

# Special Eurobarometer 470

## Summary

## Corruption

Fieldwork

October 2017

Publication

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Survey requested by the European Commission,  
Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs  
and co-ordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication

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Special Eurobarometer 470 – Wave EB88.2 – TNS opinion & social

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(DG COMM "Media monitoring and analysis" Unit)

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## INTRODUCTION

Corruption takes many forms, such as bribery, trading in influence, abuse of functions, but can also hide behind nepotism, conflicts of interest, or revolving doors between the public and the private sectors. It constitutes a threat to security, as a potential enabler for crime. It acts as a drag on economic growth, by creating business uncertainty, slowing processes, and imposing additional costs. Although the nature and scope of corruption may differ from one EU Member State to another, it harms the EU as a whole by lowering investment levels, hampering the fair operation of the Internal Market and reducing public finances.

In addition to allowing economic inefficiencies to flourish, corruption adversely affects government objectives ranging from improving income distribution, to better environmental protection. Most importantly, corruption undermines trust in governments, public institutions and democracy in general. The international community has also recognized the damaging effects of corruption on economic and social development in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and pledged to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms<sup>1</sup>.

Previous Eurobarometer surveys (in 2005<sup>2</sup>, 2007<sup>3</sup>, 2009<sup>4</sup>, 2011<sup>5</sup> and 2013<sup>6</sup>) highlighted the fact that the majority of Europeans believed that corruption was a major problem for their country. The EU's growth strategy, Europe 2020, aims at delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. This is a strategy the success of which also depends on factors such as good governance, rule of law and control of corruption. It is therefore necessary to have a good understanding of the experiences and perceptions of EU citizens relating to the problem of corruption, and of their attitudes towards the various institutions in their countries responsible for tackling this problem.

This survey was carried out in October 2017. It was carried out by TNS opinion & social network in the 28 Member States of the European Union between 21 October and 30 October 2017. Some 28,080 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed face-to-face at home in the local language, on behalf of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs. The methodology used is that of Eurobarometer surveys as carried out by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Media Monitoring and Analysis" Unit)<sup>7</sup>. A technical note on the manner in which interviews were conducted by the Institutes within the TNS opinion & social network is appended as an annex to this report. Also included are the interview methods and confidence intervals<sup>8</sup>.

This survey covers public attitudes to:

- The acceptability of giving a bribe (money, a gift or a favour) to obtain something from the public administration or a public service;
- The extent of corruption in their country;
- The areas of society in which corruption is widespread present;
- How perceived corruption has changed in the past three years;
- Services/ sectors of society facing the biggest corruption problems;
- The effectiveness of government, the judicial system and institutions in tackling corruption.

<sup>1</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_260\\_240\\_en.htm#245](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_260_240_en.htm#245)

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_300\\_280\\_en.htm#291](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb_special_300_280_en.htm#291)

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_339\\_320\\_en.htm#325](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_339_320_en.htm#325)

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_379\\_360\\_en.htm#374](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_379_360_en.htm#374)

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_399\\_380\\_en.htm#397](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_399_380_en.htm#397)

<sup>7</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion>

<sup>8</sup> The results tables are included in the annex. It should be noted that the total of the percentages in the tables of this report may exceed 100% when the respondent could give several answers to the question.

It also covers personal experiences of corruption in terms of:

- Personal exposure to corruption and in particular bribery;
- Knowing someone who takes/ has taken bribes;
- Experience or witnessing of any corruption in the last 12 months;
- Whether corruption was reported – reasons for not doing so;
- Awareness of where to report corruption and the level of trust in the relevant authorities.

Note: In this report, countries are referred to by their official abbreviation. The abbreviations used in this report correspond to:

Belgium	BE	Lithuania	LT
Bulgaria	BG	Luxembourg	LU
Czech Republic	CZ	Hungary	HU
Denmark	DK	Malta	MT
Germany	DE	The Netherlands	NL
Estonia	EE	Austria	AT
Ireland	IE	Poland	PL
Greece	EL	Portugal	PT
Spain	ES	Romania	RO
France	FR	Slovenia	SI
Croatia	HR	Slovakia	SK
Italy	IT	Finland	FI
Republic of Cyprus	CY *	Sweden	SE
Latvia	LV	United Kingdom	UK

European Union – weighted average for the 28 Member States of the EU	EU28
BE, IT, FR, DE, LU, NL, DK, UK, IE, PT, ES, EL, AT, SE, FI	EU15 **
BG, CZ, EE, HR, CY, LT, LV, MT, HU, PL, RO, SI, SK	NMS13 ***

\* Cyprus as a whole is one of the 28 European Union Member States. However, the 'acquis communautaire' has been suspended in the part of the country which is not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. For practical reasons, only the interviews carried out in the part of the country controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are included in the 'CY' category and in the EU28 average.

\*\*\* EU15 refers to the 15 countries forming the European Union before the enlargements of 2004 and 2007.

\*\*\*\* The NMS13 are the 13 'new Member States' which joined the European Union during the 2004, 2007 and 2013 enlargements.

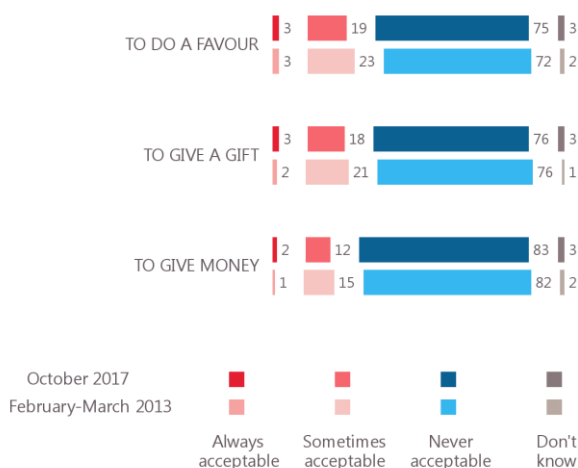
*We wish to thank the people throughout the European Union  
who have given their time to take part in this survey.*

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

## I. GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION

**Corruption is considered unacceptable in most EU Member States.** Less than a quarter Europeans think that it is acceptable to do a favour (22%) or give a gift (21%) in order to obtain something from the public administration or a public service. Fewer still (14%) think it is acceptable to give money. The results are rather stable since 2013.

**QB4** Talking more generally, if you wanted to get something from the public administration or a public service, to what extent do you think it is acceptable to do any of the following?  
(% - EU)



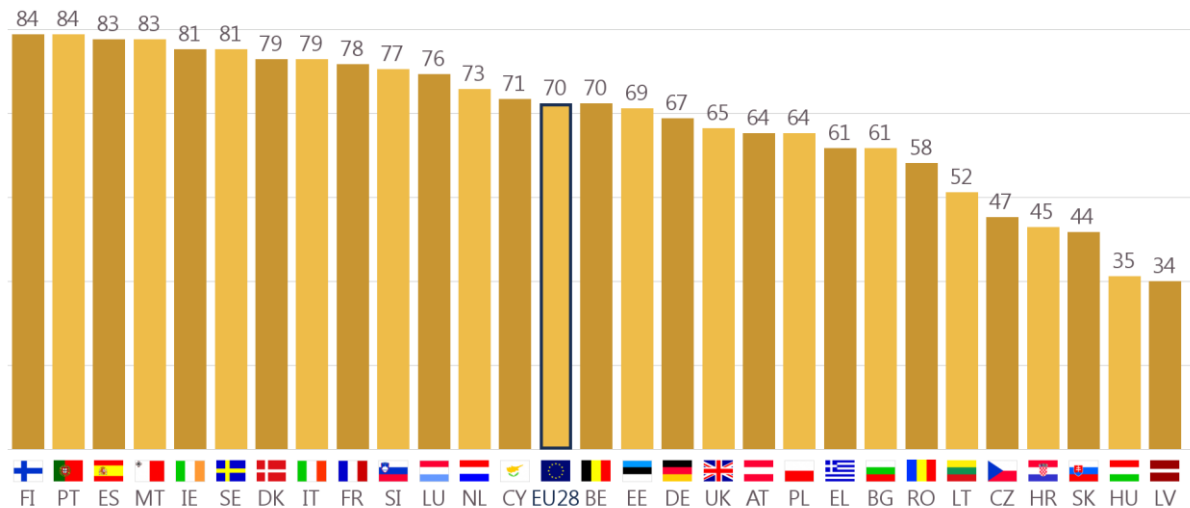
Base: all respondents (N=28,080)

The figure below shows the proportion of respondents in each country who regard corruption as unacceptable. There are significant differences between countries on this question. At individual country level, in 23 of 28 EU Member States, at least a majority of respondents think that corruption is unacceptable, but this varies from just over half of respondents in Lithuania (52%) to more than eight in ten respondents in Finland and Portugal (both 84%). Only around a third of respondents in Hungary (35%) and Latvia (34%) think that corruption is unacceptable.

To assess differences between countries, an index of tolerance to corruption has been computed. On the basis of respondents' answers to each of the preceding questions, this index categorises respondents according to whether they primarily regard corruption as behaviour that is 'acceptable', 'tolerated', or 'unacceptable'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Based on their answers to the items in question QB4, respondents were awarded points from 0 to 2 for each answer. The sum of these points was calculated and this score was treated as an index that indicates how tolerant the respondents are towards corruption and corrupt behaviour. Based on their individual score, the respondents were then grouped into three groups (high score: "acceptable", low score: "tolerated", score of zero points: "unacceptable"). The graph in this report displays the share of respondents per country that achieved a score of zero points ("unacceptable") on this tolerance index to corruption.

**QB4T** Share of respondents who say it is unacceptable to either give a gift, do a favour, or pay extra money to obtain a public service  
(% - UNACCEPTABLE)

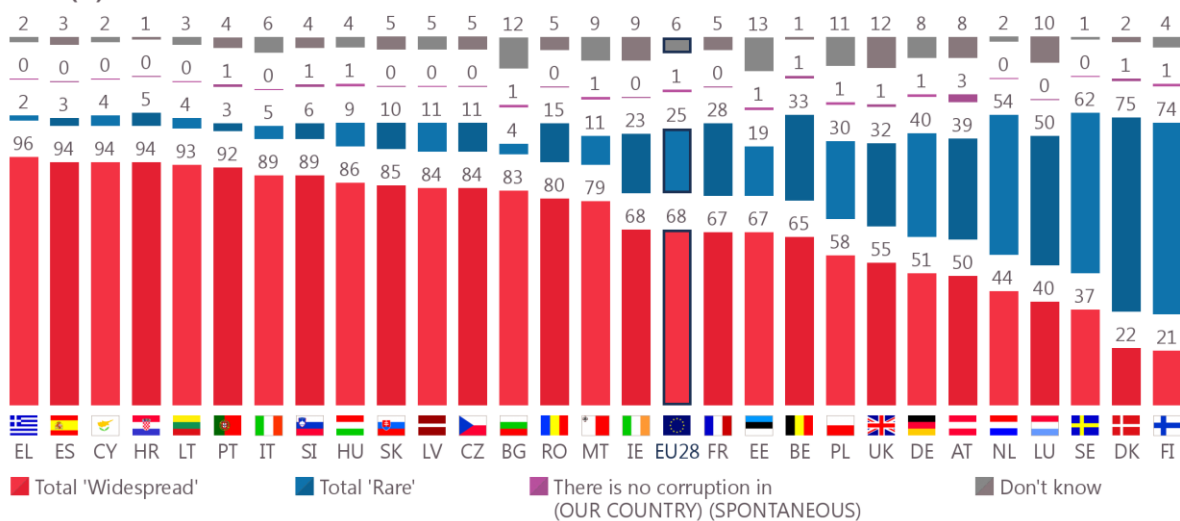


Base: all respondents (N=28,080)

**Over two thirds of Europeans think that corruption is widespread in their country, but there is much variation between countries.** The proportion of respondents who believe that corruption is a widespread phenomenon in their country has decreased by 8 percentage points since the 2013 survey.

In all but five cases, a majority of respondents think that corruption is a widespread national problem, but there are significant differences in the size of this majority. The countries where most respondents agree that corruption is widespread are Greece (96%), Spain, Cyprus and Croatia (all three 94%), Lithuania (93%) and Portugal (92%). In Poland (58%), the United Kingdom (55%) and Germany (51%) still a majority of respondents think corruption is widespread.

**QB5** How widespread do you think the problem of corruption is in (OUR COUNTRY)?  
(%)



Base: all respondents (N=28,080)

In the majority of countries, respondents are now less likely to think that corruption is widespread, in line with the general trend, and only Cyprus (+16 pp) has seen a significant increase in the

proportion of respondents agreeing with the claim. In six countries, the proportion has fallen considerably: these are Poland (-24 pp), the Netherlands (-17 pp), Austria (-16 pp), Ireland and Romania (both -13 pp) and the Czech Republic (-11 pp).

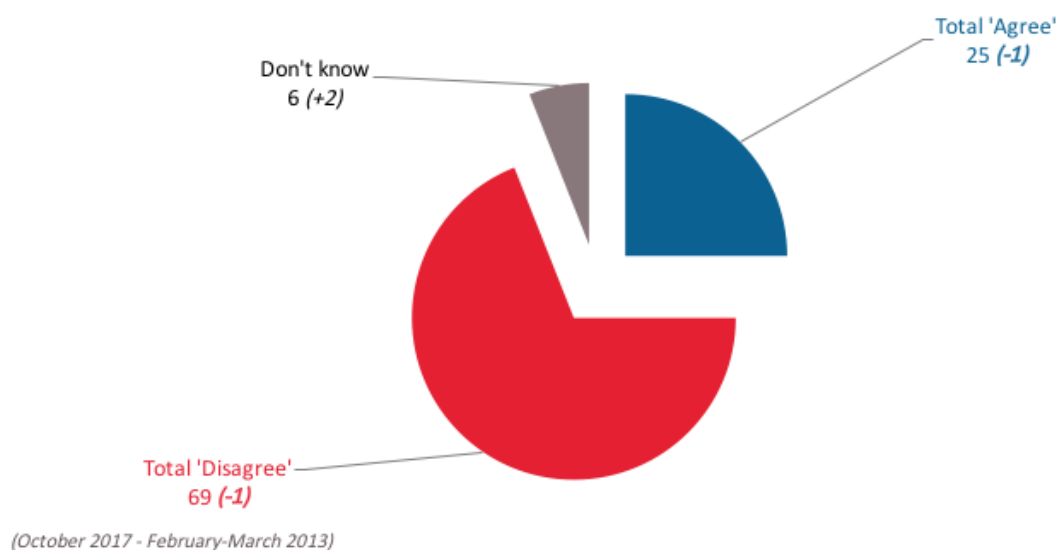
**Most Europeans think that corruption is widespread among political parties (56%) and politicians (53%); and large minorities think it is widespread among other categories.**

More than four in ten think corruption is widespread among officials awarding public tenders (43%) and those issuing building permits (42%). Four in ten Europeans believe that there is widespread corruption among private companies (40%).

**A quarter of Europeans think that they are personally affected by corruption in their daily lives.** In most countries, there has been little change since 2013 in the proportion of respondents who agree that they are personally affected by corruption. In Greece (-17 pp) and Estonia (-12 pp) the proportion of respondents who give this answer has declined significantly since 2013, but in Romania (+11 pp) there has been a clear increase.

QB15.4 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?

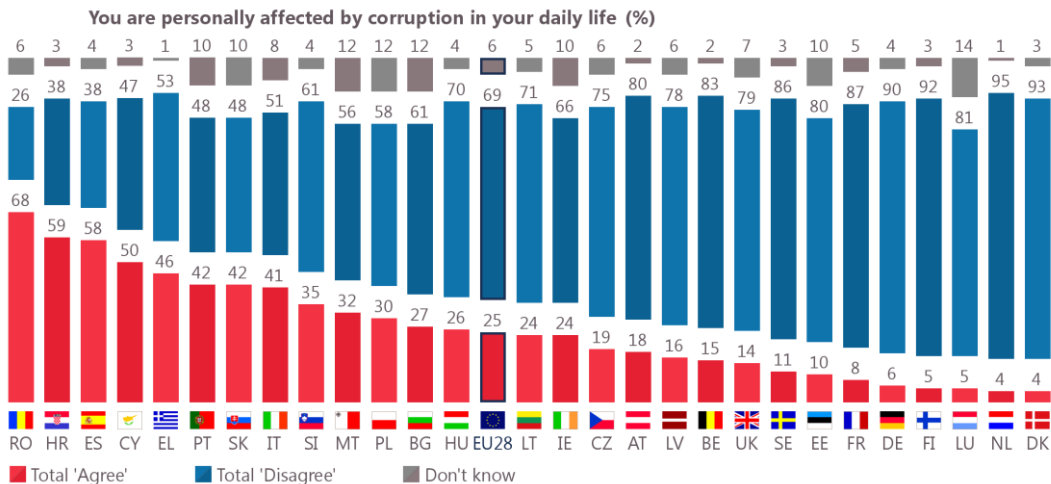
You are personally affected by corruption in your daily life (% - EU)



There is however substantial variation at the country level. In Romania, over two thirds (68%) of respondents say that they are personally affected by corruption, as do nearly six in ten of those polled in Croatia (59%) and Spain (58%). In all other cases, less than half give this answer, but this varies from nearly half (46%) of respondents in Greece to less than one in ten of those polled in France (8%), Germany (6%), Finland and Luxembourg (both 5%) and the Netherlands and Denmark (both 4%).

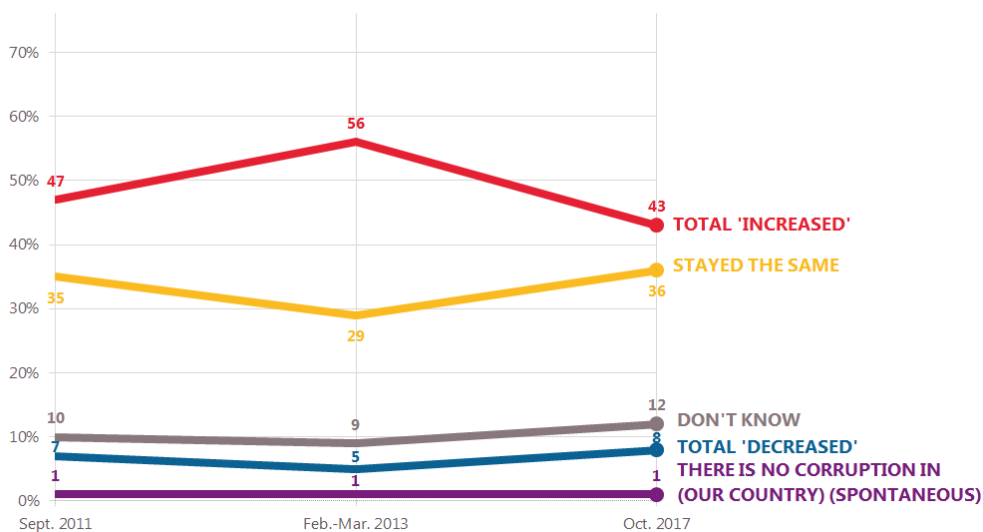


QB15.4 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?



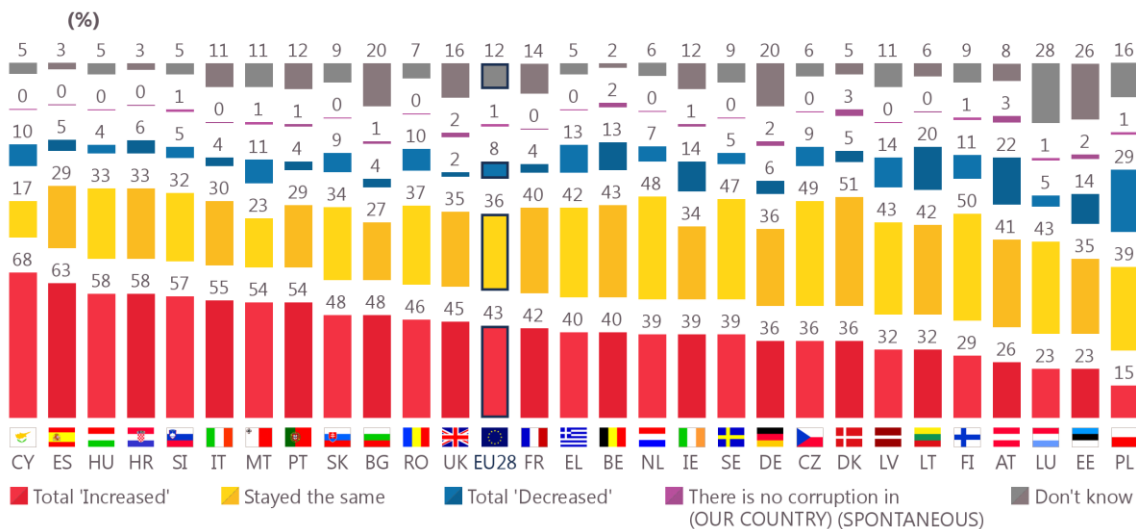
**Over four in ten (43%) Europeans think that the level of corruption in their country has increased over the past three years.** The 2013 survey saw an increase in the proportion of respondents believing that corruption has become more widespread. The current survey sees a clear movement in the other direction.

QB6 In the past three years, would you say that the level of corruption in (OUR COUNTRY) has...?  
(% - EU)



In 20 of the 28 EU Member States, less than half of those polled say it has increased. The lowest figures are found in Poland (15%) and Estonia and Luxembourg (both 23%). Countries where respondents are more likely to perceive that the level of corruption has increased include Cyprus (68%) and Spain (63%). In most cases however, only a small minority of respondents think that the level of corruption has decreased.

QB6 In the past three years, would you say that the level of corruption in (OUR COUNTRY) has...?

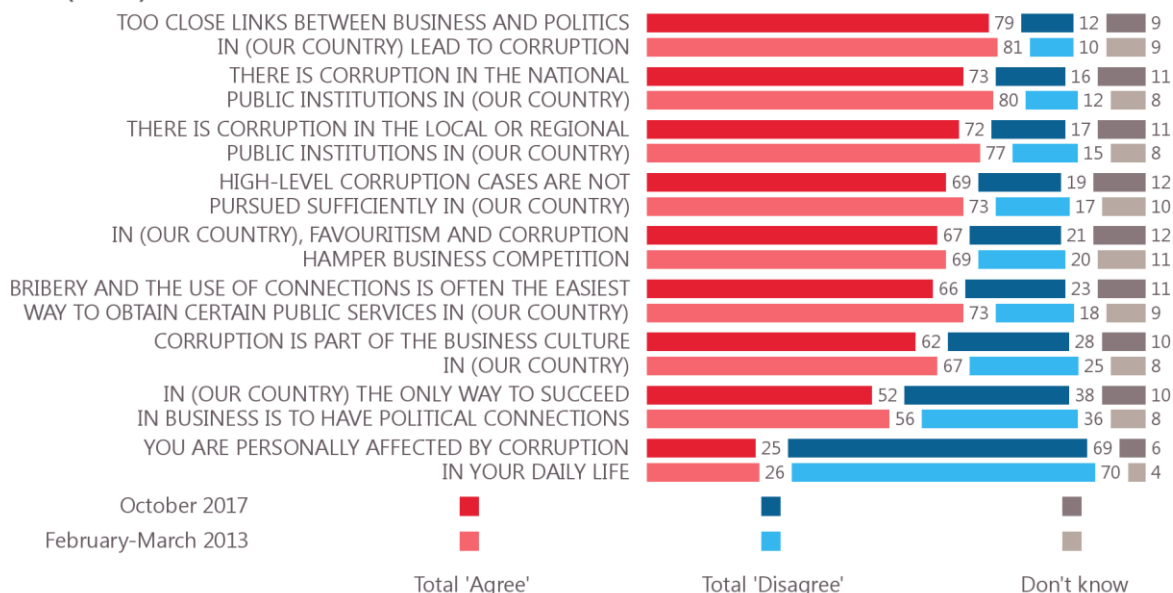


## II. DETAILED ATTITUDES TO CORRUPTION

**The large majority of Europeans think that corruption exists in public institutions at local, regional and national levels.** Nearly eight in ten Europeans (79%) agree that too close links between business and politics in their country lead to corruption. Just under three-quarters (73%) say that there is corruption national public institutions. A very similar proportion of respondents (72%) think that there is corruption in the local or regional public institutions of their country.

There have not been many considerable changes since the 2013 survey, although the average proportion of respondents who agree with all these statements has decreased across the EU. The largest changes have occurred in the case of corruption in the national public institutions (-7 pp) and bribery and the use of corruption (-7 pp).

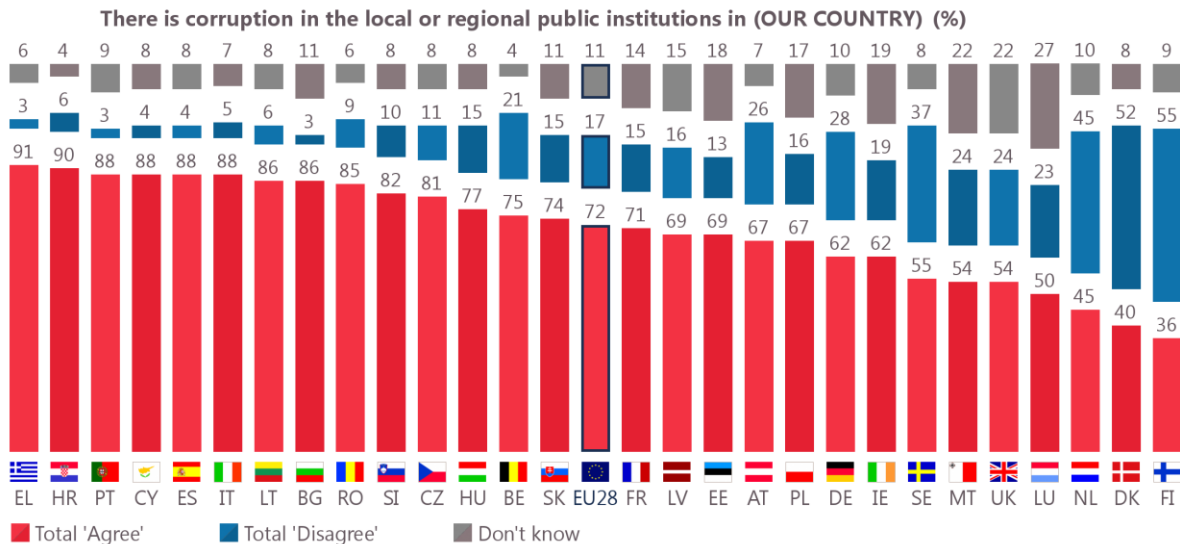
QB15 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?  
(% - EU)



### Corruption in public institutions

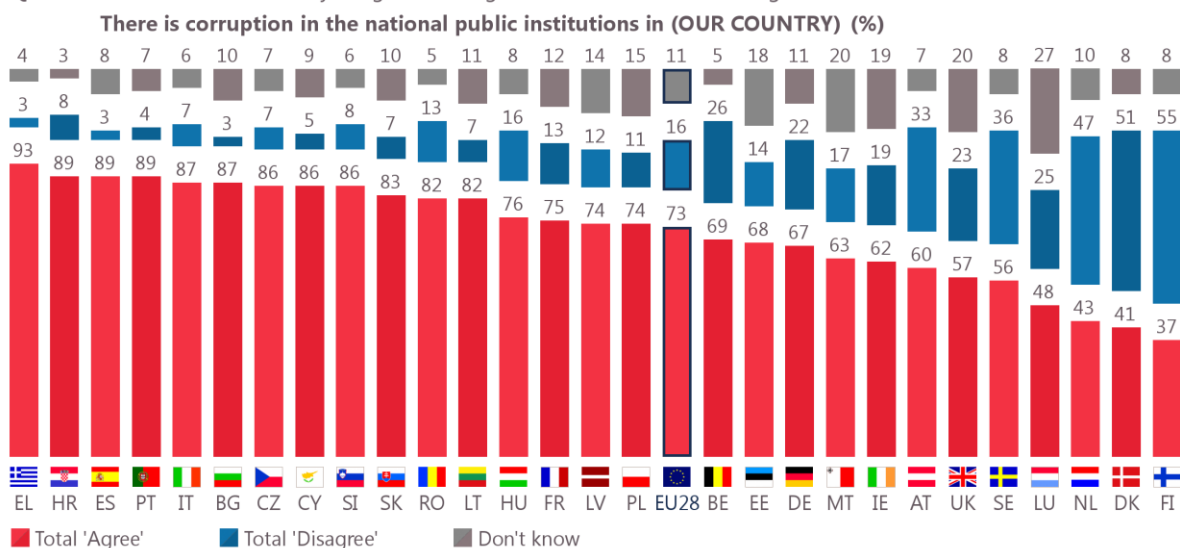
In Greece (91%) and Croatia (90%), at least nine in ten agree that there is **corruption in the local or regional public institutions of their countries**, as do nearly nine in ten of those polled in Portugal, Cyprus, Spain and Italy (all 88%). In all but three countries, a majority of respondents agree with this statement. The exceptions are the Netherlands (45%), Denmark (40%) and Finland (36%).

QB15.1 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?



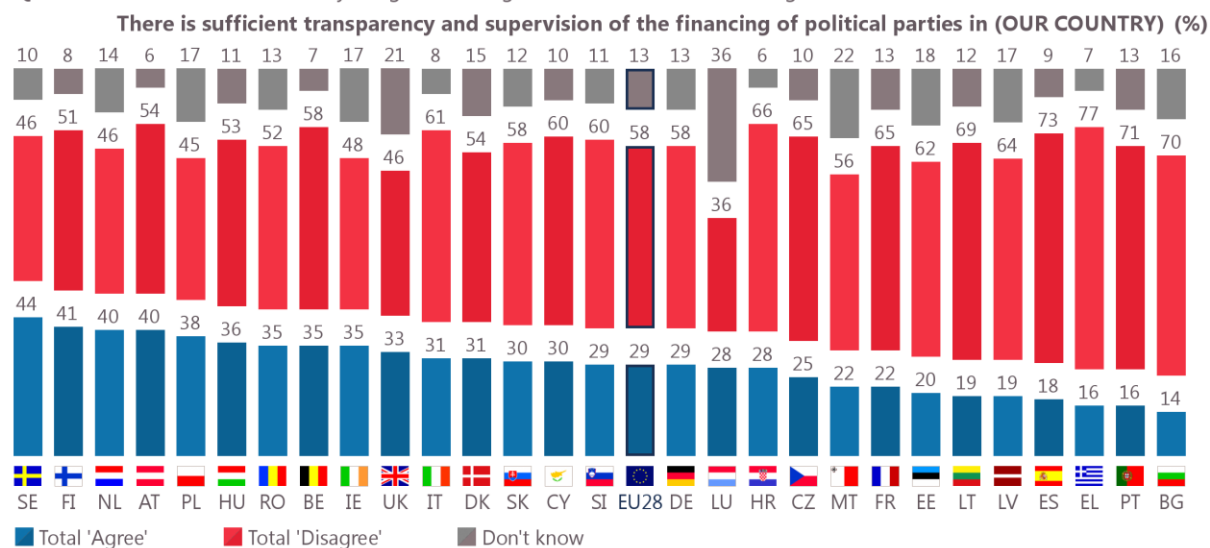
In Greece, over nine in ten (93%) of those polled say that there is **corruption in national public institutions**, and nearly nine in ten say this in Croatia, Spain and Portugal (all 89%). There are only four countries in which less than half of respondents express agreement with this statement: Luxembourg (48%), the Netherlands (43%), Denmark (41%) and Finland (37%).

QB15.2 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?



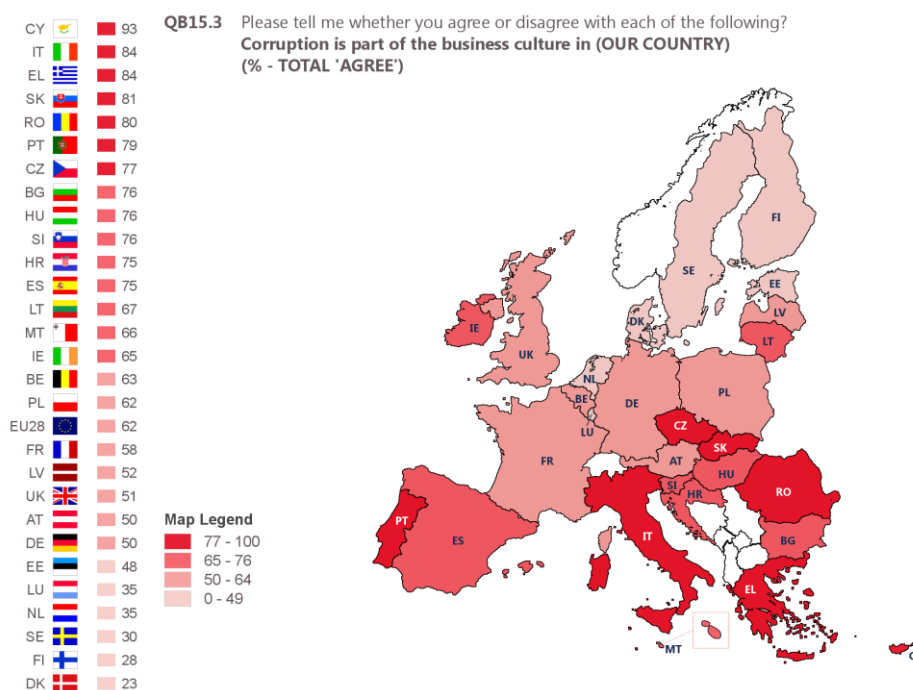
**In all countries, only a minority of respondents say that there is sufficient transparency and supervision of the financing of political parties.** Nevertheless, there is some clear variation on this issue. In Sweden (44%) and Finland (41%), over four in ten of those polled are satisfied that there is adequate oversight of party finance; and in a further seven countries at least a third hold this view, but in nine countries less than a quarter agree, with the figures particularly low in Bulgaria (14%) and Portugal and Greece (both 16%).

**QB15.10** Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?



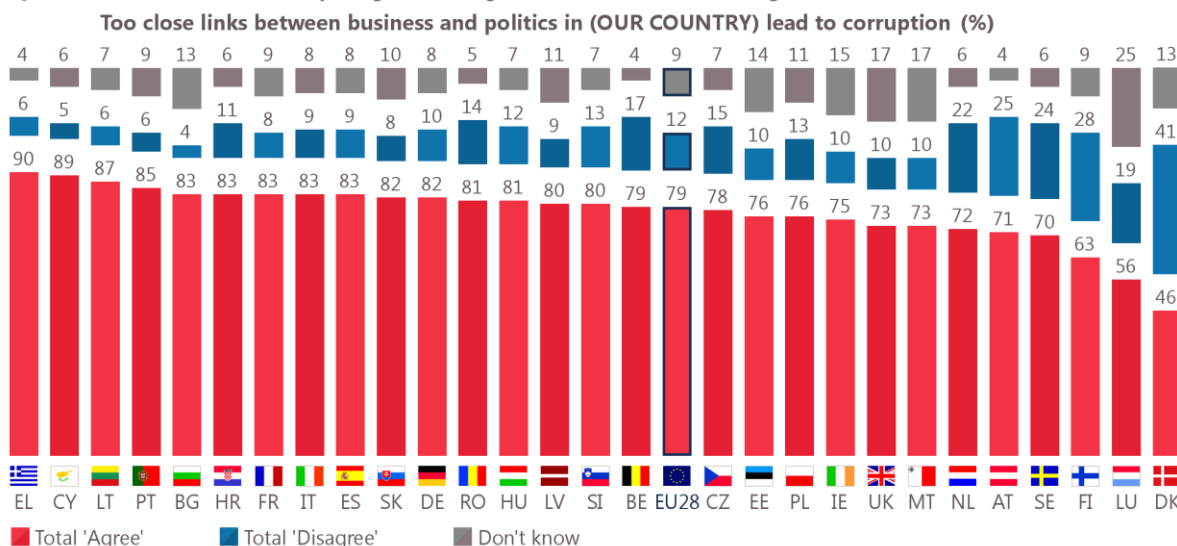
## Corruption in business

Over nine in ten (93%) of those polled in Cyprus say that corruption is part of their country's business culture, as do over eight in ten of those polled in Italy and Greece (both 84%). In a further nine EU Member States, at least three quarters of respondents hold this view.



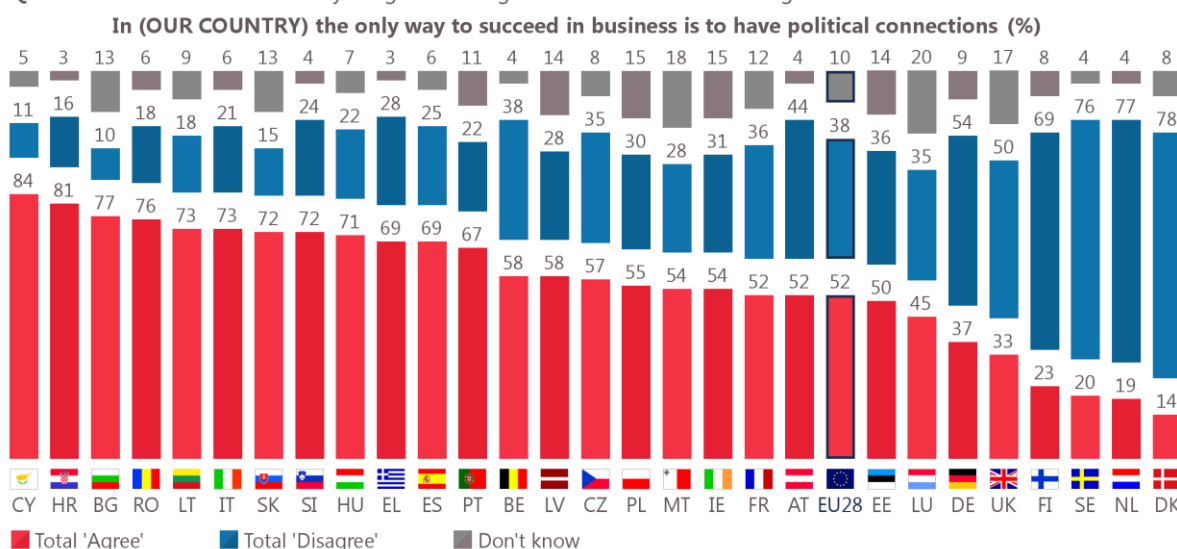
**In all but one case, a majority of respondents think that too close links between business and politics in their country lead to corruption.** Both Luxembourg (56%) and Finland (63%) have significantly lower than average majorities of respondents who agree with this statement. Denmark stands out as the only country where less than half (46%) respondents agree with the statement.

**QB15.8** Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?



**Regarding the statement that the only way to succeed in business in their country is to have political connections, there are large differences at country level.** There are 10 countries in which more than two thirds of respondents think that having political connections is the only way to ensure success in business. In Cyprus (84%) and Croatia (81%), over eight in ten agree with this statement. There are seven countries in which only a minority of respondents hold this view, but this ranges from nearly half of those polled in Luxembourg (45%) to only 14% in Denmark.

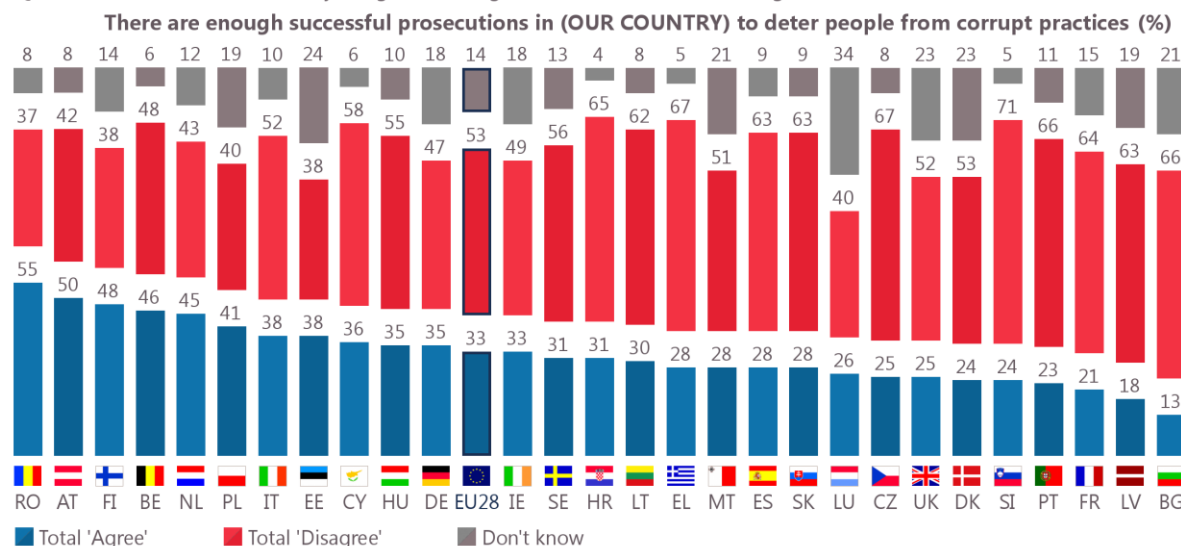
**QB15.11** Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?



## Measures to fight corruption

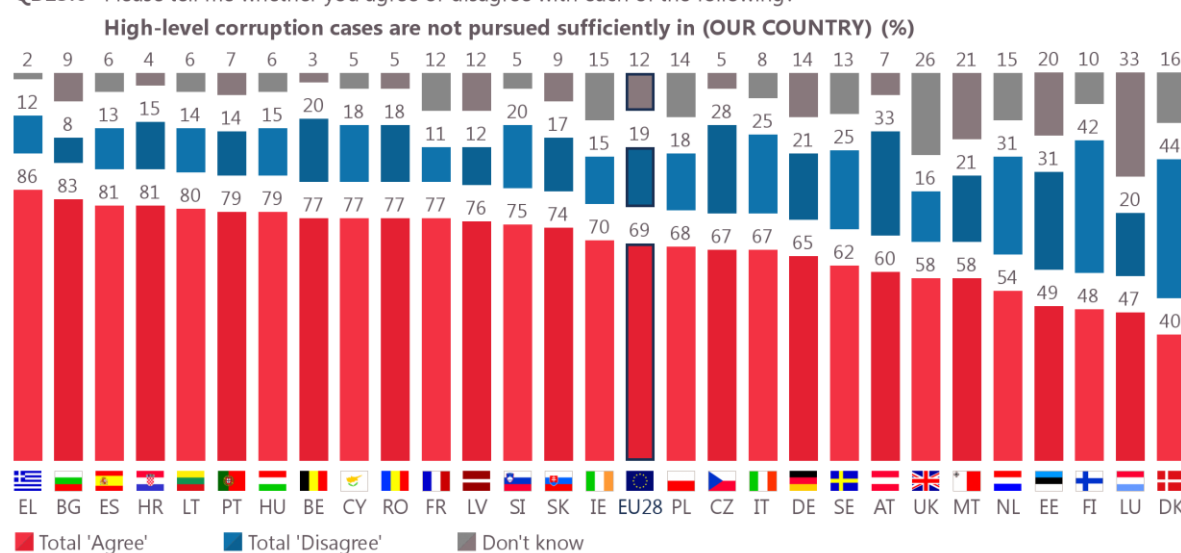
**Most Europeans think that corruption has not been tackled sufficiently.** Only a minority of respondents believe that various measures to discourage, tackle and punish corruption are effective (33 % think there is enough successful prosecution), although confidence in these measures has increased slightly since the previous survey.

QB15.5 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?



In all but four cases, **a majority of respondents think that high-level corruption cases are not pursued sufficiently in their country.** This varies from just over half of those polled in the Netherlands (54%) to over eight in ten respondents in Croatia and Spain (both 81%), Bulgaria (83%) and Greece (86%). In only four countries the proportion of respondents who agree with this statement is less than half: Denmark (40%), Luxembourg (47%), Finland (48%) and Estonia (49%).

QB15.6 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?

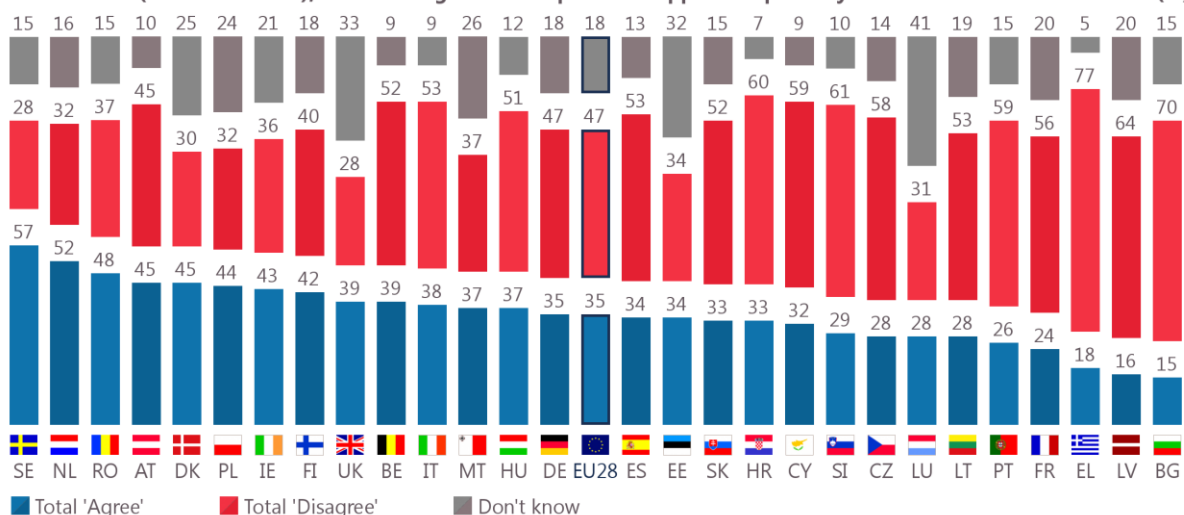


**In most countries, only a minority of respondents agree that measures against corruption are applied impartially and without ulterior motives.** The exceptions are the

Netherlands, where just over half (52%) of those polled give this response, and Sweden, where nearly six in ten (57%) do.

**QB15.13** Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following?

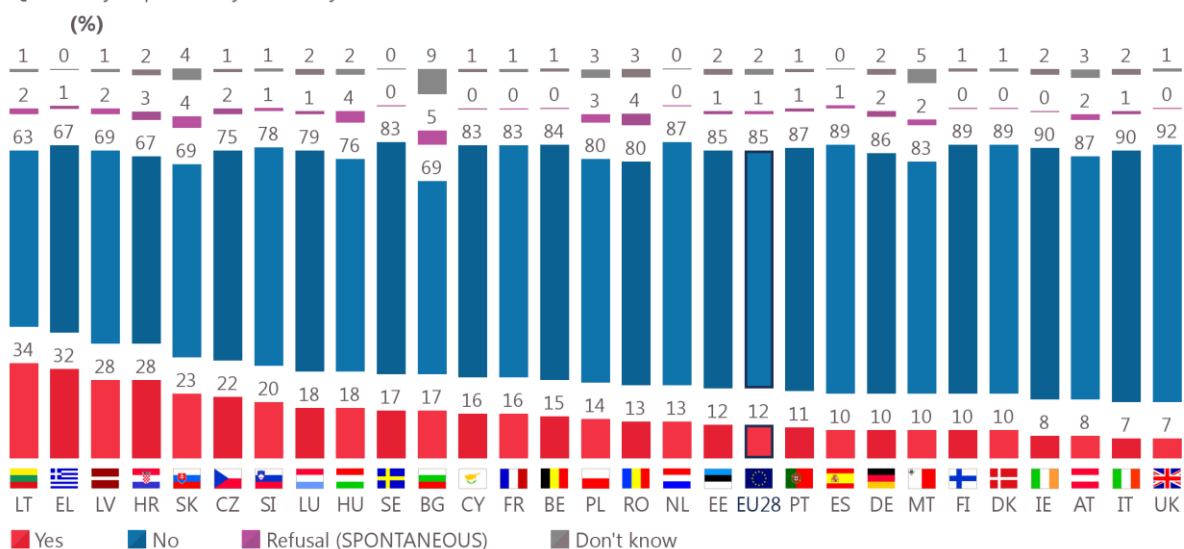
**In (OUR COUNTRY), measures against corruption are applied impartially and without ulterior motives (%)**



### III. EXPERIENCES OF CORRUPTION

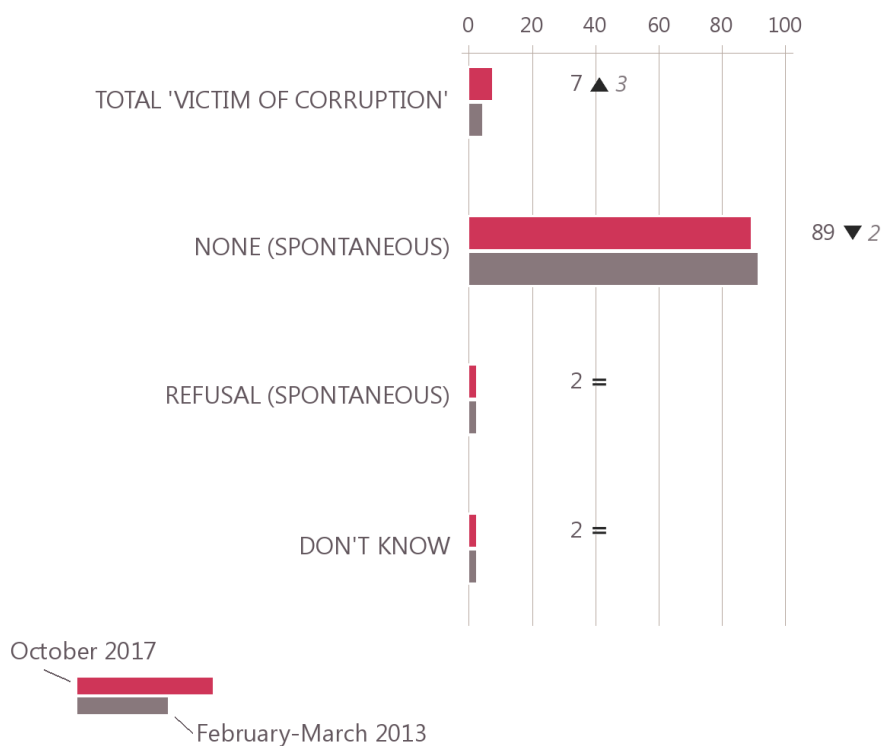
**Most Europeans say they do not have any direct exposure to corruption.** Only about one in ten Europeans say they know someone who has taken or takes bribes (12%), but there are variations at country level.

**QB8** Do you personally know anyone who takes or has taken bribes?



**Only a few Europeans say they have been a direct victim of corruption in the past year.** Only 7% of European say they have been asked or expected to pay a gift, do a favour or pay extra money for services received. Nearly nine in ten (89%) respondents say that they have not been victims of corruption.

**QB9b** Thinking about these contacts in the past 12 months has anyone in (OUR COUNTRY) asked you or expected you to give a gift, favour, or extra money for his or her services? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)  
(% - EU)



Base: respondents who had contact with authorities in the last 12 months (N=22,408)

In all countries, a minority of respondents say that they have been victims of corruption, but this varies substantially. In Belgium, over a quarter (27%) of those polled say that someone solicited or expected a gift, a favour or money from them in exchange for services, closely followed by Hungary (25%). At the other end of the scale, very few respondents report this in Denmark or Portugal (both 1%).



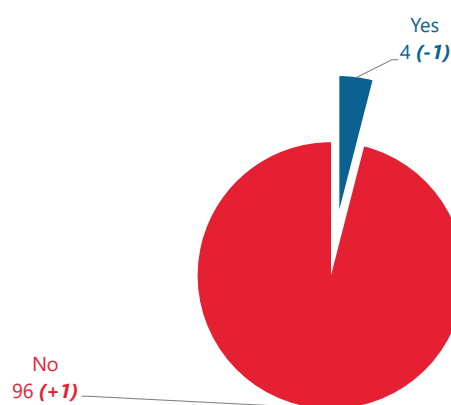
#### IV. CORRUPTION IN HEALTHCARE

Nearly eight in ten Europeans have visited a public healthcare practitioner or institution in the past year. This figure is almost identical to the result of the previous survey in 2013.

**Very few Europeans who have visited public health practitioners and institutions say that they had to give an additional payment, valuable gift or make a hospital donation.**

Only a very small percentage of respondents (4%) say that they had to give an extra payment, valuable gift or make a donation to the hospital. This figure is almost identical to the one recorded in the previous survey.

**QB2** Apart from official fees, did you have to give an extra payment or a valuable gift to a nurse or a doctor, or make a donation to the hospital?  
(% - EU)

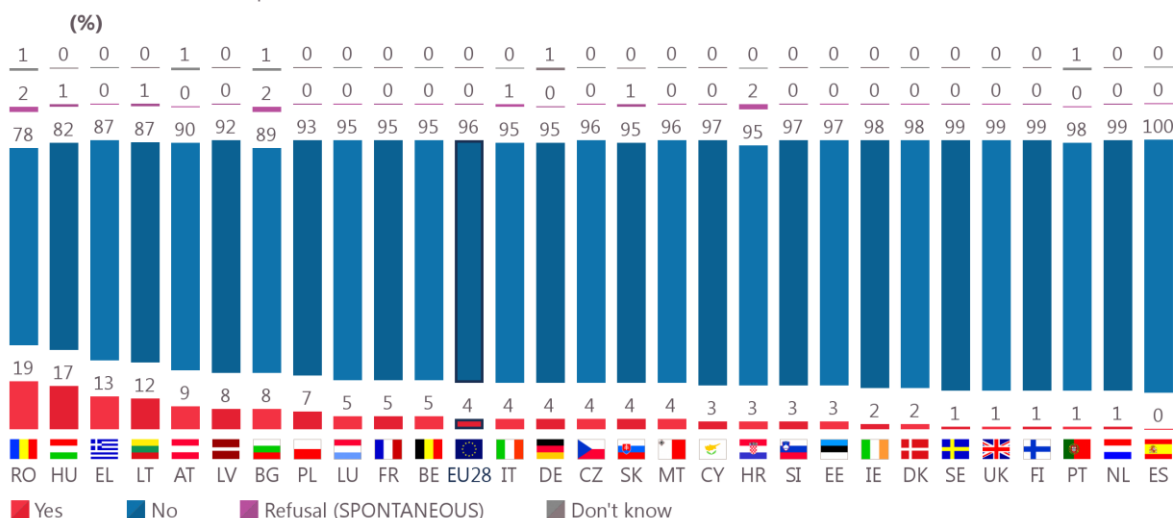


(October 2017 - February-March 2013)

Base: respondents who had contact with public healthcare sector in the last 12 months (N=2178921,789)

**There are important variations at country level.** In Romania (19%) and Hungary (17%) just under a fifth of all respondents say they had to make an extra payment, give a gift or make a donation on top of the official fees. Over one in ten of those polled in Lithuania (12%) and Greece (13%) say the same. In all but four these four countries no more than one in ten (10%) give this response, and in 20 cases no more than 5% of respondents do.

**QB2** Apart from official fees did you have to give an extra payment or a valuable gift to a nurse or a doctor, or make a donation to the hospital?



Base: respondents who had contact with public healthcare sector in the last 12 months (N=21,789)

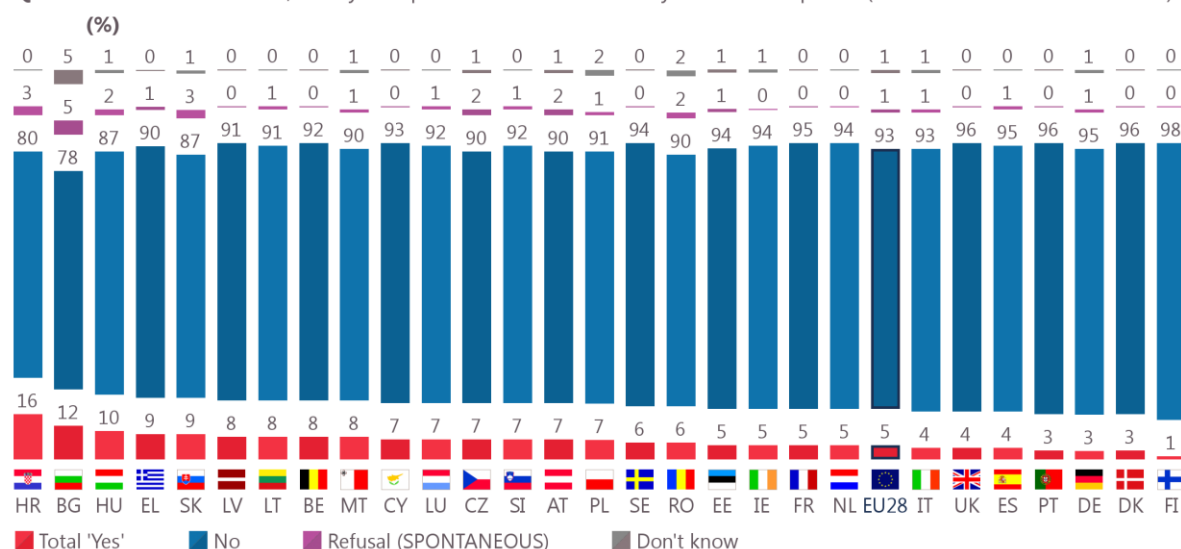
## V. REPORTING CORRUPTION

### One in twenty Europeans have experienced a case of corruption in the past year.

Very few Europeans say that they have experienced (2%) or witnessed (3%) a case of corruption in the past year. In 24 of the 28 EU Member States, the proportion of respondents who have experienced an act of corruption has decreased since the previous survey in 2013. The total proportion of Europeans with any exposure to corruption, i.e. who say that they have either experienced and/or witnessed any corruption in the past year, stands at 5%, a decrease of three percentage points since the previous survey. Over nine in ten (93%, +3 pp) say that they have not experienced any corruption.

**In all but three countries, less than one in ten respondents say that they have experienced or witnessed cases of corruption**, with particularly few respondents in Finland (1%) and Denmark, Germany and Portugal (all 3%) giving this answer. At the other end of the scale, over one in ten respondents in Bulgaria (12%) and Croatia (16%) and one in ten (10%) respondents in Hungary say they have experienced or witnessed acts of corruption.

**QB12** In the last 12 months, have you experienced or witnessed any case of corruption? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

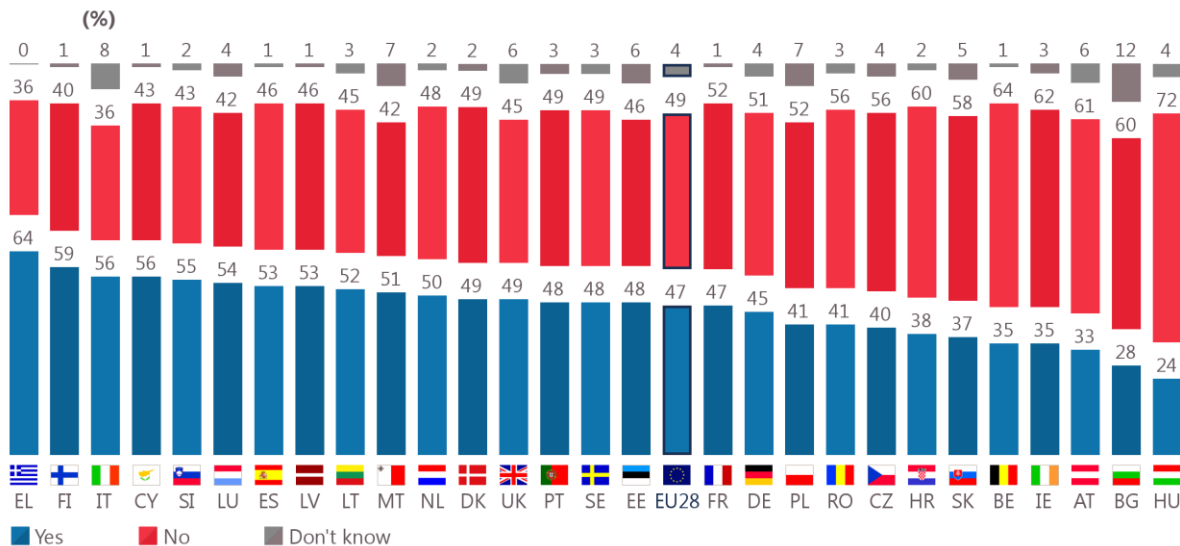


### Reporting cases of corruption

**The majority of Europeans who experience or witness corruption do not report it.** Over eight in ten respondents (81%) say that they did not report corruption that they experienced or witnessed to anyone, while nearly a fifth (18%) say that they did report it. In both cases, the proportion of responses has risen since the last survey (+7 pp and +6 pp, respectively).

**Less than half of all Europeans would know where to report corruption.** Awareness of where to report corruption varies significantly across Europe: from less than a quarter in Hungary (24%) and less than three in ten in Bulgaria (28%) to a large majority in Greece (64%) and Finland (59%).

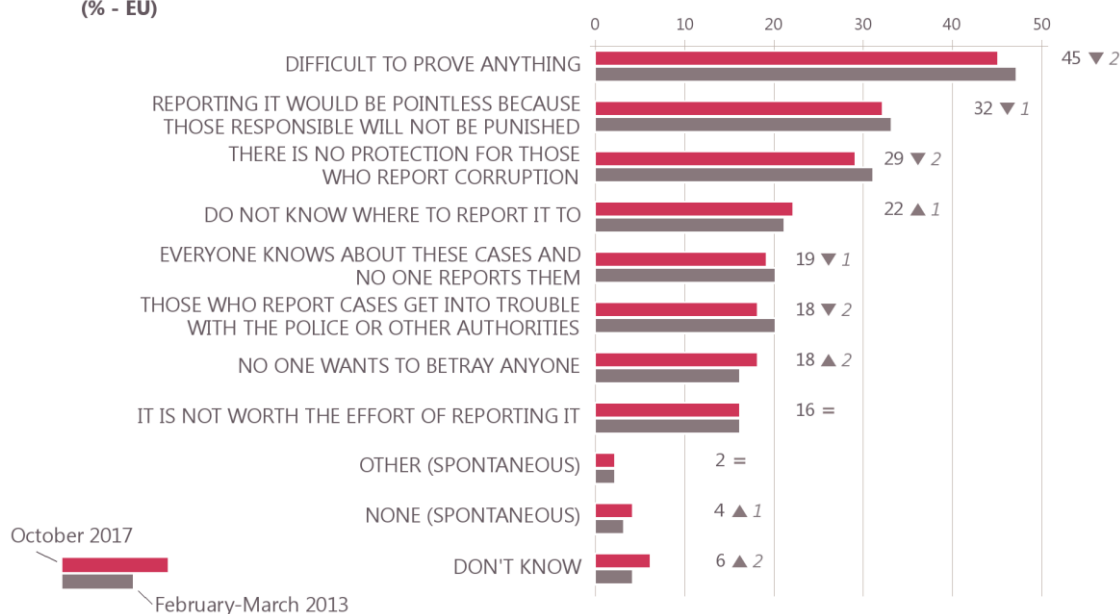
**QB10** If you were to experience or witness a case of corruption, would you know where to report it to?



Base: all respondents (N=28,080)

**The reasons people cite for not reporting corruption are the difficulty to prove, the absence of consequences on the perpetrators and the lack of protection for those who report.** Nearly half of all Europeans think that people do not report corruption because it is difficult to prove. Around one in three think it is pointless because those responsible won't be punished and that there is no protection for those reporting it.

**QB14** I am going to read out some possible reasons why people may decide not to report a case of corruption. Please tell me those which you think are the most important? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)



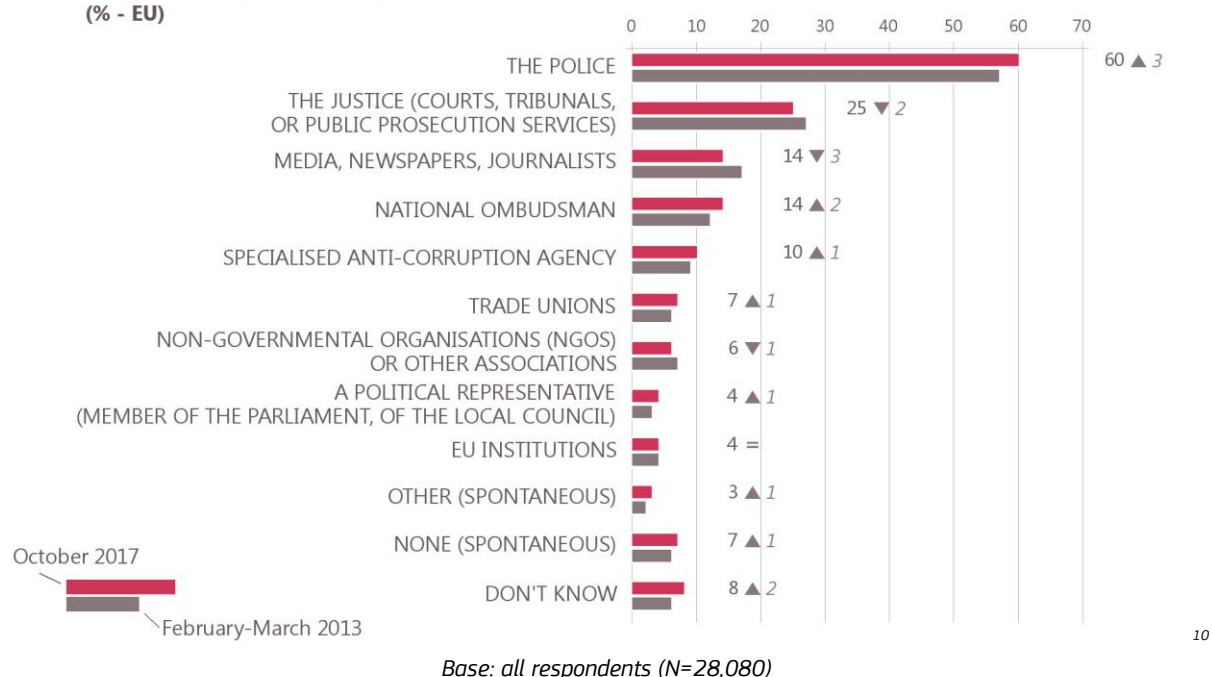
Base: all respondents (N=28,080)

**In 21 of the 28 EU Member States, the most frequently mentioned reason for not reporting corruption is that it is difficult to prove anything.** In 15 countries, the second most common response is that people do not report corruption because they see it as pointless to do so, since nobody will be punished. In a further five cases, this is the most frequently mentioned response.

### **Trust in authorities to deal with corruption complaints**

In all countries, the institution most frequently mentioned by respondents is the police. Six in ten Europeans (60%) trust the police to deal with corruption. The second and third most frequent responses are spread among four of the available options. The justice system is the second most frequently mentioned option in 15 countries, and the third most frequently mentioned option in three others. The media is the second most frequently mentioned institution in five countries, and the third most frequently mentioned in 11 others.

**QB11** And if you wanted to complain about this case of corruption, whom would you trust most to deal with it?  
(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)  
(% - EU)



<sup>10</sup> This option was only given in certain countries (see previous footnote).

## CONCLUSION

**Generally, corruption is considered as less widespread than it was in the previous survey, but the average remains high (68%) and there are large cross-country differences.**

Almost three quarters across the EU perceive corruption to be widespread in national and local or regional public institutions. About 6 out of 10 Europeans see corruption as part of their country business culture and over 50% believe that the only way to succeed in business is to have political connections.

**Overall, only a quarter of Europeans think they are affected by corruption in their daily lives in one way or another, and most say that they do not have direct experience of it,** in the sense of having recently been a victim or knowing someone who has taken or takes bribes. There are however significant differences across countries and the perception that corruption is widespread is particularly common in those countries in which a higher than average proportions of respondents see corruption as something that affects their daily lives.

**A majority of Europeans regard corruption as unacceptable,** with less than a quarter thinking that doing a favour, offering a gift or making a payment to obtain something from the public administration or a public service is an acceptable form of behaviour. Across the EU, those who have experienced or witnessed corruption or who personally know someone who has taken a bribe, are more likely to consider corruption to be something acceptable, suggesting that **exposure to corruption tends to foster acceptance, rather than prompt rejection.** Again, there are significant and persistent differences between countries. Generally, respondents in newer EU Member States are less likely to think that corruption is unacceptable.

**Most Europeans who are exposed to corruption do not report it, with only around a fifth of this group taking it to the authorities.** There are two main reasons for this. First, there is a general lack of knowledge about how to go about reporting corruption, with nearly half saying that they would not know where to report it. This problem is particularly acute in some countries, where significant majorities are unaware of where to report corruption. Secondly, significant proportions of respondents think that people may be held back in reporting cases of corruption by the difficulty to prove anything, the absence of consequences on the perpetrators and the lack of protection for those who report corruption.

**Only a minority of Europeans believe that various measures to prevent, fight and sanction corruption are effective, although confidence in these measures has increased slightly since the previous survey.** A majority of people still disagree that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter corruption in their country and less than a third of the respondents believe that the government's efforts to tackle corruption are sufficient.