



QUALITY OF LIFE in EU - Trends in key dimensions 2003-2009

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European Foundation

- Established in 1975
- First European Union Agency (with Cedefop)
- Annual budget: EUR 20 m
- Ca. 100 staff in Dublin
- Brussels Liaison Office
- Network of European Observatories (NEO) in 28 countries





Structure of the presentation:

- **Quality of life: main features of the EF concept**
- **European quality of life survey (EQLS): unique tool to measure the concept**
- **Results: trends in key dimensions of quality of life and wellbeing in EU 2003-2009**



Core domains of quality of life

- ***Income, financial situation of the household and deprivation***
- ***Employment and job quality***

- ***Work-life balance***
- ***Family relations and support***
- ***Social inclusion/exclusion (community life and social participation)***

- ***Knowledge, skills and employability***
- ***Quality of housing , neighbourhood and local environment***
- ***Health and access to health care***

- ***Social capital (trust) and quality of society (perceived tensions)***
- ***Perceived quality of public services***
- ***Subjective well being (happiness, life satisfaction , optimism about future, specific domain satisfaction)***



EF concept of quality of life: main features

Income and living standard, the concepts which prevailed in earlier EF works proved to be too narrow to capture whole complexity of challenges which asked for quick and adequate policy responses.

- **Quality of life is a multi-dimensional concept**
- **Quality of life refers to individuals' life situation (micro perspective)**
- **Quality of life is measured by objective as well as subjective indicators**
- **EQLS as a tool to measure the EF concept**



EQLS: Key features

First round 2003

Second round 2007

- **Representative household survey among Europeans aged 18 and over**
- **Frequency of the survey: every 4 years**
- **Stratified and multistage sampling (regions-settlements- PSU – addresses - individuals)**
- **Sample size: 1000-2000 persons per country**
- **Full country coverage: all EU Member States + all CC (+ Norway)**
- **Input harmonized survey (common questionnaire for 36' F2F interview)**

- **100+ analytical variables and indicators collected on all key dimensions of quality of life**
- **Centrally coordinated fieldwork: TNS opinion**
- **Data collection: September to November 2007**
- **Overall survey response rate: 58%**
- **Item non-response negligible**

Partial survey 2009 : a number of EQLS questions implemented in 2009 under EB

Third round 2011



Trends in quality of life 2003 – 2007 – 2009

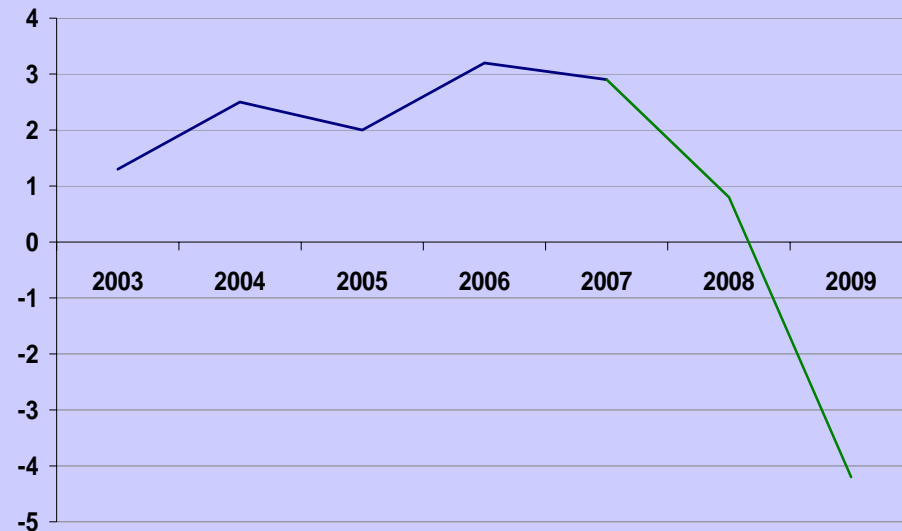


Economic background:

Growth between 2003 and 2007, recession in 2009

- Stable economic growth in EU between 2003 and 2007, rapid growth in NMS
- In the new member states reforms and huge investments (FDI and EU funds) led to two-digit annual growth rates
=> Narrowing gap between GDP of NMS and EU15

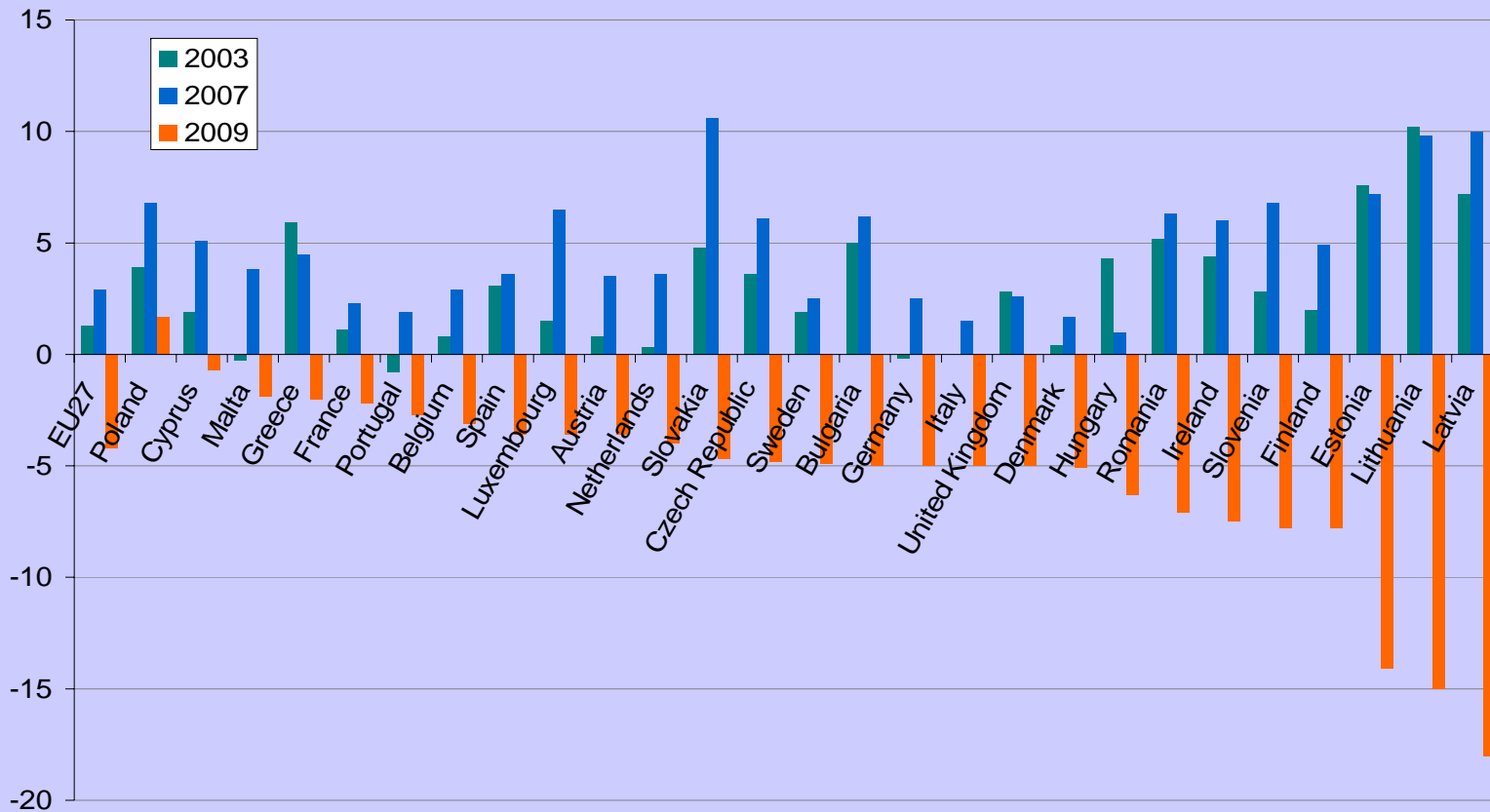
Real GDP growth in the EU27, 2003-2009



- Between 2007 and 2008 economic growth slowed, in 2009 all EU countries entered into recession



Real GDP growth by country



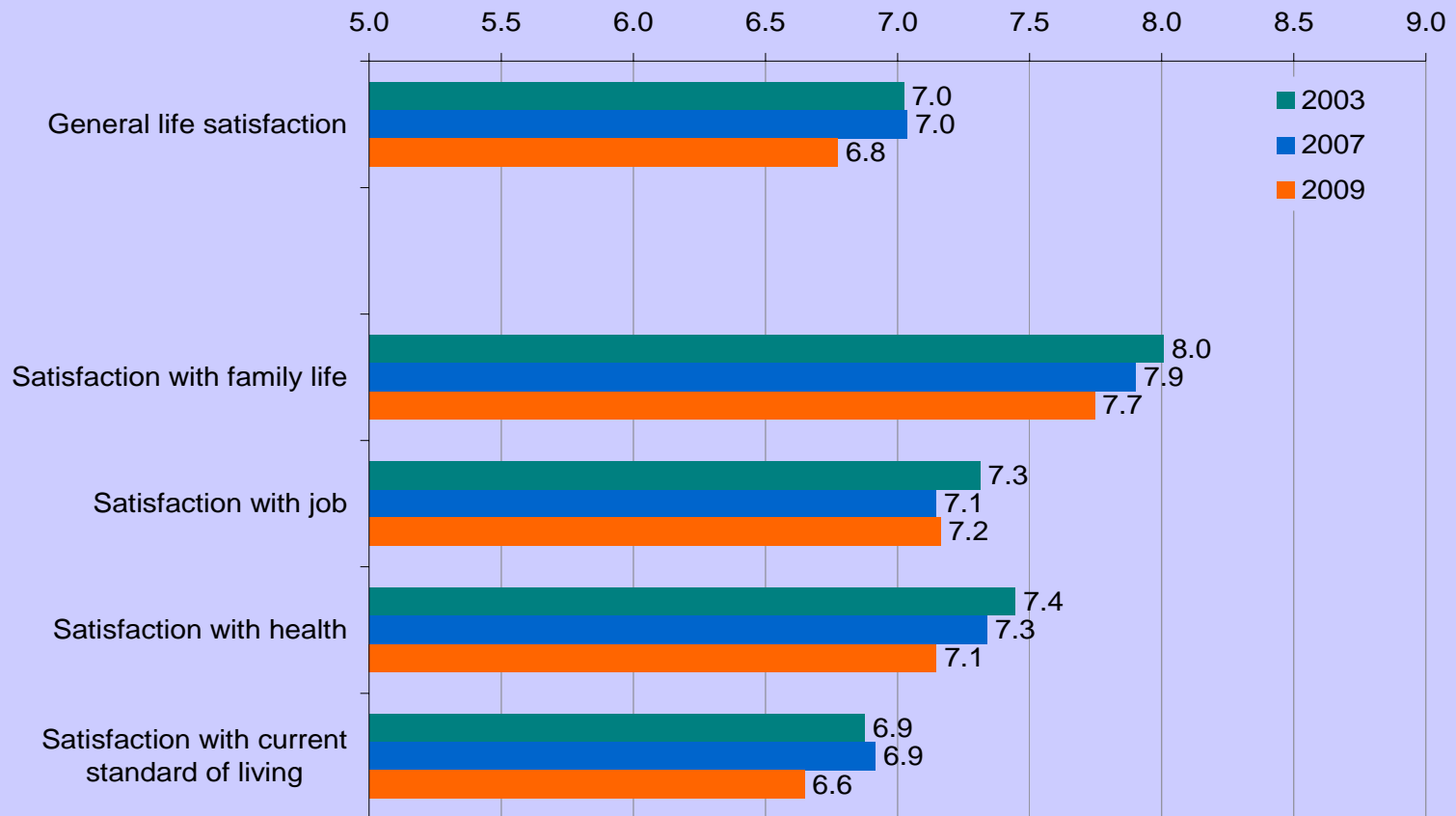


Subjective wellbeing

Life satisfaction as an aggregate measure of well-being



Overall life satisfaction and domains of satisfaction



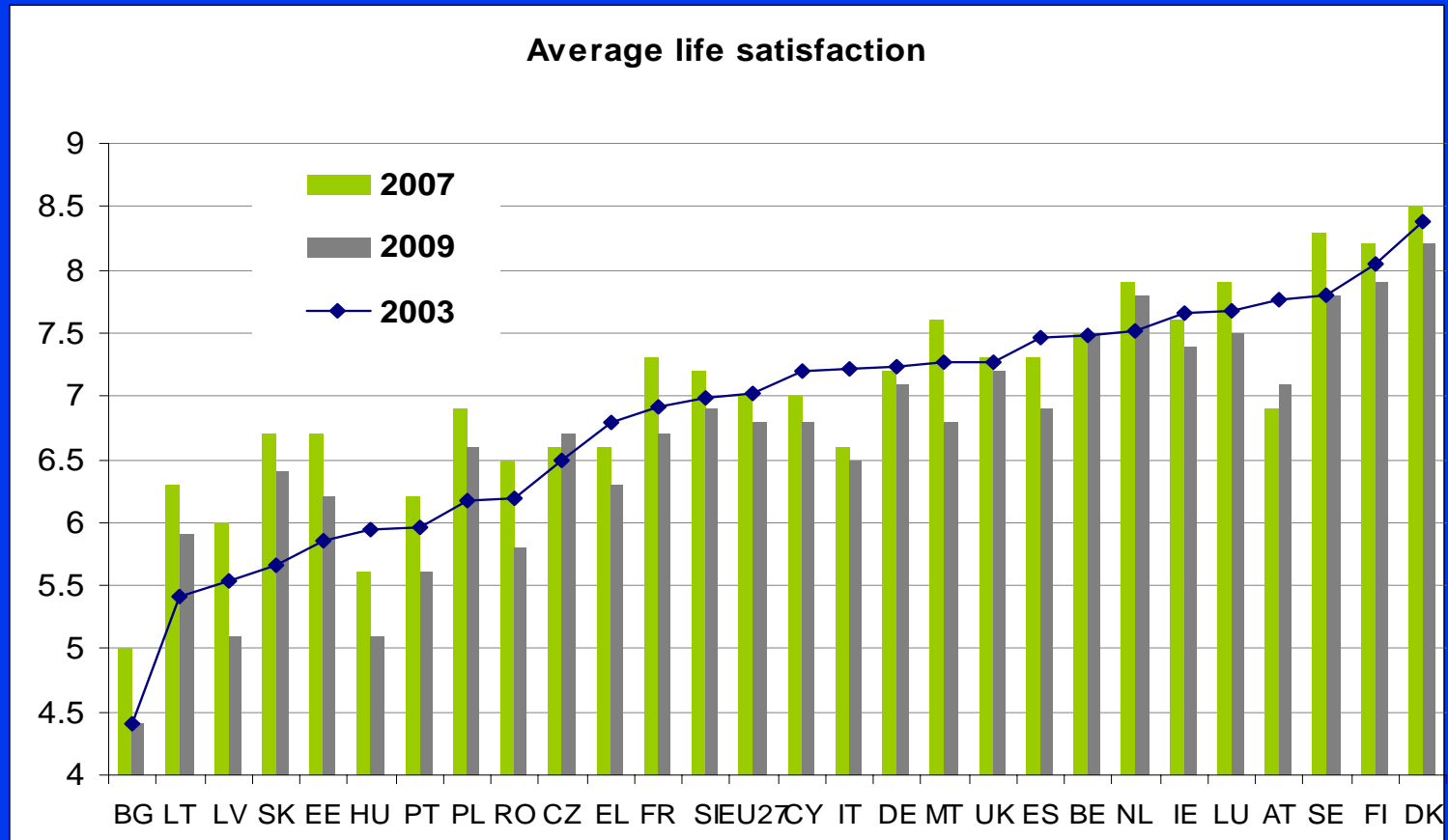


Life satisfaction by population groups

	Life satisfaction					
	2003	2007	Change	2007	2009	Change
EU15	7.30	7.19	-2%	7.19	6.97	-3%
NMS12	6.00	6.47	8%	6.47	6.05	-6%
18-34	7.16	7.13	0%	7.13	7.07	-1%
35-64	6.91	6.97	1%	6.97	6.64	-5%
65+	7.09	7.07	0%	7.07	6.76	-4%
Employed	7.17	7.18	0%	7.18	6.96	-3%
Unemployed	5.58	5.76	3%	5.76	5.56	-4%
Retired	7.03	7.03	0%	7.03	6.61	-6%
Easy	7.92	7.84	-1%	7.84	7.74	-1%
Difficult	5.35	5.31	-1%	5.31	4.86	-8%

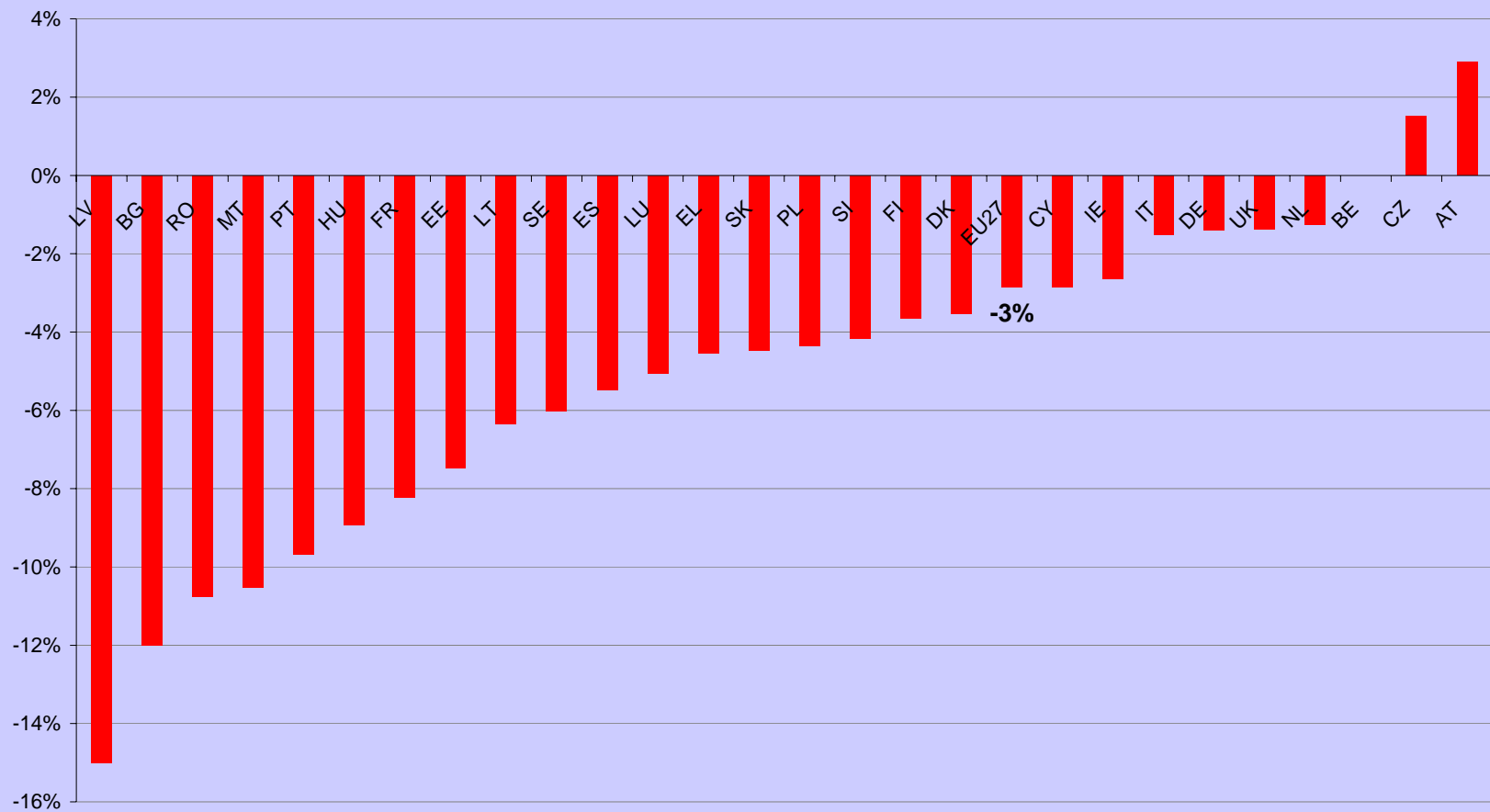


Satisfaction with life in general





Change in the level of life satisfaction (in %), 2007-2009



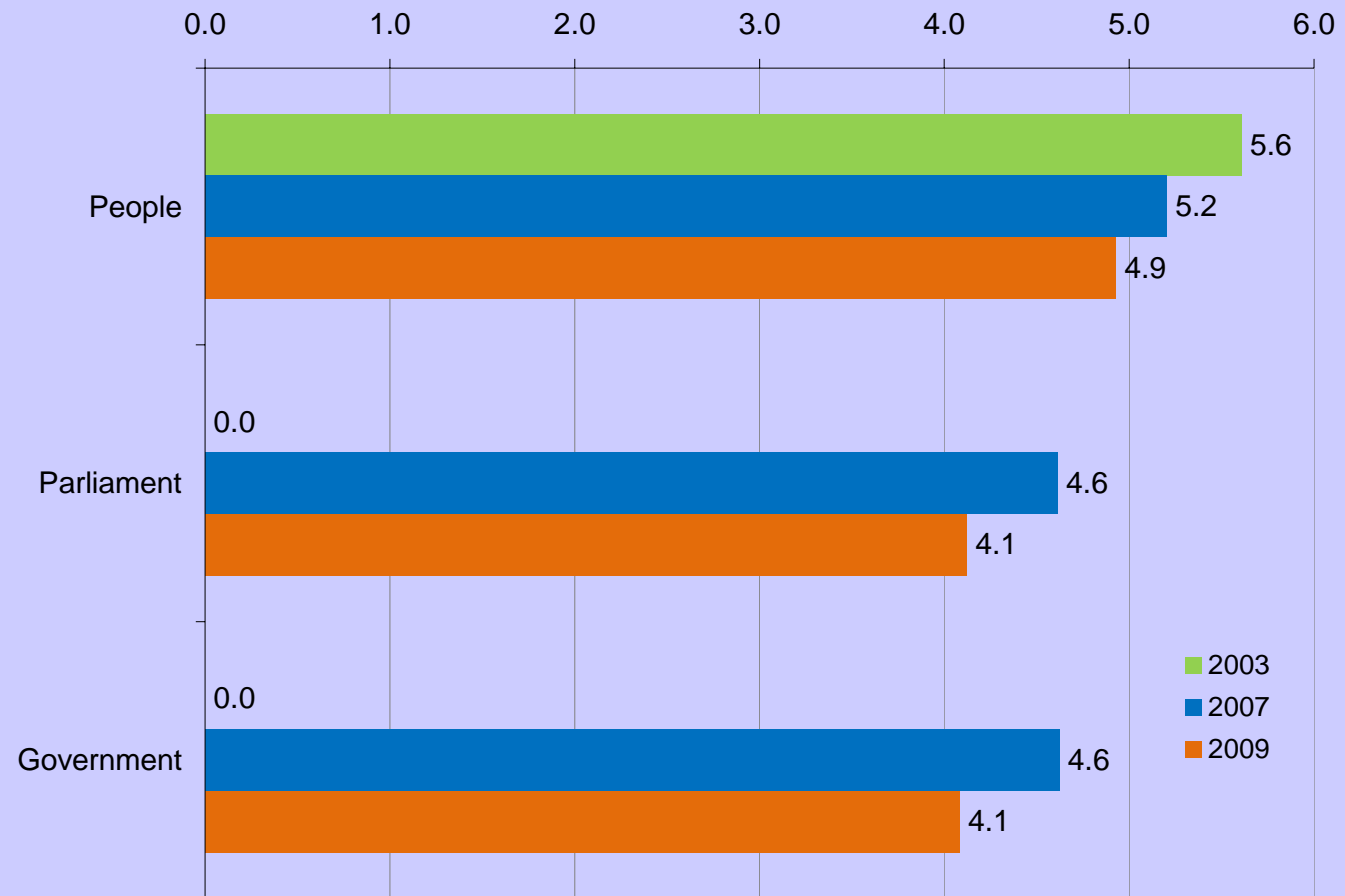


Social capital

Trust in people and democratic institutions

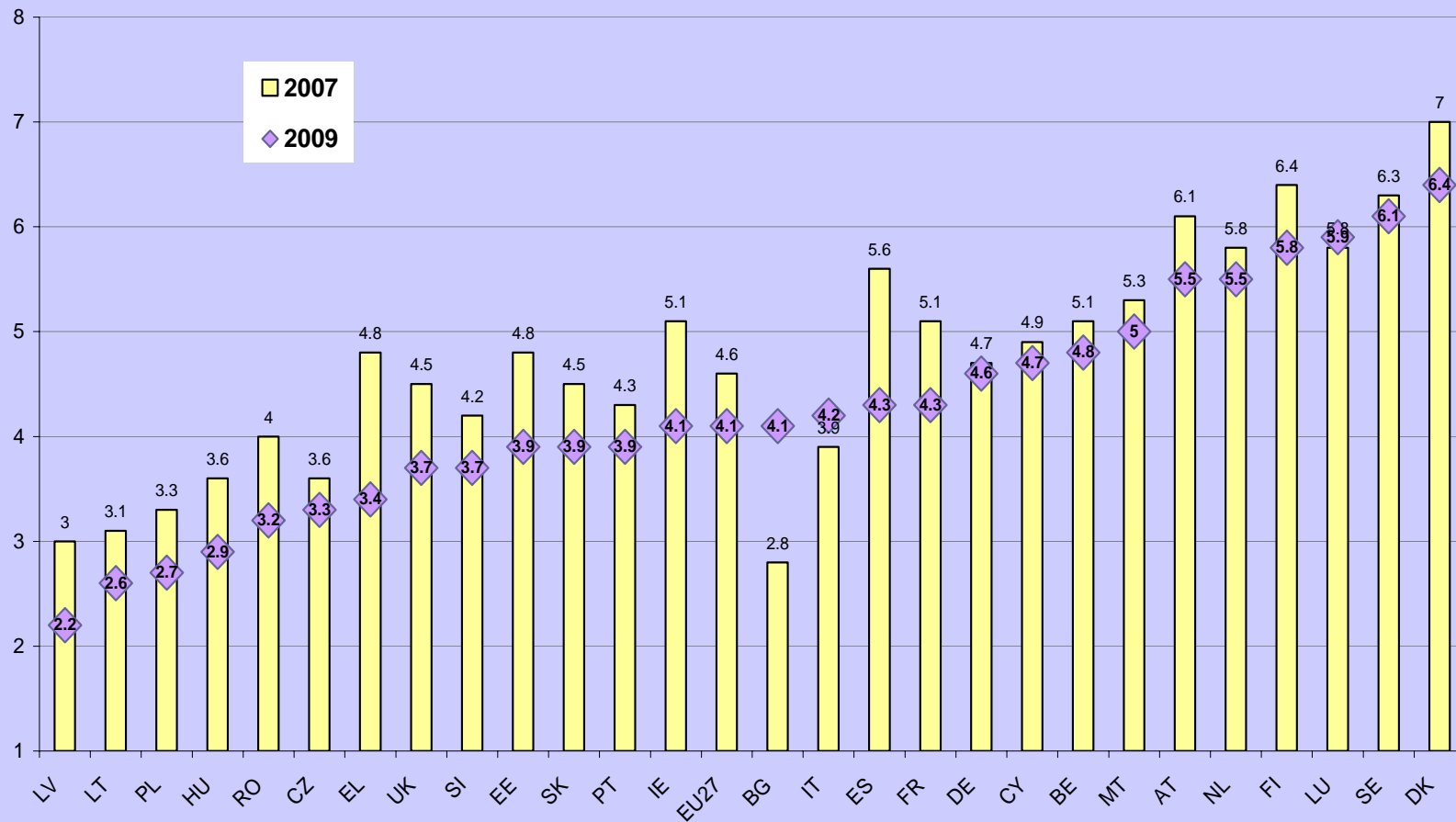


Trust in people and institutions



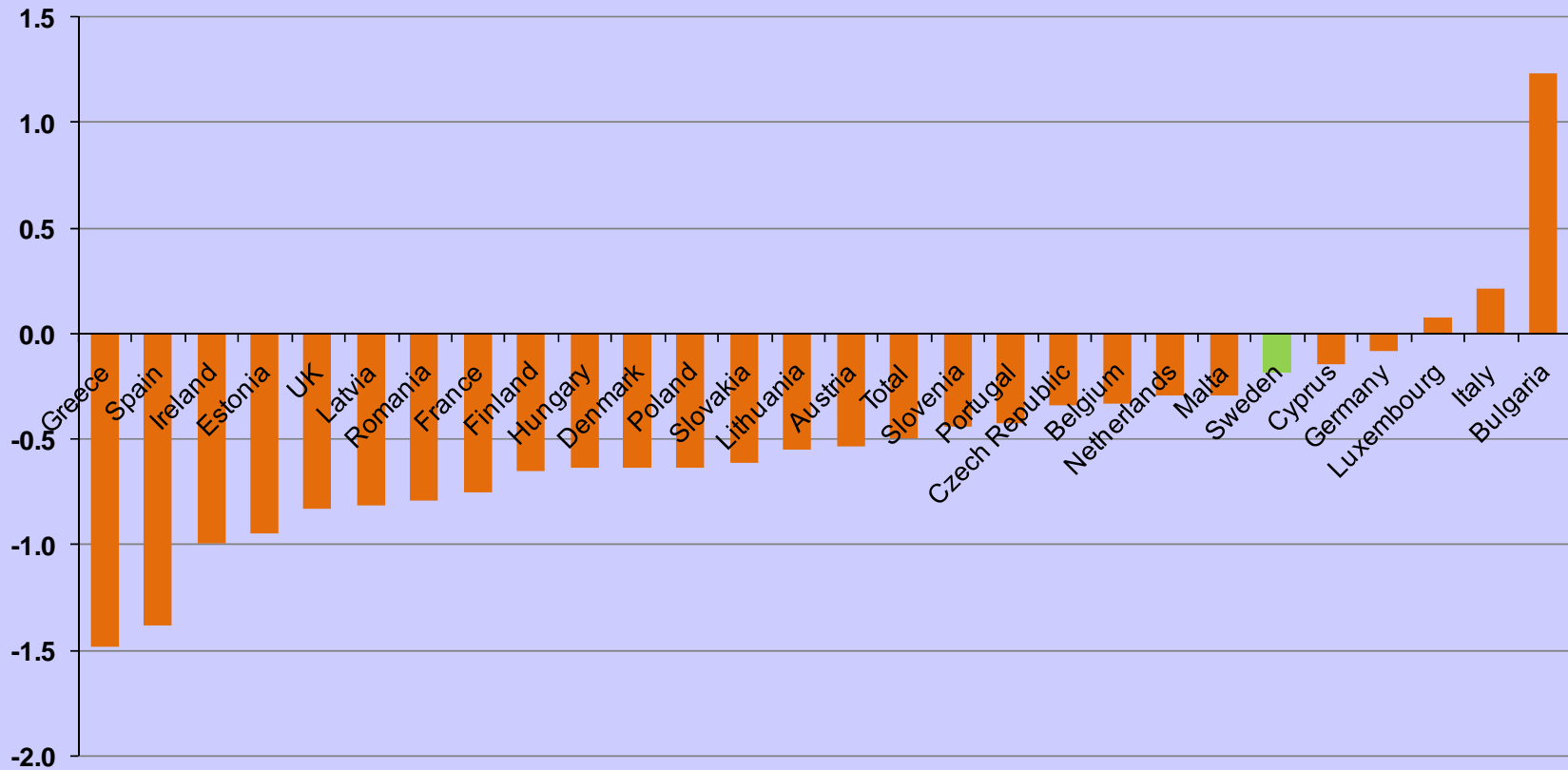


Trust in Parliament (scale 1-10)





Change in trust in national parliament, 2007-2009





Summary of findings

- QoL and subjective wellbeing had been improving in the period of relatively stable (and relatively high) economic growth in 2003-2007, in particular in NMS.
- The enlargement which enabled direct foreign investment and get access to EU funds (and market) seem to have contributed to a rapid economic growth in NMS.
- Many people in these countries benefited from the economic prosperity which is also to be seen in increased quality of life and subjective well-being.
- With the current recession and economic crisis, the quality of life of EU citizens diminished as well as their subjective well-being, especially in NMS.
- The declines in wellbeing and quality of life are found in countries more or less marked by the recession. The countries experiencing the deepest recession are not always those reporting the greatest change in quality of life – but it appears to be the case with Latvia and Estonia as well as Bulgaria and Romania.
- The well-being of traditionally vulnerable groups have diminished more rapidly than that of the rest of the population. E.G. elderly, the retired people and those who are under serious economic strain have recorded more negative changes in aspects of quality of life
- Still the impact of the economic crisis on perceived should not be exaggerated: at least until September 2009 there had been almost no change in the overall level of economic strain in EU and relatively small deterioration in the indicators of deprivation.



EQLS compared with other pan-European surveys

1. In **existing pan-European social surveys** (EU-SILC, LFS, HBS, ESS) the **their primary focus is not on entire quality of life** but on a few very specific dimensions of quality of life (income, employment, consumption, political participation). Thematically they overlap only marginally with EQLS surveys since they are designed for other purposes and uses. → Thus, they are **not competitors** on the quality of life information market.
- 2. The **EQLS is specialized** survey designed to measure various dimensions of people's life and **relationships** between them. Currently, EQLS is the **only cross-national survey** which **covers** almost all **key aspects** (dimensions) of quality of life. → **EQLS fills information a gap** in the area of QoL
- 3. Other pan-European surveys and EQLS **are nicely complementing each others**: While other surveys use more of the objective indicators, EQLS is collecting more of the subjective ones. → Focus on perceptions, views and expectations of the citizens and ensures value added
- 4. **EQLS is flexible**: new questions, new concepts research



How to make EQLS even better

- **Sampling in EQLS to be based on population registers:**
 - ▶ EQLS contractor do not have direct access to pop. registers in all countries
 - ▶ Having sample drawn from registers would mean having more reliable sample frame than using random walk method
- **Larger sample size (than 1000-2000) would contribute to better reliability of statistical estimates**
 - ▶ EF is searching for possibilities to implement EQLS with larger sample through partnership
 - ▶ EF invites national governments and social partners to participate in the survey by topping-up the sample for their country
 - ▶ Very low marginal costs for preparation of the fieldwork and relatively low costs of fieldwork per interview
- **Stakeholders input (national governments and social partners) in redesign of the EQLS questionnaire** to be implemented in 2011 by taking part in the Questionnaire Development Group meetings



Thank you!

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Kiitos **Dêkuji** **Hvala** **Grazie**
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Köszönöm **Gracias** **Dank u** **Ευχαριστώ**
Tesekkür ederim **Dekoju** **Go raibh maith agat**

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