Flash Eurobarometer 478

How do we build a stronger, more united Europe? The views of young people

Survey requested by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and co-ordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication

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Flash Eurobarometer 478 – Kantar Public
How do we build a stronger, more united Europe?
The views of young people

March 2019
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INTRODUCTION

The EU youth policy cooperation aims to address the challenges that young people are facing all over Europe, promote action to be taken in response to these challenges at EU level, and complement the efforts and initiatives of Member States.

Member States recognise that some common challenges can be better addressed at the EU level rather than by individual Member States, and as a result a dedicated EU Youth Policy cooperation based on the principles of active participation and equal access to opportunities has been running since 2002. The views of young people are important in shaping EU youth policy, and they contribute to it by sharing their aspirations and needs and by employing their creativity and talents. In that context, during 2017 and 2018, young people from all over Europe were involved in a pan-European dialogue with decision-makers with a view to developing 11 European Youth Goals. These goals include connecting the EU with youth, youth organisations, and European programmes and quality learning.

These goals informed the development of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, with three key areas of action:

- **ENGAGE**: Fostering youth participation in democratic life;
- **CONNECT**: Bringing young people together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding;
- **EMPOWER**: Supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.

The current survey, commissioned by European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture provides a deeper exploration of the attitudes and opinions of young people aged 15-30. It covers:

- The proportion of respondents who have been abroad for learning experiences, and the reasons why respondents have not participated in learning experiences in other countries;
- Young respondents’ participation in social, civic and political activities, including organised voluntary activities, as well as reasons for not participating in these activities;
- Opinions about the most important things schools should offer young people, and the topic areas that are not taught sufficiently in schools;
- Young respondents’ views about the priorities for the EU in years to come;
- The most useful actions for young people the EU could support.

This Briefing Note gives the main findings of this Flash Eurobarometer survey. Detailed results can be found in the full Report.

We wish to thank the people throughout the European Union who have given their time to take part in this survey. Without their active participation, this study would not have been possible.

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MAIN FINDINGS

Young people consider that protecting the environment and fighting climate change, along with education and training; and fighting poverty and social inequalities should be the top priorities for the EU in the years to come.

- The five most mentioned priorities for the European Union in years to come according to young people are protecting the environment and fighting climate change (67%), improving education and training (56%), fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities (56%), boosting employment (49%) and improving health and well-being (44%).
- Gender, age, level of education and employment all influence the importance young people place on each of these areas.

Regarding the EU’s actions in the area of education and training, young people see efforts to connect schools or universities with others abroad as most useful.

- Considering the competences of the EU, in the area of education and training the most useful actions for young people would be connecting schools or universities in their country with others abroad (44%), funding projects or activities for young people (41%) and increasing participation in European programmes among young people with fewer opportunities, for instance in rural areas (39%).

Young Europeans are actively engaged. Three quarters have been involved in some form of organised movement. More than seven in ten young respondents have voted in local, national or European elections while one third have been involved in organised voluntary activities in the last 12 months.

- 77% of young people took part in activities of political movements, parties or unions; student or youth organisations; campaigns, strikes or street protests; volunteering activities or local community projects.
- The three most common social, political and civic activities young respondents have taken part in are voting in local, national or European elections (72%), getting information on current issues on social media (65%) or volunteering activities or local community projects (58%).
- By far the most common reason for not participating in organised movements or associations is a lack of time (49%). More than one third (36%) say they are not interested, while 26% say they do not think these activities change anything.
- One third (33%) of all respondents have been involved in organised voluntary activities in the last 12 months, a slight increase (+3 pp) since 2017 but a sharp increase since 2011 (+ 9 pp).
Young people expect schools to prepare them for employment and to think critically. They consider the main shortcomings of schools currently to be not dedicating enough attention to entrepreneurship and financial competences; and climate change, environment and eco-friendly behaviours.

- Respondents say that the most important things school should offer young people are preparing them for employment (49%), giving everyone a chance to succeed and have access to the same opportunities (45%) and promoting creativity, adaptability and an entrepreneurial mindset (38%).
- The topics respondents most often say are not being taught sufficiently in schools are critical thinking, media and democracy (42%); climate change, environment and eco-friendly behaviours (41%) and entrepreneurship and financial competences (41%).
I. YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ON EU PRIORITIES

Young people consider that protecting the environment and fighting climate change, along with education and training; and fighting poverty and social inequalities should be the top priorities for the EU in the years to come.

More than two thirds (67%) of respondents say protecting the environment and fighting climate change should be a priority for the EU in the years to come. The majority also say improving education and training or fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities should be a priority (both 56%).

Moreover, almost half (49%) think boosting employment and tackling unemployment should be a priority, while 44% say this about improving health and wellbeing, or promoting human rights, democracy and common values.

Finally, more than one quarter (28%) say ensuring the EU’s security and defence should be a priority, while 23% say this about bringing young people from different parts of the EU together.

Q1. Which of the following topics should be a priority for the EU in the years to come? (% - EU)

- Protecting the environment and fighting climate change: 67%
- Improving education and training, including the free movement of students, apprentices, pupils, etc.: 56%
- Fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities: 56%
- Boosting employment and tackling unemployment: 49%
- Improving health and wellbeing: 44%
- Promoting human rights, democracy and common values: 44%
- Ensuring the EU’s security and defence: 28%
- Bringing young people from different parts of the EU together (North, South, East, West): 23%
- Other (spontaneous): 1%
- Don’t know: 1%

Base: all respondents (N=10,786)
To be useful for young people, EU’s actions in the area of education and training should focus on connecting schools or universities internationally (within the EU or beyond)

Respondents were given a list of actions that are within the competence of the EU in the area of education and training. They were asked which of these actions they thought were useful for young people. At least four in ten say connecting schools or universities in their country with others abroad (44%) or funding projects or activities for young people (41%) would be useful. Almost four in ten (39%) mention increasing participation in European programmes among young people with fewer opportunities, for instance in rural areas.

Around one third say providing opportunities for young people to talk directly to policy makers (34%) or raising awareness among young people on activities provided by the EU for them (32%) would be useful. Almost three in ten (28%) mention bringing young people from different parts of the EU together, while 24% say advising public authorities on what works in other countries would be useful.

Q10 The European Union has limited competence for education, youth and training. Countries decide about legislation, funding, etc. With this in mind, which of these actions do you think are useful for young people? (Max. 3 answers) (% - EU)

Base: all respondents (N=10,786)
II. SOCIAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Most young people are actively engaged and show interest in current social and political issues. Voting in local, national or European elections is the most common social, political or civic activity followed by volunteering.

More than three quarters of respondents took part in some form of organised activities or movements and only 4% of young people did not engage in any ways.

All respondents were asked about their participation in a range of civic, social and political activities. The two most common activities these young respondents have taken part in are voting in local, national or European elections (72%), and volunteering activities or local community projects (58%).

Just over four in ten (41%) have participated in student or youth organisations, while almost as many (38%) have posted opinions on current issues on social media and 35% have participated in campaigns, strikes or street protests. One quarter (25%) have made politically motivated consumer choices, while 15% say they have participated in political movements, parties or unions.

Most young people use social media to get information on current issues (65%) and only 4% of all respondents said that they were not active in any ways.

Q6 Have you ever participated in the following activities? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE) (% - EU)

- Voting in local, national or European elections: 72%
- Getting information on current issues on social media: 65%
- Volunteering activities or local community projects: 58%
- Participating in student or youth organisations: 41%
- Posting opinions on current issues on social media: 38%
- Participating in campaigns, strikes or street protests: 35%
- Making politically motivated consumer choices: 25%
- Participating in political movements, parties or unions: 15%
- None (spontaneous): 4%
- Don't know: 0%

Base: all respondents (N=10,786)

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8 If mentioned at least once: Q6.2 Participating in political movements, parties or unions; Q6.3 Participating in student or youth organisations; Q6.6 Participating in campaigns, strikes or street protests; Q6.8 Participating in political movements, parties or unions
9 Q6 Have you ever participated in the following activities?
A lack of time is the main barrier to participating in organised movements or associations

By far the most common reason for non-engagement is the lack of time (49%). More than one third (36%) say they are not interested, while 26% say they do not think these activities change anything. Almost one in five (17%) say they are not aware of these activities taking place. Respondents are less likely to say that they are too young (9%), or that nothing prevents them and they consider themselves an active citizen (6%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You don’t have time</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are not interested</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You do not think these activities change anything</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are not aware of these activities taking place</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are too young</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing, you consider yourself as an active citizen</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (spontaneous)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: respondents not involved in volunteering, political engagement or other forms of organized activities (N=2,534)

10 Political movements, parties or unions, student or youth organisations, campaigns, strikes or street protests, volunteering activities or local community projects.
11 Q7 What prevents you from participating in these activities?
One third of respondents have been involved in organised voluntary activities in the last 12 months, showing a sharp increase in recent years

In the last 12 months, one third (34%) of all respondents have been involved in organised voluntary activities\(^{12}\), which shows a 3 percentage points increase compared to 2017.

When compared to 2011, when the same question was asked, this difference is even greater. At that time 24% of young adults said they took part in organised volunteering one year prior to the survey (EU27)\(^{13}\).

\(^{12}\) Q8 In the last 12 months, have you ever been involved in any organised voluntary activities? (% - EU)

\(^{13}\) The survey did not cover Croatia which was not a Member State in 2011. Eurobarometer Youth on the Move http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/FLASH/search/youth/surveyKy/873
Respondents who have been involved in organised voluntary activities in the last 12 months were asked whether these activities were aiming to change something at local, national, European or worldwide level.\(^{14}\)

Two thirds (66%) say the activities were aimed at changing something in their local community, and just over one third (37%) say the activities were aimed at change in their country. Just over one in ten said another part of the world (13%) or another European country (10%).

Just over one in ten say they don’t know (11%).

Compared to March 2017, respondents are now more likely to say the activities were aimed at changing something in their country (+8 pp), especially if compared to December 2014 (+10 pp). They are slightly more likely to say the activities were aimed at changing something in another part of the world (+2 pp), but slightly less likely to say they were aimed at changing something in their local community (-3 pp) going back to level registered on December 2014.

Base: Respondents who have been involved in organized voluntary activities (N=3,617)
III. YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ON WHAT EDUCATION AND TRAINING SHOULD OFFER

Young people see preparation for employment, and giving everyone a chance to succeed and have access to the same opportunities as the most important things school should offer them.

Respondents were asked what they thought were the most important things school should offer to young people. Almost half (49%) say school should prepare young people for employment, while almost as many (45%) say school should give everyone a chance to succeed and have access to the same opportunities. Almost four in ten (38%) say schools should promote creativity, adaptability and an entrepreneurial mindset. At least three in ten say schools should promote physical and mental wellbeing (34%), prepare young people to be active citizens in democratic societies (33%) or promote personal development (32%). Just over one quarter (26%) think schools should promote social skills and build friendships.

Q4 What do you think are the most important things school should offer to young people? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS) (% - EU)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare young people for employment</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give everyone a chance to succeed and have access to the same opportunities</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote creativity, adaptability and an entrepreneurial mindset</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote physical and mental well-being</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare young people to be active citizens in democratic societies</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote personal development</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote social skills and build friendships</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (spontaneous)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all respondents (N=10,786)
Young people think that critical thinking, media and democracy; entrepreneurship and financial competences; and climate change, environment and eco-friendly behaviours are not taught sufficiently in schools

More than four in ten respondents think critical thinking, media and democracy (42%); climate change, environment and eco-friendly behaviours (41%) and entrepreneurship and financial competences (41%) are not taught sufficiently in schools16. One third (33%) say this about health education, while 30% say this about foreign languages and cultures and 27% think the use of digital tools and coding is not taught enough in schools.

Just over one in ten (13%) say reading, comprehension and writing are not taught enough while 10% say this about maths and sciences.

Q5 Which topics are not taught sufficiently in schools in your country? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking, media and democracy</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change, environment and eco-friendly behaviours</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship and financial competences</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health education (physical and mental)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign languages and cultures</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of digital tools and coding</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading, comprehension and writing</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths and sciences</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (spontaneous)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all respondents (N=10,786)

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16 Q5 Which topics are not taught sufficiently in schools in your country?
IV. YOUTH MOBILITY

About half of the respondents that did not take part in learning experiences abroad considered doing so. Respondents living in urban areas are much more likely to think about opportunities abroad than those in rural areas.

The main reasons why they did not take part are lack of financial means and family, personal or work-related factors.

Just over half (53%) of respondents who have not stayed abroad for work, studies, exchanges and so on say they have considered doing so. Almost half (46%) say they have not considered it.

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17 Q2 You said earlier that you have never stayed abroad for the purpose of studies, work, exchanges, etc. Have you considered taking part in any learning experience abroad?
Amongst respondents who have not stayed abroad for learning experiences but have considered doing so, lack of financial means (42%) is the main reason for not doing so, closely followed by family, personal or work-related reasons (41%)\(^{18}\). Only one in five (19%) say there was a lack of information how to apply, or that they had insufficient language skills. A similar share (18%) say there was a lack of opportunities abroad that would match their interests.

More than one in ten say the absence from home would be too long (14%), while almost one in ten (8%) feared their experience would not be recognised at home and only 4% say they were not accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of financial means</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, personal or work-related reasons</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of information on how to apply</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient language skills</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities abroad that would match your interests</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence from home would be too long</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear that your experience would not be recognised at home</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were not accepted</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (spontaneous)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: respondents who considered taking part in a learning experience abroad (N=3,948)

\(^{18}\) Q3a For which of these reasons did you not take part in a learning experience abroad even though you considered it? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS)
Lack of interest is the main reason for not considering taking part in a learning experience abroad

For respondents who had never considered going abroad for studies, training, work, exchanges or volunteering, a lack of interest (45%) is by far the most common reason cited by respondents who had never considered going abroad for learning experiences. Three in ten (30%) say it would not have been possible because of their work or studies, while one quarter (25%) say it would not have been possible because of their family situation, and 22% say they did not feel comfortable living in a foreign country.

Only one in ten say they were not aware of such opportunities (14%) or they felt too young (13%), while 5% didn’t trust the quality of education abroad.

Q3b For which of these reasons did you not consider taking part in a learning experience abroad? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS)

Base: respondents who never considered taking part in a learning experience abroad (N=3,413)
Almost one third of young respondents have spent at least two weeks abroad for learning experiences, increasing to over one third for the older cohort of respondents (aged 25-30).

Just over three in ten (31%) young people say they have been abroad for at least two weeks for studies, training, work, exchanges or volunteering.20.

Earlier studies21 analysed obstacles to young people’s participation in learning exchanges abroad but they did not assess the intention of young people to do so. In this survey additional questions were added asking those who did not take part in learning experiences abroad whether they have considered doing so, as well as the reasons why they did not participate.

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20 D7 Excluding travel for tourism or living with one’s family abroad, have you ever stayed abroad for at least two weeks? For example, for studies, training, work, exchanges or volunteering.