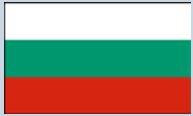


GEOPOLITICS, DISINFORMATION & MEDIA FREEDOM CHALLENGES FOR SOUTH EAST EUROPE AND THE EU

CHRISTIAN SPAHR, KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG

CLUB OF VENICE PLENARY MEETING, 23 NOVEMBER 2017





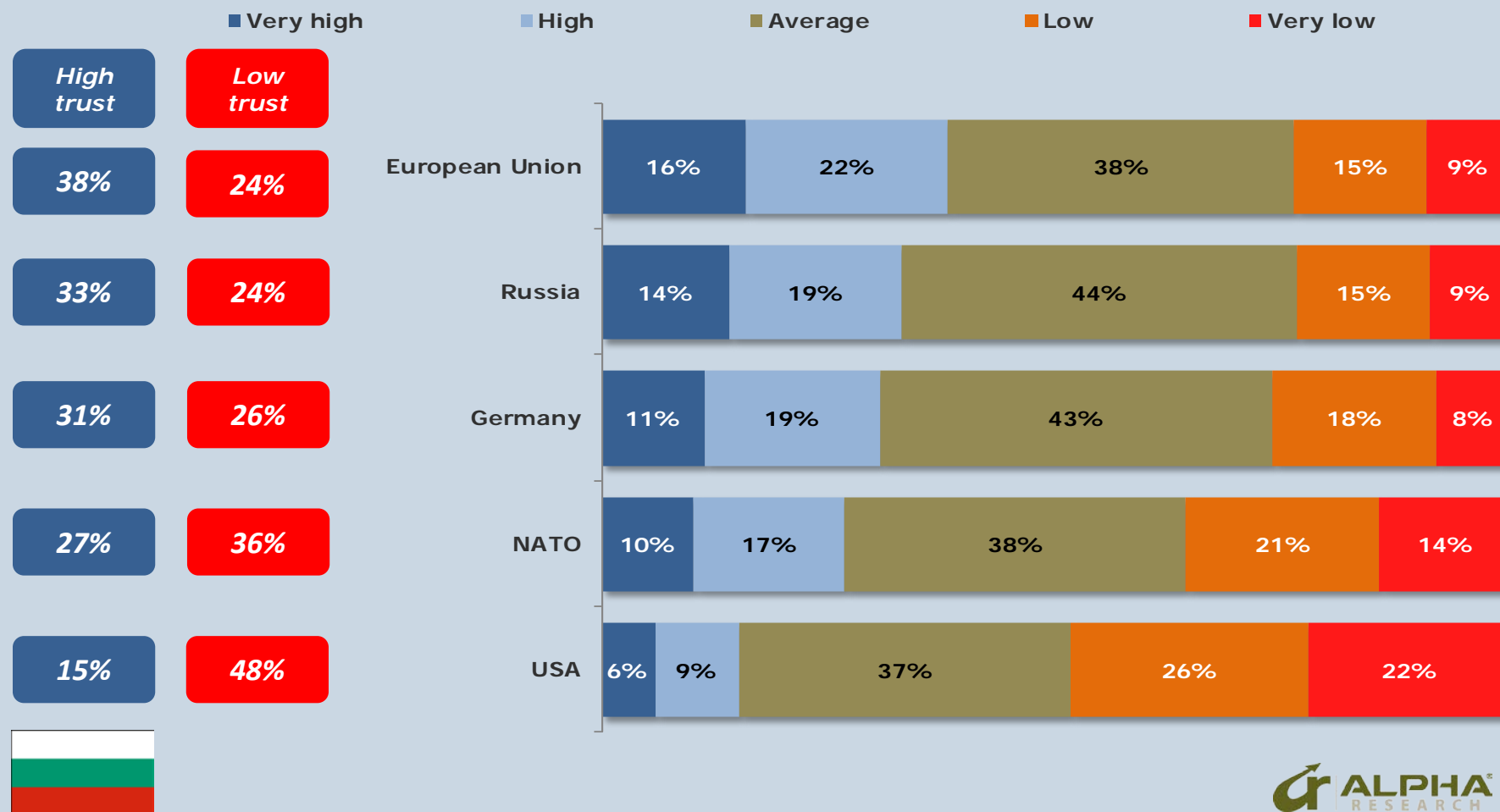
SURVEY: GEOPOLITICS, MEDIA & PROPAGANDA

- Target: Population, 18+, Bulgaria
- Method of registration: Face-to-face interview
- Sample design: Nationally representative for urban and rural population
- Sample size: 1,024
- Fieldwork: May 2017
- Conception of questionnaire: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Media Program SEE; Alpha Research
- Fieldwork and data analysis: Alpha Research



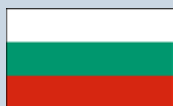
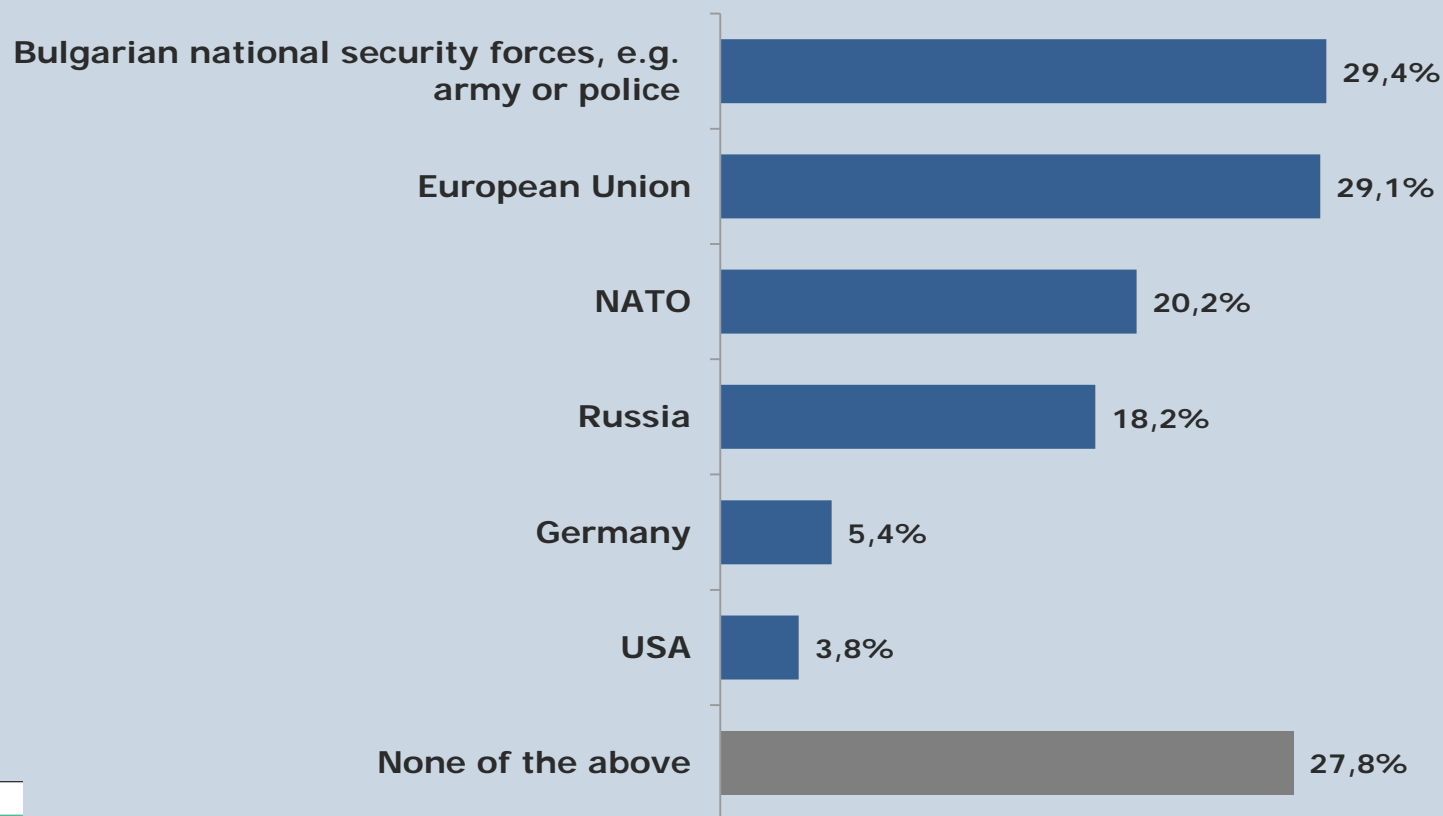
Institutions & states: EU enjoys highest confidence

“In general, how much do you trust the following institutions and countries?”



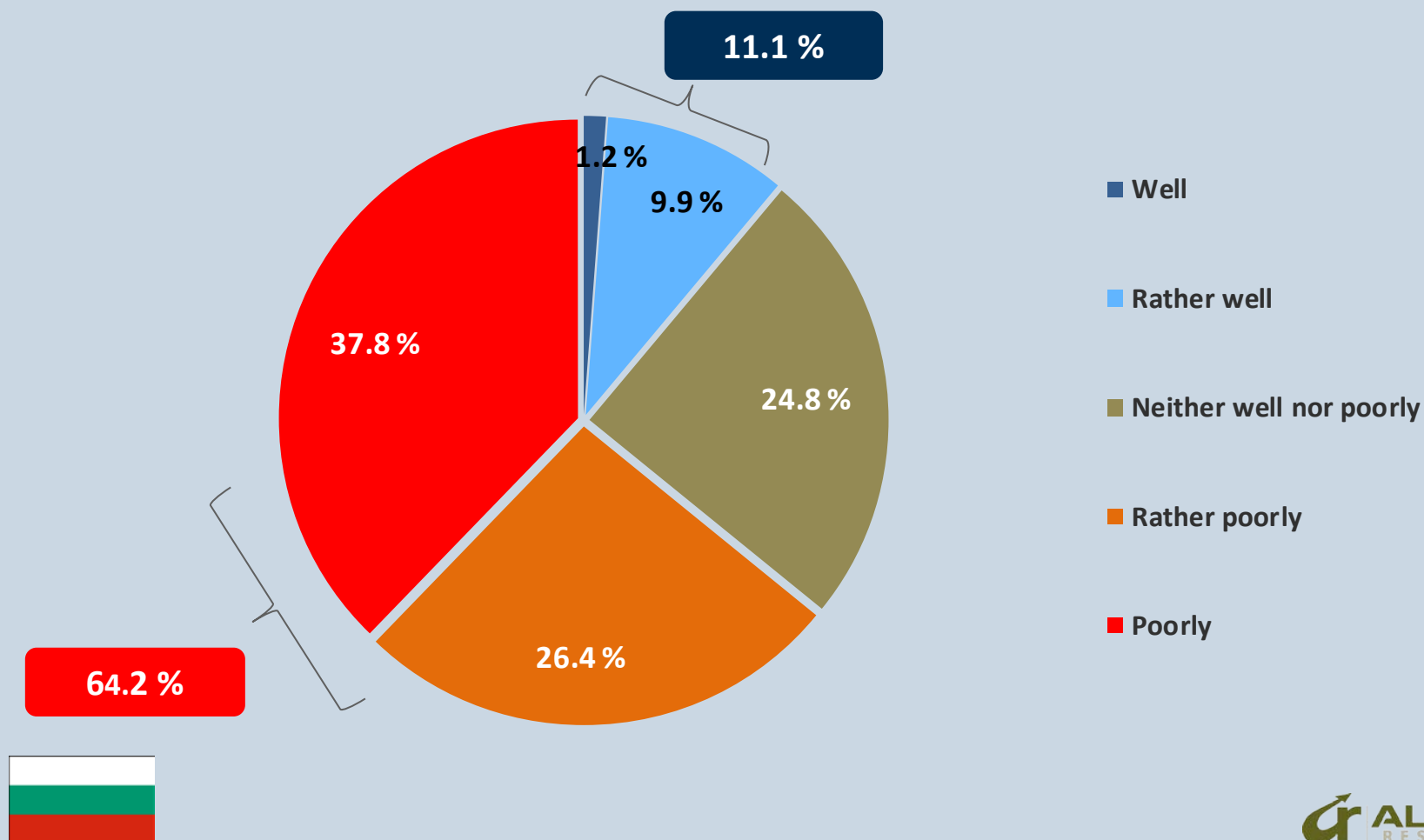
National security: Highest trust in Bulgarian forces and EU

“Concerning the national security of Bulgaria, which of the following institutions and countries do you trust?” (multiple answers)



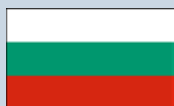
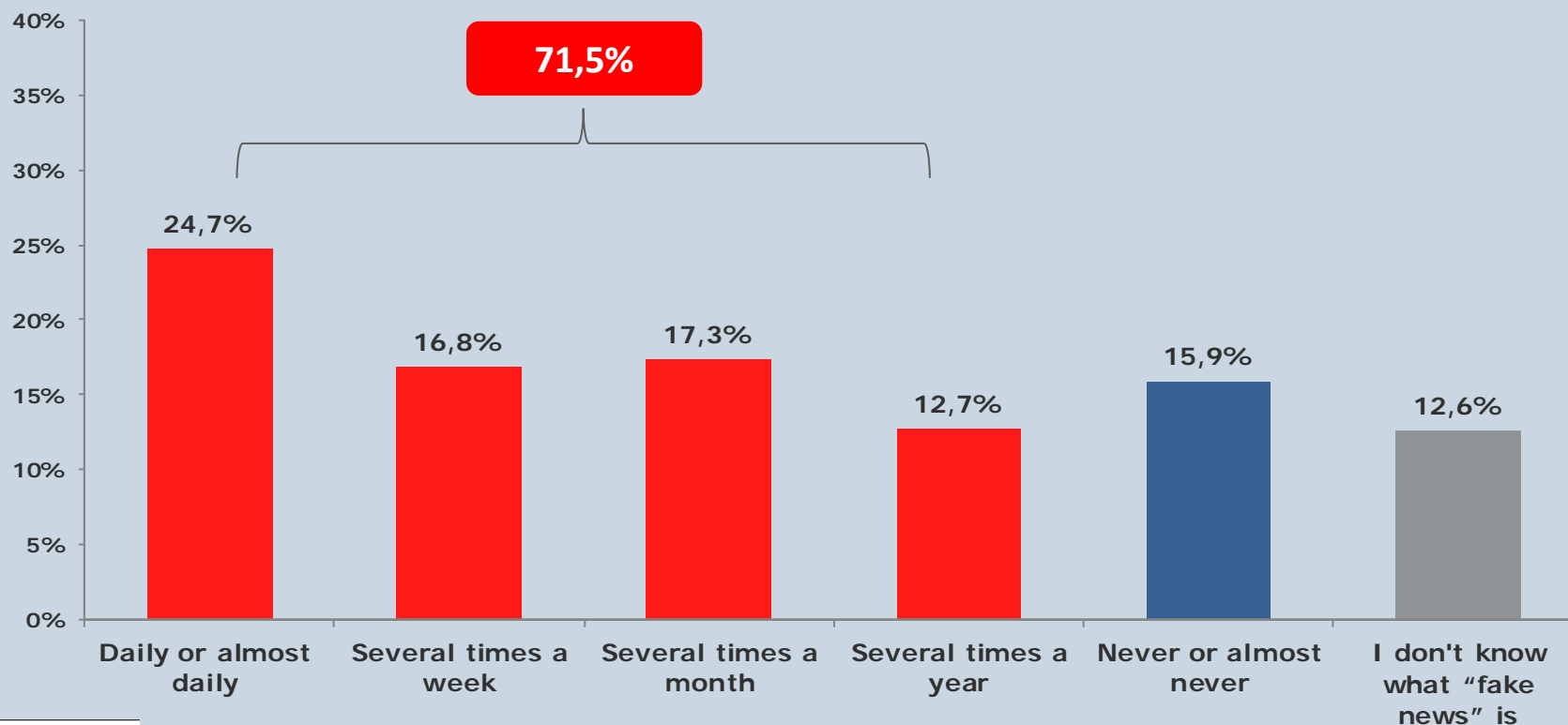
Low trust in political communication

“How are Bulgarian politicians informing citizens about the decisions they make?”



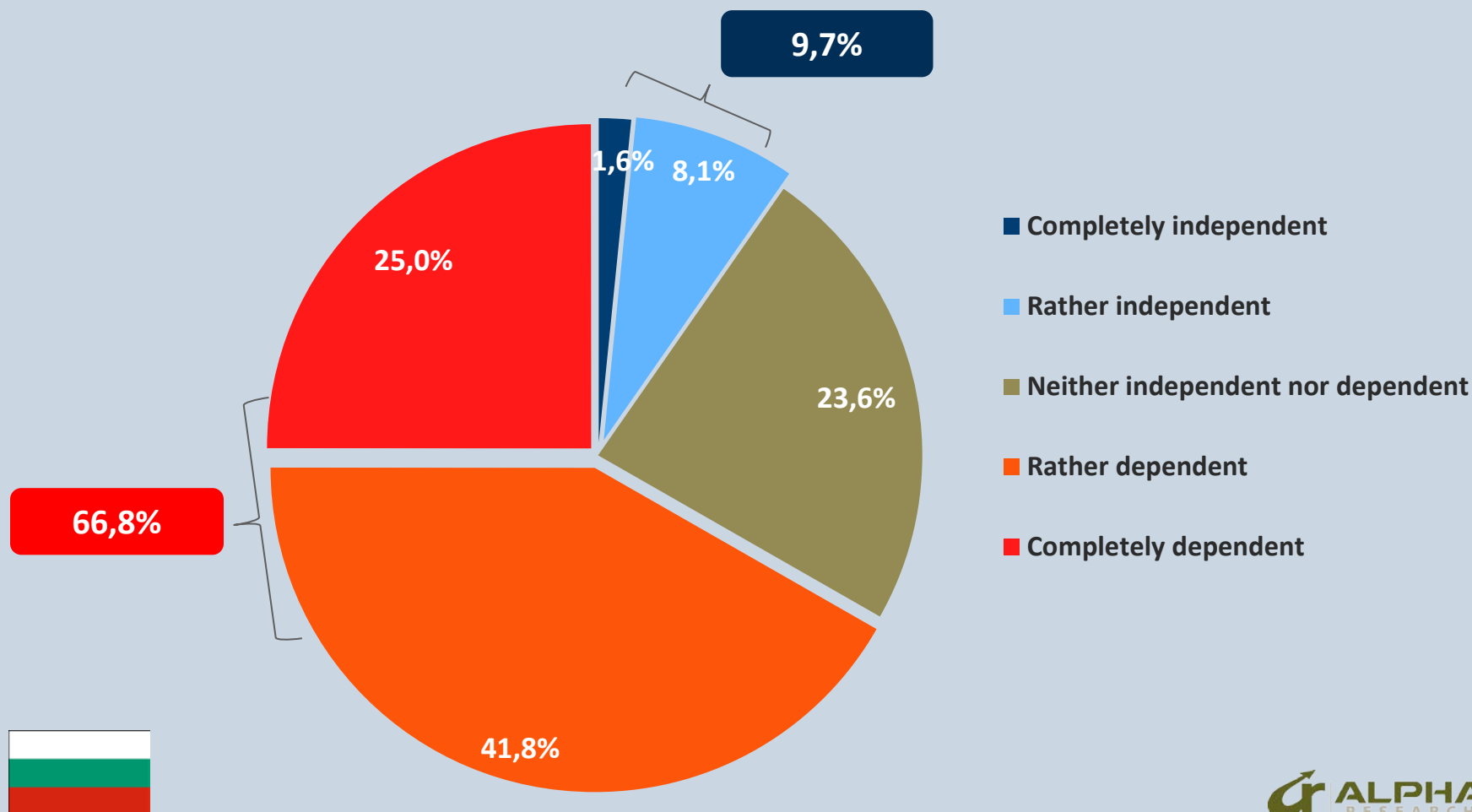
7 out of 10 Bulgarians see fake news about politics

“How often do you see news that contains false facts connected with political topics (‘fake news’)?”

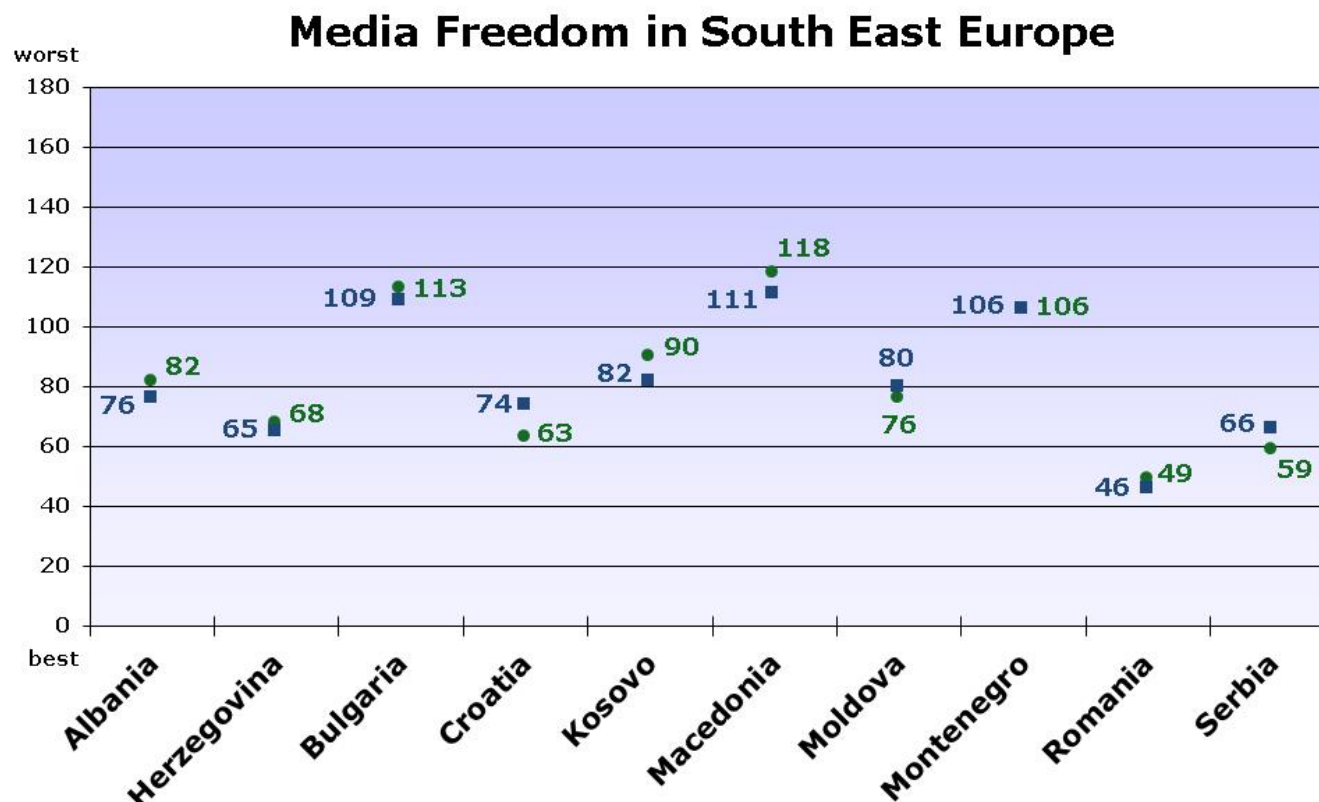


Only one in ten Bulgarians thinks the media are free

“How dependent or independent are the media in Bulgaria?”



SINCE YEARS NO PROGRESS IN MEDIA FREEDOM



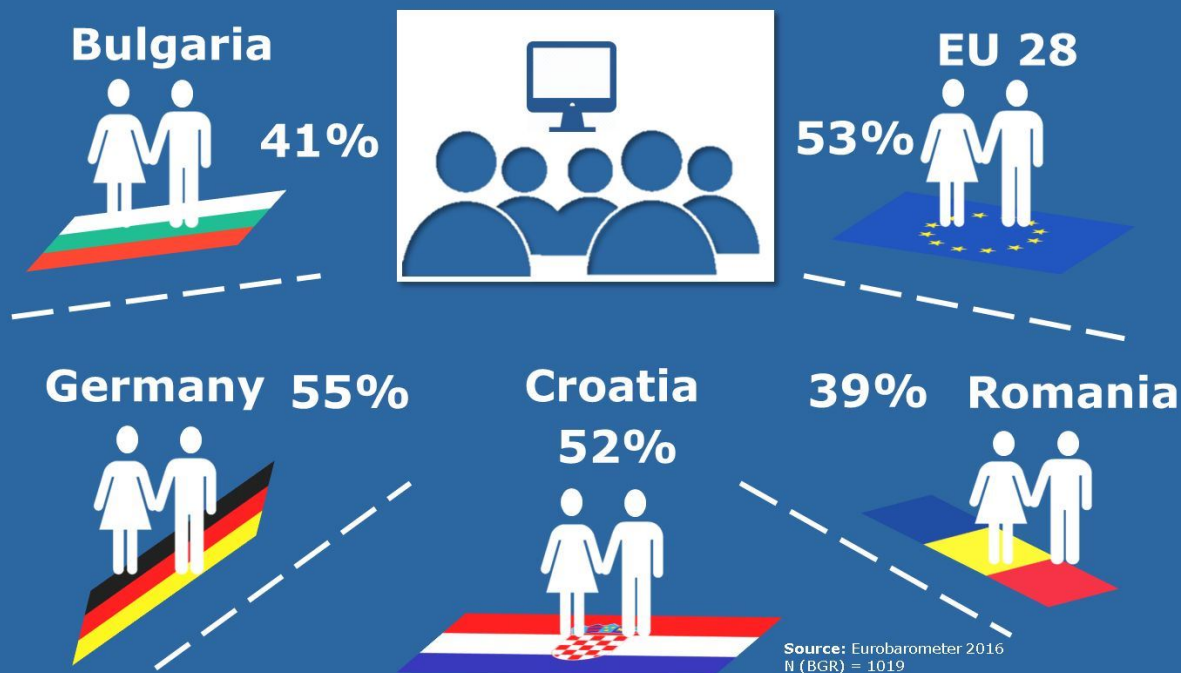
Source: Reporters without Borders (RWB),
April 20th, 2016, Basis: 180 countries
April 26th, 2017, Basis: 180 countries

● Rank RWB 2016

■ Rank RWB 2017

SOCIAL MEDIA – MORE AND MORE POLITICAL

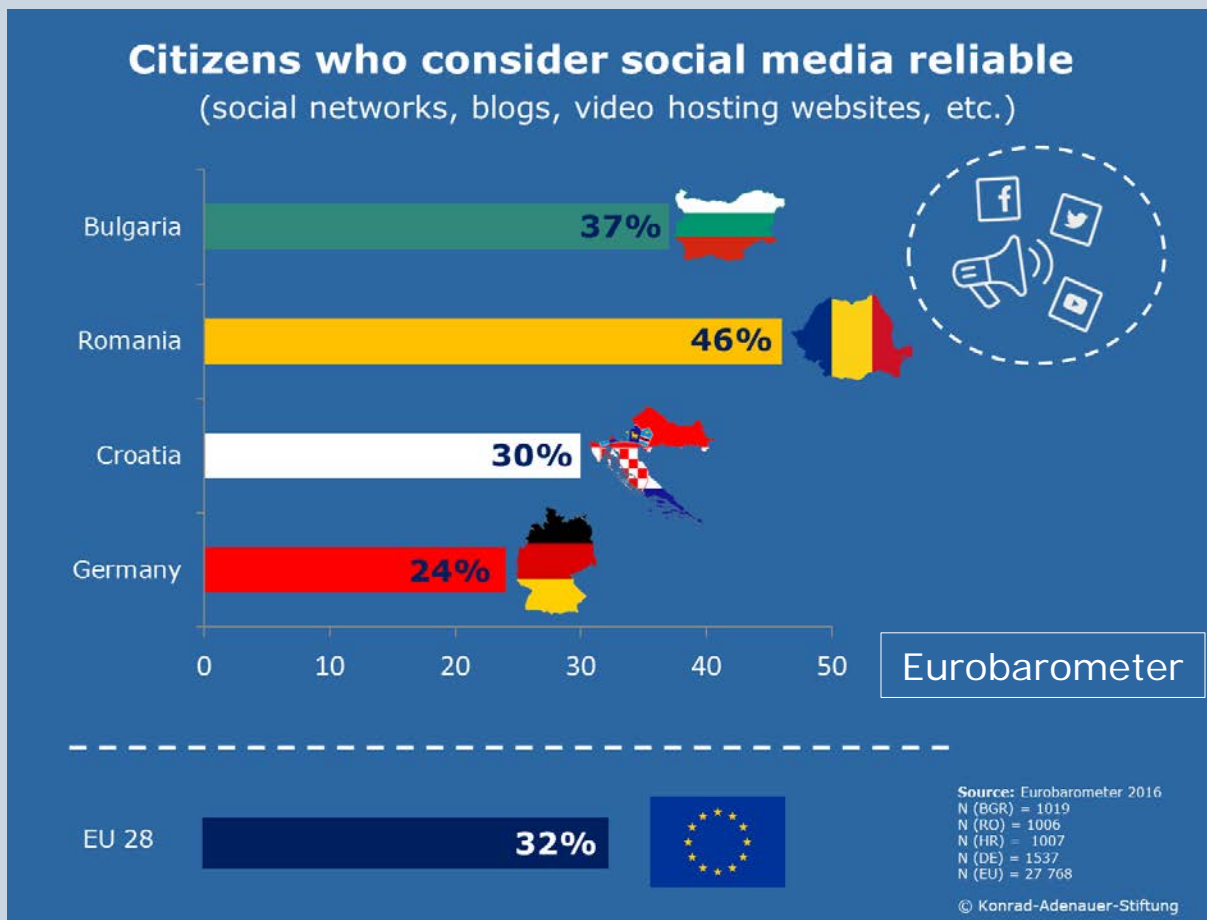
Citizens who follow debates on social media



Eurobarometer

Source: Eurobarometer 2016
N (BGR) = 1019
N (RO) = 1006
N (HR) = 1007
N (DE) = 1537
N (EU) = 27 768
© Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

BLIND TRUST IN SOCIAL MEDIA?



Comparison:
 10 % of Bulgarians and 28 % of Romanians believe in independence of professional media (KAS polls 2017/2015)

GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION IN THE BALKANS

- EU enlargement process slowed down + drawback of USA = **power vacuum**
- Perceived **lack of credibility** because EU accession does not seem realistic to citizens
- Vacuum of **soft power** is being filled by Russia, Turkey, Arab states, China
- In their **narratives towards SEE**, Russia, Turkey and Arab states emphasise on common religious values and/or cultural similarities
- EU must appear as **reliable partner** to SEE – giving security by intensive dialogue

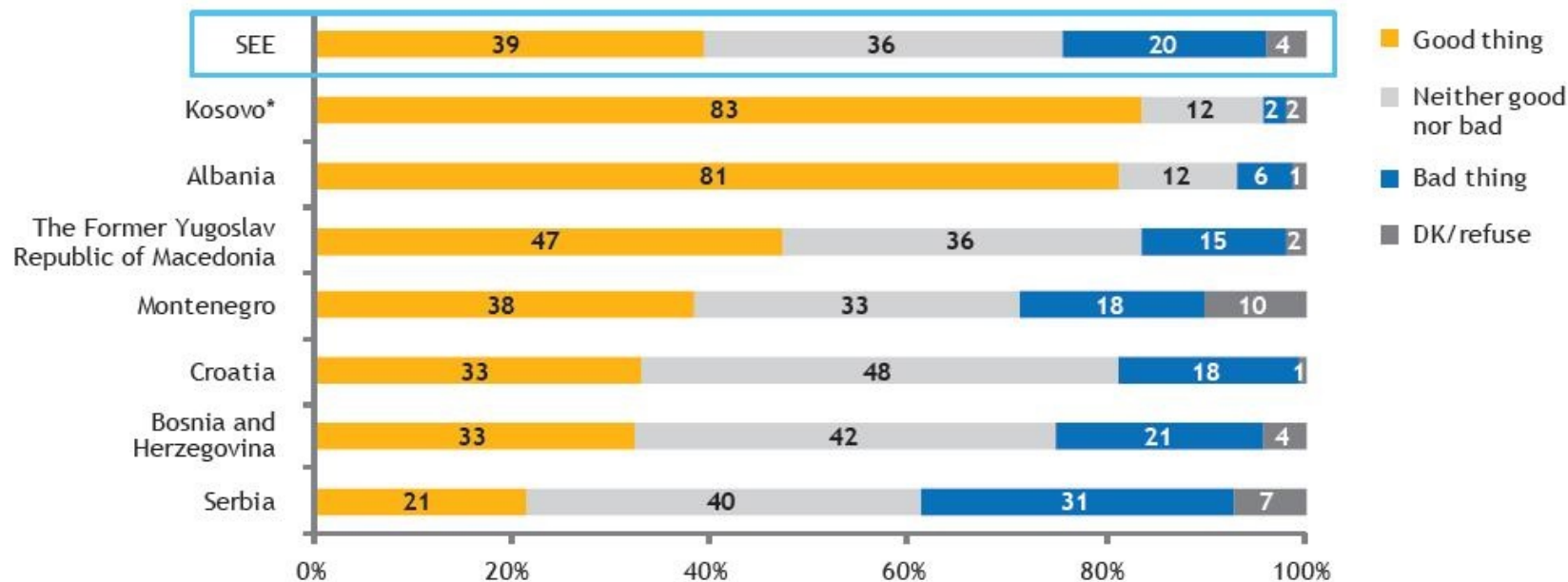


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INCONSISTENT PERCEPTION OF THE EU IN S.E.E.

Do you think that EU membership would be (is - for Croatia) a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?

(All respondents - N=7002, share of total, %)



NEW MEMBER STATES: HIGHER TRUST IN EU

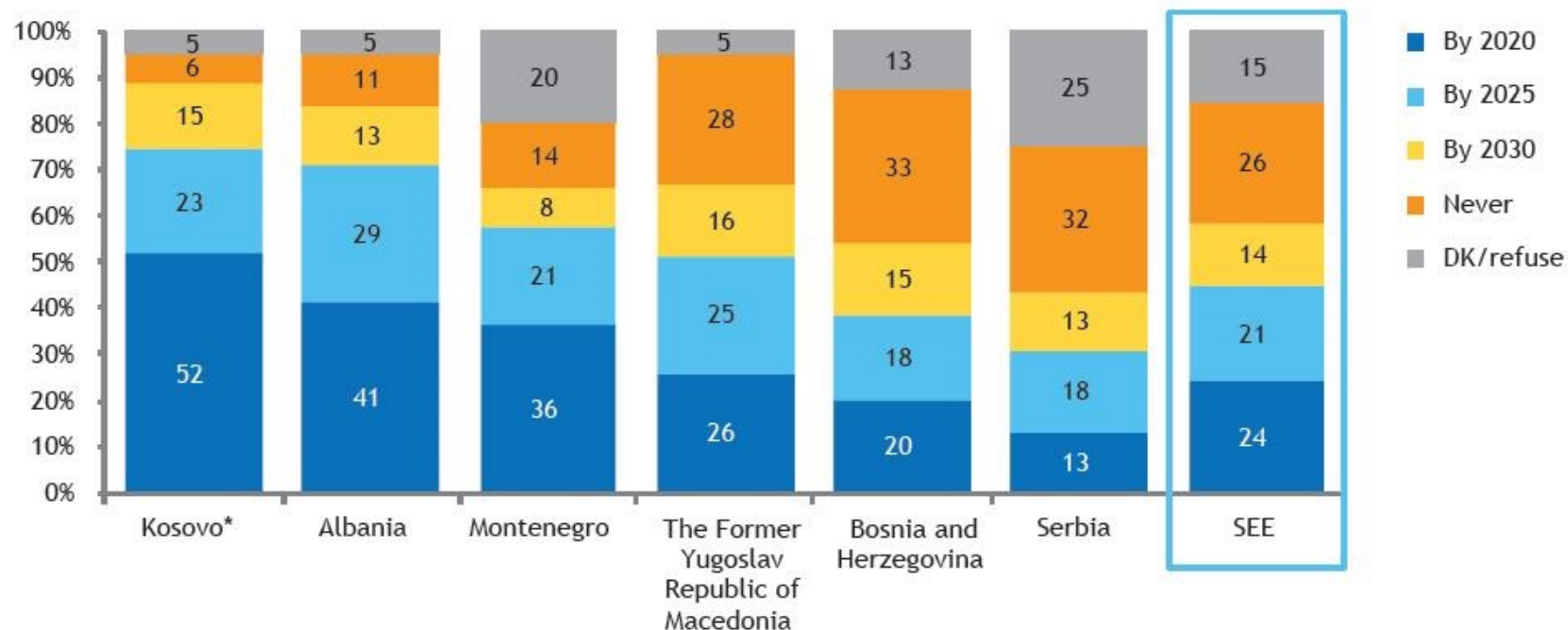
- Generally: growing mistrust in EU because of political uncertainties
- But: trust in EU is higher in Romania/Bulgaria/Croatia than EU average
- Eurobarometer 2016:

Tend to	European Union			Parliament			Government		
	Trust	not to trust	don't know	Trust	not to trust	don't know	Trust	not to trust	don't know
EU (n= 27 705)	36%	54%	10%	32%	62%	6%	31%	64%	5%
BG (n= 1 012)	49%	34%	17%	15%	77%	8%	22%	70%	8%
HR (n= 1 062)	43%	50%	7%	24%	73%	3%	26%	71%	3%
RO (n= 1 005)	52%	41%	7%	22%	74%	4%	29%	66%	5%

TOO HIGH AND TOO LOW EXPECTATIONS

In general, when do you expect the accession to EU to happen?

(All respondents - N=7002, share of total, %)



S.E.E. CITIZENS NOT WELL INFORMED ABOUT EU

- Although EU confirmed accession perspective, **many do not expect to enter the EU**
- Citizens in SEE are not well informed about EU
- E.g. Serbians think biggest donors are: Russia (25%), EU (21%), China (21%) – in reality: EU (1st), USA (2nd), Germany (3rd) (Source: SEIO – December 2016, N = 1054)
- Eurobarometer 2016: „To what extent do you think that you are well informed or not about European matters?“



	Well informed		Not well informed		Don't know	
EU (n= 27 705)	38%	-3	60%	+2	2%	+1
BG (n= 1 012)	34%	-4	63%	+3	3%	+1
HR (n= 1 062)	37%	-11	63%	+11	0%	=
RO (n= 1 005)	39%	-10	60%	+10	1%	=

COMMS CHALLENGES: SEECOM 2017 CONCLUSIONS

- European governments struggling to engage citizens in a **dialogue on a united Europe**
- In South East Europe, third parties are working systematically to offer **alternative narratives**
- The visibility & **public credit** that EU receives in SEE is not in proportion to EU's investment
- Public **support for enlargement** in EU disturbingly low – need for coordinated action
- Political messaging will not suffice: Effective comms require **active engagement** with local communities, civil society and businesses
- In crisis of trust, citizen dialogue requires highest ethical and **professional standards**



SEECOM 2017 Conference, Berlin



NEW EXPERT BOOK: RECONNECTING WITH CITIZENS

- Reconnecting with citizens – from values to big data: Communication of governments, the EU and political parties in times of populism and filter bubbles
- ✓ **Strategic comms of governments**
- ✓ **Communication of EU enlargement**
- ✓ **Digital election campaigning**
- ✓ **Citizen dialogue via social media**
- 19 leading experts from Western Europe, USA, UK and South East Europe, amongst others:

Angelina Eichhorst , **Michael Mann** (EEAS)
Alex Aiken (chief communicator, UK government)
Erik den Hoedt (chief communicator, Dutch govt.)
Vincenzo Le Voci (Secretary-Gen., Club of Venice)
Vuk Vujanović (Secretary General, SEECOM)
John Verrico (Immediate-Past President, U.S. National Association of Government Communicators)
Roland Heintze, **Mario Voigt** (CDU politicians)



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MEDIA, COMMUNICATION & POLITICS @ KAS: KEY INSTRUMENTS 2017/2018

- **Public fora:** SEEMF, Sofia, 27-29 Nov. 2017
- **Workshops:** Stratcom (anti-fake news) training for government spokespersons, 4-5 Dec. 2017
- **Seminars:** Entrepreneurial Journalism, February
- **Conferences:** Multi-stakeholder conference (April, t.b.c.) & SEECOM Conference (6-7 Sept.)
- **Summer schools:** Political Communication (17-22 June) & Investigative Journalism (19-25 Aug.)
- **Partnerships:** European Commission, Club of Venice, universities, media NGOs, DW & others
- **Opinion polls, monitoring & evaluation**



South East Europe Media Forum
2016 in Belgrade

THANK YOU

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