

# European Union and Public Opinion in Estonia

2010



## CREDITS

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# Preface and background

European integration is continuously a topic that needs attention. Although in different opinion polls Estonian people do appear EU friendly, it is not clear if, and to what extent they actually relate Estonia as a state and themselves as individuals to Europe and to different European processes. Therefore the **Pro Patria Training Centre** with the support of the **Centre for European Studies (CES)** and in co-operation with research partners conducted a research project using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to thoroughly understand public opinion and anticipation towards European integration.

There are three major reasons why this research is important:

- There was no public opinion research available in Estonia focusing on above mentioned subjects. Professional research companies are conducting several regular political public opinion research projects, but those do not provide necessary in-depth insight into those matters. Only limited number of questions is asked and those mainly focus on concrete subjects, not on long run policy process and opinion shifts.
- In the light of the global economic downturn, which especially seriously has touched the Baltic countries including Estonia, we anticipate a major shift in public anticipation towards policy process. To be capable of formulating adequate response of center-right politics in Estonia as well as on the European level, we need to understand those dynamics thoroughly.
- Despite the fact that overall turnout (43,9%) of the European Elections 2009 grew by 16,9% compared to 2004 turnout (27%), the pre-election period showed that the Estonians' understanding about EU is still rather weak. Instead of the EU issues, the main debate in Estonian society concentrated in internal policy issues. Thus one purpose of this survey is to find out how to increase the awareness about EU and carry the ideas and values of the centre-right thinking to the wider public on all levels.

# Objectives and methodology

The aim of this study is to explore the attitudes of Estonian citizens towards the European Union, its political role and influence on national policy making. The research will also study people's interest and involvement in politics, attitudes towards centre-right political parties in Estonia (Pro Patria and Res Publica Union – IRL, and Reform Party) and explore what role do European parties play in the mind-set of the people in Estonia. The survey also covers attitudes and concerns that people have regarding euro. Among other topics, attention is also devoted to analysing the reasons of protest votes in the last European Elections that were given to single candidates.

Analogous study was carried out in co-operation of Pro Patria Training Center and CES during the end of 2009 and the beginning 2010. That enabled to get comparative data and to analyze the dynamics of attitude change in the last phase of preparation on the adaption of Euro (scheduled 1.01.2011). During this period euro and other topics of the European Union integration were in the focus of public discussion and discourse.

The survey was carried out in two stages:

- Qualitative survey: 6 exploratory focus groups with voter segments inclined to vote centre-right parties and the segment of swing voters.
- Quantitative survey: nation-wide CAPI face-to-face survey of 1100 Estonian citizens.

# Objectives and methodology

## Qualitative survey

- Method: 6 focus group interviews, 8 people per group
- Fieldwork: 29.11-03.12.2010
- Location: Tallinn
- Composition of the groups:

	Settlement	Gender	Age	Education	Political views
1	Golden Ring	M	35-50	Middle	Right or centre-right
2	Tallinn	M	18-35	Higher	Right or centre-right
3	Tallin	M	Retired	Middle	Swing voter
4	Golden Ring	F	35-50	Middle	Swing voter, voted for the single candidate Indrek Tarand in the EP elections
5	Tallin	F	Retired	Middle or vocational	Right or centre-right
6	Tallinn	F	18-35	Middle	Swing voter

# Objectives and methodology

## Quantitative survey

- Method CAPI (*computer assisted personal interview*)
- Fieldwork period: 06.-17.12.2010
- Sample: 1100 Estonian citizens eligible to vote
- Sample proportions:

Data from Estonian Statistical Office and TNS Emor Omnibus studies

TOTAL		Data of		Model	Actual		Weight	Weighted	
		01.01.2009		No SP	divison			Count	Count
		Abs. no	%		Count	%			
REGION	Tallinn	906 163	100,00%	200	1 004	100,00%		1 004	100,00%
	North-Estonia	253 330	27,96%	54	282	28,09%	0,9965	281	27,99%
	West-Estonia	146 215	16,14%	31	144	14,34%	1,1250	162	16,14%
	Tartu region	122 863	13,56%	28	143	14,24%	0,9510	136	13,55%
	South-Estonia	141 933	15,66%	32	160	15,94%	0,9813	157	15,64%
	Virumaa	121 815	13,44%	29	145	14,44%	0,9310	135	13,45%
SETTLEMENT TYPE	Capital	120 007	13,24%	26	130	12,95%	1,0231	133	13,25%
	Big town	253 330	27,96%		282	28,09%	0,9965	281	27,99%
	Other town	149 248	16,47%		160	15,94%	1,0313	165	16,43%
	Village	190 743	21,05%		201	20,02%	1,0498	211	21,02%
SEX	Male	312 842	34,52%		361	35,96%	0,9612	347	34,56%
	Female	405 377	44,74%		485	48,31%	0,9258	449	44,72%
AGE	15-24	500 786	55,26%		519	51,69%	1,0694	555	55,28%
	25-34	146 012	16,11%		126	12,55%	1,2857	162	16,14%
	35-49	178 382	19,69%		142	14,14%	1,3944	198	19,72%
	50-64	254 713	28,11%		241	24,00%	1,1701	282	28,09%
	65-74	212 467	23,45%		249	24,80%	0,9478	236	23,51%
NATIONALITY	Estonians	114 589	12,65%		246	24,50%	0,5163	127	12,65%
	Non-Estonians	735 289	81,14%		812	80,88%	1,0037	815	81,18%
TOTAL		170 874	18,86%		192	19,12%	0,9844	189	18,82%



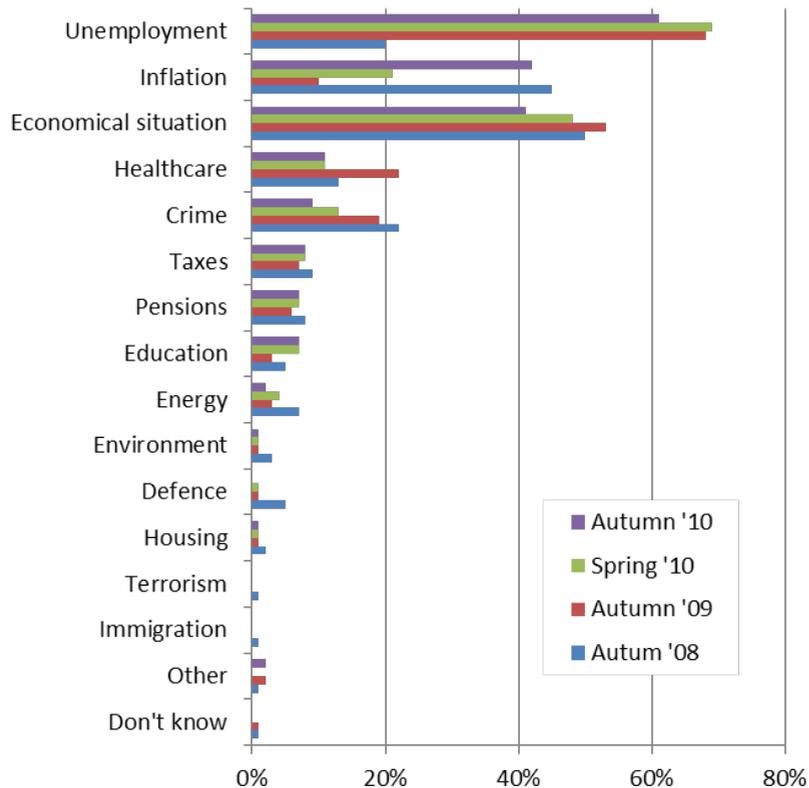
# Main perceived problems in Estonia 2009-2010 and outlook on the future

European Union and Public Opinion in Estonia

# Unemployment, inflation, economic situation

## Most important problems in Estonia

(person could choose up to 2 topics)

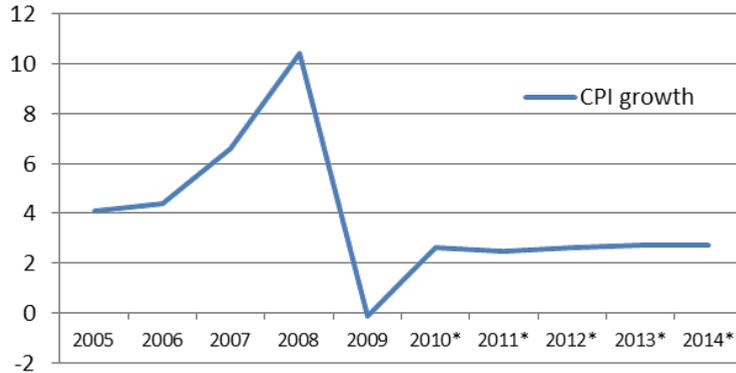


### It's Economy, ... !

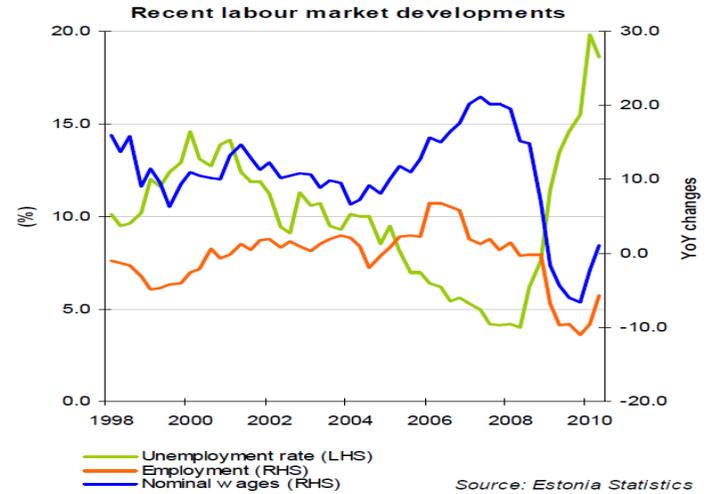
- During the 2008-2010 main problems for Estonian citizens were connected to unemployment, inflation and economic situation. In the autumn of 2010 unemployment was still the most important problem, but as during 2010 prices started rising again after freezing in 2009, and unemployment started to decrease but remained still over 15%, inflation as perceived problem raised from 21% to 42% and unemployment as problem decreased from 69% to 61%.
- Comparing other problems to these three most important problems, they were perceived much less important.
- As similarly to most countries in Estonia euro has been (mostly falsely) perceived as the driver behind rising prices, we will take closer look at the euro implementation and connecting perceptions. As in connection with financial crisis the monetary and economic policy of the EU might become a topic in the forthcoming Riigikogu debates, we also tried to look at these dimensions in Estonia and EU.
- As some anomalies occurred in the European Parliament elections in 2009 when some new political forces appeared on the political landscape, we also tried to estimate the impact of these changes to the centre-right parties during the forthcoming parliamentary elections in 2011.

# Perceptions and real economy correlate well

## Inflation prognosis is 2,5-3%

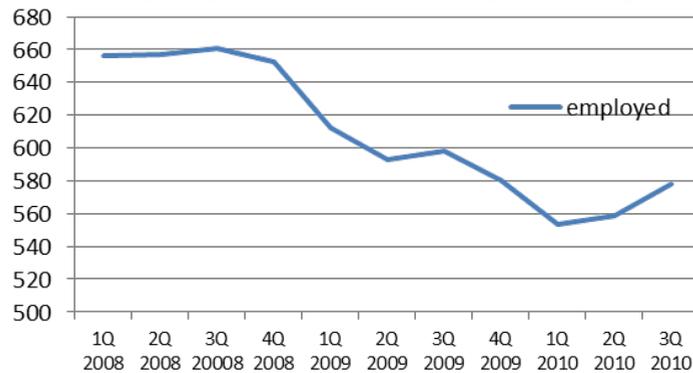


\* Ministry of Finance prognosis

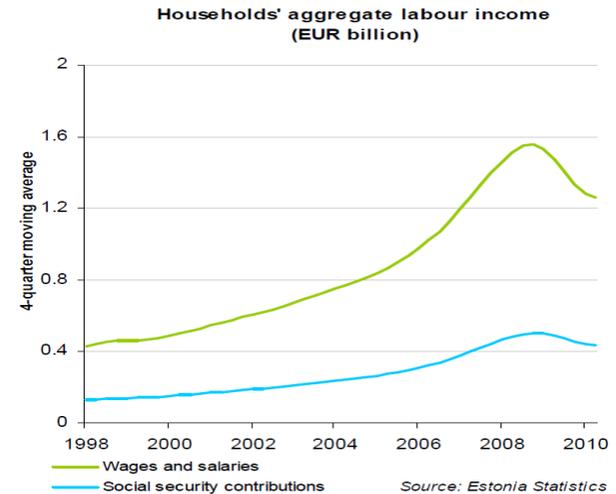


Source: Estonia Statistics

## Employment started growing



\* Ministry of Finance prognosis



Source: Estonia Statistics

# Satisfaction with life and expectations

- Estonian citizens are generally fairly satisfied with their life. People who in the qualitative study claim to be satisfied with their life, most commonly say that when one has a job and sense of security, there is not much to complain about. However, they admit that they sometimes have difficulties to manage, as the salaries have been cut, the work load has increased, and all this causes stress and tensions in the family.

*“There is work and bread, but the main problem now is that you don’t get enough salary that is needed for living” (middle-aged man)*

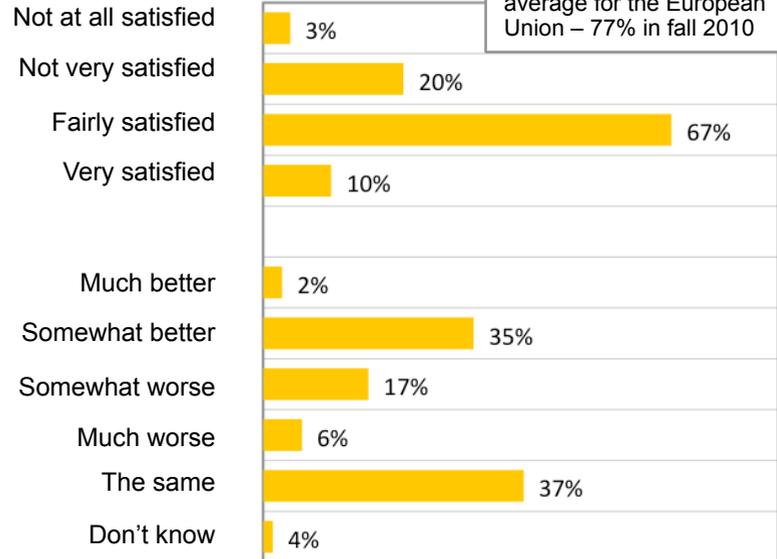
- People believe that the economic crisis was caused by global economy and is perceived as inevitable. They feel tired of accusations, and believe that everybody should gather strengths to emerge from the crisis.
- According to focus group discussions, it is believed that the following demographic groups are in the most difficult situation: people living alone, families where one or both parents are unemployed, young families trying to start their independent life.
- Citizens have quite an optimistic outlook on the future of their household, and there few of those who believe that the economic situation of their household will get worse in the next twelve months.
- There is no considerable attitude shift (max 3%) comparing the beginning of 2010 and the end although it was anticipated that uncertainty arisen by adoption of euro will influence the sense of insecurity.

# Satisfaction with life and expectations

**On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the life you lead?**

**What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same, when it comes to the financial situation of your household?**

**TOTAL, n=1004**



Satisfaction with life in Estonia is to some extent lower than the average for the European Union – 77% in fall 2010



# Attitude towards European Union and it's role in policy making

European Union and Public Opinion in Estonia

# Attitude towards the European Union

- People are generally positive about Estonia being a member of the European Union. Based on the quantitative study 76% of people support Estonia's membership in the EU – decline of only 1% compared with the first half of 2010.
- There is a general belief that Estonia has benefited from the EU membership. In the focus group discussions people point out that we have received more than we have given ourselves. According to survey, 80% of Estonian citizens believe that Estonia has benefited from the EU membership.
- Meantime the spring 2010 Eurobarometer saw a considerable decline in the average perception of the benefits of EU membership across the EU as a whole. Only 53% of the Europeans now consider that their country has benefited from its membership to the EU, a decline of 4 points since the autumn 2009 study.
- The qualitative study revealed that although people generally have rather positive opinion about the European Union, there are also some doubts – mostly regarding its direction and effectiveness.
- Those doubts are similar to other European Union member states thus it is reasonable to address those in coordinated manner. In this process EPP can take a leading role which in turn enables to promote centre-right politics and identity in the national and European level.
- On personal level the European Union is strongly associated with the freedom to travel, study and work abroad anywhere in the EU - 71% of citizens associate this meaning to the EU.

## POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS

- Freedom of movement - open borders, easy traveling, studying and working abroad
- Common market, more opportunities for smaller countries
- Support programs, monetary support
- Security
- Euro

## NEGATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

- Bureaucracy
- Constraints, too many rules
- Waste of Money
- Fines (e.g. sugar fine that Estonia had to pay)
- Small countries are not heard enough
- Local differences and cultural identity will disappear
- Uncertainty regarding the future of the EU

# Attitude towards the European Union

## Some illustrative quotes from the qualitative study:

*“Although the economy is not at its best in Europe at present moment I still feel strong about euro. Estonia must adopt euro anyway, in the longer run it will guarantee more stability and security” (younger man)*

*“Some people say that it is stupidity to continue with European integration right now as they have so many problems. I think it is a wrong attitude and if we really need to support other member states financially – no problem, they supported us when we needed it” (older man)*

*“When a small country like Estonia is together with big countries then our voice is so weak and we have to work for the interest of larger countries, we cannot look after our interest and stand out for ourselves” (younger woman)*

*“I think that joining European Union was a good thing for small Estonia, that we stand out, that we exist, that we are noticed and the European monetary support has been like life waft for us. If you have ever looked around and noticed the signs saying that this and that construction has been supported from the European Union funds, then you would say that it has really worked out well for us” (middle-aged woman)*

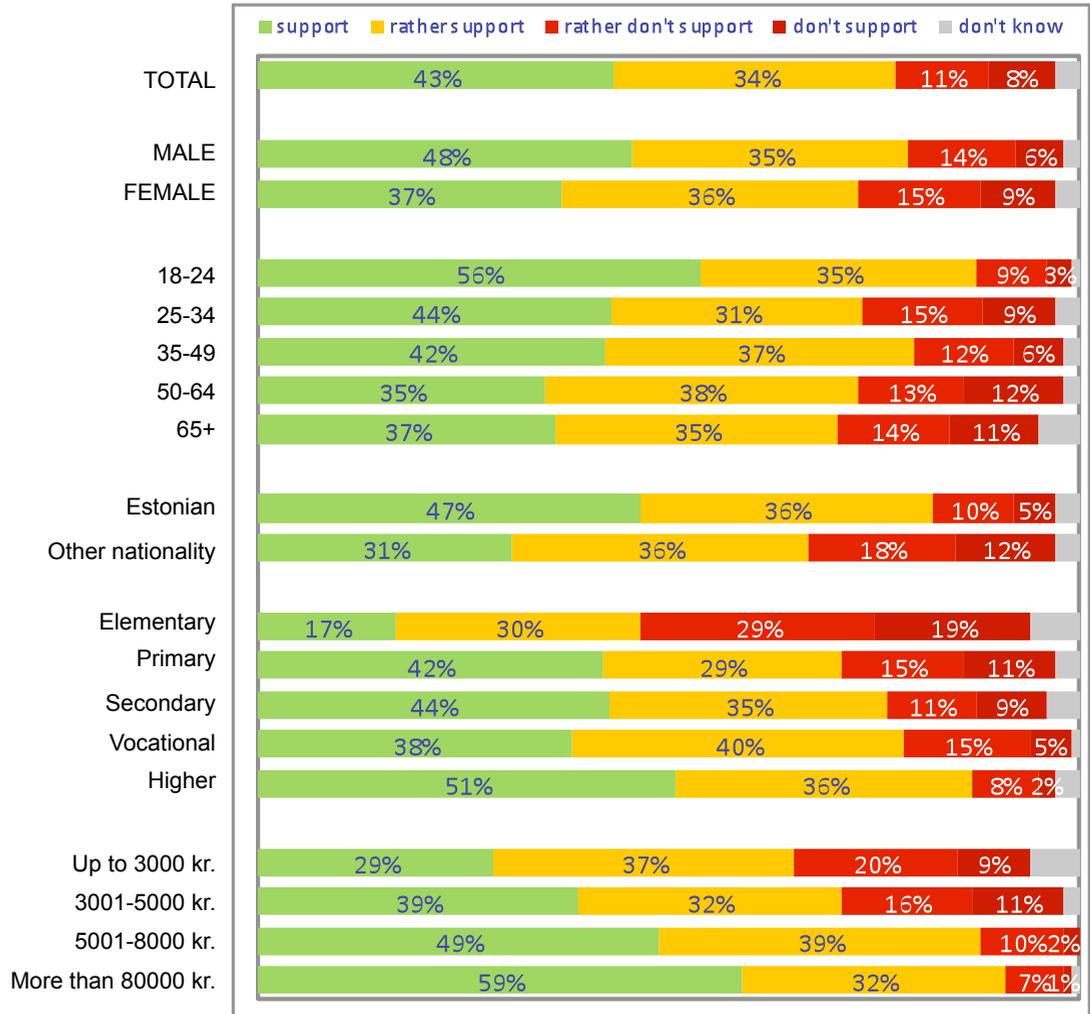
*“I used to be against the European Union. But when we had the Bronze Night (re-locating of the Soviet statue), then I was glad that we are part of the EU, it gave sense of security. It is large and unclear, there is much bureaucracy, but we wouldn't manage alone” (older woman)*

*“So far it has been positive, but we don't know what the EU will be like in the future” (middle-aged man)*

*“At first it was meant to be economic union, but how it will turn out... I can't imagine how northern conservatism and the southern mañana attitude will manage together... but we can try” (middle-aged man)*

# Support towards Estonia's membership in the EU

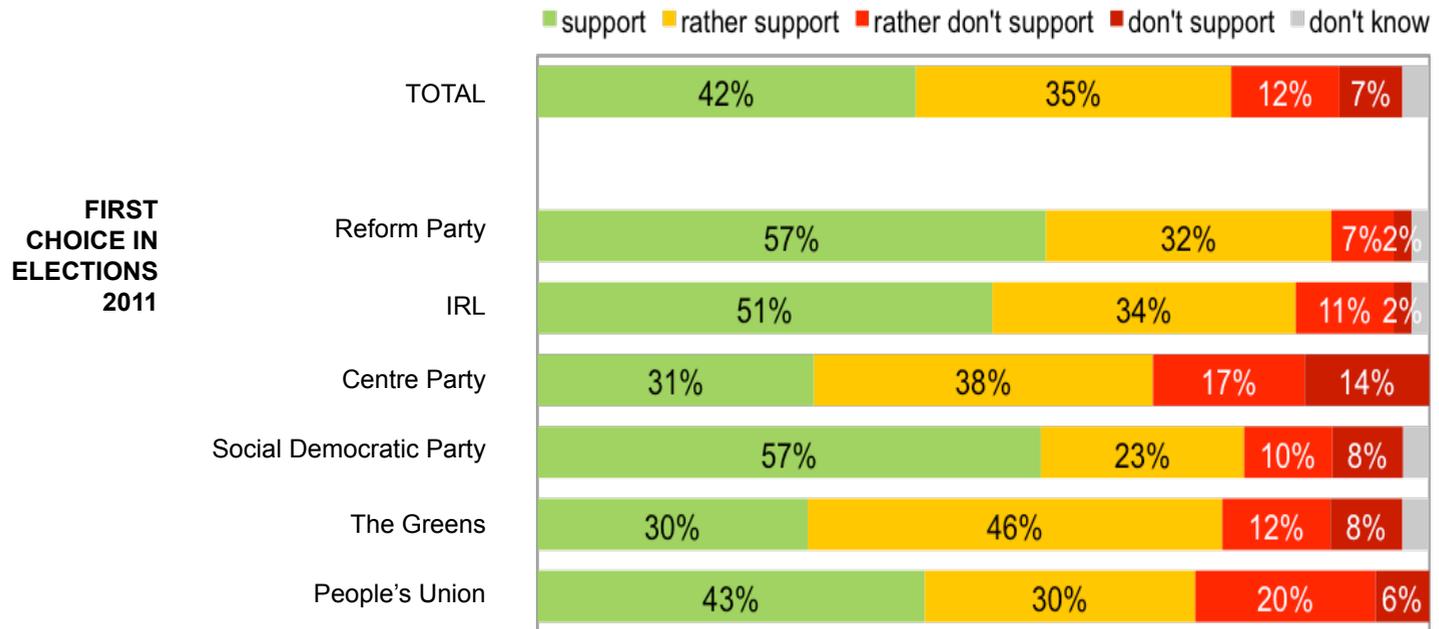
How do you feel about Estonia's membership in the European Union? Do you support it, rather support, rather do not support or do not support it?



- Men and younger people tend to support Estonia being a member of the European Union more than female and older people.
- Estonians support Estonia's membership in the EU significantly more than non-Estonians.
- People with higher education and higher income support Estonia's membership in the EU more than on average.
- In the demographic groups with higher support level the support has a growing trend (up to 3 points) during 2010. In other groups it is stable.

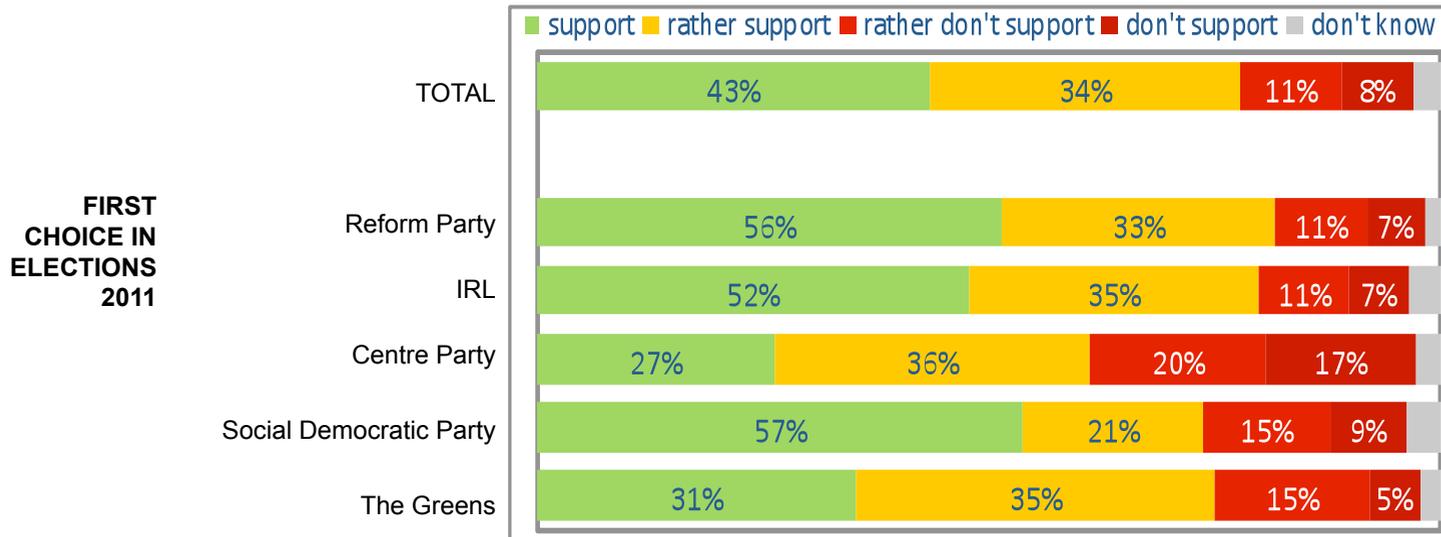
# Support towards Estonia's membership in the EU – 2010 first half

How do you feel about Estonia's membership in the European Union? Do you support it, rather support, rather do not support or do not support it?



# Support towards Estonia's membership in the EU – 2010 end

How do you feel about Estonia's membership in the European Union? Do you support it, rather support, rather do not support or do not support it?



- Supporters of the right and center-right parties in Estonia have more positive feelings towards Estonia's membership in the EU. Also the trend of support during 2010 has been in positive direction.
- 37% of the Centre Party's voters do not support Estonia's membership in the EU and this trend has grown considerably (6 point) during 2010.
- In the first half of 2010, 26% of the People's Union's voters do not support Estonia's membership in the EU. By the end of the year the general support of the party was less than 3%, so it was not included in the survey in December 2010.
- From the left and center-left parties SDE supporters have the most positive attitude towards Estonia's membership in the EU.

# European Union's role in policy making

- The influence of the European Union's policy on the local level is seen firstly in different rules that Estonia needs to follow and different constraints that are set. Some of this is seen as useful, but some is believed to be not sensible.

*"I think all those Euro-norms cannot apply in so different environments... in Estonian tourism farms there need to be doors of certain sizes, however, they used to be very low in the old days. So the individuality is lost..." (younger woman)*

*"Difference should be made between big and small countries" (younger man)*

*"Negative is that some country in the EU is doing badly like Greece, and others need to help and be responsible for it" (middle-aged woman)*

- In the opinion of Estonian citizens the highest priority which the European Union should deal with is to help people overcome the financial and economic crisis by supporting entrepreneurship (support to SMEs). It is agreed that The EU should put in place a stronger European system of supervision of financial markets and financial institutions.

*"I think some European countries are taking a free ride on the account of others. Estonia and many other countries made considerable cuts during the crises, while the others did nothing. This is not fair and for sure this is not good for building trust in the future. Something certainly must be done to control member states' financial discipline..." (younger woman)*

*"We can not allow that some countries live on the expense of our children's education..." (older woman)*

- Investment in education, training and research and support to the unemployed were also seen important.



# Attitude towards the EU common monetary policy and euro

European Union and Public Opinion in Estonia

# Attitude towards euro throughout 2010

- About half of the Estonian citizens support adoption of euro in Estonia. As the comparative surveys from the first half and from the end of 2010 clearly indicate this proportion didn't change during the year. This demonstrates clearly that the path chosen by Estonian present centre-right government towards euro and balanced budget has earned the support of the general public.
- This quantitative and qualitative evidence could encourage other centre-right political parties in EU in pursuing the same aims. It demonstrates clearly that if communicated in the proper manner citizens are eager to accept short-term cutbacks to achieve long-term goals of development.
- Main reasons throughout the year for supporting euro based on the qualitative study are the following:
  - Helps to enliven economy, brings in foreign investments  
*“Credibility of Estonia and the whole Baltic region will rise when Estonia adopts euro” (younger man)*
  - There will be no risk of devaluation any more  
*“It is important for enlivening economy. In coming years devaluation would be a threat if there won't be euro” (younger man)*
  - There is no other option for Estonia, as it is such a small country in global economy
  - Easier to travel, no currency exchange needed

# Attitude towards euro throughout 2010

- The media has reflected a lot on the adaption of euro as an important decision to bring Estonia out of the economic crisis, and there are a number of people who believe it is true. However, people generally believe that euro is not a magic tool by itself, and people will also have to work hard to emerge from the crisis.
- In the second half of the year the timing of the euro adoption (01.01.2011) was much questioned in the media. Especially as the financial crisis in Europe evolved further. Despite that the general attitude of the public was not heated up and hesitations stayed in the reasonable framework.
- Main reasons throughout the year for not supporting euro (based on the qualitative study) are the following:
  - Price increase that is believed to arrive before and after the adoption of euro  
*“Take a look at milk price – why did it rise by 2 kroons? The increase has already started” (middle-aged woman)*  
  
*“Negative is that everything will become easily comparable and we will discover that the prices are the same as in other countries, but the salaries are much lower” (younger man)*
  - There are other countries who can manage well without euro (Sweden, Denmark, GB).  
  
*“What makes me cautious is that big countries – GB, Denmark, Sweden – definitely won’t adopt euro” (middle-aged man)*
  - There is emotional attachment to Estonian kroon  
*“It looks good... pictures of beautiful places” (older woman)*  
  
*“Just that there will be many coins, that is inconvenient and Estonian currency is one of the most beautiful notes... I really wouldn’t want to loose it” (middle-aged man)*
  - Problems with Greece make people doubt if we want to be more connected to the European economy  
*“We don’t know how the crisis in Greece will end... “ (younger man)*

# Attitude towards euro throughout 2010

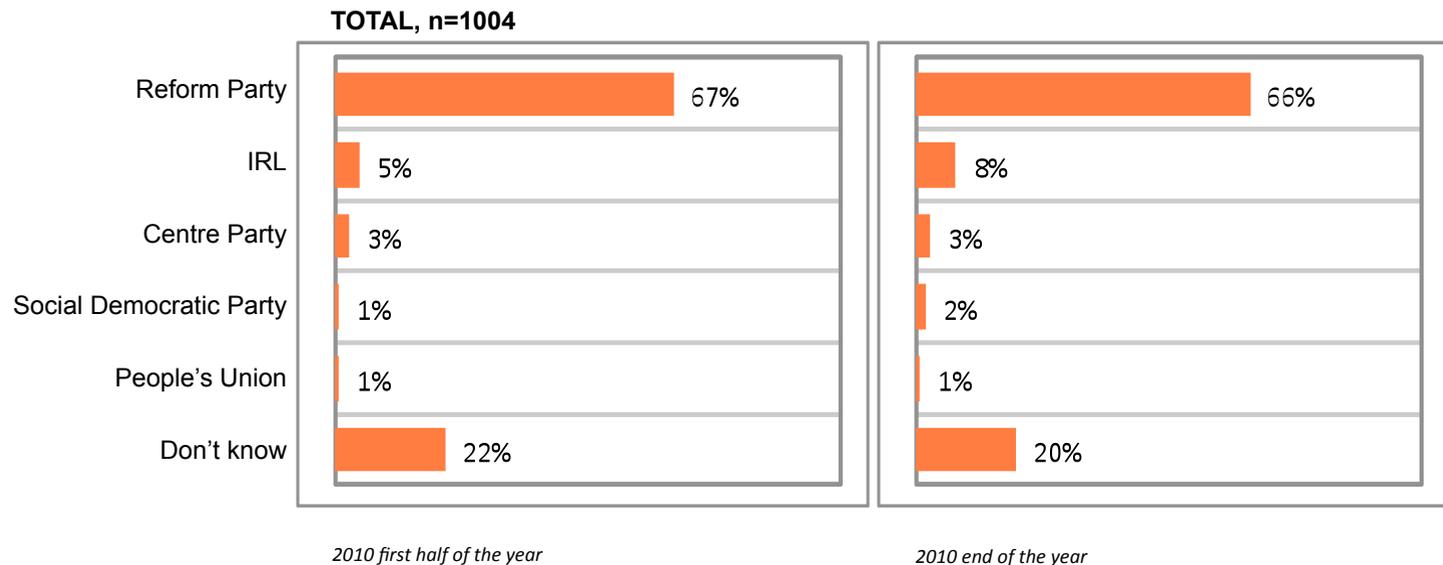
- When talking about the efforts that Estonia had to make in order to be eligible for euro, people generally believe the budget cuts were necessary. Most agree that those cuts were necessary to guarantee sustainable economy, and euro was more like an excuse for making those cuts.

*“The cuts by the Government were needed anyway to guarantee the sustainable development in the future. Euro was a good motivation to keep the things on track” (younger man)*

*“It was good to explain the cuts by this excuse. If we had not made the cuts, we would have soon be where Greece currently is” (older man)*

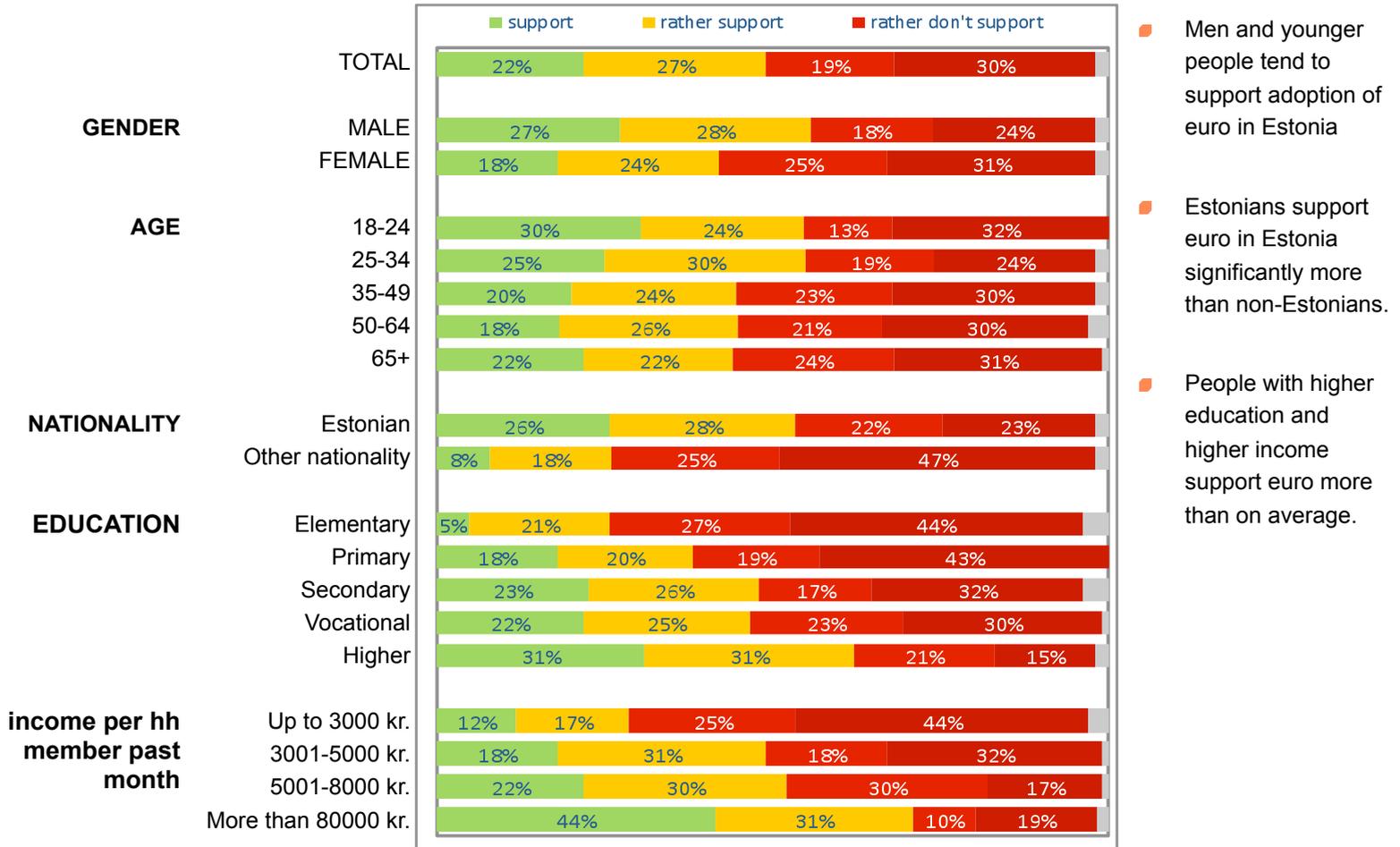
- Throughout the year Reform Party, the leading party in the centre-right coalition, is most associated with euro. The contribution of its coalition partner IRL has been equal, but not many people recognize that. This indicates to the need of having better communication plan in the future.

**Which party do you associate most with the euro?**



# Attitude towards euro

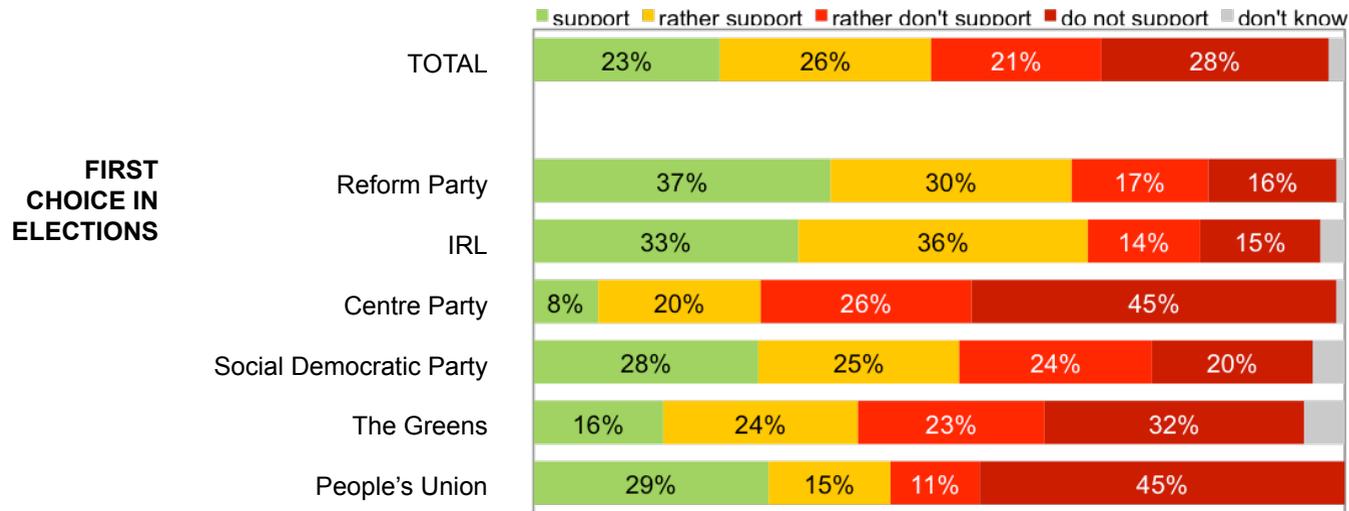
How do you support the adoption of euro in Estonia? Do you support it, rather support, rather do not support or do not support it?



- Men and younger people tend to support adoption of euro in Estonia
- Estonians support euro in Estonia significantly more than non-Estonians.
- People with higher education and higher income support euro more than on average.

# Attitude towards euro

How do you support the adoption of euro in Estonia? Do you support it, rather support, rather do not support or do not support it?



- Supporters of right or center-right parties in Estonia have more positive feelings towards adoption of euro
- 71% of the Centre Party's supporters do not support adoption of euro in Estonia.
- From the left or centre-left parties SDE supporters have most positive attitude towards euro

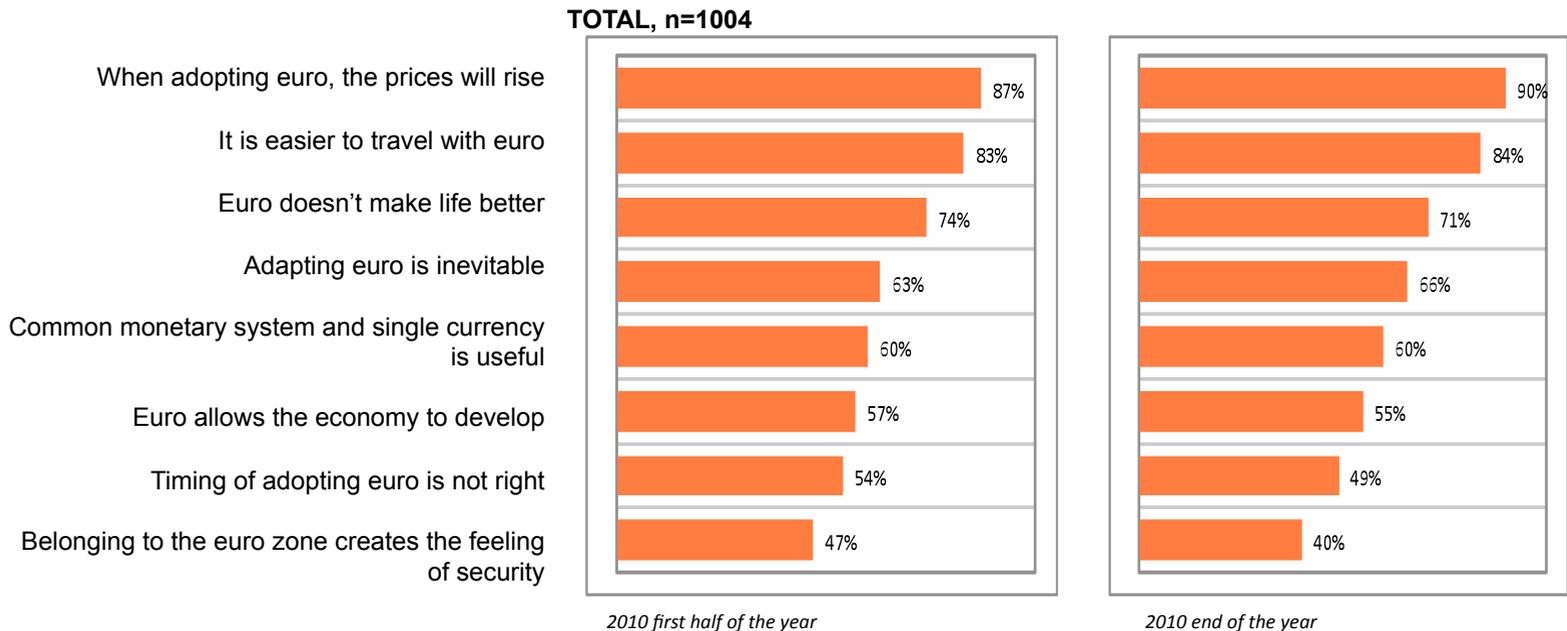
# Beliefs and concerns regarding euro throughout 2010

- Main concern regarding euro throughout 2010 has been the same - the price increase. In the first half of the year 87% of people believe that when adopting euro, the prices will rise. This number rose to 90% by the end of the year.
- During the year due to the turbulences in EU financial markets people started to hesitate in timing of the adoption. Consequently perception of the eurozone security fell 7 points between two surveys.

*“I really don’t know any more – euro seemed so safe and secure but now I think maybe we should keep our beautiful kroons...” (older woman)*

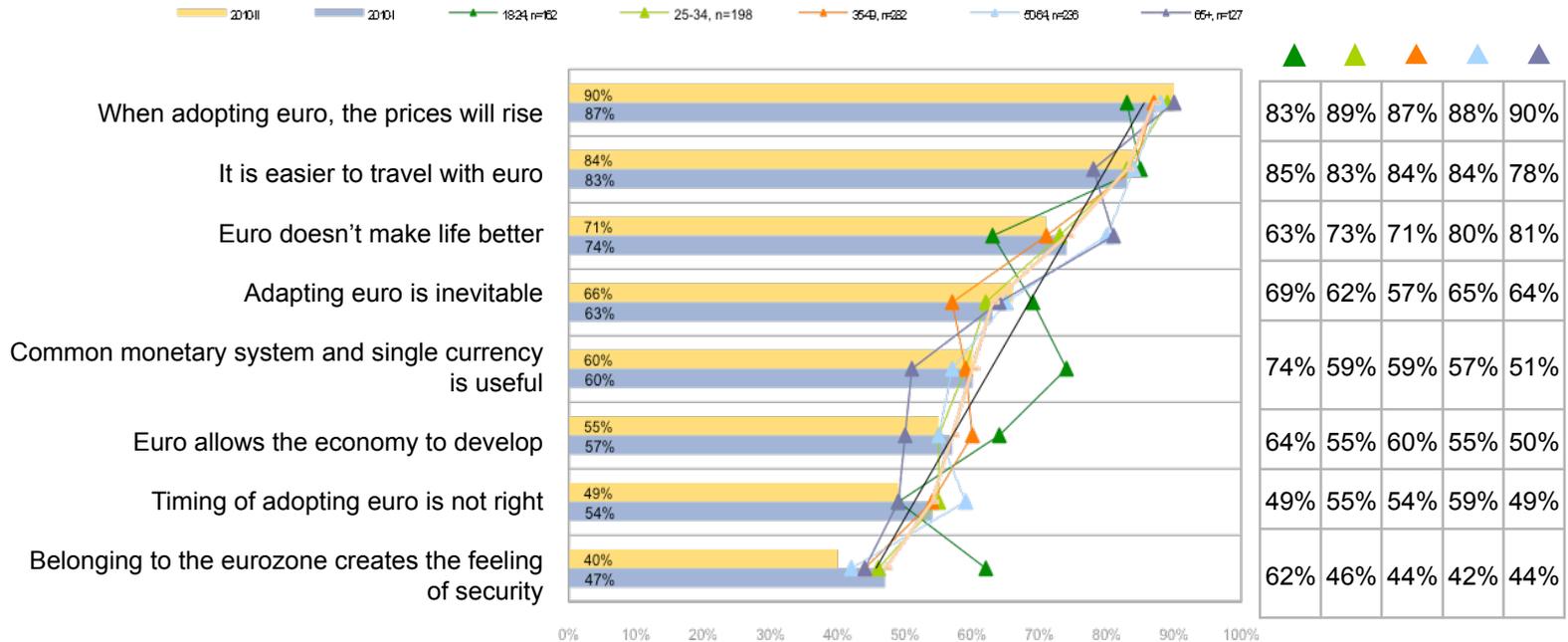
*“I think the prices will go up a lot. In Estonia now you can get something with 5 kroons... some chocolate, for example, but elsewhere in Europe you don’t get anything for those coins. And if something costs 12.50 kroons now, then you can’t round it in euros.. It will be rounded up, because nobody wants to give price tags in small cents” (younger woman)*

## Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



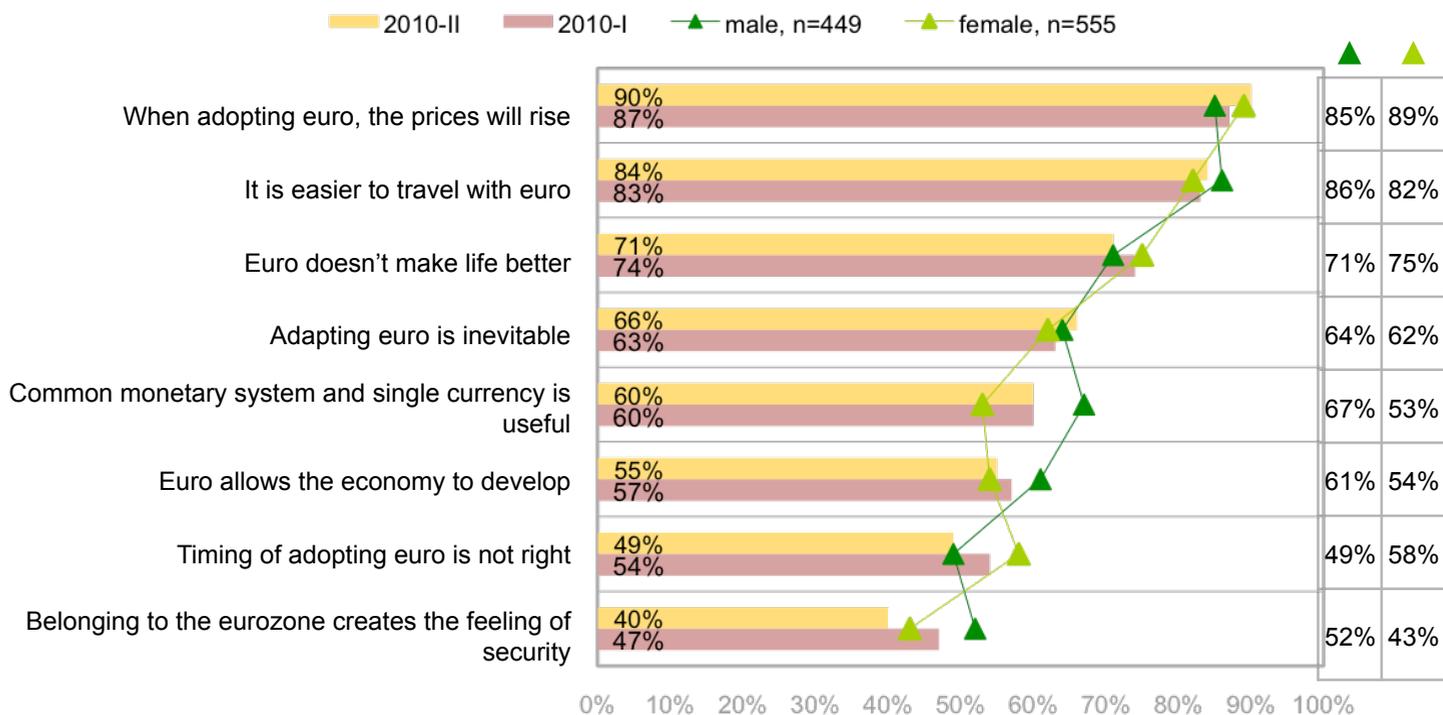
# Beliefs and concerns regarding euro throughout 2010: age

- Concern about the price increase that is believed to come with euro is common to all age groups. It increased 3 points during 2010.
- Older people are more convinced that euro doesn't make life better.
- Younger people on the other hand, believe more than on average that common monetary system and single currency is useful, and belonging to the eurozone creates the feeling of security.



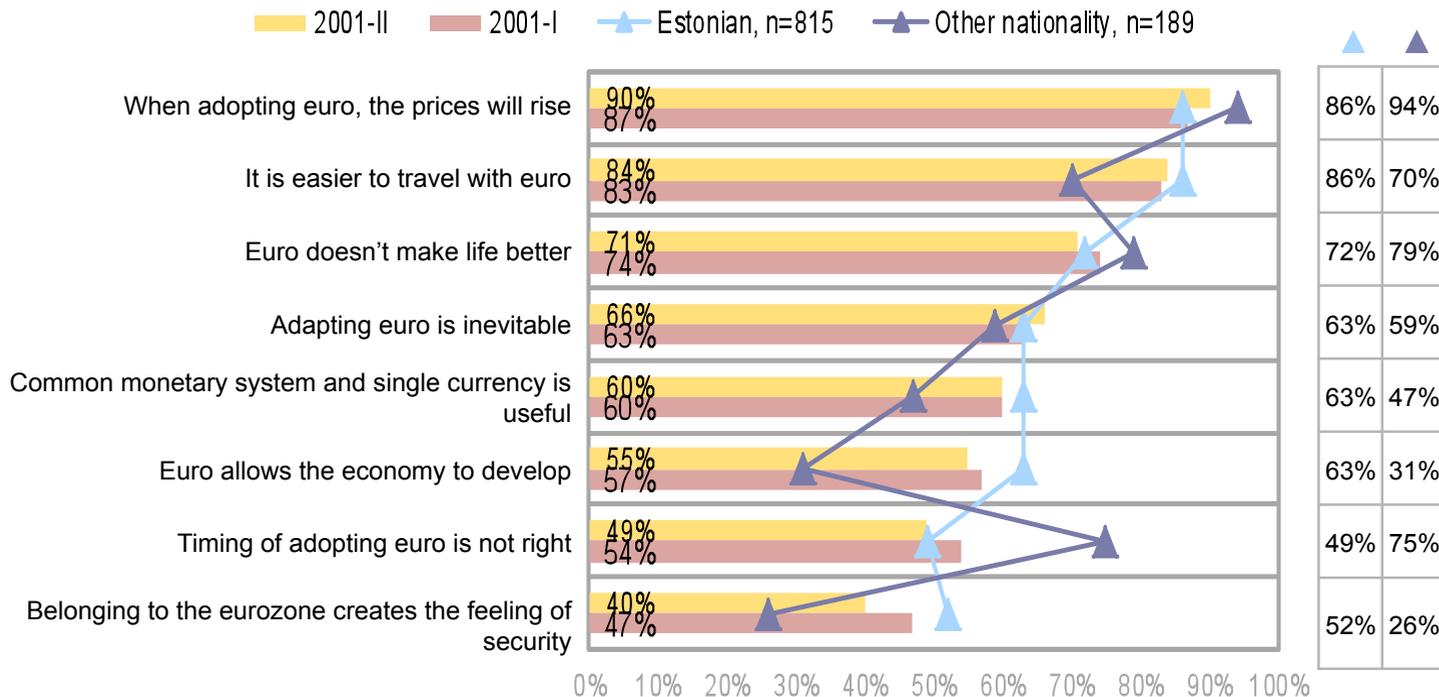
# Beliefs and concerns regarding euro throughout 2010: gender

- Men believe more in the usefulness of common monetary policy and single currency and the benefit on Estonian economy than women.
- Women hold slightly stronger opinion that the timing for changing to euro is not right.



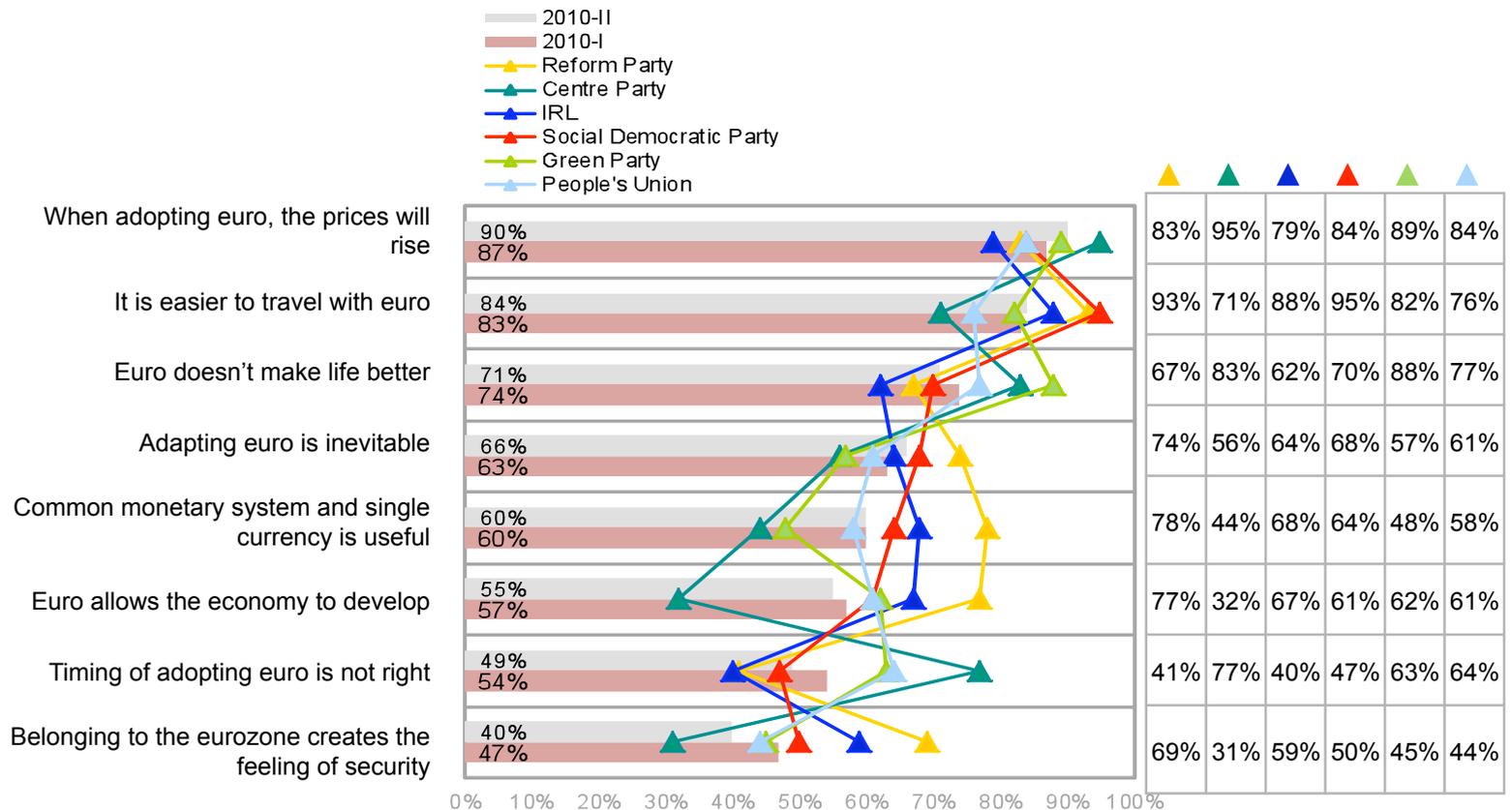
# Beliefs and concerns regarding euro throughout 2010: nationality

- Non-Estonians are far more skeptical about euro than Estonians. They also hold a stronger belief that the prices will increase than do Estonians. They are much more convinced that the timing of adopting euro is not right.
- When comparing Estonians to non-Estonians, we can see that Estonians agree much more strongly that Estonian economy will benefit from euro and that belonging to the eurozone provides the feeling of security.



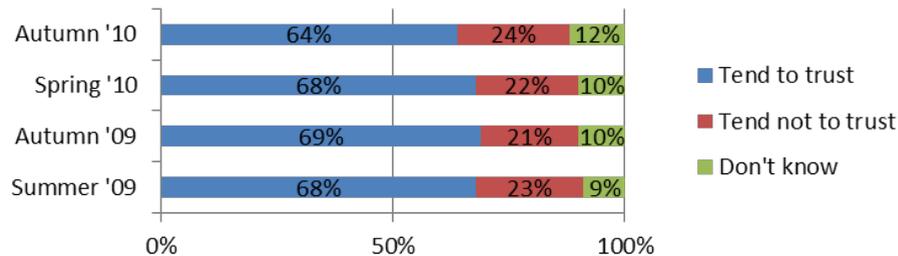
# Beliefs and concerns regarding euro throughout 2010: political preference

- The centre-right parties, especially the Reform Party supporters believe more in the usefulness of euro on Estonian economy.
- The Centre Party supporters hold most negative opinion on euro. They are most convinced that the timing of adopting euro is not right. They also don't believe much that the euro will help to enliven Estonian economy.

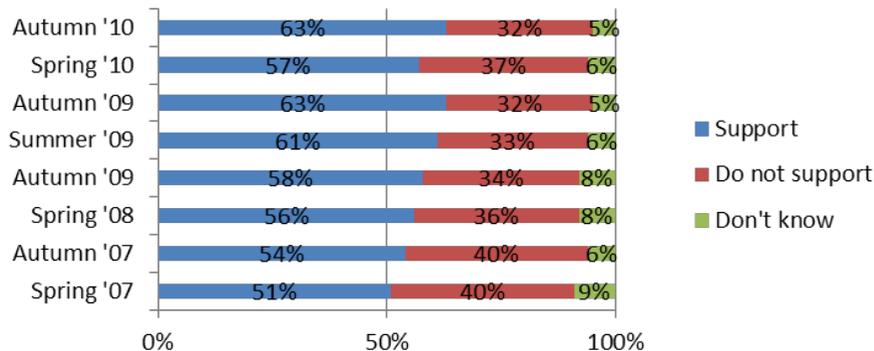


# Trends in supporting EU and euro

## Trust in EU



## Support to EU monetary policy



## Trust in EU and the monetary policy

- In early 2010, fears of a sovereign debt developed concerning some European states, notably eurozone members Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. In 2010 the debt crisis was mostly centered on events in Greece, where there was concern about the rising cost of financing government debt. On 9 May 2010, Europe's Finance Ministers approved a comprehensive rescue package worth almost a trillion dollars aimed at ensuring financial stability across Europe by creating the European Financial Stability Facility.

- Tremendous price of the Greece rescue package and Estonian share in it raised some concerns in Estonian public debate. This topic was touched in focus groups and people asked what it would mean for Estonia after joining euro. Still this debate did not change wider support to EU and European monetary policy.

- As we can see, the trust in EU has been declined 4% comparing to spring 2010 which is rather minor but still noticeable change. In the same period support to EU monetary policy has (after a small decline in spring 2010) risen back to the level of autumn 2009.

# Conclusions for the center-right parties

- About half of the Estonian citizens support adoption of euro in Estonia.
- The media has reflected a lot on the adaption of euro as an important decision to bring Estonia out of the economic crisis, and there are a number of people who believe it is true. However, people generally believe that euro is not a magic wand by itself and people will also have to work hard to emerge from the crisis.
- When talking about the efforts that Estonia had to make in order to be eligible for euro, people generally believe the budget cuts were necessary. Most agree that those cuts were necessary to guarantee sustainable economy, and euro was more like an excuse for making those cuts.
- Reform Party is most associated with euro. This party has promoted euro in Estonia the most.
- Main concern regarding euro that people have, is the price increase. 90% of people believe that when adopting euro, prices will rise.
- The centre-right parties, especially Reform Party supporters believe more in the usefulness of euro on Estonian economy.
- People take more interest in local politics than international politics. It is admitted that there is not much information about European Union and its politics in local media, and those topics are reflected only when something really big is happening. That is why European Union politics usually seems distant and is not well understood.



# Crisis and opportunities for anti-elite parties in EP and Riigikogu elections

European Union and Public Opinion in Estonia

# Crisis 2008-2009 and the government actions (background information)

## ■ Economic crisis 2008-2009 and government actions

Estonia's liberal economic policies and macroeconomic stability have fostered exceptionally strong growth and better living standards than those of most new EU member states. After enjoying 8% average annual GDP growth since 2000, the economy started to show signs of cooling in 2007 when GDP growth slowed to 6.3%. During the economic crisis, GDP fell by 3.6% in 2008 and a further 14.1% in 2009. Despite these hardships, the Estonian government kept budget deficits low, and Estonia will join the eurozone on January 1, 2011. Additionally, Estonia's economy began growing again in the fourth quarter of 2009. Led by strong export growth, Estonia's GDP is expected to grow 2% in 2010 according to the Ministry of Finance.

Estonian government took measures almost immediately after the crisis struck to keep fiscal position within the limits of the Stability and Growth Pact, and focused on maintaining the credibility of state finances.

The cumulative fiscal tightening for 2008 and 2009 amounted to 10, 2 per cent of GDP in nominal terms and to 7 per cent of GDP in structurally adjusted terms. These measures included rising VAT by 2%, cutting public servants' salaries, layoffs, etc. Private companies cut back labor force and working hours, and the average salaries fell by 4, 5 percent in 2009. **By common understanding, such steps by the government should have led to a significant decrease in government support. However, this did not happen.**

## ■ Recovery of economy

Since spring of 2009 trust in national economy started to grow. After the more downbeat mood recorded in 2009, Estonians were more positive about their country's economic situation in autumn 2010. In autumn 2010 still 66% citizens said that economic situation of country was bad, but it was 13% less comparing to 2009 (79%). Number of these who said that country's economic situation is good has been increased from 12% to 32% which was better than European average (28%)

# Crisis 2008-2009 and the government actions (background information)

## ■ Satisfaction with households economic situation and life people lead

65% of respondents said the their household financial situation is good. It is similar to European average. Almost two-thirds of Europeans (64%) continue to believe that the financial situation of their household is good. A majority of Estonians were also still satisfied with the life they lead and are more confident about the future. A large majority of Estonian citizens (72%) continue to be satisfied with the life they lead in the autumn 2010.

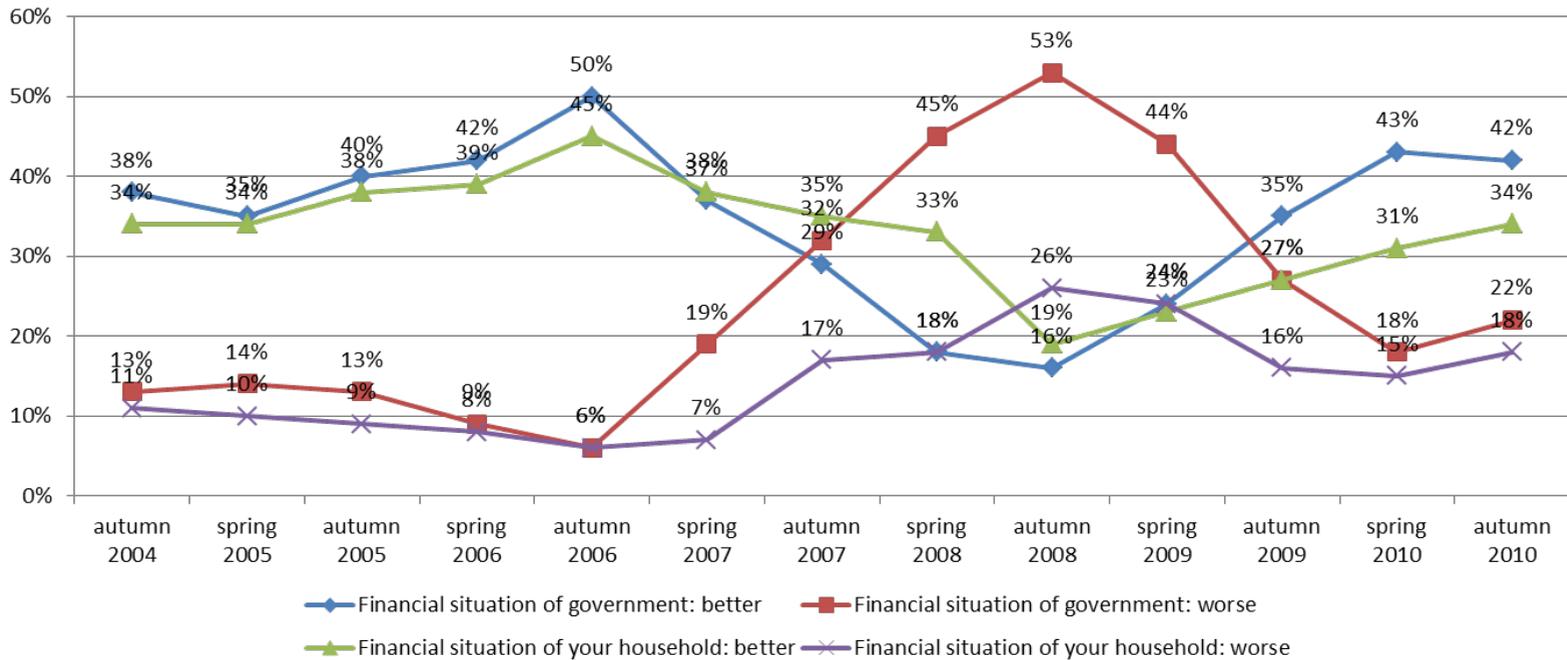
## GDP growth in Estonia (%)

\*ministry of finance forecast in summer 2010



# Trends in expectations 2004-2010 (background information)

## Expectations for the next 12 months

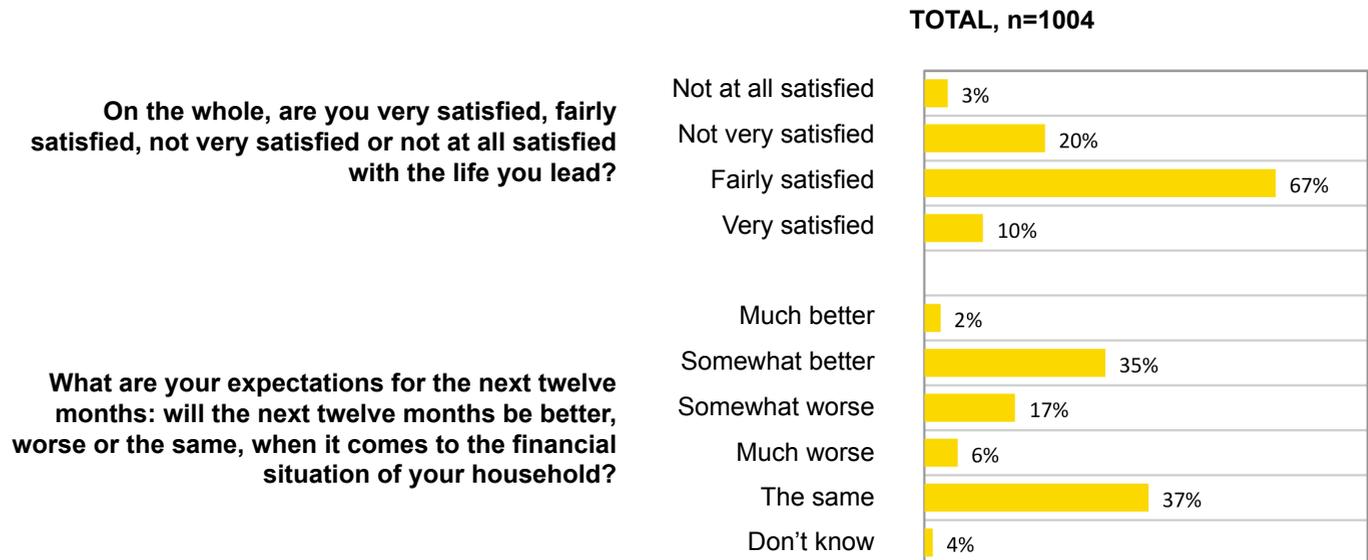


# Satisfaction with life and expectations (background information)

- Estonian citizens are generally fairly satisfied with their life. People who in the qualitative study claim to be satisfied with their life, most commonly say that when one has a job and sense of security, there is not much to complain about. However, they admit that they sometimes have difficulties to manage, as the salaries have been cut, the work load has increased, and all this causes stress and tensions in the family.

*“There is work and bread, but the main problem now is that you don’t get enough salary that is needed for living” (middle-aged man)*

- People believe that the economic crisis was caused by global economy and is perceived as inevitable. They feel tired of accusations, and believe that everybody should gather strengths to emerge from the crisis.
- According to focus group discussions, it is believed that the following demographical groups are in most difficult situation: people living alone, families where one or both parents are unemployed, young families trying to start their independent life.
- Citizens have quite an optimistic outlook on the future of their household, and there are quite a few of those who believe that the economical situation of their household will get worse in the next twelve months.
- There is no considerable attitude shift (max 3%) comparing the beginning of 2010 and the end although it was anticipated that uncertainty arisen by adoption of euro will influence the sense of insecurity.



# Crisis and trust in the Estonian government (background information)

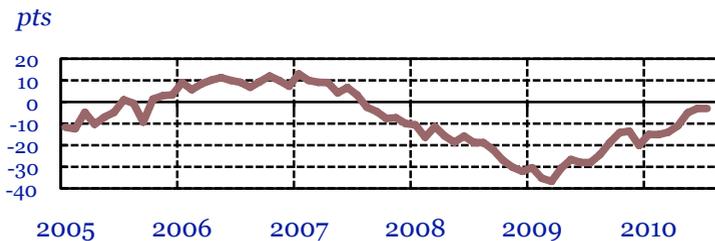
## Estonian trust in the national government is recovering

■ In the autumn 2010 55% of Estonian citizens trusted their national government. The European Union average was in the same time only 28%. The trust was higher only in Luxembourg (67%) and Sweden (63%). Trust in the Estonian government had increased over the past year, but it was still lower than in 2006, when it was 66%.

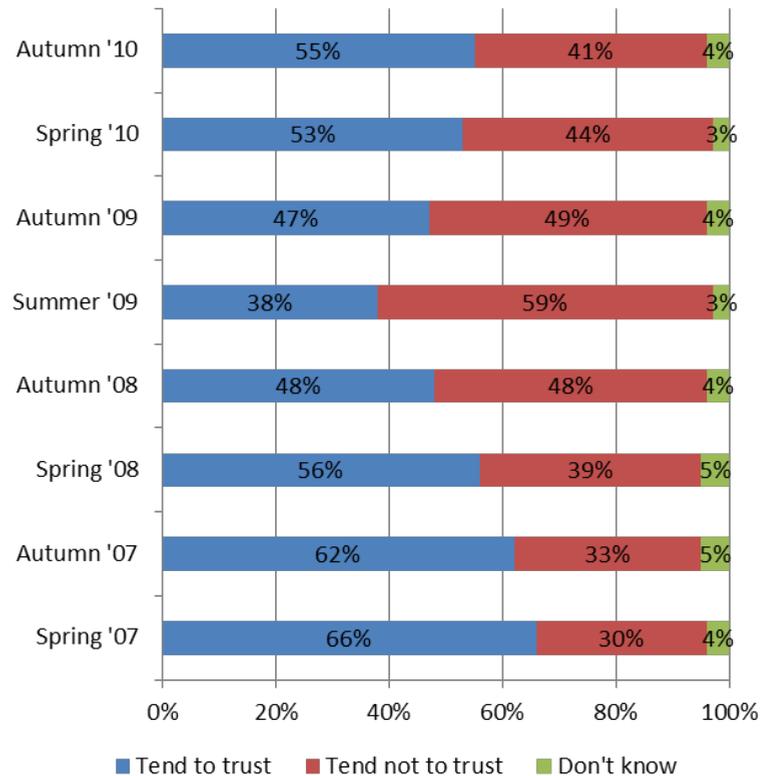
■ The fact that tough decisions in crisis situations and cutting the government spending may not significantly reduce the support to ruling political parties, has also been shown by Alesina, Carloni and Lecce\*. In Estonia such decisions followed by the turn of the economic cycle raised trust to the government even near to the pre-crisis level.

\*The Electoral Consequences of Large Fiscal Adjustments, Alberto Alesina, Dorian Carloni ja Giampaolo Lecce, October 2010.

## Consumer barometer 2005-2010



## Trust in Estonian Government



# Interest and involvement in politics (background information)

- People involved in the qualitative study claimed to take reasonable amount of interest in politics. When asked to specify, they said they keep up with every-day news on TV and radio, read newspapers daily. Some people pointed out that they find it their duty as a citizen to be well informed of politics. More common explanation for keeping oneself informed is curiosity towards the surrounding, to be able to discuss politics with friends or colleagues.
- Younger people admitted that they sometimes do not take great interest in politics, and usually just keep up with the important issues. However, they have noticed that their interest in politics has grown with age.
- Usually the interest in politics rises with important events. As an example it was pointed out that the interest towards politics rises before elections. Then debates of politicians are followed on TV and radio with great interest. Also during the economic downturn, interest in politics has risen.
- Some of the women claim to be sometimes bored with the news, because it brings them down. Some even tend to avoid reading newspapers from time to time.

*“I have got tired, because I feel that the parties are fighting with each other all the time” (middle-aged woman)*

- People take more interest in local politics than international politics. It is admitted that there is not much information about European Union and its politics in local media, and those topics are reflected only when something really big is happening. That is why European Union politics usually seems distant and is not well understood.

# European Parliament elections 2009

- "EP elections lead to the emergence of new or to the strengthening of relatively unimportant parties. This was the case for example with the French Front National in 1984 and, more recently, with the United Kingdom Independent Party (UKIP) in 2004.
- Governing parties are usually punished by the voters. Especially if the EP election takes place in the middle of a national electoral cycle, the voters tend to use it as a kind of referendum in which they express their level of satisfaction with the current government.
- Instead of being focused on purely European issues, the parties fight their campaigns on national issues. The academic literature commonly presents this factor as one of the major obstacles to the emergence of a genuine transnational political debate."

*Gagatek, Wojciech.*

*European Political Parties as Campaign Organisations:  
Toward a Greater Politicisation of the  
European Parliament Elections,  
Centre for European Studies. 2009. Page 17.*

## European Political Parties as Campaign Organisations:

Toward a Greater Politicisation of the European Parliament Elections

Wojciech Gagattek



# The decision to vote / not to vote: experience from previous European Parliament elections

- In the course of the survey in December 2010 the same questions were asked as during the previous survey. The aim was to analyze if over a period of time the memories, emotions and persuasion clues concerning electoral behavior change thus opening up more subconscious triggers of voting decisions. The conclusion is that it didn't happen, supposedly because the time period between the elections and two surveys was too short.
- In general, it is agreed that it is important to vote in elections. The main reason for voting is doing the citizen's duty and it gives people the right for criticism afterwards. It is believed that the more people go voting, the more fair the results will turn out, the opinion of most people is then represented.

*"If I don't go voting and don't participate in this process, then I have no right to point a finger later" (middle-aged woman)*

- In a couple of cases the decision to vote in EP elections was made during the campaign in order to protest. Those people wanted to protest against some party, because they found the campaign too annoying and aggravating.

*"The whole city was covered in Centre Party ads, and they were so stupid... and for that purpose I thought I would go vote for the Reform Party" (younger man)*

- Some of the reasons of non-voters include the following:
  - None of the parties gives good enough program, reliable promises
  - Frustration, because politicians are accusing and slandering one another before elections (protesting by not voting at all)
  - Too large sums of money are spent on election campaigns, especially during difficult times (protesting by not voting at all)

*"All the time I was waiting some party would say they will give money to a children's home.. That would have been the best commercial. Sometimes I think that those ads are for people who are not able to think at all" (young woman)*

- Closed lists

*"I would like to change the voting law, so it wouldn't be that I vote for a certain person and then those votes will be divided to somebody else" (middle-aged woman)*

- Inconvenient to vote (registered in another town), have lost id-card codes to vote via internet.

# The decision who to vote for and protest votes in previous European Parliament election

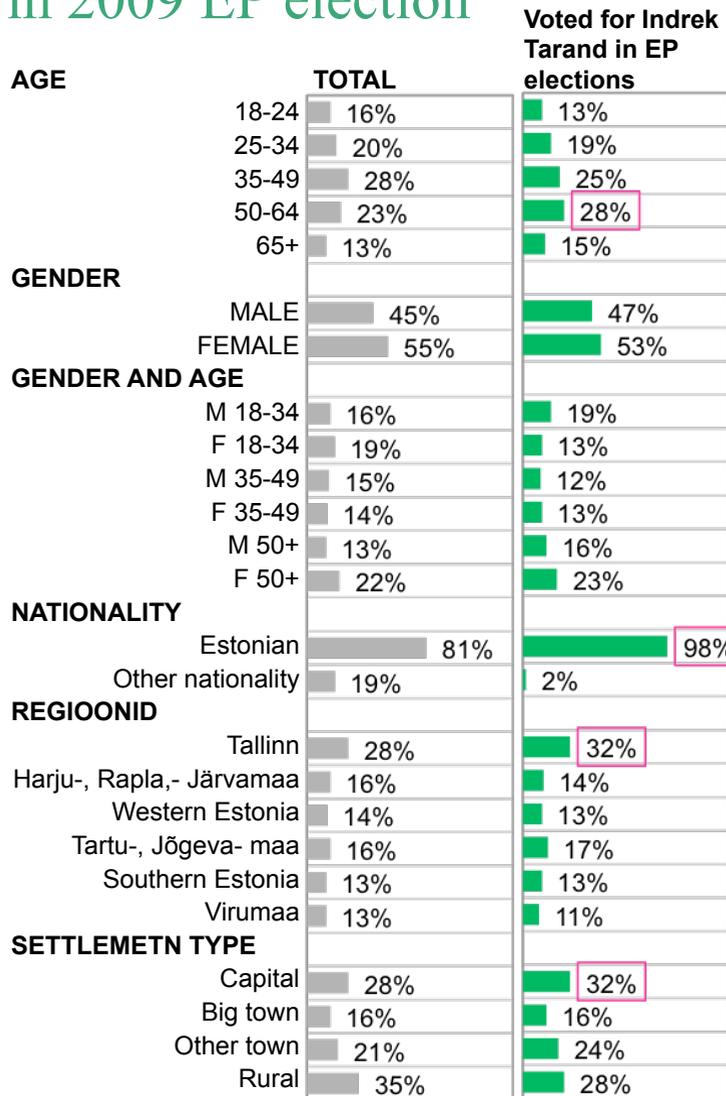
- When asked how the decision for who to vote takes place, there are two main approaches:
  - Established political preferences, either ideological or just used to vote for a certain party
  - Opinion is shaped during the campaign.
- When reasons of voting for the single candidate Indrek Tarand in previous EP elections, there appear to be two main reasons
  - Tarand as a person was favoured. He is considered intelligent and to have a good reputation.
  - His platform was appealing.

*“He criticized the existing parties and I think he is right, they create only frustration. And he is speaking in a way that everybody understands (older man)*

*“ He speaks about things that are important in Estonia not like some other experienced politicians discussing in sophisticated way European politics. I liked when he said that he will give half of his money to the university fund created by his parents which supports students (middle-aged woman)*
  - To protest against something: either closed lists, frustration that the parties were slandering each other, or too much money was spent on campaigns.

*“I liked the fact that he did not spend much money on the campaign” (young woman)*
- There was much criticism on the public debates of politicians prior the EP elections. There were mainly local issues discussed, and not enough focus on what the candidates would do in the European Parliament.
- When hypothesized that Indrek Tarand would be a leader of different parties (Social Democrats, Greens), and asked if that would influence his voters to vote for that party in the parliamentary elections, it was a general opinion that Indrek Tarand should remain independent, and is not seen as a party leader. His independence was an important reason why he was voted for.

# Profile of those who voted for the single candidate Indrek Tarand in 2009 EP election



- Among those who voted for the single candidate Indrek Tarand in EP election, there were more female aged 50-64.
- Indrek Tarand's voters were in great majority Estonians.
- Also the following demographic segments were more than on average represented among Indrek Tarand's voters: vocational or higher education, higher income, paid employment.

## EDUCATION

Elementary	2%	1%
Primary	15%	9%
Secondary	27%	20%
Vocational	32%	41%
Higher	24%	28%

## INCOME PER HH MEMBER

Up to 3000 kr.	21%	13%
3001-5000 kr.	29%	30%
5001-8000 kr.	20%	25%
More than 8000 kr.	15%	20%

## SOCIAL STATUS

Self employed (proprietor)	8%	7%
Payed employment	45%	52%
Unpayed employment	0%	0%
Pupil, student	9%	8%
Houswife	2%	1%
Retired	21%	21%
Unemployed, looking for a job	10%	4%
Childcare	5%	5%

# Political preferences of those who voted for the single candidate Indrek Tarand in 2009 EP election

## What party did you vote for in the parliamentary election in 2007?

- Those who voted for Indrek Tarand in the EP election, have previously mostly voted for the centre-right parties: Reform Party and Pro Patria and Res Publica Union and Res Publica Union
- Their probability to vote in the next election is higher than on average
- In the coming parliamentary elections they would also vote for centre-right parties.

	TOTAL	Indrek Tarand
Reform Party	18%	24%
Centre Party	12%	2%
Pro Patria and Res Publica Union	9%	15%
Social Democratic Party	7%	12%
The Greens	3%	8%
People's Union	2%	2%
Single candidat	2%	1%
Don't remember	8%	15%
Don't know / refused	2%	0%

## LIKELINESS TO VOTE 8-10

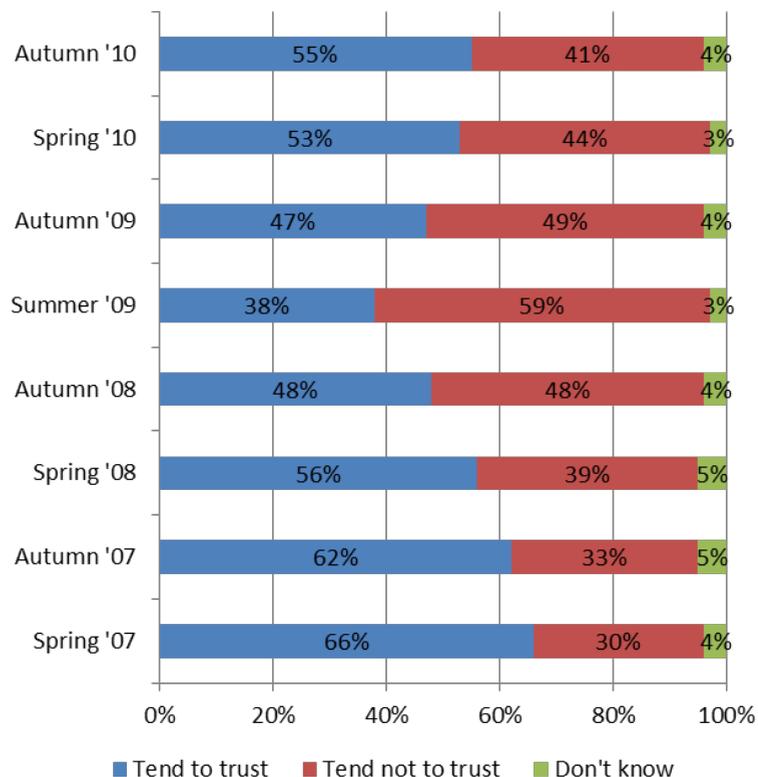
### If the parliamentary election would take place this Sunday, what party would you vote for?

LIKELINESS TO VOTE 8-10	61%	76%
Reform Party	26%	34%
Centre Party	19%	3%
Pro Patria and Res Publica Union	13%	18%
Social Democratic Party	10%	13%
The Greens	4%	5%
People's Union	3%	3%
Independence Party	1%	1%
Russian Party	1%	0%
Other	4%	5%
Don't know / refused	18%	18%

# Crisis and opportunities for the new / anti-elite parties in 2009 European Parliament and 2011 Riigikogu elections

- In Estonia the European Parliament election of 2009 took place on June 7th. The turnout was 43.9% – about 17.1% higher than five years before. The turnout was also slightly above the European average of 42.94%. Six seats were up for taking in this election: two of them were won by the Estonian Centre Party, Estonian Reform Party, Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, Social Democratic Party and an independent candidate Indrek Tarand won one seat each.
- The election result was remarkable as the independent candidate Indrek Tarand gathered the support of 102 460 voters – only 1 046 votes less than the winner of the election, Estonian Centre Party, surpassing the results of all other major and minor parties. Another independent candidate, eurosceptical Martin Helme, surprised also in gaining 9,832 votes and thus surpassing one parliament party – the People's Union of Estonia - and gaining only 1 019 votes less than the next best on the list, Estonian Greens.
- If we take a look at the numbers we can see that trust in the Estonian government ruled by Reform Party and Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, was in the time of the European Parliament election only 38% and elections took place right in the middle of a national electoral cycle, these results confirm Gagatek's argument.
- As a trust in the government has an upward trend since EP elections, the electorate's expectations for the next 12 months are going upwards and most of Indrek Tarand's voters were supporters of ruling parties – namely Reform Party and Pro Patria and Res Publica Union – these parties have much better chances to be successful in the Riigikogu elections than they were in the EP elections.

## Trust in Estonian Government



# Conclusions for the centre-right parties Reform Party and Pro Patria and Res Publica Union

- It's economy, ... !
- Estonian centre-right parties should emphasize on economy, creating jobs and minimizing inflation expectations in Estonia.
- Reform Party and Pro Patria and Res Publica Union have much better chances to be successful in the Riigikogu election than they had in the EP election, because support to the government and expectations to the future are much better than 2009 despite tough decisions in crisis situation and cutting government spending.
- As euro is perceived by center-right voters as one driver of the new economic growth those parties should promote and stay behind the euro currency.
- European policies most probably will not be an important question in forthcoming Riigikogu elections. At present people take more interest in local politics than European politics.
- Meantime we see the growing trend in interest and understanding among citizens how EU influences Estonia. Large part of this growing awareness can be contributed to the consequences EU financial crisis.
- Consequently next EP elections in Estonia will concentrate much more on European issues, compared to 2009 EP elections when local issues dominated.







