

ANNUAL ECONOMIC SURVEY OF EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN 2008

INTRODUCTION TO COUNTRY FILES

Employee ownership is progressing faster and stronger across Europe than anyone could expect. This is a quick and recent new development in most European countries. However, some countries began earlier while others dawdled on the way (see [Graph 1](#)). The new Annual Survey for year 2008 shows that employee ownership declined a bit on the threshold of the financial crisis, from 283.3 to 240.2 billion Euro (-15.2%). However, this was still much more than the 206.2 billion one year before. As a percentage, employees' share stabilized on 2.63% in the capital ownership structure. Considering recent trends, employee ownership is going to double within the next 5-10 years, from 9.1 million employee owners now to 16 millions, from 28.2% of all employees in large European companies now to 40-50%, and capitalisation held by employees going to raise from 2.63% now to 4-5%. This is the main conclusion of the economic survey of employee ownership in the European countries in year 2008. This survey is based on information about each of all large European companies – which also means a similar information for each of all European countries. Furthermore, it is based on information given by companies themselves in Annual Reports – which means a quick information and a high quality. The full version of this Annual Survey is available at the European Federation of Employee Share Ownership.

BELGIUM (BE)

Compared to other European countries, employee ownership is underdeveloped in Belgium, with a low democratisation rate, and ineffective legislation being an obstacle to broad-based employee share plans.

Considering the global percentage of capital held by employees (2.18%), Belgium is below the European average (2.63%), the half of France (4.52%) - see [Graph 2](#).

Only 74% of Belgian large companies have some employee share ownership – compared to 100% in Ireland and Finland – Belgium is here number 18 compared to other European countries, while compared to the first 15 countries of the European Union, only Luxemburg, Greece and Austria have a lower position ([Graph 3](#)).

Only 30% of large Belgian companies have "broad-based" employee share plans (all-employee plans) - compared with 51.9% in Europe and 86% in France ([Graph 4](#)).

Good for dynamics in 2007/8: 53% of large Belgian companies launched new employee share plans – compared with 36.6% on average for all European countries. Belgium was number one, most companies having launched new stock option plans ([Graph 5](#)).

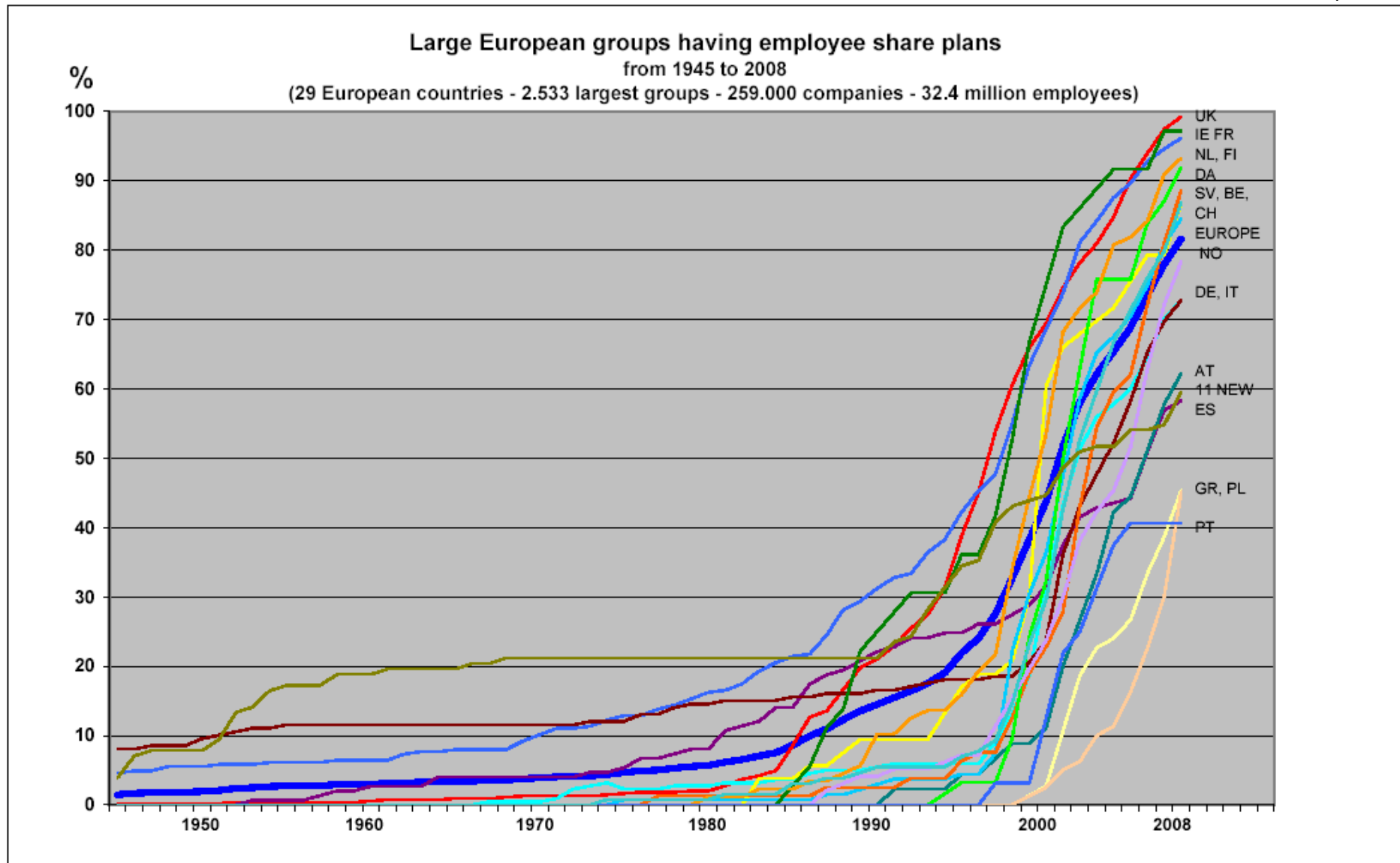
Yet Belgium was one of the first European countries where large companies launched employee share plans. The average date of the first Belgian employee share plans was 1998, just after UK, France and The Netherlands ([Graph 6](#)).

Belgium appears also to be high considering stock options. 79% of large Belgian companies have stock option plans – compared with 64.6% for all European countries – Belgium is rated number 5 after Ireland, UK, Finland and The Netherlands ([Graph 7](#)).

As a consequence, Belgium is quite low regarding the proportion of employee owners amongst all employees: It is only 20% compared to 28.2% in Europe and 46% in France ([Graph 8](#)).

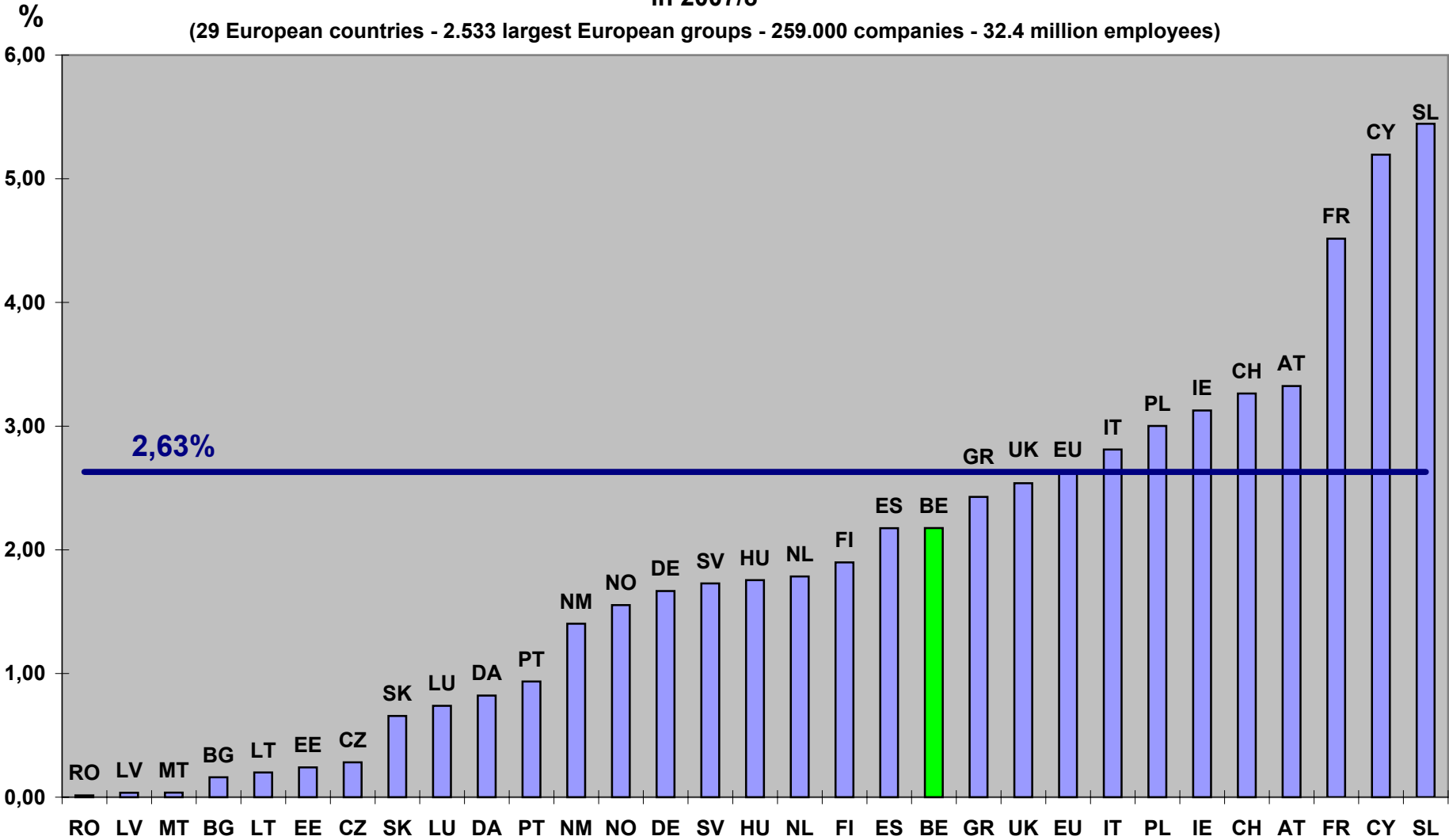
Belgium is also very low regarding companies having significant employee ownership: Only 42% of large Belgian companies have "significant" employee ownership compared to 53.92% in Europe and 75% in France ([Graph 9](#)).

It is obvious that large Belgian companies have had the intention to promote employee share plans for a long time. However, they used stock options (Belgian legislation on stock options being quite effective) much more than other employee share plans, - and singularly much more than broad-based employee share purchase plans (Belgian legislation being still quite ineffective in this case).



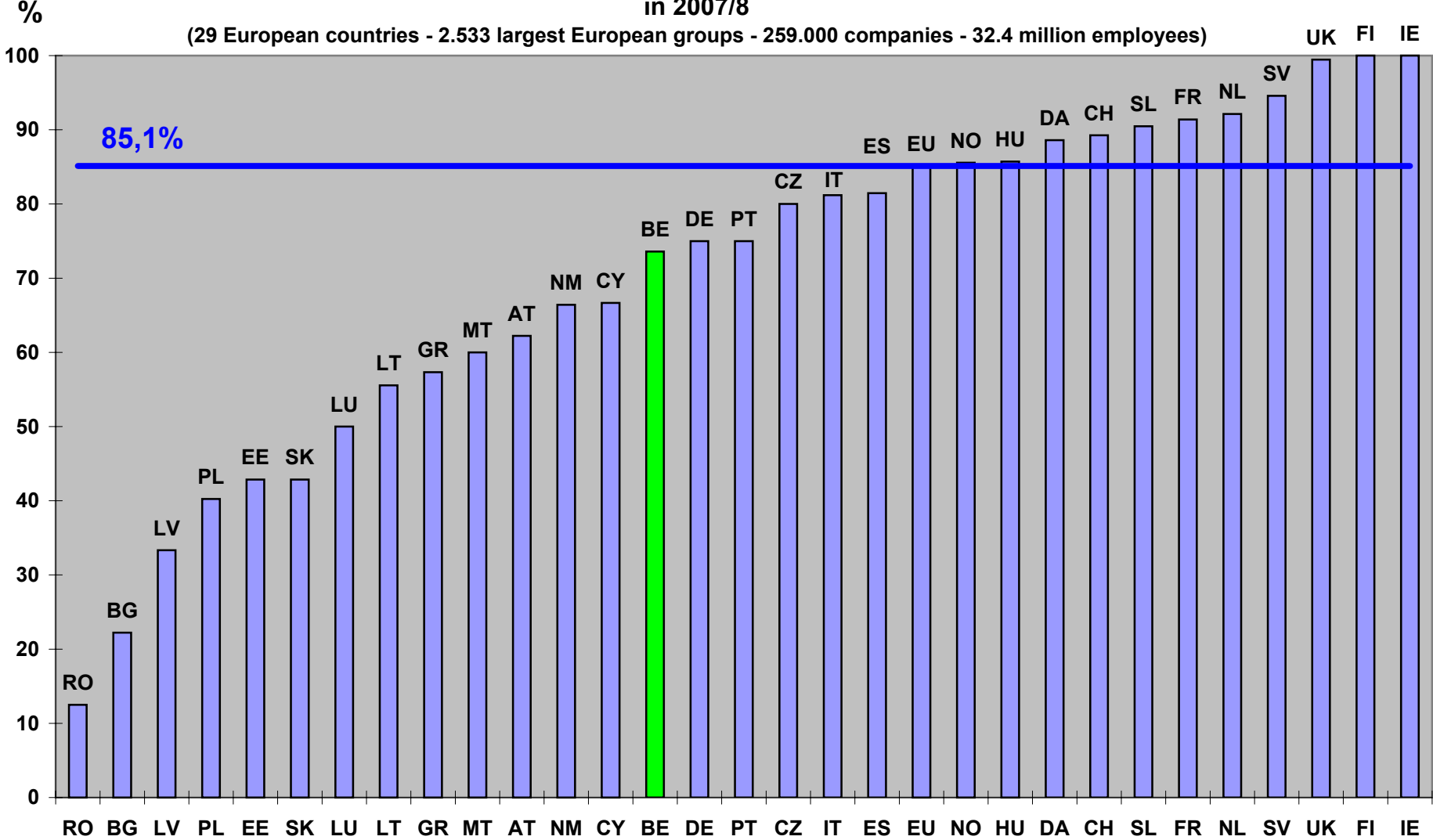
% CAPITAL HELD BY EMPLOYEES IN EUROPEAN COMPANIES in 2007/8

(29 European countries - 2.533 largest European groups - 259.000 companies - 32.4 million employees)



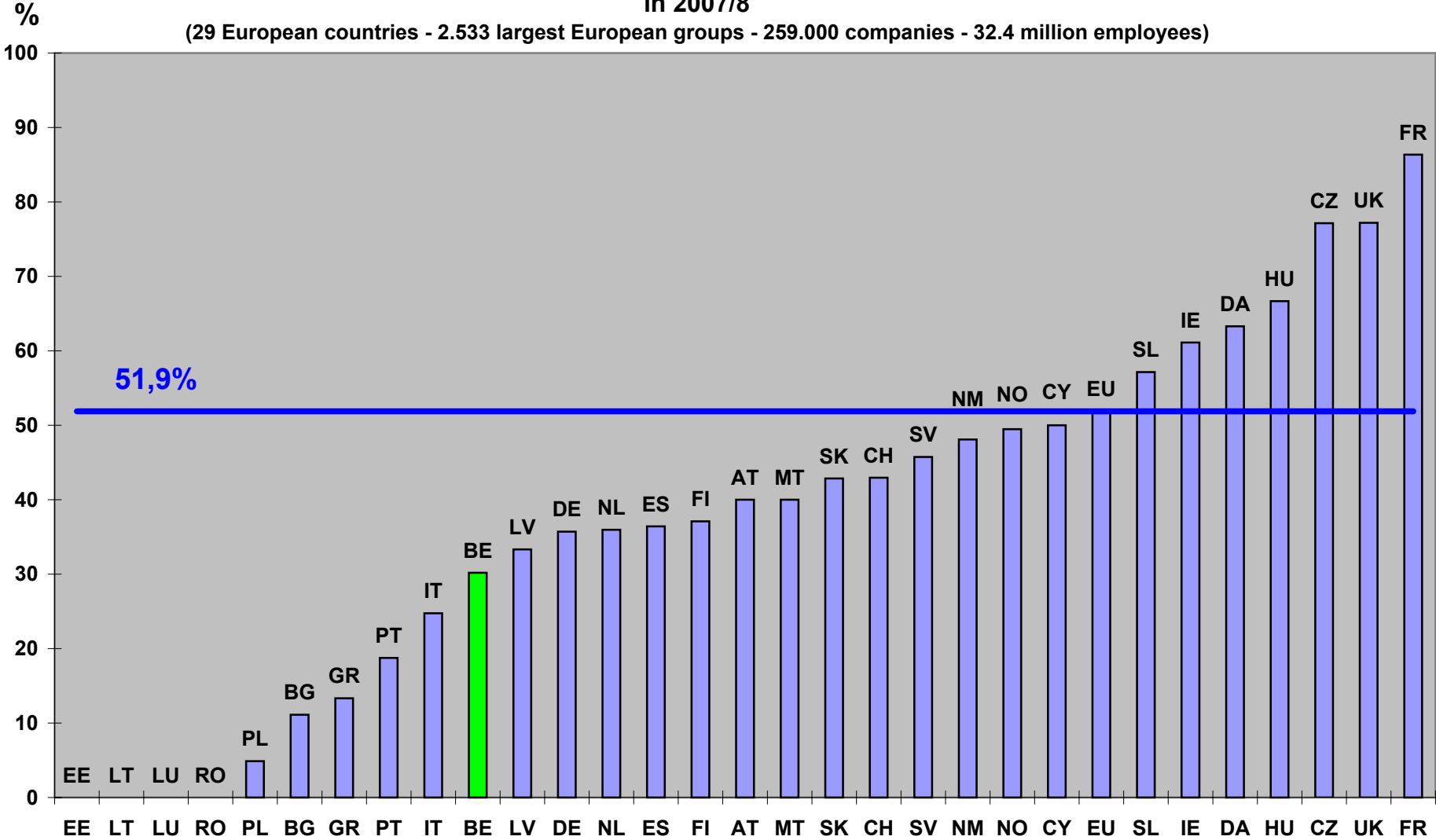
% EUROPEAN GROUPS HAVING EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP in 2007/8

(29 European countries - 2.533 largest European groups - 259.000 companies - 32.4 million employees)



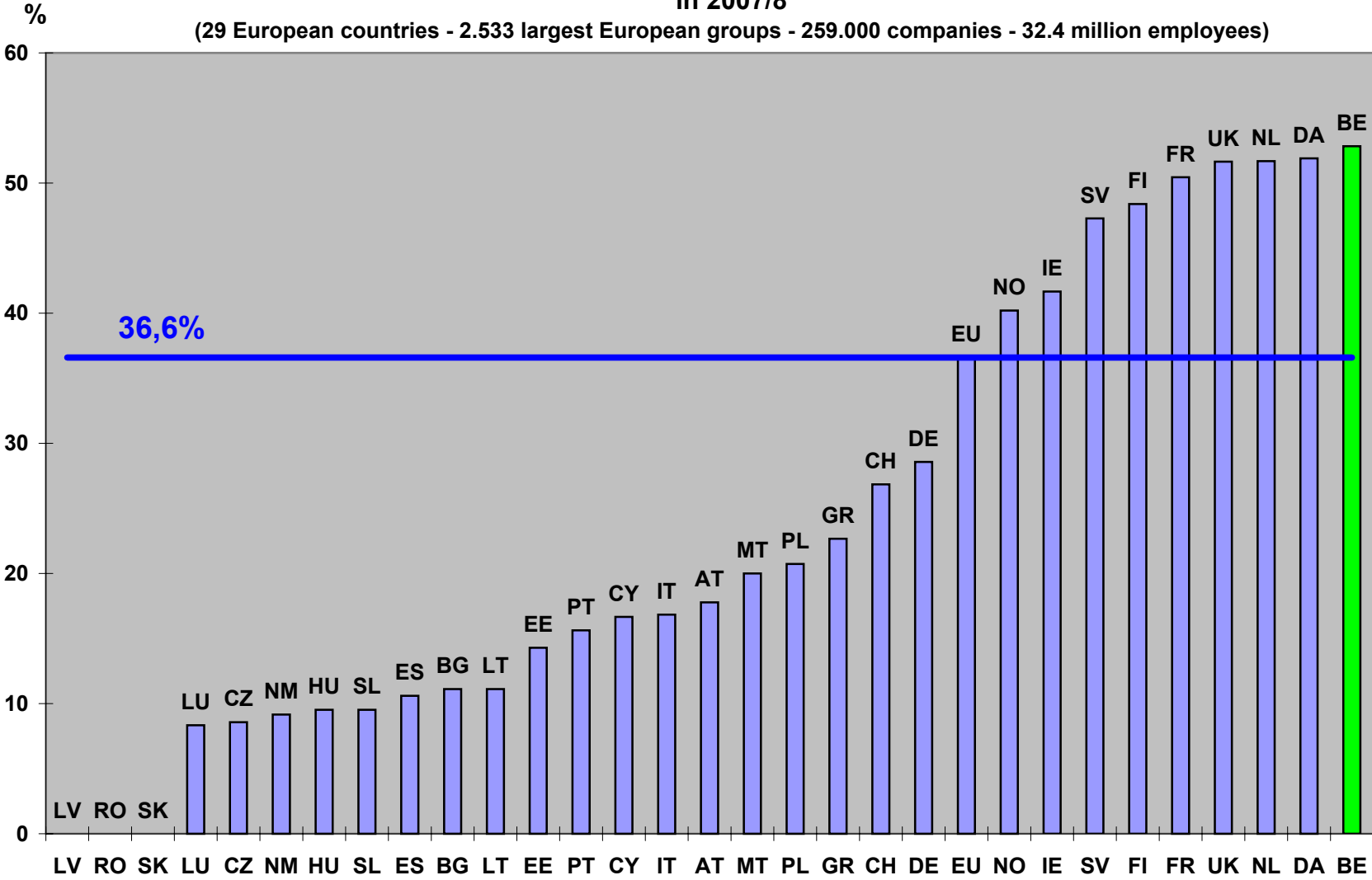
% EUROPEAN GROUPS HAVING BROAD-BASED EMPLOYEE SHARE PLANS in 2007/8

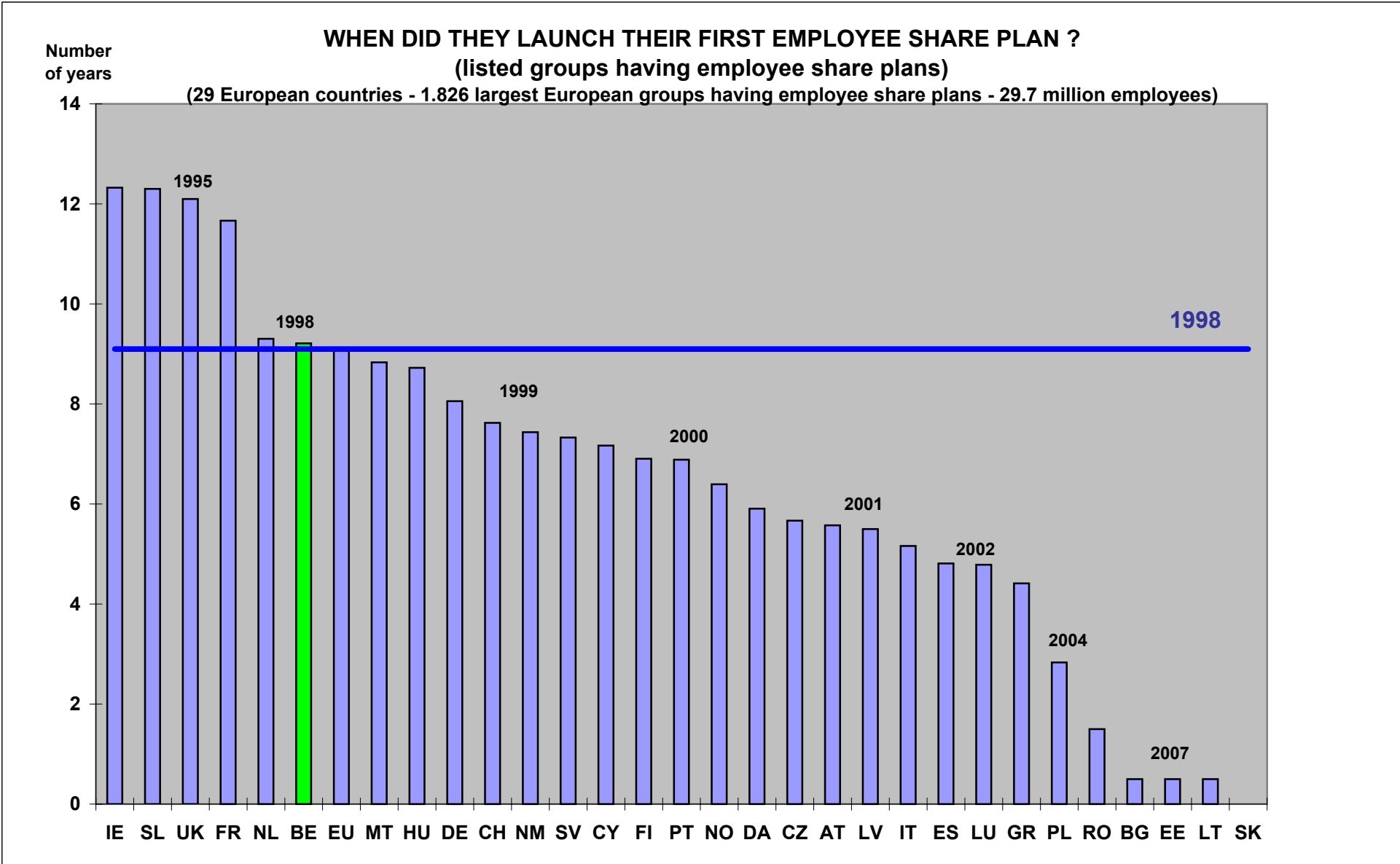
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% EUROPEAN GROUPS HAVING LAUNCHED NEW EMPLOYEE SHARE PLANS in 2007/8

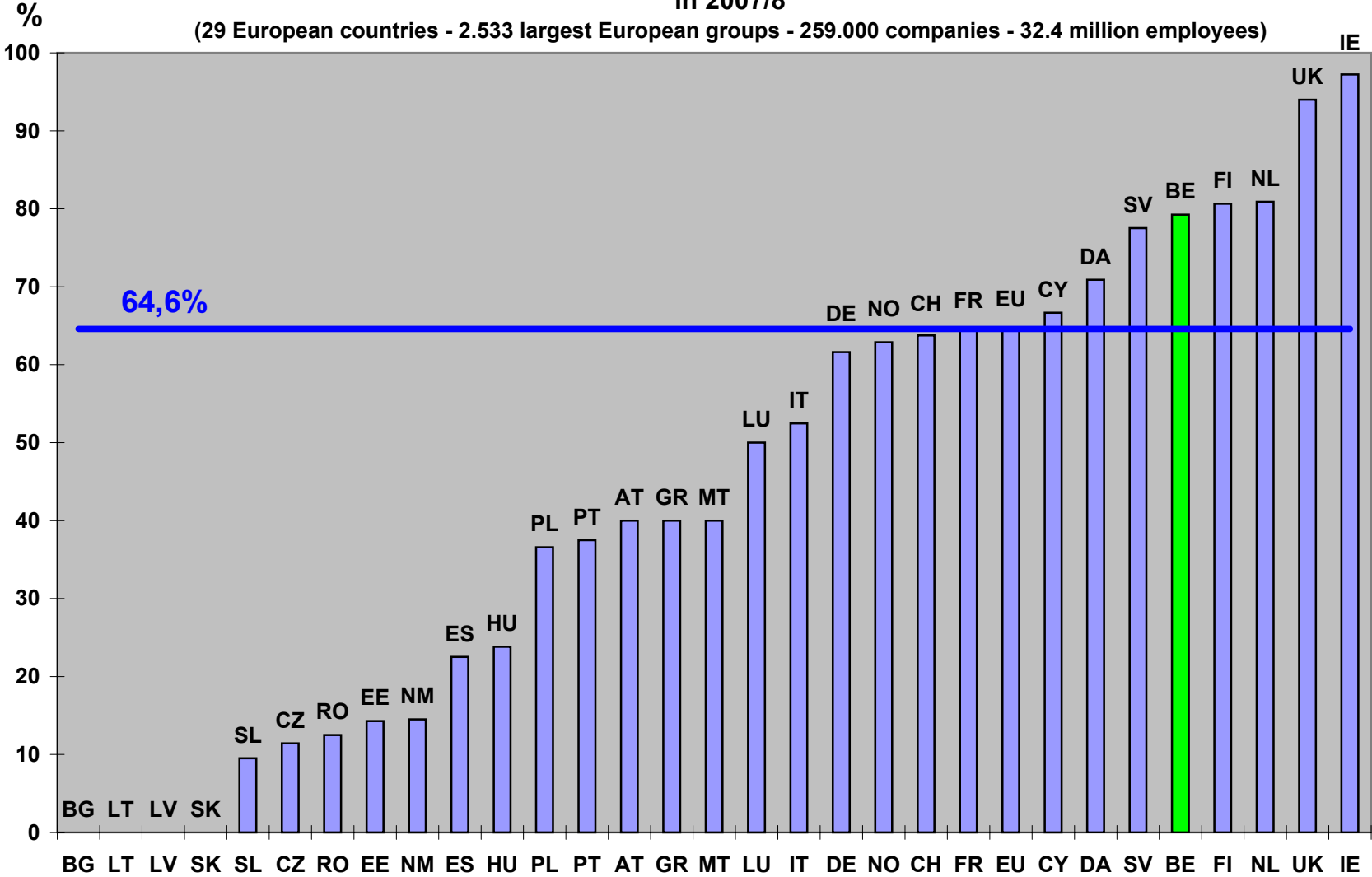
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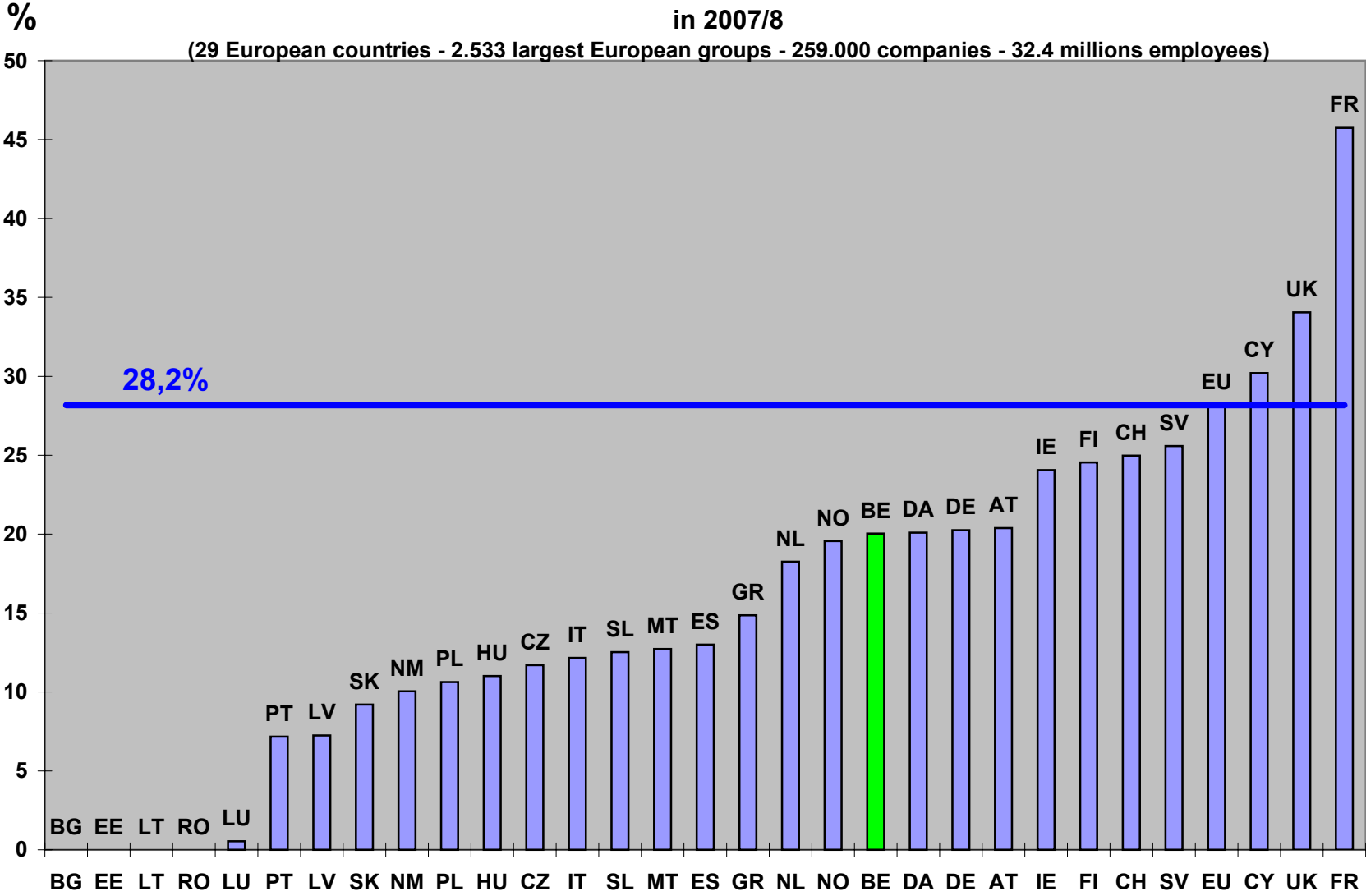
% EUROPEAN GROUPS HAVING STOCK OPTION PLANS in 2007/8

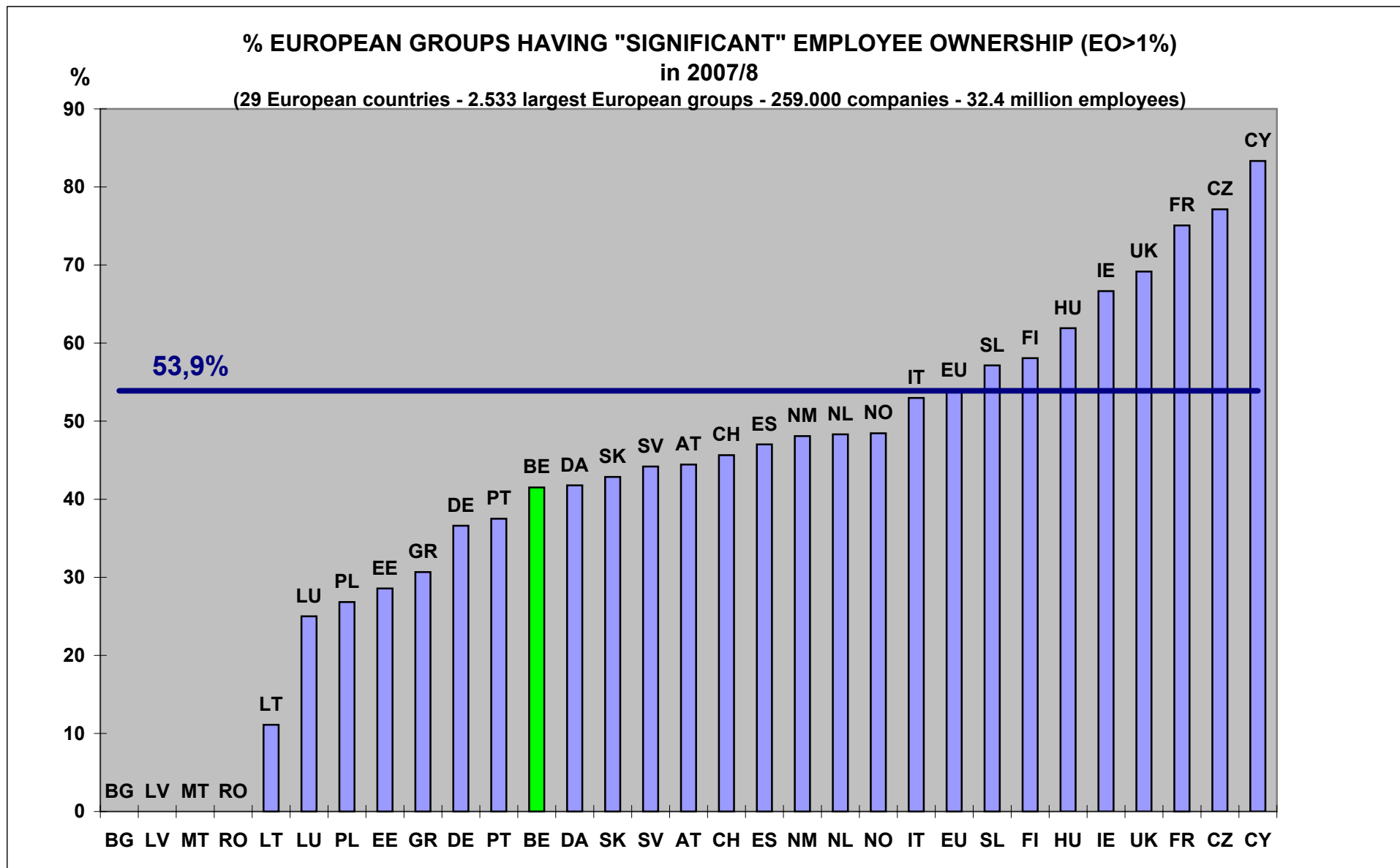
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% EMPLOYEE OWNERS AMONGST ALL EMPLOYEES in 2007/8

(29 European countries - 2.533 largest European groups - 259.000 companies - 32.4 millions employees)





CAPITAL HELD BY EMPLOYEES: EXECUTIVES' AND NON-EXECUTIVES' SHARES in 2007/8

(29 European countries - 2.533 largest European groups - 259.000 companies - 32.4 million employees)

