

FLASH EUROBAROMETER 563

# Citizens' awareness and perception of EU regional policy

EUROBAROMETER SUMMARY  
April-May 2025



Survey conducted by Ipsos European Public Affairs at the request of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers

Survey coordinated by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM “Public Opinion and Citizens Engagement” Unit)

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

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## **Table of contents**

Introduction.....	1
1. EU co-financed projects that improve local areas.....	2
2. Awareness of EU Cohesion Policy.....	3
3. Perceived benefits of EU regional policy.....	5
4. Priority regions for EU regional policy.....	6
5. Important areas for EU regional policy investment.....	7
6. Primary level of governance for EU regional policy.....	9
7. Awareness of cross-border cooperation.....	10
8. Likelihood of staying in the current region and reasons for departure.....	11

## Introduction

EU Cohesion Policy aims to enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion among EU Member States by correcting imbalances among countries and regions within the European Union (EU). EU Cohesion Policy is one of the most impactful areas of EU activity, accounting for around a third of its budget, or €392 billion in the 2021-2027 programme period. In 2021-2027, EU cohesion policy has set five key objectives: a more competitive and smarter Europe; a greener, low carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy; a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility; a more social and inclusive Europe; and a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories.

On behalf of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Urban and Regional Policy, Ipsos European Public Affairs interviewed a representative sample of citizens, aged 15 and over, in each of the 27 Member States of the EU. Between 22 April and 8 May 2025, 25 737 interviews were conducted over the telephone (landline and mobile phones).

## Notes

- Survey data are weighted to known population proportions. The EU27 averages are weighted according to the size of the 15+ population of each EU Member State.
- Survey results are subject to sampling tolerances meaning that not all apparent differences between groups may be statistically significant. Thus, only differences that are statistically significant (at the 5% level) – i.e. where it can be reasonably certain that they are unlikely to have occurred by chance – are highlighted in the text.
- The report looks at long-term trends at the EU27 level and the most recent year-on-year changes at national level. The term percentage point is used when comparing two different percentages (the abbreviation is pp). Year-on-year differences are calculated from percentages rounded to the nearest integer.
- Response percentages exceed 100% if the question allowed respondents to select multiple responses.
- In this report, countries are referred to by their official abbreviation, as indicated below.

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

\* Cyprus as a whole is one of the 27 EU Member States. For practical reasons, interviews are only carried out in the part of the country controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus.

# 1. EU co-financed projects that improve local areas

## Awareness of EU co-financed projects that improve local areas

Four in ten respondents (40%) say they have heard about EU co-financed projects to improve the area where they live. There is a large variation across the EU Member States in the proportion of respondents who report having heard about EU co-financed projects to improve the area where they live, ranging from 15% in Denmark to 77% in Poland.

On average, across the EU, the share of respondents aware of EU co-financed projects has remained **stable since 2019** (40% in 2019, 41% in 2021, 39% in 2023 and 40% in the current wave). **Compared to 2023**, awareness of EU co-financed projects to improve the areas where respondents live has significantly decreased in four Member States: Greece (48%, -12 pp), Latvia (54%, -8 pp), Estonia (53%, -7 pp) and Czechia (64%, -6 pp). The only two Member States that have seen a statistically significant increase in awareness since 2023 are Austria (31%, +6 pp) and France (36%, +5 pp).

## Impact of EU co-financed projects on development in local areas

Respondents who said they have heard of EU co-financed projects were next asked whether the support received has had a positive or negative impact on the development of their city or region.

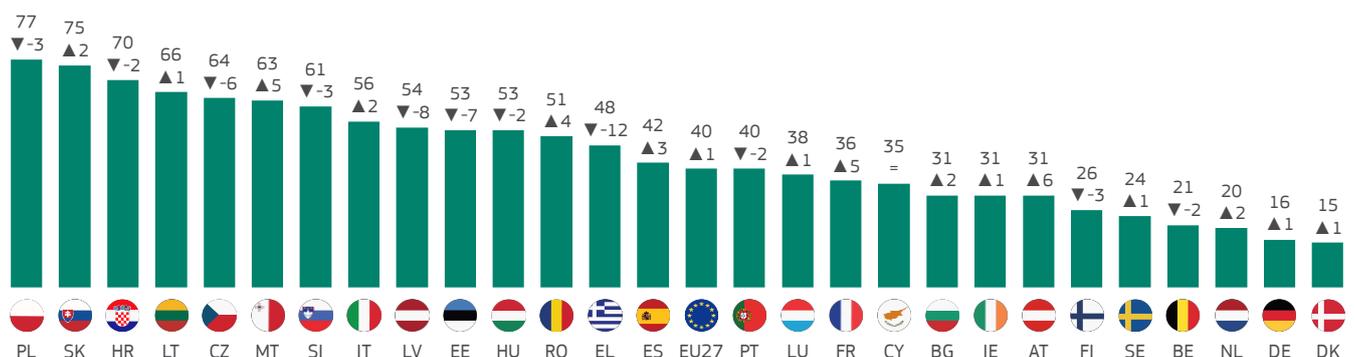
About eight in ten of these respondents (79%) report that the impact of these projects has been positive for the development of their city or region. Fewer than one in ten (8%) think the impact has been negative and a similar share (6%) spontaneously say there has been no impact.

The proportion of respondents saying that the impact of EU co-financed projects in their region has been positive remains at the **same level as in 2023**. In the longer term, the trend since 2010 shows a slight positive trend in the proportion having seen a positive impact – from 76% in 2010 to 79% in 2025.

## Sources of information on EU co-financed projects

Respondents who have heard of EU co-financed projects were also asked where they have done so. **The Internet is the most-mentioned source, with 40% saying that they received information on EU co-financed projects from this source**. This is followed by **national TV, indicated by 37% of respondents**. Other sources selected by at least one in five respondents are local and regional newspapers (27%), billboards (27%), personal knowledge (27%), online social networks (24%), national newspapers (22%) and local or regional TV (20%).

**Q1A** Europe provides financial support to regions and cities. Have you heard about any EU co-financed projects to improve the area where you live? (% Yes)



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents  
 ▼▲ Evolution 2025-2023 (comparison with Flash Eurobarometer 531, June 2023)

## 2. Awareness of EU Cohesion Policy

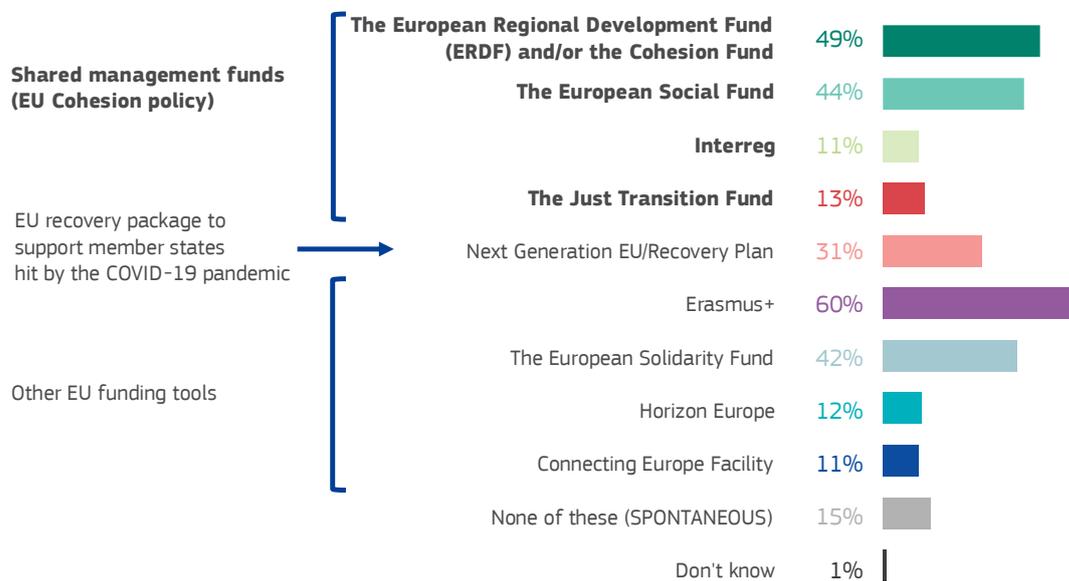
**Almost one in two respondents (49%) indicate they have heard about the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and/or the Cohesion Fund, and a somewhat smaller share (44%) have heard about the European Social Fund.**

About one in ten respondents (11%) mention they have heard of **Interreg** and nearly one in seven (13%) mention the **Just Transition Fund** (13%). About one in three respondents (31%) report they have heard about **NextGenerationEU/Recovery Plan**.

In total, **68% of respondents have heard of at least one of the shared management funds** (ERDF/Cohesion Fund, European Social Fund, Interreg, Just Transition Fund).

Awareness of EU regional policy funds was assessed against awareness of other EU funding tools, such as Erasmus+. This assessment shows that the highest level of awareness overall is observed for **Erasmus+** (the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe), with 60% of respondents reporting to have heard about this programme. Just over four in ten (42%) respondents are aware of the **European Solidarity Fund** (set to respond to major natural disasters and express European solidarity to disaster-stricken regions within Europe).

**Q2** Which, if any, of the following forms of EU support you've heard about before?  
 [MULTIPLE ANSWERS]



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents

### Individual country results

**Awareness of at least one of the shared management funds (ERDF/Cohesion Fund, European Social Fund, Interreg, Just Transition Fund)** is highest in Poland (92%) and Slovakia (91%). On the other hand, less than half are aware of at least one of these funds in Denmark (34%), Sweden (39%), Germany (47%) and the Netherlands (47%).

Next, awareness of specific shared management funds of the EU Cohesion policy is analysed.

#### European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and/or the Cohesion Fund

In Slovakia, 84% of respondents reply that they have heard of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and/or the Cohesion Fund. Poland (81%), Croatia (74%), Slovenia (71%) and Greece (70%) are close to Slovakia, with at least seven in ten respondents saying that they have heard of ERDF and/or the Cohesion Fund. On the other hand, one in five say the same in Denmark (20%).

**Since 2023**, awareness of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund has increased by three percentage points at the EU level (from 46% in 2023 to 49% in 2025). At the individual country level, awareness of these two funds has significantly decreased in four Member States: Finland (46%, -9 pp), Latvia

(56%, -8 pp), Czechia (64%, -7 pp) and Estonia (63%, -6 pp). On the other hand, a significant increase in awareness is observed in three Member States: Romania (68%, +16 pp), Bulgaria (62%, +7 pp), Malta (67%, +7 pp) and Hungary (65%, +6 pp).

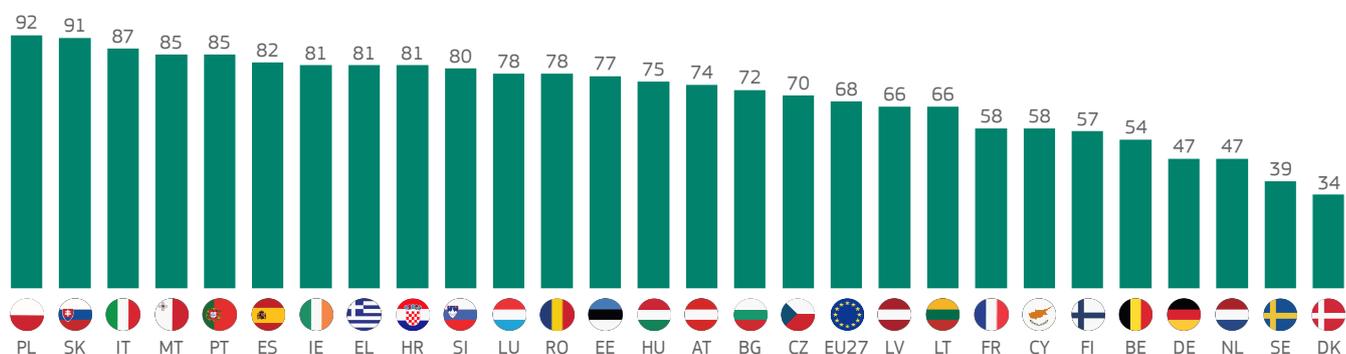
#### European Social Fund

Awareness of the European Social Fund varies between 13% in Sweden and 68% in Spain. In another two Member States, awareness is shared by more than six in ten respondents: Italy (64%) and Slovakia (66%). Respondents in Denmark and the Netherlands are not only the least likely to have heard about ERDF and/or the Cohesion Fund, they also are unlikely to have heard about the European Social Fund (17% in Denmark and 25% in the Netherlands).

#### NextGenerationEU/Recovery Plan

Eight in ten respondents in Slovakia (80%), followed by 63% in Greece, say they have heard about NextGenerationEU/Recovery Plan. However, awareness of this fund remains below 20% in seven Member States: Estonia (12%), Germany (15%), Sweden (15%), Latvia (16%), Finland (16%), France (17%) and the Netherlands (17%).

**Q2** Which, if any, of the following forms of EU support you've heard about before?  
**Heard of at least one shared management fund (ERDF/CF, ESF, Interreg, JTF)**



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents

### 3. Perceived benefits of EU regional policy

#### Personal benefits from EU funded projects

On average, **17% of respondents say they have benefitted in their daily life from a project funded by the ERDF or the Cohesion Fund**. About eight in ten (79%) say they have not and 4% do not know. The share of respondents indicating they have benefitted in their daily life from a project funded by the ERDF or the Cohesion Fund is similar to the one observed in 2023.

**Poland (58%) and Slovakia (50%) stand out with at least one in two respondents saying they have benefitted in their daily life from a project funded by the ERDF or the Cohesion Fund.** Other Member States where at least one-third of respondents say that they have benefitted in this way are Czechia (37%) and Slovenia (34%). In six Member States, fewer than 10% of respondents say the same: Austria (9%), Sweden (8%), Denmark (7%), Belgium (6%), France (6%) and the Netherlands (6%).

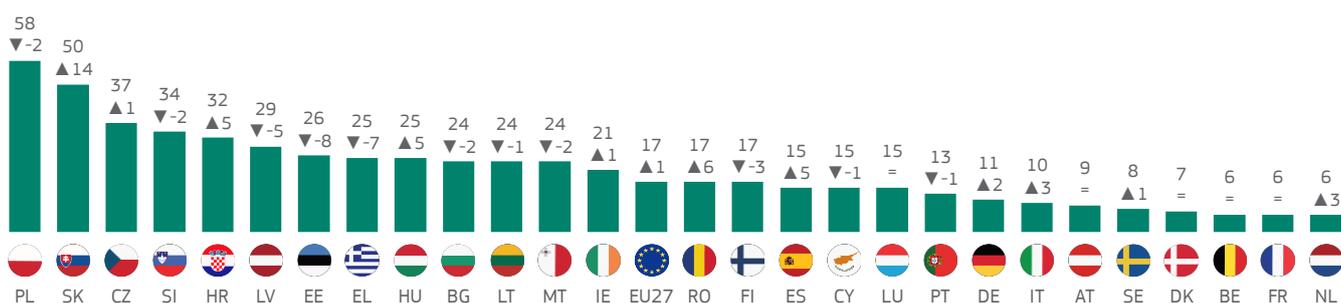
**Compared to 2023**, the share of respondents who have benefitted in their daily life from a project funded by the ERDF or the Cohesion Fund has increased in Slovakia (50%, +14 pp), Romania (17%, +6 pp), Spain (15%, +5 pp), Croatia (32%, +5 pp), Hungary (25%, +5 pp), Italy (10%, +3 pp) and the Netherlands (6%, +3 pp). By contrast, the share has decreased in Estonia (26%, -8 pp), Greece (25%, -7 pp) and Latvia (29%, -5 pp).

#### 'Feeling like an EU citizen'

As in 2023, respondents were asked **whether EU funded projects in their area make them feel (more) like EU citizens**. Just over one in five (22%) reply that EU funded projects in their area contribute **'to a large extent'** to their feeling of being EU citizens, and just over a third (35%) say these projects contribute **'to some extent'** to this feeling. Another 40%, however, see **'no'** link between EU funded projects and feeling more like an EU citizen. Results for this question are unchanged compared to 2023.

**In most Member States (23 out of 27), at least half of respondents report that EU funded projects in their area make them feel, at least 'to some extent', like an EU citizen.** More than eight in ten respondents think this in Lithuania (82%) and Poland (81%). Poland stands out as the only country where more than four in ten (43%) indicate these projects make them feel 'to a large extent' like an EU citizen. On the other hand, over half of respondents in the Netherlands (62%), Denmark (59%) and Belgium (55%) reply that EU funded project do not make them feel like an EU citizen.

**Q3A** Have you benefitted in your daily life from a project funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) or the Cohesion Fund? (% Yes)



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents

## 4. Priority regions for EU regional policy

### Targeting all regions vs less developed regions

More than six in ten respondents (64%) say that the EU should invest in all its regions, and about one in three (32%) say the EU should only invest in the poorer regions. The proportion of respondents who believe the EU should continue to invest in all its regions remains at a similar level as in 2023 and 2021.

In all but two Member States, a majority of respondents say the EU should invest in all its regions, led by respondents in Germany (69%), Poland (69%) and Italy (68%). In Bulgaria, on the other hand, about one in two respondents (52%) think that investments should be targeted only at the poorer regions, and respondents in Portugal are divided on the subject, with 50% saying that the EU should invest in all its regions and 49% that investments should be targeted only at the poorer regions.

### Targeting specific territories

The highest investment priority is given by respondents to **regions with high unemployment** (63%), followed by **deprived urban areas** (51%) and **remote rural or mountain areas** (50%). Over one in four respondents (27%) would give priority to **border regions**. Fewer than one in four would target the

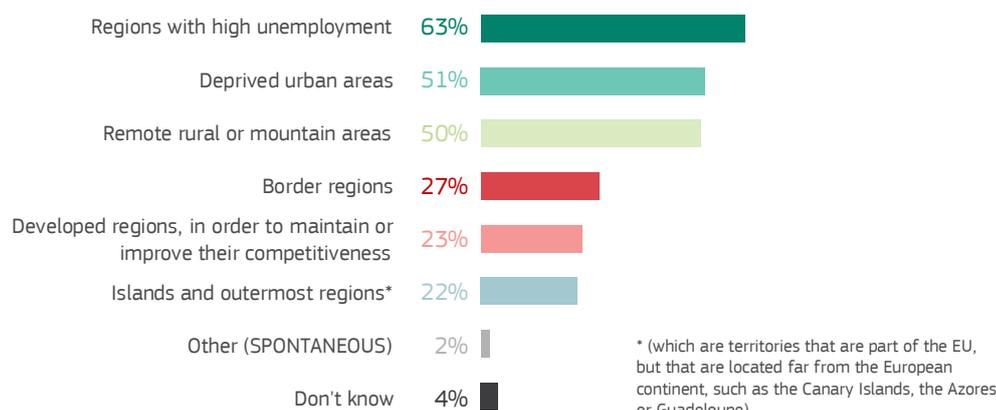
following for investments under EU regional policy: **developed regions**, in order to maintain or improve their competitiveness (23%) and **islands and outermost regions** (22%).

In all but one Member State, a majority of respondents reply that regions with high unemployment should be targeted for investment under EU regional policy. Indeed, in 21 Member States, regions with high unemployment rank first as an investment priority under EU regional policy. Across all Member States, the share that would target this type of region for investments ranges from 46% in France to 82% in Slovakia.

In one Member State – Romania (79%) – respondents most frequently indicate **deprived urban areas** as a priority for investments under EU regional policy. Other countries with a large proportion selecting deprived urban areas as a priority are Belgium (69%) and Hungary (69%).

**Remote rural or mountain areas** are the top-ranking target for investments under EU regional policy in Cyprus (77%), Slovenia (70%), Greece (62%), France (61%) and Croatia (61%). In another eight Member States, this type of region is mentioned by a majority of respondents – from 52% in both Bulgaria and Poland to 65% in both Spain and Romania.

**Q4B** Which regions would you target for investments under EU regional policy? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS]



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents

## 5. Important areas for EU regional policy investment

### EU regional policy investment in respondents' regions

All domains of EU regional policy listed in the survey are regarded as being meaningfully important domains by a majority of respondents.

At the EU level, about nine in ten (91%) consider investment in **education, health or social infrastructures** as important for their city or region. More than eight in ten respondents say that investments in the **environment** (86%), **research and innovation** (85%), **support for small and medium-sized businesses** (84%), **renewable, clean energy and energy networks** (81%) and **vocational training** (81%) are important domains for their city or region. About eight in ten (79%) consider investments in **transport facilities (rail, road or airports)** as important.

Somewhat smaller majorities support the other investment domains: 62% state that investment in **tourism and culture** is important for their

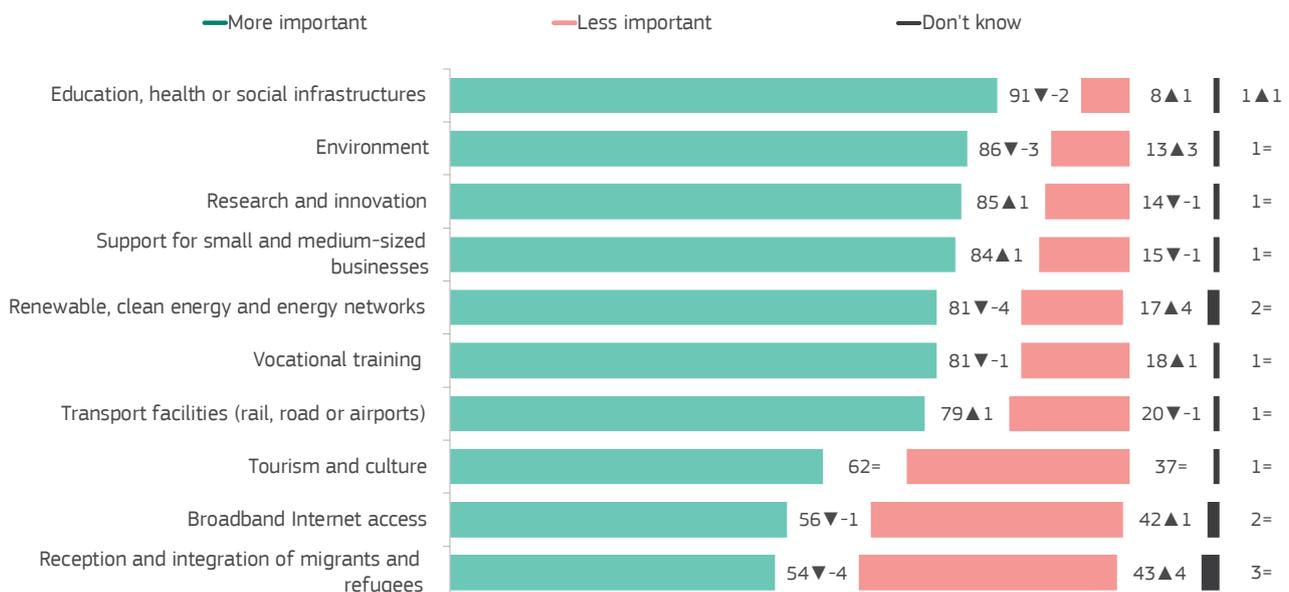
city or region. Just over half say the same about **broadband Internet access** (56%) and about the **reception and integration of migrants and refugees** (54%).

### Individual country results

In 23 of the 27 Member States, more than nine in ten respondents indicate that **education, health or social infrastructures** is an important domain for EU investment. The highest proportions thinking this are observed in Malta (98%), Ireland (98%) and Hungary (98%). In contrast, respondents in Denmark (83%), Sweden (85%) and France (85%) are the least likely to consider this an important area for EU investment.

The **environment** is considered an important area for EU investment by at least 90% of respondents in ten Member States, with the highest proportions being observed in Malta (97%) and Italy (97%). In the remaining 17 Member States, at least 80% of respondents indicate that investment in the environment is important for their city or region.

**Q5** EU regional policy can invest in many different domains. Which of the following examples do you consider among the more important or less important for your city or region?



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents

### EU regional investment in the next few years

Respondents were also asked which domains should be targeted for EU investment in the next few years. About one in two respondents (49%) report that **the improvement of infrastructures for health and education** should be prioritised in EU regional policy in the next few years.

Nearly four in ten (38%) think that the EU should invest in **environmental protection, water sources and climate action**, and about three in ten (31%) think it should invest in **job creation and access to the labour market** in the next few years.

More than one in five respondents mention investments on **housing and energy efficiency** (27%), **research, innovation and digital technology** (27%), the **improvement of transport connections (rail, roads or airports)** (25%), **defence infrastructure and capabilities** (23%), and **support for EU businesses and industry in strategic economic sectors** (23%).

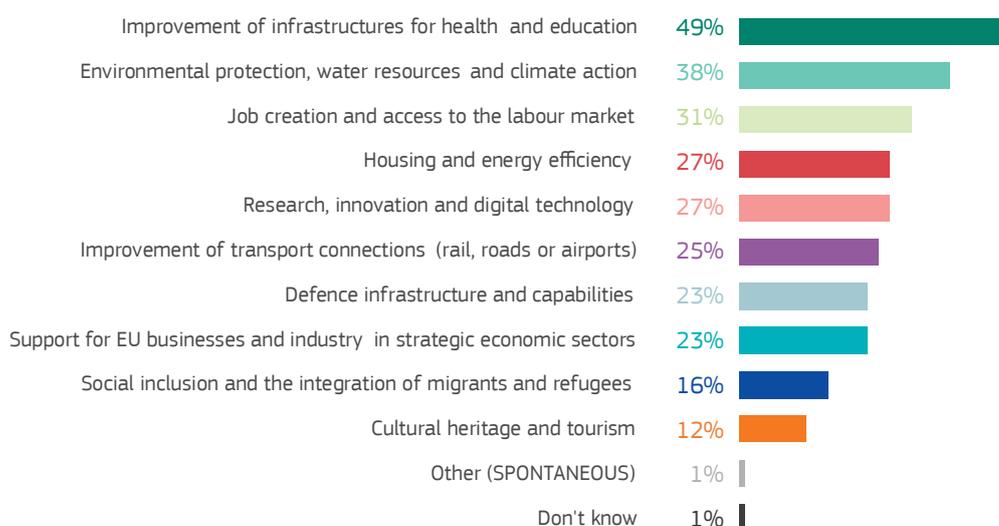
Smaller shares think that that EU investment over the next few years should be targeted at **social inclusion and the integration of migrants and refugees** (16%), and **cultural heritage and tourism** (12%).

### Individual country results

**In 22 Member States, the largest share of respondents select the improvement of infrastructures for health and education as an important domain for future EU investment.** In two Member States, more than seven in ten respondents select this domain: Greece (71%) and Hungary (73%). In Austria (35%) and Denmark (38%), on the other hand, fewer than four in ten respondents indicate this as a domain in which the EU should invest in the next few years.

In the five remaining Member States, **environmental protection, water resources and climate action** ranks as the top domain for EU investment in the next few years. This applies to Denmark (58%), Malta (56%), Italy (46%), Sweden (45%) and Austria (40%). In contrast, fewer than one in five indicate this as a priority area for future EU investment in Latvia (16%).

**Q6** Looking now at the broader, European picture: in which domains should the EU invest in the next few years? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS]



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents

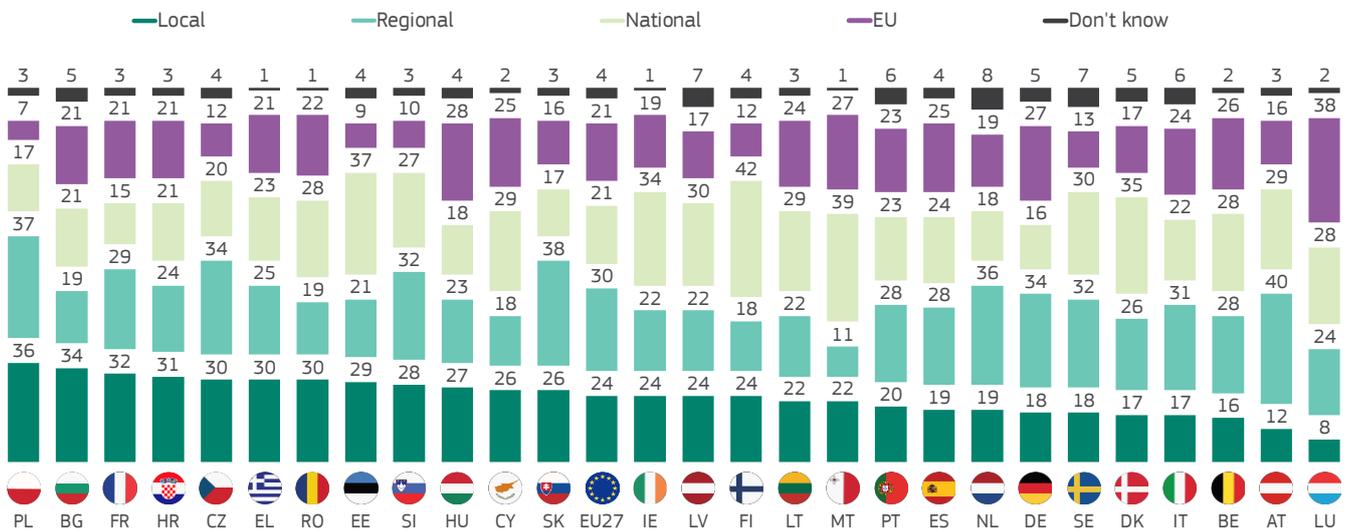
## 6. Primary level of governance for EU regional policy

A majority of respondents think that decisions about EU regional policy projects should be taken at sub-national levels, with 30% opting for the regional level and 24% for the local level. The remaining respondents think that decisions should be taken at the national level or higher, with 21% opting for the national level and 21% considering that the EU should take decisions about projects funded by its

own regional policy. The results for this question are stable compared to 2023.

Across all Member States, respondents are divided in their view about the preferred level at which decisions about projects within the scope of EU regional policy should be made. There are only a few Member States where one of the levels is selected by fewer than 10% of respondents and there are no Member States where one of the levels is preferred by a majority.

Q7 At which level should decisions about EU regional policy projects primarily be taken?



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents

## 7. Awareness of cross-border cooperation

At the EU level, 25% respondents have heard of the **legal EU cooperation agreements between regions** (so-called European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation). Fewer than one in five have heard of **Interreg** (17%), the **European Urban Initiative and URBACT** (16%), or **macro-regional strategies** (16%).

About half of respondents (52%) have heard of **none of these** cooperation initiatives.

### Individual country results

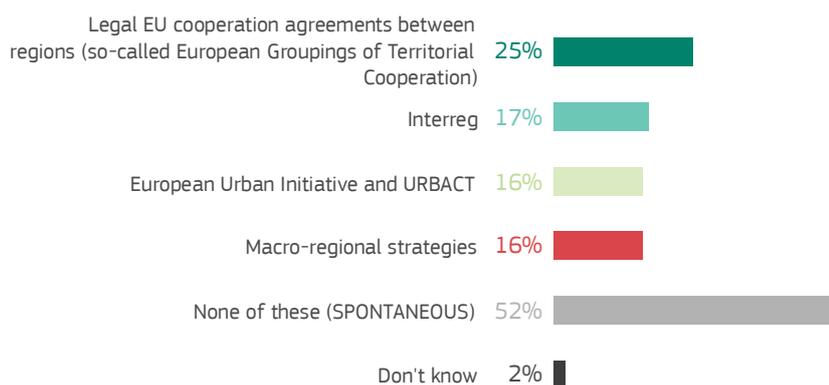
Out of all the cooperation initiatives mentioned above, **in 21 EU Member States, awareness is highest for legal EU cooperation agreements between regions** (so-called European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation). Awareness of this initiative ranges from 15% in Slovakia to 44% in Malta. In Greece, awareness of this initiative ranks highest, jointly with awareness of Interreg (18%).

The **European Urban Initiative and URBACT** rank first in Romania (42%), Ireland (21%) and Latvia (15%). On the other hand, the lowest shares being aware of these initiatives can be found in Sweden (4%) and Denmark (9%).

**Interreg** initiative ranks first in Slovakia (21%), Greece (18%) and Cyprus (15%). The share of respondents being aware of this initiative ranges from 4% in the Netherlands to 31% in Austria.

Poland (45%) is the only Member State where the largest share of respondents indicate awareness of **macro-regional strategies**. In contrast, most Member States demonstrate a low awareness level, from 3% in Sweden to 18% in Italy. Four Member States deviate from this trend, showing a higher level of awareness: Czechia (20%), Malta (21%), Romania (29%), and Poland (45%).

**Q8** European regional policy also invests in the cooperation between regions from different countries. Are you aware of any of the following cooperation initiatives? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS]



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents

## 8. Likelihood of staying in the current region and reasons for departure

### Likelihood of staying in their region in the next 5 years

About three-quarters (76%) of respondents indicate that they **plan to stay by choice** in the region they currently live for the next five years. About one in ten (11%) **plan to stay out of necessity**. Fewer than one in ten plan **to leave by choice** (7%) or plan to **leave out of necessity** (4%).

At least six in ten respondents in all Member States indicate they **plan to stay by choice** in the region they currently live for the next five years (from 64% in France to 94% in the Netherlands). Respondents in Italy (19%) and France (18%) are the most likely to report they **plan to stay out of necessity**.

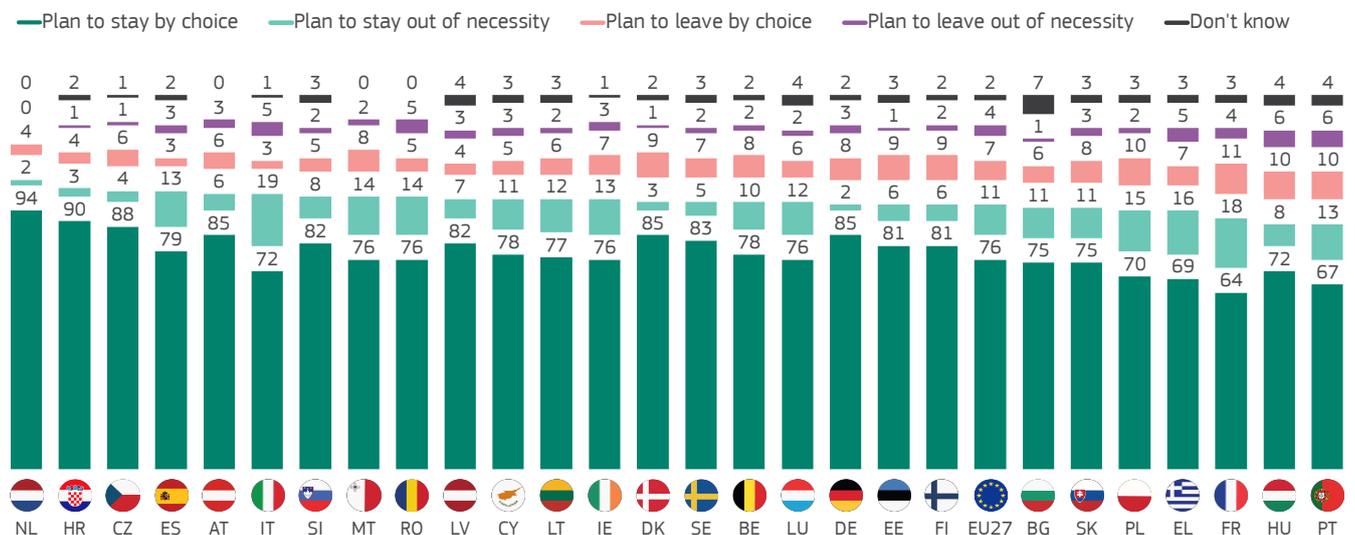
The share of respondents indicating they **plan to leave by choice** varies between 3% in Italy and about one in ten in Hungary (10%), Poland (10%), Portugal (10%) and France (11%). No more than 6% in any Member State mention they **plan to leave the region they currently live in out of necessity** (from 0% in the Netherlands to 6% in Hungary and Portugal).

### Reasons for departure among respondents that plan to leave

Of the respondents who plan to leave the region where they currently live over the course of the next five years (by choice or out of necessity), 29% indicate it is because of **lack of quality jobs or limited economic opportunities in the region**. More than one in five report that they plan to leave because of **a lack of trust in the political environment of their region** or country (23%) or **a lack of affordable, quality housing** (22%).

Reasons for departure cited by around one in ten respondents include: limited access to quality education or vocational training (13%), limited access to essential services (e.g. healthcare, childcare, administration, culture offer, financial services) (11%), remoteness, limited connectivity with the rest of the country and the EU (8%) and environmental and climate concerns (e.g. environmental degradation, pollution, risk of natural/human-made disasters) (7%).

Q9B Do you plan to continue living in this region for the next 5 years?



(%) Base: n=25 737 - All respondents