



Special Eurobarometer



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Commission

The citizens of the European Union and Sport

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Summary

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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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PRESENTATION

The **DG EAC Sport Unit** wished to renew the poll it had commissioned in 2003, related **to the practice and the image of sport within the European Union**. Indeed, 2004 has been a year rich in prestigious sports events such as the European Football Championship, commonly called Euro 2004, organised in Portugal and the Athens Olympic Games. This poll also took place while the European year of education through sport 2004 came to an end. This initiative of the European Union aims to promote the educational and social values of sports in the European Union.

Compared to the study which was conducted by The European Opinion Research Group in 2003, the geographical coverage of this new study has been, by definition, enlarged to the 10 new member States. The questionnaire used for this second wave has been slightly modified. It is nevertheless possible for a majority of the questions to compare the results obtained in 2003 and in 2004. **Interviews were conducted between October 2nd and November 8th 2004.**

The methodology used is that of the Standard Eurobarometer polls from the General Direction Press and Communication (Unit "Opinion polls, press reviews, Europe Direct"). A technical note related to the conducting of the interviews by the institutes of the TNS Opinion & Social network is enclosed to this report. This note details the interview techniques, along with the confidence limits.

The report aims to present the main results obtained during this poll. It analyses overall results country by country and by relevant socio-demographic characteristics. It puts into perspective the results by focusing more specifically on the trends observed in the barometric questions.

This report on citizens of the European Union and sport is divided into four parts:

- The first part concerns European citizens' practice of sports activities: the frequency, the organization and the obstacles to this practice.
- The second part deals with the benefits of sport.
- The third part covers its social dimension, namely the values and negative aspects associated to sport, the place of sport in school programs and furthermore the professionalization of sport.
- Finally, the last part concentrates on the actions and the role of the European Union within the domain of sports.

1. The practice of sport in the European Union

1.1. Frequency of sports practice

In 2004, 38% of citizens throughout the 25 member States of the Union declare that they do sport at least once a week. The development compared to 2003 is positive: one year ago, the practice of sport at least once a week in the European Union of 15 member States reached only 3 citizens out of 10.

Scandinavians remain in 2004 the most sporting citizens of the European Union.

Among the new member States we can observe a rather high number of sportsmen, above the European average, in Malta, Cyprus and Slovenia.

However, this proportion tends to be significantly lower in some southern countries, such as Portugal and several new member States such as Hungary.

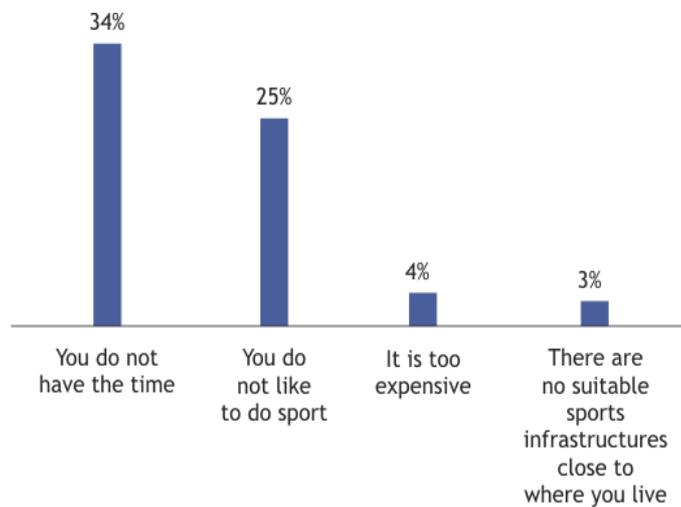
In most of the member States of the European Union, the frequency of sports activity has progressed in 2004. The analysis of results by socio-demographic characteristics shows us that the trends remain the same compared to last year, namely concerning a more active practice of sport among men as well as among the youngest populations.

1.2. Reasons that prevent the practice of sport

One third of the European Unions' citizens (34%) never practice sport due to the lack of time. The fact of not liking sport presents an obstacle difficult to overcome for one European citizen out of four (25%).

However, neither the fee nor the lack of adapted infrastructures seem to be significant obstacles for respondents throughout all the countries of the European Union: respectively, only 4% and 3% of respondents declare these as a major reason for their lack of sports practice.

The analysis of the results by socio-demographic variables shows us that, logically, the lack of time is more often mentioned by the most active categories in society.



Q49. You do not practice a sports activity mainly because...?
Answers based on EU25 (2004)

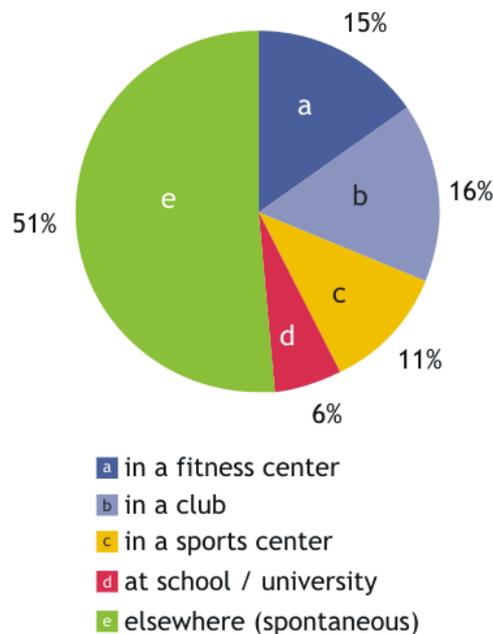
1.3. The organisation of sporting activities: where do people do sport?

When citizens of the European Union are asked where they most often practice their usual sport, a majority of respondents (51%) spontaneously cite a place different from those suggested during the interview.

Of the places which were proposed, a fitness centre (15%) and a club (16%) rank highest.

Q50. Where do you exercise/play sport that you do most often?

Answers based on EU25 (2004)



The tendency to mainly exercise outside of regular sport facilities is reinforced in the enlarged European Union.

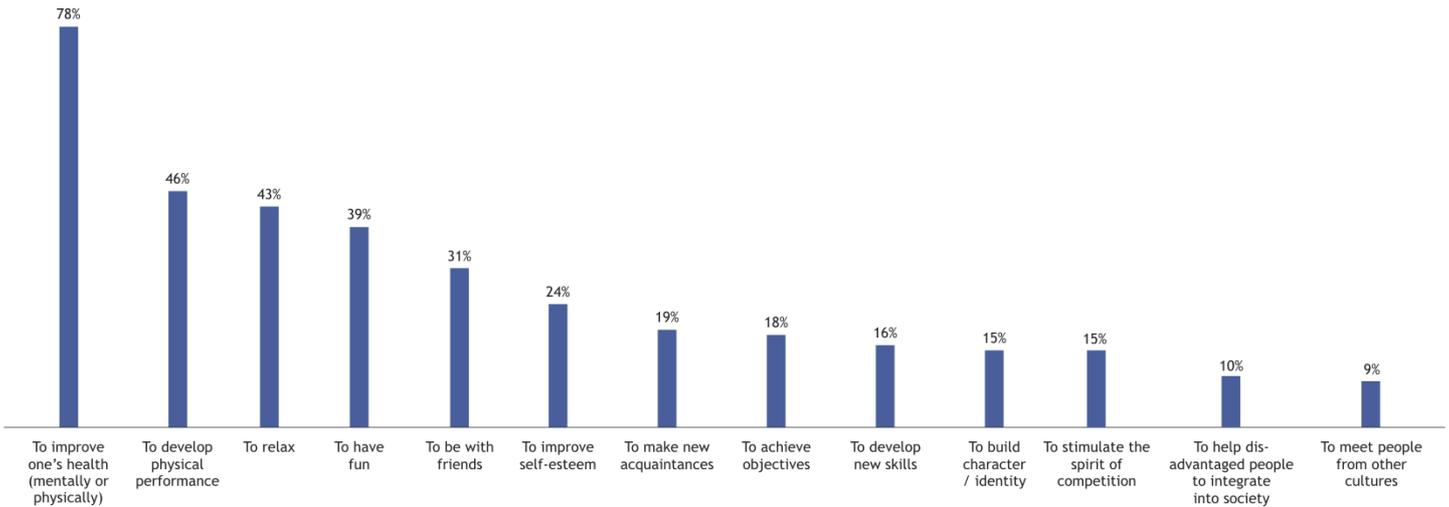
The socio-demographic characteristics mainly reveal differences in terms of the age categories.

In fact, the analysis of results by exercise frequency reveals that persons who show a more marked discipline for playing sports have a greater tendency to do sport in a structured way.

2. The benefits of sport

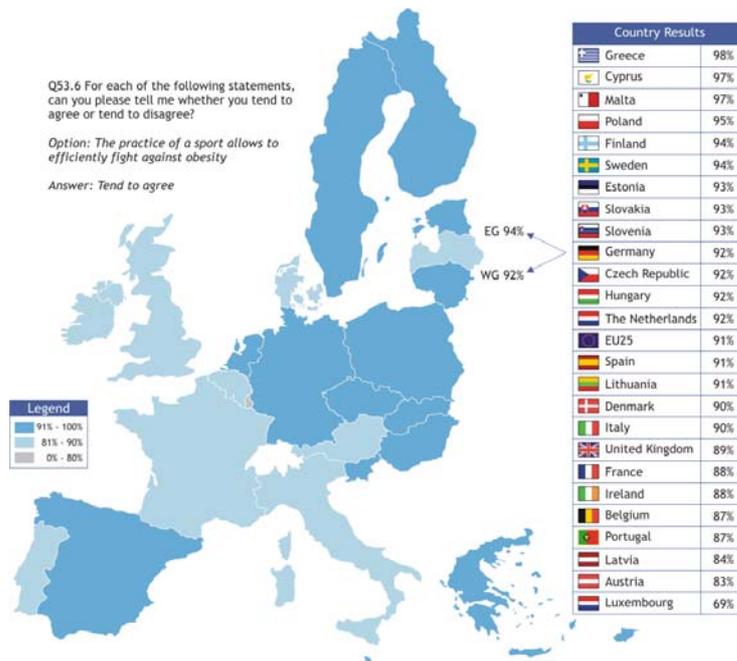
A strong majority of citizens in the European Union cite the improvement of health as being the principal benefit of sport (78%). This perception remains stable compared to last year. The development of physical performance (46%), relaxation (43%), having fun (39%), and less importantly, the fact of being with friends (31%) are among the most frequently cited benefits.

Sport, as a means of improving ones health, is unanimously recognised within the European Union of 25.



Q51. In your opinion, what are the main benefits of sport?
Answers based on EU25 (2004)

Still on the perception of sport as a means of improving ones health, 9 out of 10 citizens share the opinion that a sporting activity is an effective instrument for fighting against obesity.

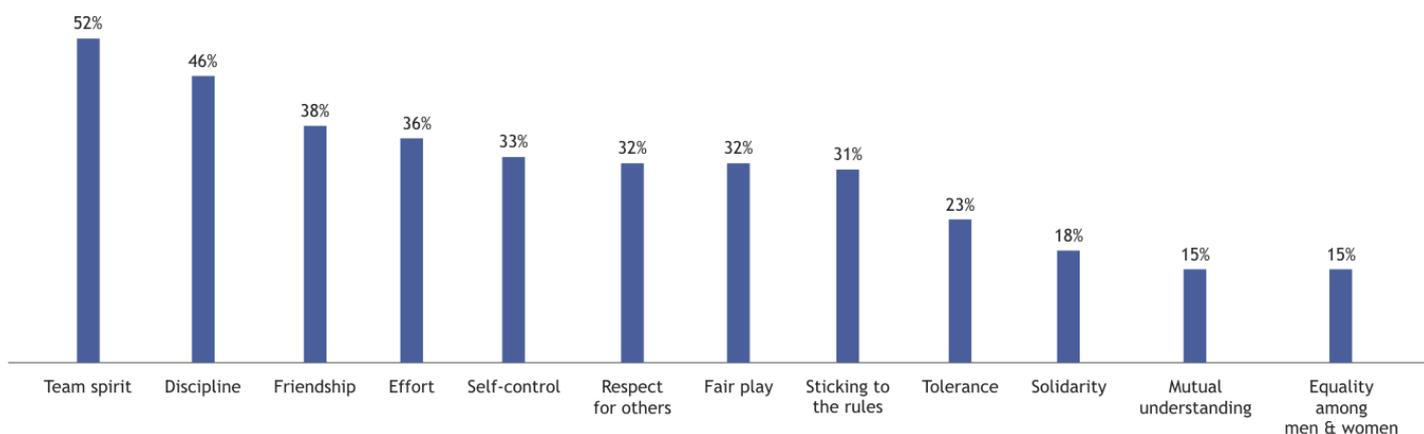


3. The social dimension of sport

3.1. Values developed through the practice of sport

Team spirit (52%) ranking highest, followed by discipline (46%) are the values which sport most promotes, according to European Union citizens.

Looking at the evolution of results since last year, we notice however, a slight loss in importance given to the "team spirit" dimension.



Q52. In your opinion, which of the following values does sport promote the most?
Answers based on EU25 (2004)

In fact, of the 10 States which have just joined the European Union in May last, only Cyprus cites team spirit as being the most important value promoted by the practice of sport. For the others, discipline is the value which is given most credit.

Q52 In your opinion, which of the following values does sport promote the most?											
	EU25	CY	CZ	EE	HU	LV	LT	MT	PL	SK	SI
Team spirit	52%	61%	29%	42%	51%	38%	38%	44%	29%	33%	45%
Tolerance	23%	21%	21%	20%	20%	24%	22%	34%	21%	19%	28%
Respect for others	32%	45%	21%	27%	26%	26%	27%	43%	24%	17%	35%
Fair play	32%	56%	40%	28%	20%	26%	25%	40%	34%	40%	48%
Self-control	33%	53%	31%	52%	38%	39%	44%	36%	22%	29%	36%
Sticking to the rules	31%	29%	37%	24%	33%	22%	31%	32%	25%	35%	36%
Discipline	46%	44%	47%	54%	57%	57%	50%	71%	52%	51%	60%
Mutual understanding	15%	19%	17%	18%	12%	23%	23%	22%	13%	16%	32%
Solidarity	18%	21%	15%	16%	9%	18%	18%	31%	15%	10%	31%
Friendship	38%	34%	46%	26%	34%	30%	40%	46%	26%	43%	57%
Equality among men & women	15%	25%	16%	12%	9%	13%	16%	23%	14%	14%	31%
Effort	36%	41%	37%	47%	26%	33%	27%	32%	38%	33%	54%
Other (SPONTANEOUS)	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	3%
None of these (SPONTANEOUS)	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	1%
DK / NA	3%	2%	1%	4%	5%	6%	7%	3%	3%	1%	2%

We noticed that persons who exercise at least once a week are more aware of the contribution of sport to the development of values.

3.2. Sport as a vector of integration and equality.

3.2.1. Integration through sport

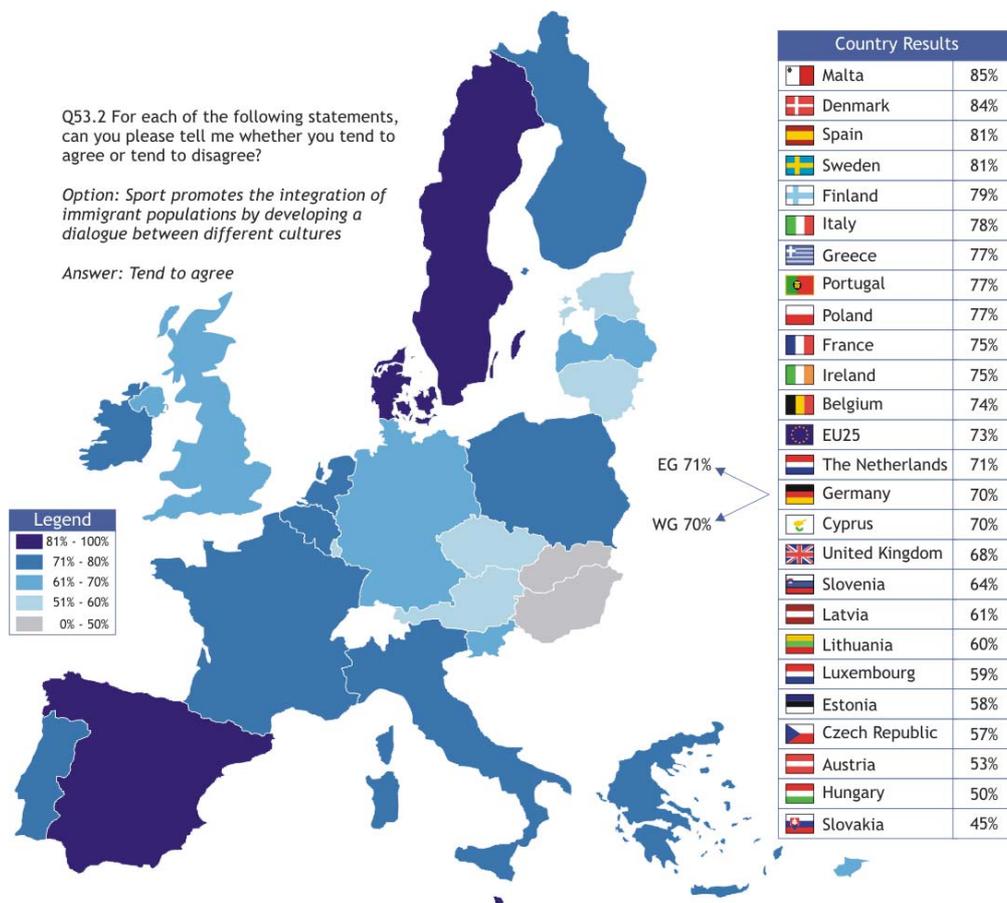
Close to three in four European Union citizens (73%) view sport as a means of promoting the integration of immigrant populations.

Although this is the view of a majority in the 25 countries surveyed, this proportion seems lower in **several central European countries**.

Agreement levels with this dimension are higher:

- as the respondent's level of education rises;
- the more often the respondent is inclined to exercise.

At the same time, the data seem to indicate the absence of a real ideological split on this point.



3.2.2. Equality through sport

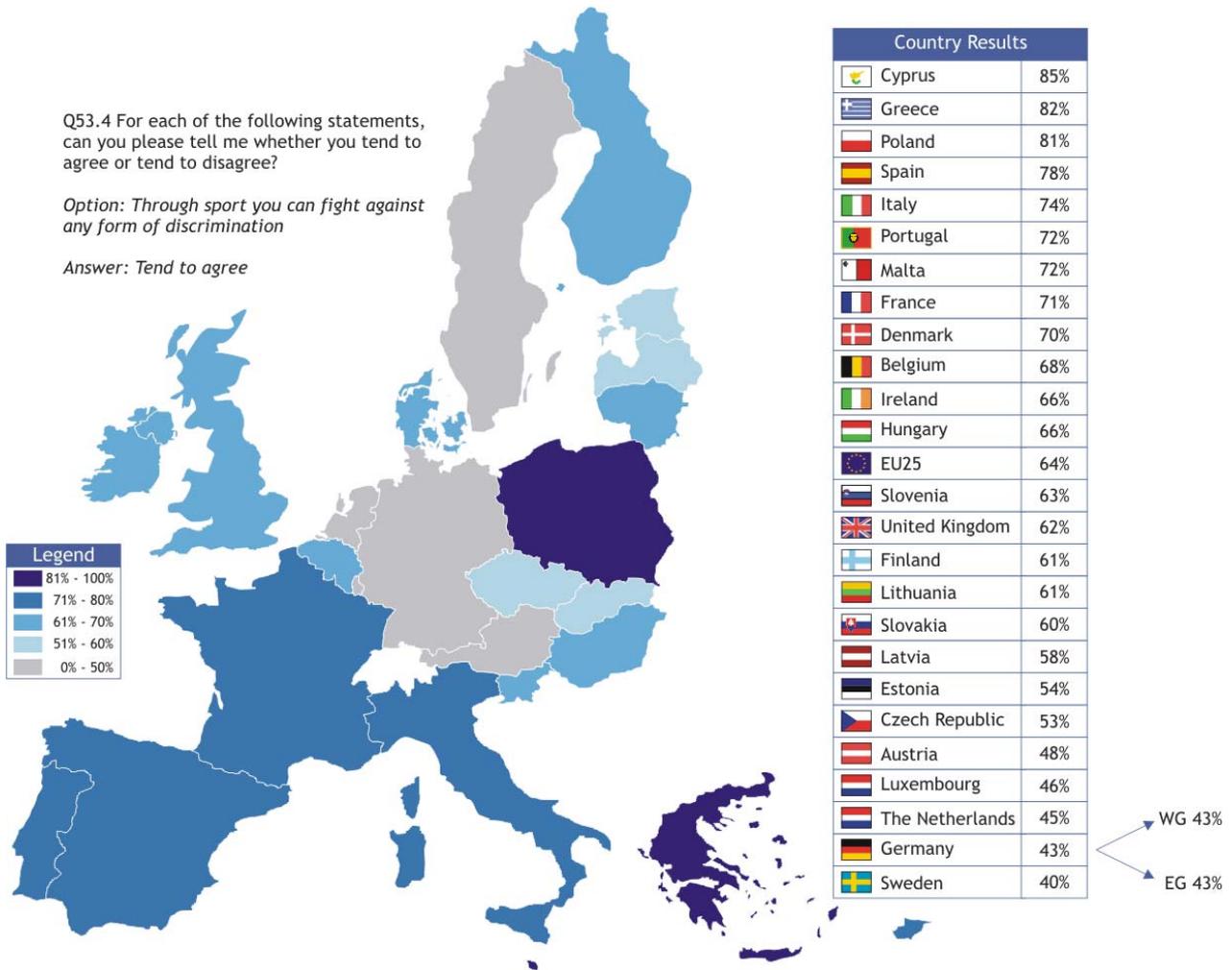
In promoting the integration of immigrant populations, sport is also perceived as acting as a means of fighting against discrimination according to two thirds of European citizens (64%).

Positive evolutions occurred in most of the "old" Member States, particularly so in Belgium, Finland and the United Kingdom. This opinion seems, however, to be weaker in Luxembourg, Greece and Austria.

Q53.4 For each of the following statements, can you please tell me whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree?

Option: Through sport you can fight against any form of discrimination

Answer: Tend to agree

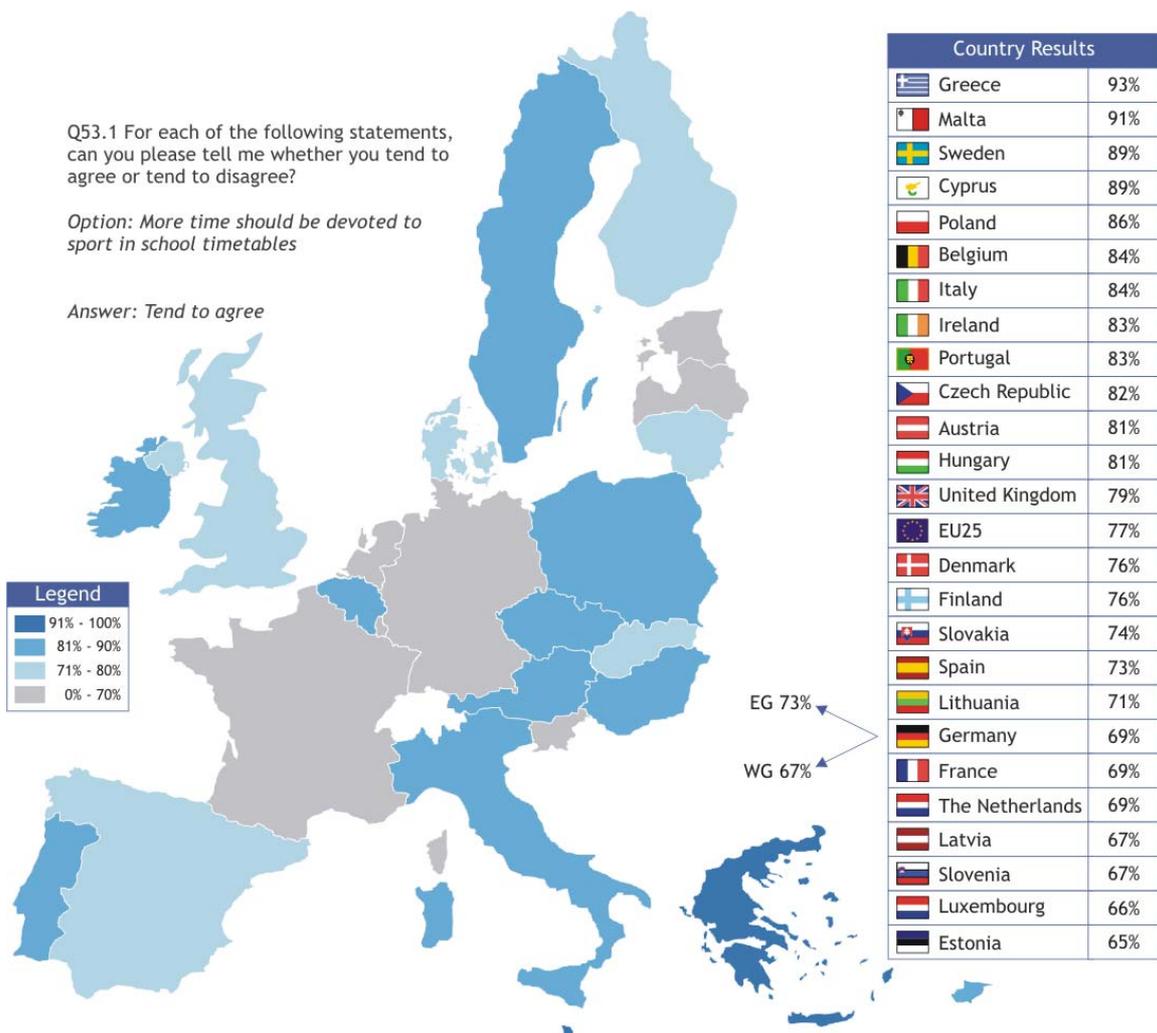


3.3. Education through sport

3.3.1. The place of sport in the school programmes

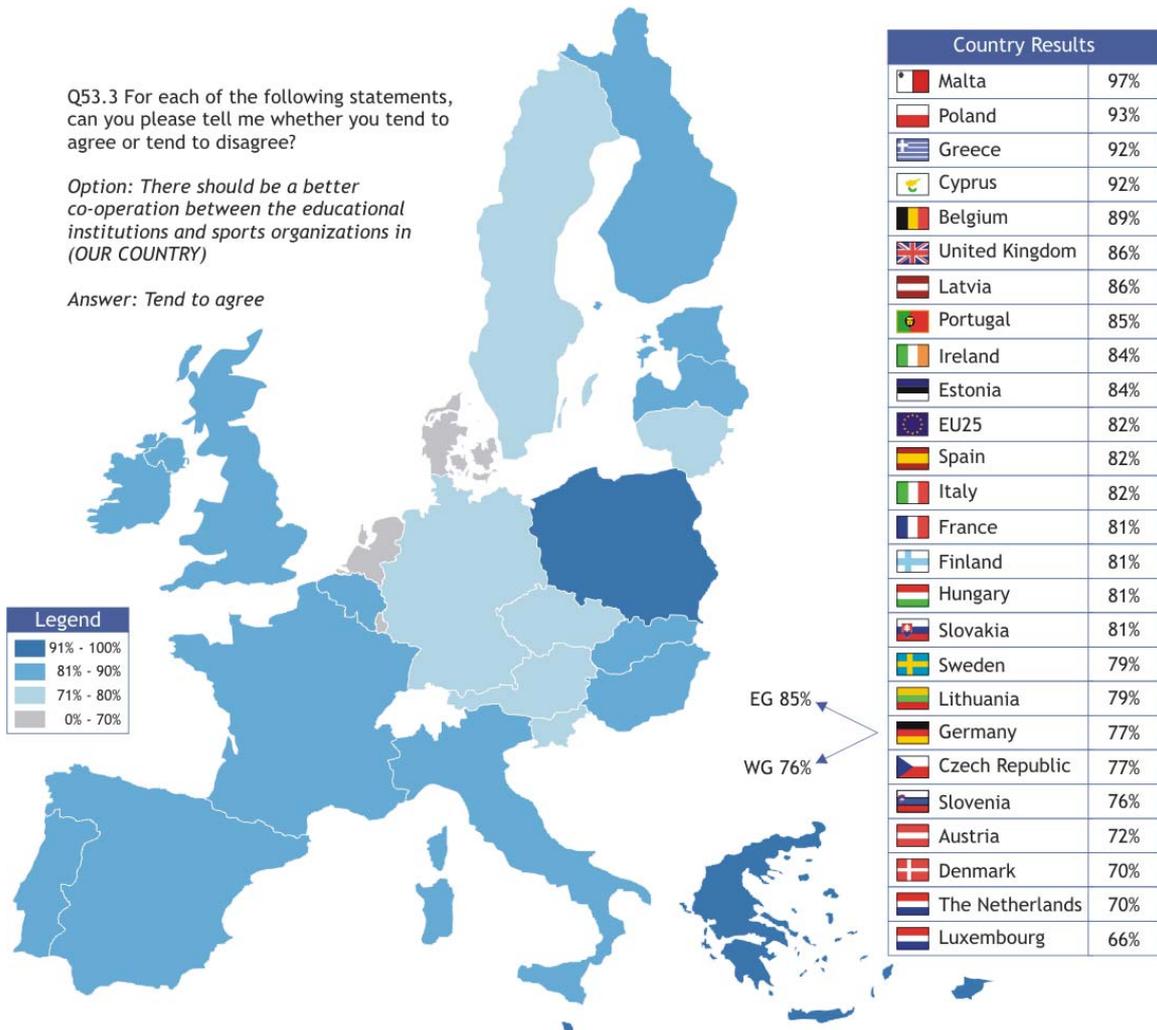
We can certainly refer to continuity and unanimity with regard to Europeans' expectations regarding the place of sport in the school programmes.

In fact, 4 in 5 citizens claim that they are in favour of more time being dedicated to sport in the school programmes.



3.3.2. Co-operation between the education system and sporting organisations

Increasing the presence of sport in the school programmes, and thereby accentuating the role of sport within the education system relies on better co-operation between the educational institutions and sports organisations within the various countries. 8 in 10 citizens of the European Union are of this opinion.

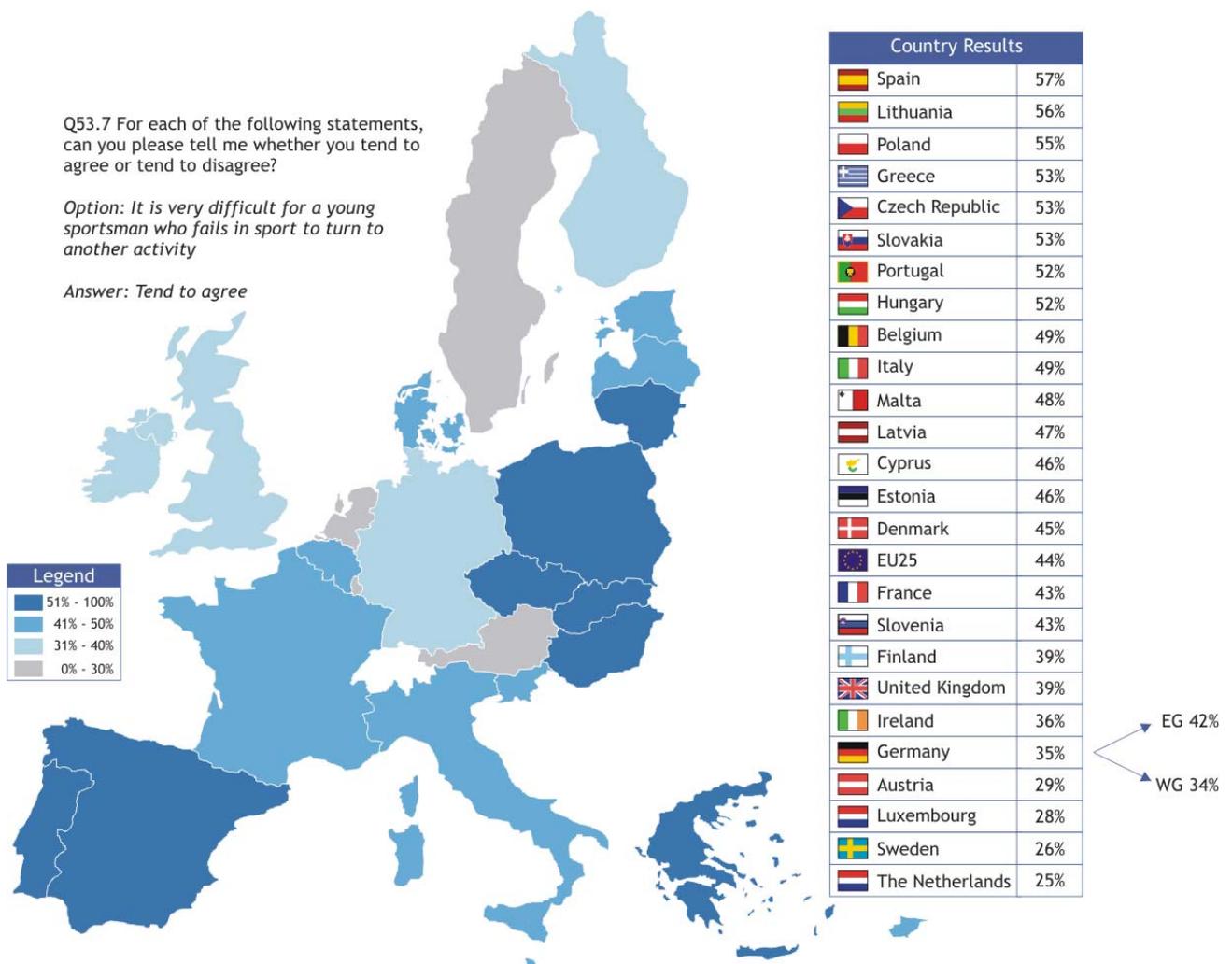


3.3.3. Television, video games and Internet

Still on the educational potential of sport, we noticed that for a very large majority of European Union citizens (86%) playing sport is a sufficiently attractive alternative to distract from indoor activities such as television, video games and the Internet.

3.4. The professional side of sport

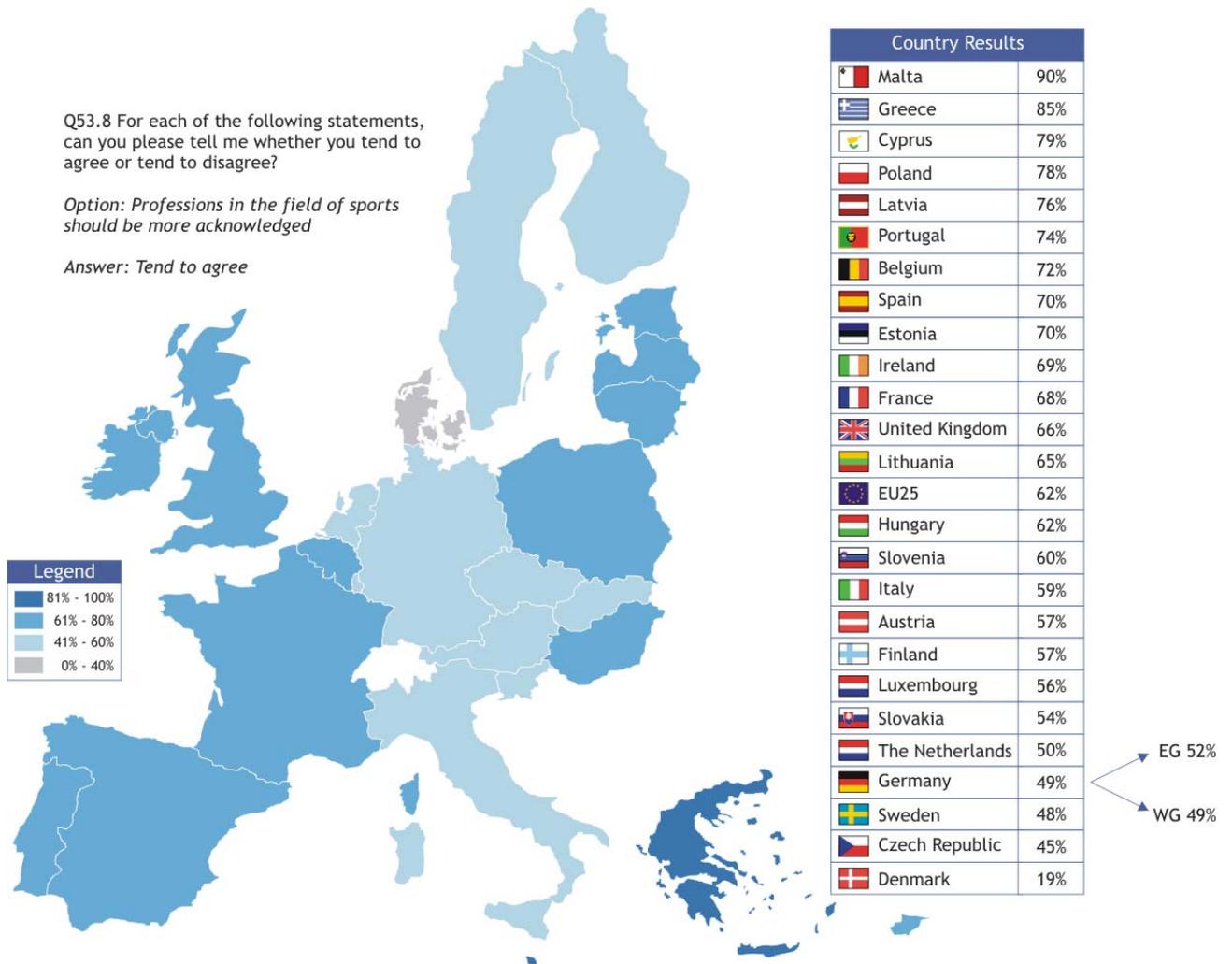
A minority of European Union citizens (44%) seem to rather agree with the statement that it is very difficult for a young sportsman who fails in sport to turn to another activity. We noticed here, concomitantly, a rather significant "do not know" response rate, nearing 20% in numerous countries.



3.4.1. Recognition of professions in sport

Six in ten citizens indicated that they are in favour of greater recognition of professions in the field of sports. In Malta, Greece and Cyprus, particularly high agreement rates are observed.

Respondents with a higher level of education more often contest this opinion.

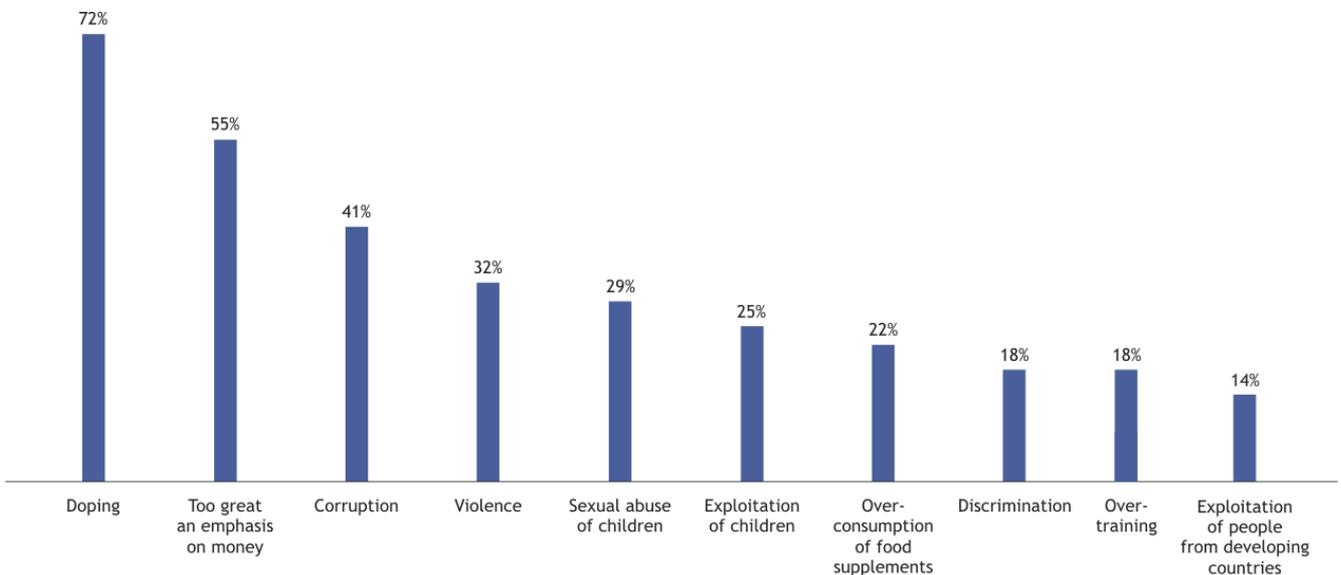


3.5. Negative aspects associated with sport

As in 2003, a majority of European Union citizens cite doping as the main negative aspect of sport (72%). Doping issues, which are given particularly high media coverage, dominate at the country as well as the socio-demographic levels.

Ranking next are excessive emphasis on money (55%) and corruption (41%).

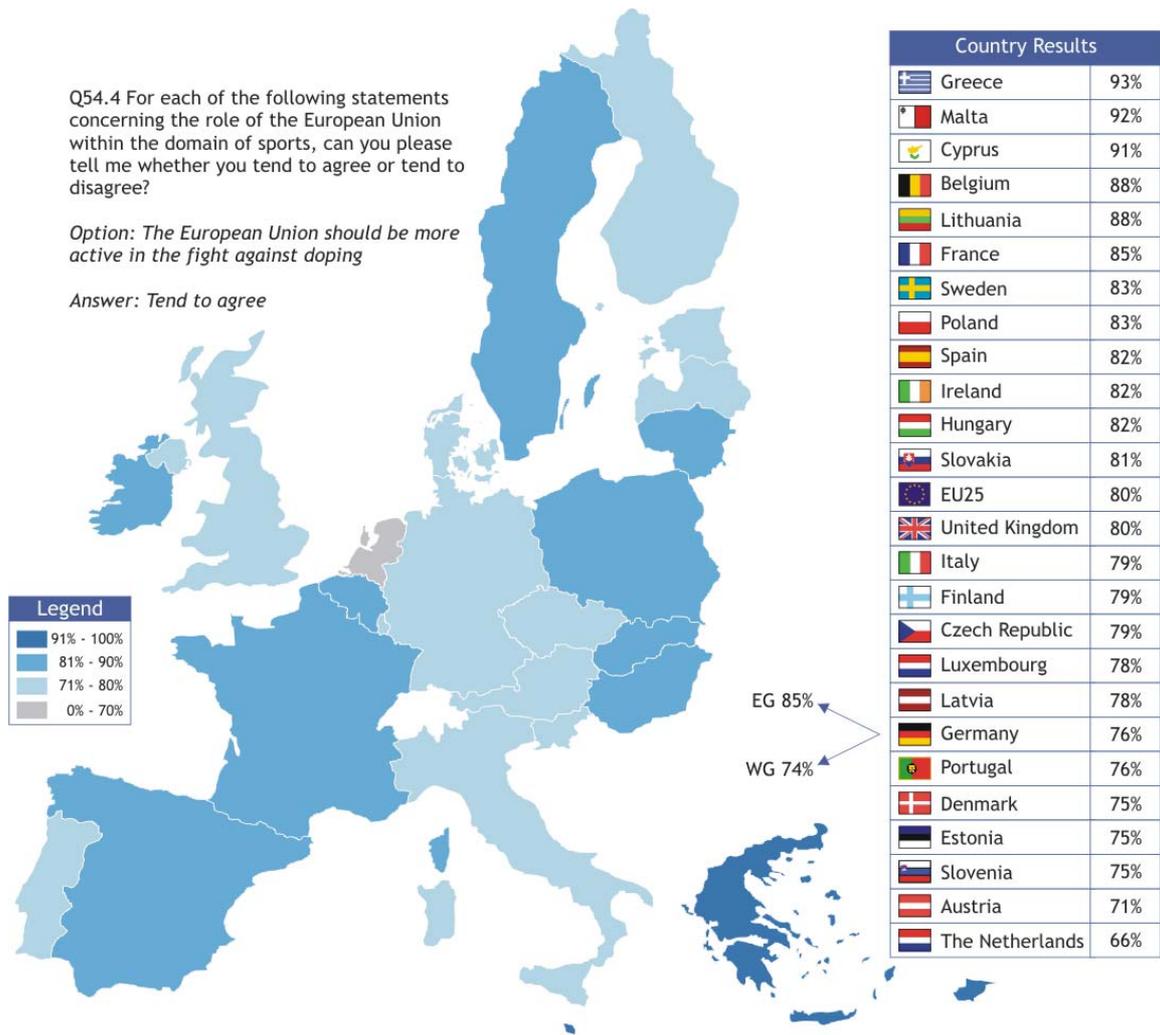
The other dimensions seem less troubling to respondents.



Q55. I am going to read out a list of negative things we hear about sport. Please tell me which of these worry you the most?
Answers based on EU25 results

4. The European Union and sport

The majority of Europeans support the idea of an increased intervention of the European authorities in the field of sport. This intervention is even clearly wished for specific domains. Following the results that we have just analysed, the action on behalf of the European Union is primarily expected for a subject which, we have seen, generates high levels of concern: the fight against doping.

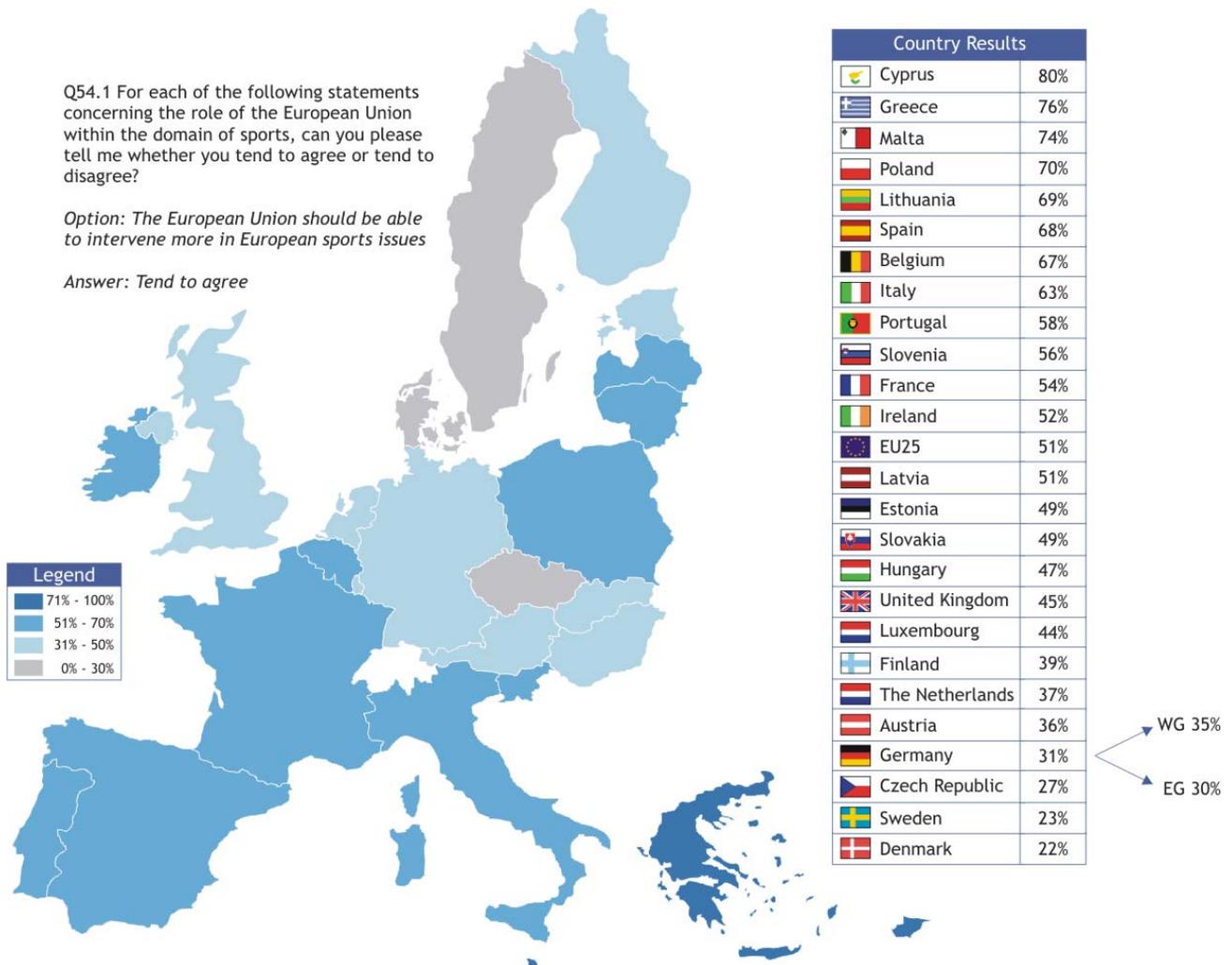


4.1. European Union action for sport

4.1.1. The intervention of the European Union in the field of sport

The support for a strengthening of the European Union's capacity to intervene in European sports issues concerns one citizen out of two. We can observe a positive difference of 17 points between persons who support this idea and those who are not in favour of it (34%).

However, this opinion is not homogeneous within the Union: Denmark, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Germany stand out for a particularly low support to this proposition. On the contrary, expectations in terms of "more Europe" are strongly felt in Cyprus, Malta, Greece and even in Poland.



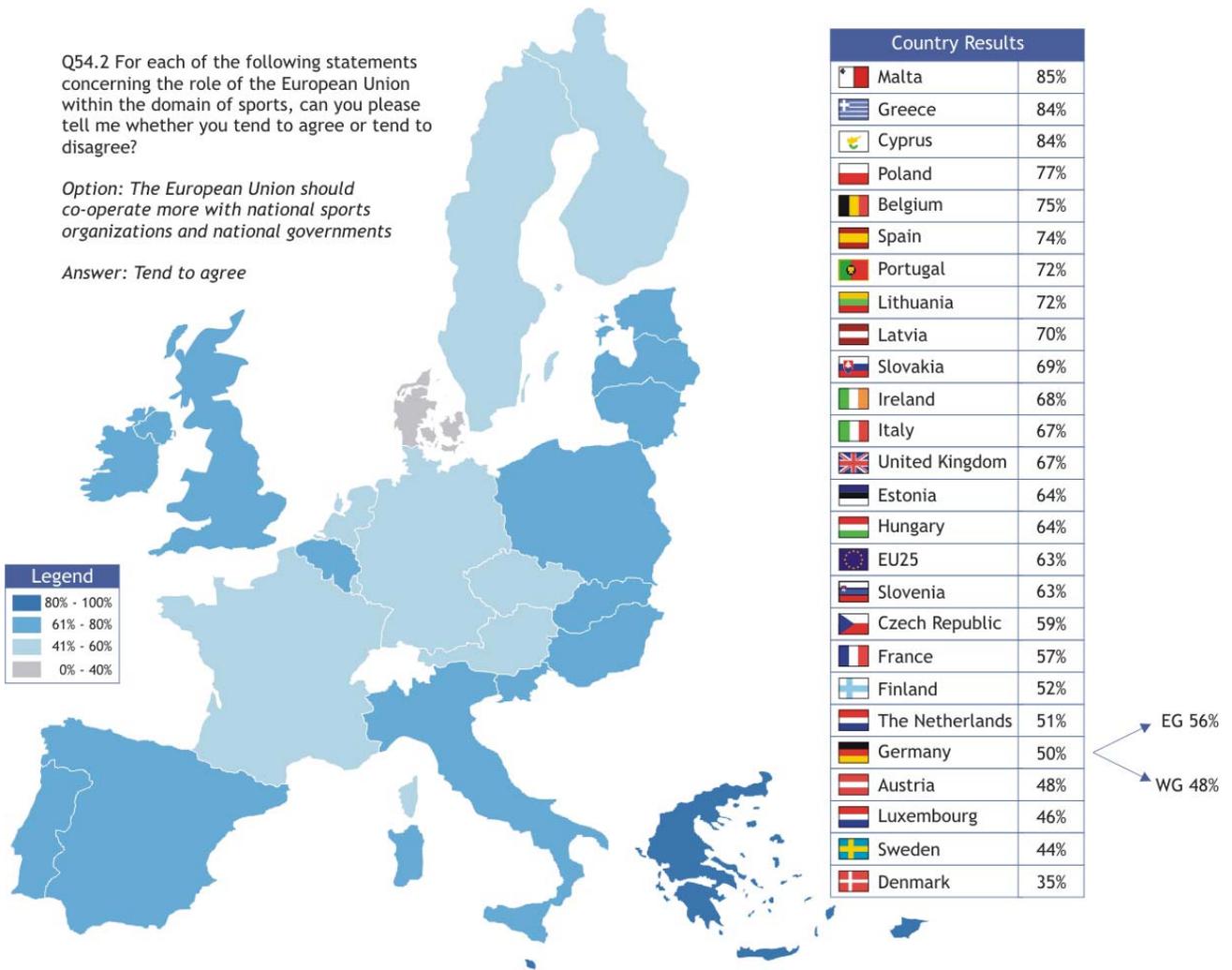
4.1.2. Cooperation between the European Union and national sporting organisations and national governments

If an increased intervention of the European Union in European sports affairs is wished by a majority, the expectations are even higher with regard to the cooperation between the Union, national sports organisations and national governments: two citizens out of three appeal to this idea (63% of respondents).

Q54.2 For each of the following statements concerning the role of the European Union within the domain of sports, can you please tell me whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree?

Option: The European Union should co-operate more with national sports organizations and national governments

Answer: Tend to agree



4.1.3. Should the European Union intervene or not for a better cooperation between the worlds of education and sport?

Close to two citizens out of three agree to say that the Union should intervene in order for the worlds of education and sport to work in unison. The fact of revealing the ultimate goal of the European Unions' potential intervention certainly favours the agreement of a majority of respondents to this proposal.

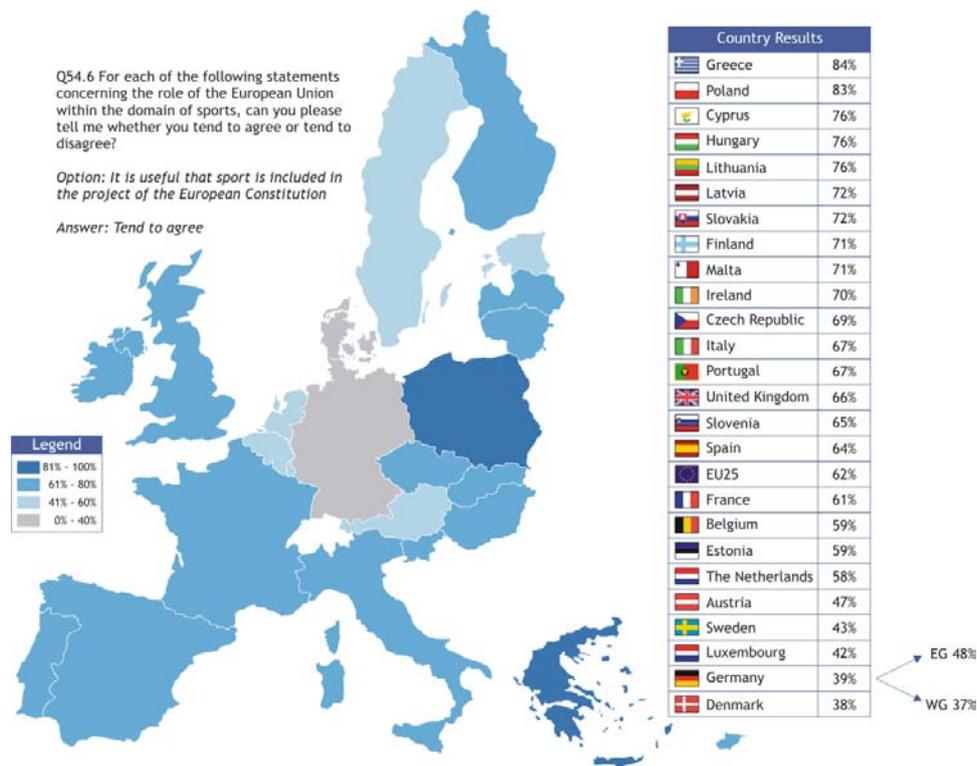
4.1.4. The promotion of ethical and social values through sport: a priority for the European Union?

A majority of the European Unions' citizens (59%) seem to rather agree that the promotion of ethical and social values through sport should become a priority for the European Union. Nevertheless, 28% of all interviewees are rather unfavourable to this idea.

4.2. The notion of sport in the European Constitution

For the first time in the history of the European construction, sport is on the verge of becoming a part of a European treaty.

In general, European citizens do perceive the utility of enshrining the notion of sport in the future European Constitution: 62% of them have this opinion. Once again, opinions vary sensibly from one country to another. Favorable answer rates are especially high in several new member States such as Poland (83%), Lithuania (76%), Hungary (76%), as well as in Greece (84%). The Danes (38%) and the Germans (39%) seem the most hesitant on this idea.



CONCLUSION

This second poll on "The citizens of the European Union and sport" falls within the scope of a year rich in sports events such as the European Football Cup and the Athens Olympic Games. This poll also took place while the European year of education through sport 2004, an initiative launched by the European Commission to promote the educational and social values of sport in the European Union, came to an end.

The practice of sport has evolved positively in the European Union compared to last year: about 4 citizens out of 10 do sports at least once a week. The Scandinavian citizens seem to be the most fond of sport throughout the Union, compared to their neighbours in the South. Among the new EU member States, the number of sportsmen is slightly higher in Cyprus and Slovenia compared to the European average.

The practice of sport remains, however, not very structured and takes place more often in other places than clubs, sports clubs or fitness centres.

Neither the fee nor the lack of infrastructure stops Europeans from practicing some sports activity. It is more due to the constraints of the typical way of living in modern society, **mainly the lack of time due to professional activity or family responsibilities.**

To the same extent as in 2003, the **most noticeable** benefits of doing sports are **mental and physical health** improvements. These benefits seem to be especially important with regard to the **fight against obesity: 9 citizens out of 10 share this opinion.**

As for the negative aspects associated to sport, these are noticeably less perceived in 2004. Nevertheless, several factors remain associated to sport that raise fear among Europeans: **doping, far above the rest, comes across once again as the main negative element associated to sport.**

The 2004 results put forward even further the importance of the social dimension of sport, and this in several fields. It is noticeable that the European public opinion conforms to the objectives of the European year of education through sport program.

Not only does the study confirm the importance of sport in transmitting essential values such as **team work, discipline or friendship** but it is also noticeable that the **Europeans have a strong will to ensure a better place for sport in school programs.** In the opinion of most interviewees, the importance devoted to sport should be further developed thanks to a better cooperation between educational institutions and sports organizations within the different member States of the EU. Furthermore, close to 9 citizens out of 10 perceive sport as a sufficiently attractive alternative to divert from sedentary activities such as television, video games or the internet.

This social dimension is widening to reach, this time, the fields of integration and discrimination. Sport is, in fact, considered by a majority of respondents as a potential tool to fight against all types of discrimination but also as a medium of integration for immigrant communities. These dimensions are, in particular, emphasized by citizens born outside the European continent.

At the same time, a majority of European citizens (six out of ten) consider that the promotion of ethical and social values through sport should be a priority for the European Union.

One citizen out of two supports the idea of an increase of the European Unions' intervention in European sports issues. And close to two out of three request a strengthening of the cooperation between the Union, the national sports organisations and the government. Logically, **the fight against doping represents the field for which these expectations are the highest.**

However, this opinion is not homogeneous within the Union, and we find weaker results, namely in the Scandinavian countries, as to the role the European Union should play with regard to sport.

Finally, **the majority of European citizens (62%) approves the enshrining of Sport in the European Constitution,** and, by this, the fact of seeing sport become a part of a European treaty for the first time.