



Flash Eurobarometer 431 on Electoral Rights

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Věra Jourová

*Commissioner for Justice,
Consumers and Gender Equality*



*Directorate-General for
Justice and Consumers*



Citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU is an essential aspect of EU citizenship. Promoting and building up citizens' electoral rights and full democratic participation is key to making the EU more democratic.

EU citizenship confers on every EU citizen the right to vote for and stand as a candidate to the European Parliament, as well as to participate in the municipal elections in their country of residence under the same conditions as nationals of that country, when residing in a Member State other than their own.

The Flash Eurobarometer survey on Electoral Rights was conducted in November 2015 amongst 26,557 citizens¹. The majority of Europeans are aware of their electoral rights in European and local elections. Europeans want to be better informed about the impact of the EU on their daily lives and believe this would increase the turnout in the European elections. Moreover, Europeans believe that certain practices would make it easier for them to vote in European and local elections in the country in which they live. For instance, most Europeans said it would be easier to vote in the country in which they live if they received individual letters explaining how to register and vote, and if registration on the electoral roll was automatic for registered residents. The vast majority of Europeans think that e-voting would make it easier to vote. At the same time, they have concerns in particular about the difficulties in using the system (69%), potential fraud (61%) or secrecy of the vote (52%).

¹ The Flash Eurobarometer survey 430 on EU citizenship rights also contains questions associated with electoral rights.

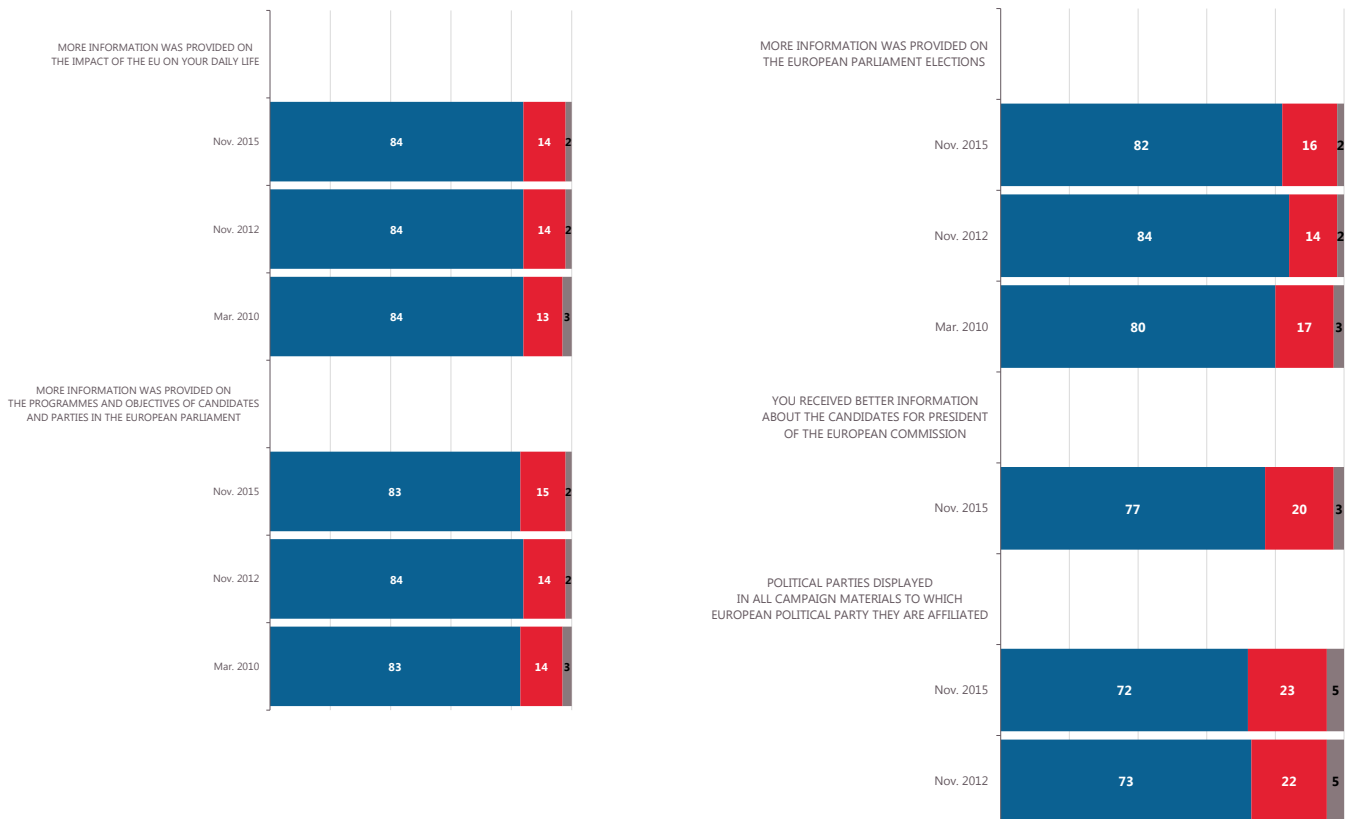
1. Improving turnout in European elections

Turnout across the whole of the EU was broadly the same in 2014 as it was in 2009, at 43 %. Europeans think that the turnout at European elections would be higher if:

- more information was provided about the impact that the EU has on their daily lives (84 %, the result is the same as in 2012).
- more information was provided on the programmes and objectives of the candidates and parties in the European Parliament (83 %, a decline of 1 percentage point from 2012).
- more information was provided on the European Parliament elections as such (82 %, a decline of 2 percentage points from 2012).
- they received better information about the candidates for President of the European Commission (77 %)².
- political parties displayed in all campaign materials the European political party to which they were affiliated (72%, a decline of 1 percentage point from 2012).

Q4 In 2014, turnout in the European Parliament elections was 43%. Do you think that turnout at European elections would be higher if...? (% - EU)

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



² This statement is new in the 2015 Eurobarometer survey.

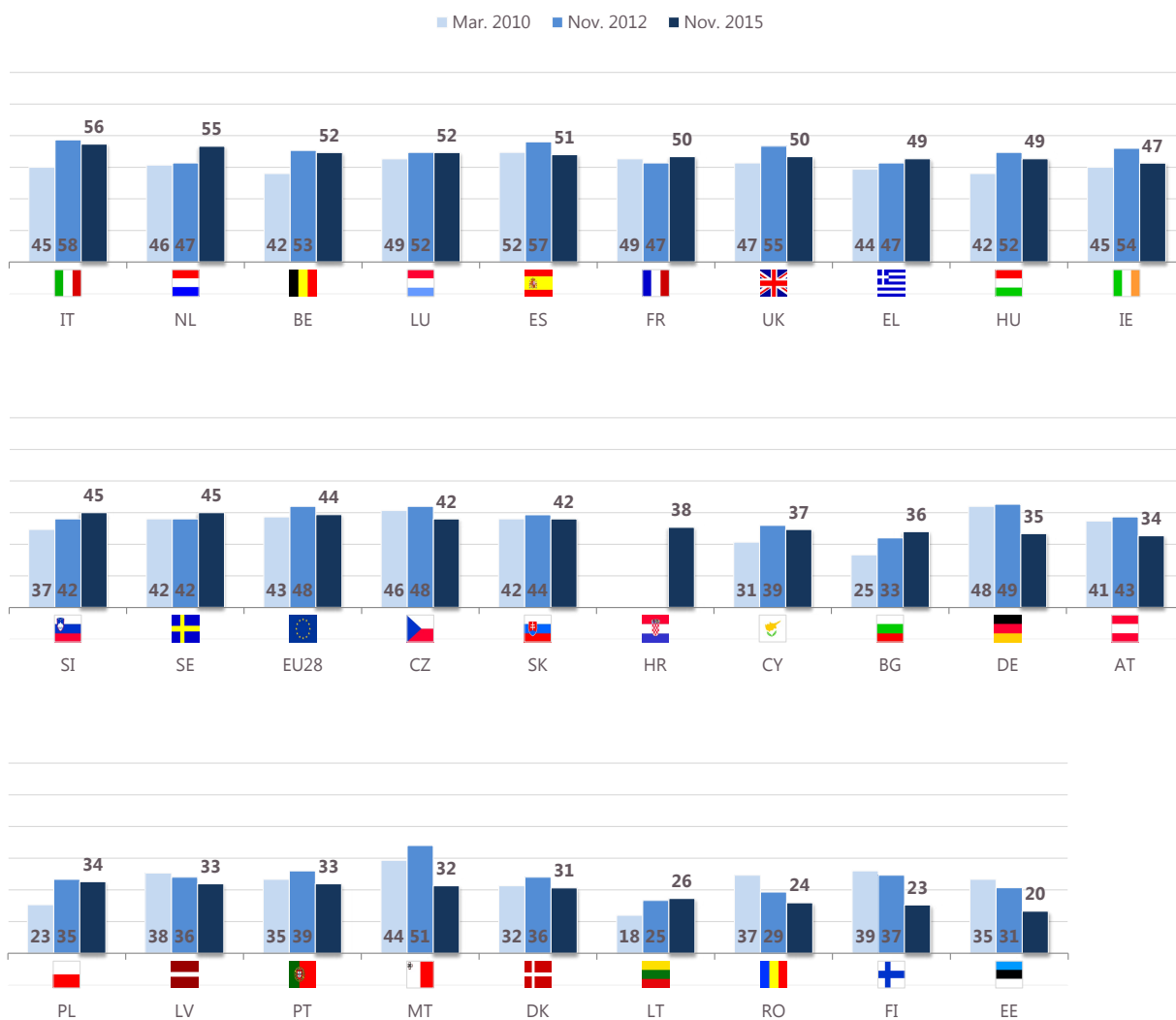
2. Voting for candidates in European and local elections in the country of residence

EU citizens living in another EU country can choose to vote, at the European elections, either in their country of origin or in the country in which they live.

- 45% would prefer to vote in their country of origin (an increase of 3 percentage points from 2012)
- 44% of Europeans would prefer to vote in the country in which they live (a decline of 4 percentage points from 2012).

There is wide variation across the EU. There is a majority of respondents who would prefer to vote for the candidates in the country in which they live in five EU countries: Italy (56%), the Netherlands (55%), Belgium (52%), Luxembourg (52%) and Spain (51%). Respondents were least likely to prefer voting for the candidates in the country in which they live in Estonia (20%), Finland (23%), Romania (24%) and Lithuania (26%).

Q1 A citizen of the EU living in another EU country than his or her country of origin has the right to vote in European Parliament elections in his/her country of residence. If you are living or were to live in another EU country than your country of origin (i.e. of which you are a national) would you rather vote in European elections for...? (% - THE CANDIDATES OF YOUR COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE)*



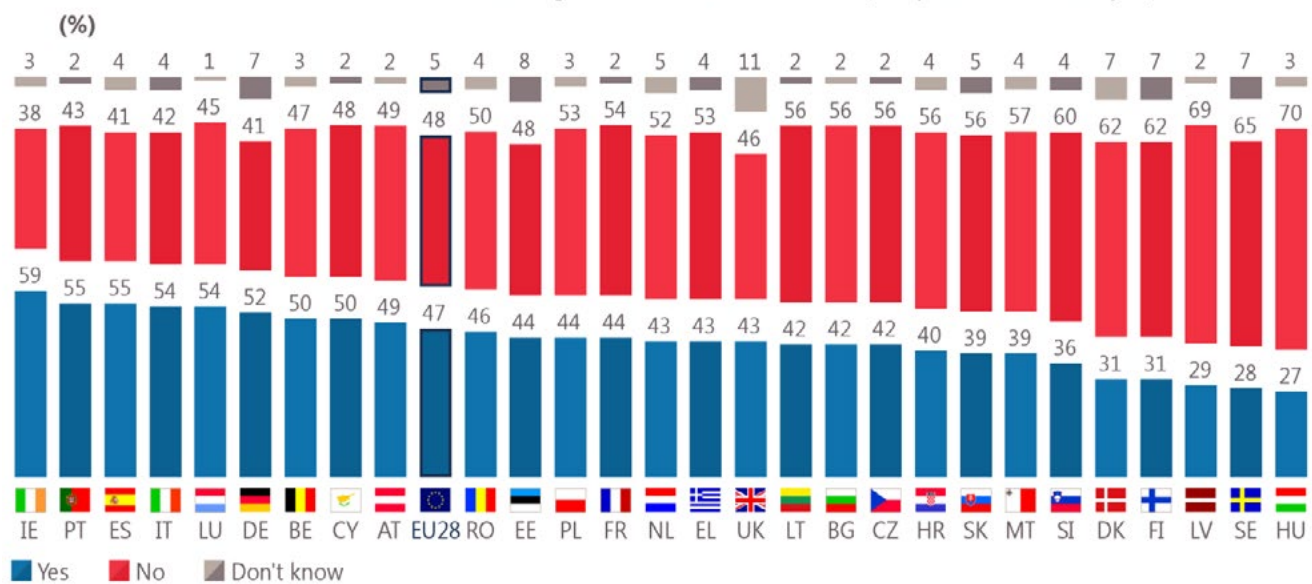
3. The right to stand as a candidate for executive offices – a possible extension of the electoral rights of non-national EU citizens in local elections³

EU citizens living in another EU country have the right to stand as candidates in local elections in the country in which they live, but EU law allows the EU countries to exclude them from certain executive offices.

- 47% of Europeans think that citizens from other EU countries should be able to stand as candidates for certain executive offices.
- 48% do not think that citizens from other EU countries should be able to stand as candidates for these offices.

There is significant variation between EU countries. There are 8 EU countries where the majority of respondents think that Europeans should have this right: Ireland (59%), Portugal (55%), Spain (55%), Italy (54%), Luxembourg (54%), Germany (52%), Belgium (50%) and Cyprus (50%). In contrast, there are 16 EU countries where the majority thinks that such a right should not exist, with the highest proportions in Hungary (70%), Latvia (69%), Sweden (65%), Denmark (62%), Finland (62%) and Slovenia (60%). There is no strong preference for or against allowing citizens to have such a right in Austria.

Q5 EU citizens living in another EU country have the right to stand as candidates in municipal elections but are excluded from certain executive offices where only nationals of the country may run as candidates. Do you agree that citizens from other EU countries should also have the right to stand for these offices (except the office of mayor)?



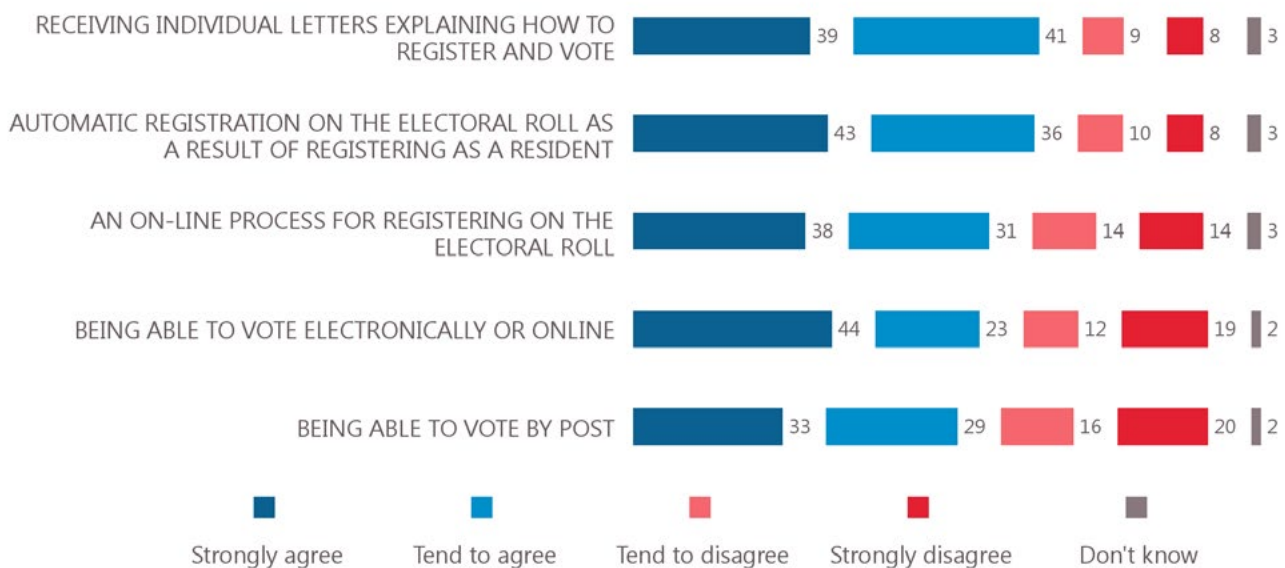
³ This question is new in the 2015 Eurobarometer survey.

4. Means for improving political participation of EU citizens in their country of residence⁴

Europeans think that it would be easier to vote in the country in which they live

- if they received individual letters explaining how to register and vote (80 %).
- if they were automatically registered on the electoral roll as a result of registering as a resident (79%).
- if there was an online process for registering on the electoral roll (69%)
- if they were able to vote electronically or online (67 %)

Q6 EU citizens living in another EU country have the right to vote in European or local elections in that country. If you were living in another EU country than your country of origin, to what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following would make it easier for you to vote in elections there?
(% - EU)

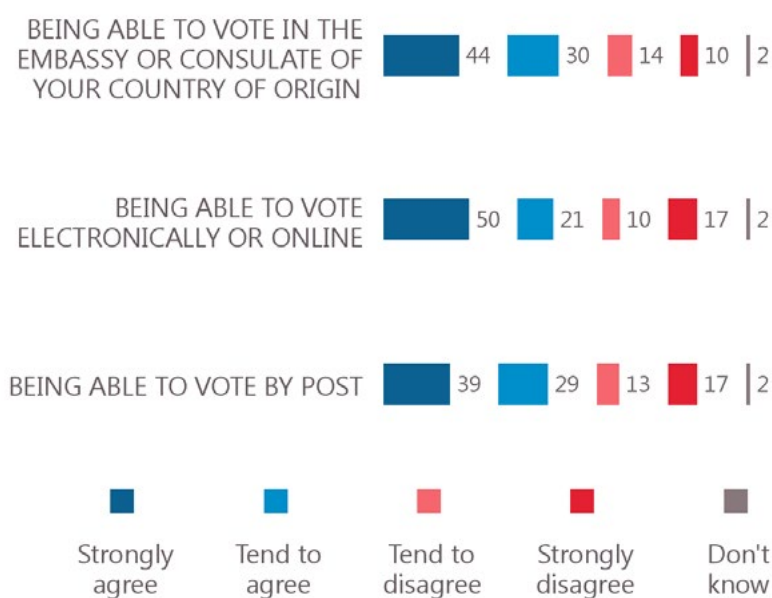


5. Means for improving political participation of EU citizens in their country of origin⁵

Europeans think that it would be easier to vote in their country of origin:

- if they were able to vote in the embassy or consulate of their country of origin (74 %).
- if they were able to vote electronically or online (71 %)
- if they were able to vote by post (68%)

Q7 And if you were living in another EU country than your country of origin, to what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following would make it easier for you to vote in elections in the country of your nationality?
(% - EU)



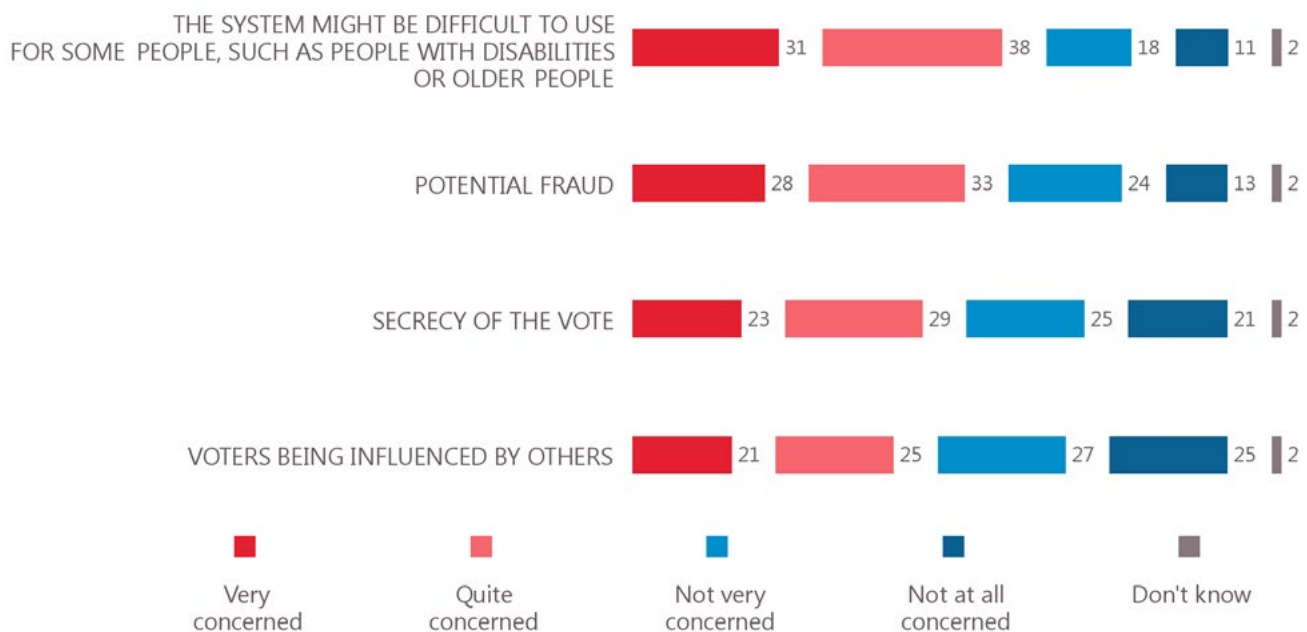
⁵ This question is new in the 2015 Eurobarometer survey.

6. Level of concern of EU citizens towards electronic, online and postal voting

If they were able to vote electronically, online or by post

- 69 % of Europeans would have concerns about the system being difficult for some people to use.
- 61 % of Europeans would have concerns about potential fraud.
- 52% of Europeans would have concerns about secrecy of the vote.

Q8 If you were able to vote electronically, online or by post, how concerned would you be about each of the following?
(% - EU)



Full Report:

<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/FLASH/surveyKy/2078>

