European Commission

Flash Eurobarometer 388

ATTITUDES OF EUROPEANS TOWARDS WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

SUMMARY

Fieldwork: December 2013

Publication: June 2014

This survey has been requested by the European Commission, Directorate-General for the Environment and co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication.

Eurobarometer

Flash Eurobarometer 388

Attitudes of Europeans towards Waste Management and Resource Efficiency

SUMMARY

Conducted by TNS Political & Social
at the request of the European Commission,
Directorate-General for the Environment

Survey co-ordinated by the European Commission,
Directorate-General for Communication
(DG COMM "Strategy, Corporate Communication Actions and Eurobarometer" Unit)

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INTRODUCTION

Resource efficiency and waste management are key elements of EU environmental policy and the Europe 2020 strategy. It is essential to get a clear picture of citizens' attitudes on these topics, throughout all Member States, in order to better guide policy making on the subject.

This survey seeks to understand citizens' perceptions, attitudes and practices related to generation and management of waste, efficient use of resources, as well as elements of the so-called "circular economy" (including second-hand products and alternatives to buying new products).

The **first chapter** of the report provides an overview of the issue of European resource management: how important is it that Europe uses its resources more efficiently? What impact would a more efficient use of resources have on quality of life, economic growth, and employment opportunities? Finally, which actions should be prioritised to improve an efficient use of resources?

The **second chapter** is divided into two parts: waste generation and waste management. The first part deals with the amount of waste generated by respondents and the actions they take to reduce that amount. It also deals with the amount of food waste generated by households, and the possible solutions to reduce it. The second half of the chapter analyses the household waste management practices of respondents and the initiatives that might convince them to separate their waste.

The **third chapter** focuses specifically on one common type of household waste – plastic – as well as on littering in general. It first looks at respondents' attitudes towards plastic waste and litter, before evaluating the extent of the litter problem in the respondents' own area. Potential ways to reduce littering and support for EU-level targets to reduce marine litter are also evaluated in this chapter.

The **fourth and final chapter** of the report addresses the "circular economy": durable or recyclable products, maximal use of products, repairing instead of discarding, etc. More specifically, this chapter deals with the most important factors when buying a durable product, as well as the main perceptions of second-hand products. Finally, it focuses on emerging alternatives to buying new products, like remanufactured, rented or shared products.

This survey was carried out by TNS Political & Social network in the 28 Member States of the European Union between the 3rd and 7th of December 2013. Some 26,595 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed via telephone (landline and mobile phone) in their mother tongue on behalf of the European Commission, DG Environment. The methodology used is that of Eurobarometer surveys as carried out by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Strategy, Corporate Communication Actions and Eurobarometer" Unit)[1]. A technical note on the manner in which interviews were conducted by the Institutes within the TNS Political & Social network is appended as an annex to this report. Also included are the interview methods and confidence intervals[2].

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

ABBREVIATIONS			
BE	Belgium	LT	Lithuania
BG	Bulgaria	LU	Luxembourg
CZ	Czech Republic	HU	Hungary
DK	Denmark	MT	Malta
DE	Germany	NL	The Netherlands
EE	Estonia	AT	Austria
EL	Greece	PL	Poland
ES	Spain	PT	Portugal
FR	France	RO	Romania
HR	Croatia	SI	Slovenia
IE	Ireland	SK	Slovakia
IT	Italy	FI	Finland
CY	Republic of Cyprus*	SE	Sweden
LV	Latvia	UK	The United Kingdom
		EU28	European Union – 28 Member States

* 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.

* * * * *

We wish to thank the people throughout Europe who have given their time to take part in this survey. Without their active participation, this study would not have been possible.

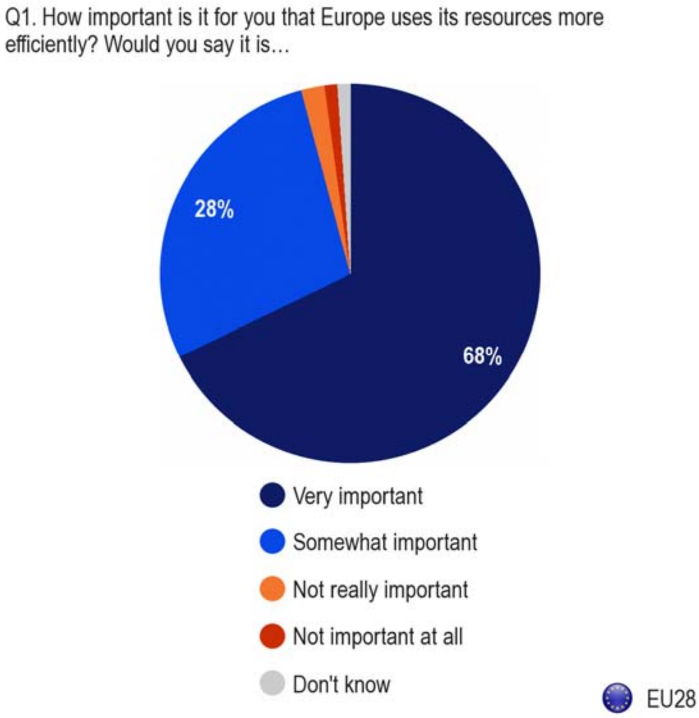
[1] http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

[2] 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 has the possibility of giving several answers to the question.

I. EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES

1.1. How important is it that Europe uses its resources efficiently?

Almost all respondents (96%) say it is important for them that Europe uses its resources more efficiently: 68% say this is very important for them, while 28% regard it as being somewhat important. Just 3% of respondents say this issue is not important for them.

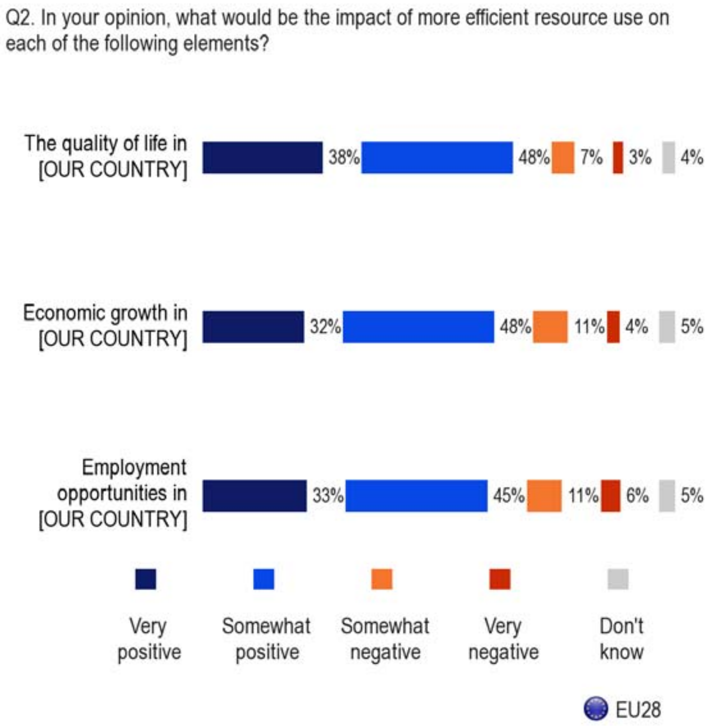


Base: Total number of respondents

The belief that this is an important issue is consistently high in all EU Member States, though the proportion of those considering it as "very important" varies to a larger extent, ranging from 43% in Estonia and 44% in Finland to twice as much in Cyprus (88%) and Malta (88%).

1.2. The impact of more efficient resource use on the country

A substantial majority of people think that the impact of more efficient resource use would be positive on the **quality of life** in their country (86%), on the **economic growth** (80%), as well as on **employment opportunities** in their country (78%).

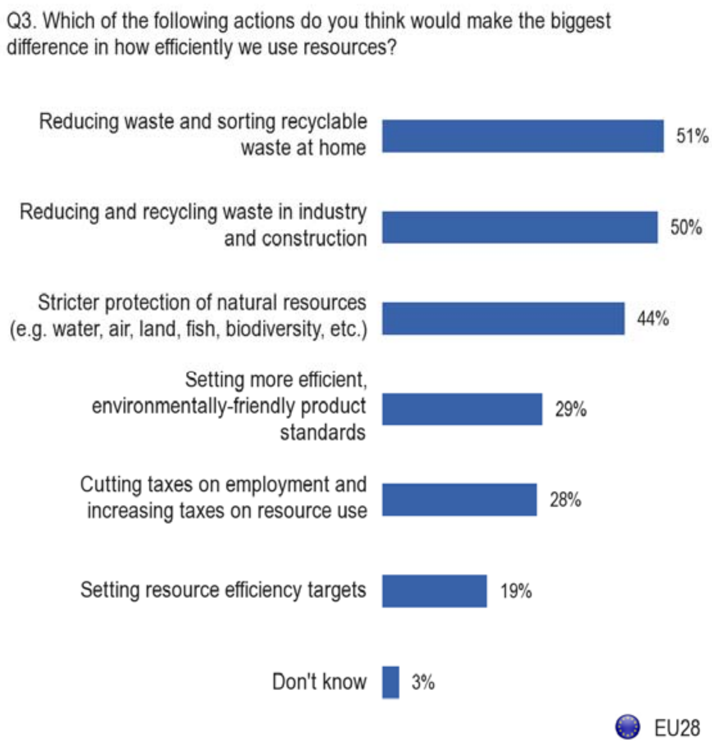


Base: Total number of respondents

At country level, Greece, Cyprus and Ireland have the highest proportions of people who think that more efficient resource use would have a positive impact on both **economic growth** and **employment opportunities** in their country. When it comes to the impact on **quality of life**, this proportion is highest in Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg and Sweden.

1.3. Actions which would make a difference in how efficiently resources are used

A majority of people consider that reducing waste and sorting recyclable waste at home (51%) and in industry and construction (50%) would make the biggest difference. A relatively high number of people (44%) also think that stricter protection of natural resources would make the biggest difference in how efficiently we use resources.



(MAX. 3 ANSWERS)

Base: Total number of respondents

Results vary greatly at country level: **reducing waste and sorting recyclable waste at home** is mentioned most often in Cyprus (63%), Italy (61%) and Portugal (61%). **Reducing and recycling waste in industry and construction** is most often mentioned in Estonia (69%), Austria (63%) and Luxembourg (62%). **Stricter protection of natural resources** is most often mentioned in the Czech Republic (63%), Slovakia (53%) and Austria (53%). Austria and Slovakia (both 39%) are the countries where most people mention that **setting more efficient, environmentally-friendly product standards** would make the biggest difference. **Cutting taxes on employment and increasing taxes on resource use** is most often mentioned in Italy, Belgium and Poland (all 36%). Finally, **setting resource efficiency targets** is mentioned most often in the Netherlands (29%), Denmark (28%) and Belgium (26%).

II. HOUSEHOLD WASTE

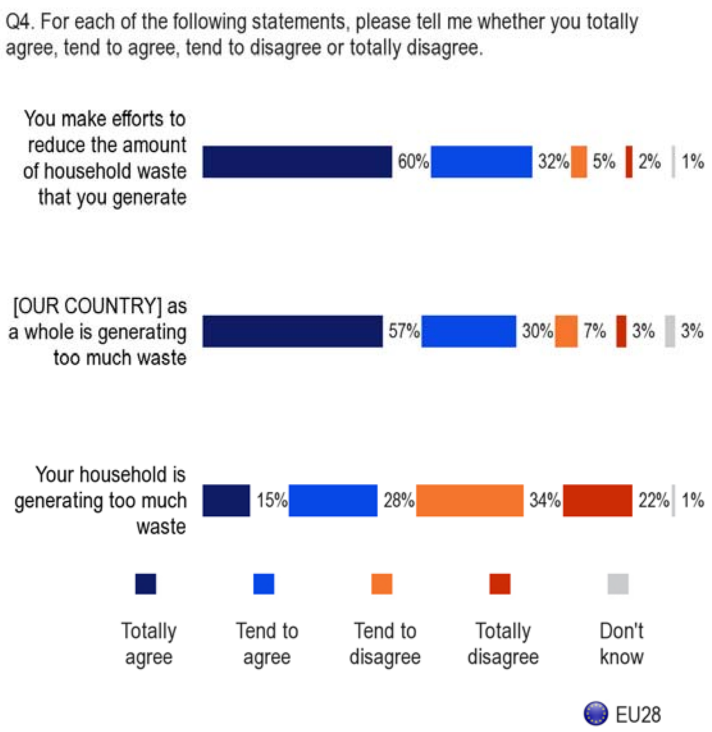
2.1. Waste generation

2.1.1. Perception of the amount of waste generated

More than nine out of ten respondents (92%) agree that they **make efforts to reduce the amount of household waste that they generate**.

Eight out of ten people (87%) agree that **their country as a whole is generating too much waste**.

However, only a minority of respondents (43%) agree that **their household is generating too much waste**.



Base: Total number of respondents

Agreement about **making efforts to reduce the amount of household waste they generate** is highest among respondents in Ireland (97%), Luxembourg (96%) and the UK (96%).

France (95%) and the UK (94%) are the Member States in which most people agree that their **country as a whole is generating too much waste**.

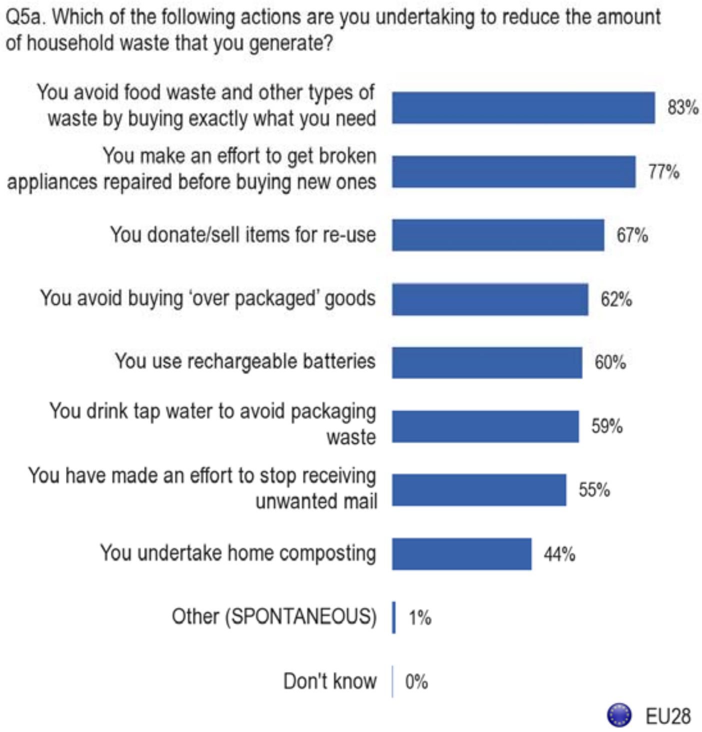
Respondents in the Netherlands (58%), Denmark (56%), France (54%) and Slovenia (54%) are most likely to agree that **their household is generating too much waste**.

2.1.2. Actions taken to reduce the amount of waste generated by households

Eight out of ten people (83%) say that they **avoid food waste and other types of waste by buying exactly what they need**, while three out of four (77%) make an **effort to get broken appliances repaired before buying new ones**.

Two out of three respondents (67%) **donate or sell items for re-use**, while roughly six out of ten people **avoid buying over-packaged goods** (62%), **use rechargeable batteries** (60%) or **drink tap water to avoid packaging waste** (59%).

More than half of respondents (55%) have **made an effort to stop receiving unwanted mail**, while four out of ten (44%) **undertake home composting**.



(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

Base: 93% from the total number of respondents

(Those who make efforts to reduce household waste)

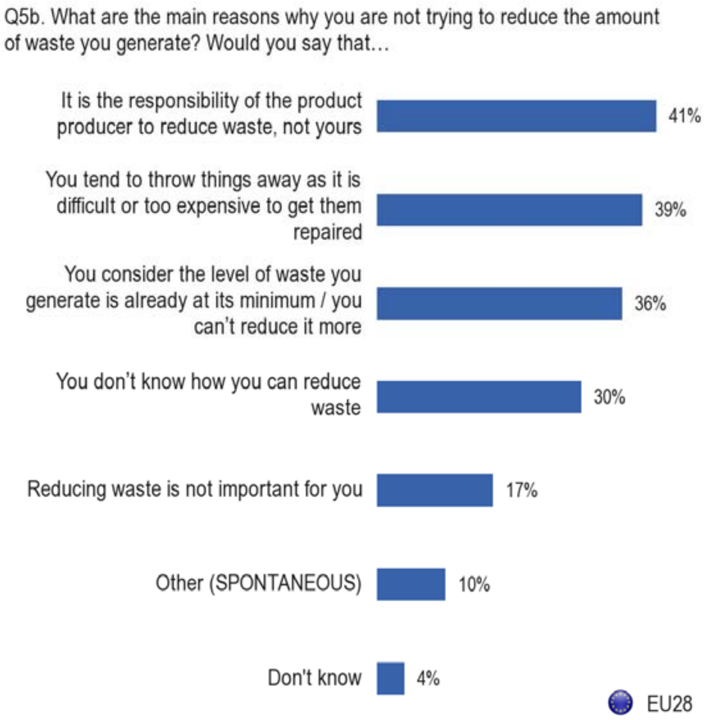
In 19 Member States, **avoiding food waste and other types of waste by buying exactly what is needed is the response given by most people**. Nine out of ten respondents say they do this in Portugal (95%) and Belgium (90%).

2.1.3. Reasons for not trying to reduce household waste

Among respondents who said that they did not make any effort to reduce their household waste, around four out of ten say that it is the **responsibility of the product producer to reduce waste, not theirs** (41%), or that they **tend to throw things away as it is difficult or too expensive to get them repaired** (39%).

Three out of ten respondents say that they consider the **level of waste they generate to be already at a minimum** (36%), or that they **don't know how to reduce the amount of waste they generate** (30%).

Relatively few respondents (17%) say that **reducing waste is not important** to them.



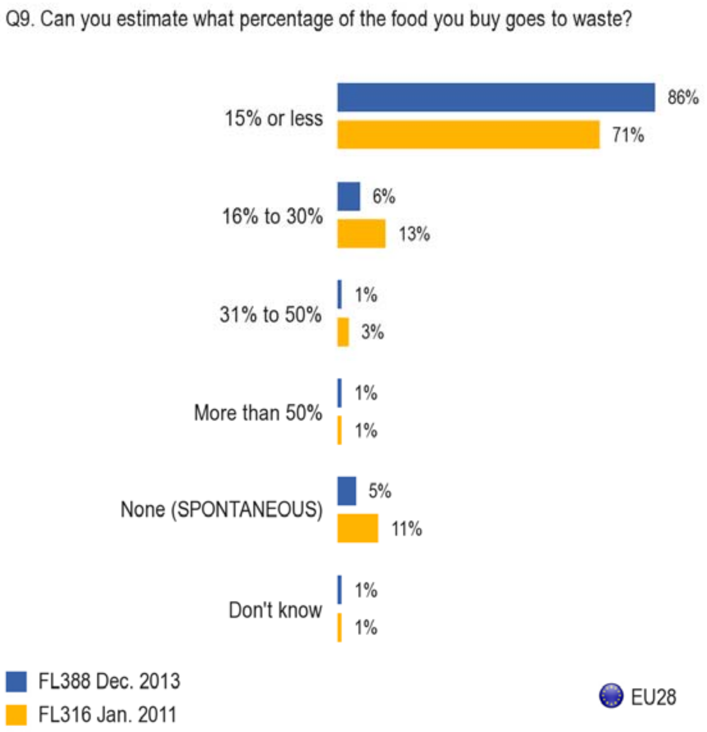
(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

Base: 7% from the total number of respondents

(Those who do not make efforts to reduce household waste)

2.1.4. Estimation of the food waste generated by the household and possible solutions to reduce it

Most respondents (86%) estimate that they **waste no more than 15% of the food they buy** – a substantial increase from the 71% of respondents who gave this answer in January 2011.



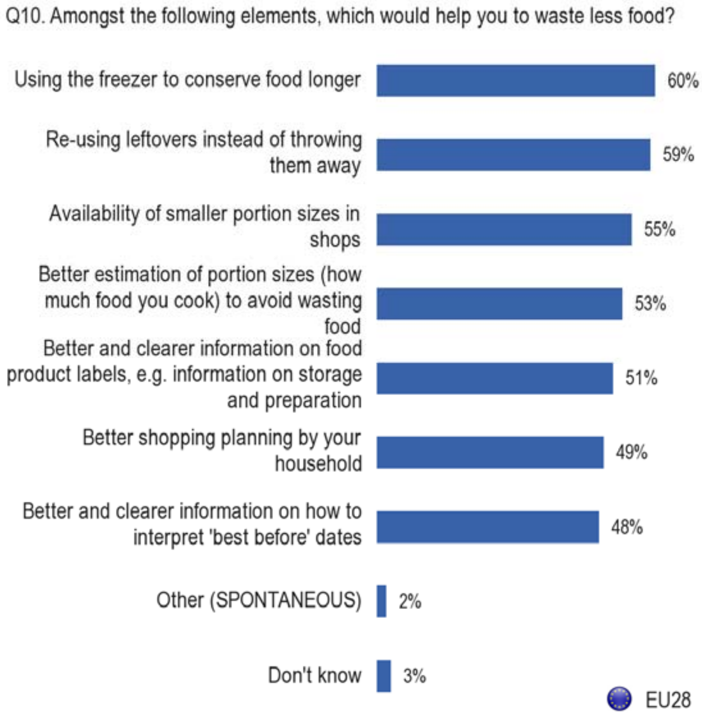
Base: Total number of respondents

In 18 Member States, at least 90% of respondents say that they waste 15% or less (including 'None') of the food they buy. In the four following countries, this proportion even climbs up to 95% of respondents: the Czech Republic, Estonia (both 96%), Spain and Malta (both 95%).

Trend analysis shows that the number of people who waste 15% or less (including 'None') of the food they buy has increased in all Member States since January 2011 except in Slovakia (-1 percentage points), with the biggest changes occurring in Cyprus (+27 percentage points), Luxembourg (+20 points), Ireland (+18 points) and Lithuania (+16 points).

All respondents, except those who said they did not waste any food, were asked what would help them to waste less of the food they buy. They considered the two most useful actions to be **using the freezer to conserve food longer** (60%), and **re-using leftovers instead of throwing them away** (59%).

Over half of respondents thought that the **availability of smaller portion sizes in shops** (55%), **better estimation of portion sizes** (53%), and **better and clearer information on food product labels** (51%) would be of help to reduce household food waste.



(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

Base: 94% from the total number of respondents

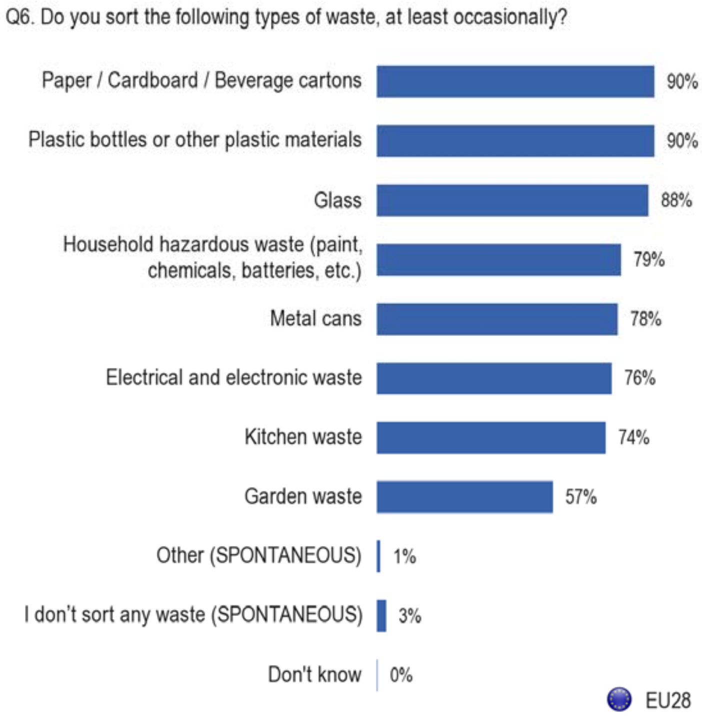
(Those who say that some of food goes to waste)

2.2. Waste management

2.2.1. Households' waste management practices

Roughly nine out of ten respondents **sort paper/cardboard/beverage cartons** (90%), **plastics** (90%) and **glass** (88%). About three quarters say they **sort household hazardous waste** (79%), **metal cans** (78%), **electrical waste** (76%) and **kitchen waste** (74%).

On a country level, we can see clear differences between Member States. At least 70% of respondents sort all eight types of waste in Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovenia and the UK. Conversely, respondents in Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia and Cyprus are least likely to sort their household waste.



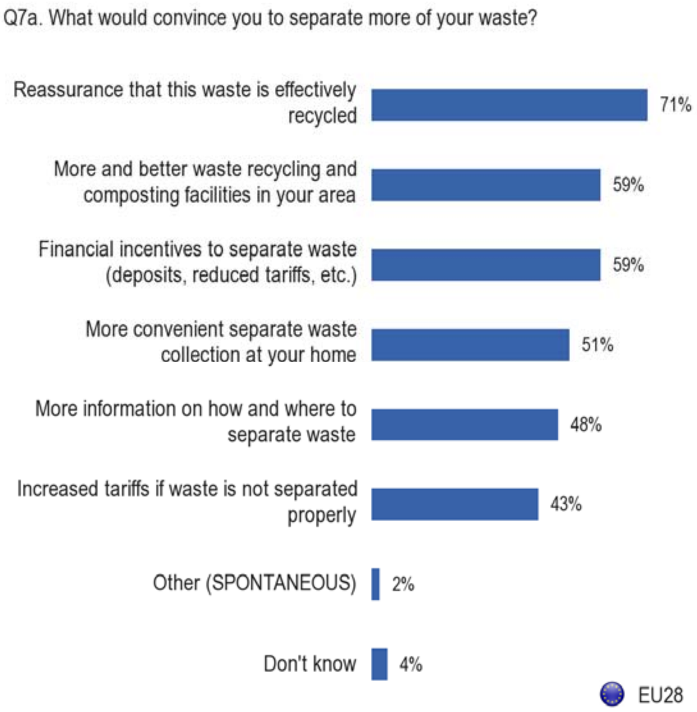
(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

Base: Total number of respondents

2.2.2. Initiatives that would convince Europeans to separate more waste

Seven out of ten respondents (71%) say that **reassurance that their waste is effectively recycled** would persuade them to separate more of their waste. A majority of people also say that **more and better waste recycling and composting facilities in their area** (59%), **financial incentives** (59%), and **more convenient separate waste collection at their home** (51%) would convince them to do more.

On a country level, these results show a clear divide between those where relatively high proportions of people say that all the initiatives would convince them to separate more waste and those where relatively few respondents say this. For example, in Portugal at least 60% of respondents say they would be convinced by all six initiatives, while in Estonia 40% would not be convinced by any of them.



(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

Base: 97% from the total number of respondents

(Those who sort waste)

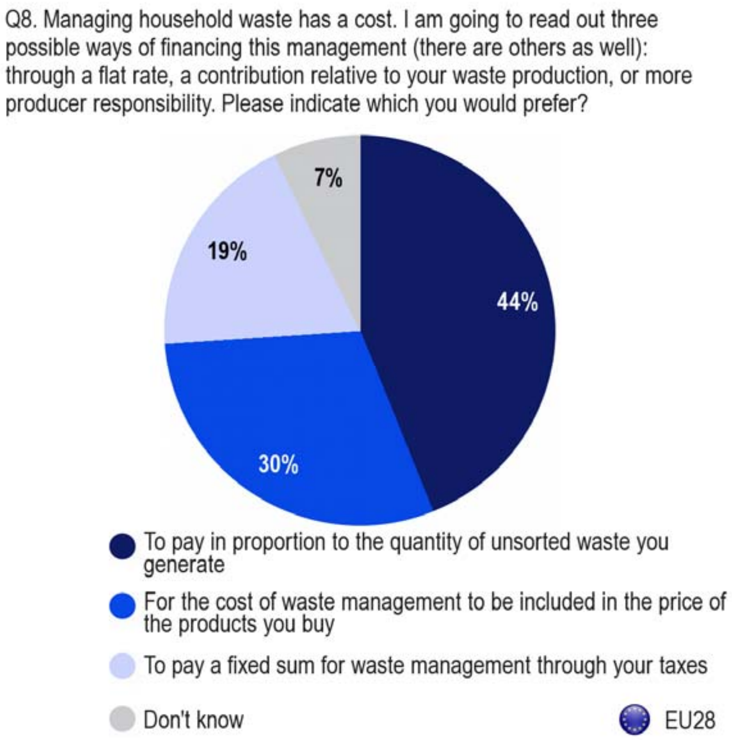
2.2.3. Preferred methods of paying for household waste management

Asked about their preferred way of financing household waste management, four out of ten respondents (44%) say that they would prefer to **pay in proportion to the quantity of unsorted waste they generate**, while three out of ten (30%) would prefer the **cost of waste management to be included in the price of products they buy**. Only a fifth of people (19%) favour **paying a fixed sum for waste management through their taxes**.

Paying in proportion to the quantity of unsorted waste which you generate is the preferred approach in all but four Member States and is supported by the highest percentages of people in Italy (58%), Belgium (54%) and Finland (54%).

In the four other countries, including the cost of waste management into the price of products is the most popular approach: Romania (36%), Bulgaria (35%), the UK (35%) and Malta (31%).

Denmark (34%) and Lithuania (31%) have the highest proportion of respondents who would like to pay a fixed sum for waste management through their taxes.



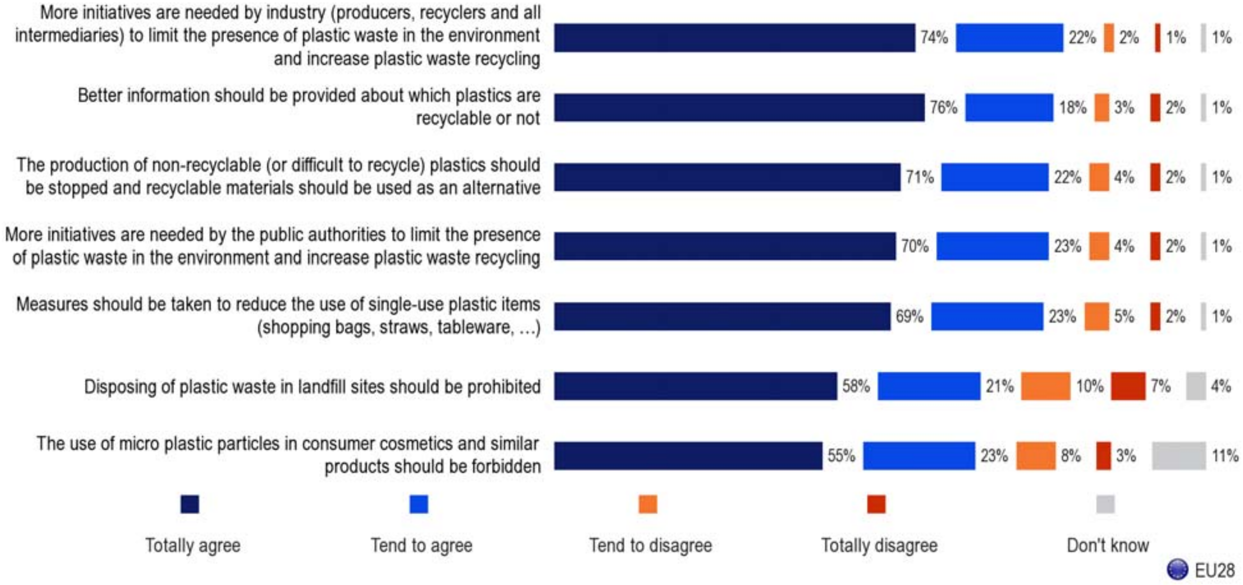
Base: Total number of respondents

III. PLASTIC WASTE AND LITTER

3.1. Perceptions about plastic waste

There is a very high level of agreement with five of the seven proposed initiatives for tackling plastic waste: 96% of respondents agree that **more initiatives are needed by industry to limit plastic waste and increase recycling**, 94% agree that **better information should be provided about which plastics are recyclable**, 93% agree that the **production of non-recyclable plastics should be stopped and recyclable materials used as an alternative** and that **more initiatives are needed by the public authorities to limit the presence of plastic waste in the environment and increase recycling**, while 92% agree that **measures should be taken to reduce the use of single-use plastic items, such as shopping bags**.

Q16. Plastic waste remains a key challenge in terms of recycling and littering. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding the specific issue of plastic waste?

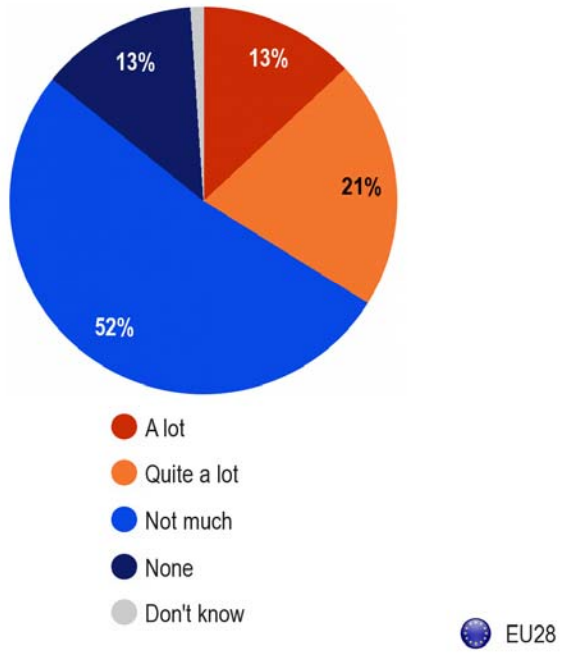


Base: Total number of respondents

3.2. Presence of litter in respondents' area

A majority of people (52%) say that there is **not much rubbish where they live**, while 13% say there is **none at all**. On the other hand, about a third of respondents (34%) say that litter is an issue where they live: 13% say that there is **a lot of rubbish**, while 21% say there is **quite a lot**.

Q17. How much litter is there in the area where you live? (litter on the street, in natural surroundings, etc.)

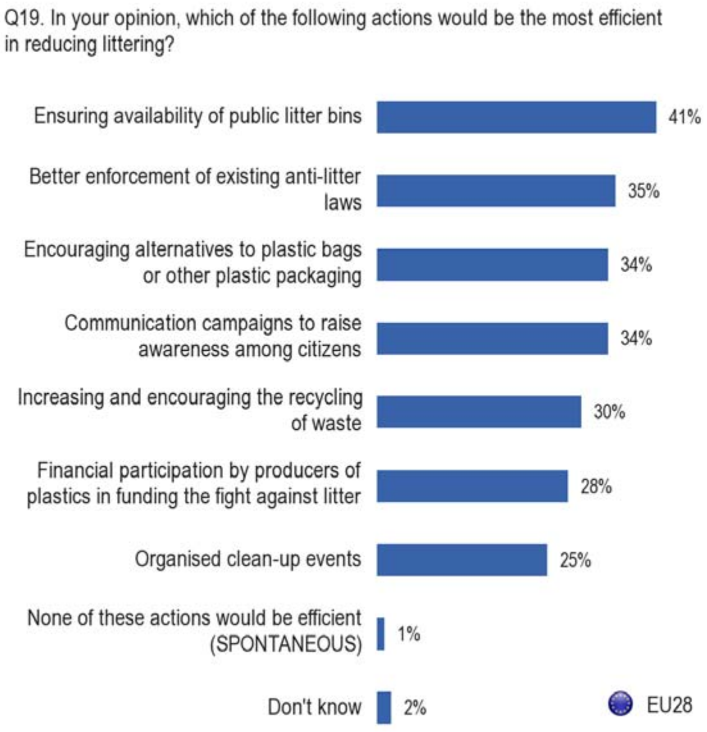


Base: Total number of respondents

3.3. Evaluation of actions to reduce littering

Asked to evaluate possible ways of reducing the amount of litter, four out of ten respondents (41%) think that **ensuring the availability of public litter bins** is the most efficient way to reduce litter.

A third of respondents also think that **better enforcement of existing anti-litter laws** (35%), **encouraging alternatives to plastic bags or other plastic packaging** (34%) and **communication campaigns to raise awareness among citizens** (34%) are efficient ways of reducing littering.



(MAX. 3 ANSWERS)

Base: Total number of respondents

3.4. Support for EU-level target to reduce marine litter

A very large majority of respondents (94%) say they would support the development of an EU-level target to reduce the amount of litter entering the oceans.

At least nine out of ten people say they would support EU targets on marine litter in all Member States, with the exception of the Netherlands (88%), where a tenth of respondents (10%) say they would not be in favour of this kind of target. Support for an EU target is highest in Malta, Portugal, Croatia and Spain (all 98%).

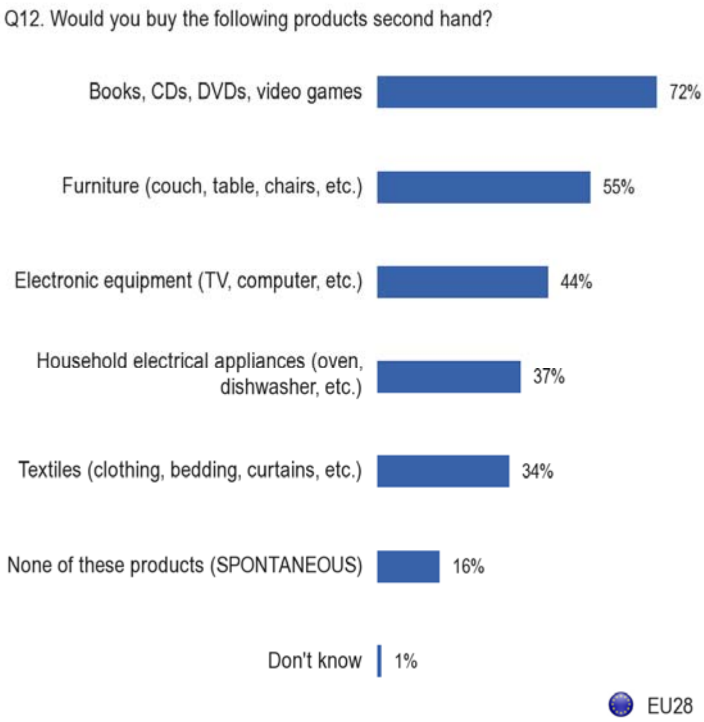
IV. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

4.1. Perceptions about second-hand products

4.1.1. Willingness to buy second-hand products

Books, CDs, DVDs and video games are the products that most respondents say they would buy second-hand: seven out of ten people (72%) say they would do this.

A majority (55%) would also consider **buying second-hand furniture**.



(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

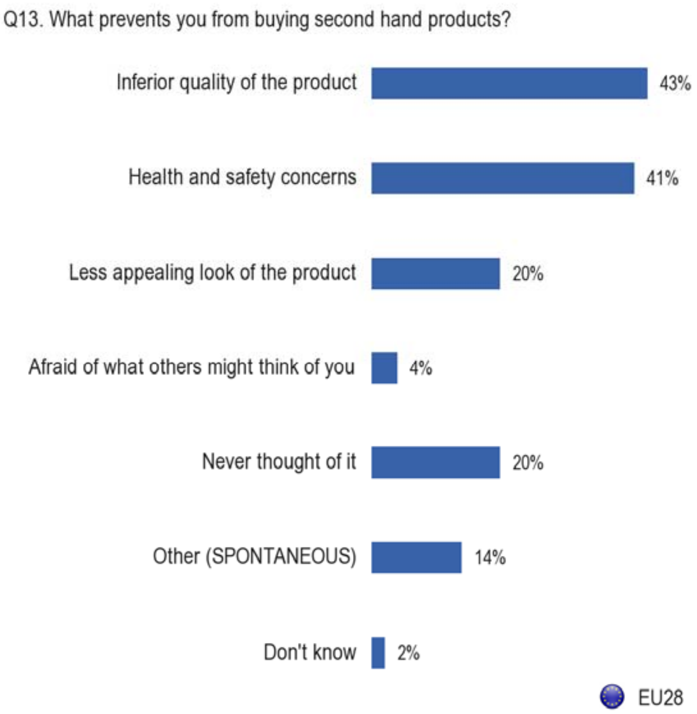
Base: Total number of respondents

In all but one Member State, **books, CDs, DVDs and video games** are the kind of products that most people would consider buying second-hand (with the exception of Estonia, where textiles are the first choice).

More than seven out of ten people would buy **second-hand furniture** in Sweden (79%), Finland (76%) and Denmark (73%), while fewest people would do so in Malta (26%), Romania (28%) and Bulgaria (32%).

4.1.2. Reasons for not buying second-hand products

Four out of ten respondents in this group say that the **inferior quality of the product** (43%) prevents them from buying second-hand, while 41% are worried about health and safety concerns.



(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

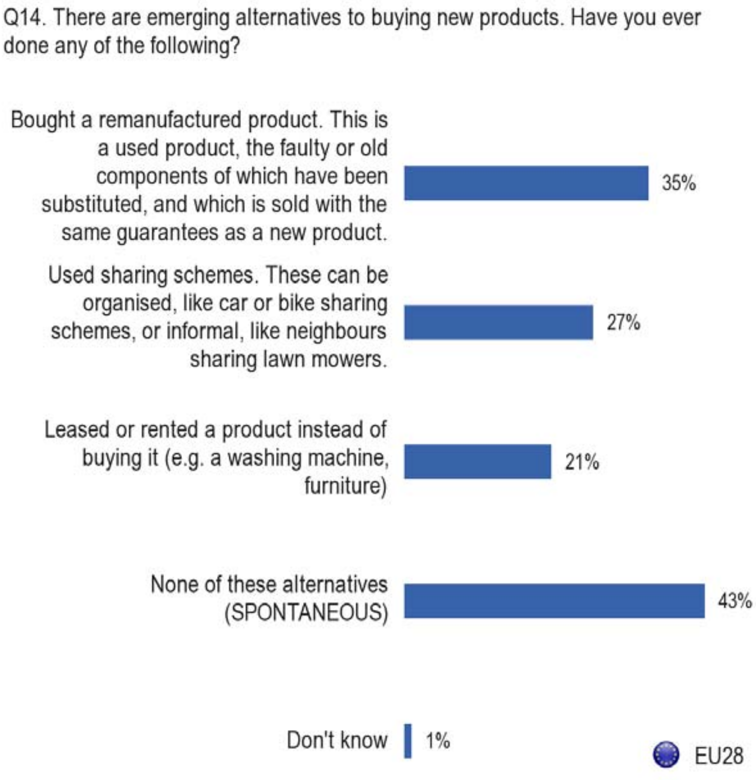
Base: 16% from the total number of respondents

(Those who would buy any of these products second-hand)

4.2. Emerging alternatives to buying new products

4.2.1. Emerging alternatives chosen by Europeans

About half of the respondents have tried at least one of the alternatives to buying brand-new products: slightly over a third of respondents (35%) say that they have already **bought a remanufactured product** (a used product whose faulty or old components have been replaced, enabling the product to be resold with the same guarantees as a new item). Roughly a quarter of respondents (27%) have **used sharing schemes**, involving the sharing of cars or bikes, or an item such as a lawn mower. And a fifth of people (21%) say that they have **leased or rented a produc**t such as a washing machine instead of buying it. Four out of ten people (43%) spontaneously answer that they have **never done any of these things**.



(MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

Base: Total number of respondents

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

FLASH EUROBAROMETER 388

"Attitudes of Europeans towards Waste Management and Resource Efficiency"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Between the 3rd and the 7th of December 2013, TNS Political & Social, a consortium created between TNS political & social, TNS UK and TNS opinion, carried out the survey FLASH EUROBAROMETER 388 about "Attitudes of Europeans towards Waste Management and Resource Efficiency".

This survey has been requested by the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for the Environment. It is a general public survey co-ordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM "Strategy, Corporate Communication Actions and Eurobarometer" Unit). The FLASH EUROBAROMETER 388 covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union Member States, resident in each of the 28 Member States and aged 15 years and over. The survey covers the national population of citizens as well as the population of citizens of all the European Union Member States that are residents in these countries and have a sufficient command of the national languages to answer the questionnaire. All interviews were carried using the TNS e-Call center (our centralized CATI system). In every country respondents were called both on fixed lines and mobile phones. The basic sample design applied in all states is multi-stage random (probability). In each household, the respondent was drawn at random following the "last birthday rule".

TNS has developed its own RDD sample generation capabilities based on using contact telephone numbers from responders to random probability or random location face to face surveys, such as Eurobarometer, as seed numbers. The approach works because the seed number identifies a working block of telephone numbers and reduces the volume of numbers generated that will be ineffective. The seed numbers are stratified by NUTS2 region and urbanisation to approximate a geographically representative sample. From each seed number the required sample of numbers are generated by randomly replacing the last two digits. The sample is then screened against business databases in order to exclude as many of these numbers as possible before going into field. This approach is consistent across all countries.

Readers are reminded that survey results are estimations, the accuracy of which, everything being equal, rests upon the sample size and upon the observed percentage. With samples of about 1,000 interviews, the real percentages vary within the following confidence limits:

Statistical Margins due to the sampling process
(at the 95% level of confidence)

various sample sizes are in rows *various observed results are in columns*

	5% 95%	10% 90%	15% 85%	20% 80%	25% 75%	30% 70%	35% 65%	40% 60%	45% 55%	50% 50%	
N=50	6,0	8,3	9,9	11,1	12,0	12,7	13,2	13,6	13,8	13,9	N=50
N=500	1,9	2,6	3,1	3,5	3,8	4,0	4,2	4,3	4,4	4,4	N=500
N=1000	1,4	1,9	2,2	2,5	2,7	2,8	3,0	3,0	3,1	3,1	N=1000
N=1500	1,1	1,5	1,8	2,0	2,2	2,3	2,4	2,5	2,5	2,5	N=1500
N=2000	1,0	1,3	1,6	1,8	1,9	2,0	2,1	2,1	2,2	2,2	N=2000
N=3000	0,8	1,1	1,3	1,4	1,5	1,6	1,7	1,8	1,8	1,8	N=3000
N=4000	0,7	0,9	1,1	1,2	1,3	1,4	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	N=4000
N=5000	0,6	0,8	1,0	1,1	1,2	1,3	1,3	1,4	1,4	1,4	N=5000
N=6000	0,6	0,8	0,9	1,0	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,3	1,3	N=6000
N=7000	0,5	0,7	0,8	0,9	1,0	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,2	1,2	N=7000
N=7500	0,5	0,7	0,8	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	N=7500
N=8000	0,5	0,7	0,8	0,9	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,1	1,1	1,1	N=8000
N=9000	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,8	0,9	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,0	1,0	N=9000
N=10000	0,4	0,6	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,9	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,0	N=10000
N=11000	0,4	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,9	N=11000
N=12000	0,4	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,9	N=12000
N=13000	0,4	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,8	0,9	0,9	N=13000
N=14000	0,4	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,8	0,8	0,8	N=14000
N=15000	0,3	0,5	0,6	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,8	0,8	N=15000
	5% 95%	10% 90%	15% 85%	20% 80%	25% 75%	30% 70%	35% 65%	40% 60%	45% 55%	50% 50%	

ABBR.	COUNTRIES	INSTITUTES	N° INTERVIEWS	FIELDWORK DATES		POPULATION 15+
BE	Belgium	TNS Dimarso	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	8.939.546
BG	Bulgaria	TNS BBSS	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	6.537.510
CZ	Czech Rep.	TNS Aisa s.r.o	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	9.012.443
DK	Denmark	TNS Gallup A/S	1.008	3/12/2013	7/12/2013	4.561.264
DE	Germany	TNS Infratest	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	64.336.389
EE	Estonia	TNS Emor	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	945.733
IE	Ireland	IMS Millward Brown	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	3.522.000
EL	Greece	TNS ICAP	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	8.693.566
ES	Spain	TNS Demoscopia S.A	1.001	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	39.127.930
FR	France	TNS Sofres	1.004	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	47.756.439
HR	Croatia	HENDAL	1.005	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	3.749.400
IT	Italy	TNS ITALIA	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	51.862.391
CY	Rep. of Cyprus	CYMAR	501	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	660.400
LV	Latvia	TNS Latvia	1.001	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	1.447.866
LT	Lithuania	TNS LT	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	2.829.740
LU	Luxembourg	TNS Dimarso	502	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	434.878
HU	Hungary	TNS Hoffmann Kft	1.003	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	8.320.614
MT	Malta	MISCO International Ltd	500	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	335.476
NL	Netherlands	TNS NIPO	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	13.371.980
AT	Austria	TNS Austria	1.001	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	7.009.827
PL	Poland	TNS POLSKA	1.001	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	32.413.735
PT	Portugal	TNS EUROTESTE	1.002	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	8.080.915
RO	Romania	TNS CSOP	1.025	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	18.246.731
SI	Slovenia	RM PLUS	1.023	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	1.759.701
SK	Slovakia	TNS AISA Slovakia	1.003	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	4.549.956
FI	Finland	TNS Gallup Oy	1.005	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	4.440.004
SE	Sweden	TNS SIFO	1.000	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	7.791.240
UK	United Kingdom	TNS UK	1.007	3/12/2013	5/12/2013	51.848.010
TOTAL EU28			**26.595**	**3/12/2013**	**7/12/2013**	**412.585.684**