

**Nothing to
fear but fear
itself?**

The culture &
politics of fear
in Europe

DEMOS



Pan-European polling

Cross-national polling surveyed adults (aged 18+) across six case study countries:

1,661 **GB** / 1,001 **French** / 2,125 **German** /
1,011 **Polish** / 1,000 **Spanish** / 1,007 **Swedish**

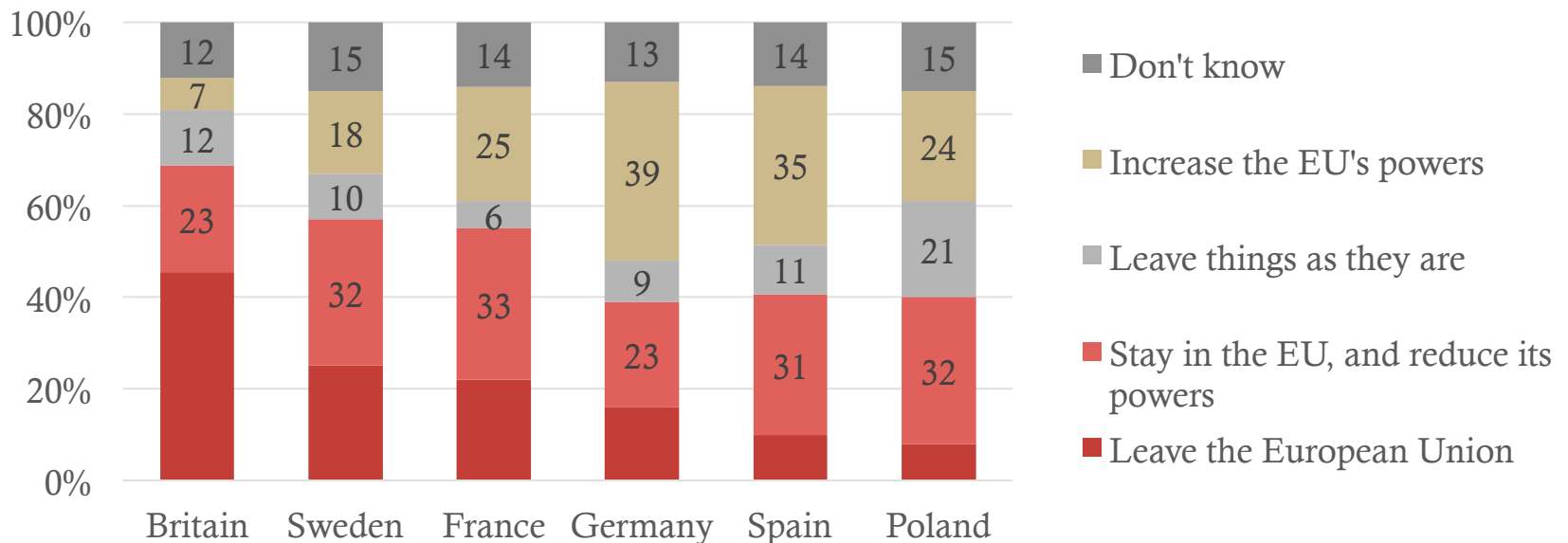
Fieldwork: 23rd August – 7th September 2016

Pan-European Findings

- **Low trust** in EU and national governments and political institutions
- Acute sense of **pessimism**, with citizens expecting things to get worse rather than better
- Growing **Euroscepticism**, with majorities or significant minorities wanting to reduce the EU's powers or leave altogether
- Nationalism and **authoritarianism** have been activated, with growing mistrust of international cooperation and desire for 'strong man' leaders resurgent
- Increasing **hostility towards cultural and ethnic diversity** sees multiculturalism as distinct from other forms of social liberalism

Euroscepticism

Do you think your country's long-term policy should be...



- Britain is an outlier, with 45% wanting thinking the UK should leave the EU (51% once 'don't knows' are removed).
- However, a majority of people in Sweden and France want to either leave the EU or see its powers reduced, and significant minorities (roughly 40%) also hold these views in Germany, Spain and Poland.

Globalisation

It has been claimed that a rejection of the EU is part of a broader rejection of globalisation. Our pan-European polling looked to explore citizens views on globalisation by asking whether they felt it had a positive or negative effect on Europe, their country, and their own lives.

Rather than use the term globalisation directly, we phrased the question in the following way:

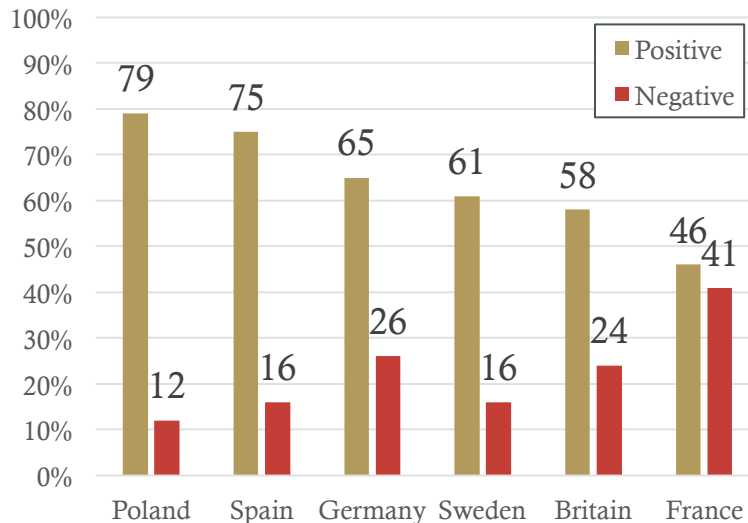
Over recent decades the world has become more interconnected.

There is greater free trade between countries and easier communication across the globe. Money, people, cultures, jobs and industries all move more easily between countries.

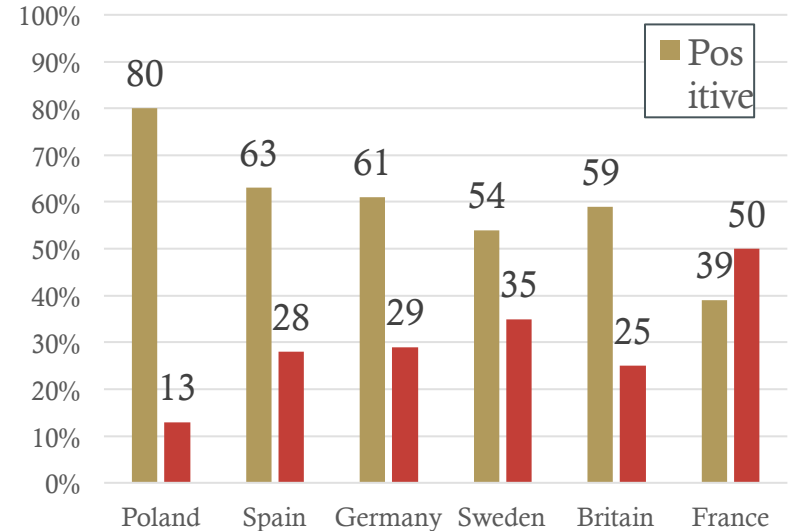
Generally speaking, do you think this has had a positive or negative effect on...

Globalisation

positive or negative effect on... Europe



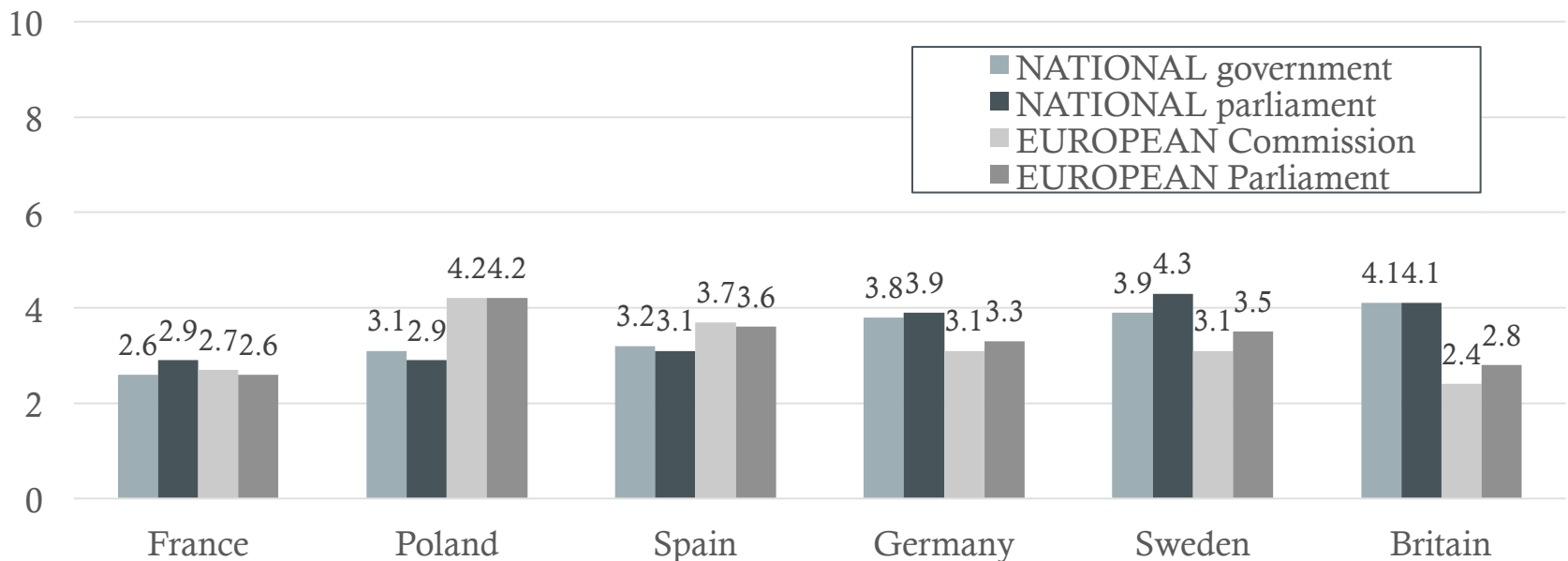
positive or negative effect on... your country



- Our findings show largely positive conceptions of globalisation, with significant majorities across most countries thinking the impact of globalisation has been positive
- However, France is a clear outlier, with the public significantly more sceptical about the benefits of globalisation. This is particularly the case for the impact of globalisation on France, where a greater proportion of people think has had a negative, rather than positive, effect.

Trust in Institutions

On a scale from 0 ('No trust at all') to 10 ('Completely trust'), how much, if at all, do you trust each of the following institutions.

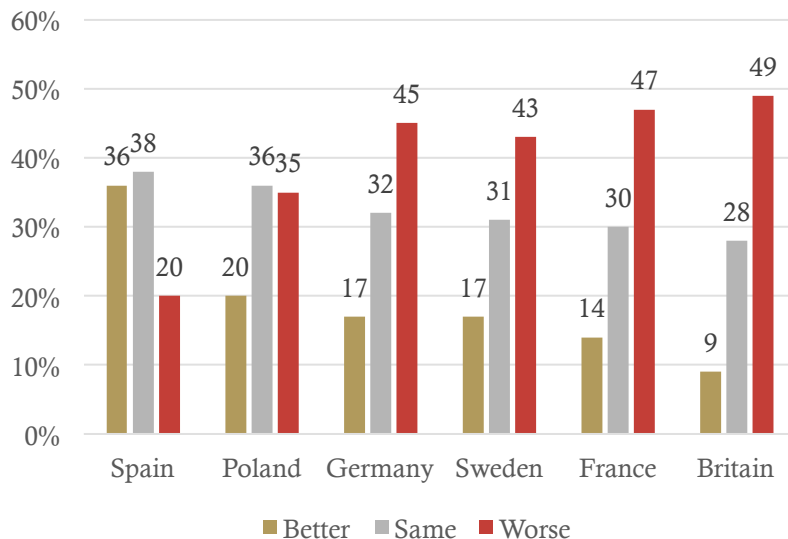


- Our polling found strikingly low levels of trust in institutions across all measures and across all countries
- In Poland and Spain trust in EU institutions was marginally higher than in national government and parliament, the reverse was true in Germany, Sweden and Britain. Again France, is somewhat of an outlier, with chronically low levels of trust across all institutions.

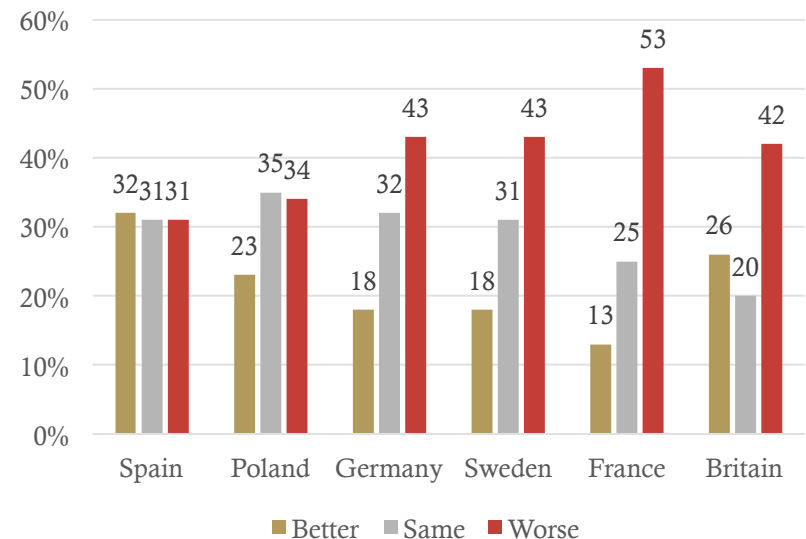
Expectations for the future

Do you think things will get better or worse over the next 12 months?

...for Europe



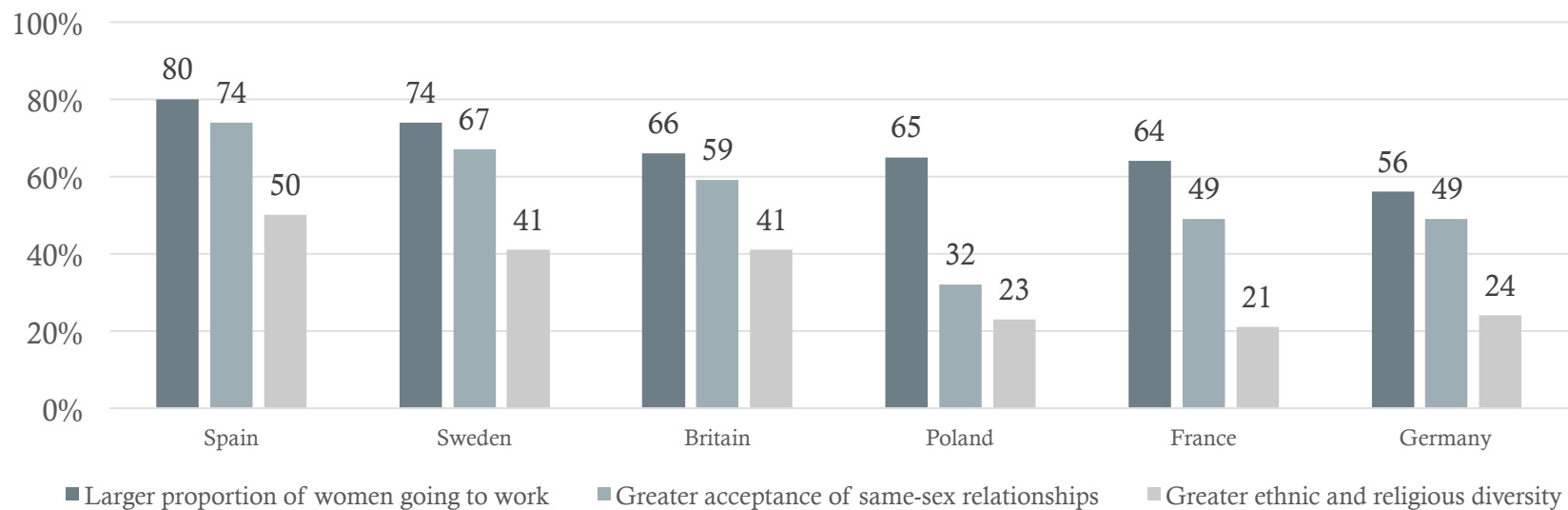
...for your country



- With the exception of Spain, publics are largely pessimistic about the future, both for Europe and for their country.
- Citizens in the UK and France are the most pessimistic about the prospects for Europe and their country respectively. In France, a majority of people think that things will get worse for their country in the next 12 months.

Societal changes

Proportion of people who think the following trends have changed society for the better



- We find broad support for female participation in the labour market, and same-sex relationships across our case study countries (with the exception of Poland in the latter case).
- Our polling finds that increasing ethnic and religious diversity is a far more polarising issue both within and between countries. Spain, Sweden and Britain are most supportive of greater diversity, with publics here twice as likely to think it has improved things for the better as their counterparts in Poland, France, and Germany. In these countries a greater proportion of people think it has changed things for the worse.

Case Studies

Great Britain - Demos

Germany – d|part

France – Jacques Delors Institute

Spain – Elcano Royal Institute

Poland – Institute of Public Affairs

Sweden - FORES

Case Studies

Our six country case studies provide a deeper understanding of the drivers and symptoms of the politics of fear through a detailed analysis of national specificities. Each provides a different analytical perspective and takes a different methodological approach, taking account of national contexts and trends.

- **Great Britain** – a statistical analysis of the demographic, geographical and attitudinal predictors of the UK's vote to leave the EU.
- **Germany** – a comparison of public and elite perceptions of EU-related concerns and fears, using public polling data, and interviews with German political leaders.
- **France** – an analysis of 'Franco-scepticism' through public polling data, investigating collective pessimism in French society and the negative tone of French politics.
- **Spain** – an investigation into 'Spanish exceptionalism' – weak far right despite economic crisis and high immigration, using polling data and policy roundtable.
- **Poland** – assessing the factors behind the electoral success of the Law and Justice Party, the only authoritarian populist party to have gained a majority across our case study countries.
- **Sweden** – a quantitative and qualitative analysis of political discourse and conceptions of national identity (civic and ethnic), in the context of a restrictive turn in asylum policy and electoral success of the populist Sweden Democrats

Great Britain

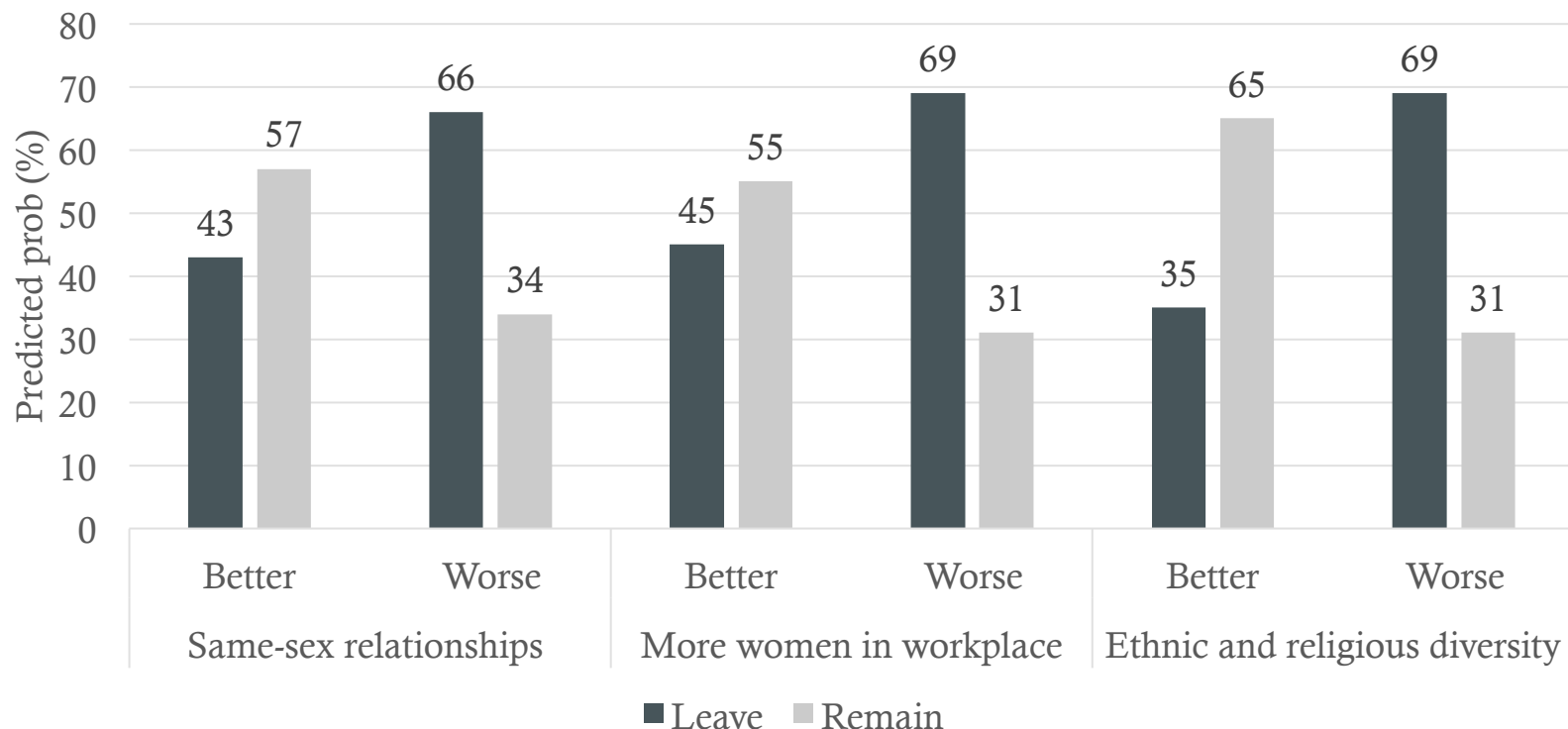
Social attitudes a key driver of Brexit vote

- Our analysis backs up findings from other studies that key demographic and socio-economic factors such as **age**, **income** and **ethnicity** were significant predictors of vote choice in the EU referendum
- Similar to other studies, we also find that **education** is a strong predictor of vote choice. Predicted probability of voting leave is 44 percentage points higher for people with no qualifications compared to people with a degree
- Our analysis finds that **attitudes towards societal changes** (see next slide) are significant predictors, even when demographic and socio-economic factors are controlled for. Leave voters also tend to favour a more authoritarian style of government and prioritise social order over openness.

Great Britain

Social attitudes a key driver of Brexit vote (cont.)

The following social changes, have changed things for the...



Great Britain

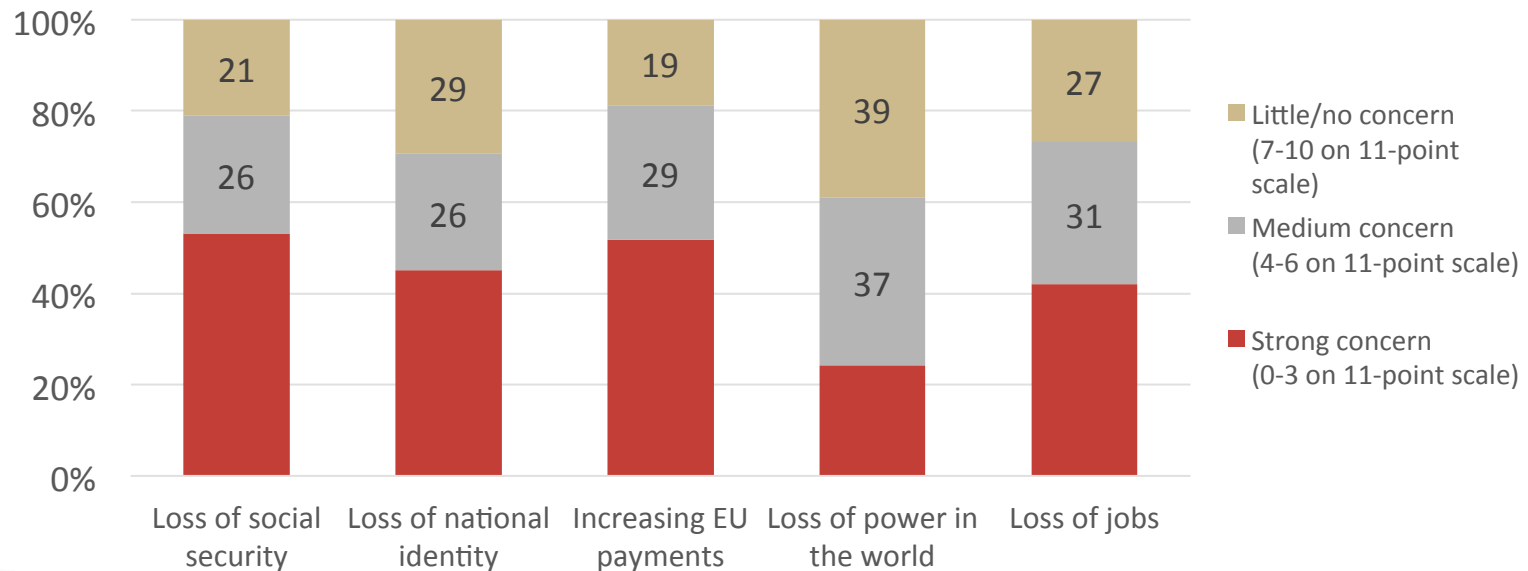
Open vs Closed – a new dividing line

- The UK case study was the first to explore the role that **social networks** play in influencing the Brexit vote.
- We find that, when controlling for other variables, people who **socialized with someone from a different part of Britain** in the last 6 months were 10 percentage points less likely to vote Leave;
- Those **socialising with people overseas** were 15 percentage points less likely to vote Leave.
- People who think that **globalization** has been negative for Britain were 30 percentage points more likely to vote to Leave
- People who favour **unilateralism over international cooperation** were 78 percentage points more likely to vote Leave

Germany

German public – concrete concerns about the EU

- Our polling revealed that significant proportions of the German public have strong concerns related to the impact of the EU on Germany
- However, only a small proportion express strong concern across every area – respondents were far more likely to express concern around one or two specific issues



Germany

German politicians – a disconnect with the public?

- Interviews with German domestic and EU-level politicians revealed limited recognition of citizens' concrete concerns.
- Politicians instead argued that citizens fears were related to a latent feeling of general malaise.

I have honestly never heard of anyone afraid about a loss of power in the world for Germany.

MP, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)

The loss of jobs or social security is not an issue here at the moment. Whoever wants to work can work in Germany at the moment.

MEP, Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU)

I haven't heard anyone in my constituency be concerned about the loss of their national identity or German culture. Maybe this is more of a concern in Frauke Petry's constituency?⁸

MP, CDU/Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (CSU)

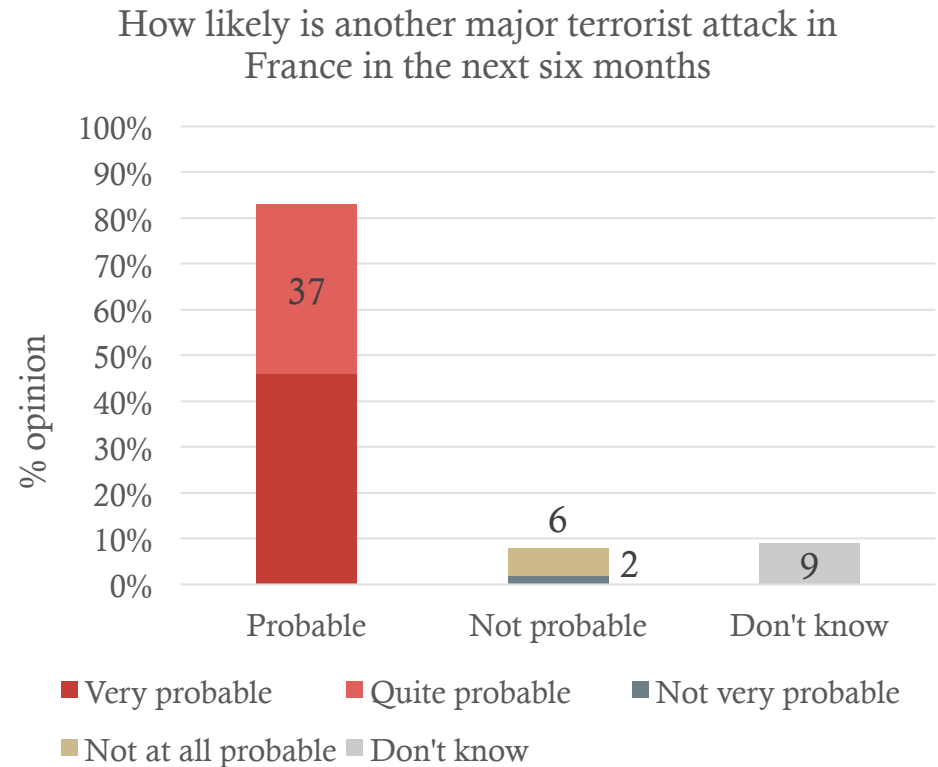
I don't think there are concrete EU-related fears or worries. It is more a diffuse, abstract feeling of insecurity among citizens.

MP, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

France

French malaise – entrenched pessimism about country's future

- 80% believe a major **terrorist attack** is likely to happen in the next 6 months
- 70% believe a major **financial crisis** is likely in the next two years;
- 58% believe a **far-right leader** will come to power in the next 10 years;
- 53% think **France's fortunes will worsen** in the coming 12 months.

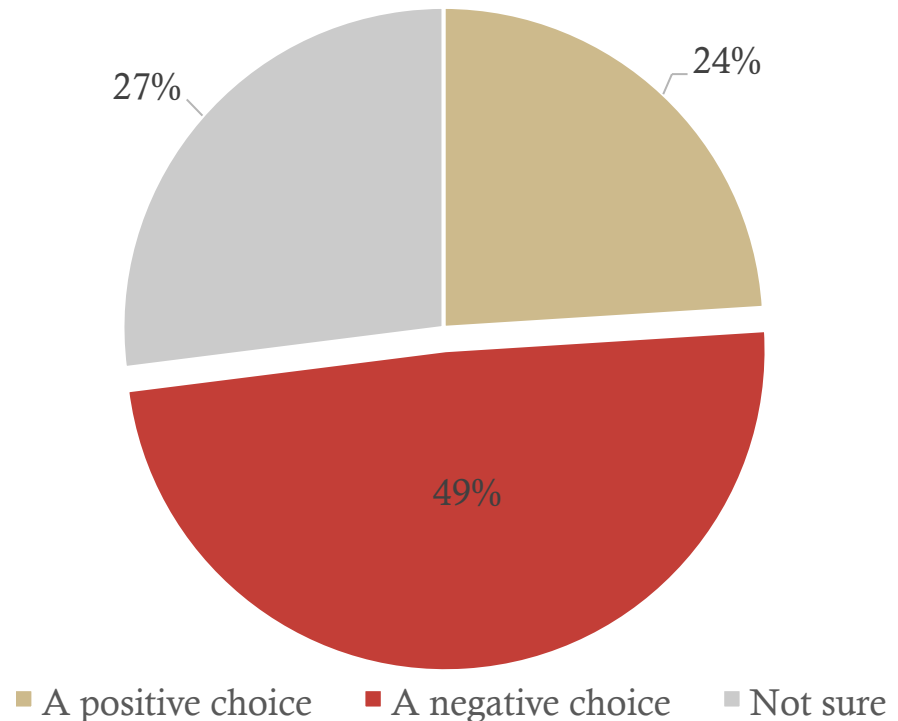


France

Negative voting set to dominate the French election

- Nearly half of French citizens think that people will **vote negatively** in the upcoming elections, ie, to prevent a candidate winning who they think will be damaging to France.
- Only a quarter of citizens think that people will **vote positively**, ie, for a candidate who they think will improve things for France

Thinking about the next Presidential election in 2017, do you think the way people vote will be mostly...

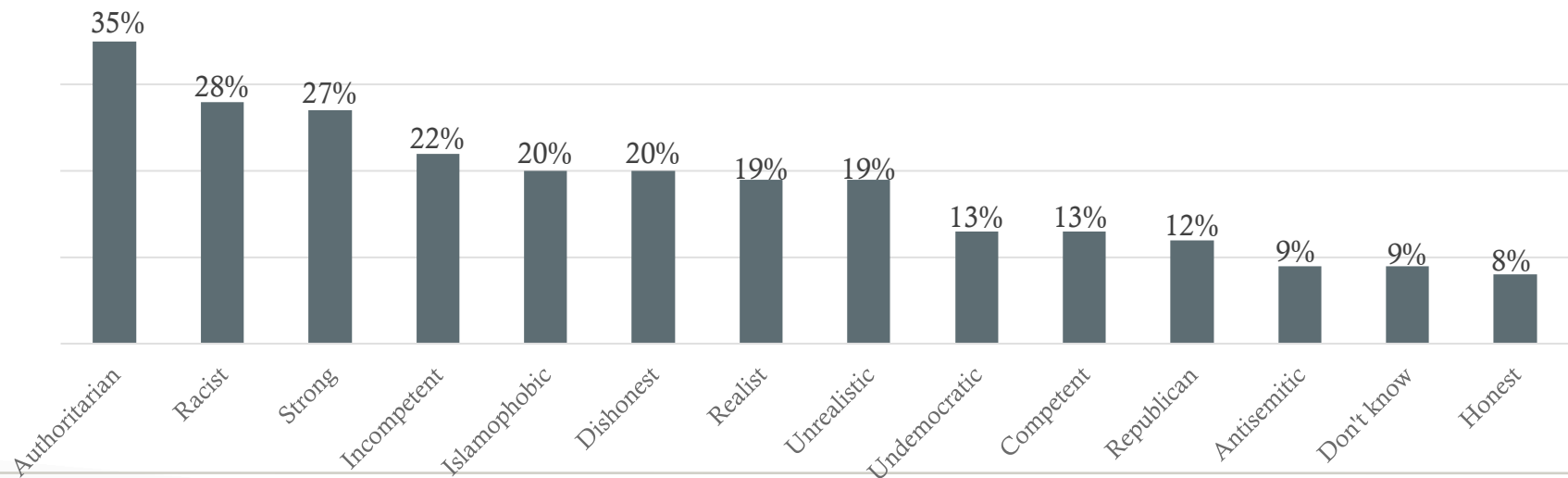


France

The FN – a product of French fear?

- While a greater proportion of people see the **Front National** as ‘racist’, ‘Islamophobic’ and ‘authoritarian’, a quarter of French citizens see the FN as ‘realist’. Similarly, while more people think of **Marine Le Pen** as ‘authoritarian’ and ‘racist’, over a quarter of French citizens see her as ‘strong’

Thinking about the Front National, which three or four, if any, of the following would you say best describes its leader, Marine Le Pen...

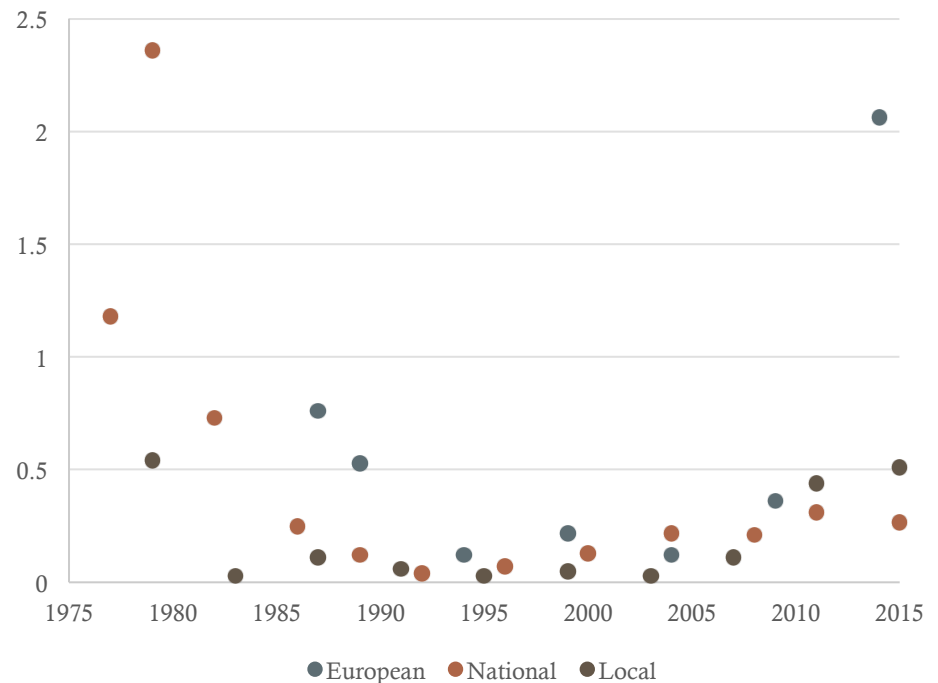


Spain

An outlier of optimism, despite negative economic context

- Economic crisis led to **spike in inequality** – gap between top and bottom 10% highest of any EU country in 2014
- Between 2000 and 2009 **highest level of net immigration per capita** of any EU nation
- BUT, **electoral failure of far-right**, anti-immigrant parties in recent years

Percentage of vote extreme-right parties in Spain have won in European, national and local elections, 1975–2015



Spain

Historical, cultural and political context is key

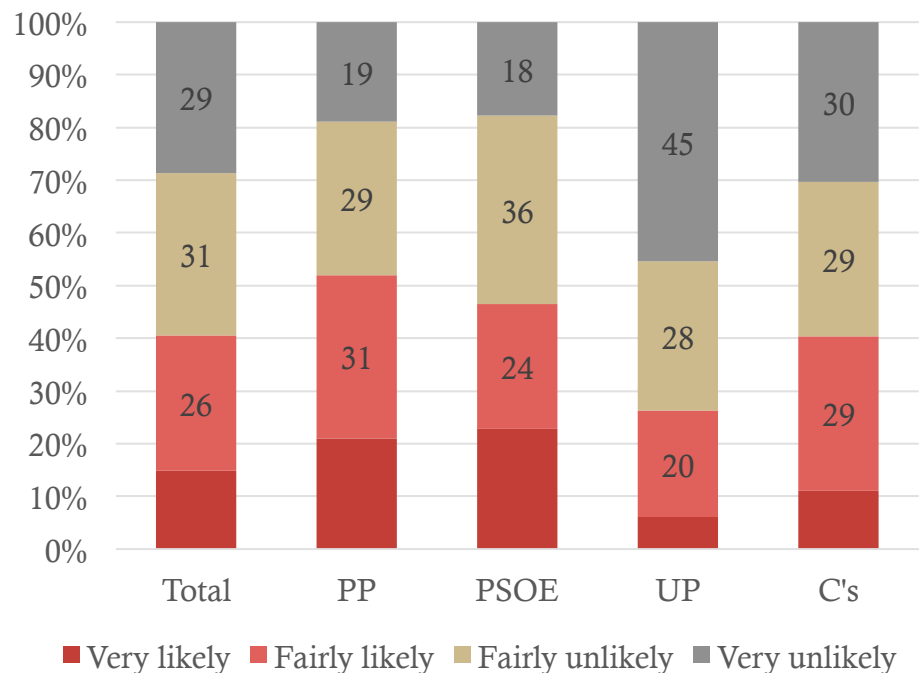
- **Weak national identity:** linked to legacy of Franco regime, and strength of regional nationalism (most notably, Basque and Catalan)
- **Electoral system that favours big parties:** combination of D'Hondt system coupled with large number of electoral districts locks smaller parties out in many areas
- **Failure of far right parties to modernise:** these parties have often maintained a link to Francoism and failed to modernise unlike other far-right parties in Europe
- **Partido Popular:** Spain's mainstream right-wing party has often attracted far right voters, although it maintains a relatively benevolent position on immigration as a result of strong Catholic links

Spain

Even in Spain anti-immigrant sentiment is rising

- Despite these pro-European and global attitudes, the study finds that Spain is experiencing a hardening of attitudes towards immigration –
- 74% of citizens believe that current levels of migration into Spain are too high
- 41% of citizens would vote for a party pledging to reduce immigration

How likely would you be to vote for political party whose main aim was to reduce immigration to Spain (by party current affiliation)?



Poland

A cultural rather than economic backlash

- Electoral victory of authoritarian populist Law and Justice Party (*PiS*), winning majority in 2015 election
- This **not a case of a backlash from the economically 'left behinds'**: since accession to the EU in 2004 - average yearly earnings have nearly doubled, minimum wage increased more than twice, unemployment decreased by 11.6 percentage points, and relative poverty dropped by 3.3 percentage points
- As a result 4 in 5 Poles believe that globalisation has had a positive impact on Poland and only 8% want to leave the EU (rising only to 13% among *PiS* supporters)
- However, 46% of *PiS* supporters believe that greater **cultural and ethnic diversity** has changed Polish society for the worse
- 58% of *PiS* supporters believe that **Muslim migration** poses a threat to traditional Polish and Christian values

Poland

Populism in Poland – the ‘politics of parallel reality’

- Of our 6 case study countries Poland arguably presents the most stark example of so-called ‘**post-truth**’ **political discourses**
- The Law and Justice Party’s (*PiS*) 2015 electoral campaign was dubbed ‘**Poland in ruin**’ by critics. It depicted Poland as a country where few benefited from growth and the masses were increasingly impoverished – despite clear evidence that living standards have risen significantly.
- *PiS*, together with other Polish populist and far-right groups, have also campaigned on an anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, Islamophobic platform. Our public polling found that more people think that **Islamic terrorism is the biggest problem that Poland currently faces**, than any other issue (42% of all Poles, and 53% of *PiS* supporters). This is despite Poland’s very small Muslim population (0.1%), and no recorded incidents of Islamic terrorism.

Sweden

End of Swedish exceptionalism? Hardening of policy & discourse

- Anti-immigrant **Sweden Democrats** entered parliament for first time in 2010, and currently polling at 18%
- **Restrictive turn in asylum policy** – tightening of conditions on family reunification; refugees now given temporary rather than permanent residency; and the introduction of border checks in 2015.
- Rise in **nationalist political discourse**, positioning immigration as a threat to ‘Swedish values’ and ‘Swedish culture’.

The word honour is also misused at times. Subjugation of the youth is sometimes justified with claims that they belong to an honour culture. But it has nothing to do with honour to restrict the members of your own family and take away their rights to their life and their own life choices. On the contrary, it is dishonest and it goes against Swedish values.

Anna Kinberg-Batra, Moderate Party

Learning the language and civic orientation should be mandatory for the newly arrived from the beginning. SFI [Swedish For Immigrants] should start straight away. Civic orientation should provide information on what rights, duties and responsibilities you have as a newcomer in our country. But also on our traditions, values and customs.

Ebba Busch Thor, Christian Democrats

Sweden

Civic vs ethnic conceptions of identity

- Party political allegiances shown to have a strong link to individual **conceptions of identity** in Sweden
- **Sweden Democrat** supporters are more than twice as likely to include **ethically-defined** concepts in their perception of national identity (linked to Swedish ancestry)
- However, the shift in political discourse and conceptions of Swedish identity should not be over-stated. All voters, regardless of party preferences, display a **strong sense of civic national identity** (linked to the political institutions of Sweden)

Responding to Europe's culture and politics of fear

Based on our findings, we set out below some of the core principles of leadership, governance and public policy-making that could support such renewal at EU and national levels, with the support of civil society and other non-governmental institutions (NGOs).

Responding to Europe's culture and politics of fear

Promote safety and security

Citizens across Europe are pessimistic and anxious about the future. National and EU-level governments need to promote policies and political discourses that seek to allay fears, address concrete concerns and more proactively foster social cohesion.

1. *Provide genuine moral leadership, to act as a stabilising and guiding hand in response to public anxiety and fear.* While politicians must recognise that the recent populist uprisings reflect genuine concerns about the direction of travel in their country, this should not come at the expense of principled, stable leadership that seeks to build long-term social and economic growth and enrichment.
2. *Deliver targeted policy interventions.* The policy response to the politics of fear must include initiatives that attempt to tackle economic insecurity and inequality directly, however, there is also a need for a more proactive approach to address some of the cultural drivers of the politics of fear.
3. *Support a more focused EU.* There was widespread consensus in our consultations with national and civil society practitioners that the EU should concentrate on a stronger, more core remit of responsibilities – enabling it to deliver more comprehensively on a reduced number of areas, and avoiding the ‘over-reach’ that contributes to a sense of disenfranchisement among citizens.

Responding to Europe's culture and politics of fear

Reconnect political 'elites' and citizens

Political leaders need to address a crisis in political trust through measures that reinforce and rejuvenate representative democracy and political accountability.

1. *Reduce the remoteness of 'political elites'.* There is a pressing need to reduce the considerable social and geographic gap between politicians and citizens. Part of the answer must involve bringing politics down to a local level, as well as making parliaments more reflective of the wider population in terms of gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic background. There is a clear role for civil society organisations to act as a bridge between local communities and local, national and supranational politics.
2. *Support democratic and policy-making processes that build rather than undermine trust.* Referendums should be used sparingly and implemented better when needed. There is scope for resolving specific political issues through well-thought-through deliberative mechanisms, however, they should not be seen as a silver bullet as they lack the representative legitimacy of electoral democracy.
3. *Boost the accountability of EU institutions and policy-makers at EU level.* Greater transparency is needed, but it needs to be conceptualised in less of a corporate and more of a civic manner – beginning with the public provision of information, but followed by far more proactive attempts to disseminate this information in a way that draws clear lines of accountability and actively engages the public.

Responding to Europe's culture and politics of fear

Make the case for openness and liberalism

With illiberal, nationalist political discourse ascendant, there is an urgent need to put forward a more persuasive case for liberalism – one that promotes liberal values of openness, international cooperation, pluralism and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, but in a way that is more meaningful for ordinary people.

1. *Develop pro-liberal arguments around collective interests.* By focusing on interests, liberal arguments can move beyond the abstract and the technocratic, and begin to make a compelling case for the concrete benefits of international openness, pluralism and diversity to ordinary people's lives. This requires liberals to be proactive in reaching across traditional political divides, to create coalitions over shared interests.
2. *Practise values of openness and pluralism.* Pro-liberal politicians and institutions should put values of openness and pluralism into practice by supporting initiatives that enable positive, and ultimately consensus-building, debates on issues such as identity, nationalism and immigration.
3. *Ensure that the benefits of openness and diversity are experienced more widely.* The benefits of openness and diversity must be experienced more widely, particularly through supporting greater inter- and intra-national mobility for socioeconomic groups unlikely to participate in existing initiatives.

Responding to Europe's culture and politics of fear

Counter 'post-truth' narratives in politics and the media

Systematic manipulation of facts for political ends are emergent trends, in part accelerated by new forms of social and alternative media. Countering these false narratives and conspiracy theories will require decisive action from political representatives – addressing the issues that encourage susceptibility to their messages and rebuilding trust in their expertise, and the systems that support stable, democratic government.

- Citizens must be supported to differentiate between credible and non-credible news sources, by promoting media literacy and digital citizenship – whether through national education systems or more informal methods.
- Support for civil society organisations (eg, fact checking organisations) with a mission to promote greater 'truthfulness' in public discourse. Trusted civil society organisations may have greater scope in contesting false narratives than mainstream political institutions. However, it must be remembered that these organisation can too suffer from a lack of democratic accountability and popular legitimacy.
- There is perhaps greater potential in more grassroots approaches to building civil society's resilience to 'post-truth' narratives and politics, such as Poland's Committee for the Defence of Democracy (KOD). The EU has a potentially powerful role to play in supporting the incubation and scaling of these bottom-up organisations.

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