

# YOUNG EUROPEANS IN 2001

## Results of a European opinion poll

Last Spring, the European Commission (Directorate – General for "Education and Culture", "Youth" Unit) carried out a survey on young Europeans aged 15 to 24<sup>1</sup>. This survey followed up an opinion poll done in 1997, which was partly repeating similar studies conducted in 1990, 1987 and 1982.<sup>2</sup> The questions dealt with young people's participation in society, their concerns about employment and unemployment, their everyday life, their education as well as their perception of the European Union and its contributions.

The main results of this survey are the following:

### ▪ YOUNG PEOPLES' PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY

#### **ACTIVITIES**

The three activities that are most frequently practised by young Europeans are in decreasing order: meeting with friends (74 %), watching television (69 %) and listening to music (66 %). One young European out of two declares practising sport. More cultural activities, such as reading a book, going to the cinema, theatre or concerts are named by four young people out of ten or more (respectively 40% and 45%).

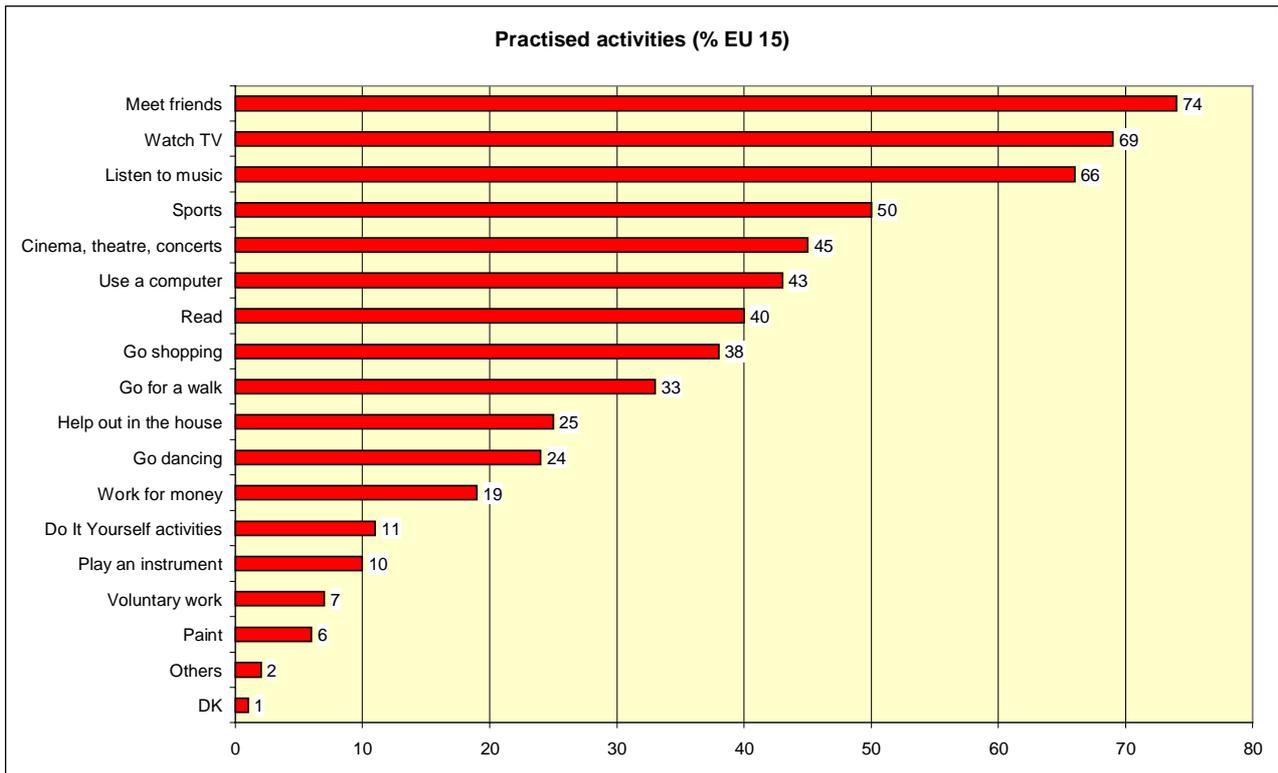
More than four out of ten young people (43 %) claim using a computer, playing video games or using the Internet. This is the most noticeable increase to be observed; compared to 1997, they are twice as many to practise these activities.

Meeting with friends comes in first position in all countries, except for Luxembourg and Portugal where young people's main activities are respectively listening to music (75%) and watching TV (78%).

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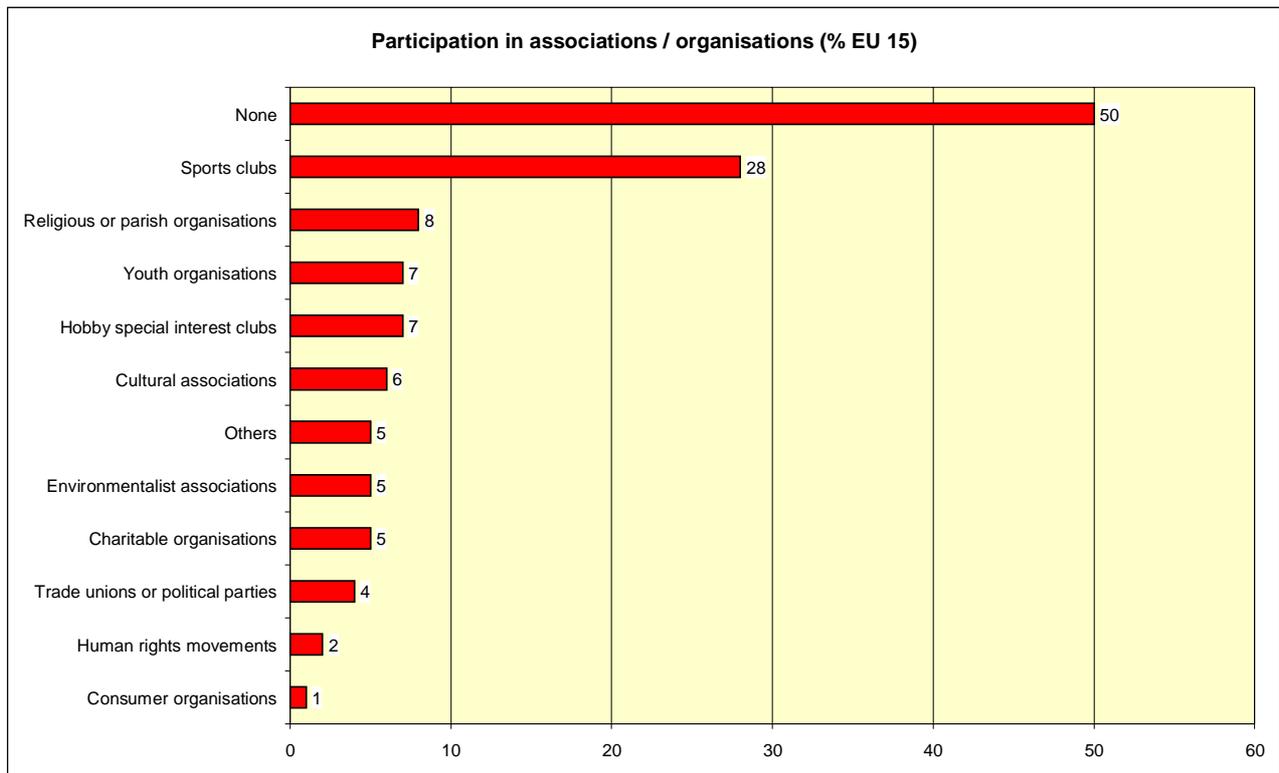
<sup>1</sup> The survey was launched in the fifteen member states between April 12<sup>th</sup> and May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2001 under the overall co-ordination of the *European Opinion Research Group*, a consortium of Market and Public Opinion Research agencies, made out of INRA (Europe) and GfK Worldwide. A total of 9.760 young people were interviewed, that is about 600 by country, at the exemption of Luxembourg (200), Germany (1.200: 600 in the Eastern part and 600 in the Western part) and in the United Kingdom (800: 600 in Great Britain and 200 in Northern Ireland).

<sup>2</sup> See INRA (1997), *Young Europeans: Eurobarometer 47.2*. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate- General for Education, Training and; INRA (1991), *Young Europeans in 1990*. Brussels: European Commission, Directorate- General for Education, Training; European Communities Commission (1988), *Les jeunes Européens en 1987*. Brussels: European Communities Commission (1982), *The Young Europeans: An Explanatory Study of 15-24 Year Olds in E.E.C. Countries*. Brussels: European Communities Commission



On the socio-demographic level, a certain number of stereotypes are being confirmed. As in 1997, European girls more often than European boys, go shopping (55 % compared to 22 %), read (49 % compared to 31 %), go dancing (31 % compared to 16 %) and help out at home (32 % compared to 19 %). On the contrary, there are clearly more European boys than girls practising sport (63 % compared to 37 %) and using computers (53 % compared to 33 %).

## **PARTICIPATION IN ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANISATIONS**



In general, young Europeans are not active members in associations. One young European out of two spontaneously claims not being affiliated to any organisation or association. This is exactly the same percentage as in 1997.

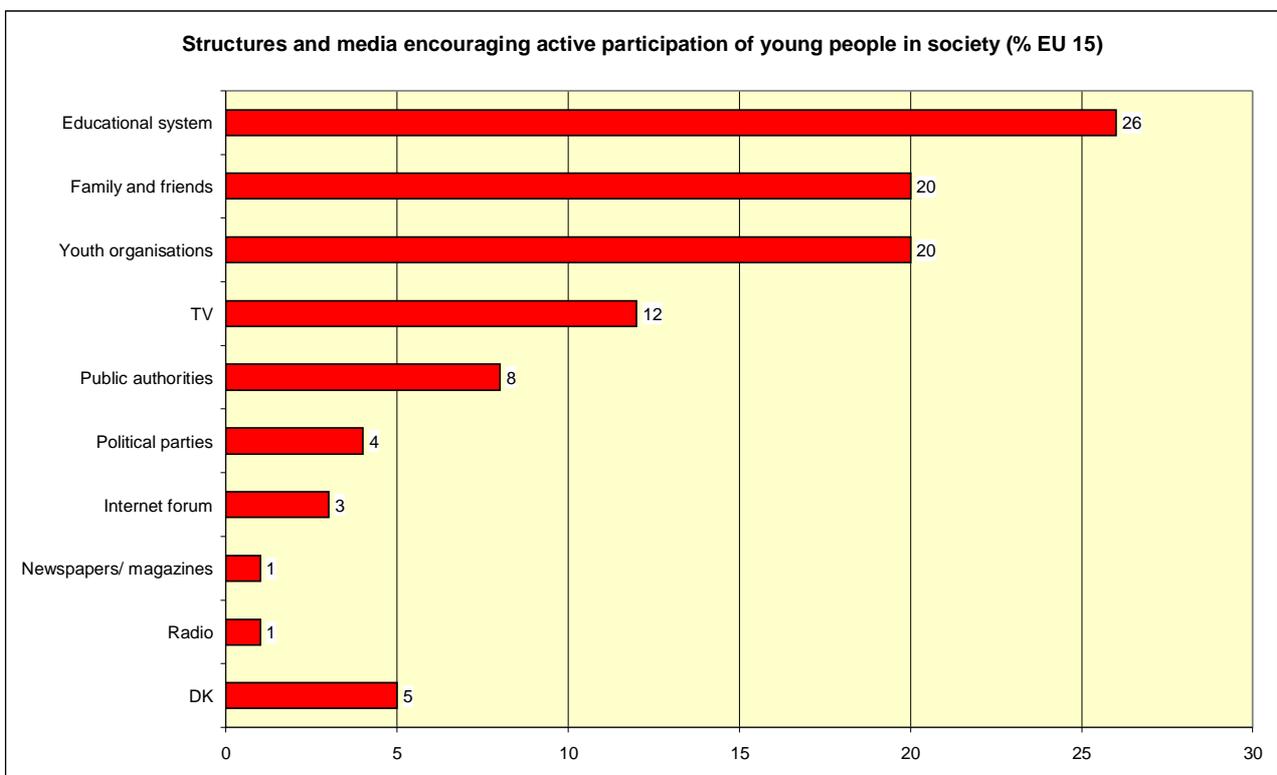
Of all suggested organisations and associations, sports clubs are the most successful and have been or are attended by just under three young Europeans out of ten (28%). Are then named by less than one out of ten respondents, religious or parish organisations (8 %), youth organisations (7 %) and hobby or special interest clubs and associations (7 %). Ranking at the bottom are, as in 1990 but in the opposite order, consumer organisations (1%) and human rights movements or organisations (2%).

If one looks at the national differences, it will be noted that only few young people in Southern European countries are active members in organisations and associations. Indeed, the largest percentages of young people responding spontaneously not being member of any organisation or association are to be found in Portugal (70 %), Spain (65 %), Greece (63 %) and to a lesser extend in Italy (56 %).

Sports clubs and associations are the most successful associations among young people in the fifteen countries of the European Union, and the percentage of people with declared affiliation tops in the Netherlands (48%) and reaches its lowest level in Portugal (13%).

As in 1997, religious and parish organisations are more common activities for young people in Austria (16%), Italy (14%), the Netherlands (13%), Sweden (13%) and Finland (12%). These are the only countries where the percentage of people declaring an affiliation to this type of organisation is (and was) greater than 10%.

### **CHANNELS AND STRUCTURES ENCOURAGING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION**



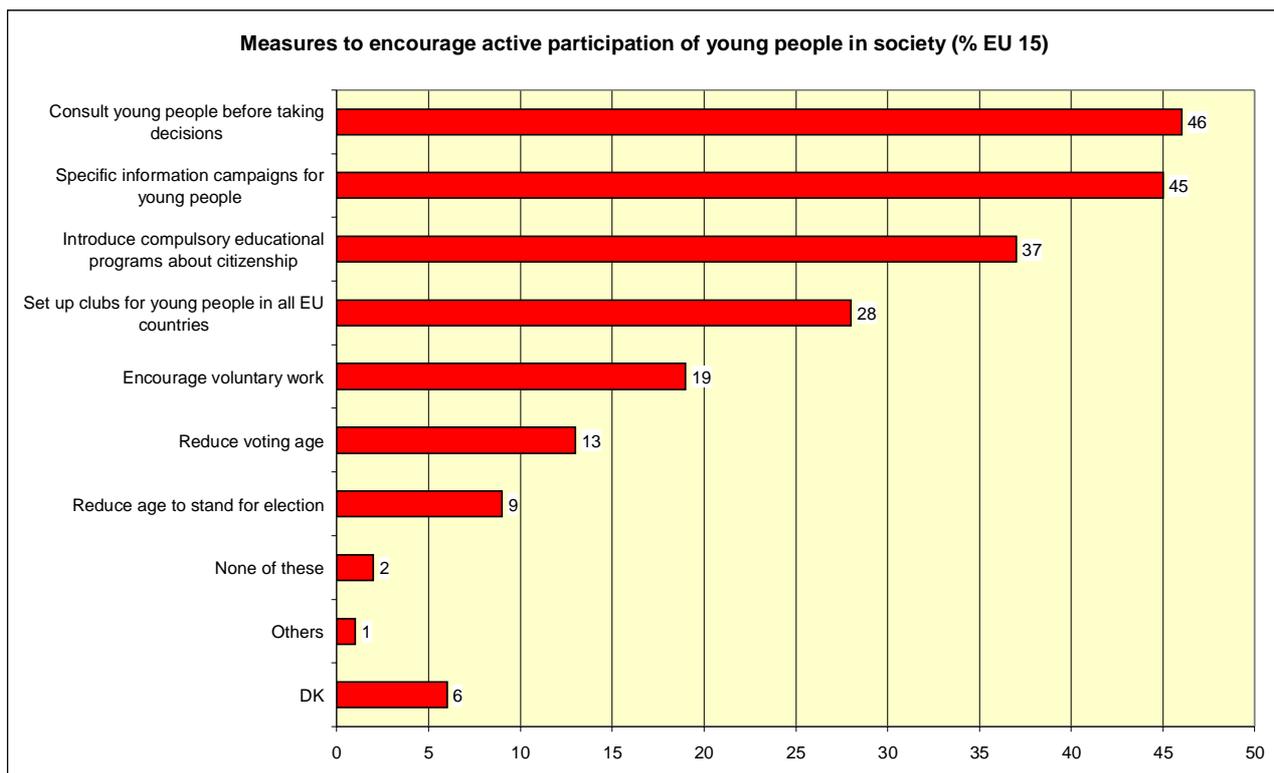
When asked which structure is considered as being the most important structure encouraging young peoples' active participation in society, more than one young European out of four (26%) designate the educational system. Then, family and friends (20%) are mentioned followed by youth organisations (20%). Television (12%) is the last structure to be named by more than 10% of young people.

Respectively only 8% and 4% of young Europeans think that public authorities and political parties are the most important structures to encourage active participation of young people in society.

The educational system is considered as the most important structure in twelve out of the fifteen countries. The percentage of young people expressing this opinion is the highest in Denmark and Finland (36%) and reaches its lowest level in France (22%). The educational structure comes in a second place in Germany (23%) and Italy (22%), after family and friends (respectively 27% and 25%). Family and friends come in a first position in Austria (37%).

Probably because they have stayed within the educational system longer, young people who left full-time education at the age of 20 or older and those who are still studying, more frequently tend to believe that the educational system is a better structure to encourage young people to participate in society (respectively 29% and 27%, in comparison to those having left full-time education between the age of 15 and 19 (25%) and those having left the full-time educational system at the age of 15 or before (21%).).

### **MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION**



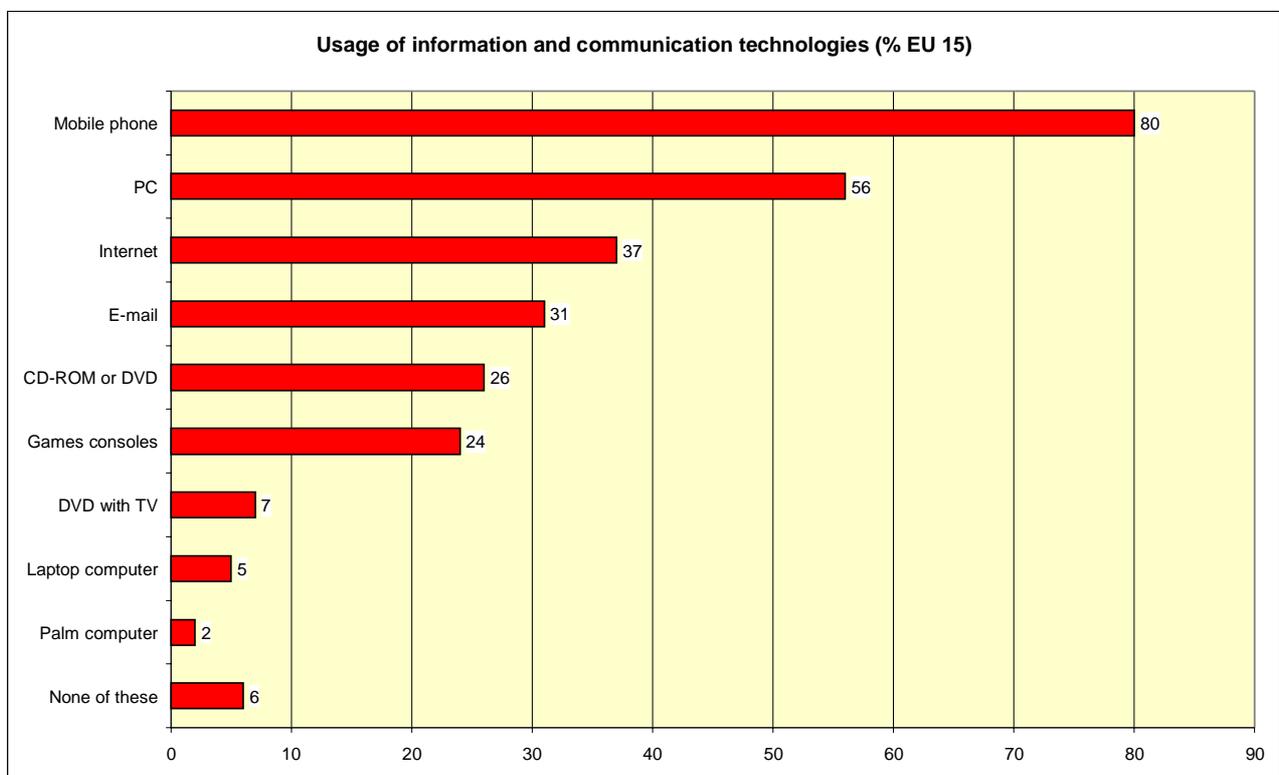
For more than four out of ten young Europeans, the two main measures to be taken in order to encourage the participation of young Europeans in society are: to consult them before a public decision which directly concerns them is taken (46%) and to carry out specific campaigns targetted toward young people (45%). In a third position (37%) is the introduction of compulsory educational

programmes about citizenship in schools. Once again the importance of the educational system as structure or medium to encourage young peoples' participation on society is prevailing.

The reduction of voting age or the age at which one can stand for election are mentioned respectively by only 13% and 9%. It is noted that young people of age 15 to 17 are those who most often name these measures (20% in comparison to those aged 18 or more). It also appears that young people of this age group mention to a lesser extent specific information campaigns than people aged 18 or more (respectively 40% and 48%).

## ▪ **INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE**

### ***INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES***



The survey reveals that information and communication technologies are increasingly present in young peoples' daily life. From a list of the nine systems with a usage rate of at least once a week, only 6% declare spontaneously not using any of these, compared to 54% in 1997.

Mobile telephone is by far the most widely used communication technology among young people aged 15 to 24: eight out of ten young Europeans claim to use this means of communication at least

once a week. The success of mobile telephones is confirmed by the fact that this item was even not suggested in the 1997 survey.

The usage rate is the highest in Finland and in Italy (respectively 92% and 90%) and the lowest in Portugal (72%).

A little under six young Europeans out of ten (56%) use a computer (PC) at least once a week, compared to 43% in 1997 (an increase of thirteen points). In all fifteen EU countries, the usage of computer comes in a second position, but the percentage varies greatly: close to nine young Dutchmen out of ten (87%) claim using a computer at least once a week, as compared to only 41% in Greece. The computer usage rate is also under the European average (of 56%) in Great Britain (48%), in Germany (52%), and more particularly in the new Länder, (48%), in Portugal (50%), in Ireland (53%), in Italy (54%) and in France (55%).

A comparison with the results in 1997 reveals that the usage of a PC has significantly increased in all EU countries. In Greece for instance the percentage has doubled: indeed, in 1997, the usage rate was only 20%.

The Internet and electronic mail are commonly used by more than three out of ten young people (respectively 37 % and 31 %). This represents a very large progression; in 1997, only 7% of respondents declared going at least once a week on the World Wide Web, and 5% using electronic mail.

The usage rate of the Internet and emails varies greatly and even triples from one country to another (respectively 76% and 69% in the Netherlands to 20% and 12% in Greece). These technologies are also widely spread in Sweden (respectively 74 % and 67 %), in Finland (64 % and 60 %) and in Denmark (57 % each).

Generally speaking, the survey reveals that among young people, the “information society” remains more developed in the Northern EU countries.

### ***MOBILITY AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES***

More than four young Europeans out of ten (44%) aged 15 to 24 have not travelled to another European country within the last two years. This is the same percentage as in 1997 (43 %). The four most popular destinations for more than 10% of young Europeans are, as in 1997, Spain (23 %), France (20 %), Germany (12 %) and Italy (11 %). The EU country that is least visited by

young people remains Finland (1% in both surveys) and Switzerland is the most visited non-EU country (7%).

86% of those who have visited other European countries in the last two years went on holidays. All other reasons (for instance work or studies) are declared by less than 10% of the respondents.

More than three young Europeans out of ten (31 %) spontaneously claim not knowing any foreign languages. This percentage is almost the same as in 1997 (29%), but less than in 1990: at that time they were 40% to declare not speaking any foreign language.

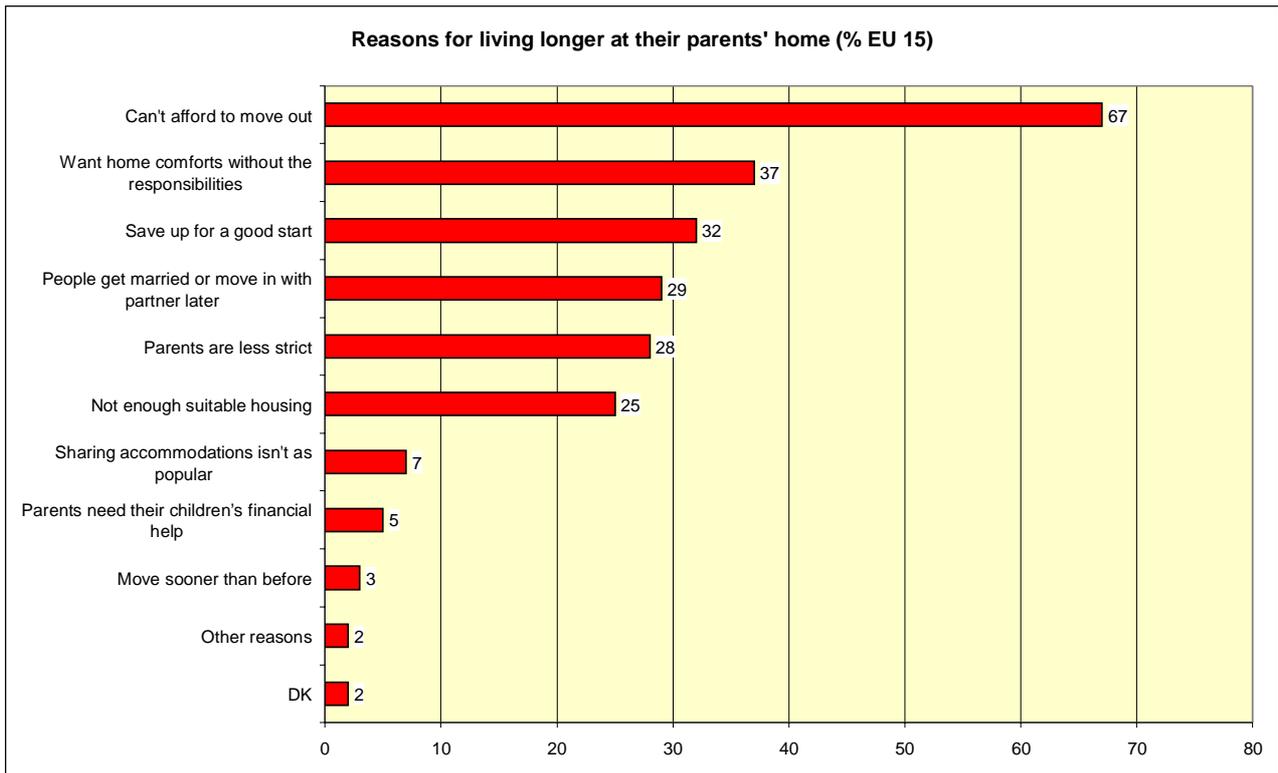
Close to one young person out of two (46 %) declares speaking a foreign language, and 16 % a second foreign language. Only 6% of young Europeans claim being able to understand and to express themselves in four languages or more. The young Brits are those who speak the fewest foreign languages and the young Danes those who speak the most foreign languages.

The foreign language to be spoken by most young Europeans is, without surprise, English. One young person out of two (whose mother tongue is not English) declares having a sufficient knowledge of the language to take part in a conversation. This is more or less the same percentage as in 1997 (54 %) but noticeable more than in 1990 (42 %) and in 1987 (34 %). In other words, English is steadily becoming the young Europeans *lingua franca*.

As in 1997, Spanish is the foreign language young people (29%) would prefer to learn. French and Italian are also mentioned by more than two young Europeans out of ten (respectively 21 % and 20 %).

- **AUTONOMY**

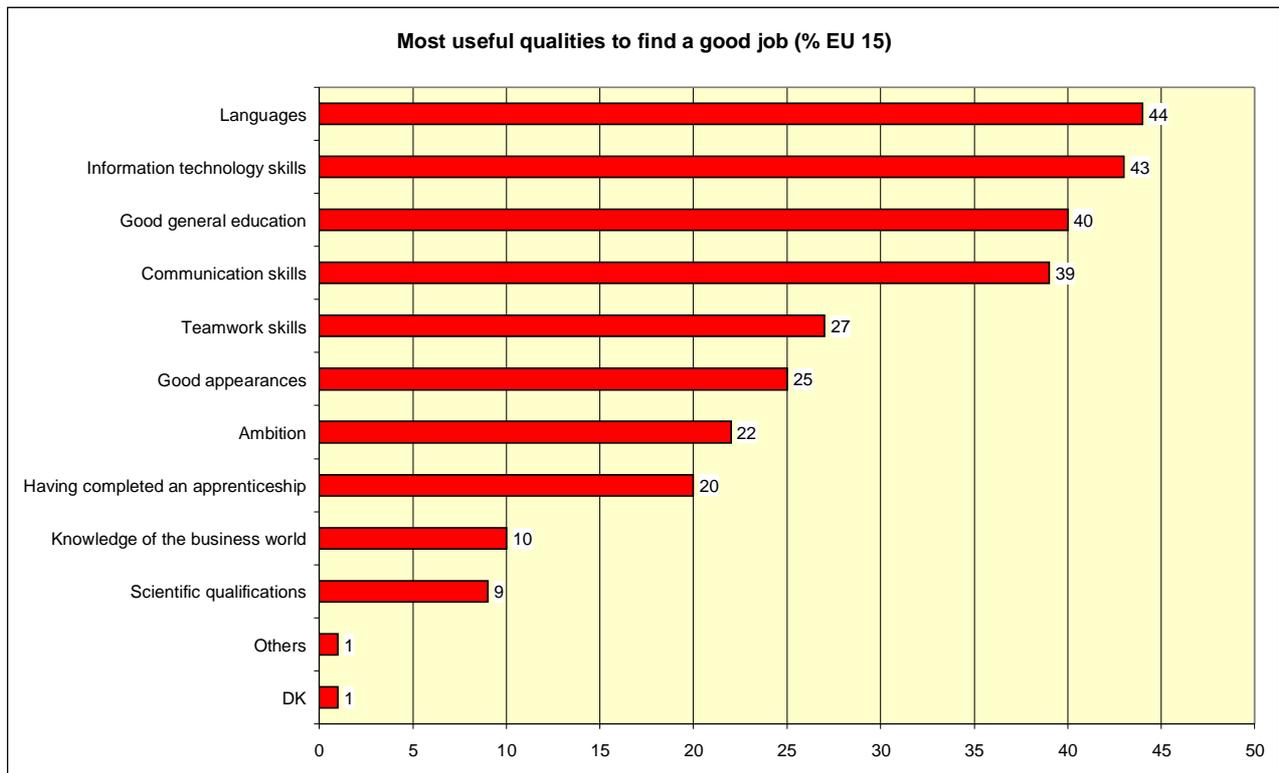
### ***DEPENDENCE TO THE FAMILY***



It is often said that young people today tend to live in their parent's home longer than they used to. When asked why, a little more than two thirds of young Europeans (67%) give a material reason for living at home longer: they can not afford to move out. In a second position, 37% give a more selfish reason, being that young people today want all the comforts without having to bear all the responsibilities. And finally, a little over three out of ten young people (32 %) point out the necessity to save up so they can make a good start later. The three same reasons were given in the same order in the survey carried out in 1997.

The lack of financial resources comes in a first position in all EU countries, except for in Luxembourg and the Netherlands where the main reasons for moving out later are, respectively, the need to save up for the future and the lack of available housing (53 % and 52%). It also clearly appears that young Spaniards and Swedes more frequently than others tend to put forward this assumption (respectively 82 % and 81 %).

## EMPLOYMENT



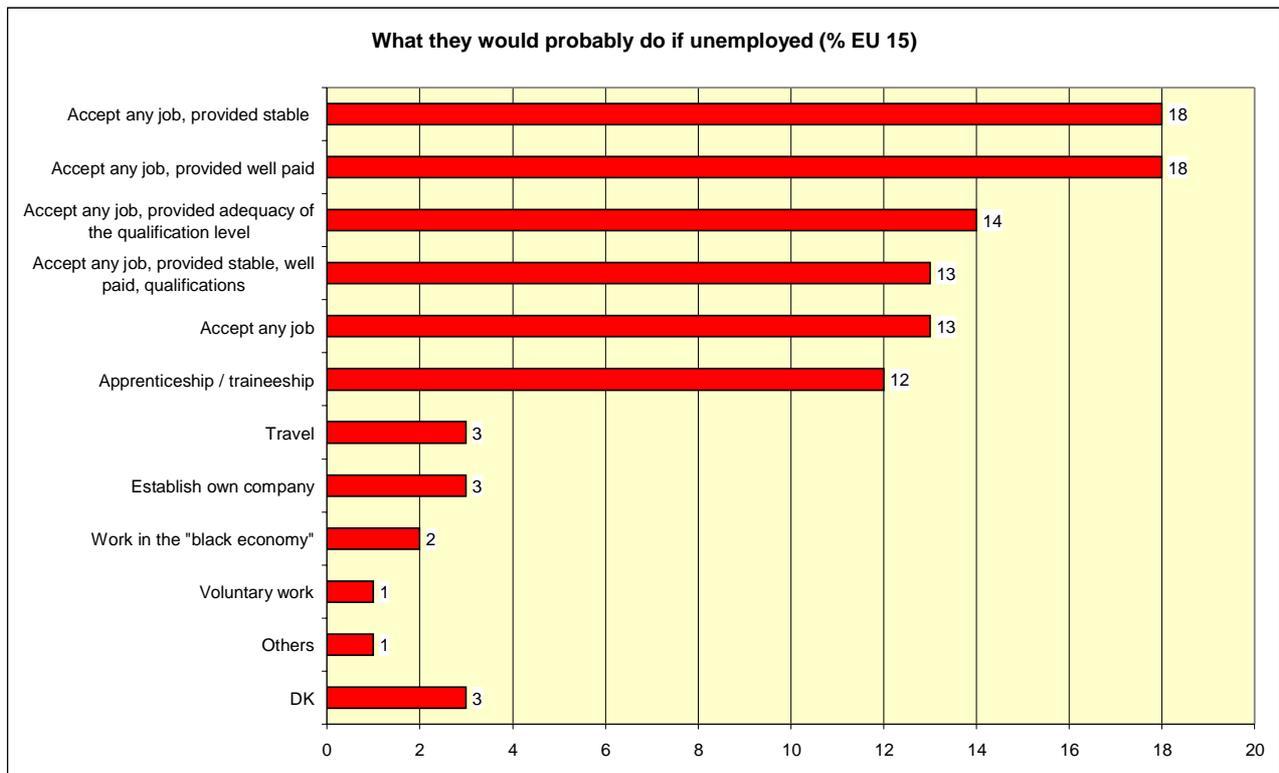
When young Europeans are asked about the most useful qualities in order to find a good job, the three main skills are: the command of languages (44 %), information and technology skills (43 %) and a good general education (40 %). In comparison to the survey carried out in 1997, an interesting evolution can be noted. In 1997, the three main reasons were in decreasing order: a good general education (43 %), command of foreign languages (40 %) and good communication skills (38 %). Information and technology skills only came in a fourth position with 32% (this is an increase of 11 points over the 4 last years).

National specificities about most useful qualities in finding a good job are observed. First of all, in comparison to 1997, the percentage of young people naming information and technology skills has increased (except for in the Netherlands and Sweden), and it has even become the most important quality in Ireland (named by 51% of the respondents in comparison to 35% in 1997).

The command of languages comes in first position in seven out of fifteen EU countries. These are Spain (74 %), Greece (72 %), Finland (66 %), Italy (65 %), Luxembourg (62 %), Portugal (62 %), and Belgium (60 %). Among these seven countries are four Southern European countries where relatively few young people command foreign languages.

As for information and technology skills, the percentage of young Europeans who view the command of language skills as useful is increasing in most EU countries with the exception of Ireland and Sweden.

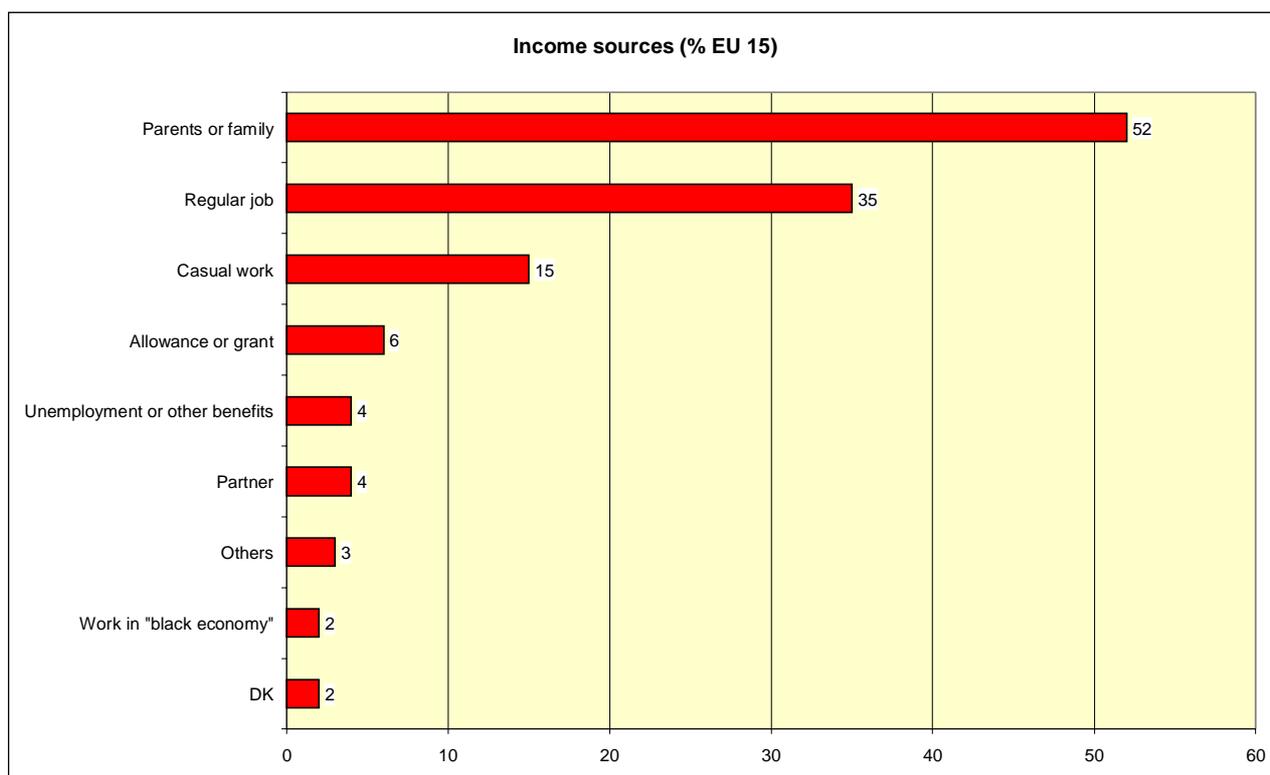
## UNEMPLOYMENT



Confronted with unemployment, most young Europeans would accept any job, but at different conditions. The two main conditions for accepting a job are job stability (18 %) and a good salary (18 %). Also, the lower the level of education, the more young people are ready to accept any job at whatever conditions.

At the exception of Germany and Austria, most young people would accept any job, but not at the same conditions. In Portugal (31 %), France (23 %) and in Italy (22 %), job stability is put forward. In Ireland (28 %), the United Kingdom (22 %), in Spain (21 %), and in Belgium (14 %), a well-paid job is the main condition, and in Finland (23 %), Denmark (22 %) and in the Netherlands (19 %), it is the jobs correspondence to the level of qualification. The young people from Luxembourg and Sweden are the less demanding: 17 % would accept the conditions that come with the job. In Germany and in Austria, traineeship or training courses comes in a first position (respectively 24 % and 21 %).

## FINANCIAL RESSOURCES



A little more than one young European out of two (52 %) declares receiving the major part of his/ her financial resources from his/ her parents or family. This percentage is a little higher than in 1997 (+ 7 points), and the respondents are in most cases students (80%). Nevertheless 55 % of those who do not have a job and 20% of those who work, also claim receiving the major part of their financial income from their parents.

A regular job as main source of income comes in a second position. Of the 35% young Europeans who state this source of revenue as being their primary source of income, 72% work (leaving 28% of those who have a regular job, with another main source of income). In comparison to 1997, the percentage of young people declaring their regular job to be their main source of income has dropped 7 points.

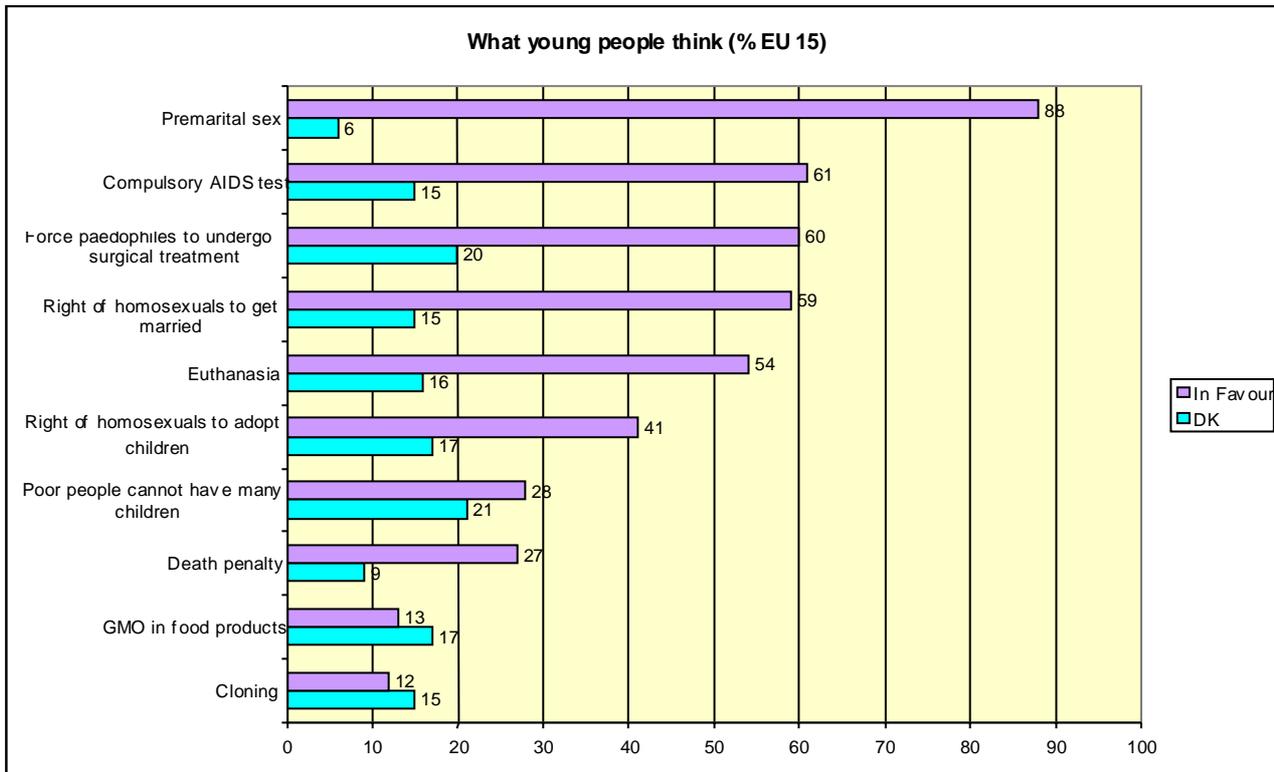
In most countries (eleven out of fifteen), parents or family are the main source of income for young people aged 15 to 24. This is particularly the case in Greece and Italy, where they are named by respectively 74 % and 71 % of the respondents. In the four other countries, Denmark (63 %), Ireland (50 %), United Kingdom (50 %) and Austria (46 %), young people obtain most of their financial resources through regular paid jobs.

The importance of parents and family as major financial contributors has increased in all countries between 1997 and 2001 with the exception of Ireland and Finland.

▪ **VALUES**

***YOUNG EUROPEANS OPINION***

One question in this survey covered young peoples' opinion on a certain number of practices. This question was only asked to those aged 18 or more (6,888 persons). It is to be noted that the questions did not concern the young people directly, but people of their age.



Close to nine young Europeans out of ten aged 18 or more (88 %) believe that young people of their age are favourable to premarital sex. This is the same percentage as in 1997. Only in three countries the percentages are less than 80%. These are in descending order: Ireland (76 %), United Kingdom (77 %) and Greece (79 %).

Just under six young Europeans out of ten (59 %) think that young people of their age tend to be in favour of the right of homosexuals to get married, an increase of 7 points compared to 1997. On the other hand, adoption of children by homosexuals remains a controversial topic, even though opposition has decreased: 41% think that young people of their age are in favour of it versus 36% in 1997.

According to the responses, the young Greeks, Italians and Irishmen are much less in favour of the right of homosexuals to get married (respectively 38 %, 39 % et 44 %). They are also, together with the Portuguese (29 %) and the Finns (30 %), more reluctant to the adoption of children by homosexuals (24 %, 20 % and 27 %). This being said, the acceptance of these practices is on the rise in most countries.

A little more than one out of two young Europeans (54 %) presume that young people of their age tend to be favourable to euthanasia. In comparison to 1997, the acceptance of this practice is stable or increasing (an increase of 5 points on a European level).

In 2001, it is in the Netherlands (where euthanasia is legally tolerated), in Belgium (where a parliamentary debate on the subject was held in the period when the survey was carried out) and in Denmark, that young people seem to be more in favour of this practice (80 %, 72 % et 71 %). As far as Belgium is concerned, the percentage has increased with 19 points since 1997. It is by far in Greece that young people were (and remain) the least in favour of euthanasia (25 % in 2001).

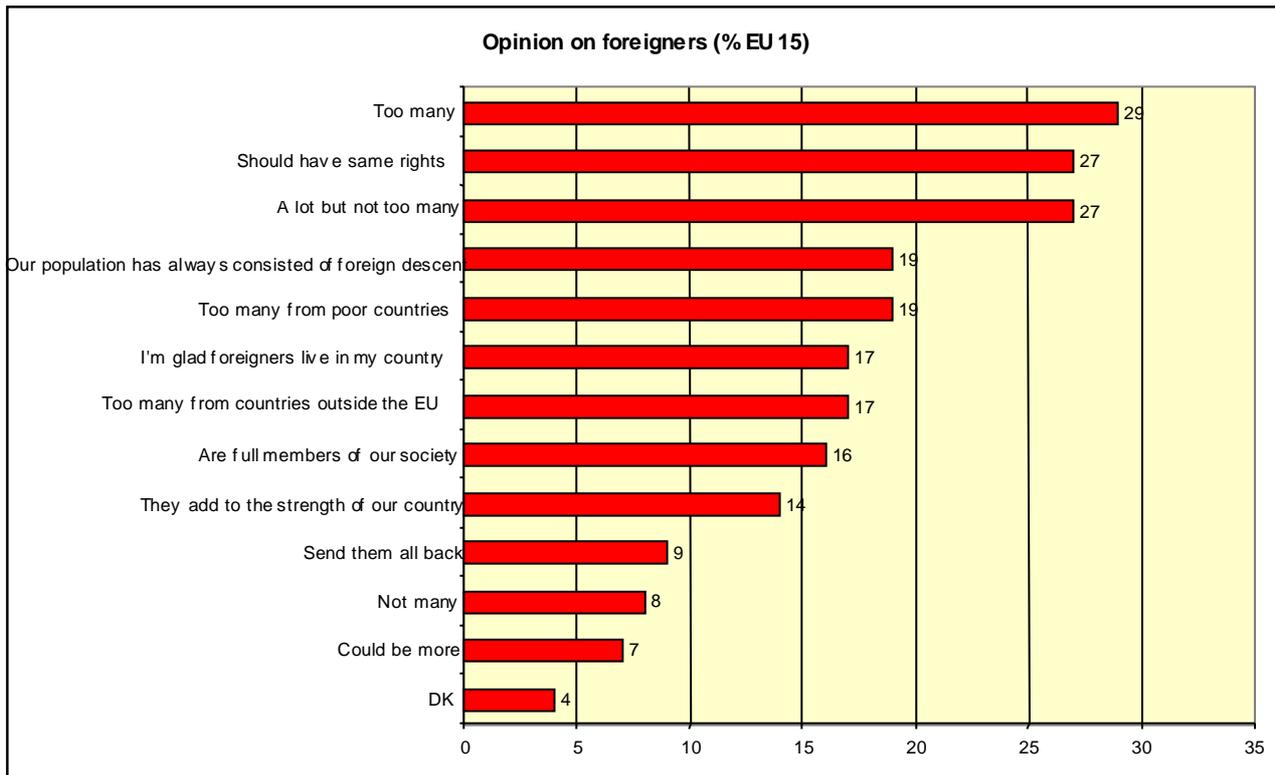
Compared to 1997, the percentage of respondents who think that young people of their age are in favour of death penalty is decreasing in all countries except Italy. In 1997, 36 % of young Europeans had the impression that young people of their age were in favour of this practice. Today they are only 27%.

It is in Belgium that this percentage has dropped the most. It was the highest in the EU countries in 1997 (55%) and has dropped to 29% in 2001. Today, the percentages are below 40% in all EU countries with the exception of the new Länder in Germany (44%).

Cloning is still the most controversial practice, even if the percentage of those who think that young people of their age are in favour of it has increased from 9% in 1997 to 12% in 2001. Genetically modified organisms in food products are also subject to controversy: only 13% of respondents claim that young people of their age approve of this practice.

### ***RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA***

In order to be able to evaluate young Europeans attitudes to foreigners, different statements were submitted. Some were neutral, in the sense that they were mere fact statements and did not imply taking a stand. Others were more than fact statements and reflected an opinion.



As in 1997, just about three out of ten young Europeans (29%) consider that there are too many foreigners in their country. However, an equivalent number (27 %) thinks that there are a lot but not too many. A little under three out of ten (27 %) share the opinion that foreigners established in their country should have the same rights as the citizens and 16 % claim that they are full members of their society. Finally, just about one out of ten (9 %) declares that all foreigners should be sent back to their country of origin.

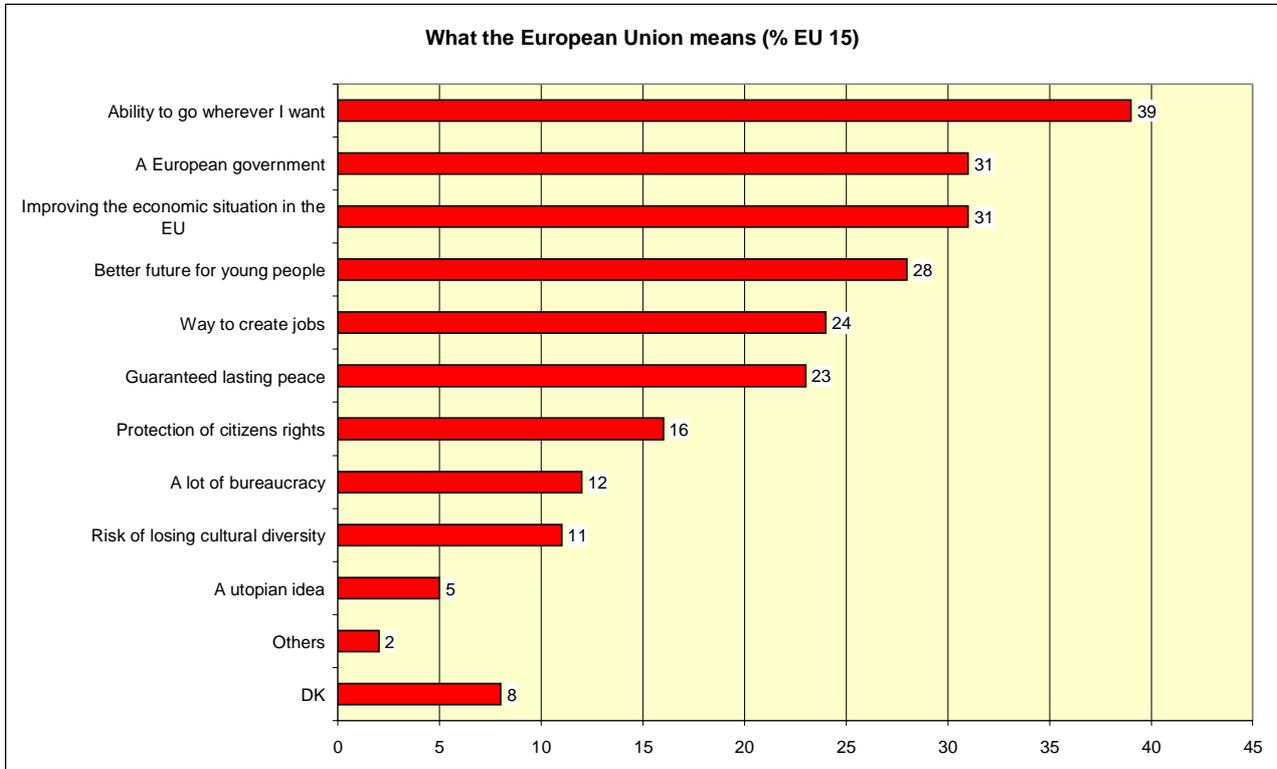
Generally speaking, it appears that it is in the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Spain, that young people appear to be less hostile towards foreigners. The opposite seems to be true in Greece.

The higher the level of education is, the more tolerant an attitude young people have towards foreigners. An opening on the world also favours a more tolerant attitude. Accordingly, the more one has travelled the more one tends to be more in favour of equal rights

According to a little less than one young European out of two, (46 %), the best way to integrate ethnical, religious or sexual minorities, as well as people who are at risk (such as the homeless, drug addicts, alcoholics, etc.) or those who are considered to be different (such as disabled people), is to better inform through awareness programmes in the educational system and the media. Furthermore, a little less than four young Europeans out of ten (39 %), believe that equal

opportunities, including the abolition of certain discriminatory laws, should be better promoted and implemented.

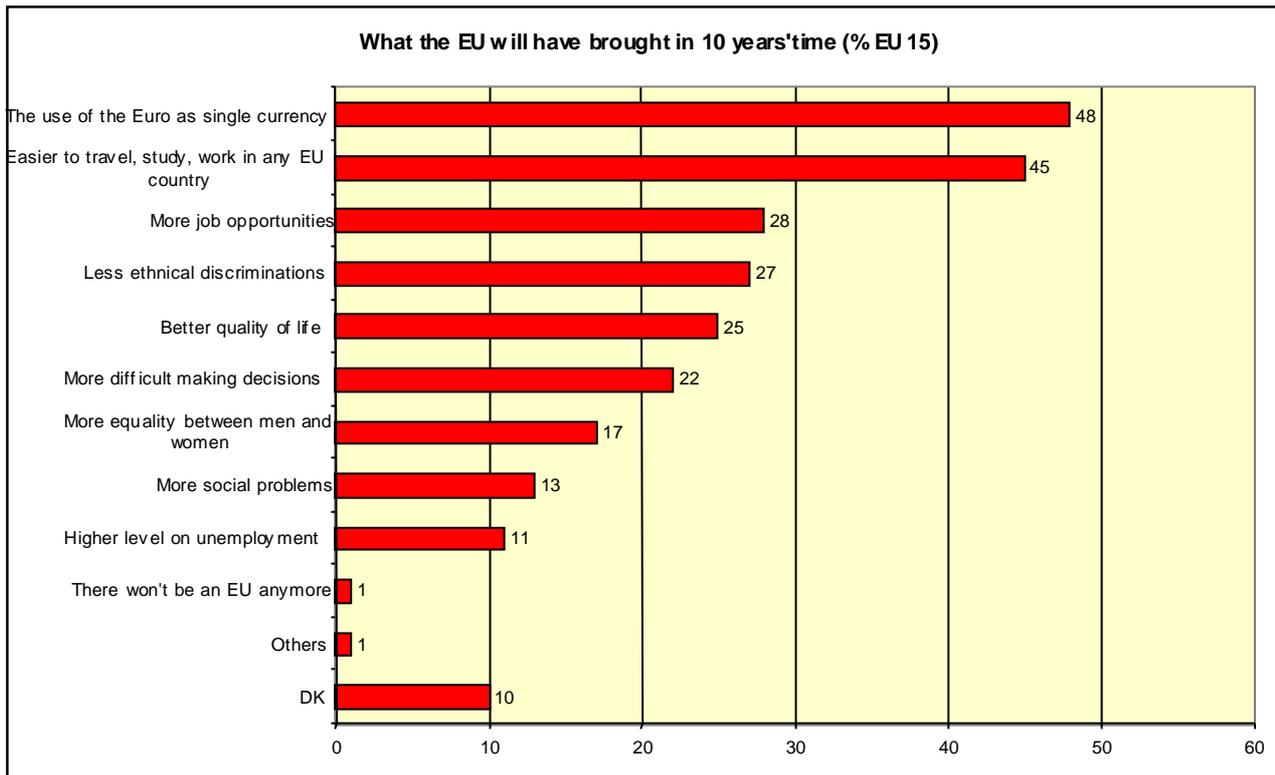
### **ATTITUDES TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Even more than in 1997, the European Union means free movement within the fifteen member states (39 % compared to 35 % in 1997). The reference to liberty of movement comes in a first position in eight of the fifteen countries, with percentages going from 38 % in Belgium and in Ireland to 50 % in Austria. The country where this meaning is less often associated to the European Union is the United Kingdom (18 %).

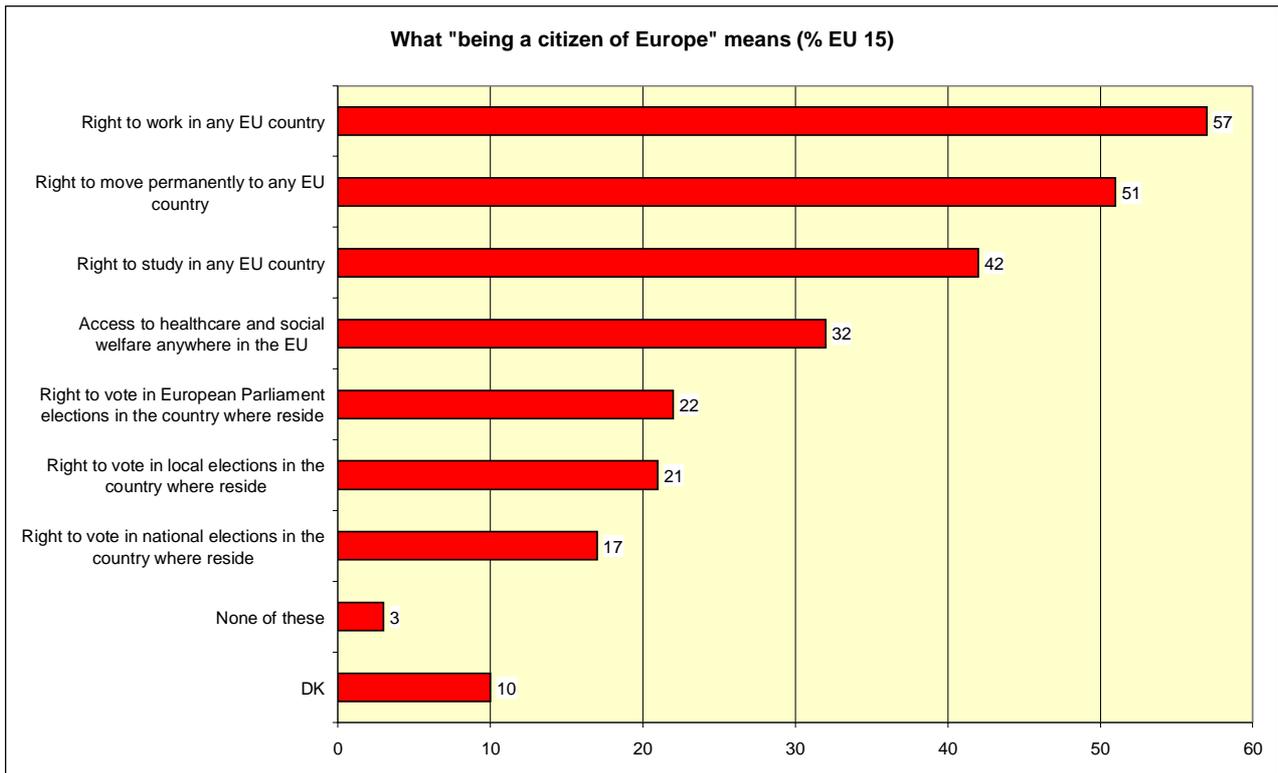
In 1997 the concept of a « European government » was mentioned by only 26% of the respondents (coming in a fifth position). In 2001 it is mentioned by 31% and comes in a second position together with « a way of improving the economic situation in the European Union » (31% compared to 34% in 1997). This is particularly the case in the Netherlands (50 %), in Spain (41 %) and in Belgium (38 %) where the reference to a European government comes in a first position.

In three countries, Italy (45 %), Greece (37 %) and Portugal (35 %), the European Union is mainly associated to « a way to create a better future for young people ».



When asked what the European Union will have brought in ten years' time, the use of a single currency is named by just under one young European out of two (48%). This is more than in 1997 (42%), the year where the decision to create the Euro was decided. At that time it was the ability to travel, study or work and live anywhere in Europe that was most frequently mentioned (48% compared to 45% in 2001). In a third position, but far behind the two other contributions, are found, as in 1997, better opportunities for all to find a job (28 % in comparison to 30 % in 1997).

In all the countries of the Euro-zone, but Finland, the use of the Euro as the single currency is the contribution that is most frequently named by young people. In Finland and in the three countries outside the Euro zone, the European Union's main contribution is the ability to travel, study or work and live anywhere in Europe. The young Dutchmen and Belgians are those who most frequently mention the Euro (respectively 68% and 64%) and those who refer the least to it are the young Brits and to a lesser extent the young Swedes (22 % and 38 %).



Being able to work, live and study in the EU country of their choice represents the core elements of being a European citizen. These three elements are named by respectively 57% (compared to 62% in 1997), 51 % (compared to 52 %) and 42 % (compared to 46 %) of respondents

Among other results, we note that close to seven young Europeans out of ten (69 %) think that employment should be given priority to in the next five years by the European Union. Second most frequently named priority area is the fight against crime (61 %); this answer was only given by 35% of the respondents in 1997, and came in a ninth position out of twelve

The area in which the European Union should not intervene is: culture clubs and associations (27 %), which also is the area that is the least often named as priority area (17%).

More than one young European out of two (51 %) declares having received information about his/her rights and duties as a European citizen through school and university. As in 1997, parents and friends are then mentioned as source of information (32 %).

Of all media, television is the main source of information (54 %), followed by newspapers and radio (32 %).