



## **Flash Eurobarometer 373**

# **EUROPEANS' ENGAGEMENT IN PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY**

## **SUMMARY**

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This survey has been requested and co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication.

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission.  
The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

**Flash Eurobarometer 373 - TNS Political & Social**

**Flash Eurobarometer 373**

**Europeans' Engagement in  
Participatory Democracy**

Conducted by TNS Political & Social at the request of  
the European Commission,  
Directorate-General for Communication

Survey co-ordinated by the European Commission,  
Directorate-General for Communication  
(DG COMM "Research and Speechwriting" Unit)

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## INTRODUCTION

This summary presents the results of the report on 'Europeans' Engagement in Participatory Democracy' that examines the extent to which European citizens engage in participatory democracy, and the extent to which they believe that political decision-making can be influenced through their own actions, and through those of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

This survey was carried out by TNS Political & Social network in the 27 Member States of the European Union between 14 February and 16 February 2013. Some 25,551 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed by telephone in their mother tongue on behalf of the Directorate-General for Communication, in response to a request from the European Economic and Social Committee. The methodology used is that of Eurobarometer surveys as carried out by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Research and Speechwriting" Unit)<sup>1</sup>. A technical note on the manner in which interviews were conducted by the Institutes within the TNS Political & Social network is appended as an annex to this summary. Also included are the interview methods and confidence intervals<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> The results tables are included in the annex. It should be noted that the total of the percentages in the tables of this report may exceed 100% when the respondent has the possibility of giving several answers to the question.

Note: In this report, countries are referred to by their official abbreviation. The abbreviations used in this report correspond to:

ABBREVIATIONS			
BE	Belgium	LV	Latvia
CZ	Czech Republic	LU	Luxembourg
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary
DK	Denmark	MT	Malta
DE	Germany	NL	The Netherlands
EE	Estonia	AT	Austria
EL	Greece	PL	Poland
ES	Spain	PT	Portugal
FR	France	RO	Romania
IE	Ireland	SI	Slovenia
IT	Italy	SK	Slovakia
CY	Republic of Cyprus*	FI	Finland
LT	Lithuania	SE	Sweden
		UK	The United Kingdom

EU27            European Union – 27 Member States

\* Cyprus as a whole is one of the 27 European Union Member States. However, the 'acquis communautaire' has been suspended in the part of the country which is not controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. For practical reasons, only the interviews carried out in the part of the country controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are included in the 'CY' category and in the EU27 average.

\* \* \* \* \*

*We wish to thank all the people interviewed who took the time to participate in this survey.*

*Without their active participation, this survey would not have been possible.*

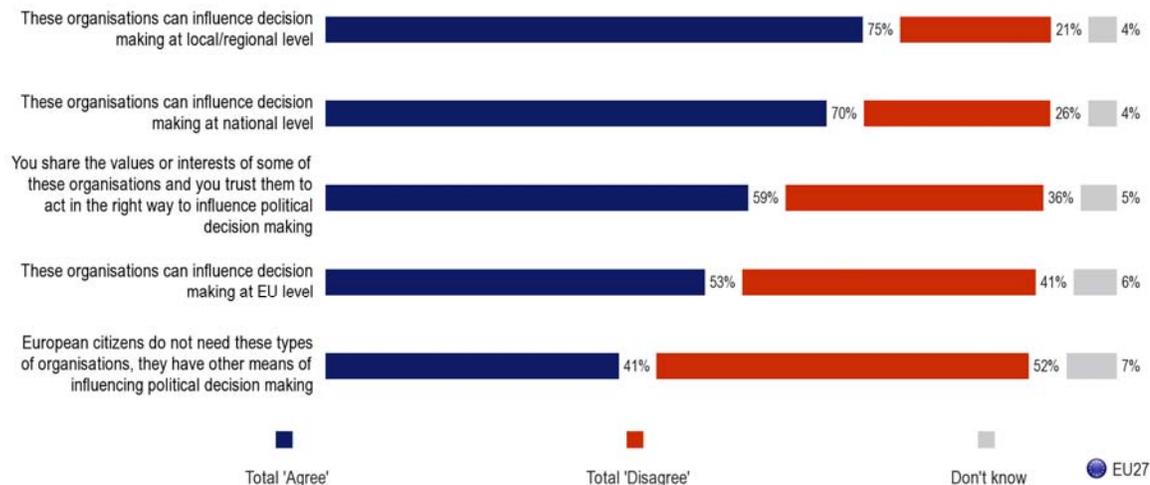
## 1. CITIZENS' VIEWS ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

**-- At least seven out of 10 respondents agree that NGOs can influence decision-making at both the local and national levels --**

Most respondents feel that NGOs can influence local (75%) and national (70%) decision-making, and to a lesser extent EU-level decision-making (53%).

A majority (59%) of people think that NGOs share their interests and values, while only four out of 10 people (41%) think European citizens do not need these types of organisations.

Q1. I would like to ask you a few questions about non-governmental organisations and associations. These are organisations and associations that are independent from the State. They include Chambers of Commerce, Industry or Agriculture, trade unions, professional associations, employers' organisations and organisations with a specific interest (economic, social, environmental, cultural or sporting interests, for example). To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about these types of organisations?



**-- A relative majority of people in five Member States agree that EU citizens do not need these types of organisations --**

A relative majority of people in five Member States agree that citizens do not need these kinds of organisations: Romania (where 55% agree, and 40% disagree), Greece (52% vs. 44%), Bulgaria (49% vs. 42%), Portugal (49% vs. 46%) and Cyprus (47% vs. 43%). Opinion is equally divided in Malta, where 46% of respondents agree and 46% disagree.

***-- At least 50% of respondents feel that they share the values or interests of these organisations in all but three Member States --***

At least 50% of respondents in all but three Member States agree that they share the values or interests of these organisations. The level of agreement is highest in the Netherlands (75%), Luxembourg (70%) and Denmark (70%). The three exceptions, where less than 50% of people agree that they share the values or interests of these organisations, are: Spain (46%), the Czech Republic (47%) and Estonia (47%).

***-- At least two-thirds of people in all Member States believe that these organisations can influence local decision-making --***

In eight Member States, at least 80% of people take the view that these organisations can influence local decision-making, with the level of agreement being the highest in Sweden (88%) and Finland (87%). At least 70% of people agree in all Member States, with the exception of Spain, where only 65% agree that NGOs can influence decision-making at local/regional level.

Spain (32%) has the highest proportion of respondents who disagree with this statement, followed by Slovenia (27%).

***-- A majority of people in all Member States think that NGOs can influence decision-making at national level --***

At least eight out of 10 people in four Member States take the view that NGOs can influence decision-making at national level: Denmark (83%), Sweden (82%), Finland (82%) and Luxembourg (80%). A majority of people in all Member States agree that these organisations can influence decision-making at national level, though less than six out of 10 people express agreement in five countries: the Czech Republic (55%), Greece (56%), Hungary (57%), Slovenia (58%) and Latvia (58%).

***-- Over half of the respondents in 19 Member States think that NGOs can influence EU decision-making --***

At least 50% of people agree that NGOs can influence EU decision-making in 19 Member States, with a relatively high number of respondents saying this in Romania (71%), Portugal (68%) and Luxembourg and Denmark (both 66%).

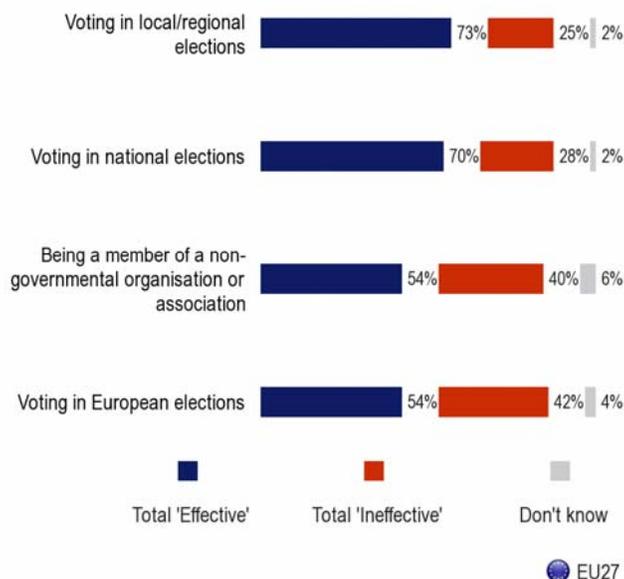
However, in six Member States a relative majority of people say that these organisations cannot influence EU-level decision-making: the Czech Republic (59% disagree vs. 37% who agree), Austria (54% vs. 42%), Slovenia (52% vs. 44%), Latvia (52% vs. 44%), Germany (48% vs. 46%) and the Netherlands (48% vs. 47%). Opinion is equally divided in Greece (49% agree and disagree).

## 2. EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT WAYS OF INFLUENCING POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

**-- Around 70% of respondents feel that voting in local/regional or national elections is an effective way of influencing political decisions, and over half think that voting in EU elections or joining an NGO is effective --**

Roughly seven out of 10 respondents think that voting in local (73%) or national (70%) elections is an effective way to influence political decisions. Figures are lower for EU elections and membership in NGOs, although a majority of respondents (54%) still think that voting in EU elections or joining an NGO is an effective means of influencing political decision-making.

Q2. For each of the following actions, please tell me if you think they are effective or ineffective in influencing political decision-making?



**-- A majority of people in all Member States see voting in local/regional elections as an effective way of influencing political decisions --**

In 12 Member States, at least three quarters of respondents consider local/regional elections to be an effective way of influencing political decisions, with Luxembourg, Germany, Denmark and Finland (all 83%) having the highest numbers of people who take this view.

A majority of people in all Member States think that voting in local/regional elections is an effective way of influencing political decision-making, though less than six out of 10 respondents take this view in Slovenia (55%) and Latvia (59%). Relatively high numbers of people say that voting in local or regional elections is ineffective in Slovenia (42%), Latvia (37%) and Spain (37%).

***-- A majority of people in 26 out of 27 Member States think that voting in national elections is an effective way to influence political decisions --***

In 11 Member States, at least three quarters of respondents believe that national elections are an effective way of influencing political decisions, with Denmark (89%), Malta (85%) and Finland (82%) having the highest numbers of people who take this view.

A majority of people in all but one of the 27 Member States think that voting in national elections is an effective way of influencing political decision-making. The exception is Slovenia, where 47% of people think that voting in national elections is effective, as opposed to 49% who think it is ineffective.

***-- In 19 Member States a majority of respondents think that voting in European elections is an effective way to influence political decisions --***

At least 50% of people in 19 Member States agree that voting in European elections is an effective way to influence political decisions. Romania (71%) has the highest number of people who take this view, followed by Malta (69%) and Italy (65%).

In four EU countries a majority of respondents think that voting in European elections is not an effective way to influence political decisions: Latvia (61%), the Czech Republic (54%), the UK (54%) and Slovenia (53%). Opinion is equally divided in the Netherlands, with 49% of respondents agreeing and 49% disagreeing that it is effective.

***-- In all but two Member States a majority of respondents think that being a member of an NGO is an effective way to influence political decisions --***

At least 50% of people in 20 Member States think that membership of an NGO is an effective way to influence political decisions. Luxembourg (68%) has the highest number of people who take this view, followed by Romania and Malta (both 65%).

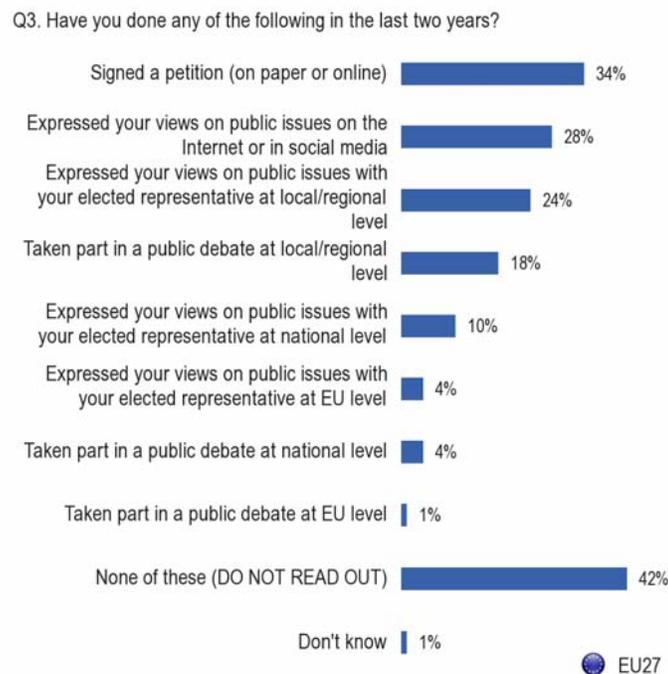
### 3. CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT IN INFLUENCING POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

***-- Petitions are the main route through which respondents seek to directly influence decision-making --***

A third (34%) of respondents say that they signed a petition on paper or online as a means to influence decision-making, while 28% of people expressed their views on public issues on the Internet or social media, and 24% expressed their views with their elected representative at local/regional level.

Just under a fifth (18%) of respondents say that they have taken part in a public debate at local/regional level during the past two years, with a tenth (10%) having expressed their views on public issues with their elected representative at national level.

42% of EU respondents haven't done any of the listed activities.



Over half of the respondents in the UK (53%) and France (51%) say that they signed a petition, but at the other end of the scale only 7% of people in Cyprus and 10% of those in Greece have signed a petition in the last two years.

In eight Member States, the Internet or social media are the main avenues for expressing views on public issues, with the highest percentages in Spain (39%), the Czech Republic and the Netherlands (both 35%).

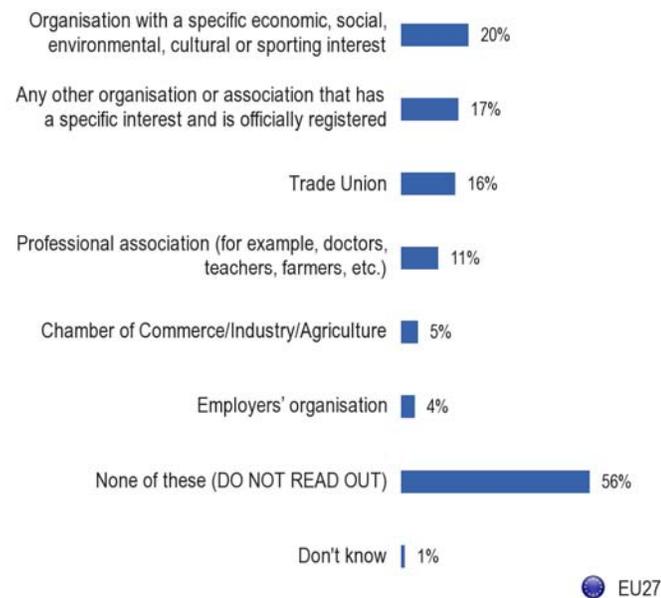
Expressing one's views on public issues with an elected representative at local/regional level is the most popular approach in six Member States, with relatively high numbers of people having done this over the past two years in Ireland (43%), Finland (36%) and Austria (33%).

**-- While NGO membership is common in a few specific EU countries, most Europeans in general are not members of any NGOs or associations --**

A fifth of European respondents (20%) say they are members of an organisation with a specific economic, social, environmental, cultural or sporting interest. Around one person in six is also a member of another type of organisation with a special interest (17%), or a member of a Trade Union (16%). A tenth (11%) of respondents are members of a professional association for groups such as doctors or teachers.

A majority (56%) of respondents say spontaneously that they are not members of any of these sorts of NGOs or associations.

Q4. Are you a member of any of the following types of non-governmental organisations or associations?



The Nordic countries stand out on this question, as they tend to have a high level of participation in NGOs and similar associations. Trade Union membership is exceptionally high in the Nordic countries as well: Denmark (61%), Finland and Sweden (both 54%).

In most countries relatively few people are members of a professional association. Denmark (27%), Finland (23%) and Ireland (21%) are the only Member States in which at least a fifth of people are members of this kind of group.

In 24 Member States, a majority of respondents say that they are not members of any kind of NGO or association. At least eight out of 10 people say this in Lithuania (84%), Estonia (81%) and Romania (80%). At the other end of the scale, only around a fifth of people are not a member of any such group in Sweden (19%), Finland (20%) and Denmark (21%).

## **TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS**

**FLASH EUROBAROMETER 373**  
**"Europeans' Engagement in Participatory Democracy"**  
**TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS**

Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2013, TNS Political & Social, a consortium created between TNS political & social, TNS UK and TNS opinion, carried out the survey FLASH EUROBAROMETER 373 about "Europeans' Engagement in Participatory Democracy".

This survey has been requested by the EUROPEAN COMMISSION. It is a general public survey co-ordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Research and Speechwriting" Unit). The FLASH EUROBAROMETER 373 covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union Member States, resident in each of the 27 Member States and aged 15 years and over. All interviews were carried using the TNS e-Call center (our centralized CATI system). In every country respondents were called both on fixed lines and mobile phones. The basic sample design applied in all states is multi-stage random (probability). In each household, the respondent was drawn at random following the "last birthday rule".

TNS has developed its own RDD sample generation capabilities based on using contact telephone numbers from responders to random probability or random location face to face surveys, such as Eurobarometer, as seed numbers. The approach works because the seed number identifies a working block of telephone numbers and reduces the volume of numbers generated that will be ineffective. The seed numbers are stratified by NUTS2 region and urbanisation to approximate a geographically representative sample. From each seed number the required sample of numbers are generated by randomly replacing the last two digits. The sample is then screened against business databases in order to exclude as many of these numbers as possible before going into field. This approach is consistent across all countries.

A comparison between the sample and the universe was carried out. The Universe description was derived from the national statistics office. The weighting procedure, using marginal and intercellular weighting, was carried out based on this Universe description. Gender, age, region, social class and the vote in the referendum on the Stability Treaty were introduced in the iteration procedure.

Readers are reminded that survey results are estimations, the accuracy of which, everything being equal, rests upon the sample size and upon the observed percentage. With samples of about 1,000 interviews, the real percentages vary within the following confidence limits:

Statistical Margins due to the sampling process (at the 95% level of confidence)											
<i>various sample sizes are in rows</i>						<i>various observed results are in columns</i>					
	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%	
	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	
N=50	6,0	8,3	9,9	11,1	12,0	12,7	13,2	13,6	13,8	13,9	N=50
N=500	1,9	2,6	3,1	3,5	3,8	4,0	4,2	4,3	4,4	4,4	N=500
N=1000	1,4	1,9	2,2	2,5	2,7	2,8	3,0	3,0	3,1	3,1	N=1000
N=1500	1,1	1,5	1,8	2,0	2,2	2,3	2,4	2,5	2,5	2,5	N=1500
N=2000	1,0	1,3	1,6	1,8	1,9	2,0	2,1	2,1	2,2	2,2	N=2000
N=3000	0,8	1,1	1,3	1,4	1,5	1,6	1,7	1,8	1,8	1,8	N=3000
N=4000	0,7	0,9	1,1	1,2	1,3	1,4	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	N=4000
N=5000	0,6	0,8	1,0	1,1	1,2	1,3	1,3	1,4	1,4	1,4	N=5000
N=6000	0,6	0,8	0,9	1,0	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,3	1,3	N=6000
N=7000	0,5	0,7	0,8	0,9	1,0	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,2	1,2	N=7000
N=7500	0,5	0,7	0,8	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	N=7500
N=8000	0,5	0,7	0,8	0,9	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,1	1,1	1,1	N=8000
N=9000	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,8	0,9	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,0	1,0	N=9000
N=10000	0,4	0,6	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,9	0,9	1,0	1,0	1,0	N=10000
N=11000	0,4	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,9	N=11000
N=12000	0,4	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,9	0,9	0,9	0,9	N=12000
N=13000	0,4	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,8	0,9	0,9	N=13000
N=14000	0,4	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,8	0,8	0,8	N=14000
N=15000	0,3	0,5	0,6	0,6	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,8	0,8	N=15000
	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%	
	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%	

ABBR.	COUNTRIES	INSTITUTES	N° INTERVIEWS	FIELDWORK DATES		POPULATION 15+
BE	Belgium	TNS Dimarso	1.002	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	8.939.546
BG	Bulgaria	TNS BBSS	1.001	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	6.537.510
CZ	Czech Rep.	TNS Aisa s.r.o	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	9.012.443
DK	Denmark	TNS Gallup A/S	1.009	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	4.561.264
DE	Germany	TNS Infratest	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	64.409.146
EE	Estonia	TNS Emor	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	945.733
EL	Greece	TNS ICAP	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	8.693.566
ES	Spain	TNS Demoscopia S.A	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	39.035.867
FR	France	TNS Sofres	1.007	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	47.756.439
IE	Ireland	IMS Millward Brown	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	3.522.000
IT	Italy	TNS Infratest	1.001	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	51.862.391
CY	Rep. of Cyprus	CYMAR	507	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	660.400
LV	Latvia	TNS Latvia	1.001	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	1.447.866
LT	Lithuania	TNS LT	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	2.829.740
LU	Luxembourg	TNS Dimarso	500	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	404.907
HU	Hungary	TNS Hoffmann Kft	1.001	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	8.320.614
MT	Malta	MISCO International Ltd	500	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	335.476
NL	Netherlands	TNS NIPO	1.003	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	13.371.980
AT	Austria	TNS Austria	1.001	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	7.009.827
PL	Poland	TNS OBOP	1.001	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	32.413.735
PT	Portugal	TNS EUROTESTE	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	8.080.915
RO	Romania	TNS CSOP	1.005	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	18.246.731
SI	Slovenia	RM PLUS	1.003	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	1.759.701
SK	Slovakia	TNS AISA Slovakia	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	4.549.955
FI	Finland	TNS Gallup Oy	1.007	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	4.440.004
SE	Sweden	TNS SIFO	1.000	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	7.791.240
UK	United Kingdom	TNS UK	1.002	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	51.848.010
<b>TOTAL EU27</b>			<b>25.551</b>	14/02/2013	16/02/2013	<b>408.787.006</b>