

“Youth takes the floor”

Young Europeans’ concerns and expectations as to the development of the European Union

Background note based on relevant findings from Eurobarometer data

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http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm

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Introduction



Between 9 May and 14 June 2005 a Standard Eurobarometer was carried out in all the European Union Member States¹. The results of this standard Eurobarometer are rather positive insofar as the relations between Europe and its young citizens are concerned. A general analysis indeed shows that Young Europeans are generally optimistic: not only about their quality of life and their personal situation but also about the future of the European Union. Support for the EU is widespread: 63% of Europeans aged 15 to 24 regard their country's membership to the European Union as a good thing, 67% feel that their country has benefited from its membership to the EU and 56% have a positive image of the European Union². In fact when it comes to Europe, young people who are still studying form the most optimistic segment of the European population. For numerous reasons, chiefly related to people's attained level of education and economic status, older people tend to be less positive.

Yet at the same time the outcome of the referenda on the proposed European Constitution and ongoing debates on the future of Europe highlight young people's concerns as to the development of the European Union. These concerns need to be understood.

This need for a better understanding of citizens' concerns was recently highlighted in the Commission's communication on a "Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate". This communication underlines the importance of listening to and examining the needs and expectations of citizens – including the young – in order to propose sustainable policy actions and priorities.

In this context and in line with its above quoted communication, the European Commission is organising a youth week known as "Youth takes the floor" which will feature a major conference. This event should give young people the opportunity to debate on how the European Union should develop and make recommendations as to how policies could be better tailored to their needs and expectations. In preparation of this event it seemed useful to analyse in more details the 2005 Standard Eurobarometer in order to better understand young people's concerns and expectation on Europe. This is the purpose of the present paper.

This analysis was prepared by TNS Opinion & Social and undertaken on behalf of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture. It is divided into the three following themes that mirror issues that will be discussed during the "Youth takes the floor" conference:

- Which Europe for tomorrow – the Youth Perspective
- Active Citizenship through Participation
- The Lisbon Process: The Youth Pact and the Youth Programme

The results presented in this report are averages for citizens aged 15 to 24 living in the 25 Member States, broken down by two age groups, those aged 15 to 19 and those aged 20 to 24. Comparisons between the 15 'old' Member States and the 10 new Member States are also made throughout the report. Unfortunately, the number of respondents aged 15 to 24 included in the survey samples is too small to compare the results at the national level.

1 Unless otherwise stated the results presented in the note are from the Eurobarometer 63. Some results, however, come from Eurobarometer waves 62.1 and 63.1. See also the technical specifications at the end of the note.

2 The EU averages for these questions are 54%, 55% and 47%, respectively. See Standard Eurobarometer Report No. 63: http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63_en.pdf

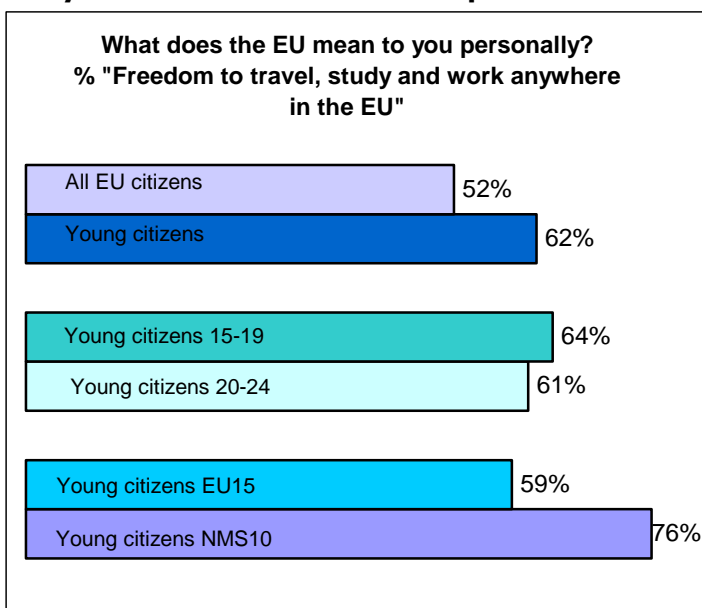
Which Europe for tomorrow? The Youth Perspective



Young people form an essential role to play in the development of the European Union and their views and opinions count. But what are their views: what does Europe mean to them, what kind of Europe do they want and what are their main concerns?

For the purpose of the present analysis and as illustrated by the graphics a comparison in percent has been made for each question between two groups within the three following categories: 1 - Young citizens and other citizens, 2 - The young and the very young, 3 - EU15 and the 10 new member states.

For young people, the EU means first and foremost the freedom to travel, study and work within the European Union.

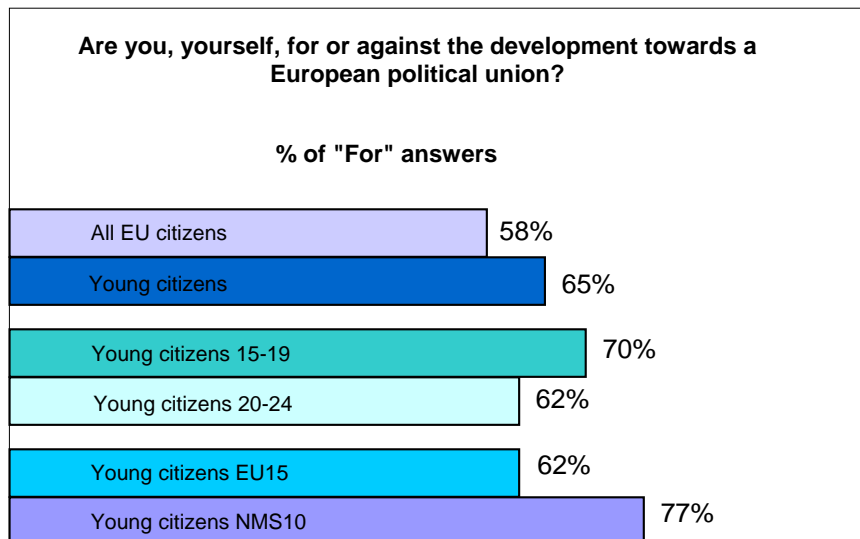


The recent enlargement of the EU has provided millions of young Europeans with the opportunity to travel, work and study throughout the European Union, a possibility that, not too long ago, was unimaginable.

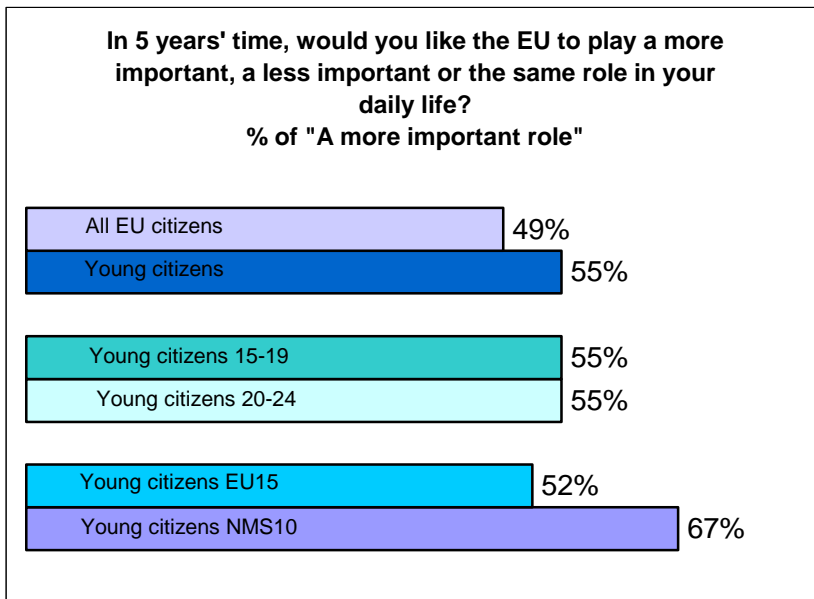
On average, 62% of Europeans aged 15 to 24 assert that for them the European Union means the freedom of movement. Among young people in the 10 new Member States this applies to three out of four young people.

The idea of a European political union is well received among young Europeans.

To young Europeans, the EU means more than the right to move around freely. For the majority of young Europeans, the Union should also have a political role. In the ten new Member States this opinion is held by more than 3 out of 4 young people.



The desire for a more important role of the European Union in the daily life of young Europeans is widespread.



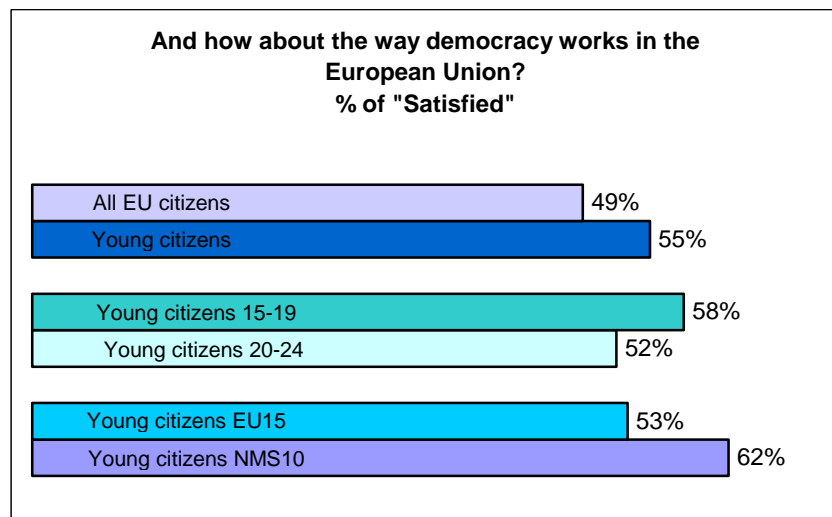
The favourable attitudes of young Europeans towards the European Union are not short-term. In fact, many would like the EU to play a more important role in their daily life in the future.

On average, 55% of Europeans aged 15 to 24 would like a more important role for the European Union in five years' time. Among young people in the 10 new Member States this applies to two out of three young people.

Young Europeans are more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union.

Especially in the New Member States, the level of satisfaction with the way democracy works in the EU is widespread among young people.

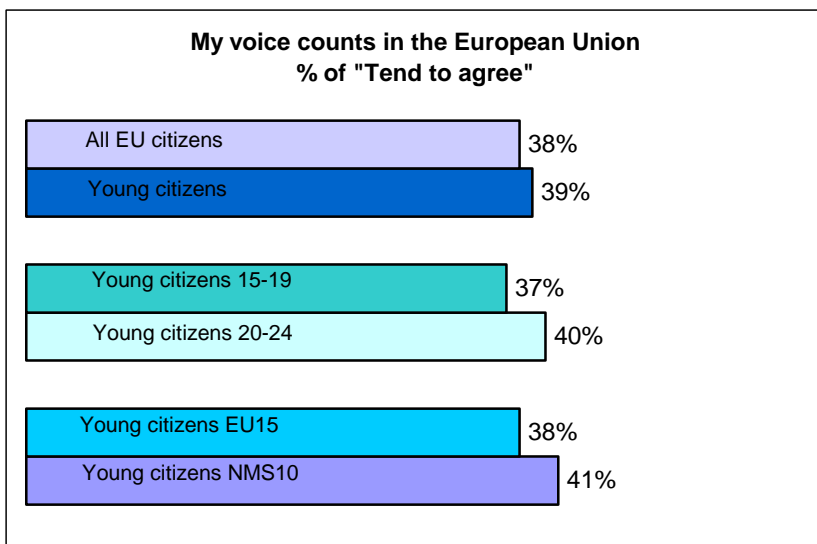
Close to 6 out of 10 Europeans aged 15 to 19 are satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU.



Young Europeans support the further development of the European Union. However, as will be highlighted in the following section, they also need to be able to voice their concerns.

Young Europeans are generally more positive than their older counterparts are about the future of Europe. This optimism, however, does not mean that they are more likely to feel that their voice counts in the European Union.

Only around four out of ten young Europeans feel that their voice counts in the European Union.



These results show how important it is to communicate to young Europeans that the European Union listens to their concerns.

When asked about their concerns, unemployment clearly ranks first. In their view, the fight against unemployment should be the Union's top priority. Especially in the New Member States, there is a broad call among young Europeans to make the fight against unemployment the Union's top priority.

"Could you tell me what should be, for you, the three actions that the EU should follow in priority?" (The table below presents the three most quoted actions)

	<i>Fighting unemployment</i>	<i>Fighting poverty and social exclusion</i>	<i>Maintaining peace and security in Europe</i>
All EU Citizens	47%	44%	31%
Young citizens	52%	45%	30%
Young citizens 15-19	51%	44%	35%
Young citizens 20-24	53%	47%	26%
Young citizens EU15	48%	41%	31%
Young citizens NMS10	68%	60%	27%

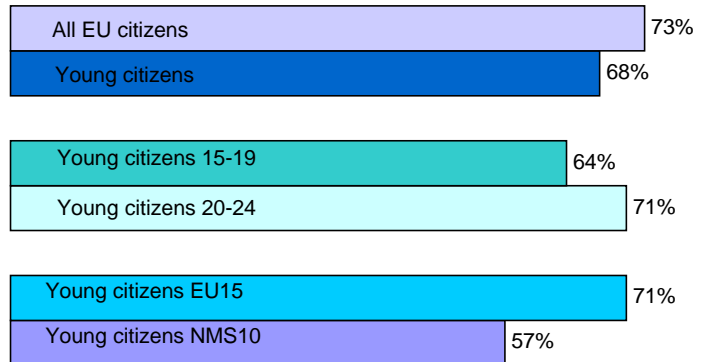
For a significant proportion of young Europeans, the fight against poverty and social exclusion should be another priority of the European Union. Also in this area, young Europeans in the ten new Member States stand out in their desire to make this a priority action of the European Union.

Young Europeans furthermore value the Union's role to maintain peace and security in Europe. It is the third most frequently mentioned priority action. Among the youngest Europeans the call to make maintaining peace and security in Europe a top priority for the EU receives the most support.

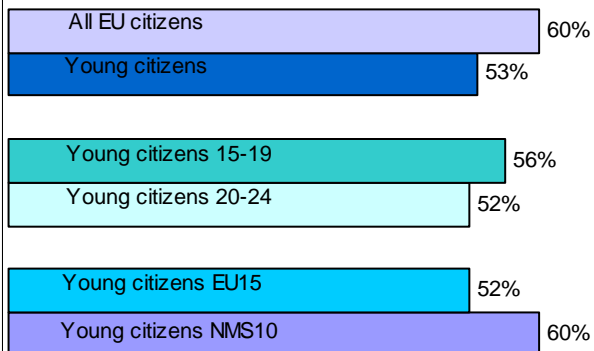
Despite their positive attitudes, the construction of Europe creates feelings of uncertainty for many young Europeans.

Two out of three young citizens of the European Union are currently afraid of the transfer of jobs to other Member Countries which have lower production costs. This concern is more widespread among young Europeans living in the 15 'old' Member States than it is among young Europeans in the 10 new Member States.

Fears about the building of Europe: % afraid of the transfer of jobs to other member countries



Fears about the building of Europe: % afraid of an increase in drugs trafficking and international organised crime



Many young Europeans are also concerned that the building of Europe may lead to an increase in drugs trafficking and international organised crime. In the 10 new Member States, this fear is more widespread than it is in the 15 'old' Member States.

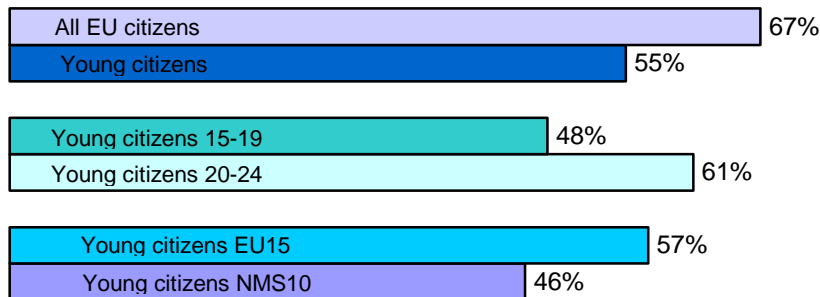
Active Citizenship through Participation



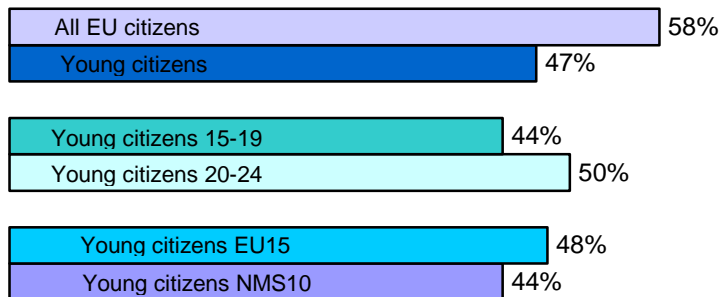
Active participation in European projects, organisations and politics will better young Europeans' understanding of their fellow European youngsters and raises awareness of their European identity. Last 2004 European elections were, in that sense, disappointing: only one third of people aged 18 to 24 did participate in these elections (compared to 45.6% on average).

Young Europeans are less likely to be interested in and to feel well informed about politics and current affairs than their older counterparts³.

I am interested in what is going on in politics and current affairs % of "Agree"



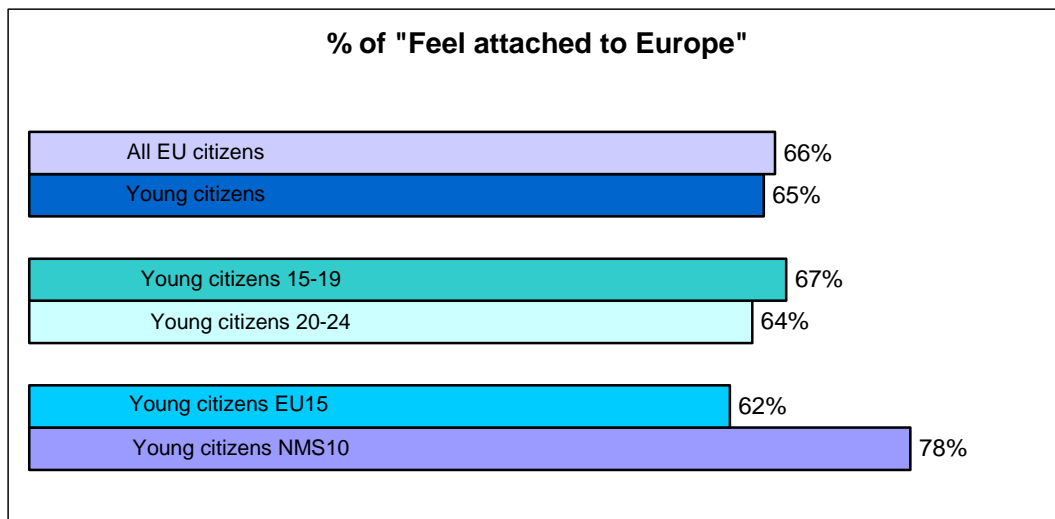
I feel well informed about what is going on in politics and current affairs % of "Agree"



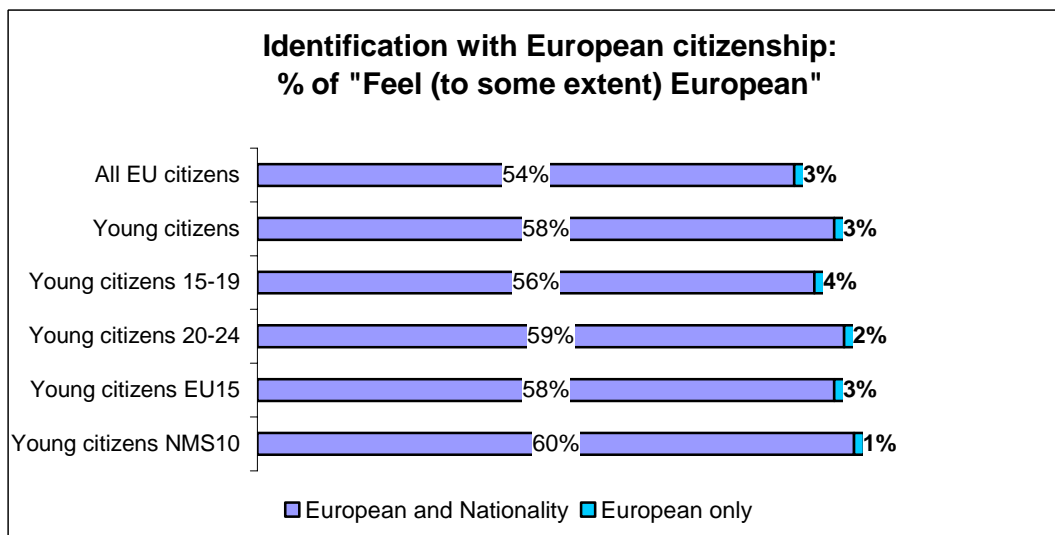
If their level of interest in politics is significantly lower than the one observed for other population's groups, this does not mean that young people are not ready to be politically involved. They seem to express their political involvement through means that differ from the classical ones like voting turnout or political membership.

³ Eurobarometer 63.1.

Although two-thirds of young Europeans feel attached to Europe, this is no more pronounced⁴ than it is for the EU population as a whole.



The proportion of young Europeans that see themselves (to some extent) as European citizens is also not significantly larger than it is for the rest of the EU population⁵.



The development of a European identity could be supported by actions to aiming at raising levels of feeling informed and levels of interest in (European) politics. One such action is to teach children about the way the European Union institutions work. This action receives the support of nearly all European citizens, young and old.

⁴ Young Europeans in the 10 new Member States being a clear exception.

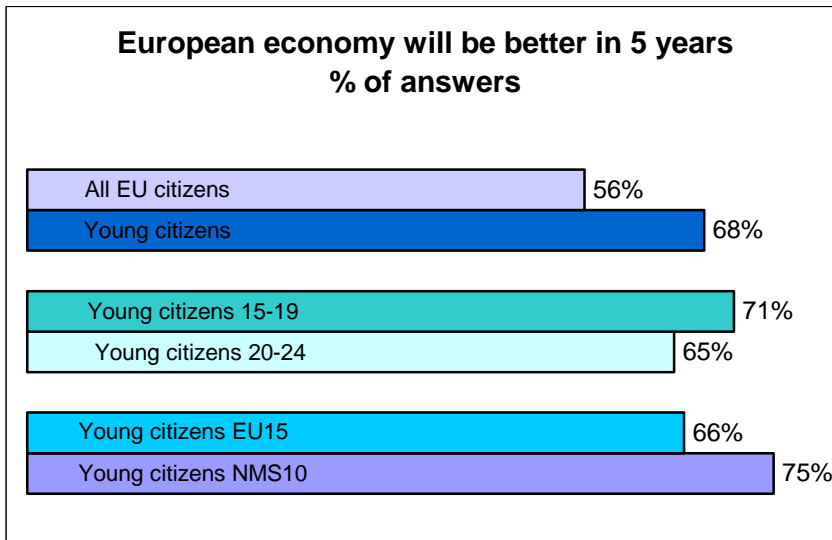
⁵ The figures come from the Standard Eurobarometer 62. 'To some extent European' means seeing oneself as a citizen of one's country and as a citizen of Europe.

The Lisbon Process: The European Youth Pact



Young Europeans are central to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives regarding the fields of education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social cohesion. The following Eurobarometer questions provide insight into the views of young people for a number of the Lisbon objectives.

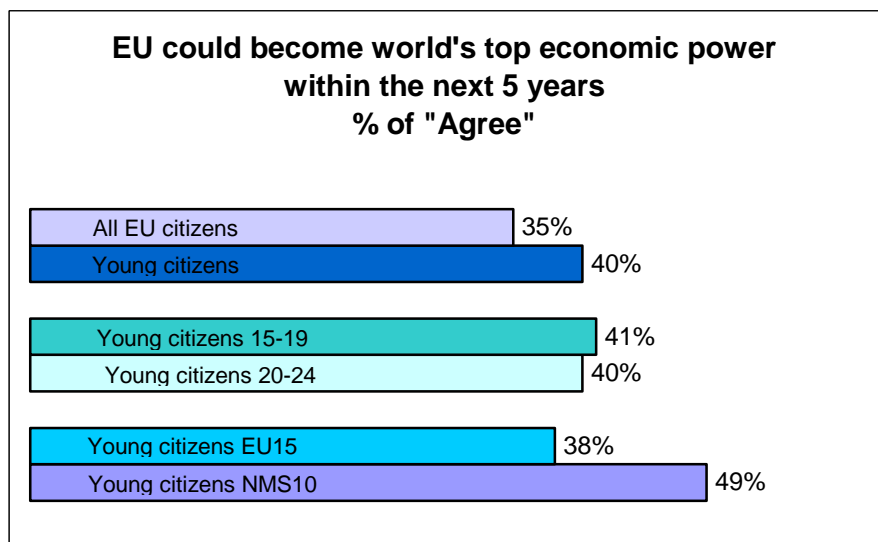
Young Europeans have faith in the strength of the European economy...



Compared to their older counter-parts, young Europeans are significantly more optimistic about the development of the European economy. This sense of optimism is particularly widespread among young Europeans in the ten new Member States.

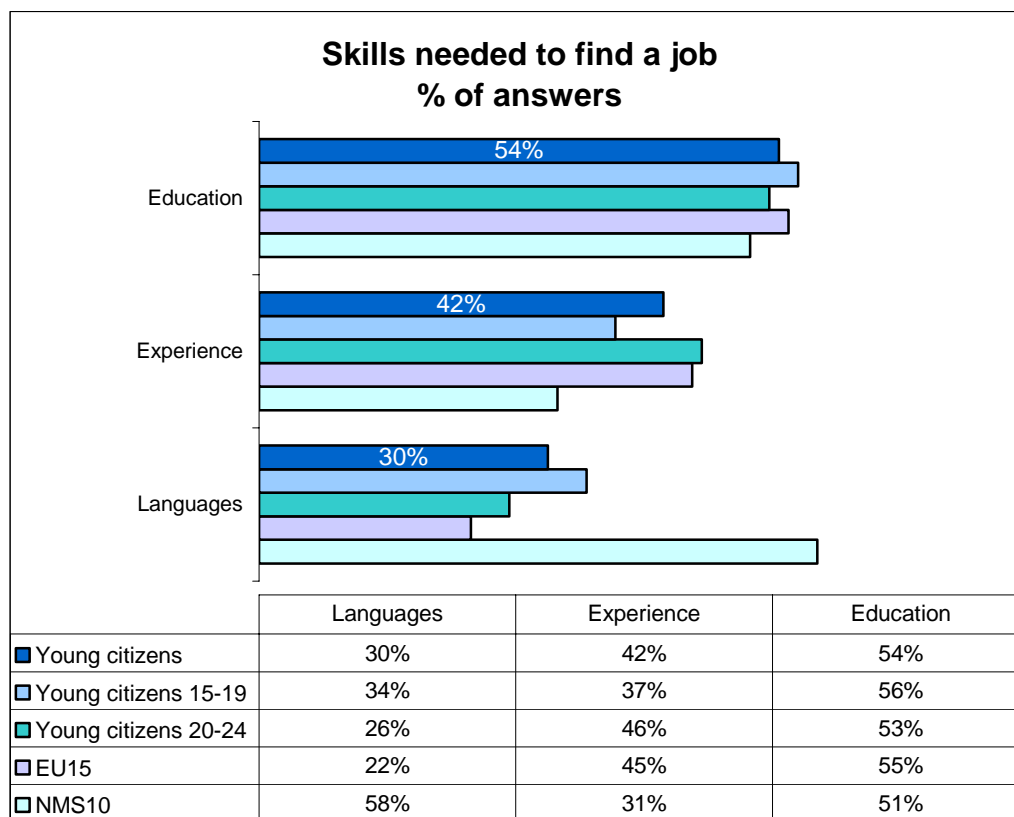
...and a significant number of young Europeans believe that the EU could become the world's top economic power within the next five years.

The Lisbon objective to become the world's leading economy receives a broader degree of support from young Europeans than from the rest of the EU population.



In order to achieve the goals set out in the Lisbon Strategy, young Europeans need to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities. The Eurobarometer 62.1, carried out in autumn 2004 included a question that measures which two assets people should emphasize in order to find a job today⁶.

Young Europeans value the importance of education, professional experience and languages⁷.



Education – or rather the level of qualifications – in particular is mentioned by many young Europeans.

In the ten new Member States, language skills are mentioned much more frequently than in the old 15 Member States.

6 The exact formulation of the question is "In your opinion, which two assets should one emphasize in order to find a job today?". Respondents could choose two assets from a list of six. The three most frequently chosen assets are level of qualification (a proxy for education), professional experience and language skills. The other three assets are computer skills, ability to adapt and willingness to work abroad.

7 The averages for all EU citizens are 49% for education, 43% for experience and 26% for languages.

Technical Specifications

The standard Eurobarometer surveys are carried out on behalf of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General Press and Communication, Opinion Polls by TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between Taylor Nelson Sofres and EOS Gallup Europe. The technical information for the surveys presented in the note is as follows:

Standard Eurobarometer 63, fieldwork period: 9 May to 14 June 2005

The weighted sample sizes for the EB63.4 figures presented in the report are as follows:

Sample	Graph legend	Weighted N
Total EU25 aged 15 and over	All EU citizens	24.801
Ages 15-24 EU25	Young citizens	3.782
Ages 15-19 EU25	Young citizens 15-19	1.675
Ages 20-24 EU25	Young citizens 20-24	2.108
Ages 15-24 EU 15	Young citizens EU15	2.244
Ages 15-24 NMS10	Young citizens NMS10	1.790

Eurobarometer 63.1, fieldwork period: 3 January to 15 February 2005

The weighted sample sizes for the EB63.1 figures presented in the report are as follows:

Sample	Graph legend	Weighted N
Total EU25 aged 15 and over	All EU citizens	24.895
Ages 15-24 EU25	Young Europeans	3.797
Ages 15-19 EU25	Young citizens 15-19	1.855
Ages 20-24 EU25	Young citizens 20-24	1.943
Ages 15-24 EU 15	Young citizens EU15	2.245
Ages 15-24 NMS10	Young citizens NMS10	1.802

Eurobarometer 62.1, fieldwork period: 27 October to 29 November 2004

The weighted sample sizes for the EB62.1 figures presented in the report are as follows:

Sample	Graph legend	Weighted N
Total EU25 aged 15 and over	All EU citizens	24.787
Ages 15-24 EU25	Young citizens	3.783
Ages 15-19 EU25	Young citizens 15-19	1.742
Ages 20-24 EU25	Young citizens 20-24	2.041
Ages 15-24 EU 15	Young citizens EU15	2.246
Ages 15-24 NMS10	Young citizens NMS10	1.786

Standard Eurobarometer 62, fieldwork period: 2 October to 8 November 2004

The figures for the EB62.0 presented in the report are based on a split sample. The weighted sample size for each of the groups is as follows:

Sample	Graph legend	Weighted N
Total EU25 aged 15 and over	All EU citizens	12.441
Ages 15-24 EU25	Young Europeans	1.850
Ages 15-19 EU25	Young citizens 15-19	831
Ages 20-24 EU25	Young citizens 20-24	1.019
Ages 15-24 EU 15	Young citizens EU15	1.100
Ages 15-24 NMS10	Young citizens NMS10	860

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:

Observed percentages	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
Confidence limits	± 1.9 points	± 2.5 points	± 2.7 points	± 3.0 points	± 3.1 points