

FLASH EUROBAROMETER 554
**Perceived independence
of the national justice
systems among the
general public in the EU
and in selected
enlargement countries**

EUROBAROMETER SUMMARY
JANUARY 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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**Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public
in the EU and in selected enlargement countries**

Table of contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Perceived independence of courts and judges among the general public.....	2
2. Main reasons among the general public for the perceived independence of the national justice systems.....	4
2.1. Positive assessments.....	4
2.2. Negative assessments.....	7
3. Communication with courts: preferred means.....	10

Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

Introduction

This Flash Eurobarometer survey explores EU citizens' perceptions about the independence of the judiciary. The survey was commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers and follows previous surveys on this topic conducted yearly since 2016. The results of these surveys feed into the EU Justice Scoreboard, which provides data on the efficiency, quality and independence of national justice systems.

For this Flash Eurobarometer, a representative sample of citizens, aged 15 and over were interviewed. The geographic scope are the 27 EU Member States, and selected enlargement countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, which have been included in the annual Rule of Law Report. Between 13 January and 2 February 2025, 25 772 interviews were conducted over the telephone (landline and mobile phones) by Ipsos European Public Affairs.

Notes

- Survey results are subject to sampling tolerances meaning that not all apparent differences between countries and socio-demographic groups may be statistically significant. Only differences that are statistically significant (at the 5% confidence level) are highlighted in the text.
- The report looks at the most recent year-on-year changes at EU27 and 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.
- Survey data are weighted to marginal population distributions for age by gender, employment status and geographic region, using post-stratification weighting. The EU27 averages are weighted according to the size of the 15+ population of each country.
- 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
ME  Montenegro	MK  North Macedonia	AL  Albania
RS  Serbia		

* 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.

Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

1. Perceived independence of courts and judges among the general public

A majority of EU citizens rate the justice system in their country – in terms of the independence of courts and judges – as **good**: 13% say it is ‘very good’ and 41% that it is ‘fairly good’. Over one in three say the independence of courts and judges is bad in their country, with 23% saying it is ‘fairly bad’ and 13% that it is ‘very bad’. Finally, 10% of respondents ‘do not know’ how they would rate the independence of the justice system in their country.

Individual country results

In 16 EU Member States, a majority of respondents rate their national justice system in terms of the independence of courts and judges as **‘very good’ or ‘fairly good’**, with respondents in Finland (89%), Austria (87%) and Denmark (81%) being the most likely to say this. In contrast, 24% of respondents in Poland and

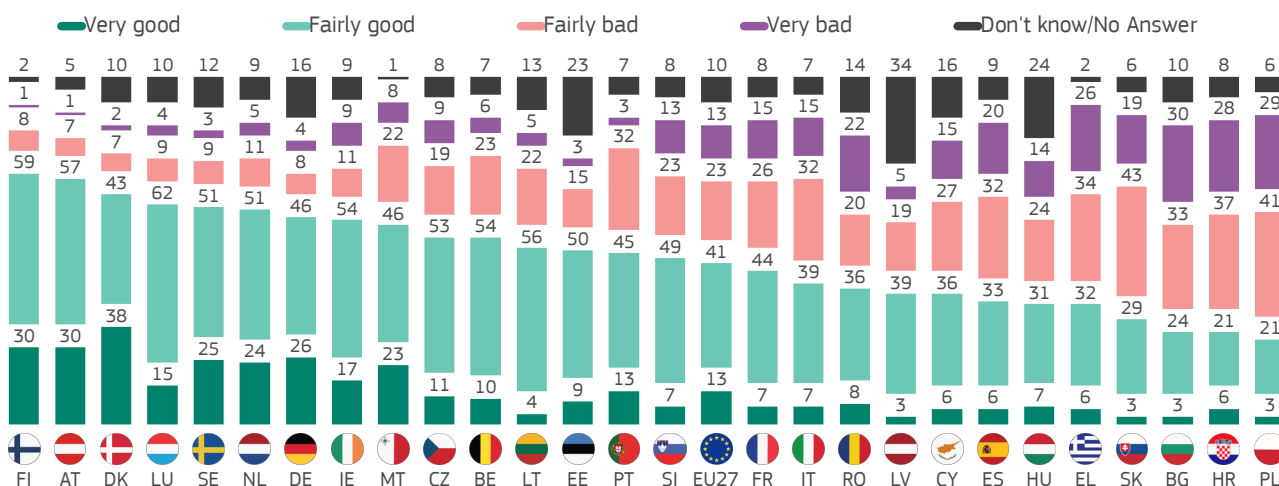
27% in both Bulgaria and Croatia rate the independence of their courts and judges as good.

Additionally, respondents in Denmark (38%) are more likely than those in other countries to rate the independence of courts and judges in their country as **‘very good’**; they are followed by respondents in Austria and Finland (both 30%).

Trend compared to 2024

Compared to 2024, the opinion about the independence of courts and judges has become significantly less positive (i.e. there is a decrease in the total proportion of ‘good’ responses) in Romania (-9 pp), Cyprus and Estonia (both -7 pp). On the other hand, in Slovenia (+11 pp), Italy (+10 pp), Czechia (+9 pp), Finland (+6 pp), as well as Austria, the Netherlands and Portugal (all +5 pp), respondents are now more likely than in 2024 to rate the independence of courts and judges as good.

Q1 From what you know, how would you rate the justice system in (THIS COUNTRY) in terms of the independence of courts and judges? Would you say it is very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad?



(%) Base: n=25 772 – All respondents

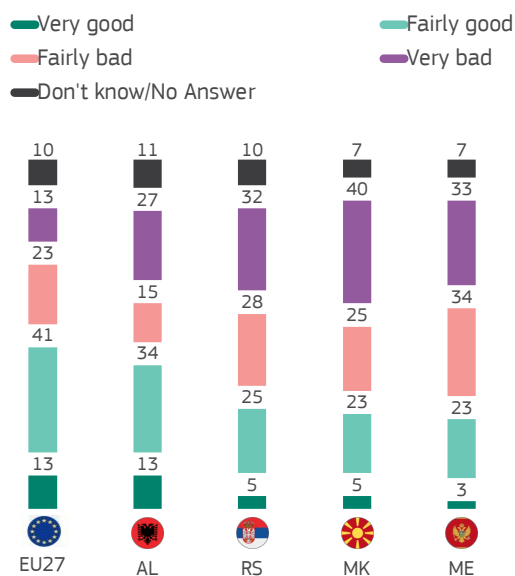
Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

Selected enlargement countries

Across the four enlargement countries surveyed, the share of respondents rating their national justice system in terms of the independence of courts and judges as **'very good' or 'fairly good'** is lower than the EU average. In **Albania**, 47% of respondents rate the independence of

courts and judges in their country as good. This share is 30% in **Serbia** and 28% in **North Macedonia**. Finally, in Montenegro, 26% of respondents rate the independence of courts and judges in their country as good (-10 pp compared to January 2024).

Q1 From what you know, how would you rate the justice system in (THIS COUNTRY) in terms of the independence of courts and judges? Would you say it is very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad?



(%) Base: n=25 772 (EU27) & n=3 539 (ME+MK+AL+RS) – All respondents

Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

2. Main reasons among the general public for the perceived independence of the national justice systems

2.1. Positive assessments

Respondents who rated the justice system in their country – in terms of the independence of courts and judges – as ‘fairly good’ or ‘very good’ were asked to what extent the status of judges, a lack of interference or pressure from government or politicians or from economic or other specific interests explain their rating.

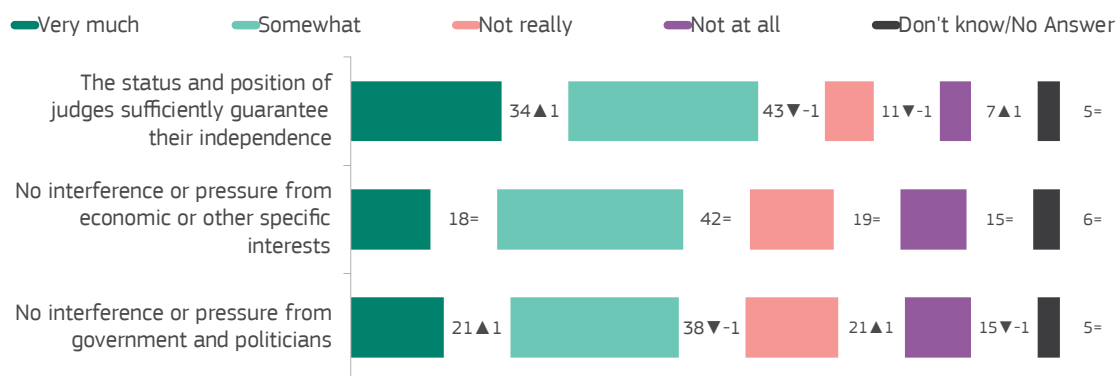
More than three-quarters of respondents who rate the justice system in their country as good say that their positive rating of the justice system's independence is explained by the fact that **the status and position of judges sufficiently guarantee their independence**, with 34% saying this reason ‘very much’ explains their rating and 43% that it ‘somewhat’ explains their rating.

Six in ten respondents say that **no interference or pressure from economic or other specific interests** explains their positive rating, with 18% saying this ‘very much’ explains their rating and 42% that this ‘somewhat’ does.

A similar proportion say **no interference or pressure from government and politicians** explains their positive rating, with 21% saying this ‘very much’ explains their rating and 38% that it ‘somewhat’ does.

Compared to January 2024, these results have remained about the same.

Q2b Could you tell me to what extent each of the following reasons explains your rating of the independence of the justice system in (THIS COUNTRY)?



(%, EU27) Base: n=14 373 – Respondents rating the independence of justice in their national justice system as very or fairly good
 ▼▲ Evolution 2025-2024 (comparison with Flash Eurobarometer 540, February 2024)

Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

Status and position of judges

In 24 EU Member States, at least 70% of respondents who rate the justice system in their country as good say that the status and position of judges sufficiently guaranteeing their independence is a reason for their positive rating of the independence of the justice system in their country. Respondents in Estonia and Finland (both 84%) are the most likely to say this. Respondents in Portugal (61%) are the least likely to say this reason explains their rating.

Three-quarters of respondents in Serbia (75%) indicate that the status and position of judges influences their positive rating of the justice system's independence. This share is lower in Albania (68%) and North Macedonia (67%) and is overall the lowest in Montenegro (52%).

Economic interests

In all EU Member States, at least half of respondents who rate the justice system in their country as good say that no interference or pressure from economic or other specific interests is a reason they rate the justice system's independence in their country positively. The highest proportion sharing this view is observed in the Netherlands (74%), followed by Cyprus (72%) and Luxembourg (71%), while the lowest ones are found in Bulgaria and Malta (both 50%).

Across the four enlargement countries, a majority of respondents state that no interference or pressure from economic or other specific interests explains their positive rating of the level of independence of courts and judges in their country. The highest proportion of respondents sharing this view is seen in Montenegro (65%) and the lowest in Albania (52%).

Political pressure

In all EU Member States, at least half of respondents who rate the justice system in their country as good say no interference or pressure from government and politicians is a reason for their positive rating of the level of independence of the justice system in their country. The proportion sharing this view ranges from 50% in Bulgaria and Romania to 71% in Austria and Finland.

Six in ten (60%) respondents in North Macedonia, 58% in Montenegro, 52% in Serbia and 50% in Albania, who rate the justice system in their country as good, reply that no interference or pressure from government and politicians explains their positive rating of the independence of the justice system in their country.

Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

Analysis based on all respondents

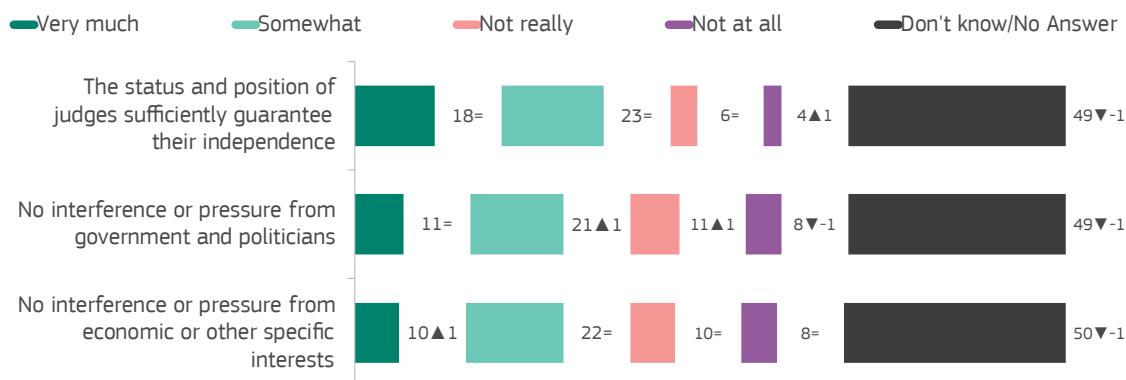
The chart below shows the results when analysing all respondents' answers to the question asking to which extent the status of judges, no interference or pressure from government or politicians, or from economic or special interests explained their positive rating of the independence of the justice system in their country.

Overall, 41% of respondents say that the **status and position of judges sufficiently guaranteeing their independence** explains

why they rate the independence of their justice system in their country as good. About one in three respondents (32%) say that **no interference or pressure from economic or other specific interests** explains why they think the independence of their justice system is good; the same proportion (32%) say this about **no interference or pressure from government and politicians**.

These findings are comparable to those observed in January 2024.

Could you tell me to what extent each of the following reasons explains your rating of the independence of the justice system in (THIS COUNTRY)?



(%, EU27) Base: n=25 772 – All respondents

▼▲ Evolution 2025-2024 (comparison with Flash Eurobarometer 540, February 2024)

Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

2.2. Negative assessments

Respondents who rated the level of independence of their national justice system as 'fairly bad' or 'very bad' were asked to what extent their rating could be explained by the following reasons: the lack of guarantees provided by the status and position of judges, interference or pressure from government or politicians, or interference or pressure from economic or special interests.

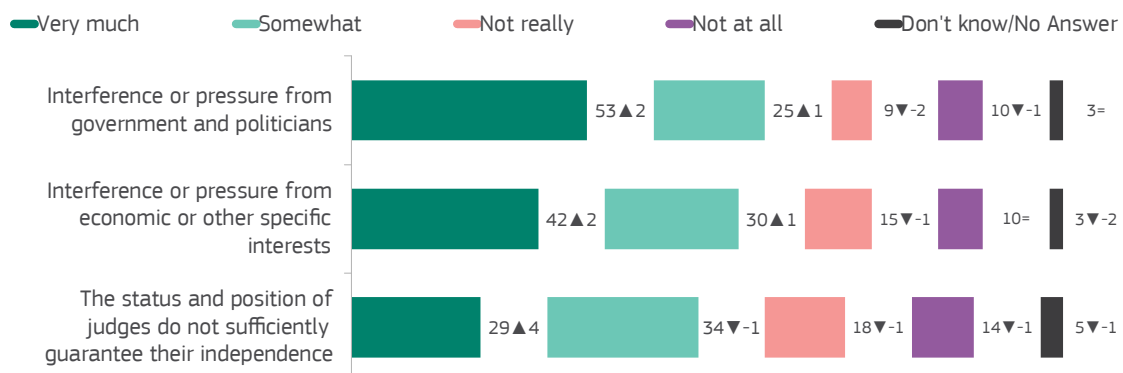
More than three-quarters of respondents who rate the justice system in their country as bad say **interference or pressure from government and politicians** explains why they rate the independence of the justice system in their country as bad: 53% say this 'very much' explains their negative rating and 25% that this 'somewhat' explains their rating.

About seven in ten respondents say that **interference or pressure from economic or other specific interests** explains their negative rating, with 42% saying this 'very much' explains it and 30% that this only 'somewhat' applies.

More than six in ten say the fact that the **status and position of judges do not sufficiently guarantee their independence** is a reason for their poor rating of their national justice system, with 29% saying this 'very much' explains their rating and 34% that this 'somewhat' explains it.

Compared with January 2024, respondents are now somewhat more likely to say that the status and position of judges not sufficiently guaranteeing their independence explains why they rate the independence of the justice system in their country as bad (+4 pp).

Q2a Could you tell me to what extent each of the following reasons explains your rating of the independence of the justice system in (THIS COUNTRY)?



(%, EU27) Base: n=8 783 – Respondents rating the independence of justice in their national justice system as very or fairly bad
▼▲ Evolution 2025-2024 (comparison with Flash Eurobarometer 540, February 2024)

Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

Status and position of judges

In all EU Member States, about half of respondents or more who rate the independence of courts and judges as bad, say that the status and position of judges not sufficiently guaranteeing their independence is a reason for their negative rating of the justice system's independence in their country. Respondents in Poland (76%), Greece, Portugal and Slovakia (all 74%) and in Cyprus (73%) are the most likely to say this, while those in Romania (49%) are the least likely to say so.

In Serbia (66%), Montenegro (64%) and Albania (61%), at least six in ten respondents with a negative perception of the independence of courts and judges say that this is explained by the status and position of judges not sufficiently guaranteeing their independence. By comparison, this view is shared by 57% of respondents in North Macedonia.

Economic interests

In all EU Member States, a majority of respondents who rate the justice system in their country as bad say that interference or pressure from economic or other specific interests explains their bad rating of the level of independence of courts and judges in their country. The proportion of respondents sharing

this view ranges from 56% in Malta and Sweden to 93% in Cyprus.

Similarly, more than eight in ten respondents across the four enlargement countries (between 84% and 88%) say that their negative assessment of the independence of the justice system in their country is explained by interference or pressure from economic or other specific interests.

Political pressure

In all EU Member States, at least half of respondents with a negative perception of the independence of courts and judges in their country indicate interference or pressure from government and politicians as a reason for this perception. Respondents in Poland (94%), Cyprus (91%), as well as Croatia and Greece (both 89%) are the most likely to say this, while those in Sweden are the least likely (56%).

In each of the four enlargement countries, a vast majority of respondents with a negative perception of the independence of courts and judges in their country attribute this to interference or pressure from government and politicians, ranging from 78% in Albania to 89% in Montenegro.

Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

Analysis based on all respondents

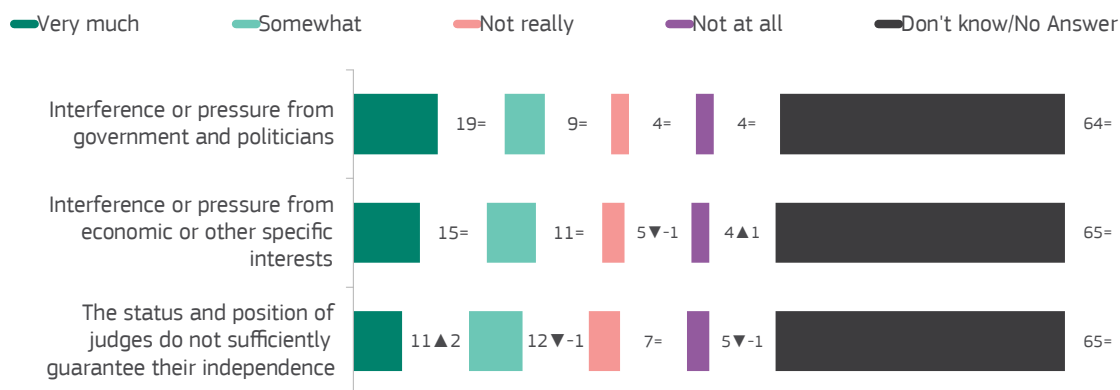
The chart below shows the results when analysing all respondents' answers to the question asking to which extent the status of judges, interference or pressure from government or politicians, or from economic or special interests explains their negative rating of the independence of the national justice system.

More than a quarter (28%) of respondents say **interference or pressure from government and politicians** explains why they rate the level of independence of courts and judges in their

country as bad, while 26% say this about **interference or pressure from economic or other specific interests**. Somewhat more than one in five respondents (23%) say the fact that the **status and position of judges do not sufficiently guarantee their independence** explains why they rate the level of independence of courts and judges in their country as bad.

These results have remained stable compared to **January 2024**.

Q2a Could you tell me to what extent each of the following reasons explains your rating of the independence of the justice system in (THIS COUNTRY)?



(%, EU27) Base: n=25 772 – All respondents

▼ ▲ Evolution 2025-2024 (comparison with Flash Eurobarometer 540, February 2024)

Perceived independence of the national justice systems among the general public in the EU and in selected enlargement countries

3. Communication with courts: preferred means

When communicating with courts in the context of judicial proceedings, **47% of respondents would prefer to communicate through electronic means, while 44% would prefer to communicate using paper.** A small share (7%) have no preference (either is fine) and 2% say they 'don't know'.

Individual country results

In ten EU Member States, more than half of respondents report that, if they were to communicate with courts, they would prefer to communicate electronically (from 51% in Lithuania to 70% in Denmark).

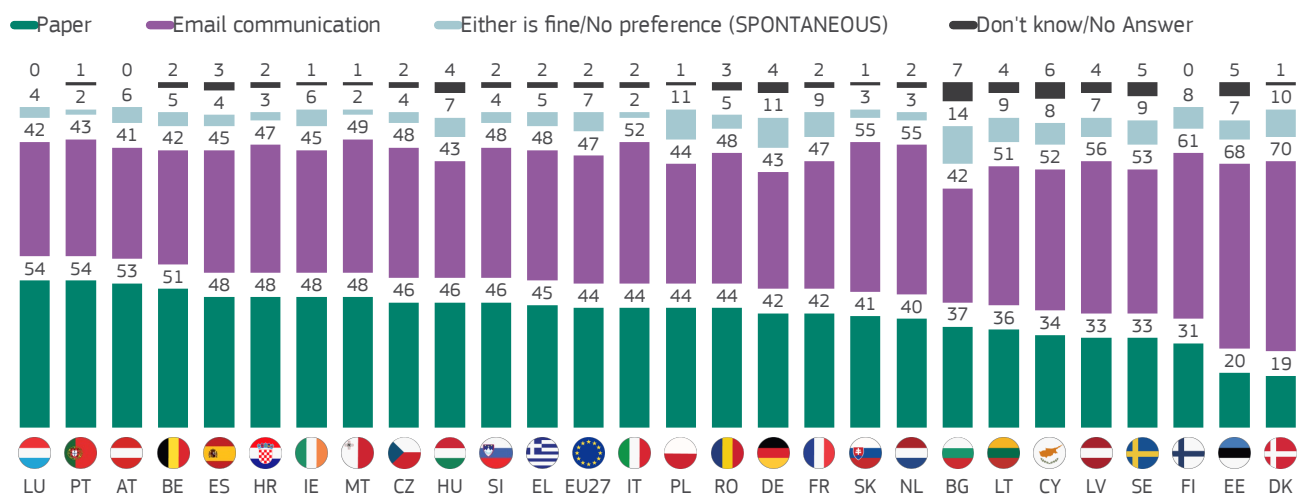
The largest shares of respondents saying that, if they were to communicate with courts in the

context of judicial proceedings, they would prefer using paper communication are seen in Luxembourg and Portugal (both 54%), Austria (53%) and Belgium (51%).

Selected enlargement countries

Over half of respondents in Montenegro and Serbia (both 55%), followed by those in North Macedonia (52%), say they would prefer to communicate with courts using paper. By contrast, in Albania, about equal shares would prefer to communicate with courts using paper (41%) or electronically (43%). In the other three enlargement countries, the share with a preference for electronic communication varies between 32% and 35%.

Q3 When communicating with courts in the context of judicial proceedings, would you prefer to use paper or electronic means of communication?



(%) Base: n=25 772 – All respondents

