

# Standard Eurobarometer 90

## National report

### PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION



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

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

This report was produced for the European Commission's Representation in Malta.

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## INTRODUCTION

The national report outlines the main findings of Wave 90 of the Standard Eurobarometer. Fieldwork was conducted between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018. A total of 503 face – to – face interviews were conducted with respondents residing in Malta and aged 15 years and over.

In 2018, the Maltese economy has continued to perform well with strong growth in the gross domestic product and in employment. The positive economic performance is likely to have had an impact on the responses of participants. There were no elections held during 2018. However a law was enacted in the first half of 2018 lowering the voting age to 16 years.

The report covers a number of topics, namely perceptions on the respondents' own personal situation, Malta and its economic situation, and the European Union; the priorities of the European Commission; trust in institutions; media and sources of news; and opinions on the EU budget.

## KEY FINDINGS

This wave of the Eurobarometer has shown once more that respondents in Malta are very positive about the life they lead, their job situation and the financial situation of their household. They are also very positive about Malta and its economic situation and are also optimistic about the future. Results also indicate an improvement in perceptions over 2017. This wave confirmed that in most respects the opinions in Malta are similar to those found in northern European countries, rather than those in Southern or Eastern Europe.

Respondents in Malta also feel very positive about the European Union, what it stands for, and Malta's membership of the EU. They also generally express a more favourable opinion about the EU's work.

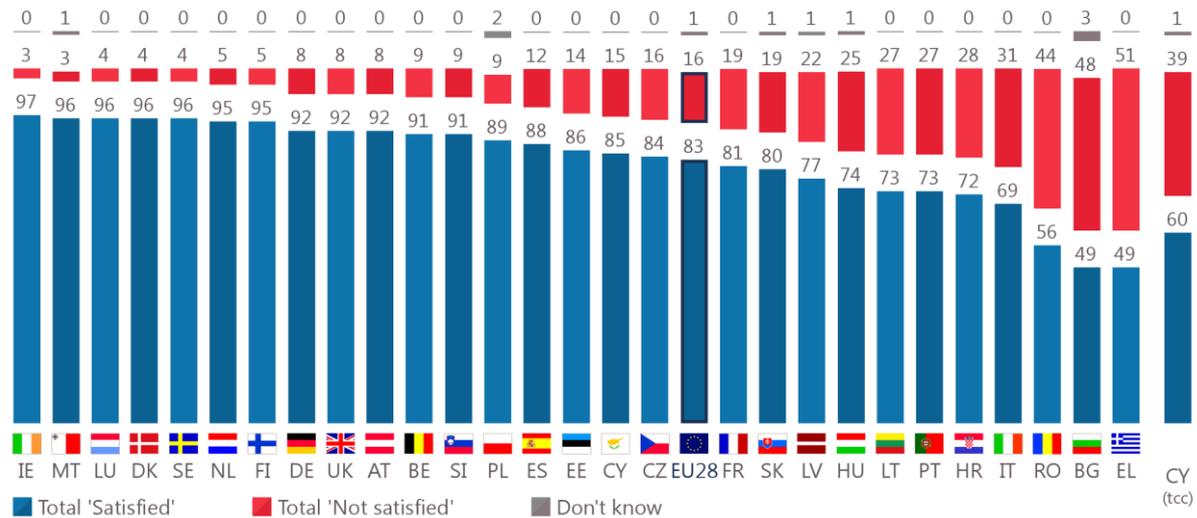
### I. PERCEPTIONS ON OWN PERSONAL SITUATION

The first part of this report deals with the respondents' own perceptions of their personal situation. A number of aspects have been researched, including how satisfied respondents are about their life in general, their personal job situation, the financial situation of their household, their expectations about their life, their confidence in the future, the financial situation of their household and their personal job situation for the next twelve months, the two most important issues they are facing at the moment, respondents' own personal values, and their quality of life in comparison to the past.

96% of respondents in Malta stated that on the whole they are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the life they lead. This is thirteen percentage points higher than the average for the whole of the EU. This places Malta at the same level as Denmark, Luxembourg and Sweden, and just 1% lower than Ireland. Respondents in Malta are also optimistic about their future with 39% expecting their life in general to get better in the coming twelve months. Only 4% expect it to get worse and 50% expect it to remain the same. 7% did not express an opinion. This level of optimism is among the highest among the EU member states, where on average 29% expect their life in general to get better in the coming twelve months.

Chart 1 below provides information on how respondents in each member state feel about the life they lead.

**D70** On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the life you lead? (%)



The high level of optimism of respondents in Malta is confirmed by the result that 83% stated that they are confident about their future, compared to an average of 67% across the 28 member states of the EU. In addition 48% stated that their quality of life at present is better than it was before, while 43% stated that it was better before than now. 9% did not express an opinion.

Respondents also rate very highly their personal job situation with 73% stating that it is either very good or rather good. Only 4% expressed a negative opinion in this regard while 23% did not express an opinion. 92% described the financial situation of their household as positive, while 7% described it as negative. This positive perception is even higher than the already positive level expressed in 2017. Moreover it is significantly better than the average for the whole of the EU. The data for the 28 member states shows that 60% describe their personal job situation as positive while 72% describe the financial situation of their household as positive. The data for the whole of the EU is at a level which is very similar to that of 2017.

In terms of expectations, 22% expect their personal job situation to get better with only 1% expecting it to get worse, and, 26% expect the financial situation of their household to get better with only 5% expecting it to get worse. The percentage of respondents in Malta expecting their personal job situation to get worse is the lowest among all the EU member states.

Respondents were presented with a set of issues and were asked to choose the two most important ones that they are facing at the moment. The issue that received most mentions was rising prices and cost of living which was mentioned by 34% of respondents, higher by twelve percentage points than the level expressed in 2017. The issue that received the next highest number of mentions was the environment, climate and energy (27%), followed by immigration (15%), pensions (14%) and crime (10%).

Respondents were also asked to mention the three most important values for them personally from a list presented to them. Peace was the value that received most mentions, mentioned by 53% of respondents. Respect for human life was mentioned by 50% of respondents, human rights by 44% of respondents and democracy by 32% of respondents.

The survey also measured the level of attachment of respondents to the town or village they live in, Malta, the European Union and Europe. Most attachment is felt with Malta with 96% of respondents saying that they feel either very attached or fairly attached to the country. Next comes attachment to the town or village they live with 85% claiming to be very attached or fairly attached. The level of attachment to the European Union is among the highest when compared to other Member States. 62% of respondents in Malta claimed to be very attached or fairly attached to the European

Union, compared to an average of 56% for the whole of the EU. The level of attachment to Europe is at 78%.

## II. PERCEPTIONS ON MALTA

Another set of questions dealt about the respondents' perceptions on Malta. The aspects researched were the current situation in Malta, whether things are going in the right direction, the provision of public services in Malta, the expected situation in the coming twelve months, the way democracy works in Malta and the main issues facing our country.

87% of respondents stated that the current situation in Malta is either very good or rather good. This compares to 50% for the whole of the EU. This positive opinion about one's own country is again one of the highest in the EU. 63% stated that in things in Malta are generally going in the right direction. 13% stated that they are going in the wrong direction while 19% stated that it is neither one nor the other or did not express an opinion. The percentage of respondents stating that things in one's own country are going in the right direction is the highest in Malta from among the EU member states.

The perceptions on the provision of public services in Malta is also very high, with 82% rating it as being very good or rather good. 14% rated it as being rather bad or very bad, while 4% did not express an opinion. In the whole of the EU, 53% rated the provision of public services in one's own country as being very good or rather good, while 42% rated it as being rather good or very good.

The level of optimism in Malta is not only at a personal level but also with regard to the country as a whole. In fact 40% of respondents believe that the situation in Malta will get better in the coming twelve months. This is nearly double the level registered for the whole of the EU (21%) and the highest among the 28 member states. 8% of respondents in Malta expect it to get worse, 46% expect it to remain the same while 6% did not express an opinion.

Respondents in Malta are also very satisfied with the way democracy works in Malta. 71% stated that they are very satisfied or fairly satisfied, while 24% stated that they are either fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Malta. 5% did not express an opinion.

On a similar note 63% stated that they totally agree or tend to agree that their voice counts in Malta, while 27% stated that they tend to disagree or totally disagree. 10% did not express an opinion.

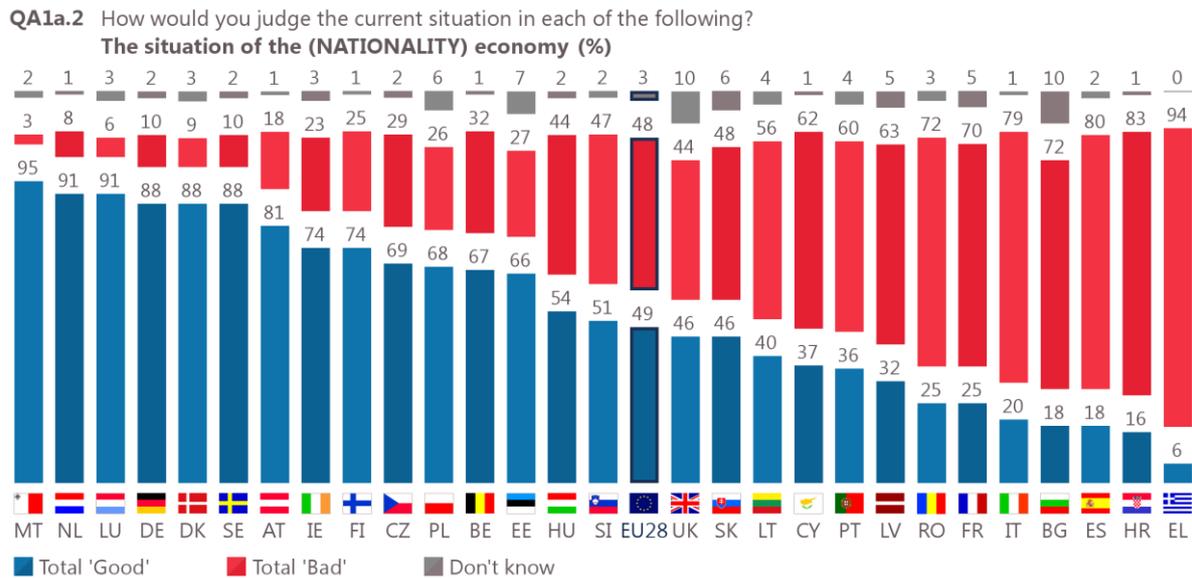
Respondents were also asked about the main issues facing Malta at the moment. Respondents had to choose two from a predetermined list. The most important issue facing Malta is immigration, mentioned by 50% of respondents. The second most mentioned issue was housing, mentioned by 29% of respondents, followed by environment, climate and energy issues (28%), crime (19%), and rising prices and inflation (19%).

As expected each member state tends to have its own issues, but overall the most mentioned issue by respondents across the whole of the EU was unemployment mentioned by 23% of respondents, followed by immigration and rising prices and inflation, each mentioned by 21% of respondents.

## III. PERCEPTIONS ON THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

The perceptions of respondents on the country's economic situation confirm the positive trend noted in other areas. 95% of respondents stated that the current economic situation of Malta is either very good or rather good. 3% described it as very bad or rather bad, while 2% did not express an opinion. This level is the highest obtained among all the member states. Moreover the average percentage of respondents who described their national economy to be very good or rather good for the whole of the EU is 49%, while 48% described it to be very bad or rather bad.

Chart 2 below provides information about how respondents in each member state judge the current situation of the economy in their respective country.



Another positive result is in the area of employment, where 94% described the employment situation in Malta to be very good or rather good, again the highest among all the 28 member states. 4% described it as rather bad or very bad, while 2% did not express an opinion. The average percentage of respondents who described the employment situation in their country to be very good or rather good for the whole of the EU is 45%, while 51% described it as very bad or rather bad.

In terms of expectations, 43% expect the economic situation in Malta to get better in the coming twelve months and 6% expect it to get worse, while 44% expect it to remain the same and 7% did not express any opinion. In the whole of the EU the percentage of respondents who expect their national economy to get better in the coming twelve months is 21%.

In relation to the employment situation, 41% of respondents expect the employment situation in Malta to get better in the coming twelve months, 4% expect it to get worse, while 46% expect it to remain the same and 9% did not express any opinion. In the whole of the EU the percentage of respondents who expect the employment situation in their country to get better in the coming twelve months is 23%.

#### IV. PERCEPTIONS ON THE EU

In terms of perceptions on the EU, a number of aspects have been analysed. These included the current situation of the EU economy, expectations for the future, issues facing the EU, democracy in the EU, the results of the EU, its values and those elements that that most create a feeling of community among EU citizens.

Respondents tend to have a positive perception on the EU economy, with 61% describing it as very good or rather good, and 18% described it as rather bad or very bad, while the other 21% did not express an opinion. 23% expect the economic situation in the EU to get better in the coming twelve months and 12% expect it to get worse, while 43% expect it to remain the same and 22% did not express an opinion.

According to respondents in Malta, the main issue being faced by the EU at the moment is immigration. This issue was mentioned by 61% of respondents. This was followed by terrorism, mentioned by 27% of respondents, followed by the environment (11%), the public finances of member states (11%), and crime (10%). Across the whole of the EU the same issues have been mentioned, even if to a lesser extent. Immigration was mentioned by 40% of respondents and

terrorism was mentioned by 20% of respondents. Economic issues acquire more importance when one takes into account the responses obtained from all respondents in the EU. The public finances of member states was mentioned by 19%, the economic situation by 18% and unemployment by 13%. One important issue to mention is climate change. 16% of respondents in the whole of the EU mentioned this aspect as one of the key issues facing the EU at the moment, while only 7% of respondents in Malta mentioned it.

Overall 35% of respondents in Malta stated that things in the EU are generally going in the right direction and 14% said that they were going in the wrong direction. 51% stated that it was neither one nor the other or did not express an opinion. In contrast, respondents across the EU are not so favourable about the EU as they are in Malta, as 29% stated that things were going in the right direction while 51% stated that they were going in the wrong direction. The other 20% stated that it was neither one nor the other or did not express an opinion. It is important to note that countries which have expressed a more negative opinion about the EU are not necessarily countries where the economy is not performing well.

In terms of expectations, 63% of respondents in Malta are very optimistic or fairly optimistic about the future of the EU, compared to 58% across the 28 member states. Pessimism was expressed by 23% of respondents in Malta compared to 37% in the whole of the EU. For 43% of respondents, the EU conjures up a very positive or fairly positive image, the same level as in the whole of the EU. For 10% of respondents in Malta, the EU conjures up a fairly negative or very negative image, while for another 43% it conjures up a neutral image. 4% did not express an opinion.

Respondents were given a number of adjectives and were asked to state whether each of these adjectives describes very well, fairly well, fairly badly or very badly the idea they might have of the EU. The results once more indicate that respondents in Malta have a much more positive perception of the EU than the EU average. Chart 3 below provides the responses achieved.

Please tell me for each of the following words if it describes very well, fairly well, fairly badly or very badly the idea you might have of the EU.	Very well or fairly well	Very well or fairly well
	Malta	EU
<b>Modern</b>	74%	64%
<b>Democratic</b>	68%	67%
<b>Protective</b>	65%	56%
<b>Efficient</b>	56%	40%
<b>Remote</b>	46%	52%
<b>Forward looking</b>	65%	57%

51% of respondents in Malta stated that they are either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU, compared to 50% for the whole of the EU. 22% stated that they are not very satisfied or not at all satisfied while 27% did not express an opinion. An explanation of this result can be given through another aspect. 46% stated that they totally agree or tend to agree that their voice counts in the EU, as against 40% who stated that they totally disagree or tend to disagree. On the other hand, the more positive perceptions on the EU among respondents in Malta emerged again, when 64% stated that they totally agree or tend to agree that Malta's interests are well taken into account in the EU. Across the 28 member states, 49% totally agree or tend to agree that the interests of their country are well taken into account in the EU. In addition, 68% of respondents in Malta totally disagree or tend to disagree that the country could better face the future outside the EU. In 2017 the level of disagreement was higher at 77%.

Respondents were asked to mention the two most positive results of the European Union. 56% mentioned the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU, 48% mentioned peace among the member states, 46% mentioned student exchange programmes such as ERASMUS and 37% mentioned the euro. However it is worth noting that the aspect that received most mentions as the single most positive result is peace among the member states.

Respondents were also asked to state what, in their opinion, are those aspects that most create a feeling of community among EU citizens. The rule of law is the aspect that received most mentions as it was mentioned by 32% of respondents, followed by culture, mentioned by 30% of respondents. Health care, education and pensions were mentioned by 21% of respondents and values received 20% of mentions.

The survey also analysed which values, in the opinion of respondents, best represent the EU. The rule of law was mentioned by 34% of respondents, and democracy and peace each received 33% of mentions. In terms of shared values, 58% of respondents stated that EU member states are very close or fairly close to each other, 28% stated that they are fairly distant or very distant from each other, while the 14% did not express an opinion.

## V. TRUST IN MEDIA AND INSTITUTIONS

Respondents were asked whether they tend to trust or not a number of media and institutions. Respondents displayed a low level of trust in various media as shown in Chart 4 below. The chart provides information on the percentage of respondents who stated that they trust the media and institutions in Malta and the average level of trust in the whole of the EU.

<b>For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it</b>	<b>Malta</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>The written press</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Radio</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>59%</b>
<b>Television</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>The internet</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Online social networks</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Political parties</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Justice / the Legal System</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>The Police</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>The Army</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>Public Administration</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Regional or Local Public Authorities</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>The Maltese Government</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>The Maltese Parliament</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>The European Union</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>The United Nations</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>The European Parliament</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>The European Commission</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>43%</b>

<b>The European Central Bank</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>The European Council</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>The Council of the European Union</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>34%</b>

## VI. MEDIA AND SOURCES OF NEWS

Another set of questions was asked about media usage and sources of news. Respondents how often they watch or listen to or read or use various media. 79% of respondents in Malta stated that they watch television on a TV set daily or almost daily, making television the most used medium. 92% watch television at least once a week, the same level as across the whole of the EU. 24% stated that they watch TV via the internet daily or almost daily and 40% claim to do so at least once a week.

The media used most next is internet with 64% of respondents claiming they use it daily or almost daily and 72% claiming to use it at least once a week. Also high is the use of online social networks with 53% claiming to use this medium daily or almost daily and 65% using it at least once a week. Radio is listened to daily or almost daily by 42% of respondents and at least once weekly by 68% of respondents. Daily written newspaper readership has gone down to 10%, while 31% claim to read the written press at least once a week.

A Media Usage Index was developed on the basis of the data of this survey. This Index shows that 45% of respondents in Malta have a high level of usage of the media, 31% have a medium level of usage of the media and 24% have a low level of or no usage of the media.

In terms of sources of news on national political matters, 47% stated that the first source is television, followed by websites mentioned by 26% of respondents. Other sources are online social networks (14%), radio (3%), the written press (2%), and others (2%). 5% claim not to look for news on national political matters. Overall the use of internet as the primary source of news for political matters is at 40%, while the average for the whole of the EU is 21%. Respondents in Malta make use of websites and online social networks as a primary source of news on national political matters to a much greater extent than the rest of Europe.

Respondents were also asked what they use next as a source of news on national political matters. Chart 5 below groups together the main sources of information on both national political matters and European political matters. Television maintains its importance also as the primary source for information on European political matters.

<b>Sources of Information</b>	<b>Local Political Matters</b>	<b>European Political Matters</b>
<b>Television</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>The written press</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Radio</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Websites</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Online social networks</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Do not look for news on European political matters</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>15%</b>

When you are looking for information about the EU, its policies and its institutions, 39% of respondents resort to television, 29% to information websites, 28% to institutional or official websites, and 20% make use of online social networks. Other sources were mentioned but to a lesser extent. 26% stated that they never look for such information.

## VII THE PRIORITIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Respondents were asked a set of questions regarding the priorities being promoted by the European Commission. Chart 6 below provides information on the percentage of respondents in Malta and the EU as a whole who stated that they are in favour of each of these priority areas.

Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it.	Malta	European Union
<b>A European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>A common foreign policy for the 28 Member States of the EU</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>Further enlargement to include countries in future years</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>A common defence and security policy among EU Member States</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>The EU's common trade policy</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>A common European policy on migration</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>A common energy policy among EU Member States</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>A digital single market within the EU</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>The free movement of EU citizens who can live, work, study and do business anywhere in the EU</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>83%</b>

The only two areas where respondents in Malta are a little sceptical in relation to these priorities are foreign policy and defence and security policy. This is attributable to a traditional neutral stance Malta has taken in both these areas over the years.

## VIII EU BUDGET

Respondents were asked questions on the EU Budget. They sought to identify the respondents' opinions on what should be the Budget priorities of the EU. 41% of respondents in Malta believe that the EU should have greater financial means given its political objectives, while 36% believe that the EU's financial means match its political objectives. These answers do not contrast greatly from the average for the whole of the EU. However countries with higher income per capita, tend to favour more the second view, namely that the EU's financial means match its political objectives.

20% of respondents in Malta believe that most of the EU budget is spent on administrative and personnel costs and buildings. On the other hand, the top three EU Budget priorities for respondents in Malta should be education, training, culture and media, mentioned by 47% of respondents, followed by climate change and environmental protection (45%), and employment, social affairs and public health (38%).

These are the same three elements that emerge from the data for the whole of the EU, even if in different priority order. Employment, social affairs and public health is given more priority across

the whole of the EU. Chart 7 below gives information on what respondents in Malta and in the whole of the EU believe should be the Budget priorities of the EU.

<b>On which of the following would you like EU budget to be spent?</b>	<b>Malta</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>Economic and monetary policy</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Scientific research and innovation</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Education, training, culture and media</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Transport and energy infrastructures</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>SMEs and competitiveness</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Digital infrastructures</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Climate change and environmental protection</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Agriculture and rural development</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Regional investment</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Assistance to EU neighbours, including candidate countries</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Development and humanitarian aid to countries outside the EU</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Defence and security</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Immigration issues</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Employment, social affairs and public health</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Administrative and personnel costs, buildings</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>None</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Do not know</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>