

Directorate-General for Education and Culture



Le Magazine

EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN EUROPE

Issue 15 - 2001

A NEW *impetus*
for Europe's
youth



European Commission



The new Magazine:

more compact, more frequent, more targeted

This 15th issue of *Le Magazine* sees the launch of a new look and feel for the publication. Our aim is to make it a benchmark resource on European Union policies and action implemented by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

Each issue will take an in-depth look at a major question of the day. We start with young people, to coincide with the European Commission's adoption of a White Paper on Youth. In these unsettled times, the next issue will concern intercultural dialogue and combating racism. A later issue will examine multilingualism in Europe, reporting on the actions conducted in 2001 for the European Year of Languages. Other important subjects on the eve of an unprecedented enlargement of the Union are European cultural identity and diversity in the face of globalisation: these themes will be examined through the prism of audiovisual production and cinema.

The new design of *Le Magazine* gives priority to factual information and reports from the field, placing them in a European political, social and cultural context. To reflect current events more closely, *Le Magazine* will be published quarterly. We also hope that the more convenient format and the five language versions will also make it more practical and useable.

Le Magazine provides an opportunity to explore a specific subject. It supplements the more 'institutional' electronic newsletter on the Directorate-General's activities, published every two months on our web site.

It is our hope that these publications will provide sources of high quality, first-hand information. We would be pleased to have your feedback on how they can be made even better.



Nikolaus G. van der Pas
Director-General
Education and Culture

#15

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Unveiling the White Paper (1) on Youth to the Council of Youth Ministers on 29 November, Commissioner Viviane Reding was a messenger for the tens of thousands of young people who took part in a nearly two-year consultation process (see page 6) that was unprecedented in its scope and range. The ministers undertook to continue the debate with a view to developing a European cooperation policy guided by the same spirit of openness. Whilst the White Paper marks the conclusion of a specific period of consultation, it sets the tone for a whole new approach to policy-making in this area.

A new impetus for Europe's youth

The White Paper was based on the principle of openness right through the process. It was released immediately prior to a Council session during a colloquium in Ghent (Belgium). Among the 300 delegates there were young people and youth organisations, experts and political leaders, who examined its content and prepared for further action. The White Paper initiative resulted from the observation that, in spite of a wide range of Community actions, the European institutions and Member States lack an overview of youth policy. Meanwhile, existing cooperation on youth matters is not responsive to the challenges created by demographic, sociological, economic, technological and cultural changes in our societies. One of these challenges is the divide between young people's concerns and perceptions and the policies pursued by national and European authorities. New forms of governance inviting citizens, in particular young people, to become more involved in decision-making seek to bridge this divide. The initiation of a wide consultation of young people by Commissioner Reding in 1999 was a truly pioneering development in this respect.

Acting at grass-roots level and encouraging interaction

The White Paper aims to involve young people more closely in the policies that concern them by encouraging cooperation between Member States under a process of 'open coordination'. This kind of process is particularly suited to policy areas such as youth, which remain primarily the responsibility of the Member States. In this way it becomes possible, through discussion and the sharing of best practice, to optimise the effectiveness of grassroots solutions by raising their profile in national-policy making processes.

The White Paper itself contains an analysis of the consultation process (see issue 14 of *Le Magazine*), which focused on five subject areas: participation; education; employment, training and social integration; welfare, personal autonomy and culture; and European values, mobility and relations with the rest of the world. For each, the White Paper analyses the results of the consultation while providing a platform for young people to offer their views and suggestions to public authorities at national, regional, local and European levels.

Priorities

Starting with the key messages that emerge from the debate, the Commission has identified several priorities. First, the participation of young people should be developed through flexible and innovative mechanisms capable of reaching those who do not belong to representative organisations. The Commission plans to propose pilot projects to this effect for 2003 and to keep the dialogue going through further meetings with young people. Other priorities are volunteering (the European Voluntary Service should be expanded and facilitated), combating racism and xenophobia (which must be brought to the fore in all Community programmes), and education, lifelong learning and mobility. The emphasis in the latter area will be placed on recognition of 'informal' learning as being complementary to school or university, so as to prepare young people more fully for work, life in society and responsible citizenship.

Therefore, in this on-going process the pumps have been primed for an efficient and collaborative exchange in the future.

Interview



Viviane Reding

Commissioner responsible for education and culture



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Why a White Paper on youth now?

In a sense this White Paper marks both beginning and an end. It finalises a broad-based process of consultation of young people in Europe. At the same time, it is the initiative that I hope will give new impetus to youth policies at Community level and at every level of public administration. When the Prodi Commission was appointed, I decided that we had to give young people a say, which is exactly what we did with tens of thousands of people over the course of a whole year. This White Paper is, in large measure, the result of their ideas and input.

With this White Paper the Commission challenged the Member States to improve cooperation to mainstream young people's concerns into the whole range of different policy areas. We have offered a particular working method and a set of priorities, such as volunteering, mobility and citizenship. It goes without saying that young people will continue to be closely involved in this new form of cooperation.

Obviously, this White Paper does not set out to reinvent the wheel. However, I do believe that what is lacking at present, given the range of players involved, is a shared overview of youth-related policies.

I would also like to point out that I am proud of the success of the Youth programme, which each year enables 100 000 young people to get involved in a project-based transnational experience.

Are the young people who were consulted during preparation of the White Paper representative of European youth? Or are they an elite already won over to the European cause?

I insisted that young people from every background be included in the consultation process and I believe we have succeeded in doing that. It was my impression, during the meetings in which I participated, that the young people present saw themselves as representing their generation. In addition, the White Paper has not

censored the views of young people but explicitly includes the lukewarm reactions of some young people to the way Europe is being built.

Young people call for improvements to the education system. They want schools to teach them skills for learning, for becoming responsible citizens and for getting started in working life. But how can education be adapted to the situation of less-favoured young people, who often leave school early?

School is the principal channel through which young people participate in society, as confirmed by the Eurobarometer poll that we commissioned in the run-up to the release of the White Paper. At the same time, young people are often highly critical of the education systems that they pass through. Many find that school is not responsive to the needs of society, that it is undemocratic, is inaccessible to some sections of the youth population and does not offer enough possibilities for lifelong learning.

Personally I do not agree with all these criticisms and I believe the Member States are making serious efforts to make their education systems more responsive. They are strengthening consultation at European level and establishing common goals for educational reform and a strategy for lifelong learning. With the Second Chance Schools pilot project, the European Commission, in partnership with Member States and regions, is succeeding in integrating young people who have dropped out of the conventional education system. Reducing the number of such young people leaving school without recognised qualifications is one of the priorities of Member States.

Although this question is being dealt with by education ministers, there is still room for cooperation between education ministers, youth ministers and young people themselves. The White Paper opens up this possibility.

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Whether for employment assistance, working conditions or health care, young people want stronger European legislation that addresses their difficulties. What actions does the White Paper put forward?

For the most part the response must be national, particularly in the social sphere. The White Paper must not be seen as a prelude to legislative proposals, but as a tool, a work method enabling national or local authorities to take account of young people's concerns in policies that affect them directly.

The White Paper is presented as a starting point. What actions does the Commission foresee to continue this dialogue, to strengthen participation and to lead to specific policy developments?

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I see my role as that of an ally of young people. I believe we need to have confidence in them, giving them the challenge of making a stronger commitment to influence the decisions that have an impact on their daily life. In practical terms, the White Paper proposes the widespread use of national and regional youth councils, open to young people from every background, not just those whose backgrounds and qualifications predispose them to membership of formal representation bodies. At Community level, the White Paper calls for a revitalisation of the European Youth

Forum and suggests stronger representation for young people in the Economic and Social Committee.

How will the European Union and the Member States divide the work?

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Political responsibility for youth policy resides essentially with Member States. In some countries, it is even largely the remit of regional authorities. The Member States are the first to acknowledge the lack of youth participation in society. The White Paper is not about pushing decisions up to Community level, but about making the most of best practice to promote youth participation in Europe.

Young people have played their part

The viewpoint of the European Youth Forum


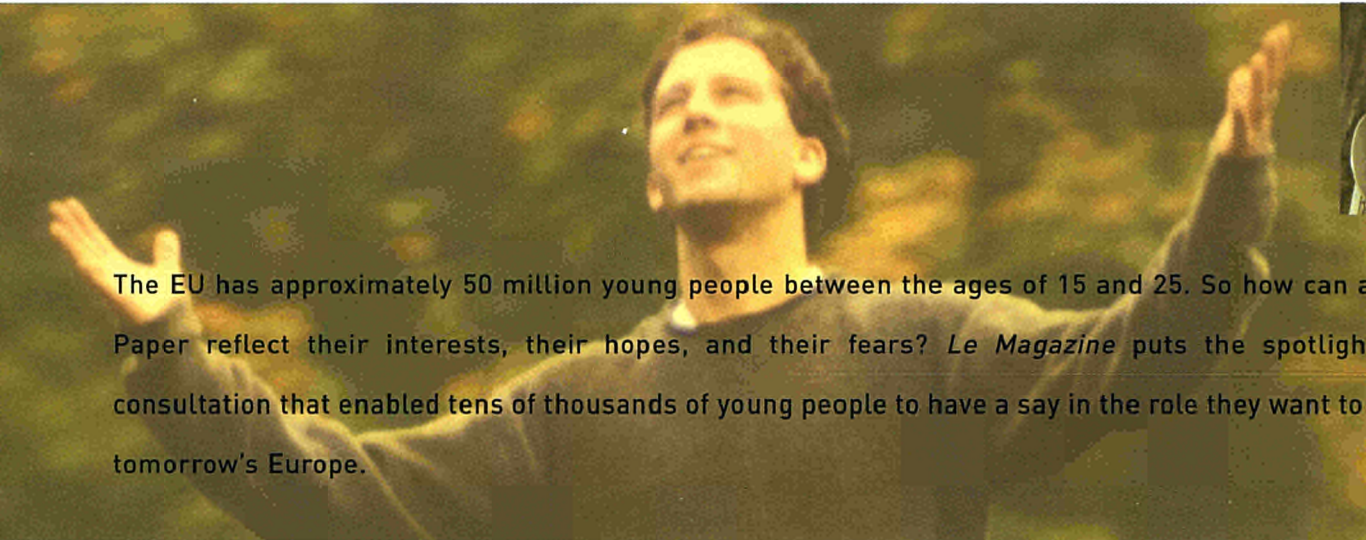


The European Commission's consultation of young people between the ages of 15 and 25 in preparing its White Paper on youth was the largest ever organised to date. A decisive role in expanding this consultation was played by the European Youth Forum in negotiating the participation of civil society and the applicant countries. The forum's chairman, Henrik Söderman, aged 25, drew a few conclusions from this tremendous survey of the aspirations of Europe's young people.

'Obviously, it was impossible to ask everyone's opinion, but we took care to ensure that the sample represented the diversity of different social groups and communities. By insisting on the involvement of civil society, for instance, we were able to bring to light the exclusion faced by some young people. This particular result came out of the consultation of NGOs working with the least favoured sections of the population. We also insisted that the Commission consult young people in the applicant countries. This appeared to us to be an absolute necessity in the context of a long-term policy. This, has been, judging by its success, a very rewarding initiative. Indeed, young people in Eastern Europe proved to be the most receptive to involvement. They expressed a greater desire to participate in building Europe than anyone else. Which is not surprising given the importance of the accession process in their national political agendas.'

Henrik Söderman makes no secret of the fact that he would like to see the EU develop a more effective policy for the future. 'The Treaty articles on youth are a bit dated and in their current form no longer really reflect today's reality. What is more, given the number of directorates-general and the variety of programmes that concern young people, the Commission has a hard time coordinating its actions. We would like to see more cooperation mechanisms between the institutions. In this respect, we have also recommended the creation of a European Youth Agency. There are a variety of views on this. However, we hope to see such a proposal acted upon in some shape or form at the next intergovernmental conference. This consultation raised the expectations among young Europeans. Romano Prodi said recently that the role of young people is to challenge, to criticize, that doing so is much better than indifference. Young people are playing their part. Now it is up to the Union to do the same.'

A wellspring ^{of} ideas



The EU has approximately 50 million young people between the ages of 15 and 25. So how can a White Paper reflect their interests, their hopes, and their fears? *Le Magazine* puts the spotlight on a consultation that enabled tens of thousands of young people to have a say in the role they want to play in tomorrow's Europe.

In drawing up a White Paper to reflect the concerns and expectations of young people it quickly became obvious that the European Commission would need to engage the involvement not only of young people themselves, but also of youth bodies and organisations. This resulted in the far-reaching consultation that was initiated in early 2000. Meeting in Paris a few months later, 600 participants, among them 450 young delegates from some 30 countries, traded ideas on five major themes: participation; employment (as well as vocational training and social integration); education; welfare (along with personal autonomy and culture); and European values (including mobility and relations with the rest of the world). Eighteen young people then presented the conclusions of this meeting to the Council of Youth Ministers on 9 November 2000.

Civil society also took part: 200 representatives of a multitude of associations and public organisations attended a hearing last February sponsored by the Economic and Social Committee of the European Union and the European Commission, in collaboration with the European Youth Forum. This hearing resulted in 550 pages of opinions and recommendations! Meanwhile, a team of researchers worked on drawing up various scenarios for developing an overall policy for youth.

Dialogue between the institutions

In the midst of all this activity, there was considerable behind-the-scenes institutional work going on. Dialogue was engaged between the Commission and the political and administrative officials of the different Member States, the latter being invited to provide details on how they organise youth policy and on its priorities, and to state their expectations of the White Paper.

Last March, the representatives of these different participants met in the Swedish city of Umeå to share their ideas and brainstorm on the different themes.

Summed up by the European Youth Forum, 'the Commission's consultations for the White Paper gave rise to a wellspring of ideas, recommendation and information for a European youth policy. These emanated from young people themselves, youth organisations and other civil society groups, Member State authorities, academics and experts in youth issues. They also came from the local, regional, national, European and international levels.'

All these contributions made it possible to pinpoint the hopes and expectations of today's youth and of associations and policy-makers. To get an even more accurate picture of young Europeans, last spring the Commission conducted a Eurobarometer poll providing a wealth of information on their way of life and their values. On the strength of these different sources of information, the White Paper will suggest ideas for actions and priorities. But, 'what is most important', in the words of Violet Soen, a young Belgian student involved in the consultation, 'is to keep alive the dynamic of exchange set in motion between the different participants'.

Eurobarometer sounds out young *Europeans*



Who are young Europeans today? What are their views on life in society, employment, and unemployment? What importance do they attach to education, travel, and foreign languages? In order to get a clearer picture of the daily life, aspirations and expectations of young Europeans the European Union conducted an opinion poll this year in the 15 EU Member States. In each country, 23 questions were put to a representative sample of the national population between 15 and 24 years of age, or some 9 760 young people in all. Using some of the same questions from polls conducted in 1997 and 1990, the Eurobarometer scrutinized today's young generation.

The boom in information and communication technologies

The most striking change relates, not surprisingly, to new technologies, especially mobile phones. Very unobtrusive in the previous survey, the cell phone is now used regularly by 80% of young Europeans. The highest numbers of enthusiasts are found in Finland (92%) and Italy (90%), while Portugal's young people show the lowest rate of use (72%). Along with cell phones, computers are in wider use – nearly 60% of young people use a computer at least once a week, up 13 points from 1997. 'Internet and e-mail are used regularly by more than 30% of young people', explains Belgian sociologist Philippe Manigart, who wrote the Eurobarometer analytical report. 'In 1997, only 7% of those polled said they connected to Internet at least once a week and 5% used e-mail once a week. So there is a sharp rise here too.'

Limited independence

But not all aspects of life have changed as markedly in the last four years. 'When asked why they live with their parents longer than young people did in the past, nearly 70% of young Europeans mention financial reasons: they do not have the means to live on their own! The second most frequent reason given (37%) is admittedly to take advantage of the comforts of a home without having the costs. Just over 30% also mention the necessity of setting aside money for the future. 'These were also the three top-ranking reasons in the 1997 survey', observes Philippe Manigart.

Indeed, family ties are all the stronger because over 50% of young people receive the bulk of their financial resources from their parents or family. This is a little higher than in 1997 (+7%). 'Of course, 80% of the respondents are students. But 55% of those not working and even 20% of those in jobs also state that they receive the greater part of their financial income from their parents', continues the sociologist. Regular work ranks second as the main source of income for 35% of young people polled.

Young people are not 'joiners'

The Eurobarometer also provides interesting findings on young people's daily existence. The most regular leisure activities are, by order of importance: going out with friends (74%); watching television (69%); and listening to music (66%).

As in 1997, one in two young people belong to no organisations or associations of any kind. Of all types of organisation, sport clubs are the most popular: nearly 30% of young people are members or participate in a sport club. Fewer than 10%, in contrast, belong to

a religious or parish association, a youth organisation or a special interest club. At the bottom of the scale, consumer groups and human rights movements attract barely one or two young people out of 100.

Polyglots gaining ground

As far as languages are concerned, the Eurobarometer survey reveals that nearly one young European in 10 is bilingual and 16% trilingual. As in 1997, just over one in three of those polled spontaneously admit that they know no foreign languages. 'Not surprisingly, English is by far the number one foreign language of young Europeans', notes Philippe Manigart. 'One in two (who do not speak English as their mother tongue) say they know enough English to take part in a conversation. This is more or less the same rate as in 1997 but considerably higher than 1990 (42%) and 1987 (37%). In other words, English is increasingly the "lingua franca" of young Europeans! And this may explain why young citizens of the United Kingdom know the fewest foreign languages while Danish young people appear to be the most multilingual, practising an average of two foreign languages.'





Youth and Europe, a question of freedom

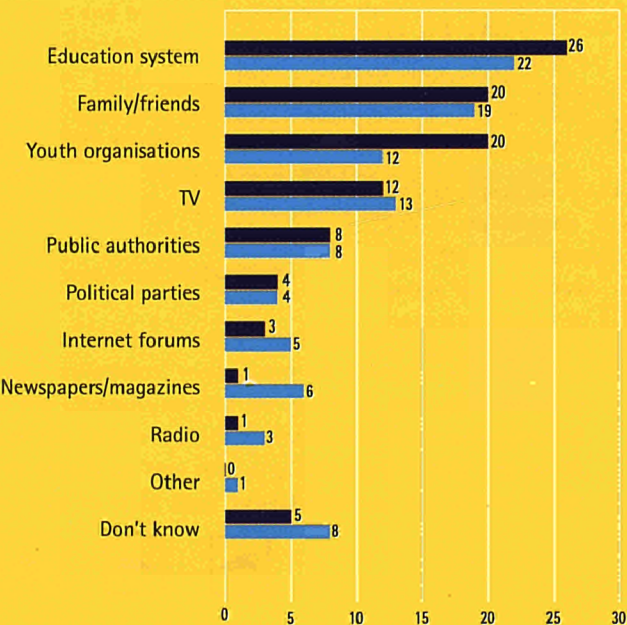
What does the European Union represent for its younger generations? Even more than in 1997, it is synonymous with freedom of movement throughout the Union. Youth in the United Kingdom give this response least often (18%). The idea of 'European government' is progressing, rising from fifth to second position in four years, and is on a par with 'a means of improving the economy in the European Union' (which fell three points). When asked what the EU will have accomplished in 10 years, the sample replied in order: the single currency; freedom of movement; and offering a better chance of finding a job. Being able to work, live and study in any Member State is still the most important meaning of the European Union for young people. Nearly 70% of young Europeans say employment should be a priority for the EU over the next five years, along with combating crime.

More active in political and social life

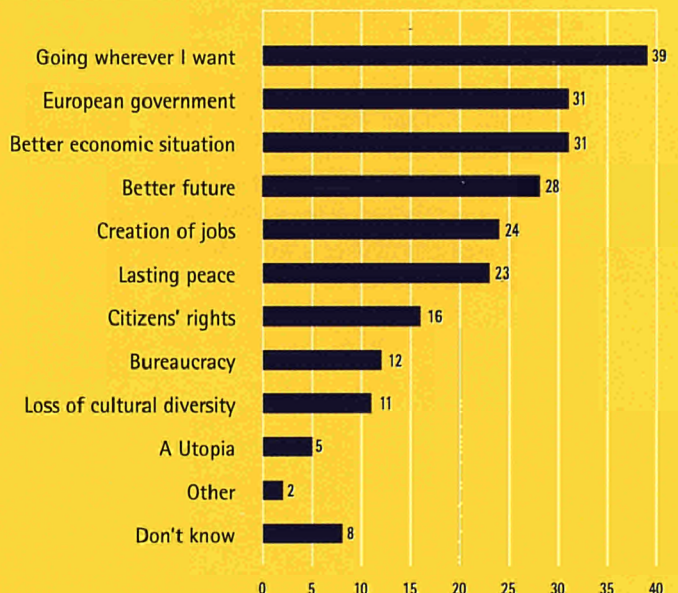
In 12 out of 15 EU countries, young people consider the education system to be the most important structure through which they participate in society. In Germany, Austria and Italy, family and friends rank first in terms of channels of participation. But what measures should be taken to improve youth participation in society? For 46% of those polled it is important that consultation of young people takes place before any public decision affecting them is made: 45% stressed the importance of information campaigns aimed specifically at young people, whilst the introduction of a compulsory civics course was mentioned by 37% of the sample. The poll also reveals that a lower age for voting or standing for election is only mentioned by 13% and 9% respectively of young Europeans. Nonetheless, young people between the ages of 15 and 17 (who are not yet entitled to vote) mention this measure far more often than the others (20% as against 10% of those over 18).

The most important channels and structures which help the young participate in society
(% EU 15)

■ First choice
■ Second choice



Meaning of the EU
(% EU 15)

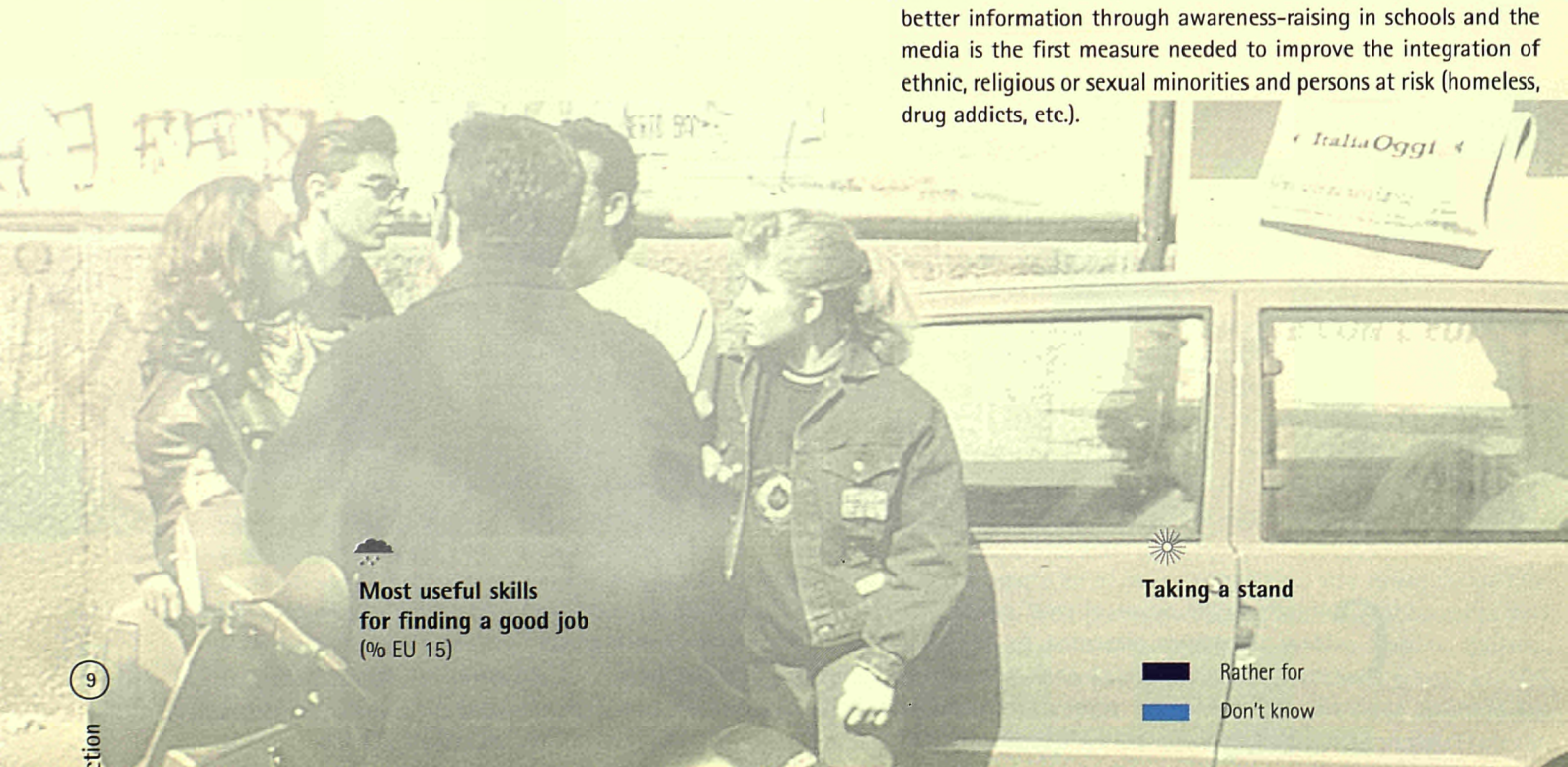


The hit parade of new skills

When young Europeans between the ages of 15 and 24 are asked which skills are most important for getting a good job, they answer, by order of importance: languages; information technology; and a good general education. This contrasts with the 1997 survey, which ranked a good general education first (43%), followed by languages (40%) and communication skills. Ranking fourth with 32% in 1997, IT skills have jumped 11 points in the poll in only four years. Moreover, if unemployed, most young people would accept any job, but with conditions. The two conditions cited most often are job stability (18%) and remuneration (18%). Not surprisingly, demands rise with the level of education.

The questions shown in this graph were only put to young people who had come of age, i.e. 6 888 people in the sample. While there is wide consensus on certain issues (close to nine out of ten approve of premarital sex), others are more controversial. Six out of ten respondents support homosexuals' right to marry (a 7-point increase over 1997), but only 41% approve of adoption of children by homosexuals (36% in 1997). The acceptance of euthanasia is up in most European countries (+5% for the Union as a whole), with young people in the Netherlands (where euthanasia is legal), Belgium (where parliament was debating the issue at the time of the survey) and Denmark most in favour of this practice (over 70%).

Opinions on the presence of foreigners are less clear-cut. As in 1997, nearly three out of ten young people (29%) say there are too many foreigners in their country, an equivalent number (27%) expressing the view that there are 'a lot but not too many'. The same proportion consider that foreigners residing in their country should have the same rights as nationals and 16% consider them full members of society. For nearly one in two young people (46%), better information through awareness-raising in schools and the media is the first measure needed to improve the integration of ethnic, religious or sexual minorities and persons at risk (homeless, drug addicts, etc.).

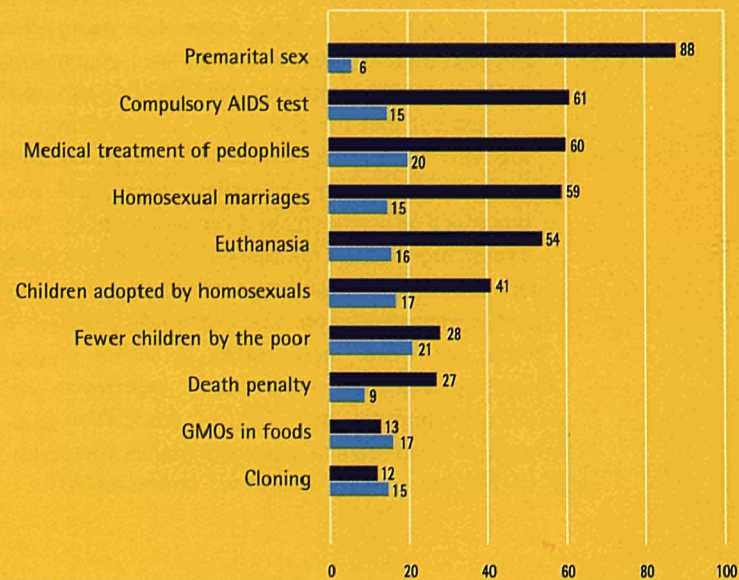
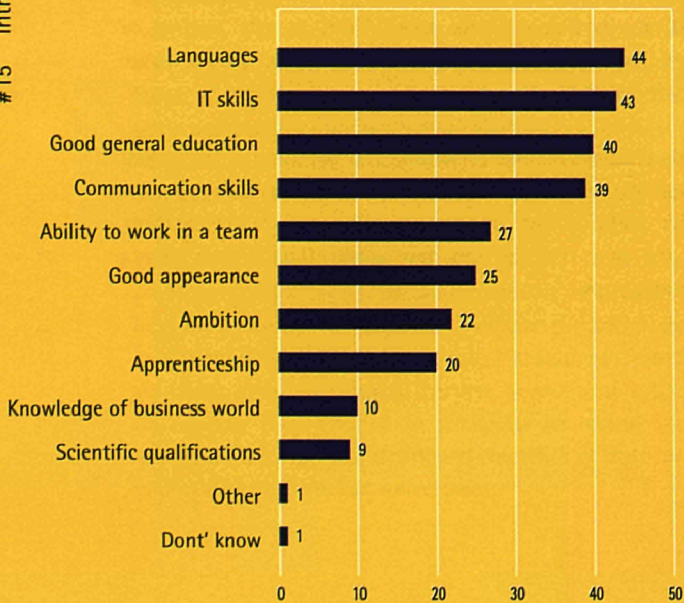


Most useful skills for finding a good job
(% EU 15)

Taking a stand

■ Rather for
■ Don't know

#15 Introduction 9





Participation:

ideas for moving forward




Contrary to the claims of older people or the ideas sometimes presented by the media, young Europeans insist that today's young people are not more passive than previous generations. Furthermore, this view was echoed by youth organisations and sociologists. The form this participation takes has evolved, however. Meeting last year in Paris, some 450 young delegates from 30 countries underlined young people's interest in participation. But they also pointed out that the channels of participation are still too scarce, inaccessible or purely symbolic. In many countries, legal and procedural difficulties make it complex to set up a youth organisation, for example. And given the lack of adequate networking, such organisations rarely exchange good practice. In contrast, young people participate more readily in school or university activities, where they experience democracy through the right of association, the right of representation, uncensored publications and so on. Along with traditional structures of

participation, such as unions and political parties, young people prefer more or less formal groups based on a local initiative, which are closer to home, more direct and sometimes more one-off.

For the young people consulted ahead of the White Paper, participation requires education and appropriate information, but also financial means and human values such as respect and non-discrimination. Participating is more than merely voting or supporting demonstrations: it is also a way of becoming more aware of the outside world.

By presenting proposals and priorities, and by using a structured work method involving the sharing of experience across Europe, the White Paper seeks to give impetus to more active participation, geared to the new realities and new ways of action of today's younger generations.



University, the laboratory of debate

It is during their university years that young people tend to make their most active commitment to society, organising conferences, taking part in decisions that affect their studies, their faculty, their university or even educational policy in their country...

The way students choose to participate varies greatly from one country to the next', explains Jacob Henricson, chairman of ESIB⁽¹⁾ – an organisation with over 40 student federation members in 31 European countries. 'Especially in the Scandinavian countries, regulations recognise the importance of student organisations and enable them to take part in many decisions concerning the university community. In other countries, students are very active even without having such guarantees. The most striking example is the Serb student movement *Otpor!* which created strong opposition to the Milosevic regime. Students have regularly reacted to condemn non-democratic regimes or conflicts, as they did during the war in Vietnam', adds the Swedish political science student, 'but, on the other hand, it is harder to measure their role in democratic states during periods of calm.'

Students organise conferences on a wide range of issues, and by announcing them in the press they regularly invite the public to take part in their *intra muros* debates. The university thus still plays the role of *agora*, or of a laboratory of ideas. But not all student associations defend positions outside the walls of the university. Here too, practices vary from one country to the next. 'In the Scandinavian countries', points out Jacob Henricson, 'associations focus in large measure on university life. But in other countries, some organisations are resolutely more political in their discourse. In Belgium, for example, students defended a position in the debate on immigration.'

Both within the university and outside, student participation presents multiple facets. This was borne out at a student conference held in November in Belgium. To debate the social aspects of the evolution of higher education, some 150 students from 37 European countries chose to include certain geopolitical subjects in their discussions. They decided in particular to review the long-term implications for the less developed countries of the drawing of their young elite by European universities.

Last year, the European Commission encouraged the creation of a liaison group of university student associations. The group already brings together three important organisations, namely ESIB (all of whose members are elected at local, national and European level), the AEGEE (European Students' Forum) and the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), made up of past or current participants in the Erasmus action of the Socrates programme. Other associations will soon be joining the liaison group, which has a voice at European level. The associations are also in charge of the 'Socrates on the Move' operation, whose 'ambassadors' promote European exchange programmes among less favoured students.

'Students have a lot of ideas and express a very strong demand for participation. There is simply a need to find a way at European level to make their participation effective', explains Massimo Gaudina, responsible for information and NGOs for university education at DG Education and Culture. 'The challenge consists of involving the greatest number of student associations and networks in debates on the future of Europe. Students already exert considerable influence on educational policies, but are less vocal on society's major issues, such as European construction or sustainable development. But it is crucial for them to participate in building the world that will be theirs tomorrow.'

Further information

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Within the context of the White Paper process, two months of intense debate and exchange enabled a group of academics from different regions of Europe, all specialised in research on young people, to compare ideas. And they did not hesitate to redefine concepts, starting with that of participation, the stakes of which are underlined by Icelandic sociologist and rapporteur Gestur Gudmundsson: 'A high percentage of young people have no ties with the working life of older generations and a good many older people are cultural "foreigners" when it comes to the universe of the younger generations.

attention focused on elections. At the start of the modern age, associations and organisations played a fundamental role in involving citizens and giving them influence. But the environment in which citizens are supposed to support democracy also changes as time goes by. In the 1960s and '70s for example, the fundamental challenge was industrial democracy, but in the '80s and '90s, emphasis shifted to individual and group codetermination in working life.'

The latest Eurobarometer survey on young Europeans (see page 7), conducted just a few months ago, highlights once again the low

young people attach increasing importance to taking charge of their future. This is what they are doing as individuals, as couples or as participants in changing social constellations.'

And these personal plans have a strong social component. Consequently, say the sociologists, 'the challenge of participation today consists of making the social elements and impact of personal plans more visible, of building bridges where individuality can develop in a social context. This challenge has to be taken up by education systems, youth associations, organisations, neighbourhood structures and

Other forms of engagement

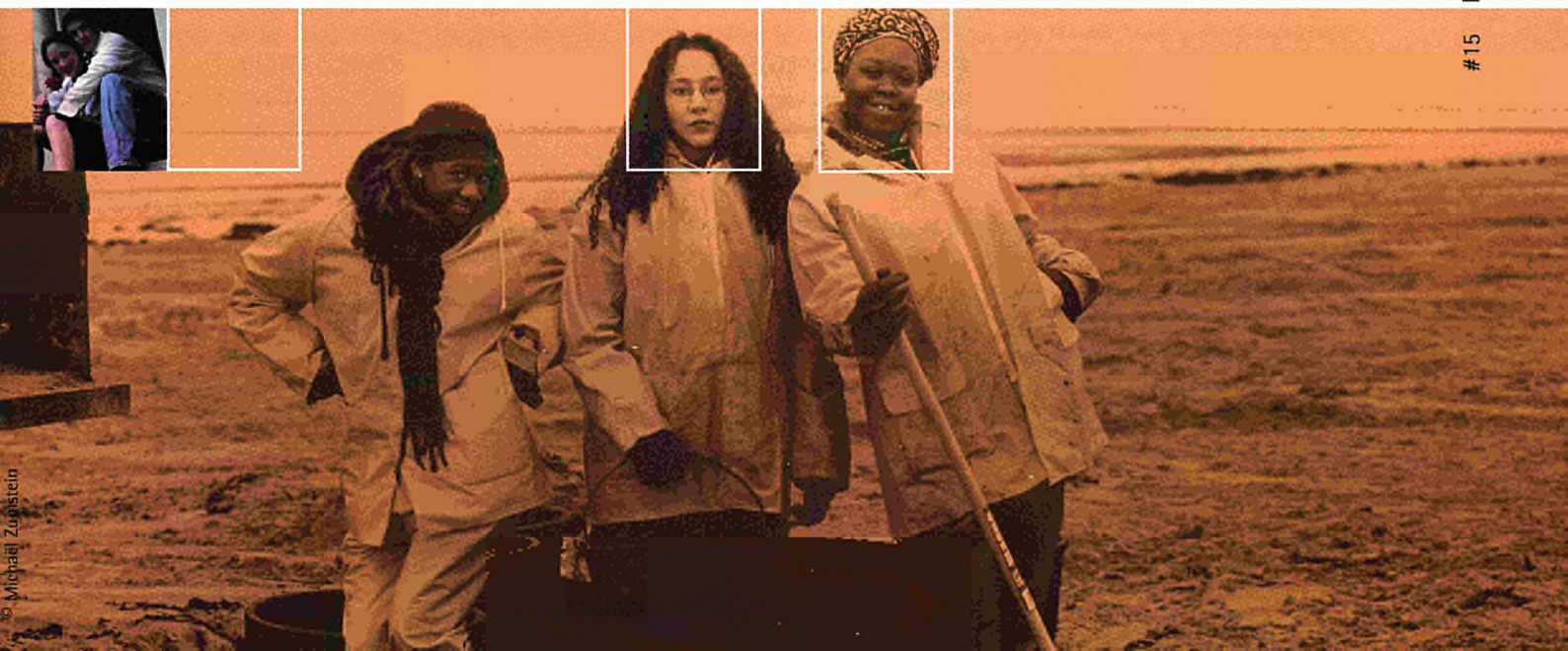
While the political commitment of young Europeans is on the decline, they are nevertheless taking firm control over their future as individuals, couples or participants in changing social constellations. As a result, some sociologists claim that the concept of participation needs to be made more inclusive.

'How are we going to convince young people to face up to the consequences of demographic evolution and to provide for the needs of the older generations? This is the general framework within which we have to study the question of participation.'

At the heart of the debate on European youth, the concept of participation is too often confined to outdated definitions, say academics. This debate, they continue, 'forgets that every generation has a new way of defining democracy'. A few examples: 'In the early days of parliamentary democracy,

level of involvement in associations. Half of today's youth belong to no associations or organisations. 'For several decades', confirms Gestur Gudmundsson for the expert group, 'Europe has been seeing a decline in the political engagement of young people, both in participation in elections and membership of political parties, and commitment to civil society organisations and associations! While young people 'are increasingly losing interest in these forms of representation', the researchers nonetheless do not take the view that they have become more passive. 'On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that

all the other spheres where the first experiences of individual development occur within a social framework! In this connection, the intercultural European context 'is an extremely important platform for exchange of good practice, which helps teach democracy through contact with diversity and difference', Gestur Gudmundsson points out.





Jobs for the young, the key to the future

Getting a job is a basic step towards becoming fully integrated in society. But today's young people are concerned not only with avoiding unemployment, but also with finding a job that offers some satisfaction. They realise that employment is a key factor of social cohesion and the basis for financing social and intergenerational solidarity. They would like to see stronger social legislation that takes their specific difficulties into account. Indeed, job-seeking conditions are growing more difficult, and working conditions and remuneration are deteriorating. Many young people hold precarious jobs. The demands of the labour market have multiplied in terms of skills (especially technological), experience, flexibility and mobility. The transition between school and work is filled with obstacles and young people are becoming more dependent economically. Discrimination on grounds of race, gender or age continues. Young people are critical of both public and private decision-makers for not doing enough to help young people become full members of society.

At national, regional and local levels, those who participated in the consultation submitted a number of proposals designed to: guarantee accessible information for young people on all issues related to work; build bridges between education, vocational training and employment; encourage entrepreneurship and facilitate the creation of jobs for and by young people; prevent social exclusion through neighbourhood services; guarantee viable social security and pension systems; promote the principle of 'affirmative discrimination' (particularly for the least favoured young people), and so on. At European level, youth employment must remain a major political objective. Proposals include stronger EU policies in this area and European programmes (notably using 'pathways to integration'), the consultation of civil society during development of the European employment strategy, and mutual recognition of diplomas and professional experience.



getting a foot in the door

There is not a shadow of a doubt: young people are particularly badly off on the labour market. In the European Union, the number of jobless is much higher among workers aged 15 to 24 than among their elders. This is in spite of the fact that the proportion of young people is declining, 15- to 24-year-olds now making up fewer than 15% of Europe's population. When they do work, young people are regularly steered into temporary or part-time jobs. And yet the problem is not one of skills, at a time when curricula are longer and education levels higher than in the past. But the situations vacant sections of European dailies repeat page after page what amounts to the squaring of the circle for many young school-leavers entering the job market: "three years' experience required". So to get a job, experience is essential, but experience cannot be had without getting a job.

Paradoxically, some sectors, notably those related to the new technologies or offering technical jobs, are experiencing a shortage of qualified workers that is dampening their prospects for growth. It is estimated that Europe will be short of between one and two million computer scientists in 2002. This gulf between supply and demand on the labour market is not systematically indicative of ill-adapted public education and training policies. The number of lay-offs in the promising 'new economy' also reveals flaws in the private sector's analysis of its own needs.

Unemployment in Europe: same problem, different remedies

While the problem of unemployment is primarily a matter for the national authorities, the Commission is nonetheless active at European level. As far as young people are concerned, the action priorities agreed by the EU and its Member States at the 'Jobs' summit in Luxembourg (November 1997) have been given effect in a European employment strategy. This instrument provides that, before reaching six months of unemployment, every young European will be offered a new start in the form of training or a job. The strategy also endeavours to develop entrepreneurship among young people and the capacity to adapt more quickly to the changing realities of the employment market. Different Community programmes and initiatives provide financial support for measures taken by the Member States.

Europe's tools for combating unemployment

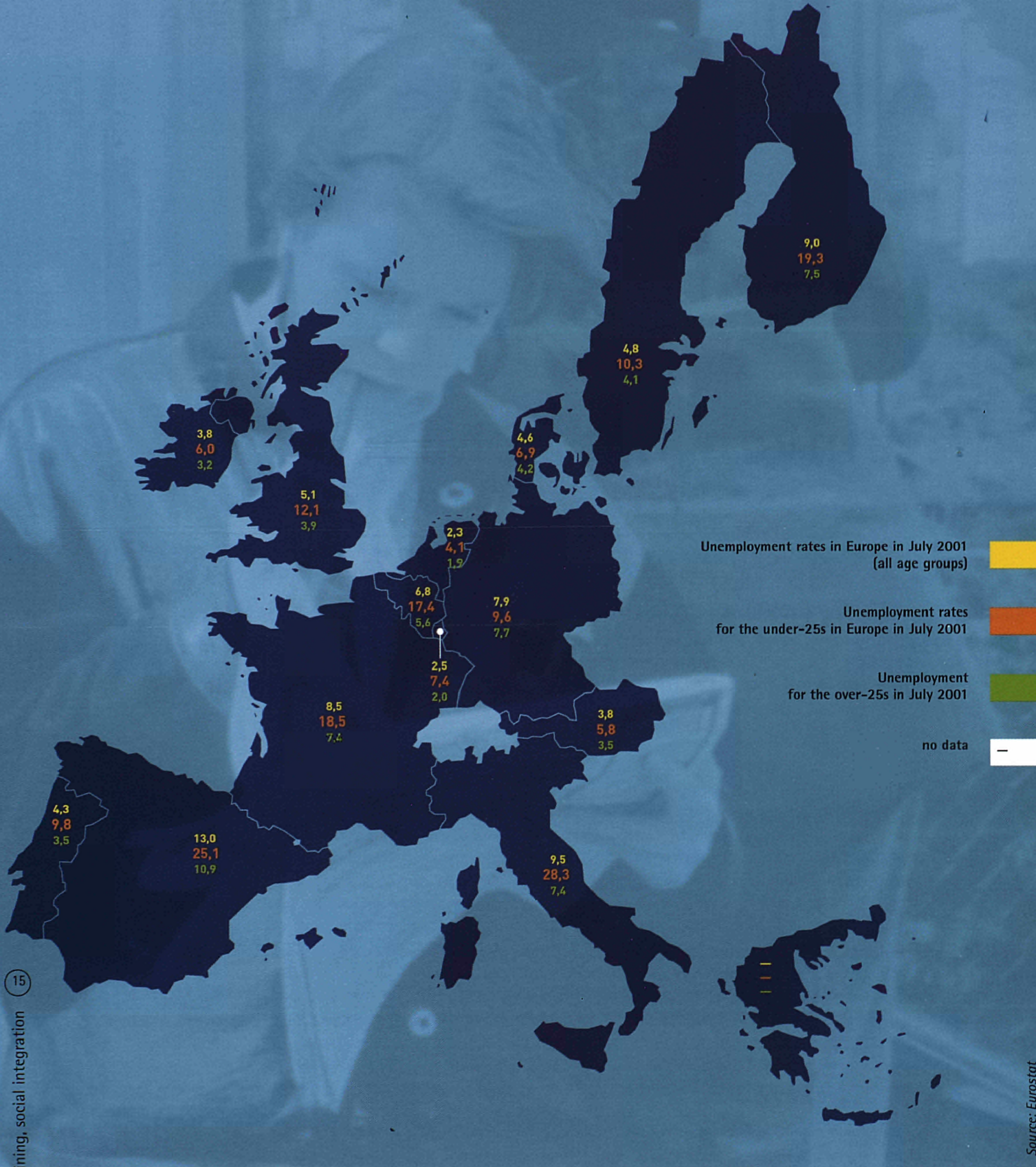
With the introduction of new Titles on employment and social affairs in the Treaties, the European Union can develop strategies and programmes in these areas, such as the European Employment Strategy, the Lisbon Strategy for modernisation of the European social model and the Social Agenda. The European Social Fund and the Leonardo da Vinci programme are two EU instruments on which such strategies can be based.

The European Social Fund (ESF)

The ESF is the leading financial instrument at the service of European employment policy. It provides financial aid for initiatives by the 15 EU countries aimed at improving workers' skills and creating a climate more favourable to employment. To date, the ESF has provided support for the training of some 30 million people, of whom 11 million are under 25 years of age. Taking into account the fact that some have trained in more than one area or course, it can be estimated that close to 20% of young Europeans have been trained thanks to the ESF.

Leonardo da Vinci

The Leonardo da Vinci programme supports transnational pilot projects, exchanges and placements, studies and analysis to improve and develop training practices. It promotes quality and innovation in national systems, giving particular emphasis to use of the new technologies. It also seeks to develop language skills among young Europeans.



Evolution of unemployment rates in Europe

Unemployment rates in Europe in July 2001 (all age groups)

As a general rule, the unemployment rate (1) in the EU as a whole has been declining since 1996. In July 2001, unemployment in the Union was 7.6%. It rose to 8.1% in July 2000. Over the past 12 months, the biggest relative declines were seen in the Netherlands (from 2.9% in June 2000 to 2.3% in June 2001), Sweden (from 5.8% to 4.8%) and France (from 9.4% to 8.5%). Eurostat estimates that in July 2001, 11.3 million men and women were unemployed in the European Union.

Unemployment rates for the under-25s in Europe in July 2001

In July 2001, unemployment among the under-25s was 16.4% in the euro area and 15.1% in the EU-15. A year earlier, it was 17.0% and 16.1% respectively during the same period. In July 2001, it ranged from under 6% in the Netherlands (in June) and Austria to a little over 25% in Spain and over 28% in Italy (in April).

Unemployment for the over-25s in July 2001

Nearly half of the jobless 25 years of age and older are looking for their first job.

(1) According to the criteria determined by the International Labour Office (ILO), unemployed persons are those age 15 or over: without a job, available to start working within two weeks, having actively looked for a job for the previous four weeks.

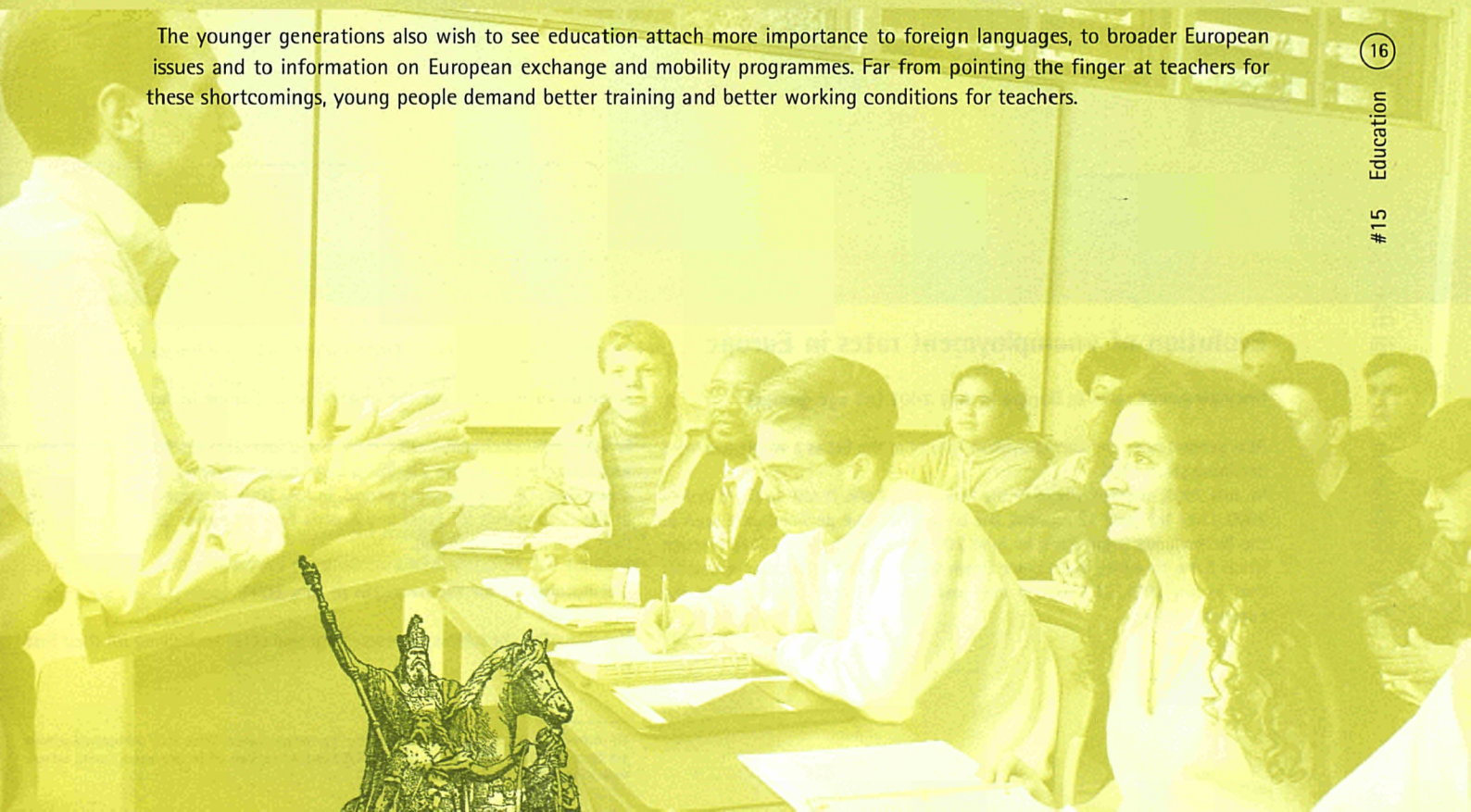


Reinventing school

Education is one of the uppermost concerns of young people. And most of them agree that education needs to be better adapted to the realities of the 21st century, more in line with the constraints of working life, more democratic, more open and better equipped with modern communication tools.

These concerns are at the heart of the White Paper, which also – at the request of young people themselves – highlights the crucial role of informal education and proposes an increase in student exchange possibilities and support for youth-led initiatives, improvements to the European Voluntary Service and greater recognition of continuing training. Young people advance the need for lifelong learning, which would improve knowledge and skills, encourage personal fulfilment, active citizenship and employability. As learning activities can take place in a wide range of situations, particularly in the context of work, complementarity between formal and informal learning is stressed. Special attention is granted to teaching approaches based on the individual and on equal access.

The younger generations also wish to see education attach more importance to foreign languages, to broader European issues and to information on European exchange and mobility programmes. Far from pointing the finger at teachers for these shortcomings, young people demand better training and better working conditions for teachers.





'Many of us are demanding that education become more democratic, more accessible to the less favoured, more respectful of minorities...'

▶ Hank, 18, Dutch.



'We think it's essential to have a system of recognition of informal learning...'

▶ Ellen, Danish.



'...this was the first time we've ever been really involved in a debate.'

▶ Josephine, 18, Irish.



'Everyone says that Internet is the future. So why are our schools so poorly equipped?'

▶ Sonia, Italian student.

In their own words...

During the different phases of the White Paper consultation, young people were asked to express their views on education, the key to their future. The following are selected passages from the comments and observations of the 15- to 25-year-olds at the closing conference held in Umeå, Sweden, on 16 and 17 March last.

Adults often criticise us for not being interested in Europe. But I ask them, "Are we young people really included in discussions on the future of the European Union?" exclaims Josephine, 18, from Ireland. 'That's why I came to Umeå. Not only because this is a White Paper that is first and foremost about us, but also because this was the first time we've ever been really involved in a debate.' The tone is set. Young people did not turn a deaf ear to the European Commission's invitation to express their ideas on the future, theirs and that of the EU.

'Everyone recognises that globalisation is increasing competition between businesses. But it is also increasing competition between future workers. So our education has to be improved. Why are schools and universities not being given more resources? Everyone says that Internet is the future. So why are our schools so poorly equipped?' asks Sonia, an Italian student. She decided to take advantage of the opportunity offered in Umeå to present her demands and those of other European students. She also stressed the need for improved language courses and access to European exchanges, better recognition of diplomas and programmes combining work and studies to facilitate the transition between the two.

Hank, aged 18, from the Netherlands, stressed the social aspect. 'I had the chance to say what I thought and, for once, I had the

feeling that people really listened. Many of us are demanding that education become more democratic, more accessible to the less favoured, more respectful of minorities and specific national, philosophical or sexual characteristics. We also think it would be a good idea to draw up a European Student Charter.'

Also pleased to have participated in the Umeå conference, Ellen, from Denmark, supports the idea of complementarity between formal and informal education recognised in the White Paper. 'We discussed this idea a great deal. Traditional education is not the only way to learn. We think it's essential to have a system of recognition of informal learning, such as youth exchanges, experience acquired in youth organisations, continuing training, extracurricular language courses and even internships in businesses.'

And as Hank puts it: 'Umeå was more than intensive discussions on the future of education in Europe and on the contribution we young people hope to have made to the famous White Paper. Umeå was above all a concrete demonstration of the added value of European exchange on a question that concerns us all.'

17

Education
#15



Alternative teaching for a different community

The education of less-favoured populations is one of the European Union's priorities, as witnessed in the White Paper on Youth and the European Commission's Youth programme. In O Porriño, situated in southern Galicia (Spain), a school is implementing a project designed to meet the needs of travellers. The experience could serve as a model for all of Europe.

O Porriño, situated between Vigo and the northern border of Portugal. Of the town's 15 000 inhabitants, some 140, mostly gypsies, belong to the community of 'travellers'. Around 40 are of school age. The biggest problem in providing education for such communities is absenteeism. Periods of festivals and fairs, farm work... there are countless occasions to miss school, especially once spring has arrived.

The curriculum is another obstacle as the one developed by the Ministry of Education is made to measure for the children of a settled population, accustomed to attending school regularly. Young travellers get nothing out of it, especially because they are often lagging behind.

Tools adapted to the needs of travellers

To meet the challenge of educating travellers, seven institutions (1) joined forces, under the initiative of Instituto Ribeira de Louro, a secondary school in O Porriño. The resulting project is entitled 'New teaching tools for itinerant populations'. Fifty percent part-financed (out of a total budget of € 150 000) by the Commission's Socrates programme, Comenius action, the project is aimed at 'adapting teaching to the interests and needs of the traveller community', explains project coordinator Amador Ordoñez Puime. 'We develop teaching material capable of motivating students with material with which they can identify. The material must also enable each pupil to work at his or her own pace. The use of computers and multimedia tools has a dual advantage: it enables these young people to gain access to the information society and facilitates learning. As Amador Ordoñez observes, 'all children like to work and play with computers.'

Several teaching tools will be developed and become fully operational in August 2003. The first stage is the preparation of CD-ROMs for learning Spanish and maths. They will provide exercises for pupils in reading, writing, vocabulary, arithmetic and metric calculation. 'We emphasise the subjects essential to everyday life', explains the project coordinator. 'This is why we have decided to overlook subjects like English and history, which do not interest them in the least.' But the adaptation of material is not limited simply to the choice of subjects to be taught. It also concerns content. 'The exercises contain references to their traditions, culture and history. We have chosen themes that reflect their social reality and are therefore much more meaningful to them.' In parallel with multimedia tools, printed lessons and educational games will enable young travellers to learn both in class and during periods of absence from school.

A European-scale project

The development of such material would be impossible without sufficient knowledge of the traditions and customs of travellers. The project promoters were able to count on the support of certain adults from the O Porriño community, who contributed to the development of content. For Luis Machado, a member of this community, 'the most interesting materials are on the mechanics and welding trades, because they are useful' (2). The adult gypsy population is not generally very keen on training programmes, but it recognises that maths are important and wants its children to learn to read and write.

(1) In addition to Ribeira de Louro Institute, the project includes: the Antonio Palacios nursery and primary school in O Porriño (whose participation enables the project to cover all school levels); the School Cluster Electroprecizia Salce and District School Inspectorate of Brasov, Romania; the Lisbon Diocesan Secretariat, the Leeds Education Special Service and Wrexham County Borough Council in the United Kingdom.

(2) These subjects are expected to be covered in phase two of the project.



A marginal community with a variety of needs

Moreover, the participation of the travellers will not be limited to developing content. They will also be involved in training and awareness raising for teachers, to be organised throughout Spain by experienced professionals. The objective of the training sessions will be to explain to teachers the needs of traveller populations, specifically in terms of teaching.

The 'New teaching tools for itinerant populations' project is the result of a real European partnership. While the town of O Porriño is playing a pioneering role, the other schools and education bodies involved in the project – from Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom – are making contributions based on relations with the traveller communities of their regions. The partners meet to share experiences. The final goal is to develop material that is applicable, with the adaptations needed to respond to local situations, to all traveller communities in Europe.

The travellers of O Porriño, 140-strong, work mostly in fairs and as itinerant farm labourers in northern Spain and Portugal. They are accustomed to travelling and would not change their way of life for anything. 'When I've left this earth, my children will take over the family business in fairs, no doubt about it', asserts Luis Machado, a member of the community.

The conditions in which travellers live are precarious. Many of them suffer from problems caused by the lack of a balanced diet. Diabetes and cholesterol are frequent among children. Most live in the vehicles that serve as their workplace, run-down trucks or vans. Some have built a shanty town with salvaged materials, 'to have a shelter'. The rural area where they live has no running water or sewerage system. Nor is it very accessible.

A striking picture that the 'New teaching tools for itinerant populations' project has no ambition of completely changing. 'It is not the intention of this project to change the way they live', notes Amador Ordoñez. 'It is simply meant to give them a basic education that can help them to fend for themselves more easily in today's society.'



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A Europe of welfare, personal autonomy and values

The consultations demonstrated that, for young Europeans, welfare is synonymous with personal autonomy. Young people require ways of developing this autonomy: a job, a decent salary and affordable housing. For young people between the ages of 15 and 25, welfare can only be understood in reference to the society in which they live. Issues such as the environment, immigration, public health, drugs, sexuality and security directly influence their perceptions of their personal situation. Individual welfare depends on collective welfare.

For young people, collective welfare rests on three fundamental principles: non-discrimination, equal opportunity and protection of diversity. Furthermore, these principles must apply whatever means are used to improve the collective welfare: information on treatment for drug addiction, legislation on discrimination on grounds of sex, housing assistance, promotion of personal autonomy and so on.

Based on these expectations, the White Paper discerns two areas of interest for the European Union: establishing common definitions (of social security, autonomy, combating discrimination and so on) and giving more weight to young people's specific needs in various policies and programmes, notably by improving access for all young people to existing programmes.

As the consultation revealed, Europe is at the heart of the concerns of 15- to 25-year-olds, even if this Europe is not limited to the frontiers of the Union or to a wide free-trade area. It is the European ideal that counts, an ideal founded on the values of peace, prosperity and democracy. To strengthen a Europe of solidarity and diversity, young people recognise the virtues of actions encouraging mobility and volunteering. The White Paper relays their demands: mobility for all and the recognition and validation of volunteering as a means of participating in society and as a genuine educational or even professional experience. They expect the European Union to recognise the value of this approach.

Experiencing Europe through immersion in another culture

The life-changing experience of mobility is one of the best things Europe has to offer, say young people. The following are excerpts from letters written by two young people who spent several months in another country through Erasmus and the European Voluntary Service.

'I would never have discovered that we are alike.'

**Gun Elise Maitland,
21,
from Norway,**

had been a volunteer worker in a small village in Alentejo, Portugal for seven months when she wrote this letter.

Had it not been for my time in Messejana, here in Alentejo, I would never have discovered that we are alike. I wouldn't know how people live in Portugal and I wouldn't be able to compare, to see what is different and what is similar. I wouldn't have learned Portuguese and I wouldn't be tasting all this good cooking. [...] I would never have sat in the park with the 'old folk' who tell me their life history, and I wouldn't have learned about the stars in a workshop with young people. [...] I wouldn't have learned to see myself differently and I wouldn't know that I am capable of living without my friends and family around me. I wouldn't speak so easily to people I don't know. [...] I would never have met volunteers from all over Europe and I wouldn't be working with a team of Portuguese villagers. I wouldn't have lived with a French volunteer and learned to understand her culture. [...] I would never have gone to Evora, Odivelas, Tavira, Santiago, Beja, Aljustrel, Monsaraz, Castro Verde... And I wouldn't have had the experience of knowing what it means to live in a lovely little village and to be part of its everyday life!

The young Norwegian adds that she would never have experienced all that had she stayed at home, in her country, her town, watching television, always going to the same places and doing the same things. Of course, she could have spent two weeks in Portugal on holiday, but she would have been just another tourist, someone missing a lot, not seeing the people living their lives.

After living seven months in my village, I have the feeling that my life has been so enriched. Every day I learn something that will be useful to me later in life. [...] But I'm not saying everything is perfect! There are tedious days, sad days, days when I'm so lonely! But that could happen in Norway or in China. [...] In any case, I know that I'll be going back to Norway with tremendous experience and that I'll see life very differently!

'With time, I've grown used to Swedish customs.'

Carmen Strigel, a German student, spent time in Sweden under the Erasmus action of the Socrates programme.

I had a problem: I didn't speak a word of Swedish. I was so relieved to discover that most people in Sweden speak English. As a result, I saw this experience as an opportunity to learn a new language and to learn about another culture at the same time. But at the start it was very hard to live in a country where you can't read any signs, timetables or newspapers, to say nothing of not being able to communicate with the people around you, which can be more serious.

Fitting in with the other students is probably the hardest part of living abroad, even if a 'mentor' appointed for each of us helps us take the first steps. They organise outings, language courses and social and cultural events. With time, I've grown used to Swedish customs, like taking off your shoes when you enter a house or apartment, queuing up at automatic teller machines or seeing people mow their lawns three times a week! Or seeing students partying intensely on weekends! [...] And even if people are very friendly and cooperative, it is still really hard to get to know the Swedes and to make friends. 'Keeping a Scandinavian distance' is not just a saying, it's really the way most of them behave! [...] After seven or eight months, I was much better able to measure the differences between us. For example, Swedish students seem to be much more dependent on their system. They receive a lot of financial aid and so very few of them work while attending university, which is in stark contrast with almost all German students, who work throughout their university years. So the Swedes seem somewhat removed from the reality of having to earn every penny to eat, drink, travel and so on.

But three months later, Carmen was already managing to follow basic conversations and to read and understand most publications.

Today, three years after this experience, Carmen Strigel acknowledges that her stay in Sweden really changed her life.

I stayed more than 14 months in all, studying and working at the university and at SVT [Swedish television, Ed.]. I now speak Swedish fluently, which was one of my objectives. [...] But, apart from that, I was so enthusiastic over the idea of the Erasmus Student Network that I founded a section in my own university as soon as I came back to Germany. I was appointed to head the international office and then became a member of the network's European board, as the national representative for Germany. And from there I was elected a member of the Socrates Programme Steering Group with the start-up of the second project in March 2000.

The technical skills required of volunteers for Bruges 2002 break down as follows:

- 2 light technicians
- 2 sound technicians
- 4 stage technicians
- 1 concert manager
- 2 production assistants for touring companies
- 2 communication and promotion assistants
- 7 production assistants to work on the general organisation of Bruges 2002

Twenty volunteers for a cultural capital

In 2002, Bruges will be one of Europe's cultural capitals. Twenty young people from every corner of Europe, Member States and applicant countries alike, will work as volunteers to help organise this large-scale event.

Bruges 2002, cultural capital of Europe. Hundreds of prestigious events are scheduled throughout the year... Hundreds of thousands of visitors are expected... Another feather in the cap of a city already hugely appreciated, with a worldwide reputation as the 'Venice of the North'.

At the heart of all this activity, 20 young Europeans (1) are lending a hand. 'They will be asked to perform a lot of different tasks', explains Leen Laconte, coordinator of the European Voluntary Service project for Bruges 2002, 'such as helping to organise press conferences, exhibitions and presentations. And they will learn to manage groups of spectators or visitors, under the supervision of experienced people. So they will develop new technical, organisational, interpersonal and intercultural skills.'

In addition to their technical qualifications (see above), the volunteers selected for Bruges 2002 had to meet the following conditions: aged 18 to 25, completion of secondary school, basic oral skills in English or French, some experience in the field of

culture, motivated by intercultural exchanges and volunteering, and willing to work on weekends and holidays.

For its part, the European Union's Youth programme, managed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture, will pay most of the volunteers' expenses (return air ticket, housing, food, language courses, local transport) throughout the one-year service. Only leisure expenses are not covered. The total budget for the action amounts to € 321 730.

A chance to acquire international experience

'This is an excellent chance to acquire international experience. I have already had the opportunity to help organise events in Poland, but never in another country. And I'll also have a chance to learn more about Bruges and Belgium', notes Magdalena Polaczyk, one of the 20 volunteers selected. The 23-year-old economics student at Poznan University is an experienced volunteer. 'I did voluntary work at school and

university, even if it was not recognised as such. I participated in different activities on a voluntary basis.'

Magdalena put her enthusiasm for intercultural exchanges to work straight away. 'I sent an e-mail to the other volunteers. Some answered and we are staying in contact', she explains. She does not yet know what she will be doing in Bruges. 'Duties will be assigned after a training period, during which our skills will be evaluated. That's when we'll really get to work organising Bruges 2002.'

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(1) Volunteers are from the following countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.



Our new look online
The Directorate-General for Education and Culture is remodelling its home page to reflect the EU Europa site more closely.

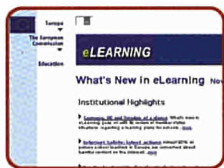
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm



Education and Culture at a glance

The bimonthly, online newsletter *Education and Culture at a glance* provides an overview of policy developments, programme implementation, key events and publications in all the areas of responsibility of the DG Education and Culture.

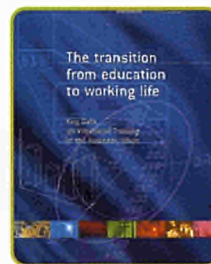
Available in English, French and German at the following address:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/publ/news/03/newsletter_en.htm



What's new in eLearning?

The monthly newsletter *What's New in eLearning* contains useful information on the European Union's e-learning initiatives. It is targeted at key players in the sector: decision-makers, company directors, and education and training officials.

Available in English on:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/elearning/what.htm>



The transition to working life

Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) recently put out a study on *The Transition from School to Working Life* in its series "Key Data on Vocational Training in the European Union", catalogue number TI-32-00-984-EN-C.

This publication follows an initial study entitled *Young People's Training*, published in 1999, catalogue number C2-19-98-EN-C.

The studies are available in English, French and German from the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities
(see: <http://eur-op.eu.int/general/en/s-ad.htm>).