

Opinions on organised, cross-border crime and corruption

Summary

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INTRODUCTION

One of the European Union's fundamental objectives, as stated in the constitutional treaty which was signed in October 2004 by the Heads of State and government of the European Union Member States, is to offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal borders¹.

There is an ongoing debate about security in general, the fight against terrorism and organised crime, the management of immigration and integration, and cooperation between Member States' police and judicial authorities.

This survey was carried out by TNS Opinion & Social among 24 683 citizens in the 25 European Union Member States between 5 November and 7 December 2005.

This summary briefly addresses [the following subjects](#) that are analysed in depth in the report:

- ◆ Data sharing
- ◆ Cross-border crime
- ◆ Corruption
- ◆ The link between corruption and organised crime

1. Data sharing

The development of the single market and the information society has increased flows of personal data between the European Union Member States. How do the European Union citizens perceive exchanges of information between Member States in the fight against international terrorism and organised crime?

1.1. The exchange of personal data

The police, judicial system, intelligence services and European organisations such as Europol and Eurojust exchange information in order to combat international terrorism and organised crime.

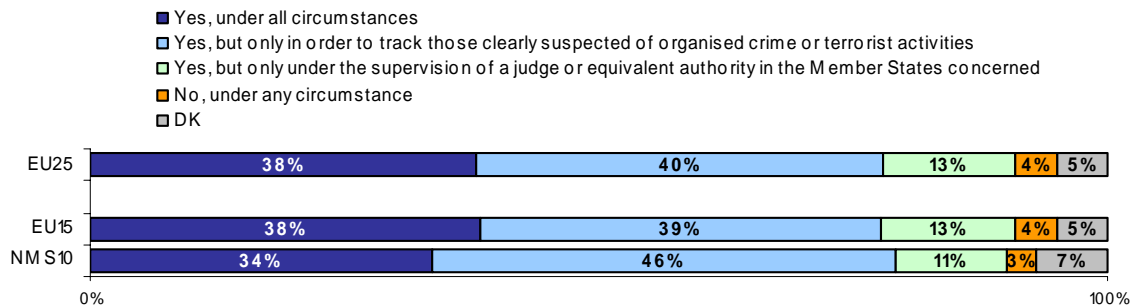
In the European Union, 38% of citizens believe that personal data should be shared systematically in order to combat international terrorism and organised crime. According to 40%, however, the sharing of such data should be restricted to cases involving people who are clearly suspected of terrorist or criminal activities.

¹ http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/fsj/intro/fsj_intro_en.htm

13% of the people interviewed are in favour of such data sharing, but only under the supervision of a competent authority.

Finally, only 4% of respondents consider that personal data should not be exchanged under any circumstances between Member States, while 5% of respondents have no opinion on this subject.

QC2. Do you agree that personal data should be shared for such purposes?



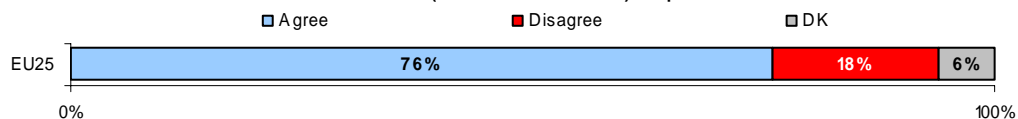
In average, the results observed in the 15 old Member States and in the 10 new Member States are about equal. However we note that a somewhat higher percentage of the new EU citizens are in favour of a restrictive sharing of the personal data to cases involving people who are clearly suspected of terrorist or criminal activities (46%, against 39%).

1.2. Access to personal data

Three quarters of European Union citizens (76%) agree with the statement that techniques should be developed to allow the services charged with combating organised crime and terrorism immediate and direct access (real time access) to private sector databases, such as those of banks, telecom providers, etc. On the other hand, 18% are against such a measure and 6% have no opinion.

There is clearly a vast consensus in the Member States on this subject, with the percentage of citizens in favour of such a measure varying between 83% in Belgium and 60% in Estonia. One third of Greek citizens are against the idea, however (33%).

QC3. In order to monitor and apprehend people suspected of organised crime or terrorism, techniques should be developed to allow relevant authorities immediate and direct access ("real time access") to private sector databases.

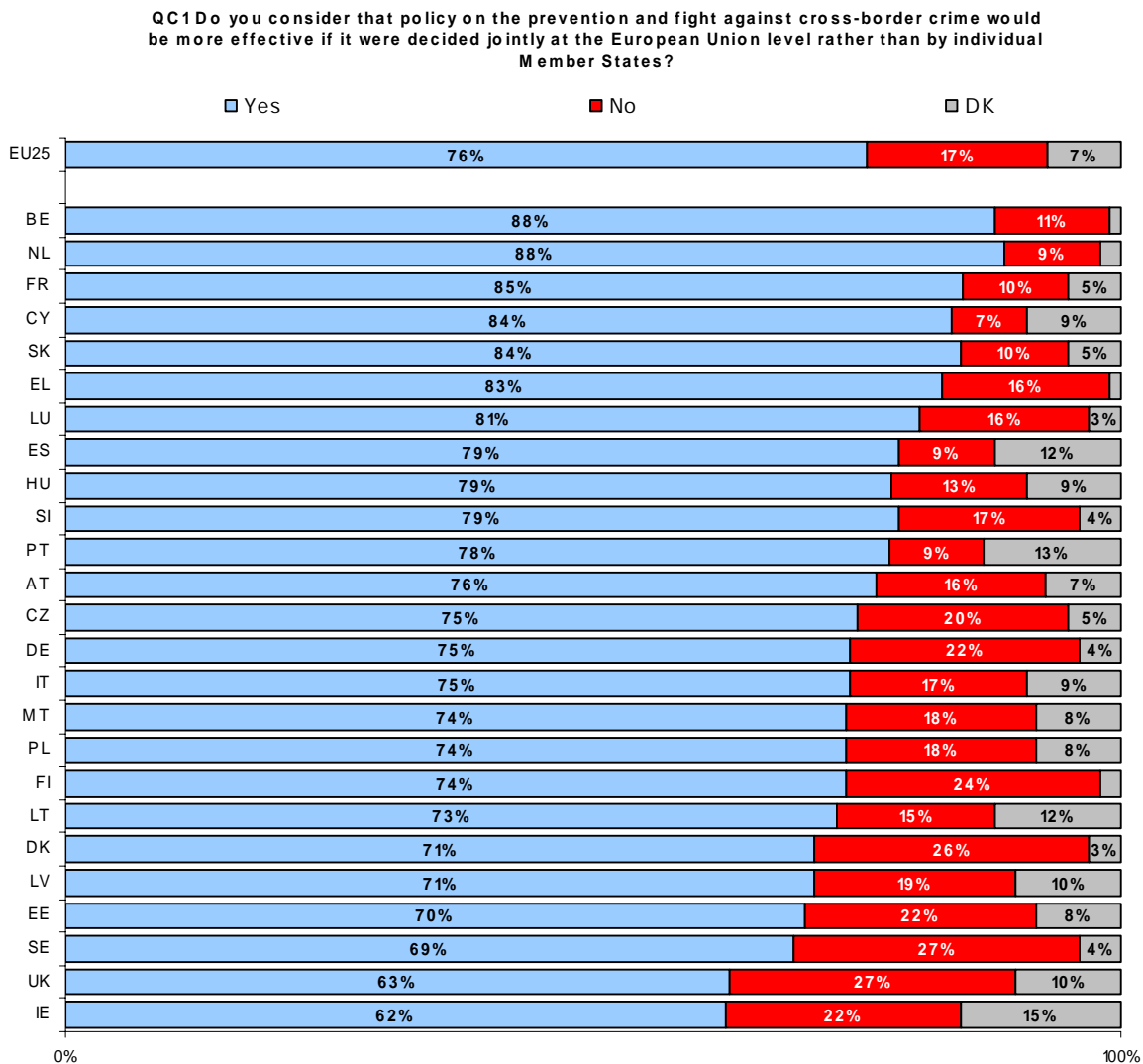


2. Cross-border crime

The elimination of borders between European Union Member States facilitates, among other things, the activities of criminal organisations in Europe.

For more than three quarters of European Union citizens, the policy of preventing and combating cross-border crime would be more effective if common policy decisions were taken at European Union level rather than by individual Member States (76%). There is a broad consensus on this point in all the Member States. The level of support for common policy decisions on cross-border crime ranges from 88% in Belgium and the Netherlands to 62% in Ireland.

On the other hand, more than a quarter of citizens in Sweden (27%), the United Kingdom (27%) and Denmark (26%) do not think that joint decisions on preventing and combating cross-border crime would make policy in this area more effective.

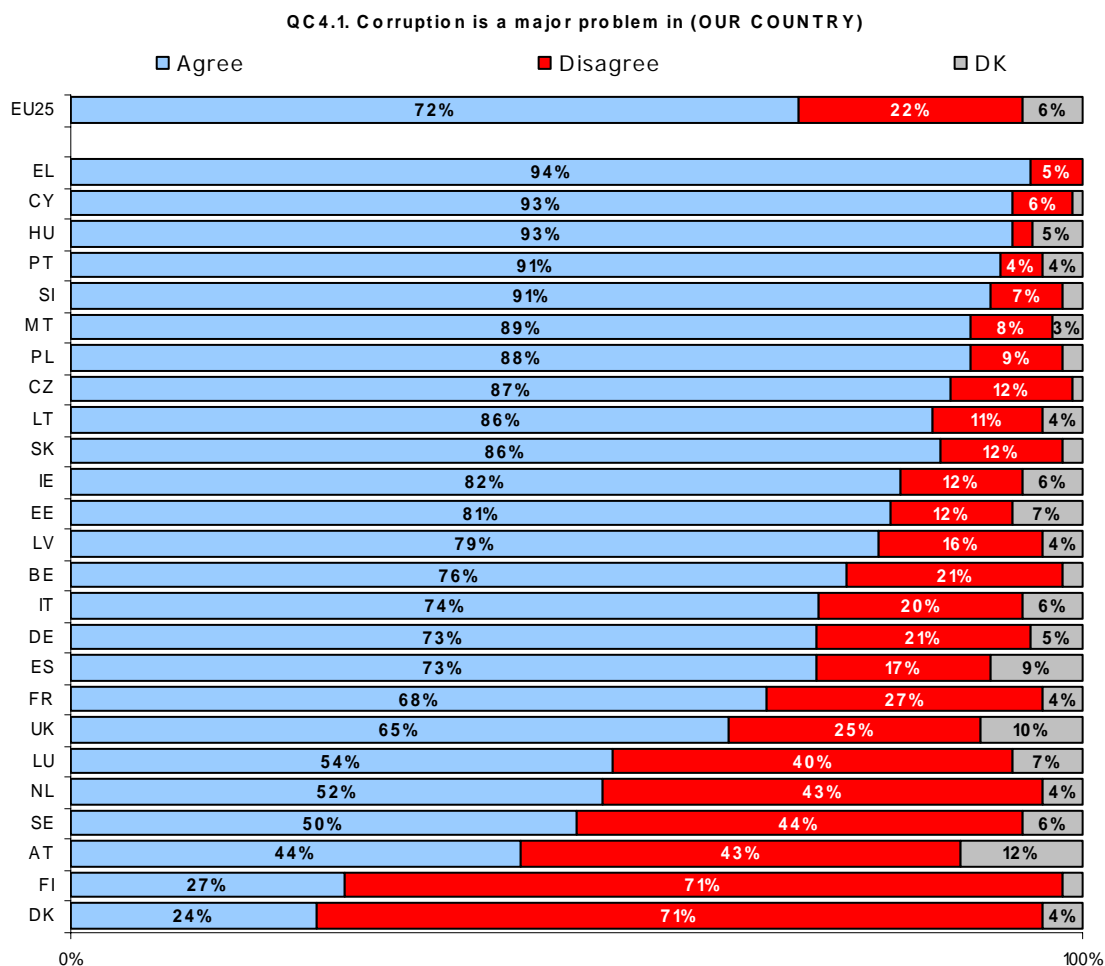


3. Corruption

3.1. Is corruption a major national problem?

Almost three fourths of European Union citizens agree that corruption is a major problem in their country (72%). More than nine out of ten citizens share that view in Greece (94%), the Czech Republic (93%), Hungary (93%), Portugal (91%) and Slovenia (91%).

On the other hand, more than seven out of ten respondents in Finland and Denmark do not see corruption as a major problem in their country (71%), while at European Union level that view is held by fewer than one in four citizens (22%).

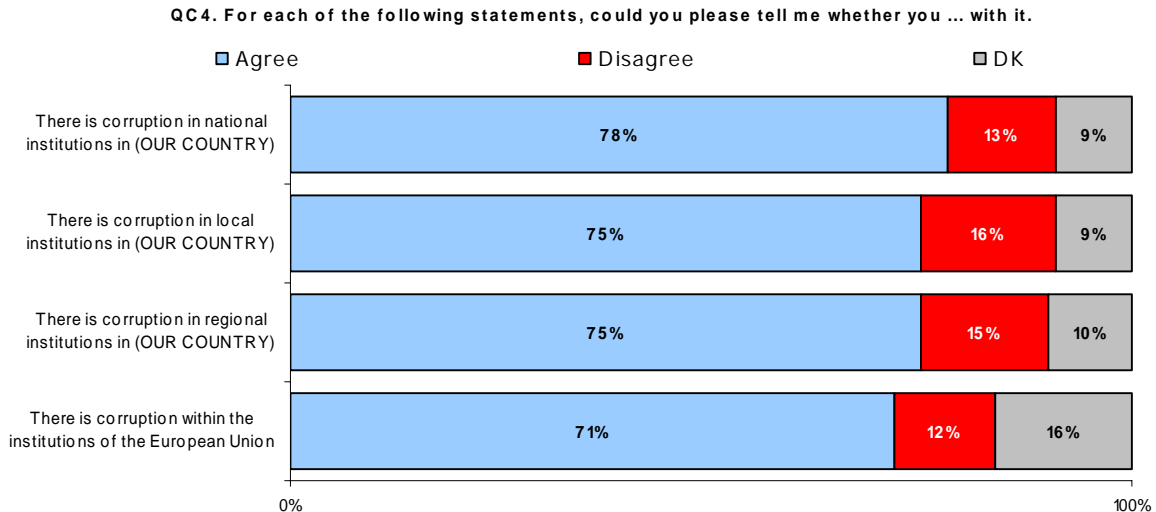


3.2. In which institutions does corruption exist?

According to 78% of European Union citizens, corruption exists in their country's national institutions. Moreover, 75% believe that corruption plagues local and regional institutions. Finally, 71% of respondents consider that corruption is present in the European Union institutions.

These results show that the public opinion believes that corruption exists in institutions at every level. The slightly lower score for the institutions of the European Union reflects a higher number of DK replies (16%) rather than a more positive opinion as regards corruption.

Moreover, a relatively similar percentage of people interviewed disagree with the statement that corruption exists in the different institutions: this figure ranges from 16% for local institutions to 12% for European institutions.



The following page takes a detailed look at the replies by country for each category of institution examined in this question.

At European Union level 78% of respondents consider that there is corruption in national institutions. More than nine out of ten citizens, however, express that view in Greece, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Portugal and Slovakia.

Moreover Greek citizens also are most likely (95%) to consider that corruption exists in their regional and local institutions. The view that corruption exists in institutions at local and regional levels is also very widespread in Poland, the Czech Republic, Portugal and Slovakia.

Citizens in Denmark and Finland are the most likely to consider that there is no corruption in their national, regional and local institutions.

In the 25 European Union Member States as a whole, the majority of citizens believe that there is corruption in the European institutions. That opinion is even shared by more than eight out of ten respondents in Sweden, Belgium and Germany and by more than three quarters of citizens in Luxembourg, Portugal, Greece and Denmark.

	% Agree			
	There is corruption in ... institutions			
	national	local	regional	European Union
EU25	78%	75%	75%	71%
BE	80%	77%	79%	81%
CZ	93%	87%	88%	65%
DK	29%	25%	25%	76%
DE	80%	78%	79%	81%
EE	81%	75%	71%	54%
EL	94%	95%	95%	77%
ES	74%	74%	73%	67%
FR	80%	70%	74%	72%
IE	79%	75%	73%	61%
IT	84%	80%	81%	72%
CY	83%	85%	83%	62%
LV	88%	86%	83%	59%
LT	91%	90%	86%	63%
LU	66%	62%	59%	79%
HU	85%	86%	86%	66%
MT	77%	80%	71%	61%
NL	56%	52%	52%	67%
AT	52%	51%	51%	65%
PL	90%	90%	89%	60%
PT	91%	88%	88%	78%
SI	89%	82%	82%	73%
SK	91%	87%	87%	56%
FI	40%	37%	35%	64%
SE	66%	64%	63%	85%
UK	68%	65%	64%	70%

3.3. The categories of people likely to be corrupt

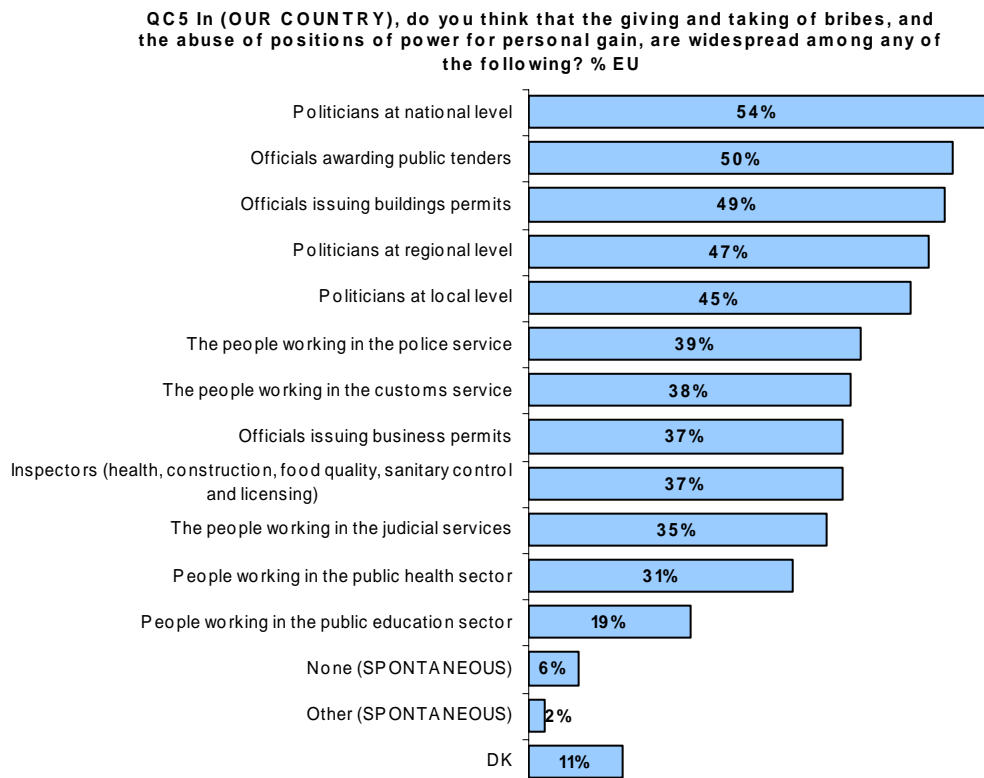
At European Union level, 54% of citizens think that corruption affects politicians at national level. Furthermore, 47% and 45% of the people interviewed think that corruption also affects politicians at regional and local level respectively.

Moreover, one out of two citizens considers that corruption exists among officials awarding public tenders (50%) and among officials issuing building permits (49%).

A relatively similar percentage of European Union citizens consider that bribes and the abuse of positions of power for personal gain are widespread among people working in the police service (39%), customs service (38%) and among officials issuing business permits (37%) and inspectors in various services (37%).

People working in judicial services or the public health sector are subject to corruption according to 35% and 31% respectively of those interviewed at European Union level.

Finally, among the categories suggested to respondents for this question, people working in the public education sector are thought to be the least likely to be affected by bribes and the abuse of positions of power (19%).

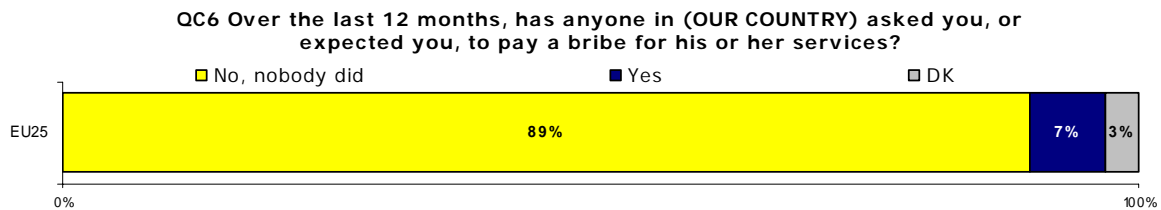


3.4. Personal experience of corruption

To ascertain whether the people interviewed have themselves come face to face with corruption, we asked them the following question: "Over the last 12 months, has anyone in (OUR COUNTRY) asked you, or expected you, to pay a bribe for his or her services?"

In the European Union, only 7% of the people interviewed declared that they had been asked to pay a bribe over the last twelve months.

According to 89% of respondents, no one has asked or expected them to pay a bribe for services.



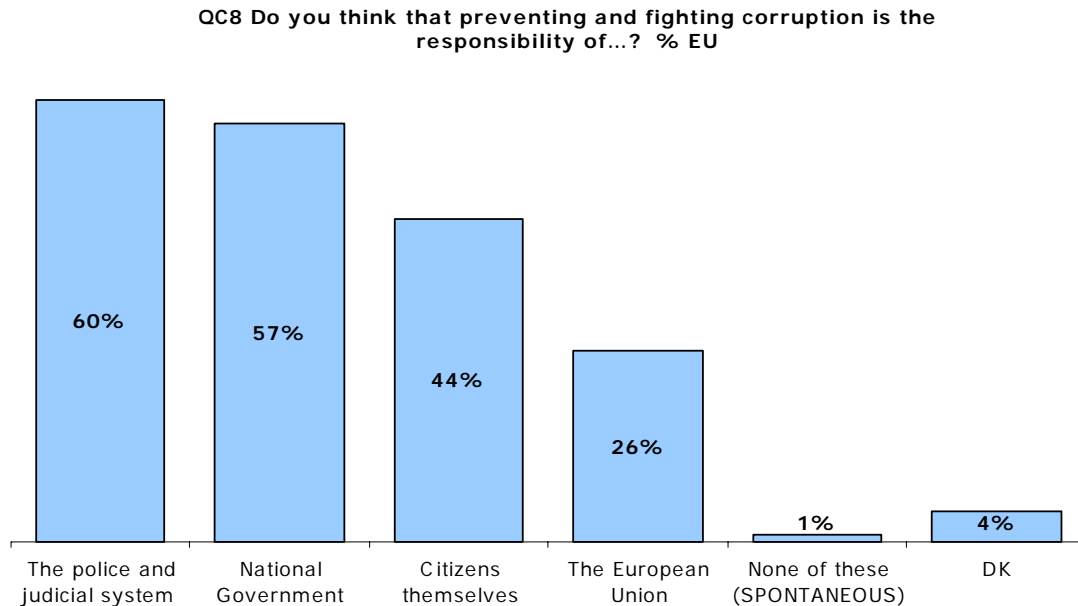
The percentages recorded for the different categories of potential bribe takers are so small that they cannot be used for a detailed analysis. They are shown below purely for information purposes.

	EU25
No, nobody did	89%
Yes, from people working in the public health sector	2%
Yes, from people working in the police service	1%
Yes, from people working in the customs service	1%
Yes, from people working in the judicial services	1%
Yes, from politicians at national level	1%
Yes, from politicians at regional level	1%
Yes, from politicians at local level	1%
Yes, an official issuing building permits	1%
Yes, an inspector (health, construction, food quality, sanitary control and licensing)	1%
Yes, an official awarding public tenders	0%
Yes, an official issuing business permits	0%
Yes, from people working in the public education sector	0%
Yes, from someone else	2%
DK	3%

3.5. Responsibility in this area

At European Union level, 60% of the people interviewed consider that preventing and combating corruption is the responsibility of the police and judicial system. Moreover, 57% think it is the responsibility of national governments and 44% believe that responsibility lies with citizens themselves.

Finally, just over a quarter of respondents (26%) consider that preventing and fighting corruption is the responsibility of the European Union.



When analysed by country, the answers reveal the following:

- ◆ More than three quarters of citizens in Denmark (78%) and Germany (76%) consider that preventing and fighting corruption is the responsibility of the police and judicial system. That opinion is shared by 73% of Swedish citizens.
- ◆ Almost eight out of ten citizens in Greece (79%) consider that responsibility in this area lies with the national government.
- ◆ Responsibility for preventing and fighting corruption lies mainly with citizens themselves according to respondents in the Republic of Cyprus (69%), Denmark (66%) and the Netherlands (61%).
- ◆ Finally, according to 42% of Belgians and 38% of citizens in Estonia and the Netherlands, the European Union is responsible for preventing and combating corruption. Only 8% of citizens in Slovakia consider this the European Union's responsibility.

4. The link between corruption and organised crime

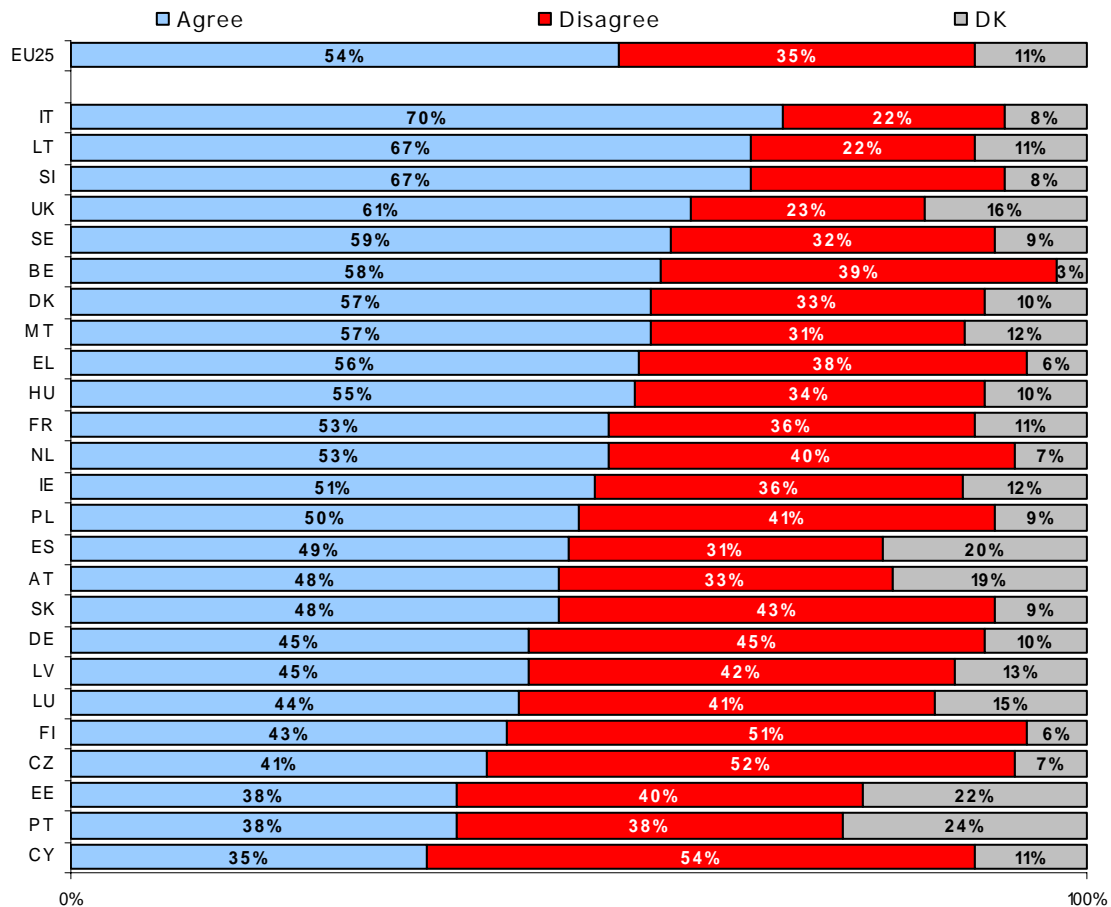
In the European Union as a whole, more than half of citizens believe that most corruption in their country is caused by organised crime (54%), while 35% believe the opposite and 11% have no opinion.

Italy has the highest number of respondents convinced of the link between corruption and organised crime (70%). Two thirds of citizens also share that view in Lithuania (67%) and Slovenia (67%).

On the other hand, in the Republic of Cyprus (54%), the Czech Republic (52%) and Finland (51%), the majority of citizens do not agree that there is a link between corruption and organised crime in their country.

Finally, there was a high level of DK replies to this question in Portugal (24%), Estonia (22%) and Spain (20%).

QC7 In (OUR COUNTRY) most corruption is caused by organised crime



CONCLUSION

The opening of the European Union's internal borders and freedom of movement raise a number of questions regarding international crime. For more than three quarters of European Union citizens, policy on preventing and fighting **cross-border crime** would be more effective if it were decided jointly at European Union level rather than by each Member State individually (76%). Indeed, there is a vast consensus on this subject in all Member States.

In order to combat terrorism and organised crime, intelligence services and competent European organisations exchange **personal data**. In this context, 38% of the people interviewed for this survey are in favour of personal data being shared systematically, while 40% believe that such data should only be shared in the case of people clearly suspected of terrorist or criminal activities. Only 4% of respondents consider that these data should not be shared under any circumstances between Member States. Moreover, three quarters of European Union citizens consider that techniques should be developed in order to give the services responsible for combating organised crime and terrorism immediate and direct access (in real time) to private sector databases, such as those of banks, telecom providers, etc (76%), while 18% are against such a measure.

Another theme addressed in this study is **corruption**. For 72% of European Union citizens, this scourge is a major national problem in their country. According to 59% of respondents, there are not enough successful prosecutions to deter people from giving and taking bribes. In the opinion of those interviewed, corruption exists at all levels of institutions: national (78%), local and regional (75%) and European (71%). Citizens consider that responsibility for preventing and combating corruption lies mainly with the police and judicial systems (60%) and national governments (57%).

According to European Union citizens, corruption affects mainly **the political sector**, and more precisely national (54%), regional (47%) and local (45%) politicians. In addition, half of the respondents consider that corruption affects officials awarding public tenders. Only 7% of the people interviewed have been asked to pay a bribe in exchange for a service over the last twelve months.

Finally, more than one out of two citizens considers that most corruption is caused by organised crime (54%), whereas 35% of the people interviewed reject that view.