Understanding democracy in comparative context

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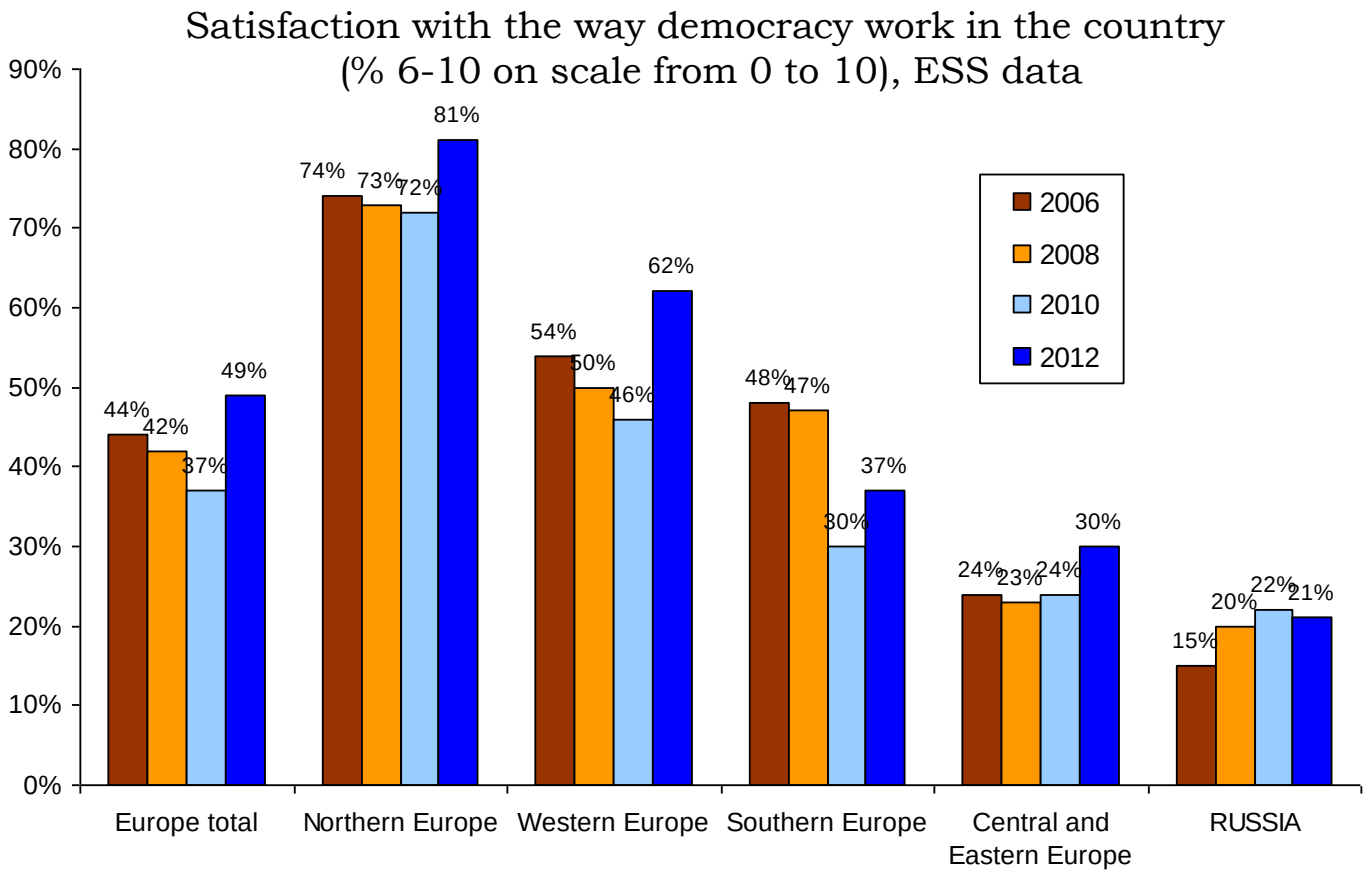
CeSSI

Evaluation of the way democracy work in the country is one of the key part of modern political process. Measuring the evaluation of democracy is the task for many comparative and national surveys

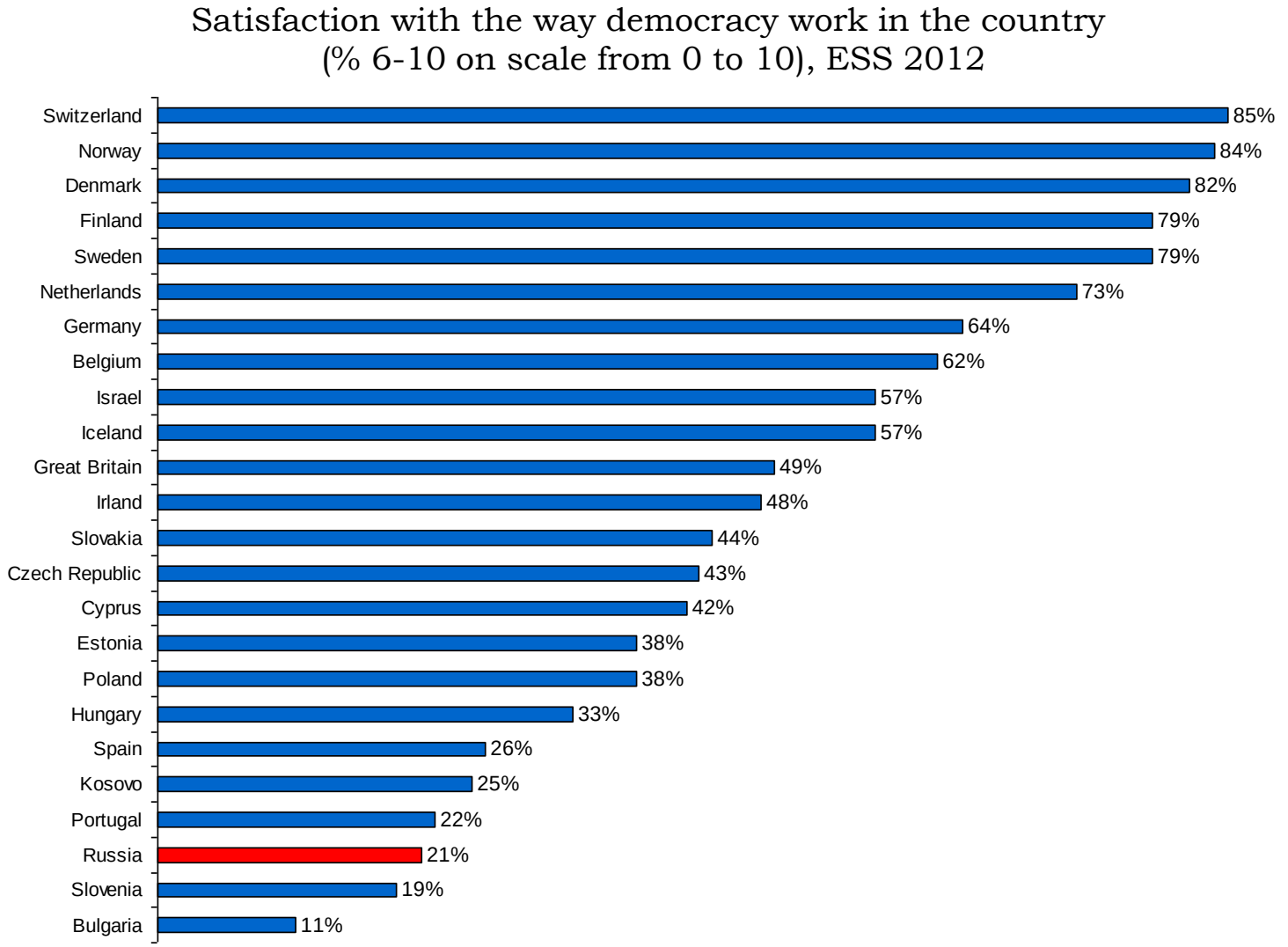
The level of satisfaction with democracy in different groups of countries is very different



Question: On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Russia? (0- extremely dissatisfied, 10 – extremely satisfied)

Вопрос: Если говорить в целом, насколько Вы удовлетворены тем, как работает демократия в России? (шкала ответов 0 – совершенно не удовлетворен, 10- полностью удовлетворен)

The level of satisfaction with democracy between particular countries in Europe is also very different



Consequences and Reasons

Consequences

- Stability of democratic system
- Support and trust to political and public institutions
- Integration of citizens into political system (vs. anomie, alienation)

Differences in evaluation of democracy in a country can be a result of

Real differences in functioning of democracy, fulfillment of democratic principles and norms in particular country

Experience, learning of democratic principles, norms, procedures, practical skills

Prior historical experience, traditions

Differences in understanding of democracy as a concept

Type and characteristics of political system

- Question – are cross-county comparisons possible on this issue?

How to study the issue of understanding democracy in different countries

Method of "open" definition

«Open-ended question» - What is democracy in your opinion? What are the main characteristics of democracy?

Thomassen 1995, Kornberg and Clarke 1992, Seligson 2001, Canache *et al.* 2001; Baviskar and Malone 2004; Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; *R.J. Dalton, D. C. Shin, W.Jou 2007*

Method of rating of theoretical components

- Define theoretical components of democracy
- Find the correspondence of theoretical factors with the perception of population - evaluate these components (ranging/ ranking – horizontal or hierarchical structure)

Diamond and Morlino 2005; Morlino, 2009

Hanspeter Kriesi, Leonardo Morlino, Pedro Magalhães, Sonia Alonso and Mónica Ferrín, Mark Franklin, Bernard Wessels, Mariano Torcal, Braulio Gymez, Alexander Trechsel, Radek Markowski, Wolfgang Merkel, Todd Landmann.

Theoretical components of democracy

Procedural

Policies, End-Result

Freedoms and Competition

- **Free and Fair elections** «Чтобы федеральные выборы проводились свободно и справедливо»
- **Competition between parties** «Чтобы политические партии предлагали избирателям по-настоящему разные программы»
- **Free opposition** «Чтобы оппозиционные партии могли свободно критиковать правительство»
- **Free media** «Чтобы средства массовой информации могли свободно критиковать правительство»

Participation

- **Direct participation** citizens have the final say on the most important political issues by voting on them directly in referendums «Чтобы граждане страны имели решающее слово в принятии важных политических решений путем прямого голосования на референдумах»
- **Participation for all** «Чтобы иммигранты получали право голосовать на федеральных выборах, только после получения гражданства»
- **Voters discuss politics before voting** «Чтобы до того, как принимать решение за кого голосовать, избиратели обсуждали политические вопросы в своем кругу»

Control

- **Vertical -** governing parties are punished in elections when they have done a bad job - «Чтобы правящие партии лишались поддержки избирателей, если плохо выполняют свою работу»
- **Feedback** - the government explains its decisions to voters «Чтобы правительство разъясняло свои решения избирателям»
- **Access to information from media -** media provide citizens with reliable information to judge the government «Чтобы СМИ предоставляли гражданам достоверную информацию, позволяющую судить о деятельности правительства»
- **Horizontal** - the courts are able to stop the government acting beyond its authority «Чтобы суды могли приостановить решения правительства, если оно превышает свои полномочия»

- **Civic equality -** courts treat everyone the same «Чтобы суды подходили ко всем одинаково»
- **Policy to reduce differences in income** «Чтобы правительство предпринимало меры по уменьшению разницы в доходах между людьми»
- **Rights of minorities are protected** «Чтобы права меньшинств были защищены»
- **Protecting all citizens against poverty** «Чтобы государство защищало всех граждан от бедности»

Data: countries in ESS

Red - participated in all or almost all rounds since 2006

Orange – participated in few rounds

Yellow – did not participate

Not in ESS

Andorra

Lichtenstein

Monako

Vanikan

Malta

San Marino

Not in ESS

Moldavia

Belarus

Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Macedonia

Montenegro

In ESS

Russia

Turkey

Israel

Understanding Democracy in Europe

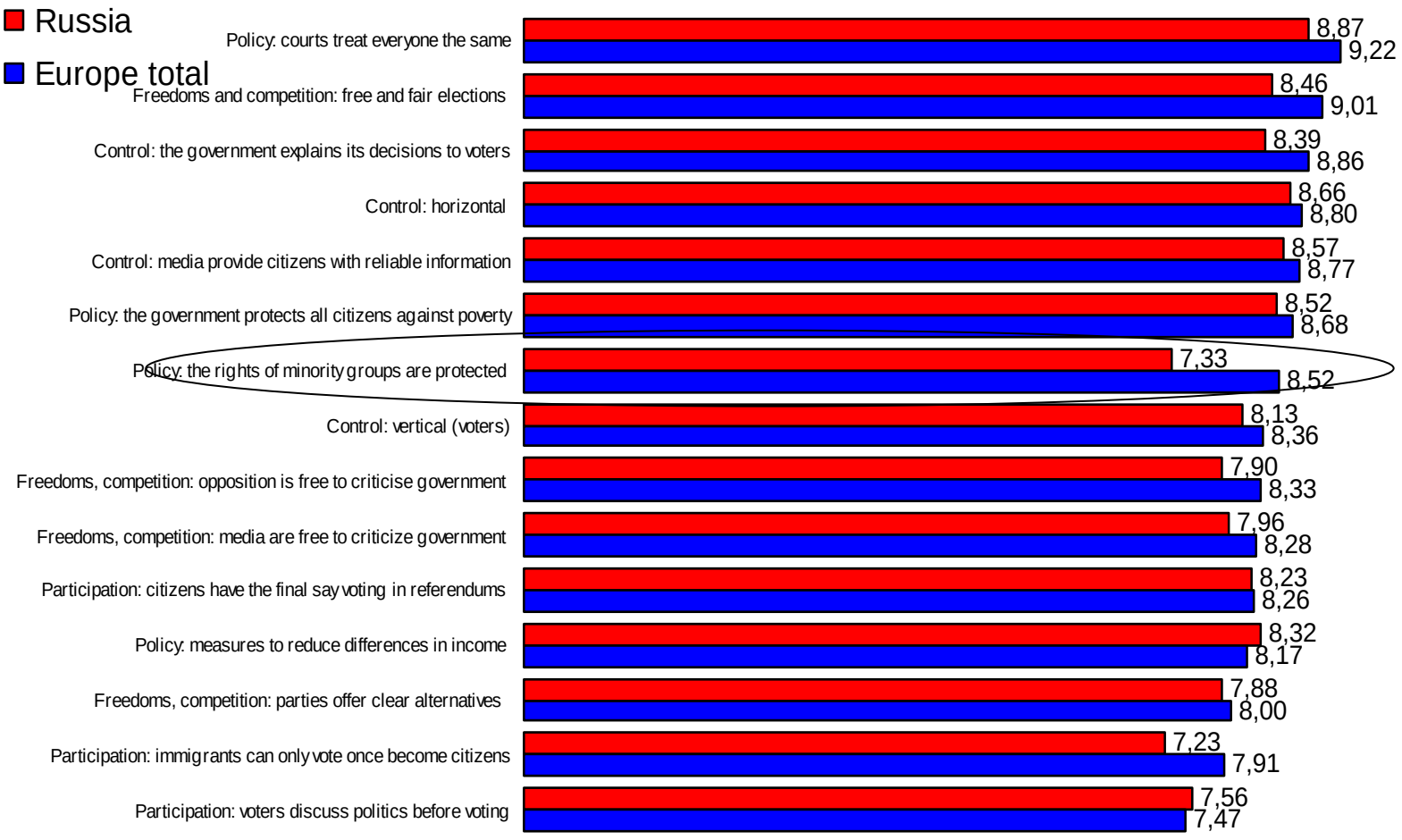
Mean on scale from 0 to 10

Question: Please tell me how important you think it is for democracy in general...(0- not at all important for democracy in general, 10 – extremely important for democracy in general)

Вопрос: Насколько важным признаком демократии как таковой, на Ваш взгляд, является (0 – совсем не важный признак демократии, 10 – жизненно важный)

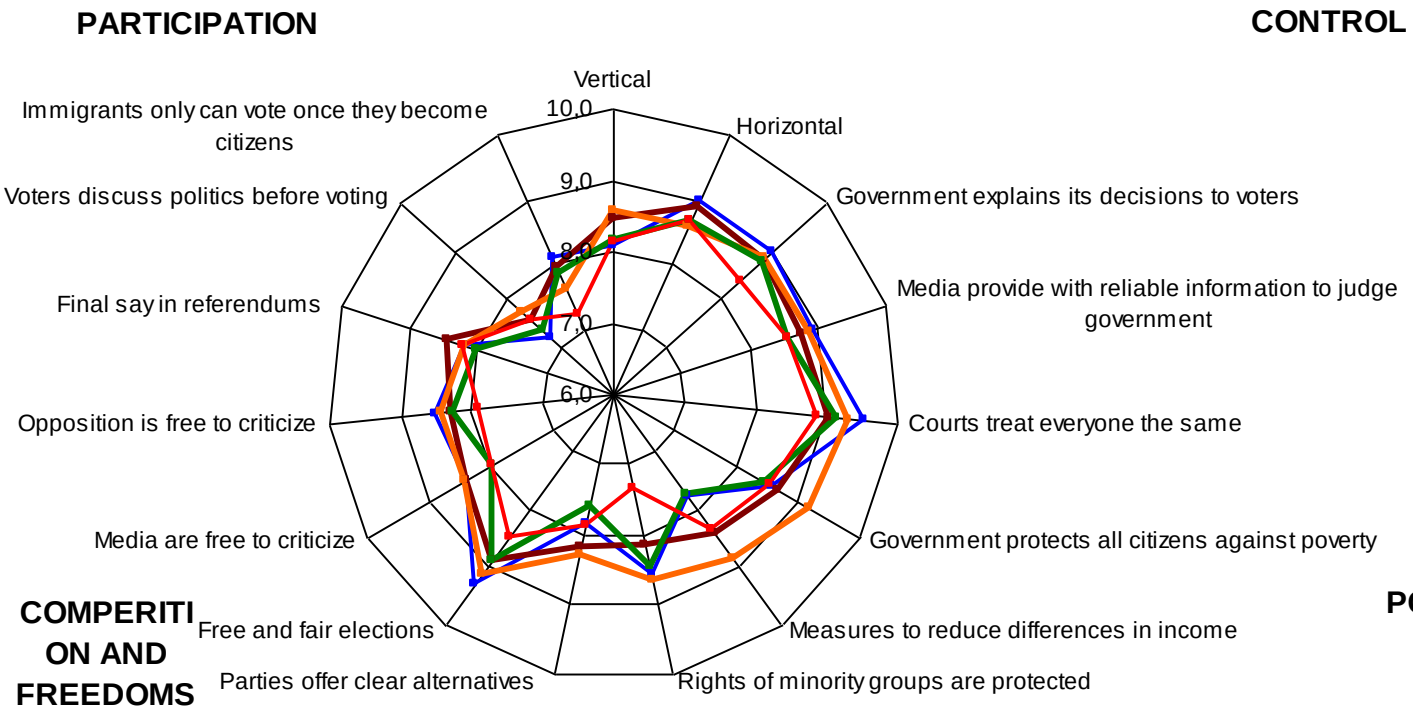
8

Understanding Democracy in Russia and in Europe



9

Components of Democracy



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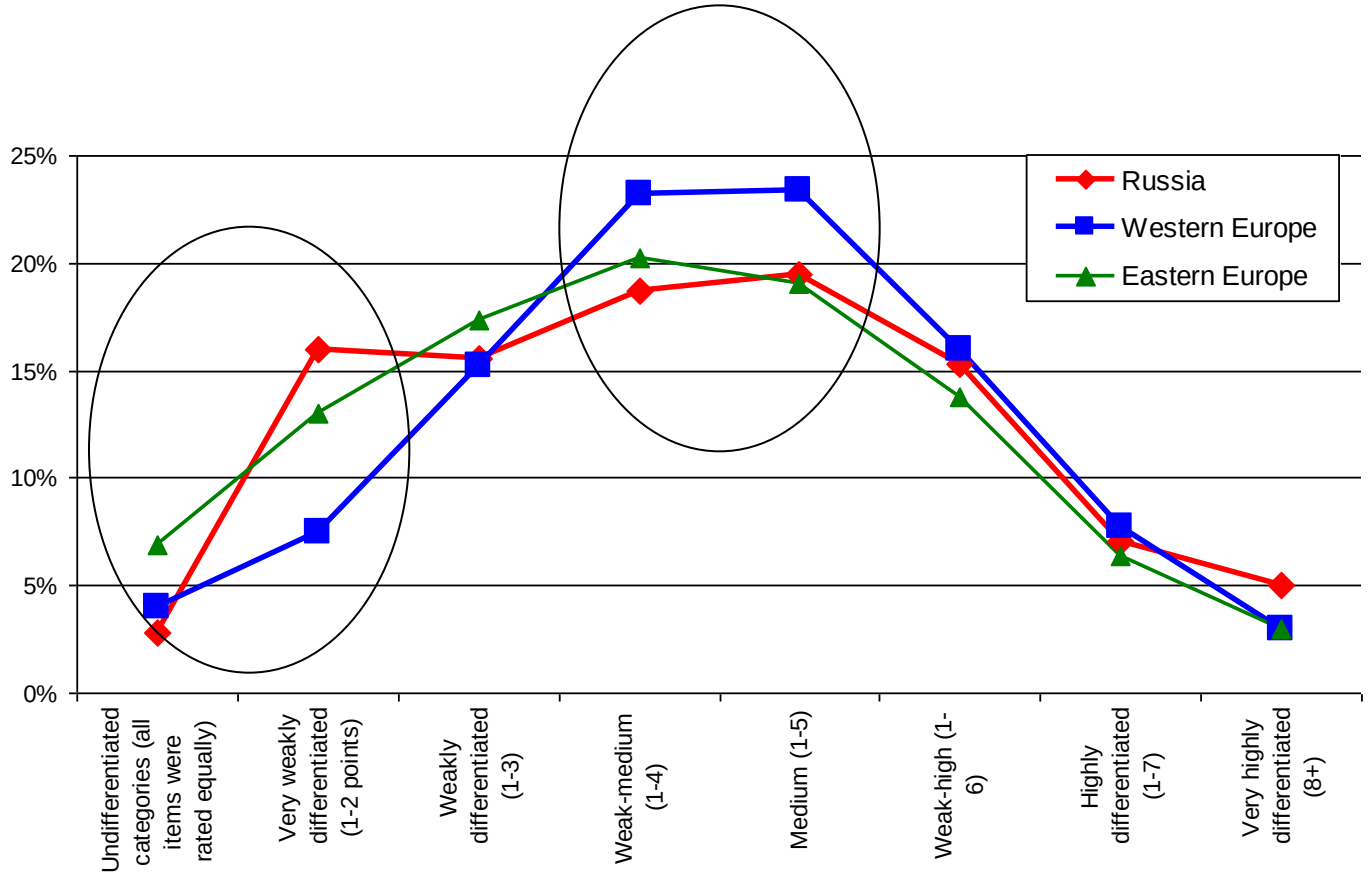
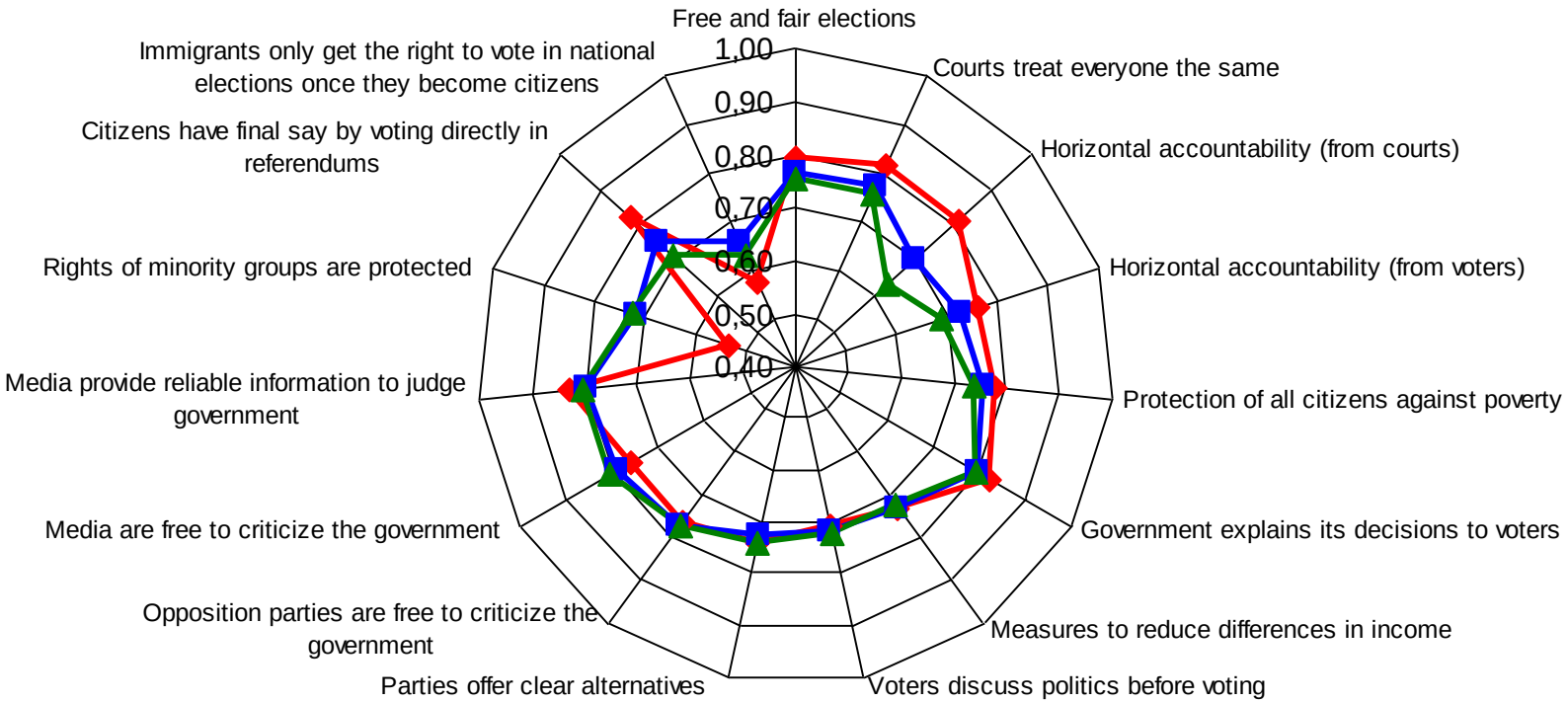
Differentiation of components of Democracy



Each component was ranked (hierarchical place among other components by the importance for democracy), if rating of importance were equal, those components got the same rank

Structural relations of components: results of factor analysis

Factor loadings on first factor before the rotation



Consolidation of components in understanding democracy

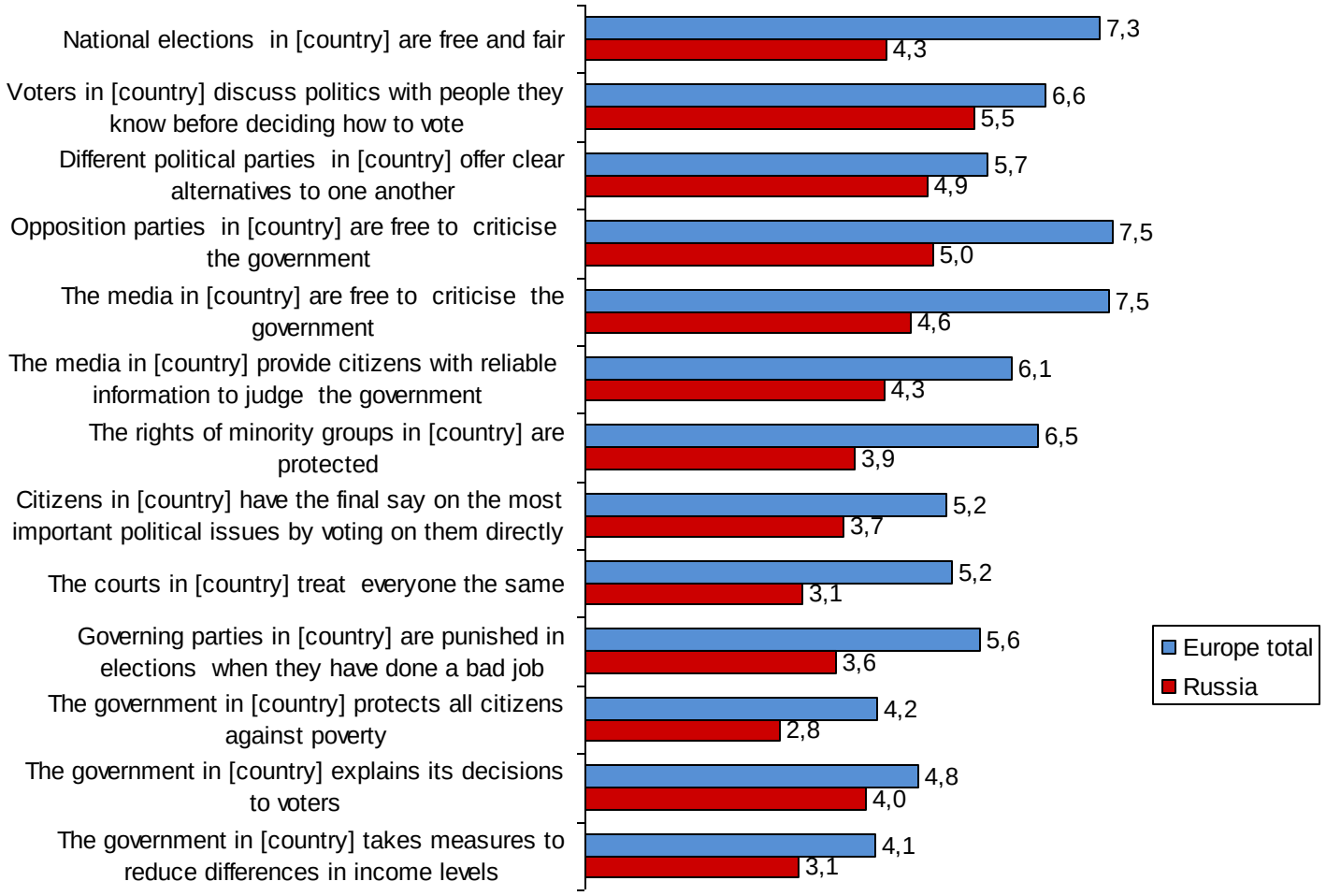
% 8-10 on scale from 0 to 10	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Russia
Participation: voters discuss politics before voting	56	57	55
Freedoms and competition: parties offer clear alternatives	64	66	61
Policy: measures to reduce differences in income	66	72	69
Freedoms and competition: media are free to criticize the government	70	71	64
Control: governing parties are punished in elections when they have done a bad job	71	71	66
Freedoms and competition: opposition parties are free to criticise the government	72	68	60
Participation: citizens have the final say on the most important political issues by voting on them directly in referendums	69	70	68
Policy: the rights of minority groups are protected	75	68	53
Policy: the government protects all citizens against poverty	79	77	73
Control: horizontal (the courts are able to stop the government acting beyond its authority)	78	78	73
Control: the government explains its decisions to voters	84	79	70
Control: media provide citizens with reliable information to judge the government	80	78	75
Freedoms and competition: free and fair elections	85	81	72
Policy: the courts treat everyone the same	90	84	79

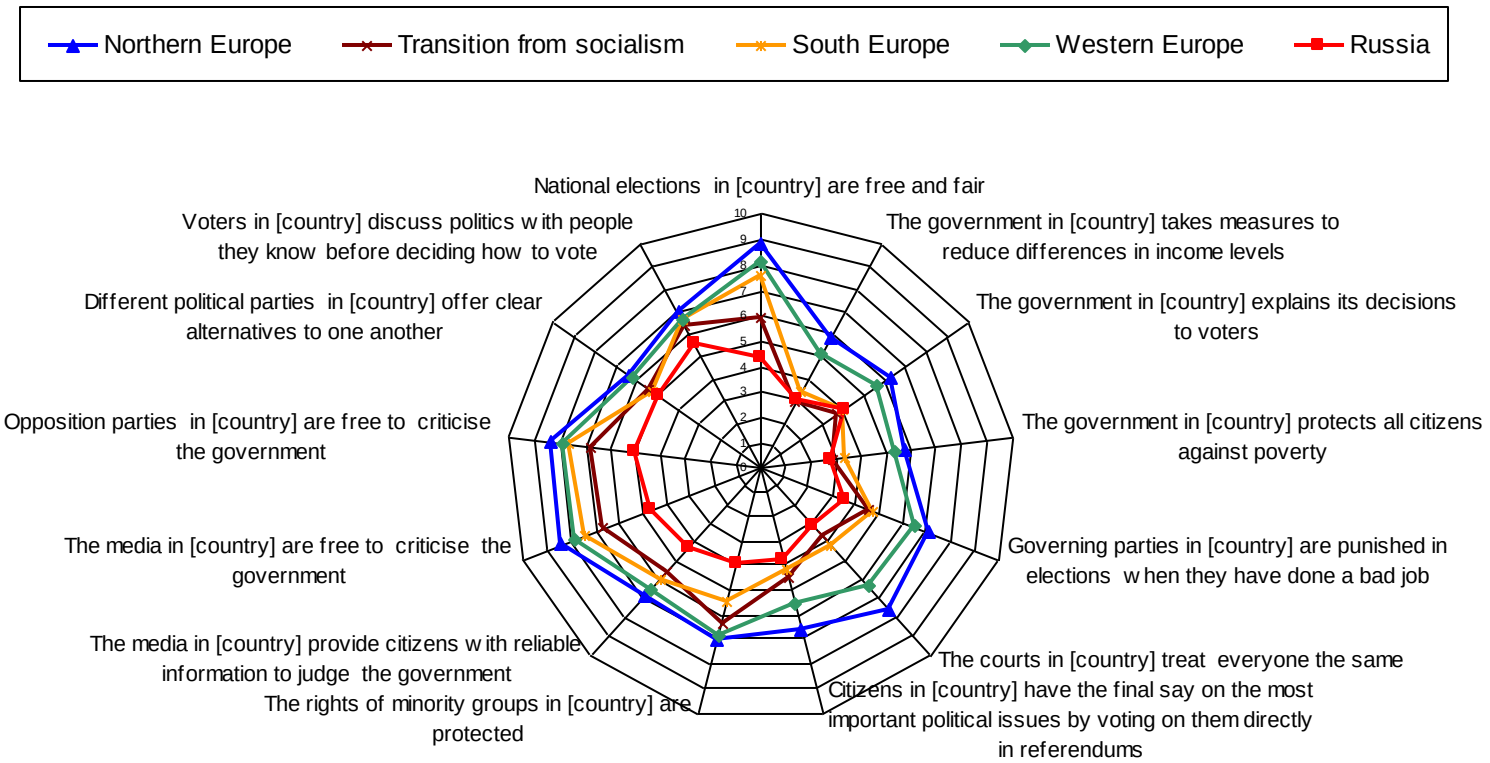
Conclusions

- No substantial obstacles for comparative analysis of attitudes of population toward democracy or the evaluation of democracy were found
- Reasons of differences in evaluation and the satisfaction with democracy should be based on real differences in the implementation of democratic principles in particular countries rather than on differences in understanding this concept. Differences in expectations from democracy, results of democracy and the speed of achievement of visible results can however play the role in explaining differences in the satisfaction with democracy in particular countries.
- From substantial rather than methodological point of view, understanding of democracy studied as the rating of importance of different theoretical components for the notion of democracy is very similar in different European counties. Different historical and life experience, forms of democracy (political systems), the age of democracy, political history, traditions and culture do not influence understanding of democracy notion (but still can influence the evaluation and expectations from democracy)
- Some differences were found in the depth of understanding of democracy notion and the level of consolidation in society on key and periphery components of democracy. In post Soviet countries, and in Russia in particular, understanding of democracy is less differentiated. Individual components are often ranted the same way on importance scale. In these countries the division of components into “core” (highly consolidated opinion about high importance of these components for democracy), “medium important” and “peripheral in importance” is less clear than in developed democracies. In post Soviet countries there are less public agreement, less consolidated opinion about the meaning of democracy than in Western countries.
- Russia differs from other countries by even lower differentiation of democracy components and the lack of consolidated opinion about “core” components of democracy, weaker consensus on key elements of the democracy than in other Post-soviet countries.
- In Russia democracy is less related to the idea of minority's rights than in all other countries. It can due to the lack of notion of consensus democracy as the way to balance interests of different groups in the society regardless of the size of these groups, and the domination of the idea of “dictatorship of the majority”. But it also can be related to situational factors – intensive public discussion on the issue of “minorities” (including sexual minorities, migrants, etc.) in the recent years.

Evaluation of different components of democracy

(mean on scale from 0 to 10), ESS 2012



Evaluation of democracy components

(mean on scale from 0 to 10), ESS 2012