



# Flash Eurobarometer 452

## Briefing Note

### Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy

Fieldwork  
March 2017  
Publication  
June 2017

Survey requested by the European Commission,  
Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy  
and co-ordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication

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.

# Flash Eurobarometer 452

## Briefing note

### Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy

March 2017

Survey conducted by TNS political & social at the request of the European Commission,  
Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy

Survey co-ordinated by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication  
(DG COMM "Strategic Communication" Unit)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>I. AWARENESS OF EU REGIONAL POLICY AND PERCEIVED BENEFITS</b>	<b>4</b>
1 Awareness and perceived impact of EU regional support	4
2 The European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund	6
3 Sources of information on EU regional policy	7
<b>II. PRIORITIES FOR EU REGIONAL POLICY</b>	<b>8</b>
1 Priority regions for EU regional investment	8
2 Most important areas for EU regional policy investment	10
<b>III. PRIMARY LEVEL OF GOVERNANCE</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>IV. CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION</b>	<b>12</b>
1 Awareness of and support for EU regional funding for cross-border cooperation	12
2 Awareness of EU strategies to promote cooperation	13
<b>V. KNOWLEDGE OF EU OUTERMOST REGIONS</b>	<b>14</b>

## INTRODUCTION

EU Regional Policy invests in all EU regions to reduce the differences in wealth which exist both between Member States, and between regions within Member States. Regional Policy targets all regions and cities in the European Union in order to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens' quality of life.

Regional policy is the EU's main instrument of investment: at €351.8 billion, it accounts for approximately a third of the EU budget for the 2014-2020 periods<sup>1</sup>. Through several funds – most prominently the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund – the EU co-finances a variety of projects which make it possible for less developed regions and countries to fulfil their economic potential. Prominent among these projects are investment in transport and communication infrastructures, support for small and medium-sized enterprises, and the modernisation of educational systems. EU Regional Policy is also a major instrument for the realisation of the EU's "Europe 2020" growth goals, which aim to create growth and jobs via innovation, deal with the problems of climate change and energy dependence, and reduce poverty and social exclusion.

The majority of funding available under the regional policy is directed towards "less developed regions", whose GDP is lower than 75% of the EU average, and "transition regions", whose GDP is between 75% and 90% of the EU average. While individual Member States and their regions are the main recipients of co-financing for development projects, the EU has also sought to promote cross-border cooperation in macro-regions such as the Baltic Sea region, in an effort to promote a shared approach to drive growth in these regions.

Between the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017, 27,173 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed via telephone (mobile and fixed line) in their mother tongue on behalf of Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy. The methodology used is that of Eurobarometer Flash surveys, as carried out by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Strategic Communication" Unit)<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://europa.eu/pol/pdf/flipbook/en/regional\\_policy\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu/pol/pdf/flipbook/en/regional_policy_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/>

Note: In this report, countries are referred to by their official abbreviation. The abbreviations used in this report correspond to:

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

\* Cyprus as a whole is one of the 28 European Union Member States. However, the 'acquis communautaire' has been suspended in the part of the country, which is not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. For practical reasons, only the interviews carried out in the part of the country controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are included in the 'CY' category and in the EU28 average.

*We wish to thank the people throughout the European Union  
who have given their time to take part in this survey.*

*Without their active participation, this study would not have been possible.*

## I. AWARENESS OF EU REGIONAL POLICY AND PERCEIVED BENEFITS

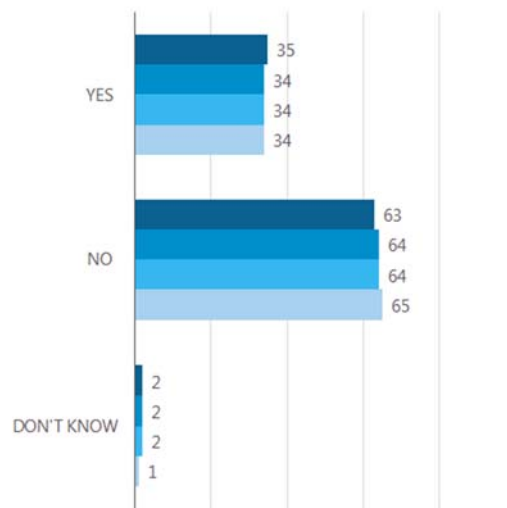
### 1 Awareness and perceived impact of EU regional support

#### - Over a third of respondents say that they have heard of EU co-financed projects –

Over a third (35%) of respondents have heard about EU co-financed projects in the area in which they live.

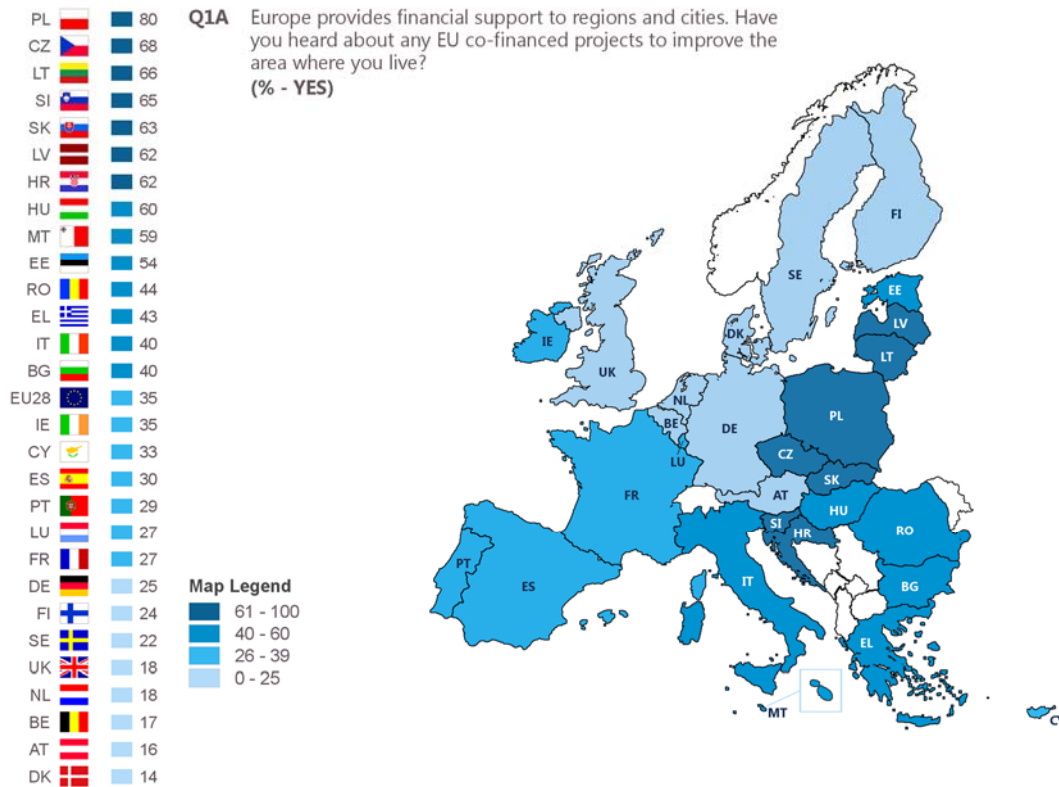
**Q1A** Europe provides financial support to regions and cities. Have you heard about any EU co-financed projects to improve the area where you live?  
(% - EU)

■ Mar. 2017 ■ June 2015 ■ Sept. 2013 ■ June 2010



Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

In ten Member States, a majority of respondents say that they have heard of such EU co-financed projects. In 18 countries, only a minority of respondents have done so. The proportions of respondents who have heard of EU co-financed projects range from 80% in Poland, 68% in the Czech Republic and 66% in Lithuania to 14% in Denmark, 16% in Austria and 17% in Belgium.

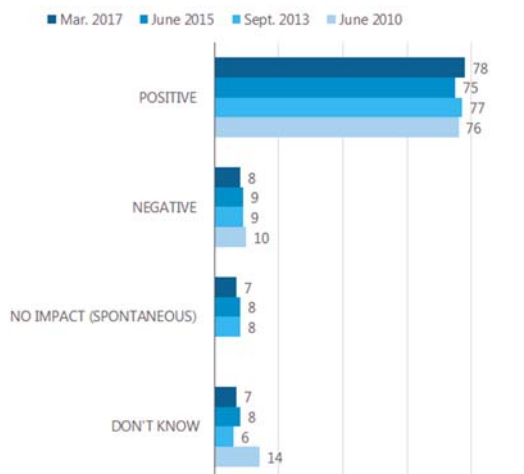


Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

**- More than three-quarters of respondents say that the impact of EU co-financed projects on the development of their city or region has been positive -**

Close to eight in ten respondents say that their impact on the development of cities or regions has been positive (78%). In all but one Member State (Italy (43%)), at least two-thirds of respondents (67%) think this way.

**Q1C** Taking into consideration all the projects you have heard about, would you say that this support has had a positive or negative impact on the development of your city or region? (% - EU)

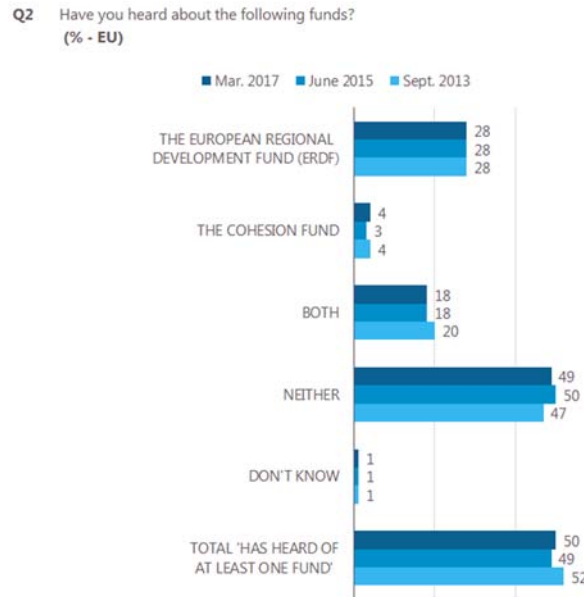


Base: respondents who have heard of EU co-financed projects (N=9,470)

## 2 The European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund

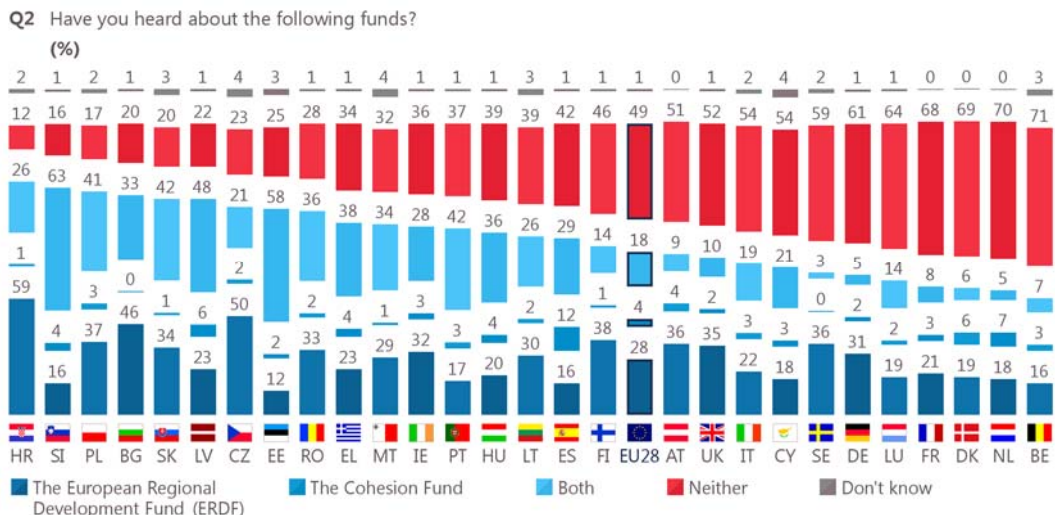
**- Half the the respondents have heard of at least one of the two EU development funds, and nearly a fifth have heard of both -**

Half of the respondents (50%) have heard of at least one of the two EU funds - the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund.



Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

Public awareness of the two funds varies considerably between countries. Respondents in Croatia (59%), the Czech Republic (50%) and Bulgaria (46%) are the most likely to be aware of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Very few respondents in any country have heard only of the Cohesion Fund, with the exception of Spain, where 12% of the respondents have heard of it.



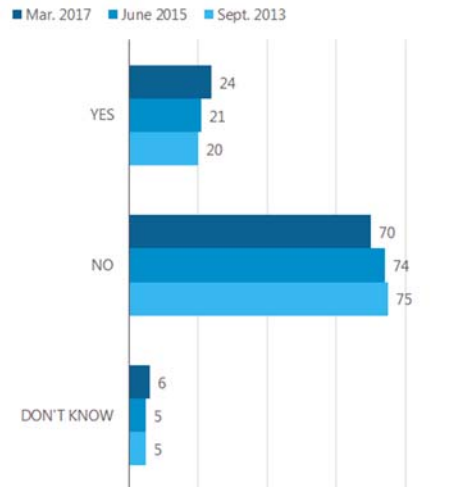
Base: All respondents (N=27,173)



**- Close to a quarter of respondents say they have benefited from a project funded by the European Regional Development Fund or the Cohesion Fund -**

Close to a quarter of respondents (24%) say they have benefited in their daily life from a project funded by the European Regional Development Fund or the Cohesion Fund. This result has increased by five percentage points since September 2013.

**Q3** Have you benefited in your daily life from a project funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) or the Cohesion Fund? (% - EU)



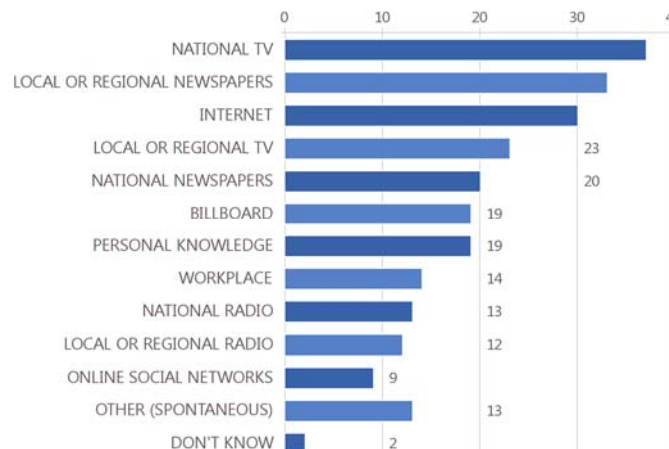
Base: Respondents who have heard of at least one of the two funds (N=13,480)

**3 Sources of information on EU regional policy**

**- TV remains the main source of information about EU co-financed projects -**

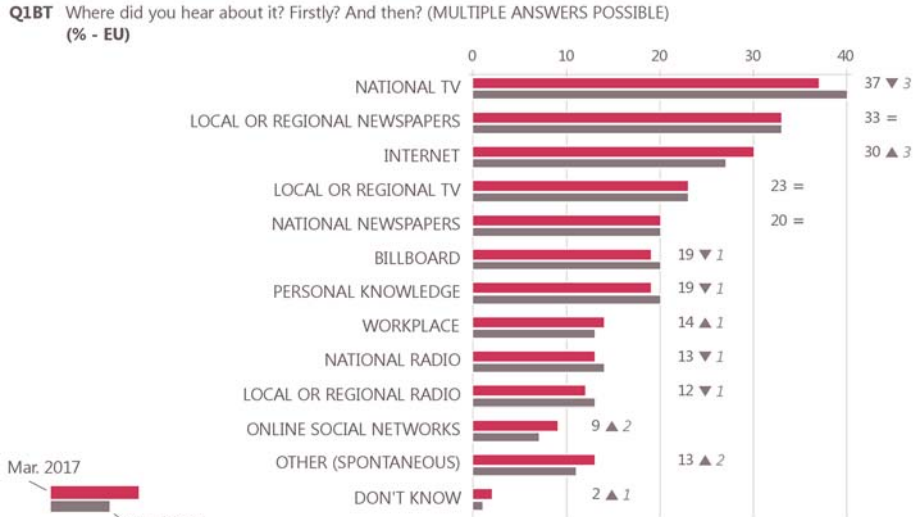
National TV remains the most common source of information about EU co-financed projects, mentioned by 18% of respondents as their first source and by 37% as one of their main sources of information.

**Q1BT** Where did you hear about it? Firstly? And then? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (% - EU)



Base: respondents who have heard of EU co-financed projects (N=9,470)

Compared with 2015, respondents are now slightly more likely to get their information from the Internet (30%, +3 percentage points), while they are less likely to hear this kind of information on national TV (37%, -3).



Base: respondents who have heard of EU co-financed projects (N=9,470)

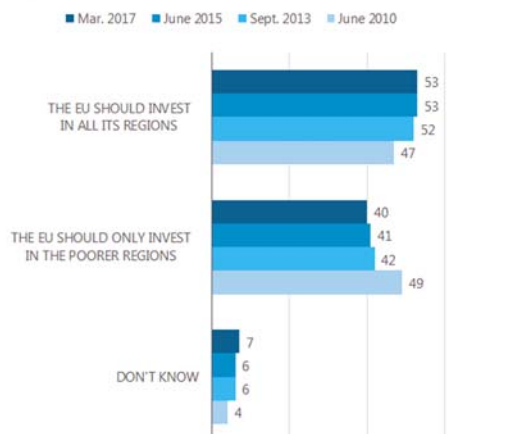
## II. PRIORITIES FOR EU REGIONAL POLICY

### 1 Priority regions for EU regional investment

**- A majority of respondents agree that the EU should continue to invest in all its regions**

A majority of respondents (53%) think that the EU should continue to invest in all regions. This result is stable compared to 2015.

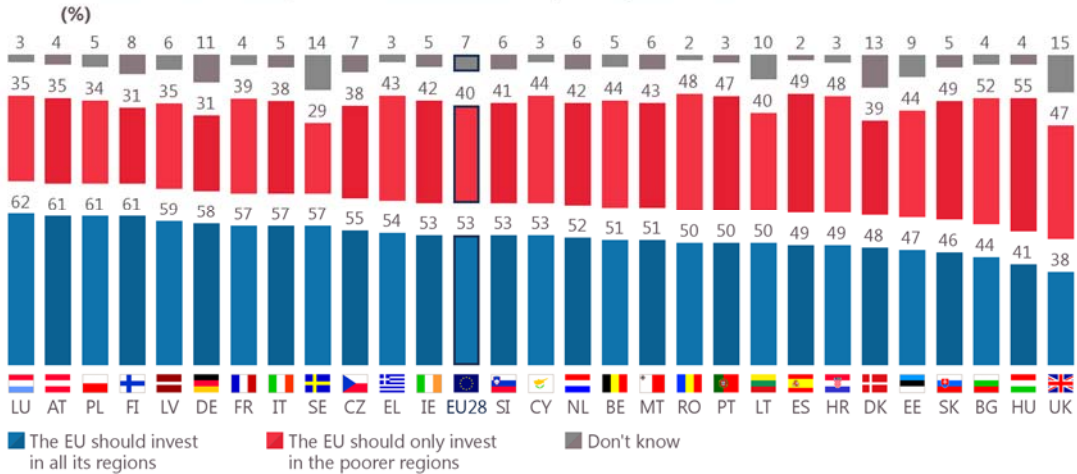
**Q4a** European regional policy supports economic development projects in all regions. In your opinion, should the EU continue to invest in all regions or concentrate exclusively on the poorer ones?  
(% - EU)



Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

There are some national differences on this question. A majority of respondents in 23 Member States say the EU should invest in all its regions, led by Luxembourg (62%), and Finland, Poland and Austria (all 61%). In three countries, a majority of respondents say that the EU should focus its investment in the poorer regions: in Hungary (55%), Bulgaria (52%) and Slovakia (49%).

**Q4a** European regional policy supports economic development projects in all regions. In your opinion, should the EU continue to invest in all regions or concentrate exclusively on the poorer ones?

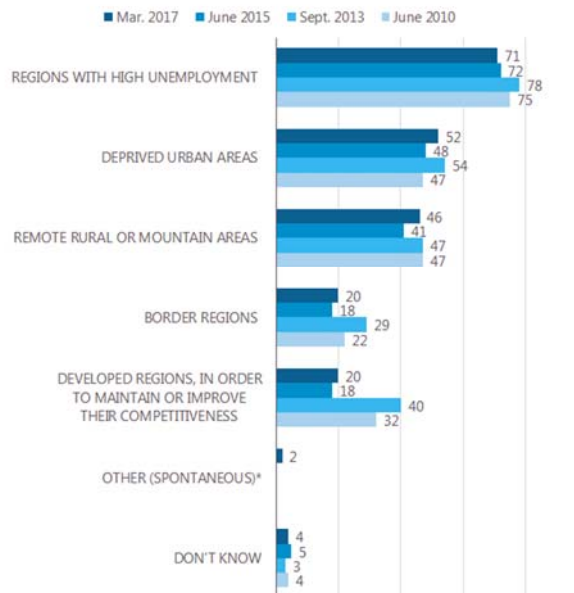


Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

**- Over seven in ten respondents would target regions with high unemployment for investment -**

Over seven in ten respondents (71%) say that priority should be given to regions with high unemployment, followed by deprived urban areas (52%, +4 pp) and rural or mountain areas (46%, +5 pp). A fifth of respondents would also target border regions (20%) and developed regions (20%). A fifth of respondents would also target border regions (20%) and developed regions (20%).

**Q4b** Which regions would you target for investments under EU regional policy? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (% - EU)



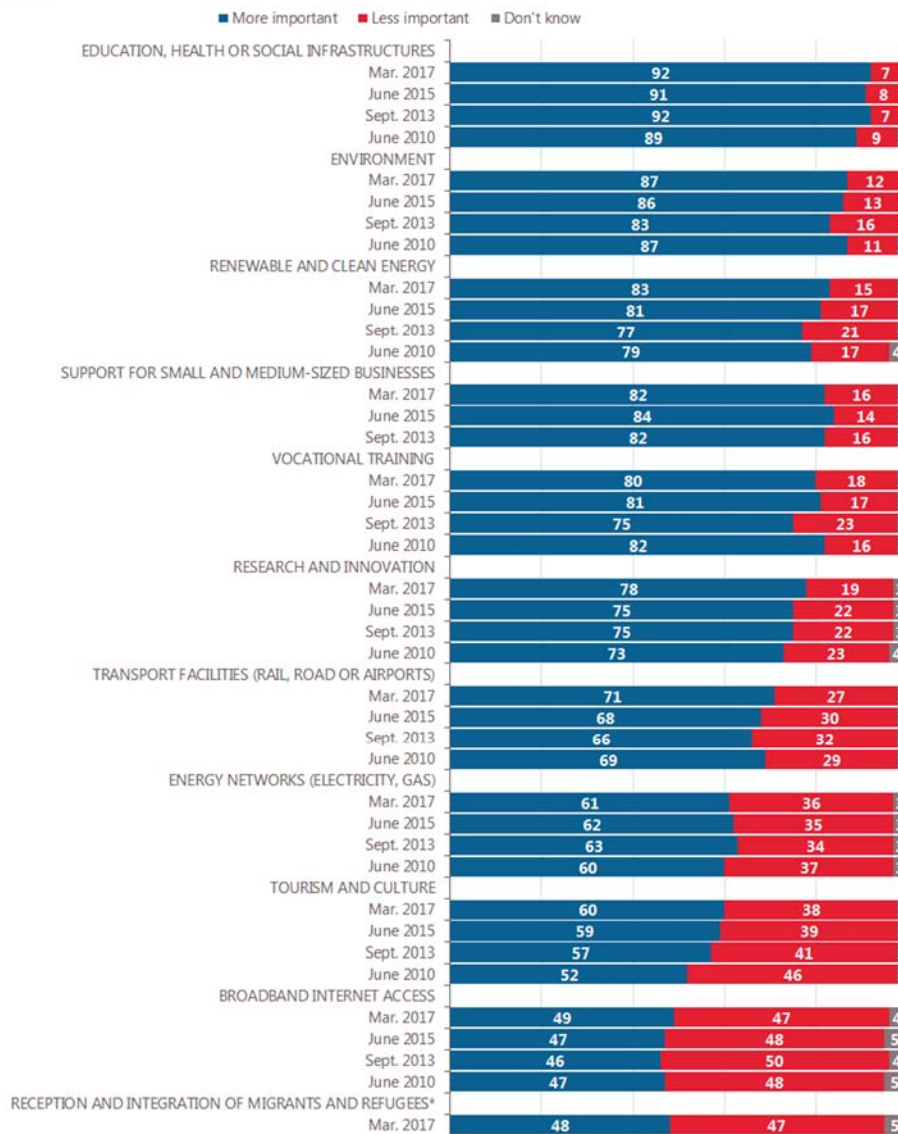
Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

## 2 Most important areas for EU regional policy investment

### - Over nine in ten respondents want investment in education, health or social infrastructure –

Education, health or social infrastructures are regarded as important areas for investment by over nine in ten (92%) respondents. In all EU Member States, at least eight in ten respondents support this domain and the highest proportions are found in Hungary (98%), Croatia (97%) and Latvia (96%).

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



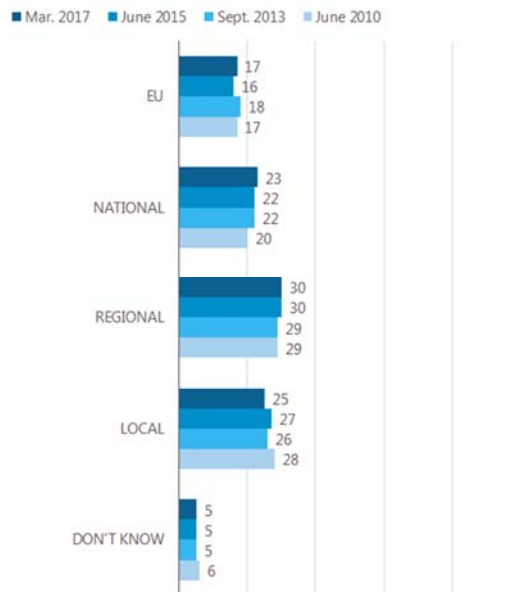
Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

### III. PRIMARY LEVEL OF GOVERNANCE

#### - Over half of respondents still think that decisions about EU-funded projects should be taken at the regional or local level –

A majority of respondents (55%) think that decisions should be taken at sub-national levels, with a third (30%) opting for the regional level and a quarter (25%) favouring the local level. These are very close to the equivalent figures from the surveys in 2015, 2013 and 2010. Four in ten (40%) respondents think that decisions should be taken at the national level or above, with over a fifth (23%) of respondents opting for the national level, and 17% suggesting that the EU should take decisions on projects funded by its own regional policy.

Q6 At which level should decisions about EU regional policy projects primarily be taken? (% - EU)



Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

#### IV. CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

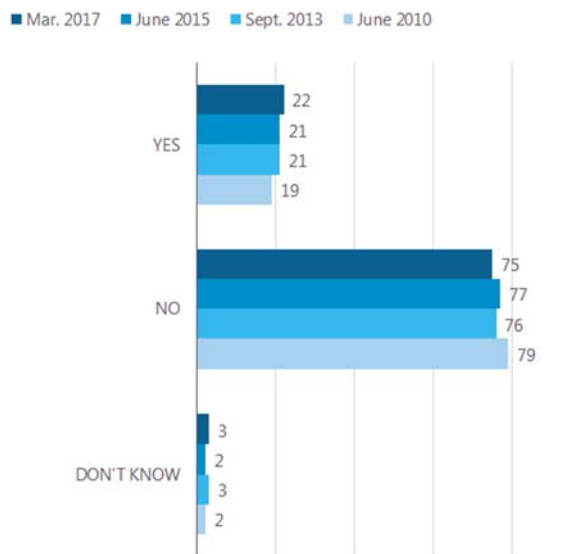
### 1 Awareness of and support for EU regional funding for cross-border cooperation

**- Just over a fifth of respondents are aware that EU regional funding fosters cross-border cooperation –**

Just over a fifth of respondents (22%) are aware of cooperation between regions in different countries because of EU regional funding.

Results are very similar to those recorded previously, although the proportion of respondents who are aware of such cooperation has been steadily increasing since June 2010.

**Q7** Are you aware of cooperation between regions from different countries because of EU regional funding?  
(% - EU)

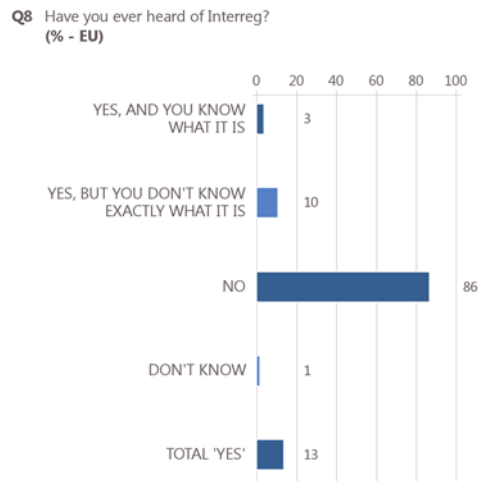


Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

## 2 Awareness of EU strategies to promote cooperation

### - Around one in ten respondents have heard of Interreg –

Over one in ten respondents have heard of Interreg (13%). Respondents in Greece (22%), Poland (21%) and Romania (17%) are the most likely to have heard of Interreg without knowing what it is, while close to a tenth of respondents in Luxembourg who have heard of Interreg are the most likely to also know what it is (7%).

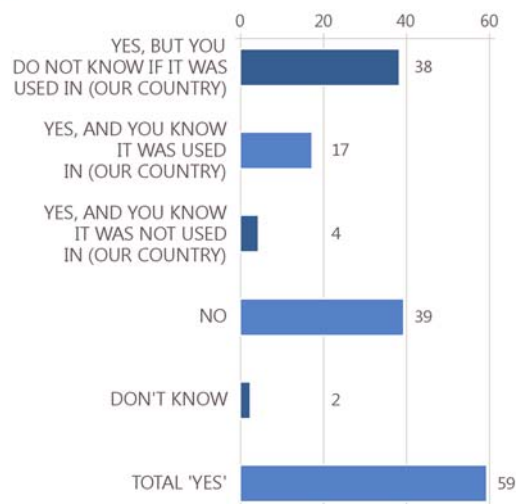


Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

### - More than half the respondents know there is a European Solidarity Fund to respond to natural disasters –

Nearly six in ten respondents (59%) are aware that there is a European Solidarity Fund to respond to natural disasters, and this is the case for a majority of respondents in 23 Member States.

Q9 Are you aware that there is a European Solidarity Fund to respond to natural disasters?  
(% - EU)

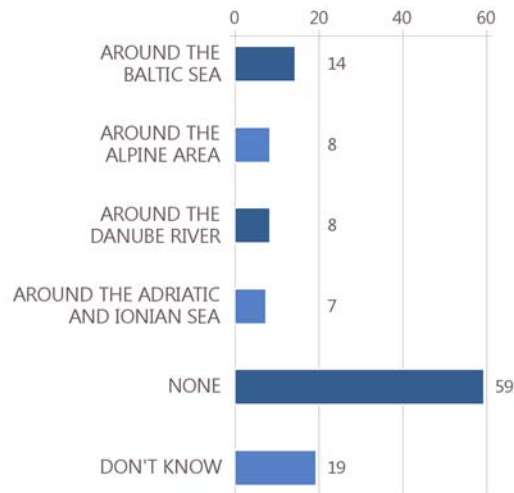


Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

**- Close to one in six respondents have heard of the EU strategy to promote cooperation between countries around the Baltic Sea –**

More than a tenth of respondents (14%) are aware of a strategy to promote cooperation between countries around the Baltic Sea. Fewer are aware of similar initiatives around the Danube River (8%), the Alpine area (8%) and the Adriatic and Ionian Sea (7%).

**Q10** Are you aware that there is an EU strategy to promote cooperation between countries in the following areas? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)  
(% - EU)



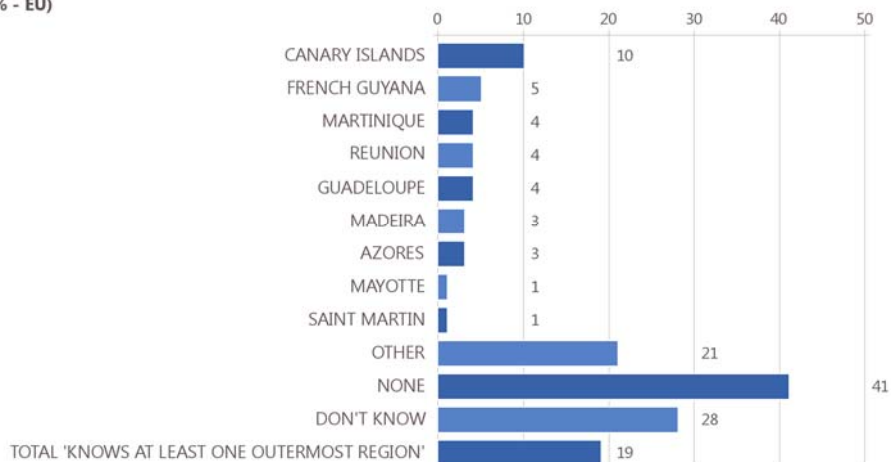
Base: All respondents (N=27,173)

**V. KNOWLEDGE OF EU OUTERMOST REGIONS**

**- Almost one in five respondents can name at least one EU outermost region –**

Close to one in five respondents (19%) can name at least one of the nine outermost EU regions. The only region mentioned by as many as one in ten respondents is the Canary Islands (10%).

**Q11** There are 9 EU outermost regions which are territories or islands located far away from the European continent. Can you name one or more of them? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)  
(% - EU)



Open ended question, spontaneous answers

Base: All respondents (N=27,173)