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February 14, 2024

The War and the Vote

Europeans Head to the Ballot Box as
Ukrainians Fight for Freedom:
How Will the War Shape the Vote?

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Ukraine-related policies correlated with political orientations and party preferences

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has had a profound impact on EU policies and politics. The European Union and its member states have steadfastly supported Ukraine in its defensive efforts while simultaneously aiming to curb Russia's aggression. This support has been manifested through unprecedented financial and economic sanctions imposed on Russia and its principal actors, as well as the provision of weapons and financial assistance to Ukraine. EU member states have also opened their doors to Ukrainian refugees, and Ukraine, once a distant neighbour, is now actively pursuing accession to become a full EU member.

Driven by pivotal events, this strategic shift and accelerated decision-making have gained widespread public support. Gripping images of the conflict, marked by its brutality, have evoked collective memories of past European wars, galvanising a strong majority of Europeans to stand in solidarity with Ukraine and endorse the resulting policies.

Contrary to initial expectations of a swift decline in support, this enduring backing has persisted over time. Our ongoing eupinions surveys, tracking attitudes toward Ukraine policies since March 2022, have consistently shown support for measures such as weapons delivery, refugee assistance, EU enlargement, energy independence, sanctions, and the development of a European defence policy.

However, in recent months, we have observed an emerging decline in this support as the war enters its third year and other crises become apparent – developments that are redirecting public attention and sensitivities, as highlighted in our previous report titled [“A Burden or a Bond?”](#).

The timing of these shifts is of particular significance, as they coincide with the crucial re-election of European leadership in 2024. As EU citizens prepare to cast their votes for a new European Parliament in June, closely followed by the nomination of a new European Commission, this publication seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how policies on Ukraine intersect with political orientations and party preferences.

In this report, we explore the relationship between political orientations and seven key Ukraine-related policy questions:

1. *Does the European Union need a common defence policy?*
2. *Should the EU support Ukraine by delivering weapons?*
3. *Should your country accept refugees from Ukraine?*
4. *Should the EU accept Ukraine as a member state in the coming years?*

5. *Should the EU become more energy independent of Russia even if that means prices are rising even further?*
6. *Do you think economic and financial sanctions on Russia are effective or ineffective?*
7. *Do you think the reconstruction of Ukraine will be an economic opportunity or an economic burden?*

For each of these questions, we provide an overview of responses from across the EU and seven member states. Subsequently, we offer a breakdown based on political orientations. These insights are drawn from a survey conducted in December 2023 that encompassed nearly 13,000 EU citizens. Our data is not only representative of the entire EU but also specifically representative of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and Spain.

Please note

This report “*The War and the Vote*” is part of *an eight-part series*.

Part 1

- **The War and the Vote**

delves into the correlation of political orientation and support for Ukraine policies in the EU as well as seven member states.

Parts 2-8

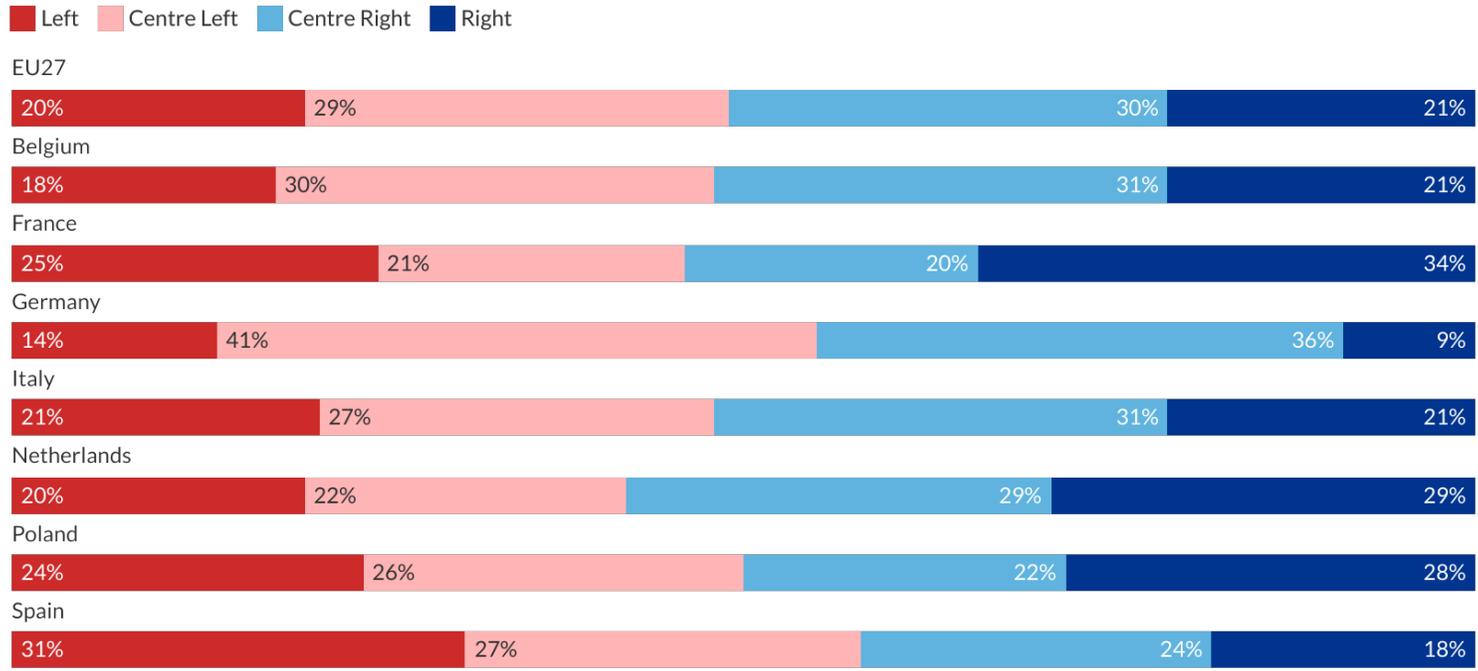
Part 1 is complemented by *seven country reports*, each focusing on political party preferences in correlation with the same Ukraine-related questions:

- [Belgium, the War and the Vote](#)
- [France, the War and the Vote](#)
- [Germany, the War and the Vote](#)
- [Italy, the War and the Vote](#)
- [The Netherlands, the War and the Vote](#)
- [Poland, the War and the Vote](#)
- [Spain, the War and the Vote](#)

An overview:

- 1. Think about your political orientation: Where do you position yourself on the political left-right-spectrum?**
General distribution (GD) across the EU and seven member states
- 2. Does the European Union need a common defence policy?**
First the GD across the EU and seven member states, then by political orientation
- 3. Should the EU support Ukraine by delivering weapons?**
First the GD across the EU and seven member states, then by political orientation
- 4. Should your country accept refugees from Ukraine?**
First the GD across the EU and seven member states, then by political orientation
- 5. Should the EU accept Ukraine as a member state in the coming years?**
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- 6. Should the EU become more energy independent of Russia even if that means prices are rising even further?**
First the GD across the EU and seven member states, then by political orientation
- 7. Do you think economic and financial sanctions on Russia are effective or ineffective?**
First the GD across the EU and seven member states, then by political orientation
- 8. Do you think the reconstruction of Ukraine will be an economic opportunity or an economic burden for the EU?**
First the GD across the EU and seven member states, then by political orientation

Think about your political orientation: Where do you position yourself on the political left-right-spectrum?



December 2023

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Near-equal split between the left and right among Europeans

- Europeans are evenly divided between the political left and right when it comes to their political orientation, with 49% identifying as left-wing and 51% as right-wing.
- Within the left-wing category, there is a distinction between those who consider themselves centre-left (29%) and those who identify as simply left (20%). Similarly, among those on the right, there is a division between those who position themselves as centre-right (30%) and those who identify as right (21%).
- Notably, the political centre, which includes individuals who identify as either centre-right or centre-left, comprises 59% of Europeans, outnumbering those who align with the political fringes.
- Specific countries – Belgium (52%), France (54%), Italy (52%), and the Netherlands (58%) – have a majority identifying with the right, while Germany (55%) and Spain (58%) have a majority aligning with the left. Poland stands out as evenly split, with 50% identifying as left-wing and 50% as right-wing.
- In Germany, a significant 77% of people position themselves within the political centre. France has the highest proportion of individuals identifying as right-wing (34%), while Spain has the largest share of left-wing identifiers (31%).

Does the European Union need a common defence policy?



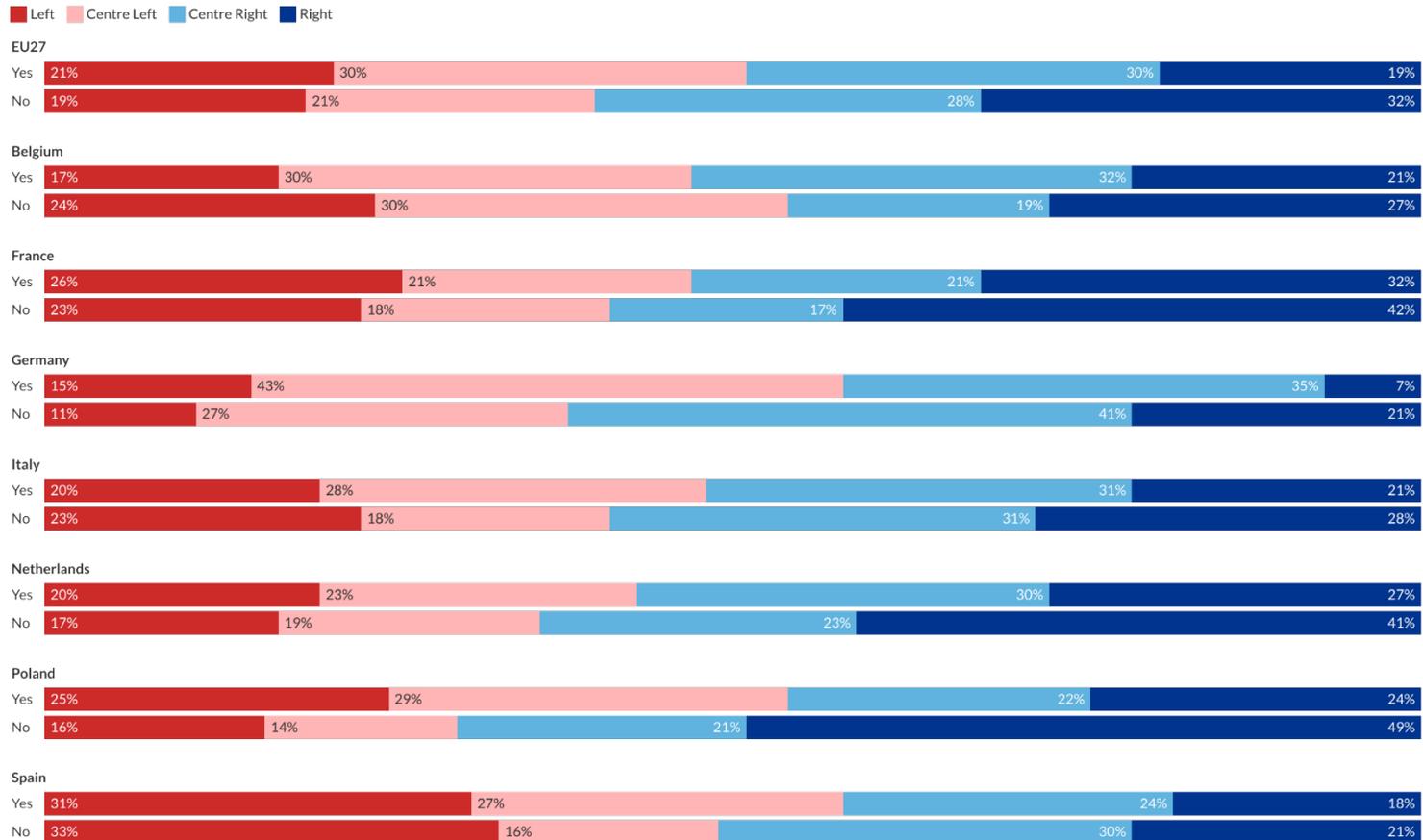
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A resounding majority favour a common EU defence policy

- A clear and overwhelming majority of EU citizens express support for the establishment of a common EU defence policy, with 87% favouring this proposition.
- This sentiment is echoed across all seven member states, albeit with slight variations. In France, support stands at 81%, representing the lowest level among the surveyed countries. Conversely, Spain leads the pack with 94% backing the initiative. The Netherlands, Poland, Belgium, Germany, and Italy fall in between these extremes, showcasing varying degrees of support.

Does the European Union need a common defence policy? By political orientation



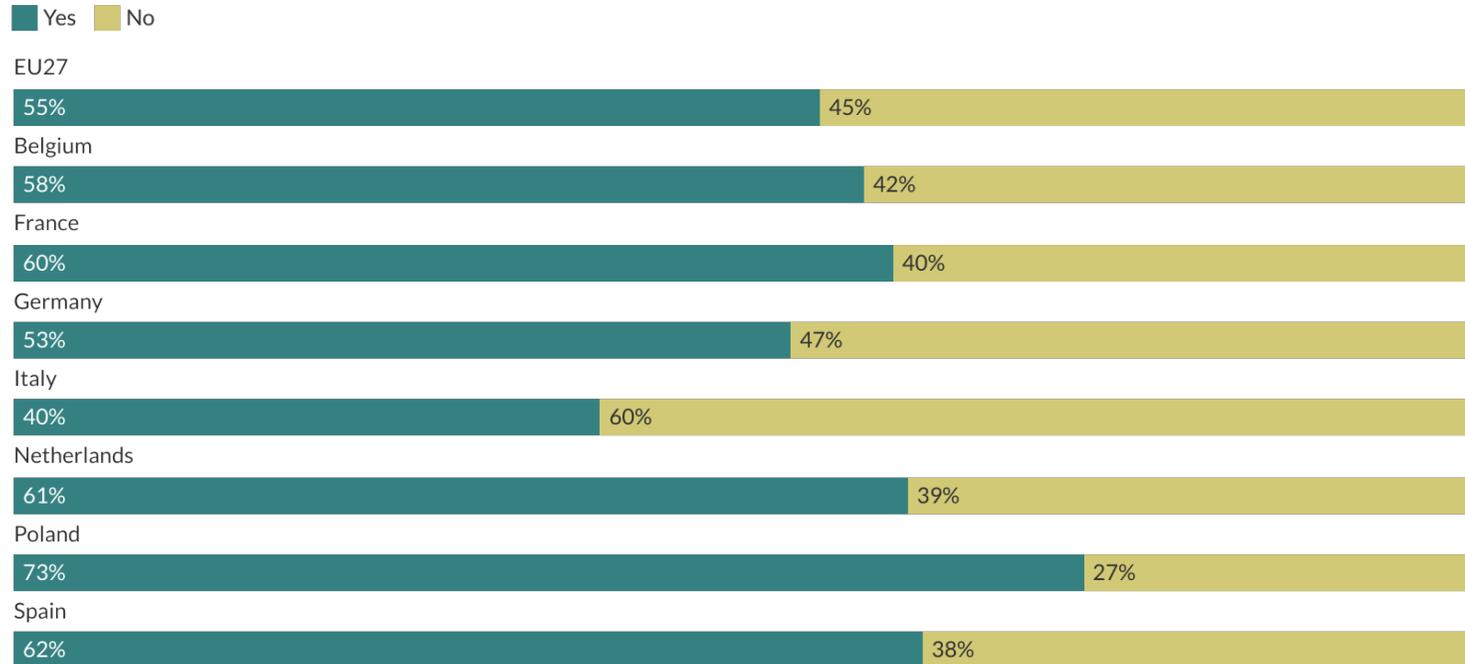
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Fairly equal distribution of support for EU defence policy across left-right-spectrum

- Support for a common EU defence policy is distributed fairly evenly across the political spectrum, with a slight leaning toward the centre. On a pan-European scale, 51% express their support while 49% are opposed. Among those in support of a common defence policy, 60% identify as centre-leaning.
- Among those opposed to a common defence policy, a majority come from the right side of the political spectrum, accounting for 60% of respondents, with 32% identifying as right-wing and 28% as centre-right.
- In Belgium, France, Italy, and the Netherlands, where a majority self-identifies as right-leaning, this group also dominates the support for a common defence policy. Similarly, in Germany and Spain, where a majority aligns with the left, they also play a dominant role in supporting a common defence policy.
- In Poland, we see an equal split in terms of political orientation, with 50% of respondents positioning themselves on the right and 50% on the left. However, the majority supporting a common EU defence policy consists of 54% left-leaning respondents and 46% right-leaning respondents.
- Across all member states, individuals leaning toward the centre dominate the group of those expressing support for a common defence policy.

Should the EU support Ukraine by delivering weapons?



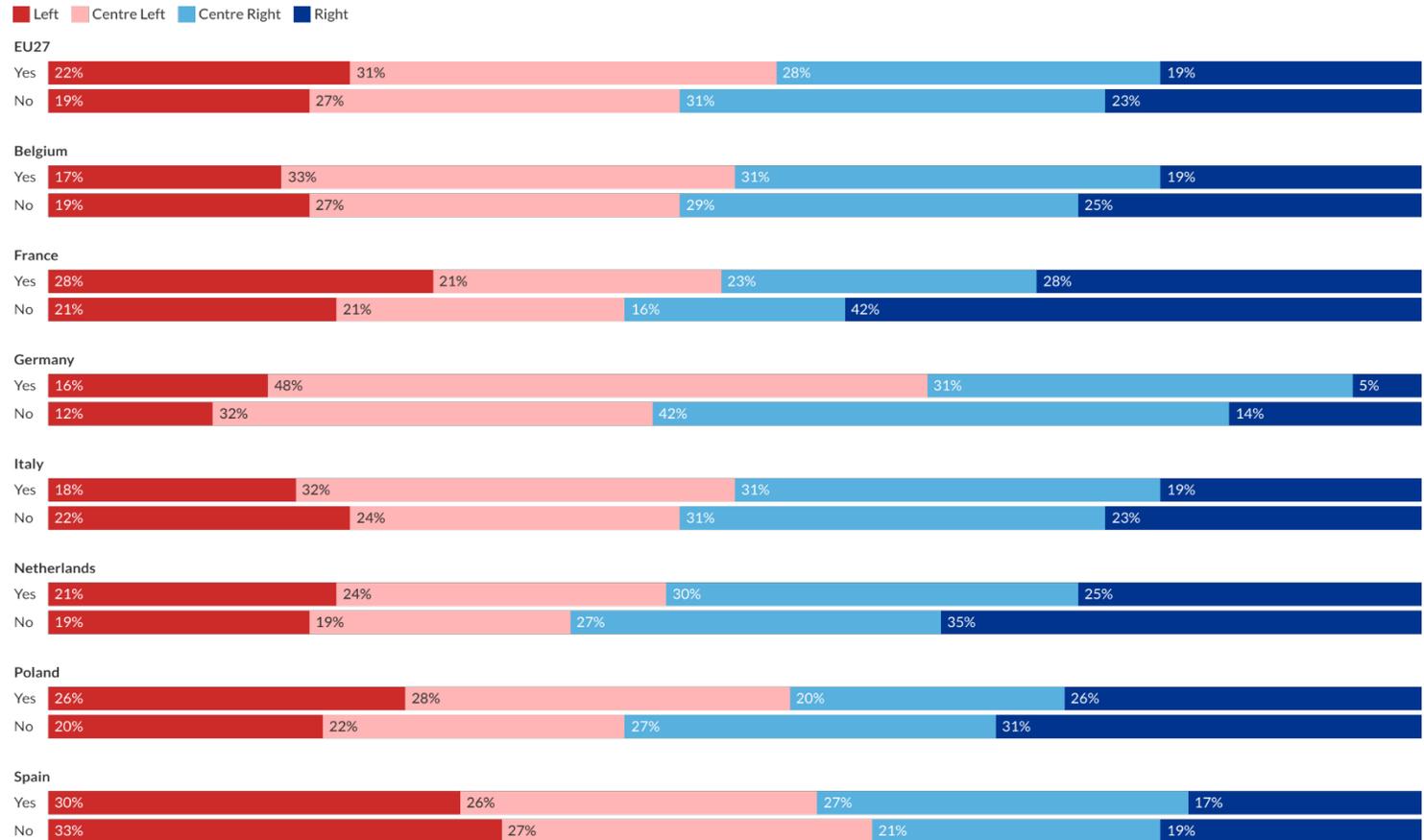
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Support for delivering weapons is weakening

- Support for delivering weapons to Ukraine is showing signs of weakening, with 55% of the overall EU population agreeing that the EU should provide such support.
- Although a majority of the general public in most polled member states still supports weapons delivery, Italy stands out as an exception, with 60% of Italians disagreeing with the idea of the EU offering weapons assistance to Ukraine.
- As part of our ongoing analysis of trends related to Ukraine, we monitor support for weapons delivery over time. Recent data indicates a downward trend in support for this measure.

Should the EU support Ukraine by delivering weapons? By political orientation



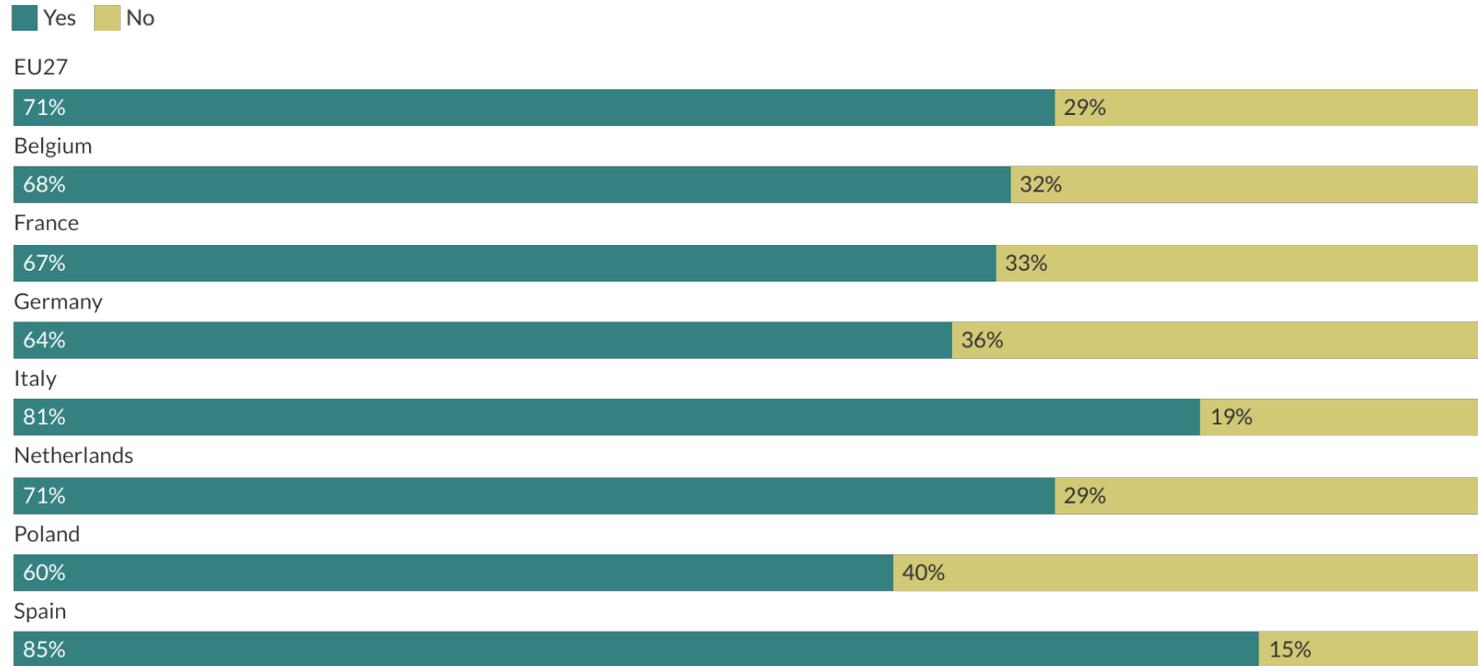
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Support for weapons delivery stronger on the left

- Support for weapons delivery to Ukraine by the EU is slightly dominated by those who self-identify as left-wing, comprising 53% of supporters. Conversely, opposition to weapons delivery is slightly dominated by those who self-identify as right-wing, accounting for 54% of opponents.
- A similar pattern emerges when analysing member state data. In Belgium, France, and Italy, the group in support is evenly split between left-wing and right-wing identifiers. In Germany, Poland, and Spain, the majority of supporters lean left politically. The Netherlands stands out, with the majority of supporters identifying as right-wing.
- Opposition to the EU providing weapons to Ukraine by the EU is primarily associated with the political right in every member state, except for Spain, where most opponents identify as left-wing.

Should your country accept refugees from Ukraine?



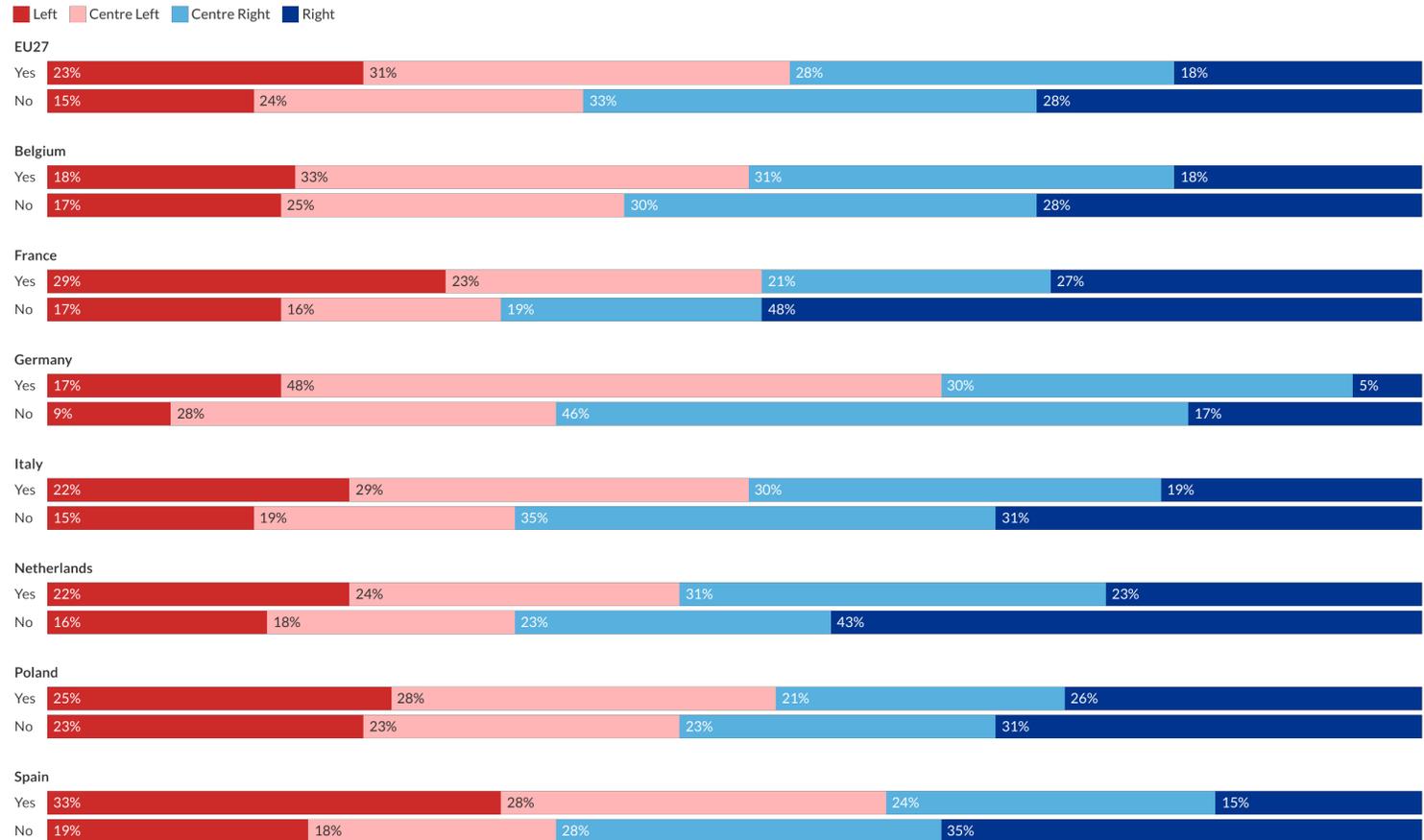
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Strong support for Ukrainian refugees

- Support for Ukrainian refugees remains strong, both within the entire EU and among the seven analysed member states. Although support is at its lowest in Poland, at 60%, it reaches its highest level in Spain, with 85%. On average, across the EU, support stands at 71%.
- However, as part of our ongoing analysis of trends related to Ukraine, we also track support for Ukrainian refugees over time. Recent data indicates a decline in support for this measure.

Should your country accept refugees from Ukraine? By political orientation



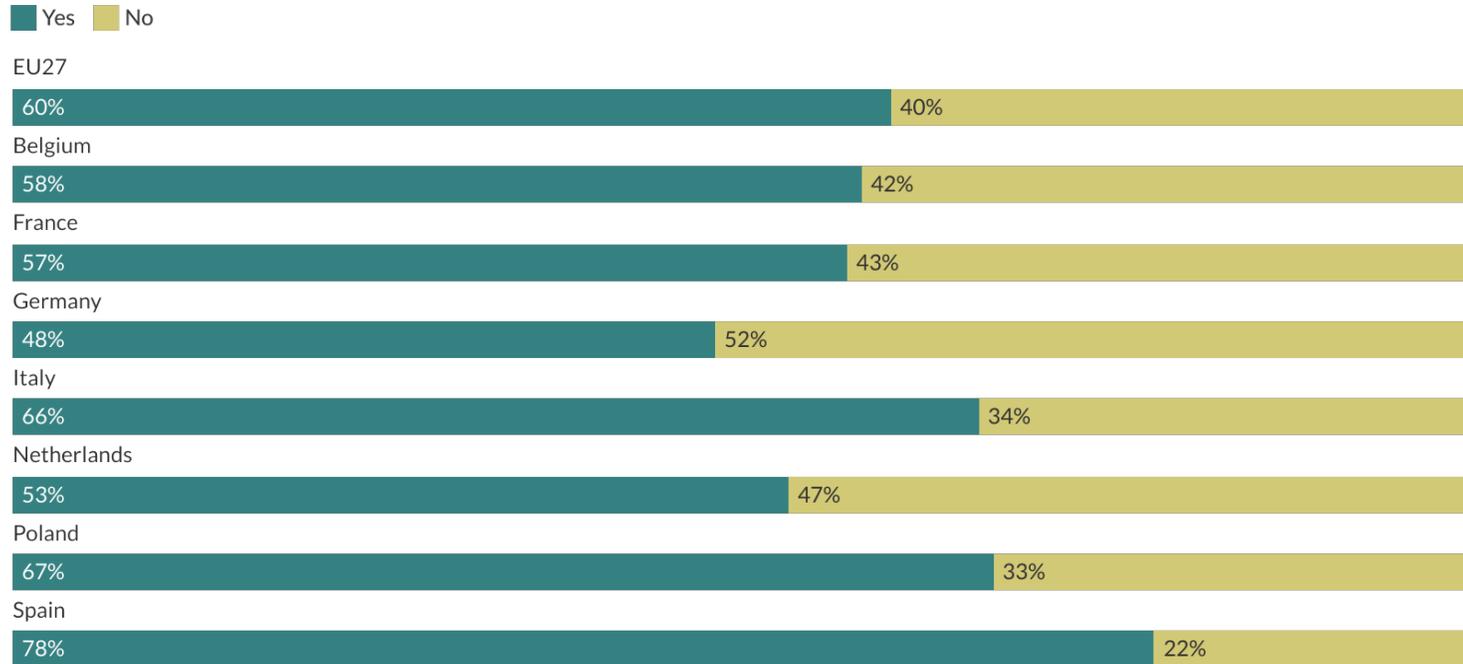
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Stronger support for refugees on the left

- In the EU, those who support accepting refugees are predominantly on the left (54%), while those who oppose it are predominantly on the right (61%).
- An analysis of data from the seven member states shows a similar pattern. In most of these states, those on the left slightly outnumber those on the right when expressing support for refugees from Ukraine. This trend is particularly pronounced in Germany and Spain, where 65% and 61%, respectively, among those in support of such measures identify with the left. The Netherlands stands out here, with 46% self-identifying as left-wing and 54% as right-wing among those who favour support for refugees.
- Conversely, the opposition group is predominantly composed of individuals who self-identify as right-wing. This trend is weakest in Poland, with a split of 46% to 54%, and strongest in France, with a split of 33% to 67%.
- Across the EU and in most member states, those in the political centre (combining centre-left and centre-right) constitute the largest group. However, France stands out as an exception, as those who identify with the political centre do not form the majority, with 44% in favour and 35% against.

Should the EU accept Ukraine as a member of the EU in the coming years?



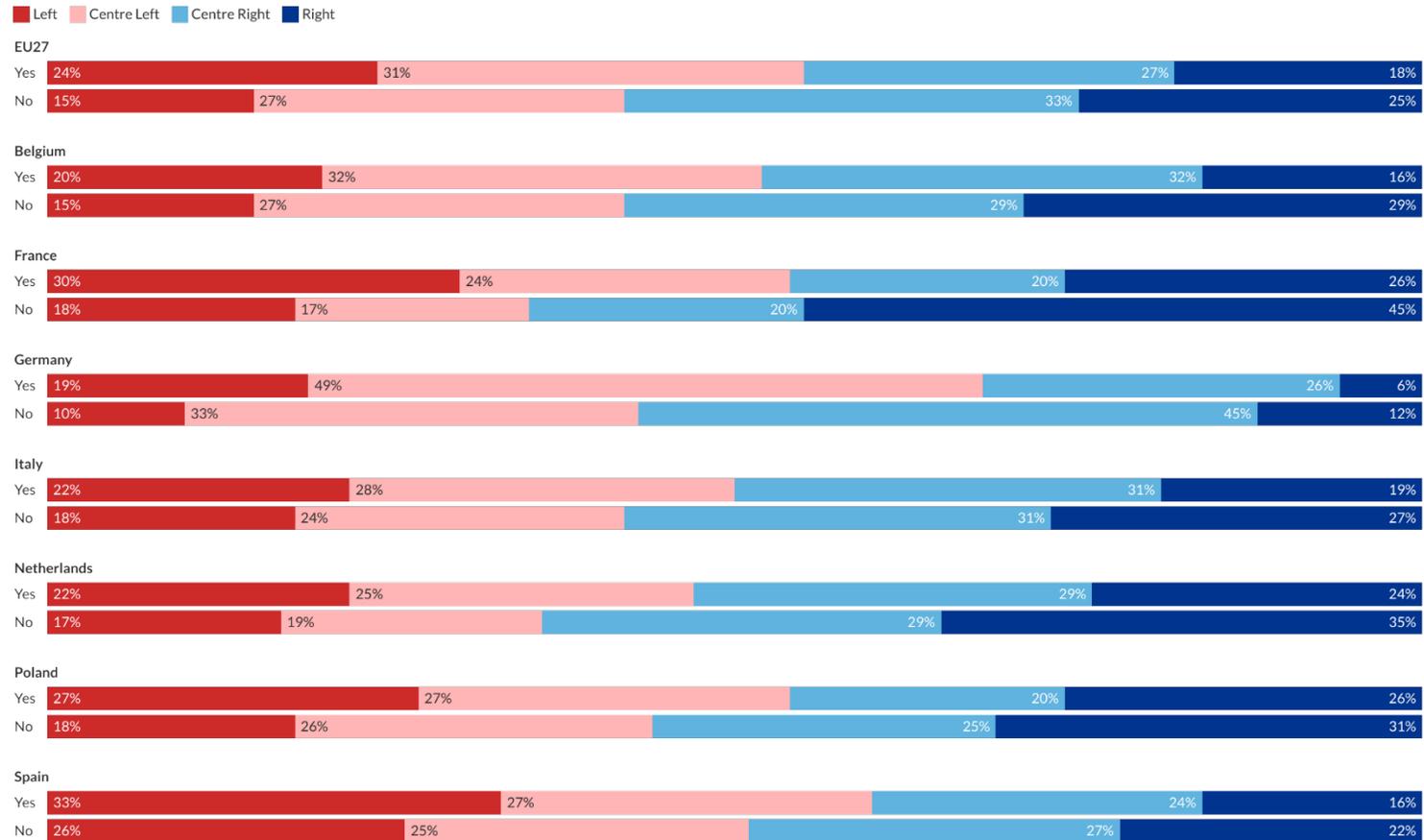
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A majority endorses Ukraine's ambition to become a member of the EU

- In the EU, 60% of respondents are in favour of Ukraine becoming a member of the EU in the coming years, while 40% disagree with this idea.
- This pattern is mostly consistent across the member states, with one notable exception being Germany. In Germany, a slim majority (52%) opposes the idea of Ukraine joining the EU, while a slight minority (48%) supports it.
- As part of our ongoing analysis of trends related to Ukraine, we also track support for Ukraine's membership aspirations over time. Recent data suggests a decline in support for this goal.

Should the EU accept Ukraine as a member of the EU in the coming years? By political orientation



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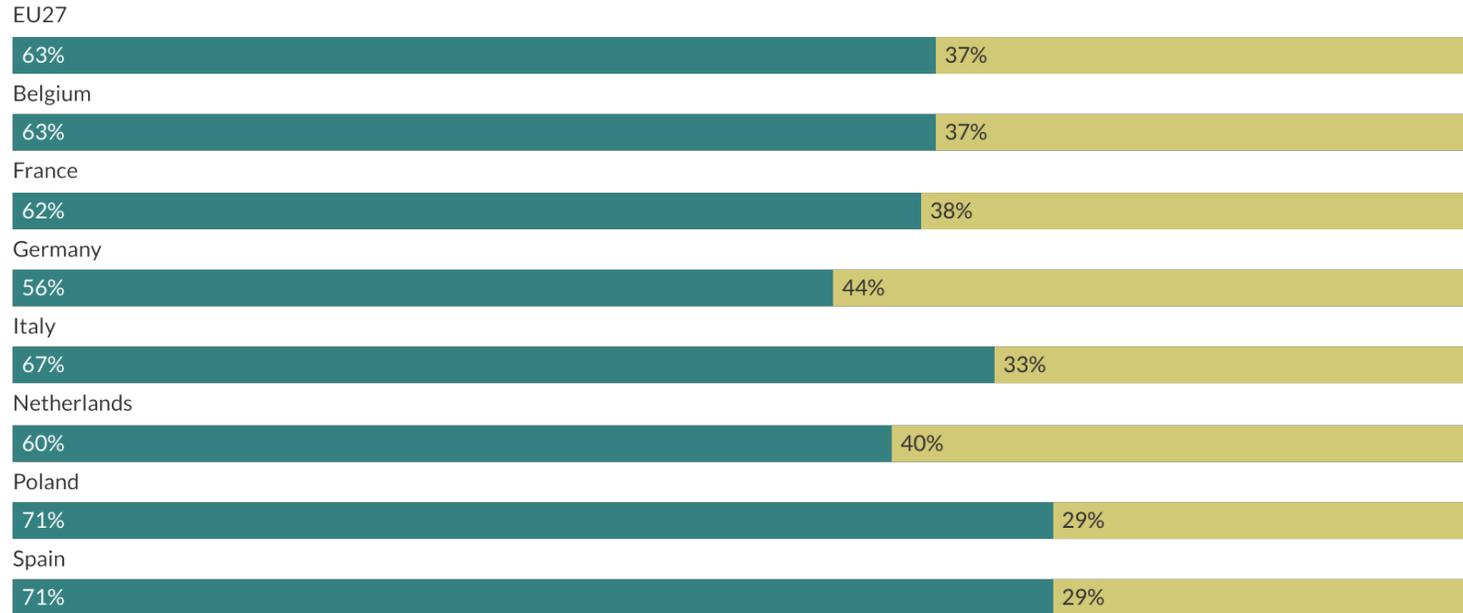
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Stronger support for Ukrainian EU membership on the left

- In the EU, 55% of those who endorse Ukraine's EU-membership aspirations identify themselves as left-wing, while 45% identify as right-wing.
- This distribution is particularly notable in Germany and Spain. In Germany, 68% of supporters of Ukraine's membership aspiration identify with the left, while in Spain, 60% do the same.
- A similar pattern emerges in every member state, with the exception of Italy and the Netherlands. In Italy, supporters of Ukraine's membership ambition are equally divided along political lines. However, in the Netherlands, those who back Ukraine's ambition predominantly identify as right-wing.

Should the EU become more energy independent of Russia even if that means prices are rising even further?

■ Yes ■ No



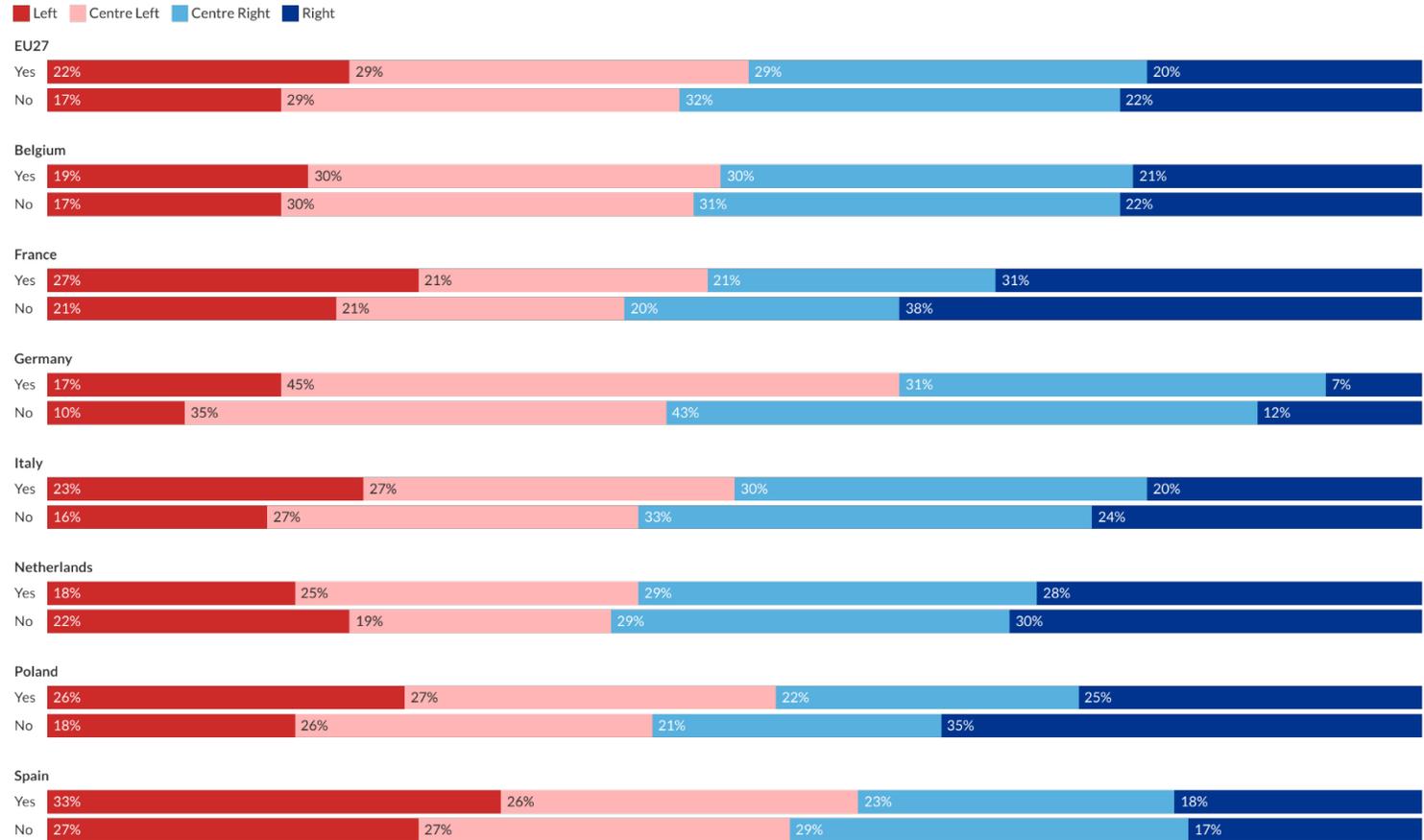
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Stable majority for energy independence

- A total of 63% of EU citizens support the idea that the EU should strive for energy independence, even if it leads to higher prices.
- This sentiment is shared by a majority in all seven member states, but the strength of this majority varies. The weakest support is observed in Germany at 56%, while the strongest support is seen in Poland and Spain, both at 71%.
- As part of our ongoing analysis of trends related to Ukraine, we also track support for energy independence over time. Recent data suggests a decline in this support.

Should the EU become more energy independent of Russia even if that means prices are rising even further? By political orientation



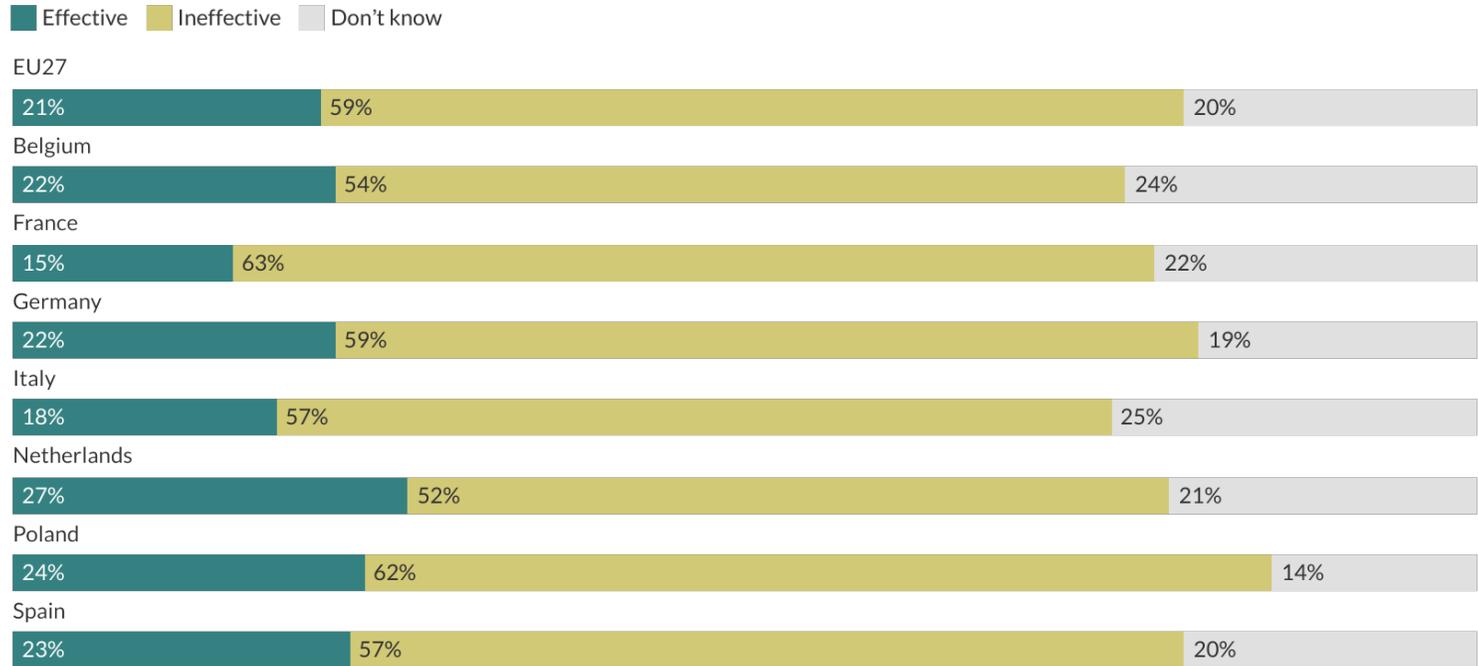
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Support for energy independence transcends political ideologies in the EU

- Within the EU, those in favour of energy independence are almost evenly divided between those who identify as left-wing (51%) and those as right-wing (49%).
- A similar pattern is observed in Belgium (49%/51%), France (48%/52%), Italy (50%/50%), and Poland (53%/47%).
- However, in Germany and Spain, a majority of those supporting energy independence identify as left-wing, with proportions of 62%/38% in Germany and 59%/41% in Spain. In contrast, in the Netherlands, the majority of supporters of energy independence (57%) identify as right-wing.
- As for those who oppose energy independence at the expense of rising prices, the trend is consistent. Across the EU and in most member states, the majority of this group identifies as right-wing.

Do you think economic and financial sanctions on Russia are effective or ineffective?



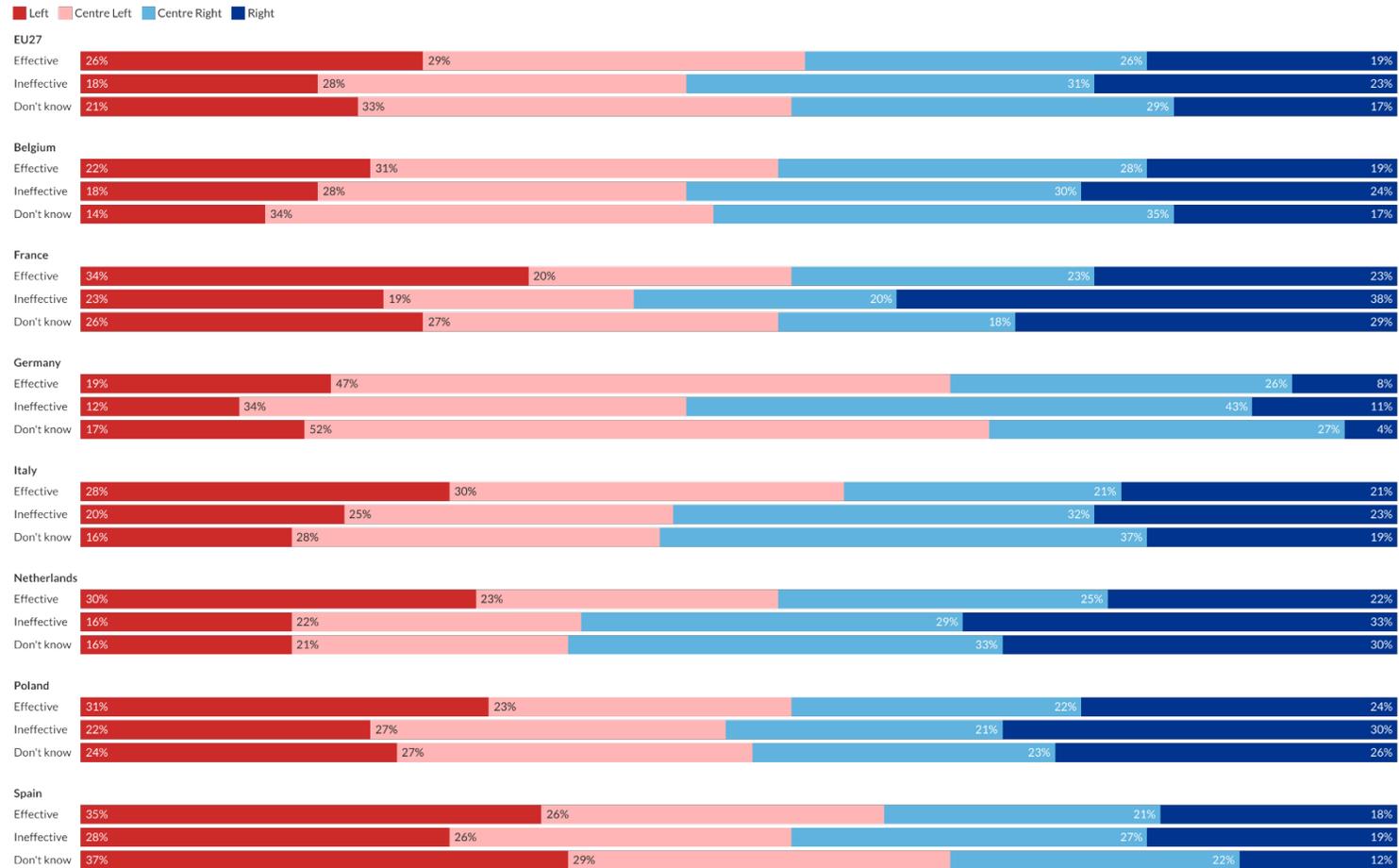
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A majority is convinced that economic and financial sanctions are ineffective

- In both the EU and the seven member states, a majority believes that economic and financial sanctions are ineffective. This sentiment is strongest in France, where 63% share this view, and weakest in the Netherlands, where 52% hold this opinion.
- Conversely, only 21% of EU citizens believe that sanctions are effective. This belief is least prevalent in France, at 15%, and most prevalent in the Netherlands, at 27%.
- As part of our ongoing analysis of Ukraine-related trends, we also track support for sanctions over time, and the data shows a consistent pattern over time.

Do you think economic and financial sanctions on Russia are effective or ineffective? By political orientation



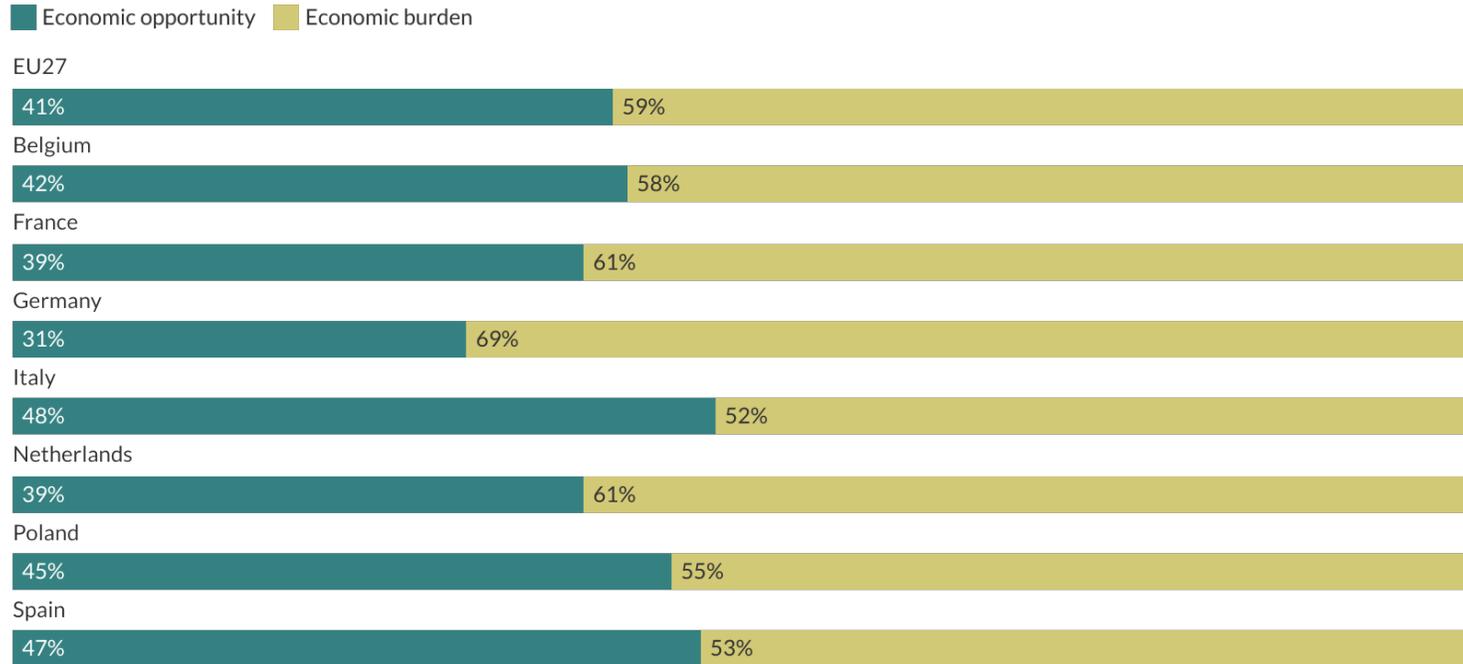
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A majority believes economic and financial sanctions are ineffective

- Those who believe sanctions are effective mostly identify as left-wing, with the most substantial proportions observed in Germany (66%) and Spain (61%).
- Conversely, in Spain alone (54%), those who view sanctions as ineffective mostly identify as left-wing.
- However, an analysis of the seven member states reveals a different pattern in which those who believe sanctions are ineffective mostly identify as right-wing. This trend is most pronounced in the Netherlands (62%) and least pronounced in Spain (46%).

Do you think the reconstruction of Ukraine will be an economic opportunity or an economic burden for the EU?



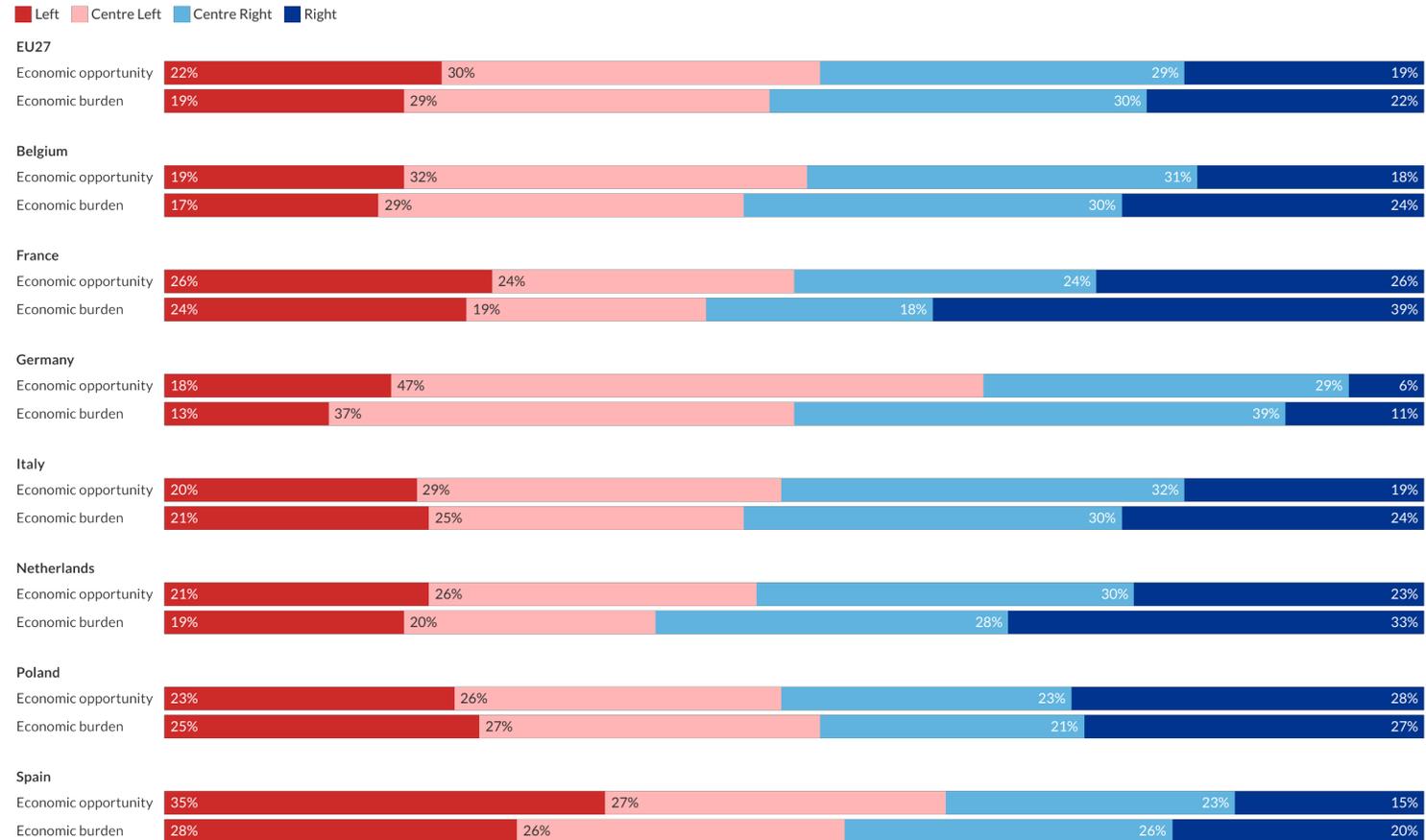
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A majority anticipates that the reconstruction of Ukraine will be an economic liability

- Across Europe, 59% of respondents believe that the EU will face an economic burden as a result of Ukraine's reconstruction, while 41% believe it will present an economic opportunity.
- A similar sentiment is observed among the seven member states, as the majority in each country also perceives the reconstruction of Ukraine as an economic burden. This belief is most pronounced in Germany, where 69% share this viewpoint, and least pronounced in Italy, where 52% hold this view.

Do you think the reconstruction of Ukraine will be an economic opportunity or an economic burden for the EU? By political orientation



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Among those who believe that Ukraine's reconstruction will impose a burden, most identify with the right

- In the EU, 52% of those who express reservations about Ukraine's economic reconstruction of Ukraine identify as right-wing.
- This trend is also apparent in Belgium, France, Italy, and the Netherlands. In Germany, the distribution is evenly split at 50%/50%.
- However, in Poland and Spain, a larger share of individuals self-identifying as left-wing (52% and 54%, respectively) can be found among those who express caution about Ukraine's economic reconstruction.

Conclusions

Throughout our analysis of public opinion regarding various aspects of the EU's response to the Ukrainian crisis, several key trends and notable exceptions have become evident. As EU citizens prepare to elect a new European Parliament in June, followed closely by the nomination of a new European Commission, our goal has been to gauge public sentiment across the EU and seven member states regarding crucial aspects of the war in Ukraine. We have also aimed to delve deeper into how policies on Ukraine intersect with political orientations and party preferences.

By examining these opinions, we have sought to provide insight into the diverse perspectives within the European public and identify any trends or noteworthy deviations from the norm.

In summary, our findings are as follows:

- **Political Orientation:** Europeans are evenly split between left-wing (49%) and right-wing (51%) political orientations. Within each, there's a divide: 29% identify as centre-left, 20% as left; 30% as centre-right, and 21% as right. Notably, the political centre, including both centre-left and centre-right, makes up 59% of Europeans, outnumbering the political fringes.
- **European Defence Policy:** There is widespread support for a common EU defence policy, with a notable balance across political orientations. However, opposition to this policy tends to be more prominent among those on the political right.
- **Weapons Delivery:** While there is overall support for delivering weapons to Ukraine, a slight decline in support has been observed over time. Support for this measure is slightly stronger among those on the political left.

- **Refugee Acceptance:** Support for accepting Ukrainian refugees remains high, particularly among those on the political left. However, opposition to refugee acceptance tends to be more prevalent among those on the political right.
- **EU Membership for Ukraine:** A majority of respondents endorse Ukraine's aspiration to join the EU, with stronger support coming from those on the left end of the political spectrum.
- **Energy Independence:** There is robust support for EU energy independence, although opinions are evenly split across political orientations, except in Germany and Spain where support leans towards the left.
- **Effectiveness of Sanctions:** A majority believes that economic and financial sanctions on Russia are ineffective, with notable variations across member states. Those who view sanctions as ineffective predominantly identify as right-wing.
- **Reconstruction of Ukraine:** Most Europeans believe that the reconstruction of Ukraine will impose an economic burden on the EU, with stronger caution expressed by those on the right politically.

Overall, while there are discernible trends in public opinion regarding the EU's response to the Ukrainian crisis, notable exceptions and variations across member states underscore the complexity of these sentiments. As geopolitical dynamics continue to evolve, understanding and addressing these nuances will be crucial for shaping effective policies and responses within the European Union.

About eupinions

eupinions is an independent platform for European public opinion. We collect and analyse data on European public opinion and comment on what Europeans think about current political issues and megatrends.

Every quarter, we collect samples from each EU member state in 22 languages. Our data is representative with regard to age, gender, education and country/region.

eupinions is a Bertelsmann Stiftung project. The data is collected by Latana.

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Methodology note

The samples analysed in this report were drawn by Latana in December 2023 (n=13,299) across all 27 EU member states. Our samples take into account current population distributions with regard to age (16–70 years), gender and region/country. In order to obtain census representative results, the data were weighted using the most recent Eurostat statistics.

Any references to differences between countries in the report pertain only to the seven countries with sufficiently large sample sizes: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain.

Given the sample size and design–effect considerations, the margin of error is 0.9% at a confidence level of 95%.

Thank you!



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