



Euroopa Liit
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Eesti tuleviku heaks

Political culture, participation and civil society in the Baltic States Part I

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Objectives of the lecture

- To introduce the new concepts: political culture and interest groups
- To provide a basic overview about the main features of the political culture in the Baltic countries
- To provide an overview about the main trends of political participation and trust in the Baltic countries and to compare the Baltic States with the Western Europe
- To demonstrate how the interest groups are exerting pressure on politics and which are the more or less influential interest groups in the Baltic politics

Outcomes of the lecture

- The basic knowledge what is a political culture and what are the interest groups
- The basic knowledge about the main features of the political culture in the Baltic States
- The basic knowledge about the trends and forms of political participation in the Baltic countries

Political culture

- A very wide phenomenon – ethical conduct of the politicians is only one dimension of it.
- Political culture:
 - beliefs (for example “democracy is the best governmental system”),
 - attitudes (trust in institutions, regime, politicians),
 - values (equality vs. elitist values, individualism vs. collectivism, etc),
 - norms (ethics),
 - symbols and rituals (how independence day is celebrated, national symbols), etc
- Provides the general background for political process.

Political culture in Baltic States

- Low trust in institution, but high support for democracy (less than 5 % would like to see former system restored).
- Low inter-personal trust – social capital
- Low political participation
- Politics is leader-centered, leaders matters more than ideologies for voters (has changed in the 2000's).
- Rather “the winner takes all” style of policy making – not consensual style
- Paternalistic elitist attitudes – we know what is best for the people (EU referendums)
- Materialist values, post-materialist values not wide-spread (more in Estonia, among more educated people)
- Not very “developed” protest culture
- Etatism – more in Lithuania, Latvia-Estonia rather anti-etatist

Trust in institution I

1. Support for the political community – basic attachment to the nation and political elite who is ruling over the country.

- Measured by national pride or willingness to defend the country.
- Baltic nations – very strong, Russian minority - weaker.

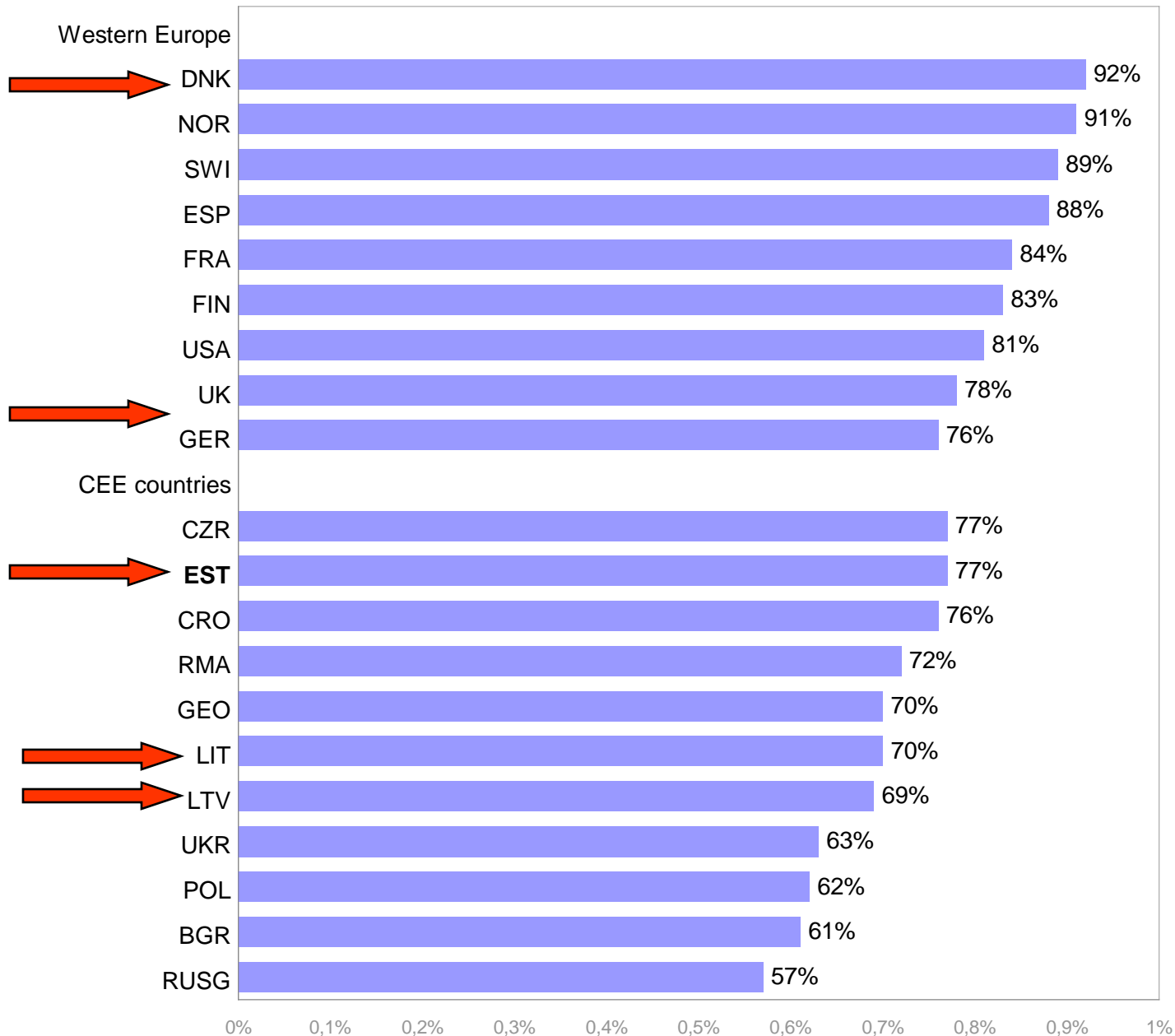
2. Support for the core regime principles – support for democracy as a political regime.

- Baltic states – strong, comparable with Western Europe.
- Highest in Estonia, lowest in Lithuania.

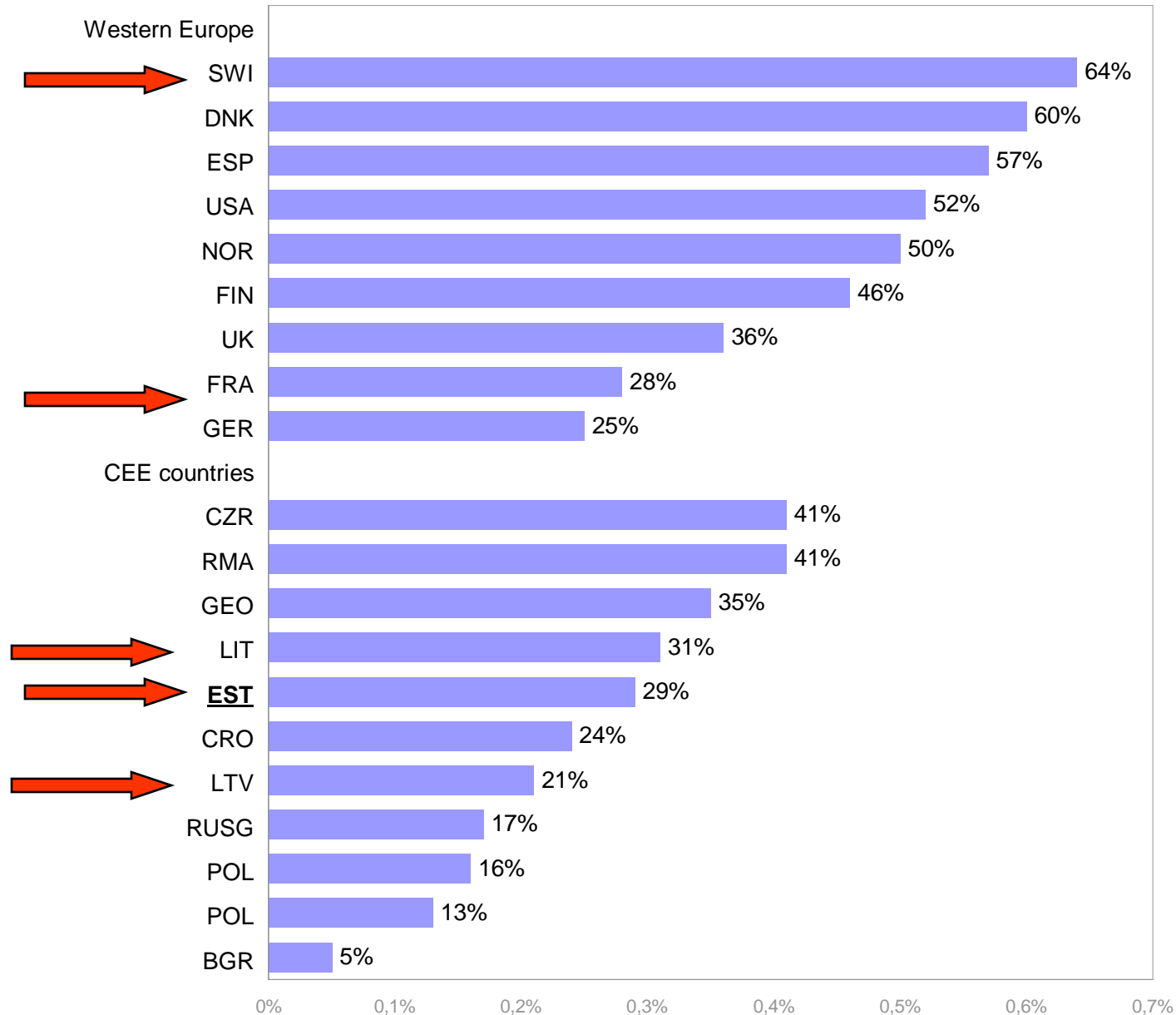
Trust in institution II

3. Evaluation of regime performance – how democracy is working, are people satisfied with functioning of democracy.
 - Baltic States – quite low.
 - Present system compared to former system – Estonians and Latvians more positive towards the present system
4. Support for institutions – parliament, government, president, etc.
 - Baltic States - lower than in Western E.
 - Higher support in Estonia, lower in Lithuania. Presidents enjoy high support
5. Support for political actors – certain politicians and personalities, ministries, parties, etc. Baltic States – specific, no general trends

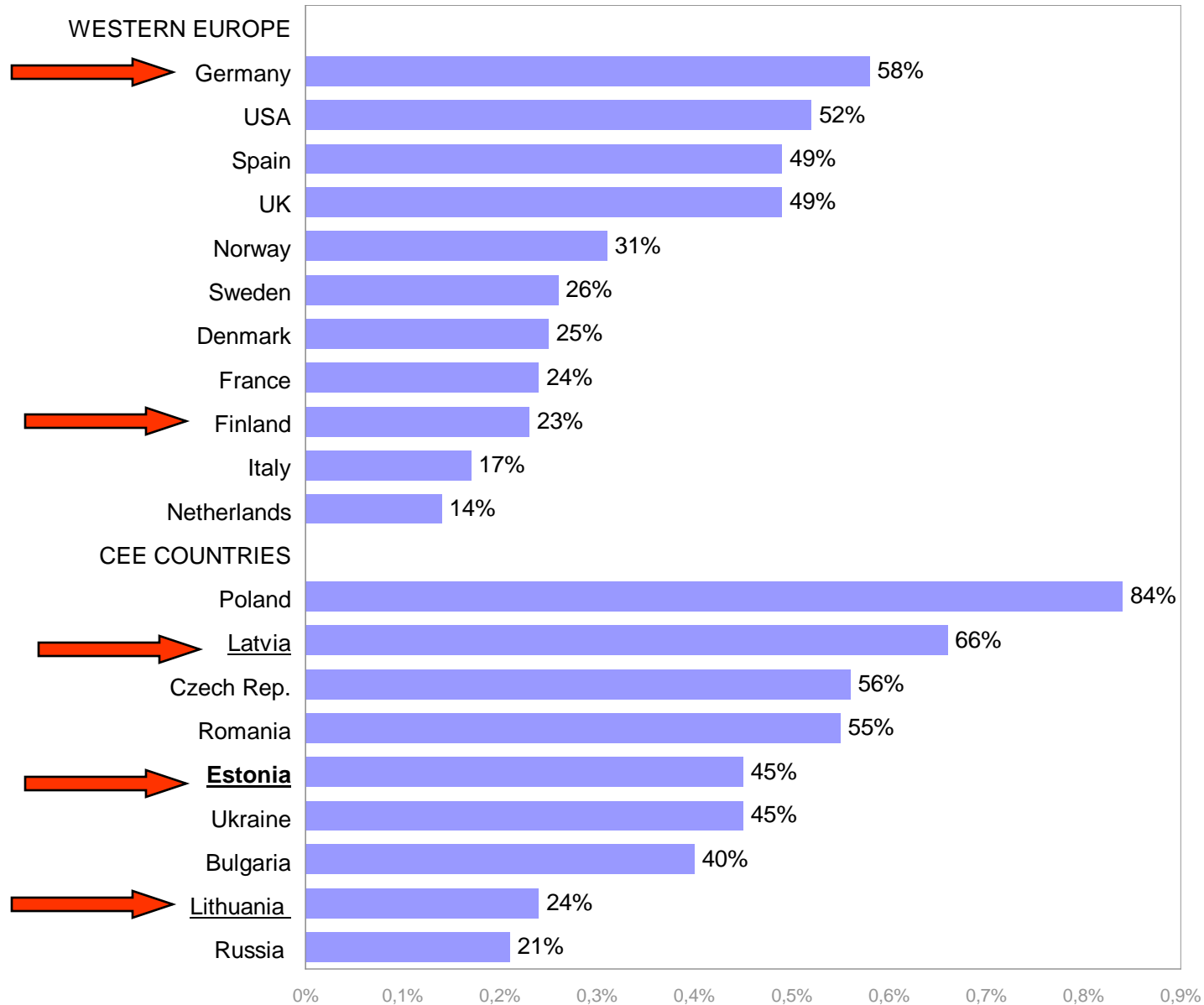
Support on democracy (2005)



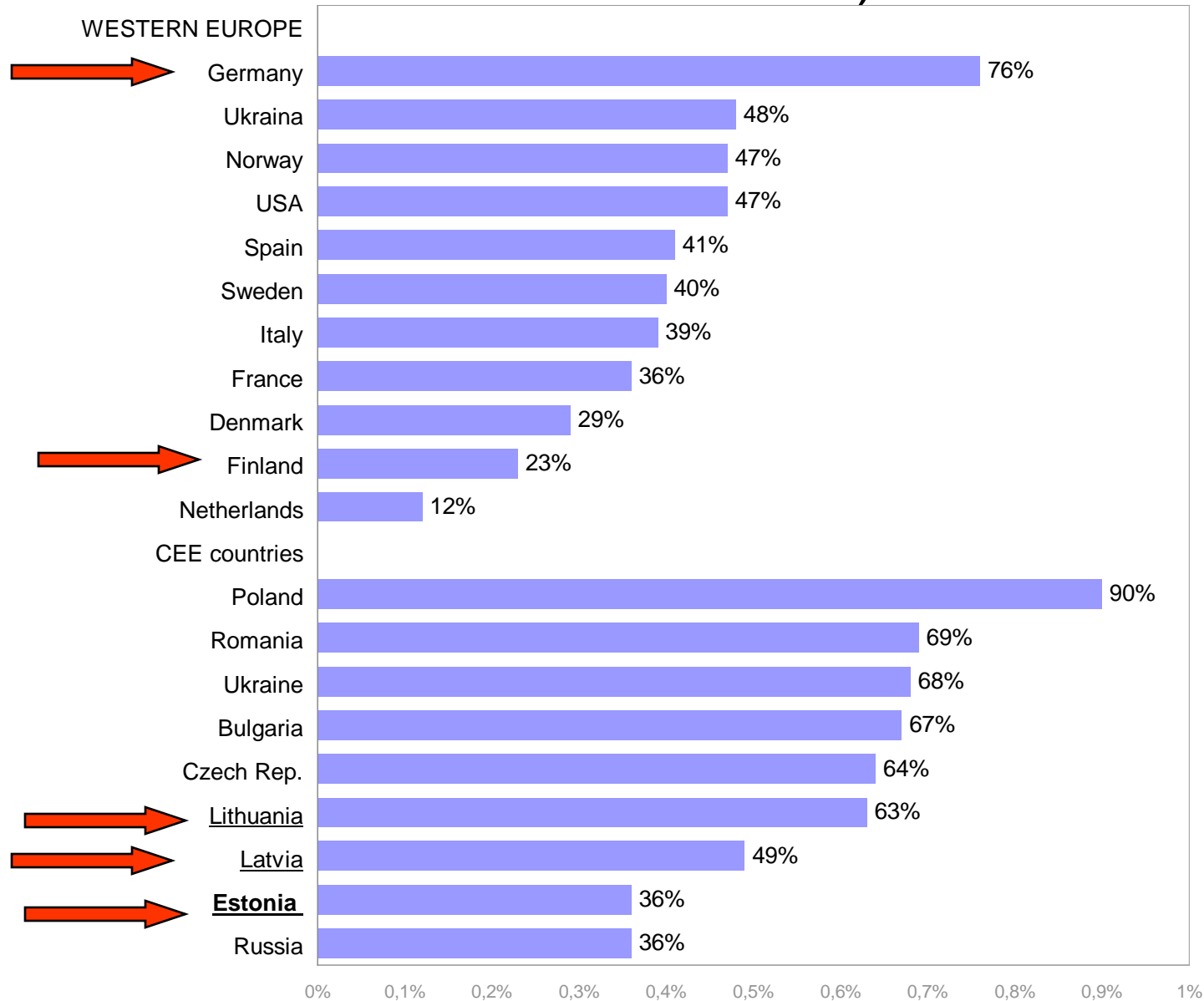
Your country is ruled according to the will of people? "Yes" answers (2005)



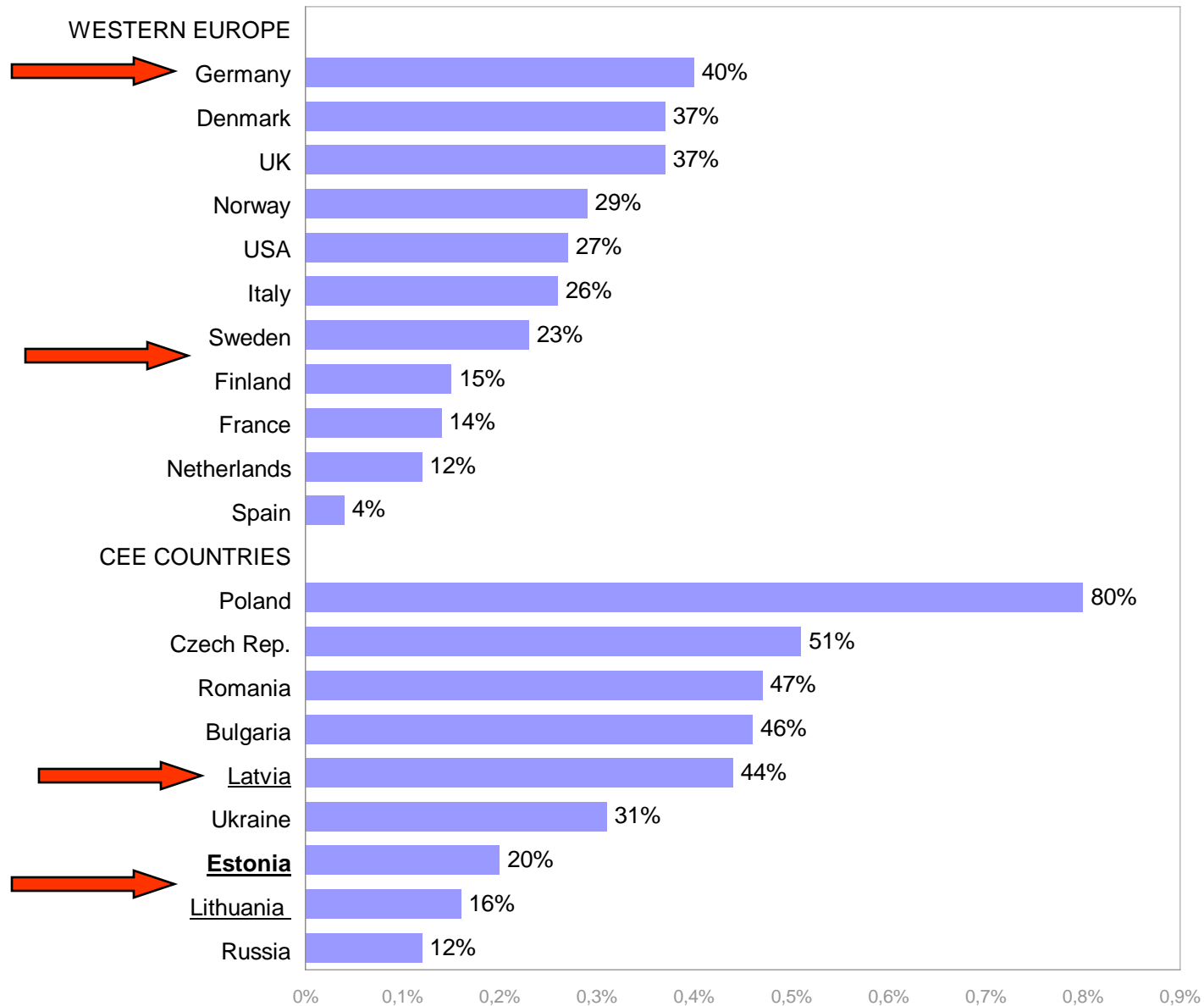
Politicians behave unethically (accepting this statement %)



Politicians are dishonest (accepting this statement %)



Politicians are not capable and competent (accepting this statement %)



Trust in institutions – Baltic States

- General – support for regime and institutions highest in Estonia, lowest in Lithuania.
- Why support for institutions is so low?
 - Social problems and governments' inability.
Incompetence and corruption among political elite (especially Latvia).
 - Cultural and historical peculiarities – the center of the power has always situated somewhere else. Institutions of central power – they are not ours (Latvia, Estonia)
 - Low social capital – if people don't trust each-other, they don't trust political institutions as well
 - Too high expectations and disappointment now
- Who trust institutions: winners of transition trust more (higher income, higher education, etc.);