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

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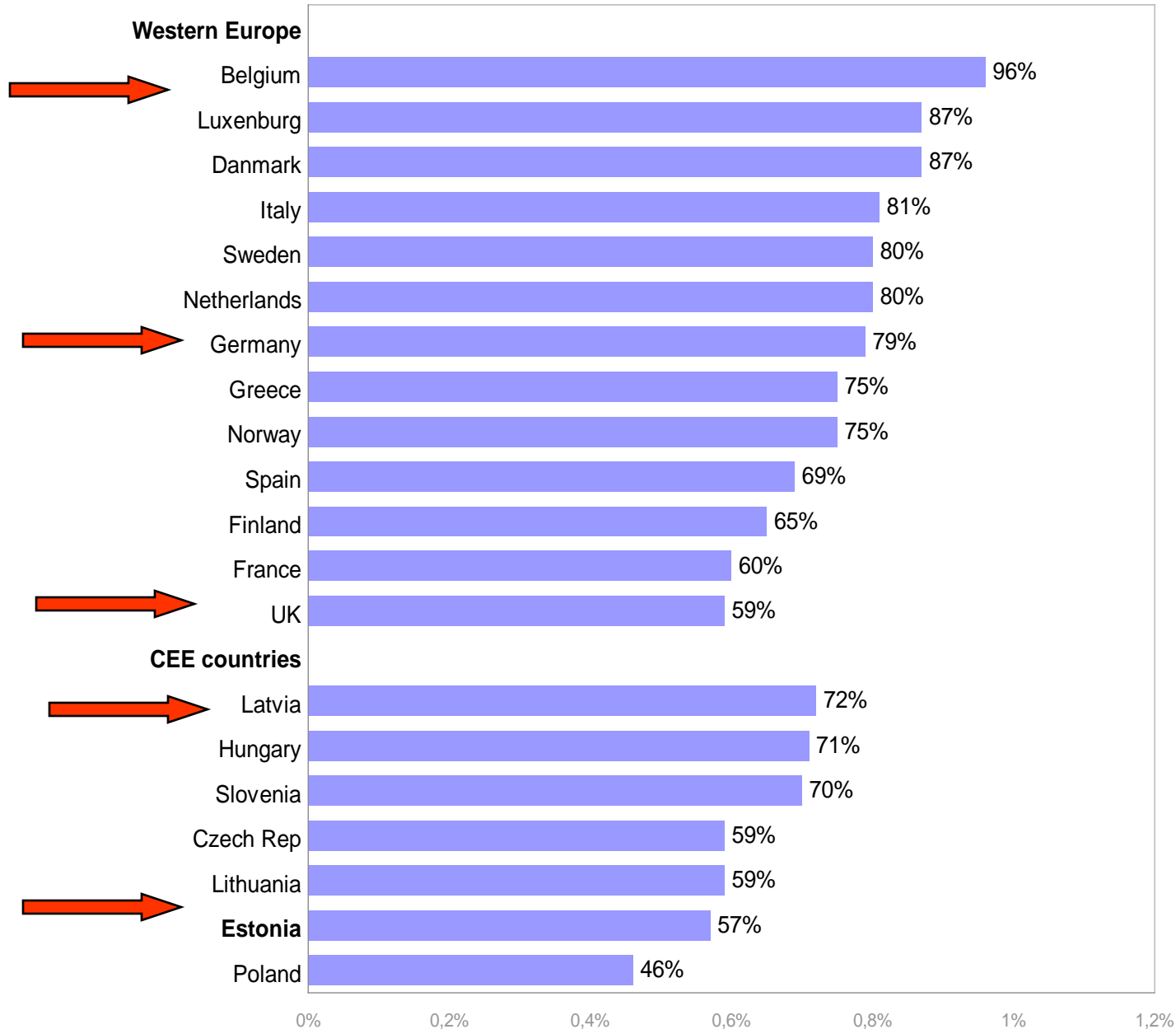
# Values and politics – Baltic States

- Post-materialist values (participation, environment problems, minority rights, freedom of self-expression, etc) are not very wide-spread. Very materialist societies. Post-materialist values a little bit more wide-spread in Estonia. Correlates with education, not age.
- Hofstede's value dimensions:
  - Power distance – smaller in Estonia, bigger in Lithuania
  - Individualism vs collectivism – Estonia more individualistic, Lithuania more collectivistic. Compared to Scandinavia all three more collectivistic societies
  - Masculinity vs femininity – compared to Scandinavia much more masculine. Lithuania more masculine than Estonia
  - Uncertainty avoidance – stronger in Lithuania (less risks, certain rules), lower in Estonia
  - Long-term vs short-term orientation – Estonia short-time orientation, Lithuania more long-term orientation

# Political Participation

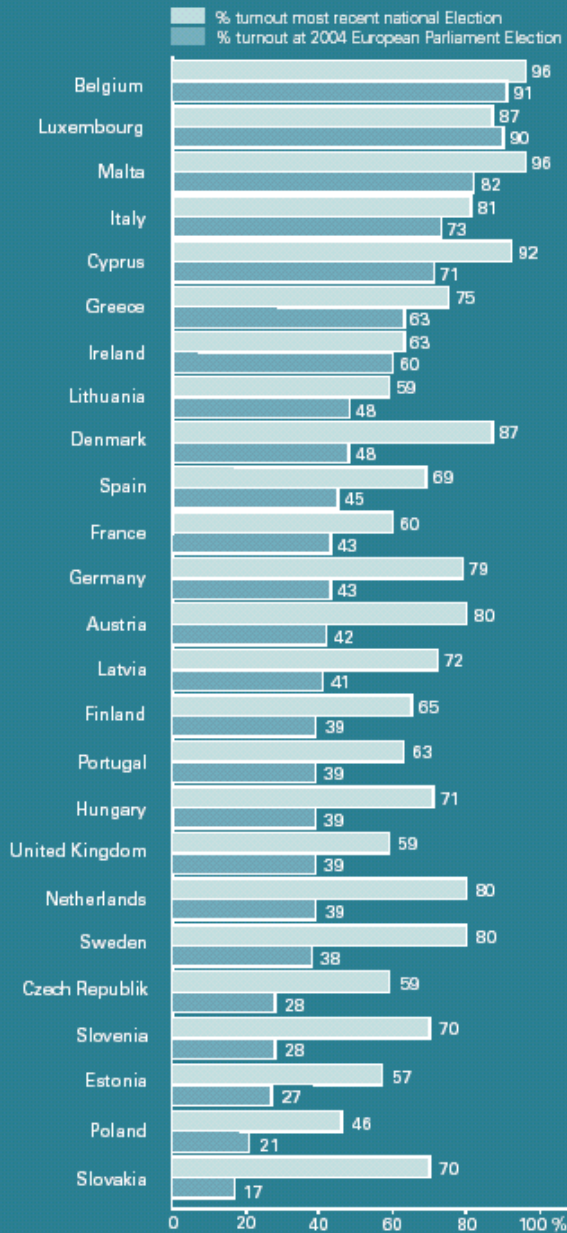
- More educated and wealthy people more active
- Older generation – more active in elections, otherwise passive; younger people – protest, direct action, but voter turnout low (universal)
- Lithuania – participation more through parties.
- Estonia – more through civil society, more developed participatory democracy.
- Latvia – people contact more with officials
- Electoral turnout:
  - Decline since first elections (1992-93).
  - Much lower than in Scandinavia.
  - Was highest in Latvia for years (over 70%, comparable with Germany), decline in last elections 2006 (61%),
  - Estonia and Lithuania lower (50%-60%)

# Voter turnout (last parliamentary elections)

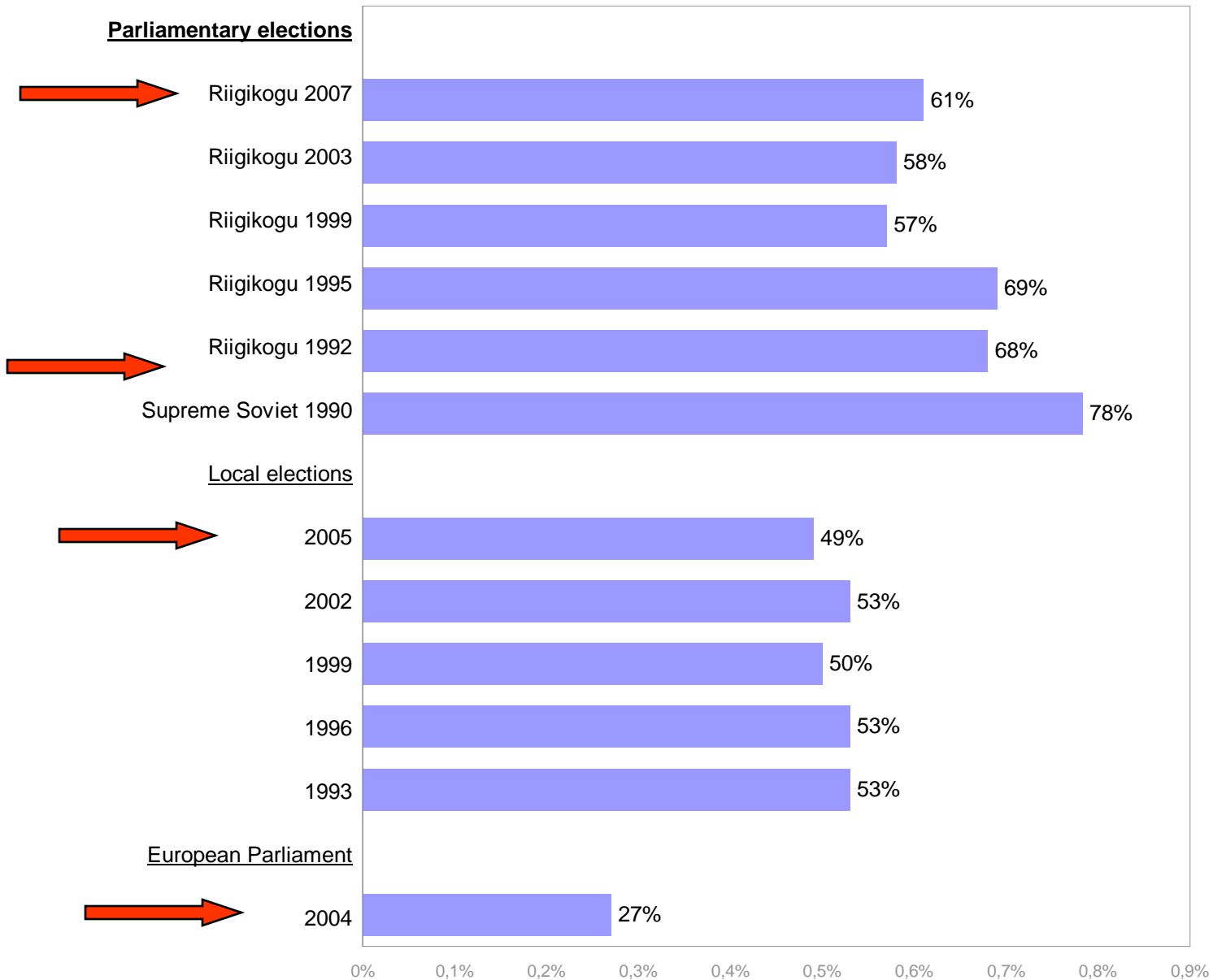


**Figure 1: National Differences in the Euro-Gap, 2004**

EURO-GAP: Difference in turnout at latest national election and 2004 European Parliament election.



# Voter turnout in Estonia



# Civil society in the Baltic States

- Strong historical traditions for political participation are missing – mostly cultural self-expression
- Compared to the Western Europe civil society weak
- Estonia – Civil Society Development Concept adopted by Parliament in 2004. Mechanisms for more extensive participatory democracy introduced
- Latvia – poor prestige. Politicians distrust civil society. Situation is improving
- Lithuania - lagged down in legislation. Image is better. Problem is in political agenda.
- Common problems:
  - Elite doesn't understand the functions of Civil Society
  - Weak social capital
  - Public sector not very competent for dealing with NGO-s

# Interest groups

- Focused on very specific problems and exerting pressure on government. Interest groups = pressure groups. Use more lobby than protest and not appealing to mass support. Interest groups have quite narrow agenda and they don't want to gain the power
- Types:
  - Communal – based on birth than recruitment. Share common heritage or traditions. Ethnic, religious groups.
  - Institutional – part of government/administration. Military elite, bureaucracy, leaders of state-owned companies
  - Associational – come together to pursue certain goals. On voluntary basis.
- Another typology:
  - (1) Sectoral – represent certain group in society,
  - (2) Promotional – promote collective values or benefits



# Interest groups - influence

- Channels to exert influence:
  - Parties – fragmented party system and weak parties especially exposed to influence by interest groups. Baltic case!
  - Bureaucracy – corruption. Corruption - lowest in Estonia.
  - Parliament and government – especially easy to exert influence when parliament is dominating over executive.

# Most influential interest groups

- Very strong business-politics linkage.
- Business groups are very influential – political culture, fragmented party system
- Quite common that politicians become after their career successful businessmen (Vähi), or in opposite way – businessmen become politicians (Skele, Uspaskich).
- Some examples:
  - Estonia. Res Publica was mainly created by Estonian business elite and campaign financed by them
  - Latvia. Parties rather as puppets of oligarchs. Tremendous impact of business elite on politics and on parties
  - Lithuania. When Paksas was prime minister in 2001 he supported interests of Russian companies in privatization of Mazeikiai Oil Refinery. Russian origin businessmen also invested to Paksas presidential campaign several millions.

# Other important interest groups

- Ethnic minorities – exert influence more through parties or ethnic interests and business are connected (Latvia – most of economic and business elite are Russian speakers, Lithuania also remarkable Russian influence).
- Church – in Estonia hasn't any influence on politics. Lithuania - influence of Catholic Church quite important. Latvia – some influence.
- Trade Unions:
  - compared to Scandinavia and Western Europe weak.
  - Soviet time experiences – were just formal organizations, didn't protect the workers' interests.
  - More influential in Lithuania (collective agreements).
  - Not so influential in Latvia but have highest membership
  - Weakest in Estonia

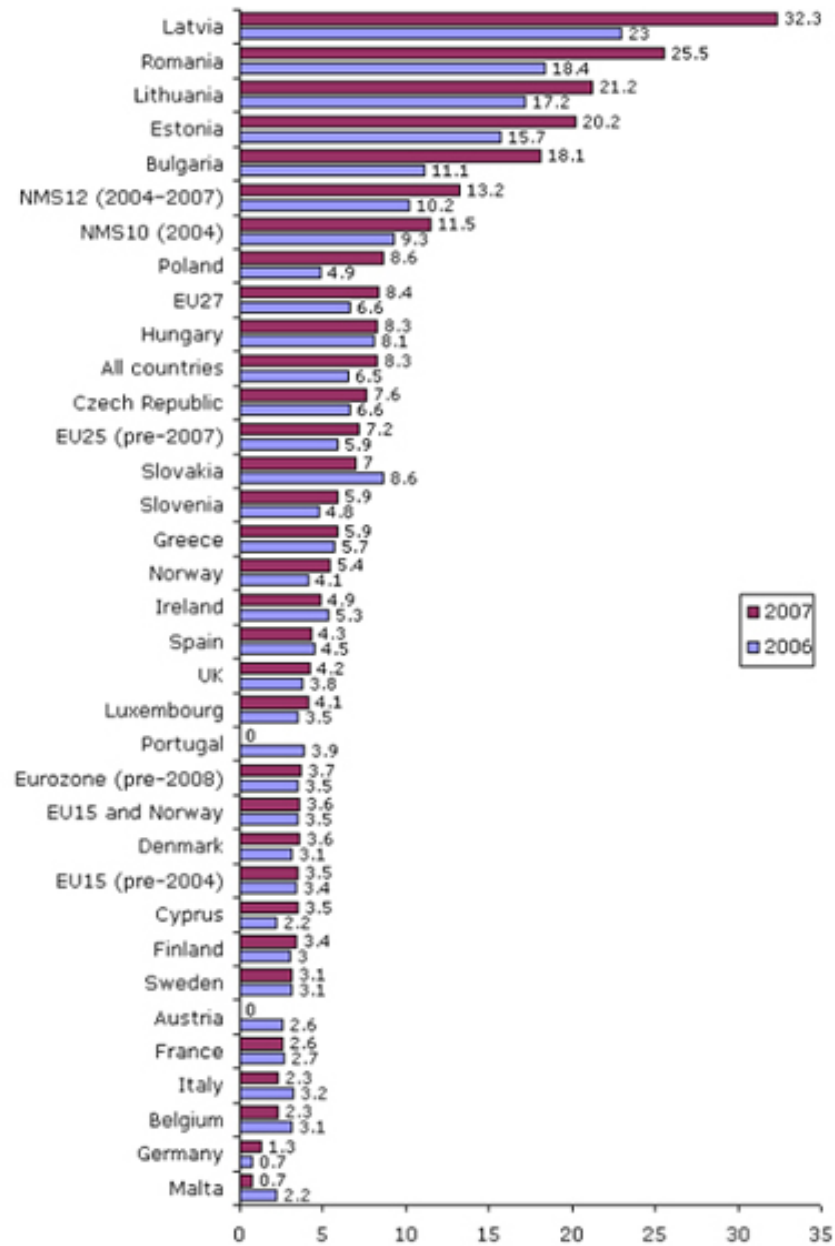
# Less influential interest groups

- Greens – Environmental problems are not very in agenda. Strongest in Estonia, also in Latvia. Lithuania - different environmental organizations.
- Feminists – compared to Scandinavia very weak women movement. Seems Western-imported for Baltic people. Stronger in Latvia and Estonia. Women in Parliament 2001 – Latvia 17%, Estonia 18%, Lithuania 10%. Salaries: Lithuania - men salaries 23% higher, Estonia 37%, Latvia 30%. EU average around 20-25%.
- Sexual minorities – very homophobic societies. Gay and lesbian organization weak and their problems are not in political agenda. Favour of same-sex marriage: Estonia 35%, Lithuania 26%, Latvia 19%, EU average 53%. Lithuania considered to be most homophobic, Estonia a little bit more liberal.

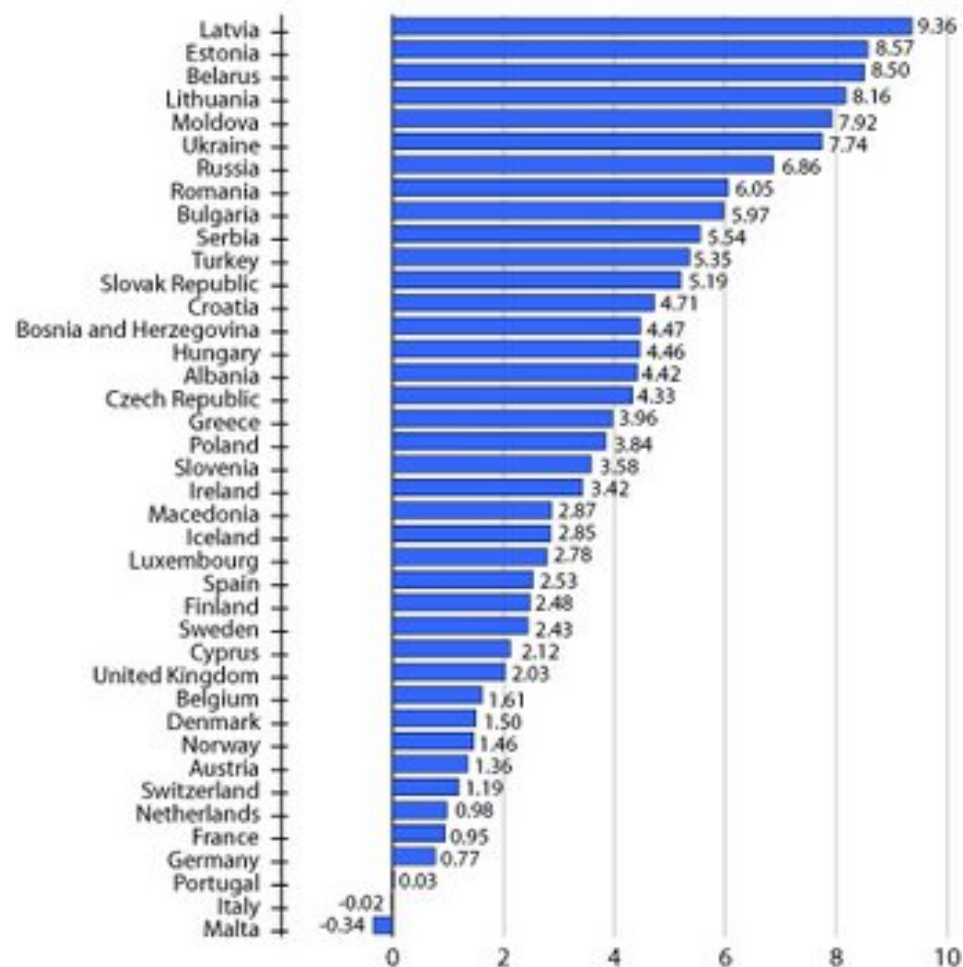
# Basic facts about societies

- GDP – Highest in Estonia, lowest in Lithuania
- Human Development Index. Ranks: Estonia 38, Lithuania 39, Latvia 48.
- Gini index. High even in CEE context. Estonia – highest in CEE (0,37); Latvia – 0,32, Lithuania – 0,34.
- Unemployment. Traditionally has been highest in Lithuania, lowest in Estonia. Now most problematic in Latvia
- Corruption. Lowest in CEE – Estonia, Lithuania fourth place in CEE. Latvia highest in EU (same rank with Malawi, Ghana, Turkey, Moldova, etc) .
- Rural population and agriculture. Rural population highest in Lithuania, around 10% of workforce in agriculture.
- Demographic trends.
  - Fertility rate highest in Lithuania (1991 - 2,02 → 2000 1,27),
  - Demographic crisis hits more Latvia (1990 - 2,0 → 2000 - 1,1),
  - Divorce rate – Latvia highest in EU.
- Governments expenditures on social welfare lowest in the EU

Increase in average earnings, 2006 and 2007 (%)

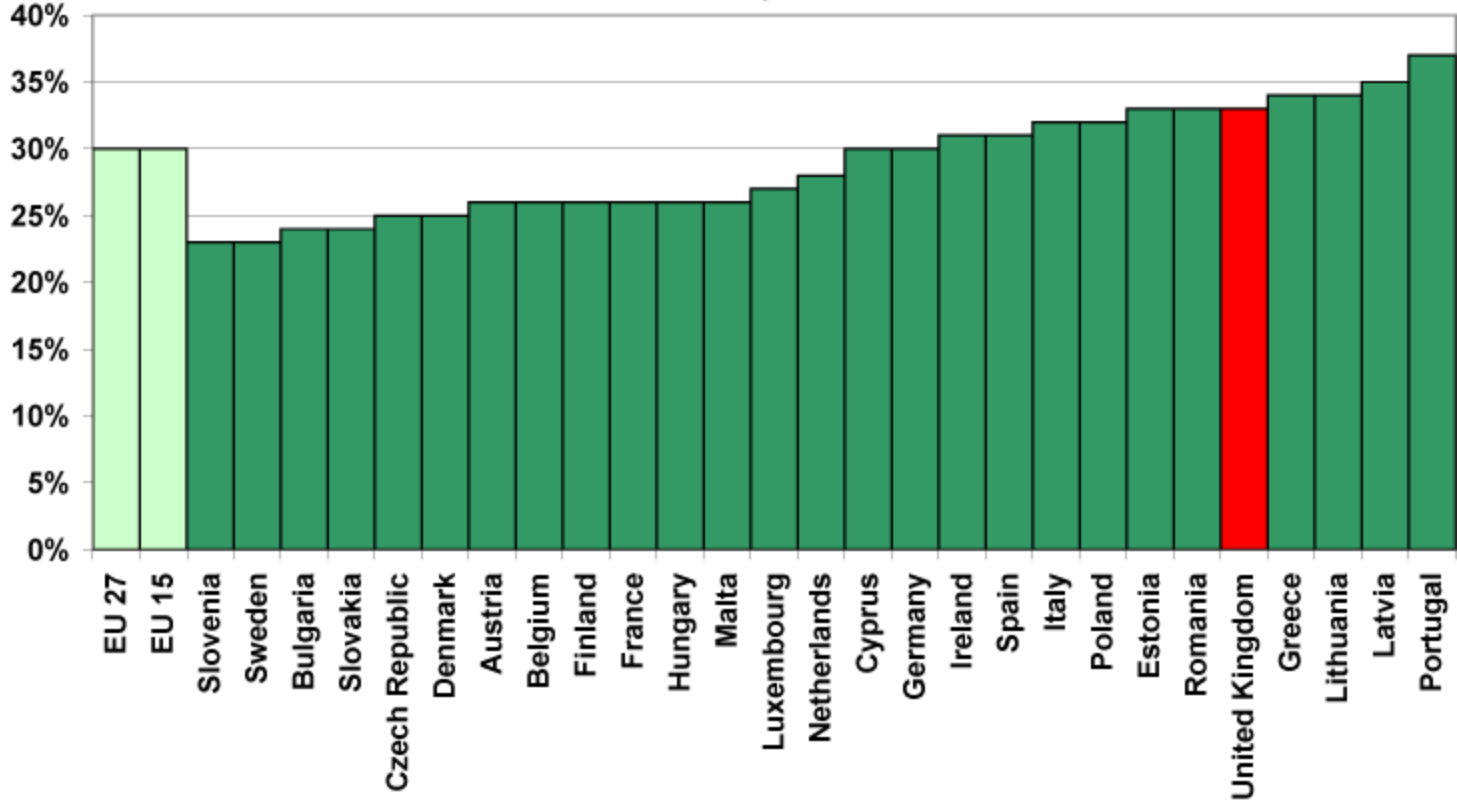


## GDP per Capita Growth 5yrs (%)



Source: Global Property Guide

### Income inequality: Gini coefficient



Source: EU Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions; the data is for 2007; updated Jan 2009



# Exercises

- Search for additional literature about the political cultures in the Baltic States! Compare the trust in institutions and trends of political participation in three Baltic countries! What is similar, what is different?
- Compare the role of interest groups in the politics in three Baltic States! What is similar, what is different?
- Compare the political culture (political participation, trust, etc) and the civil society in your own home country with the Baltic States!

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- - Norgaard, O; Johannsen, L; Skak, M; Sorensen, R. H. (1997). *The Baltic States after Independence*. Chapter 3. Reconstructing and developing Democracy. pp. 95-104. (Note: General overview about political culture in the Baltic States).

# Suggested reading

- Loftsson, E.; Choe, Y. (2003). *Political Representation and Participation in Transitional Democracies: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola
- Björklund, F & Liubiniene, V. (2004). *Value changes related to the process of democratization in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia*. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola.
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