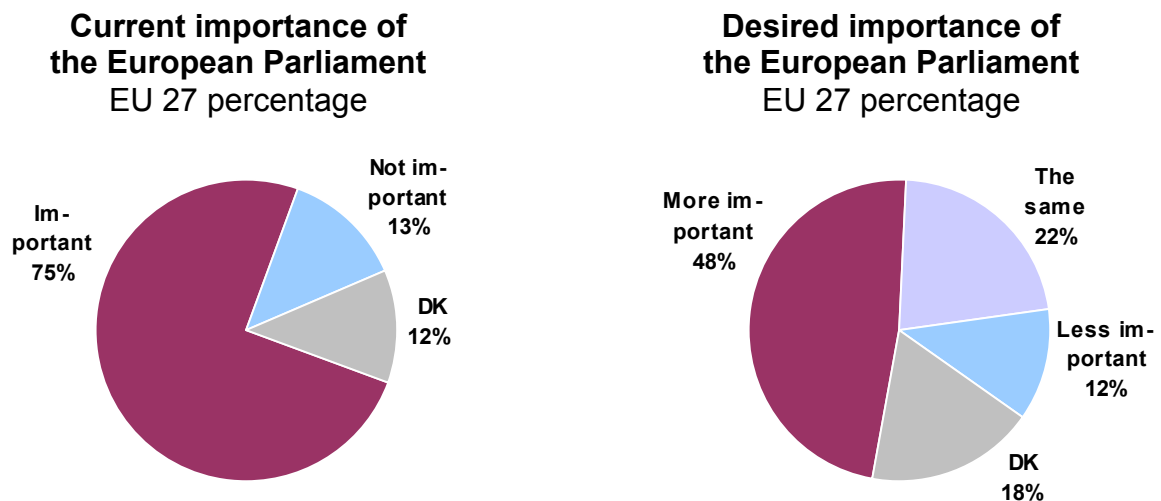




## **TNS POLITICAL & SOCIAL FACTS AND FIGURES – EUROBAROMETER**

### **ONE IN TWO EUROPEANS WANT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO PLAY A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE EU**

**London (UK), April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008** – While 75% of citizens consider the European Parliament plays an important role in the life of the European Union, one in two (48%) would like to see its importance grow even more, according to the findings of a recent Eurobarometer survey conducted by TNS Opinion on behalf of the European Parliament in collaboration with the European Commission. The survey, which interviewed over 26,700 people across the 27 Member States also shows that a majority of EU citizens perceive the European Parliament as democratic although significant minorities believe it is not dynamic and does not listen to people enough.



**Source:** TNS Opinion for the European Parliament in association with the European Commission – Eurobarometer 68.1

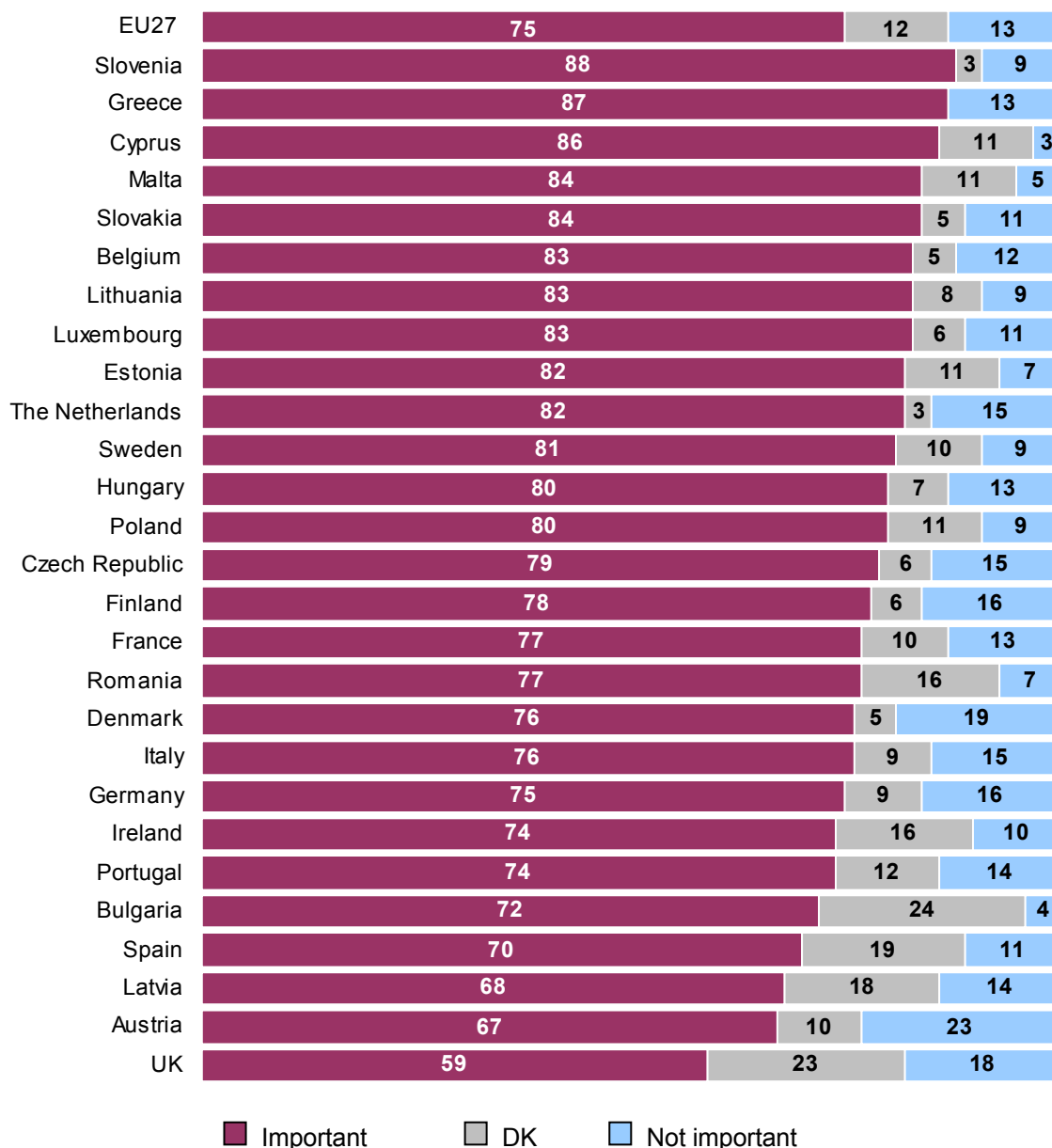
The European Parliament's role is perceived as "important" or "very important" by 75% of Europeans whilst 13% of the people polled think it is not important and 12% did not express an opinion. In all European Union countries but one (UK: 59%), at least two out of three respondents consider that the European Union plays an important role. The countries with the highest proportions of respondents considering the European Parliament's role as important are Slovenia (88%), Greece (87%), and Cyprus (86%). Contrarily, the opinion that this institution does not play an important role is strongest in Austria (23%), Denmark (19%) and UK (18%). Almost a quarter did not answer the question in Bulgaria (24%) and the UK (23%). Since Spring 2000, when this question was asked for the last time, there has been an increase of 12 percentage points in the proportion of Europeans who consider that the European Parliament plays an important role (from

63% to 75%), although it should be noted that at that time the European Union was composed of 15 Member States.

### Current importance of the European Parliament

Percentage per country

*In your opinion, is the role played by the European Parliament in the life of the European Union...?*



**Source:** TNS Opinion for the European Parliament in association with the European Commission – Eurobarometer 68.1

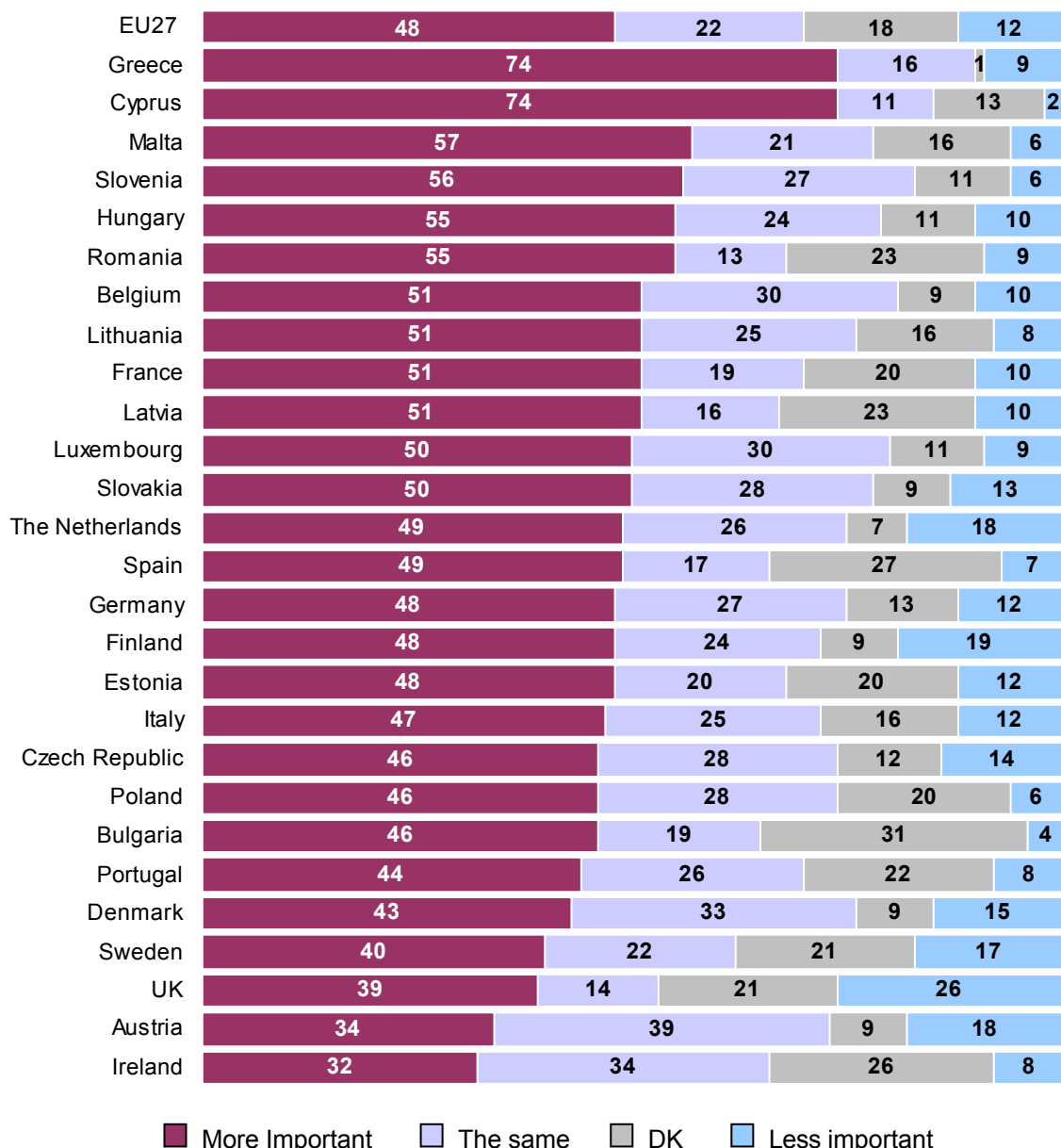
The survey conducted by TNS Opinion also shows that one in two Europeans (48%) wants the role of the European Parliament to be strengthened, against 12% who think it should decrease and 22% who say that it should remain the same as now. The level of support for a greater role of the European Parliament reaches 50% or more in 12 countries: Greece (74%), Cyprus (74%), Malta (57%), Slovenia (56%), Hungary (55%), Romania (55%), Belgium (51%), Lithuania (51%), France (51%), Latvia (51%), Luxembourg (50%) and Slovakia (50%). At the opposite side, the highest proportions of citizens wishing a decrease in the importance of this institution are in UK (26%),

Finland (19%), The Netherlands (18%), Austria (18%), Sweden (17%), and Denmark (15%). In the case of Ireland and Austria, respondents are slightly more likely to be in favour of the status quo: those who would prefer to see the European Parliament's role "stay the same as at the current time" exceed those who want it to become "more important" (34% versus 32% in Ireland and 39% versus 34% in Austria). Support for the idea that the European Parliament should have more power than at present has increased 5 percentage points since this question was asked in the former EU15 Member States in spring 2000. Then, 43% of EU citizens wanted the European Parliament to play a more important role, while 23% wanted its role to stay the same and 11% wanted its role to be reduced in importance.

### Desired importance of the European Parliament

Percentage per country

*Would you personally like to see the European Parliament play a more important or less important role than it currently does?*



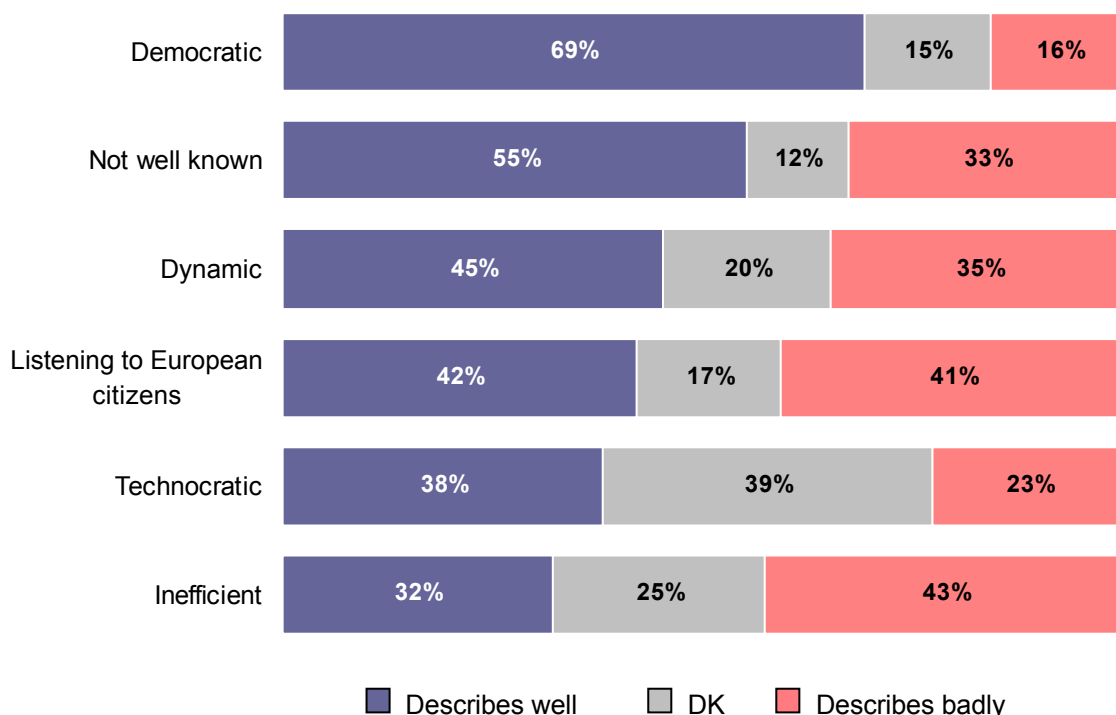
Source: TNS Opinion for the European Parliament in association with the European Commission – Eurobarometer 68.1

The survey also asked Europeans whether certain words or expressions corresponded to their perception of the European Parliament. As a result, the word that best describes the European Parliament for EU citizens is “democratic” (69%). However, significant minorities believe this institution is not dynamic (35% against 45% who think it is) and does not listen to people enough (41% against 42%). Also, 55% think the European Parliament is not well known, 38% describe it as technocratic, and 32% as inefficient.

### The Image of the European Parliament

EU 27 Percentage

*Please tell me for each of the following words/expressions whether it describes very well, fairly well, fairly badly or very badly your perception of the European parliament*



**Source:** TNS Opinion for the European Parliament in association with the European Commission – Eurobarometer 68.1

There are no major differences with regard to the term "Democratic". This is the word which best describes for Europeans their perception of the European Parliament. This opinion is shared by a majority of respondents in all European Union countries, even in those with the highest levels of negative opinions, that is to say Finland (40% of negative answers), Austria (33%), and the UK (27%).

In general, Europeans associate the expression "not well known" with the European Parliament. This opinion is the highest in the Netherlands (71%), Belgium (67%), France (66%), Finland (66%), and Italy (65%). On the other hand, the situation is the opposite in Malta (66% disagrees), Cyprus (64%), Greece (61%), Lithuania (61%), Portugal (59%).

The situation with regard to the word "dynamic" varies considerably from one Member State to another. The countries with the highest numbers of citizens considering the European Parliament

as dynamic includes Greece (79%), Belgium (57%), and new Member States like Slovenia (71%), Cyprus (65%), Slovakia (65%), Poland (60%), Romania (60%), Hungary (57%), and Malta (57%). On the other hand, the European Parliament is seen as not being dynamic in the Netherlands (65% of negative associations versus 26%), Germany (52% versus 36%), the United Kingdom (50% versus 21%) and Austria (48% versus 36%).

The perception of whether the European Parliament "listens to citizens" also varies considerably from country to country. In certain countries, a majority of respondents consider that the European Parliament "listens to citizens", specially in Malta (67%), Hungary (62%), Poland (60%), Slovakia (59%), Slovenia (58%), Greece (57%), Estonia (55%), and Cyprus (55%). The opposite view dominates in Finland (62%), The Netherlands (62%), Germany (60%), Austria (57%), and Sweden (51%). It should be noted that all the countries where the balance is negative – where the view is that the European Parliament "does not" listen to citizens – are long-standing members of the European Union.

In the European Union as a whole and in most countries the word "technocratic" is most often seen as a good description of the European Parliament. This is specially true in Greece (71%), Belgium (59%), France (55%), Germany (52%), and Denmark (51%). The largest proportions of respondents believing that this word does not describe well the European Parliament are found in Slovenia (37%), Slovakia (36%), Poland (33%), and Portugal (31%). However, it should be noted that half of interviewees or more did not answer in Bulgaria (65%), Malta (63%), Latvia (56%), Spain (56%), Lithuania (55%), Romania (55%), UK (55%), and Ireland (50%).

Whilst four in ten EU citizens (43%) believe the word "inefficient" does not describe well the European, a significant minority think it does (32%). Once again, the overall result conceals considerable differences at national level. The opinion that the European Parliament is "inefficient" is preponderant in the Netherlands (56%), Sweden (55%), Finland (54%), Germany (47%), UK (46%), Denmark (45%), Austria (43%). Contrarily, more than six in ten respondents disagree in Greece (70%), Lithuania (65%), Hungary (63%), and Slovakia (60%).

Leendert de Voogd, Global Head of TNS Political & Social, comments: "Democracy, as shown by previous waves of the Eurobarometer, is one of the values most treasured by Europeans. Therefore, it is not surprising to find out that EU citizens want a greater level of influence for an institution so closely related to this principle as the European Parliament".

**--- Ends ---**

## **Note to Editors**

### **About TNS Political & Social Facts and Figures:**

**The Eurobarometer report was posted at the following website on March 2008:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

The European Commission has made data from this report available to relevant media since it was first published. To the best of our knowledge, the findings in the attached press release have not been released.

These findings are based on TNS Opinion research conducted between September and November 2007. All data discussed in the above announcement is based on the opinions of those surveyed. TNS will only support data which is published, in the context we have presented it and our own interpretation of these findings. We cannot be held responsible for any other interpretation.

**As a leading information provider, TNS wants to cast new light on currently debated topics presenting data collected on a European or International basis. TNS Political & Social Facts & Figures will be published twice a month.**

Methodological background:

Fieldwork: 22nd of September to the 3rd of November 2007

Number of interviews conducted: 26,768 persons interviewed face-to-face in the 27 Member States of the EU.

### **About TNS**

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