28	34	22	18	18	18	13	12	12	10	9	5	4	4
My voice counts in the EU													
Agree	33	26	20	17	16	15	11	14	10	8	6	4	4
Disagree	36	17	16	20	19	10	14	10	11	9	5	4	5
My voice counts in (OUR COUNTRY)													
Agree	35	25	20	17	17	14	11	14	10	9	5	4	4
Disagree	34	17	15	20	19	11	15	9	11	9	5	5	5
 Left-right political scale													
Left	30	28	19	17	14	18	13	13	10	7	6	4	5
Centre	36	23	19	18	17	13	11	14	10	9	4	4	4
Right	41	17	19	17	21	10	11	10	10	11	6	5	5
Talk about European political matters													
Frequently	33	25	24	19	13	15	10	18	8	7	7	4	3
Occasionally	37	25	20	18	18	14	11	13	10	9	5	4	4
Never	31	16	12	18	20	11	14	8	13	9	4	5	5
Image of EU													
Positive	32	26	20	17	17	15	11	14	9	7	6	4	3
Neutral	35	20	16	18	19	12	12	10	11	9	5	4	5
Negative	37	16	16	20	17	10	13	12	12	10	4	5	6
Things in country are going in...													
Right direction	35	25	18	15	18	14	10	14	9	8	6	4	4
Wrong direction	33	21	18	20	17	12	14	10	12	9	5	5	5
Neither	34	19	19	18	17	15	11	14	9	8	5	3	4
Things in the EU are going in...													
Right direction	34	26	17	16	20	15	10	13	10	9	7	4	4
Wrong direction	36	20	19	20	16	12	14	12	11	9	5	5	5
Neither	35	21	19	17	18	14	11	12	9	7	5	3	4
Satis. democracy in (OUR COUNTRY)													
Yes	34	24	19	17	17	14	11	13	9	9	5	4	4
No	35	19	16	20	18	11	14	10	12	9	5	5	5
Satis. democracy in EU													
Yes	33	24	19	17	18	15	11	13	10	8	6	4	4
No	36	20	18	19	17	11	14	11	11	9	5	5	5
Understand how the EU works													
Agree	34	24	21	18	17	14	11	14	10	8	6	4	4
Disagree	34	18	13	18	18	11	14	9	12	9	4	4	5
(OUR COUNTRY) better outside of EU													
Agree	32	16	14	19	20	10	14	10	13	11	5	6	7
Disagree	35	26	20	17	17	15	11	14	9	7	6	3	3

<sup>85</sup> Table made by the author using the same layout as the EB reports for consistency.

Altogether, the information from the answers to the climate-related questions analysed show that the respondents mentioning those items seem to be the Europeans that have less difficulty in their lives, more positive views toward the economy, and are satisfied with the way the political system works. They are the most educated, the managers but also those perceiving the actual political and economic situation as good.

Coming back to the analysis per country, we identified a group of countries in which the respondents seemed to mention climate-change-related items more frequently in the questions analysed. These countries included the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, as well as Germany and Austria. We notice that these are also the countries that have the highest level of respondents answering that the situation in their country in general and the situation of the national economy are ‘good’. On the contrary, we have seen that the respondents in Greece or Bulgaria have a lower tendency to mention climate change as one of the main issues at different levels. In the question on their judgement of the current situation in general or about the national economy in their country, those countries also have the most pessimistic among respondents as we can observe in the charts below.

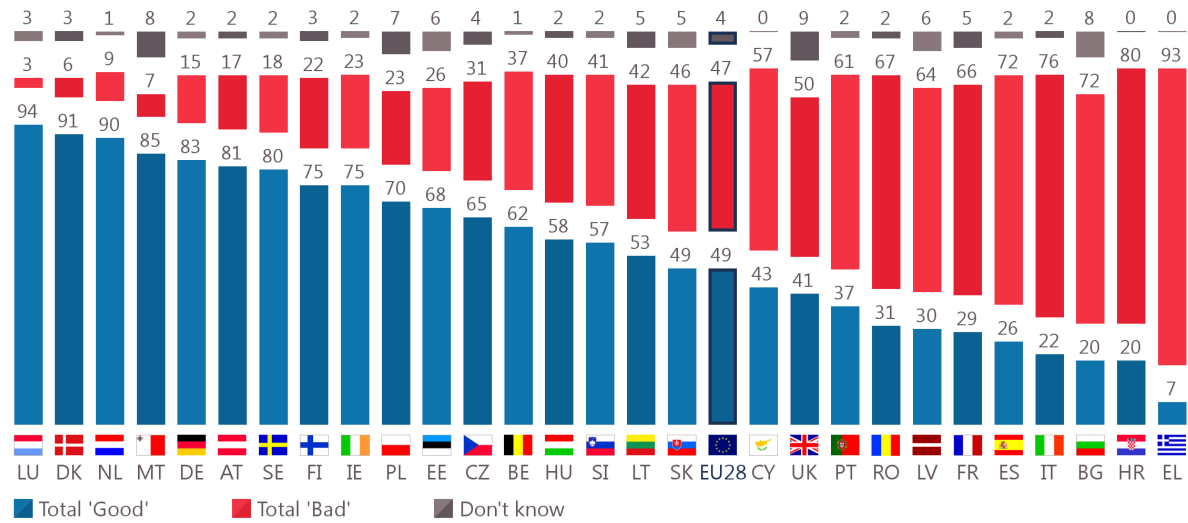
Chart 32<sup>86</sup>



<sup>86</sup> “L’opinion Publique Dans l’Union Européenne.”

Chart 33<sup>87</sup>

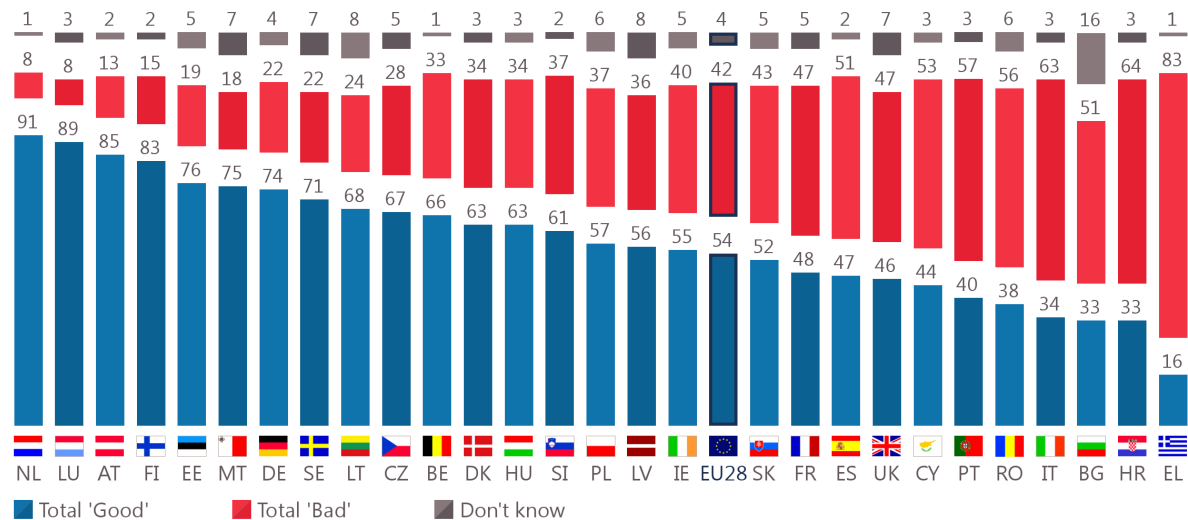
QA1a.2 How would you judge the current situation in each of the following?  
The situation of the (NATIONALITY) economy (%)



A similar picture might be observed for the question about the provision of public services: the respondents in the countries mentioning climate-change-related items most frequently are also the most positive in general and this is also relatively true for the countries where the respondents are less positive.

Chart 34<sup>88</sup>

QA1a.7 How would you judge the current situation in each of the following?  
The provision of public services in (OUR COUNTRY) (%)

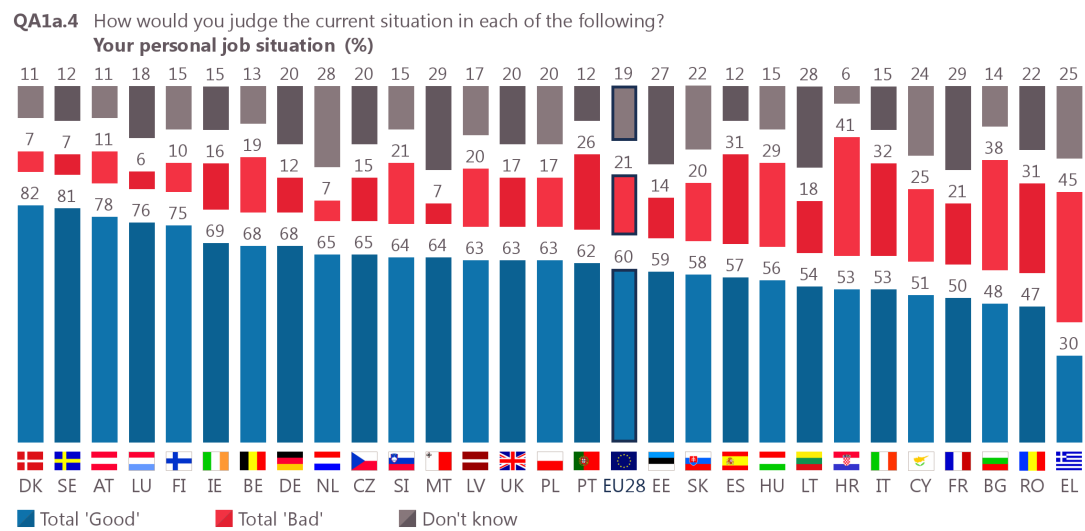


<sup>87</sup> "Public Opinion in the European Union - First Results."

<sup>88</sup> "L'opinion Publique Dans l'Union Européenne."

Furthermore, on a more personal aspect, for example the personal job situation or the financial situation of the respondents' household, the pattern is quite similar: the respondents in Bulgaria and Greece are among the least positive whereas the respondents in the Netherlands and Luxembourg are the most positive. Nevertheless, some exceptions can be overserved. In fact, with respect to the indicators, the respondents in France<sup>89</sup> are less positive although they mention climate-related items quite frequently.

Chart 35<sup>90</sup>

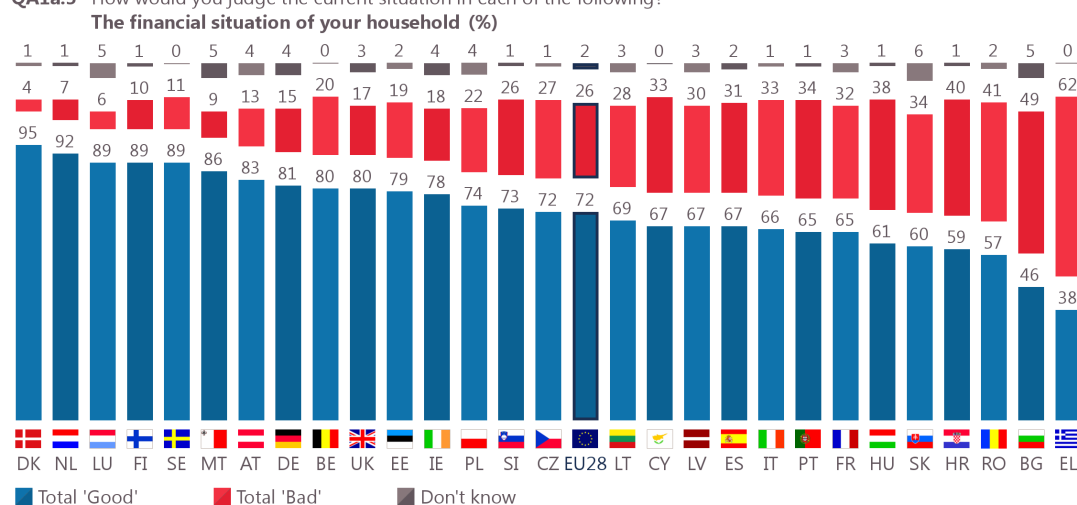


<sup>89</sup> On the pessimism of the French citizens measured in different surveys, see : Hervé Le Bras, *Se Sentir Mal Dans Une France Qui va Bien: La Société Paradoxe*, Monde En Cours (La Tour d’Aigues: Éditions de l’Aube, 2019).

<sup>90</sup> “L’opinion Publique Dans l’Union Européenne.”

Chart 36<sup>91</sup>

QA1a.5 How would you judge the current situation in each of the following?



As we already mentioned briefly, the fact that climate change is mentioned as one of the most important issues in the different questions seems to be related to a positive perception of the economy, the political system but also the respondents' personal situation.

<sup>91</sup> "L'opinion Publique Dans l'Union Européenne."

## CONCLUSION

The Eurobarometer surveys are an invaluable source of information on public opinion in Europe. As we have seen, combining the information in the surveys per country, demographics or with emblematic Eurobarometer questions allows the researcher to discover some patterns and form a picture of European public opinion at a certain moment.

Thus, by focusing on the most important issues questions and the corresponding answers that relate to climate change in different Eurobarometer surveys, we discovered that there is a geographic pattern on these results: the respondents from the countries in northern and western Europe seem to be more inclined to mention those items than the respondents in southern and eastern Europe. Furthermore, focusing on socio-demographics, we saw that the more educated individuals, students, managers, the youngest and those having less difficulty paying their bills mention those items more frequently than the other respondents. Last but not least, when cross-checking with other questions on the perception of the economy and the political situation, we noticed that those respondents mentioning climate change when answering the question on the most important issues are also the ones with the most positive views and attitudes toward the economic and political situation: they are the most positive toward the economy, democracy and the situation in general, both at the European and national level. This last finding is not very surprising since the geographical pattern initially observed in the climate-change-related items is the same for the question on the situation in general or the economic situation. Thus, it seems that the respondents mentioning climate change are those having a positive perception of their economic and political environment.

Our findings tend to show a rather fragmented Europe in that respect: it seems that the more one feels satisfied with the situation one lives live in, the more one tends to mention climate change as one of the main issues. On the contrary, the less one feels satisfied, the more one tends to mention other issues. Lastly, climate change seems to be one of the main issues on the rise at the European level for part of the population. It will be interesting to observe if this trend will be maintained in future waves and if the composition of the results per country, socio-demographics and economic and political attitudes is going to change.

At the same time, two important warnings should be taken into account with respect to our findings. First, as explained in the first part of our methodology, the Eurobarometer, like every poll, has certain biases. Even if we try to neutralise them by choosing the questions we consider less biased, the results must be taken, above all, as a measure of public opinion which is to some

extent artificial as it aggregates answers of respondents with much more complex views than the items chosen in the questions; it is crucial to cross-check those results with studies using other methodologies to temper and complete those findings. Second, even though we tried to diversify our material by using different surveys, they are all Eurobarometer surveys sharing the same methodology, due to rarity of qualitative and quantitative surveys conducted on that topic at a European level. Indeed, these findings might hardly be counterbalanced, which accentuates the fact that caution is needed when interpreting those results.