



Research Report

ESNsurvey 2019

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND STUDENT EXCHANGE IN LIGHT OF THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

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ESNsurvey 2019: Active citizenship and student exchange in light of the European elections

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PREFACE

With the European Elections behind us, where the turnout of young voters increased to 42%, the Erasmus Student Network is releasing a Europe-wide survey to measure the impact of Erasmus+ and other exchange programmes on the civil, social and political participation of young people in Europe.

For more than 32 years, the Erasmus+ Programme has created an “Erasmus Generation” with more than 5,000,000 higher education students who had the opportunity not only to study abroad but also to participate in the social life of another country and meet people from different cultural backgrounds.

At a time when the European project is increasingly questioned and part of the European population struggles to understand the added-value of the European Union, it is important to study how current and recent alumni of the Erasmus+ Programme, a flagship initiative of the EU, assess the European project.

The Erasmus Student Network, having been working for 30 years alongside with the Erasmus+ Programme, understands the transformative impact of the programme on young people as well as its important role in building a better Europe.

The European Elections that took place in May 2019 granted the perfect background for this study. It is relevant to understand the attitudes and behaviors of the European youth - and in particular the Erasmus Generation - towards this event. I am very confident that the results will be very useful for a variety of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

This research is a result of the great effort put forward by our 14,500 volunteers which are part of our 530 local associations operating in 40 countries across Europe.

I would like to thank the ESNsurvey team who, throughout the year, voluntarily carried out the biggest student-based research project in Europe. Without them, this survey and its crucial findings would not be possible.

Kostis Giannidis
President of the Erasmus Student Network 2019-2020

KEY FINDINGS

Every four in ten respondents do not know what civil participation is

Figure 17, page 27

According to the results of our questionnaire, 41.69% of respondents do not know what the term “civil participation” means. This apparent lack of knowledge translates into low rates of respondents who have expressed their views on public issues with their elected representatives and who have taken part in public debates, both forms of civil participation. These numbers are lower than the European average shown in “Flash Eurobarometer 373”.

Online participation is more prevalent among young people

Table 1, page 29

A total of 66.67% of women and 64.21% of men signed a petition (on paper or online). At the European level, according to the “Flash Eurobarometer 373”, only 34% of the respondents (the highest number in that study) had signed petitions. Additionally, 35.02% of respondents of our survey say that they have expressed their views on public issues on the internet or in social media, a number higher than the Eurobarometer’s 28%. These numbers contrast with lower rates of offline participation as illustrated by the only 7.57% who have expressed their views on public issues with their elected representatives at the local or regional level, a much lower number than the European average of 24%. This figure gets worse as the level gets higher with only 1.55% and 0.81% expressing their views in public with their elected representatives at the national and European levels respectively, with the latter number being lower than the European average of 4%.

Students do not feel very informed about the work of civil society organisations on the European level

Figure 25, page 35

While 35.34% of the respondents feel quite informed about the work of civil society at the local level and 37.80% feel quite informed about it at the national level, only 5.37% feel the same at the European level. Paradoxically, 67.56% agree or strongly agree that civil society organisations have the capacity to influence decision-making at the European level. This is a more

optimistic perspective than the European average of 53% totally agreeing, according to the “Flash Eurobarometer 373”.

Students with an exchange experience are far more engaged in civil society organisations than the average European youth

Figure 29, page 39

While, according to the “Flash Eurobarometer 455”, 47% of the average European youth is not a member of any civil society organisation, this number is reduced to 19% in the population with an exchange experience. The respondents of our survey are also twice as likely to be engaged in a cultural or human rights organisation and three times more likely to be engaged in organisations active in environmental issues when compared to the average European youth. Furthermore, when examining the involvement of the respondents in any organised volunteer activity, results show that 52.70% of those who have participated in student exchange are volunteers. This result is only 30.72% for those who never went on exchange.

30% of respondents feel very or quite informed about the European Parliament’s work

Figure 30, page 42

When asked how informed they feel about the European Parliament’s functions and responsibilities, about one third of respondents considered to be very or quite informed about the work of this institution. This number is in line with the European average.

Students who are on exchange vote less

Figure 33 and Table 4, pages 46 and 48

Students on exchange indicate procedural barriers as the main reasons for not voting in the 2019 European elections. Even though 70.54% intend to vote in the elections of 2024, only 51.19% expected to do it in 2019. This resonates with data from “Eurobarometer 89.2”, where being busy and away from home were presented as the main reasons why people between 15 to 39 years old were not able to vote in local, national and European elections. Today, there are still several EU countries¹ that do not make it possible

¹ It was not possible for citizens of Czech Republic, Ireland, Malta and Slovakia to vote from abroad in European elections 2019, according to europeanconstitution.eu.

at all for their citizens to vote in the European elections while abroad. In some countries the procedures are also not clear or dependent on various constraints. Respondents themselves are not well-informed on how to vote while living abroad since only one out of five stated they were very informed on this issue.

Erasmus+ Alumni have higher interest and are more likely to vote in European elections than the European average

Page 48

Students who participated in an EU-funded exchange programme (Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes) give higher importance to the European elections (60.69%), had higher intention of voting in the European elections 2019 (76.18%) and had a higher election turnout (71.20%) when compared to the European average of the younger population (18-39), as presented by Eurobarometer surveys².

Women are twice less likely to run as candidates in elections

Figure 38, page 51

The percentage of female participants between 18 and 35 years old who would consider running for elections varies between 5% and 8% at the local, regional, national and European levels. For men, this percentage varies between 12% and 16%. Furthermore, the respondents consider it more attractive to run for local and European elections than for regional or national.

EU students with an exchange experience wish for more rights as EU citizens and for more European civic education in schools

Table 5, page 58

On the question “Which of the following things would do most to strengthen your feeling of being a European citizen?”, 58.37% of our respondents chose “Being able to live anywhere in the EU after you retire and draw your pension there directly” and 55.55% chose “A European social welfare system harmonised between the member states (health, pensions, etc.)”. This prioritisation is similar to that of average Europeans, according to

² Eurobarometer 89.2 “Democracy on the move - European elections: One year to go” (2018) and “First results of the European Parliament post-electoral survey” (2019).

“Eurobarometer 79.5”. However, while 46.64% of our respondents would also like to have “European civic education classes starting in primary school”, this is only true for 20% of average Europeans.

INTRODUCTION

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is the biggest inter-disciplinary European student organisation in the field of student mobility. ESN interacts with several institutions and stakeholders (European Commission, European Parliament, other youth associations, commercial partners, etc.), both at the European and national level. In order to strengthen the way ESN advocates, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the group of young people we represent: students who are taking or have taken part in an exchange programme or are planning to do so. All in all, when ESN speaks on behalf of the Erasmus Generation showing accurate data on the profile of the students, how they are impacted by the Erasmus+ Programme and what their challenges are, claims become more tangible for decision-makers and education policies are improved.

But, if this rationale to develop such a research was not enough, this year we had an additional reason to do so. The European Elections of May 2019 granted the perfect background to study and understand the attitudes and behaviours of the European youth - and in particular the Erasmus generation - towards this event.

The study was done under the brand “ESNsurvey” which is the largest European-wide research programme run by students covering different topics related to academic mobility and education. Given the importance of the European elections, it is not a coincidence that this year’s study has as its title “Active citizenship and student exchange in light of the European elections”.

Citizenship is a concept in constant evolution, and it can be understood differently in many societies. Following the definition from the Council of Europe, participation and active citizenship is about “having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society”³. Interestingly, in 2015, 11.9% of the adult population in the European Union (EU) said they were active citizens, meaning that they had attended meetings, signed petitions, or otherwise participated in activities related to political groups, associations or parties⁴. Our interest in the Erasmus Generation led us to explore

3 Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.

4 Eurostat: Participation in formal or informal voluntary activities or active citizenship by sex, age and educational attainment level.

this concept from the perspective of mobile and non-mobile students to understand if there is any relationship between this experience and their understanding of their rights and duties as citizens. This exercise was done through two questionnaires to gather the needed data and to provide to you, in this final research report, the results of the ESNsurvey 2019.

Robert Banet
ESNsurvey 2019 Coordinator

METHODOLOGY

The ESNsurvey 2019 Project

The ESNsurvey is a Europe-wide research project covering different topics concerning student mobility and higher education. It is the largest project of its kind carried out solely by volunteers. Every edition since the establishment of the project in 2005, the different ESNsurvey teams have developed an online questionnaire and disseminated it among students at European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to collect information on their study abroad experience and related themes. How have the lives of these students changed after their exchanges? What is the impact of the Erasmus+ Programme on students who have had the opportunity to meet new cultures, new friends, and live in an international environment through the Programme? With these studies we aim at understanding the difference between these students and those who have never had the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus+ or other exchange programmes.

Many associations, students, teachers, academics and various European institutions collaborate with ESN on this project. Throughout the 14 years of its existence, over 170,000 responses have been collected, with an average of 14,000 answers per edition. These are analysed and compiled in an annual publication called the ESNsurvey Report which is shared with the main stakeholders in higher education and student mobility programmes: the European Commission, National Agencies of the Erasmus+ Programme, HEIs and many other associations dealing with higher education and student mobility. There are two key aims of the report: firstly, to explore current issues connected to academic and non-academic mobility and education, and secondly, to get better insight into student issues in order to represent their real needs⁵.

The topic of the ESNsurvey 2019 is “Active citizenship and student exchange in light of the European elections”. Our research focused on the impact of the study abroad experience on the participation of international students in society, and their sense of citizenship in political, civil and social participation. Researchers and scientists have been interested in citizenship for a long time now. In the beginning, being a citizen meant having a political membership (Habermas, cited in European Youth Forum, 2016⁶). Later, in the mid-twentieth century, T. H. Marshall presented a more complex

5 More information can be found at esn.org/ESNsurvey.

6 European Youth Forum. (2016). Youth organisations contribution to citizenship education. Brussels: Belgium.

concept. It presented citizenship as a combination of the different aspects (civil, political and social) that were developed as a result of the evolving socio-political context. Civil, political and social citizenship refer to the recognition of civil, political and social rights respectively. Nowadays, we can even talk about ecological or cultural citizenship, notions that derive from the ever-changing perception of citizenship (ibid.)

Citizenship is not something passive though; active participation is essential. Marshall's multifaceted vision allows us to imagine citizens who participate actively in civil activities, such as signing petitions and protesting, political activities, such as voting in elections, and social activities, such as volunteering.

For this survey, the team drew inspiration not only from academic sources, mostly from Marshall, but from institutional sources as well, such as the European Parliament's Eurobarometers, the Erasmus Impact Study (EIS) and other ESNsurvey reports. For example, when the European Parliament questions EU citizens about their perception of the European citizenship it refers to identifying as European citizens and how this feeling of belonging is developed. All the aforementioned elements were combined in order to create a survey that covers as many aspects of citizenship possible.

ESN has been interested in aspects of citizenship before. The 2014 project Erasmus Voting Assessment (EVA), funded by the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme, studied the voting behaviour of Erasmus students and their feelings towards the EU for the occasion of the 2014 European Parliament elections. This year's survey builds on this project and enlarges its scope by addressing the concept of citizenship as a whole in its civil, political and social dimensions. In this research report references to other publications will be made, such as Marshall, T. H. *Citizenship and Social Class*, Eurobarometers, Erasmus Voting Assessment (EVA), Erasmus Impact Study (EIS), or other ESNsurvey reports.

The ESNsurvey 2019 is also a timely study which aims at contributing to the broader understanding of the relationship between the European Union and its citizens in a year of important elections for the European Parliament. The two Erasmus Impact Studies (2014 and 2019) stress that Erasmus+ participants feel more European than other citizens and are more protective of the European project. However, how does that translate into votes and the general perception of the EU and its institutions? By using some of the same questions from EVA and several Eurobarometer surveys, the ESNsurvey 2019 adopts a comparative perspective in relation to the general European

population and the evolution of the Erasmus student population. Hence, this study aimed at answering the following question:

To what extent does the experience in Erasmus+ and other student exchange programmes determine the students' active participation (civil, political, social) in society?

Essentially, we focused on understanding if going abroad makes students more engaged on a political, civil, and social level. What are the trends of active citizenship gained through the study abroad experience? Does this have an impact on their opinion on the European Union as the entity that finances the Erasmus+ Programme? And on their voting behaviour? How do these elements interact with each other? These are the main questions we aim at addressing in this study.

Data collection and analysis

ESNsurvey 2019 is a quantitative, cross-sectional, deductive research. The applied research method was based on an online questionnaire executed in two parts. The first online questionnaire, hereinafter the **main questionnaire**, was launched on 4th March 2019 and, after extending the deadline by three weeks, was officially closed on 19th of May 2019. In order to increase dissemination among international students, the role of ESN members and, specifically, ESN sections, was essential. The link was made available at esn.org/survey2019.

Shortly after, the European elections took place between the 23rd and 26th of May 2019. Afterwards, a short **follow-up questionnaire** was sent directly to the respondents of the main questionnaire who provided such consent and were eligible to vote.

The main questionnaire consisted of 60 questions and the follow-up questionnaire of 12, numbers that may differ slightly depending on the answers chosen. Both questionnaires were distributed only in English. The questions were open to all students or graduates but some were targeted at specific groups such as EU citizens. The dissemination through a snowball research strategy helped to reach a wide audience but cannot provide a precisely calculated return rate.

The key target groups, all in the higher education sector, were:

- Current Erasmus+ students,
- Current students participating in an exchange programme other than

Erasmus+,

- Alumni of the Erasmus+ Programme,
- Alumni of other exchange programmes,
- Non-mobile students (with a special focus on those interested in going abroad).

The main questionnaire gathered **14,681** answers and the follow-up questionnaire **4,381** which amounts to a total of **19,062** answers for the ESNsurvey 2019. The number of respondents who participated in the main questionnaire (14,681) will be treated in most of the cases as the total value. Often references to the follow-up questionnaire or other sources will be mentioned. The data collection was followed by an analytical process leading to the conclusions and recommendations shared through this research report within the ESN network and with stakeholders at the local, national, and European levels.

The sample of respondents cannot be considered as fully representative and therefore the results cannot be generalised to the entire population. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the individual chapters. A statistical analysis with the help of a computer software is used to verify whether certain relationships among variables are significant and whether observed differences between various groups are significant. In the names under charts and tables in the report there is a number “n” in brackets showing the total number per figure, i.e. (n=14,681).

DEMOGRAPHICS

by Robert Banet

The next two introductory chapters provide general characteristics of the whole group of respondents. Firstly, we will analyse their demographics, and secondly their educational background.

Gender

The first characteristic is gender. The analysis of all answers provided a ratio of 62.44% to 37.56% for women over men which corresponds to the “European Commission (2015) Erasmus Facts, Figures & Trends” where the female to male ratio for mobility students is 60:40. It also corresponds to the follow-up questionnaire where the numbers were 61.38% to 38.14%. In the main questionnaire there was also an available option “Other/I prefer not to say” that was chosen by 0.89% of all respondents.

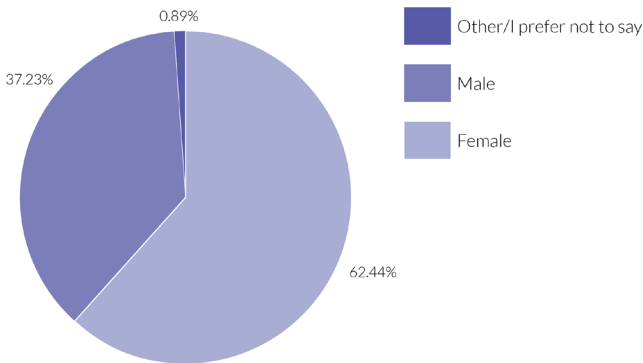


Figure 1 - Gender distribution (n=14,681)

Age

The second key attribute of the whole group is age. To provide a representative number for this section, outliers have been identified as aged below 18 or above 35 and have been omitted. The average of the main questionnaire (22.95 years) corresponds to the average of the follow-up questionnaire (23.25 years). In both the main and the follow-up questionnaire, the biggest age group was 22-year old people. Especially the number related to the follow-up questionnaire corresponds to the aforementioned “European Commission (2015) Erasmus Facts, Figures & Trends” where the average age of students in the “studies” type of mobility was 23.40 years. The cause of the difference in the average age between the two questionnaires is twofold.

Firstly, not all participants of the main questionnaire filled out the follow-up one. Secondly, the age itself of the participants changed from the first to the second questionnaire, as some of them had their birthdays during this period. The average age without any outliers (from all answers) is approximately 23.10.

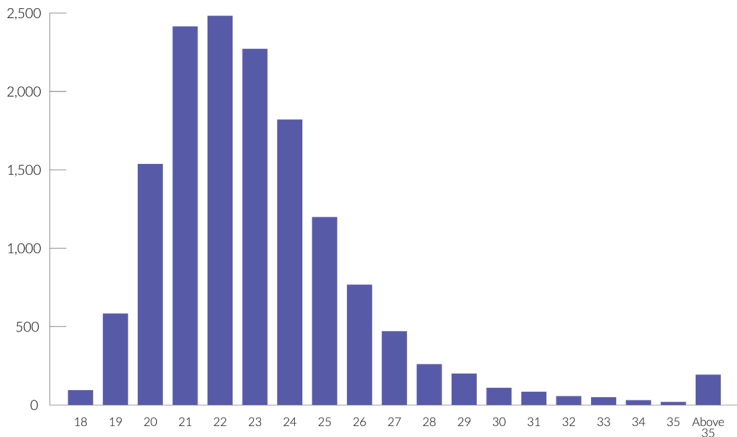


Figure 2 - Age distribution (n=14,681)

Country of origin

The Erasmus Student Network is present in 40 countries, mostly European ones, but its size and extensive network helped to reach people who come from all parts of the world. Therefore, another key figure showing the scale of this year's edition is a number of countries where the 14,681 respondents were came from - they were born in 140 countries in total. Below, Figure 3 shows all the countries where at least one respondent was born.

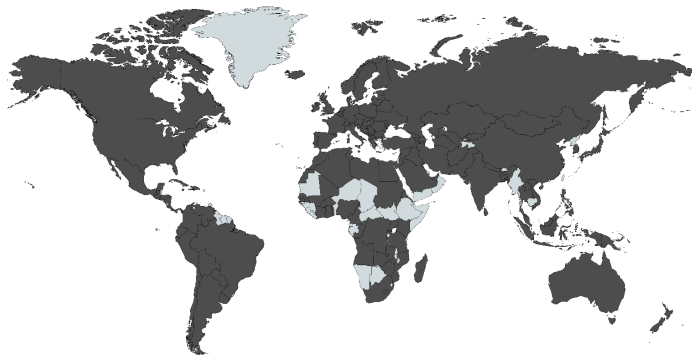


Figure 3 - Visual representation of country of birth of respondents (n=14,681)

Country of citizenship

According to the main questionnaire, the top country by citizenship is Italy with 4,729 responses (31.57%), followed by Germany with 2,235 (14.92%) and Spain with 827 (5.52%). The most answers from all 4,381 in the follow-up questionnaire were obtained from the same countries, in the same order, and with comparable percentages (respectively 32.64%, 19.08% and 5.23%).

It is important to add that 1,081 (7.36%) of respondents indicated they also have a second citizenship. Additionally, there are also 2,118 of respondents (14.43%) who have their first or second citizenship that is different than their country of residence, which means they live in a country other than the one associated with their nationalities.

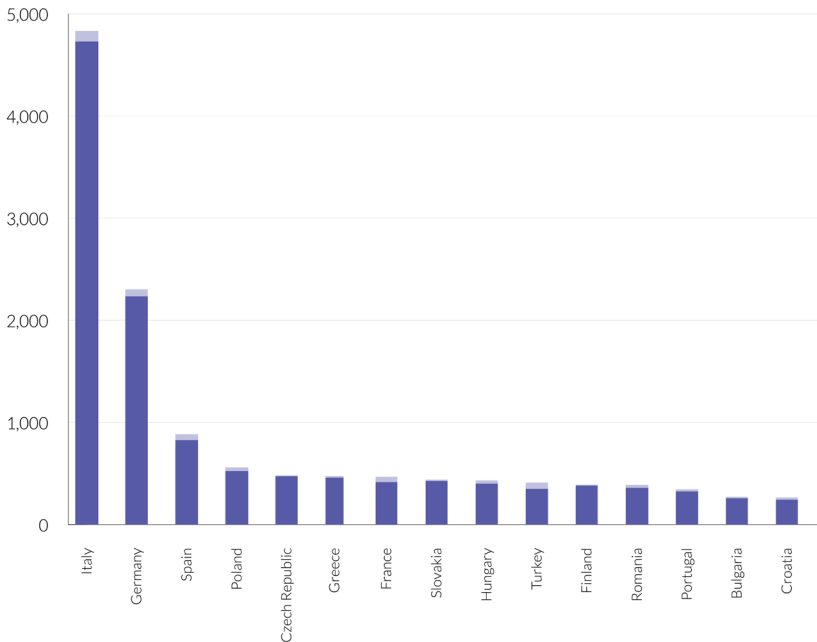


Figure 4 - Top 15 countries of citizenship (first citizenship n=14,681, and additionally second citizenship n2=1,081 in light grey)

Country of residence

Besides country of birth and country of citizenship, there was one more country characteristic giving at once a unique value and measurable information in terms of active citizenship in light of the European elections - country of residence. According to the main questionnaire, respondents were then living in exactly 100 countries. The top country of residence was Italy with 4,826 responses (32.87%), followed by Germany with 2,135 (14.54%) and Spain with 851 (5.80%). The most answers from all 4,381 in the follow-up questionnaire showed the same countries, in the same order, and with comparable percentages (respectively 33.28%, 18.19% and 5.55%).

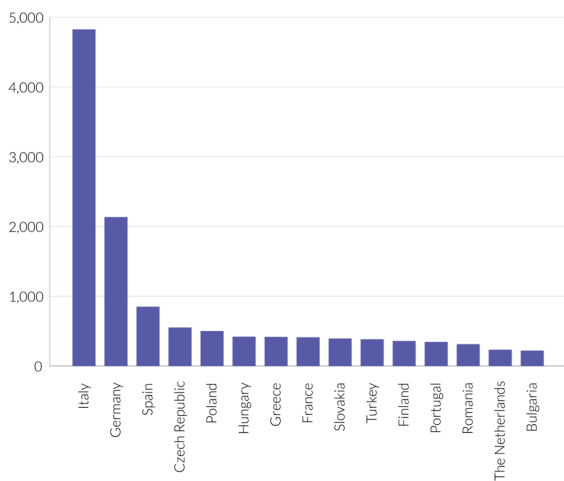


Figure 5 - Country of residence (n=14,681)

Such a distribution can be explained by several factors, including:

- Popularity of the Erasmus+ Programme: there is often a big difference between countries in the number of exchange students, for both incoming or outgoing.
- Strength of ESN: some country networks are bigger in size and number of ESN sections, or have stronger collaborations with educational stakeholders who helped with the dissemination, such as Erasmus+ National Agencies.
- Promotion of the ESNsurvey 2019 main questionnaire: many ESN countries did a very effective job at promoting among their members and exchange students. Similarly, better results were achieved thanks to certain individuals who engaged fully in viral promotion.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

by Robert Banet

In this paragraph, the degree of education of the respondents, their study disciplines, current or past education, experience with mobility, its type and destination, year, length, and reasons to study abroad are presented.

Degree of studies

Among the respondents of the main questionnaire, 8,636 were undergraduate students (58.82%), followed by 4,489 master's students (30.58%). Also, 55 respondents (0.37%) chose "I am in post-doc studies" and since the number is very low, it was not shown in the chart below. This corresponds to the results from the follow-up questionnaire (respectively, 53.69% of undergraduate and 34.47% of master's students).

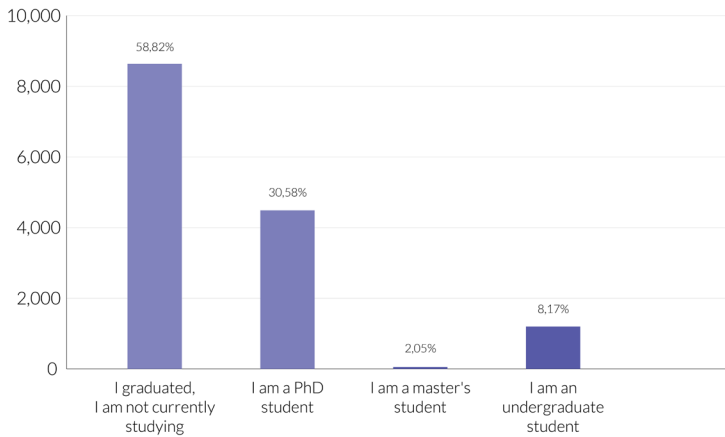


Figure 6 - Degree of studies (n=14,681)

From exactly 1,200 respondents who have graduated and are not currently studying, the highest degrees obtained were:

- Bachelor's degree 465
- Master's degree 642
- PhD degree 20

There were also 36 respondents with "High school diploma" as the highest-degree and 37 respondents who answered "Other".

Field of studies

The study subjects follow the ISCED⁷ classification. The most popular field of studies was chosen by 2,917 respondents, namely “Business, administration and law” (19.87%), followed by 2,427 in “Engineering, manufacturing and construction” (16.53%), and 1,936 in “Arts and humanities” (13.19%). The least popular studies were chosen by 264 studying “Services” (1.80%) and 293 in “Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, veterinary” (2.00%). These numbers are in line with those of the Erasmus Impact Study where the top three fields of study of students and alumni in the report⁸ were “Business studies and management sciences”, “Engineering, technology”, and “Social sciences”. The last position shown in the figure was “Agricultural Sciences”.

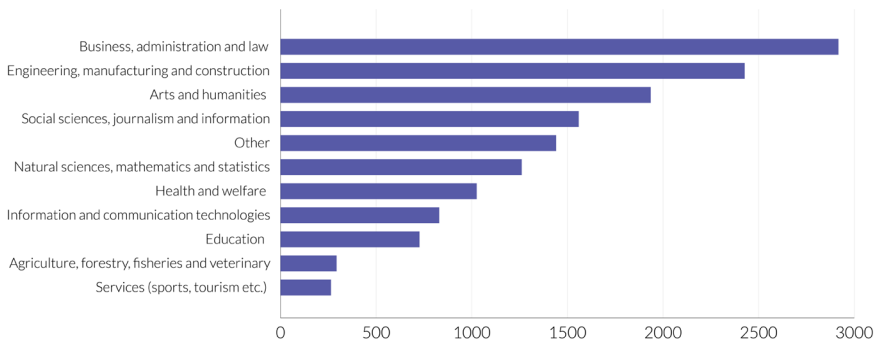


Figure 7 - Majors and areas of studies of respondents (n=14,681)

Participation in exchange programmes

From 14,681 respondents, 7,634 (50.16%) took part in an exchange programme. Additionally, 2,688 (18.31%) are currently participating in an exchange. The remaining group of respondents, a total of 4,629 (31.53%), did not participate in any exchange programme so far.

7 International Standard Classification Of Education. Fields of education and training 2013 (ISCED-F 2013).
8 According to the “Figure 2-3 Field of study of students and alumni” in EIS (in %).

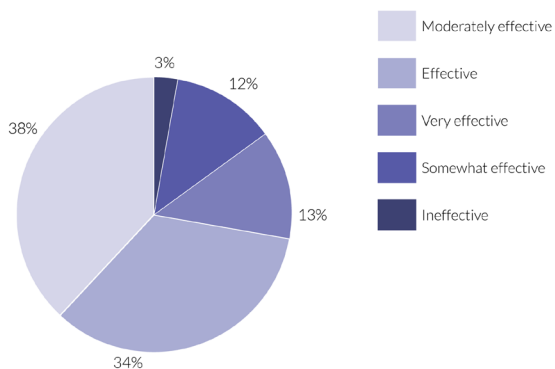


Figure 8 - Past or current participation in exchange programmes (n=14,681)

From the 10,052 (68.47%) participants in current (2,688 respondents) or past (7,634 respondents) student mobility experiences, 8,990 (61.24%) took part in an Erasmus+ higher education exchange. The remaining 1,062 persons took part in other exchange programmes. It is important to emphasise that the Erasmus+ Programme lasts from 2014 to 2020. It is possible that people who took part in the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLL, 2007-2013), the predecessor of the Erasmus+ Programme, could have chosen either the first or the second option.

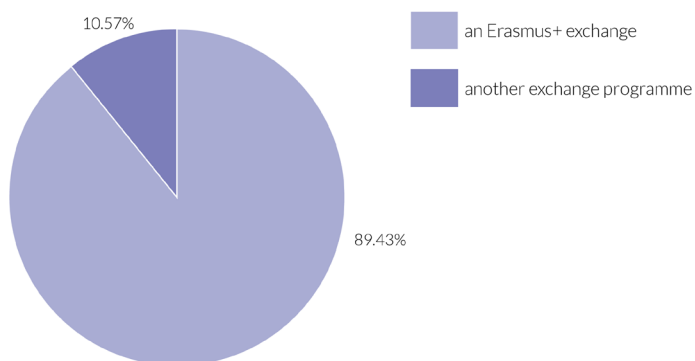


Figure 9 - Type of exchange programmes (n=10,052)

Destination of exchange

From the 10,052 respondents with current or past experience in exchange programmes, the sample can be divided by country of exchange. There are 8,897 respondents who are currently on or already went on an exchange to a European Union country. The remaining 1,155 students are currently or went for an exchange to a country outside of the European Union.

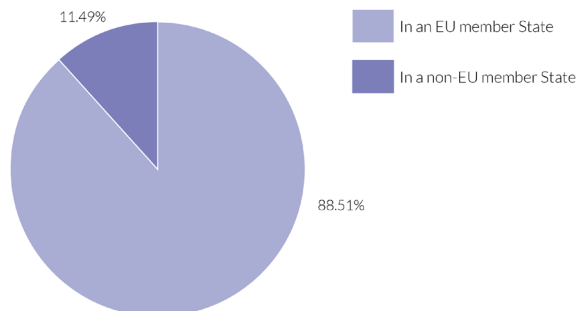


Figure 10 - Country of the exchange inside or outside EU (n=10,052)

The group of people who are or have been on an exchange to an EU country (in total 8,897) had mostly Spain (15.94%), followed by Germany (10.26%), France (8.96%) and Italy (8.43%) as their destinations. These numbers correspond to the most popular countries for Erasmus+ exchanges according to the “Annex of Erasmus+ Annual Report 2017”. According to this document⁹, the top receiving countries are Spain (47,138), Germany (32,876), France (27,742) and Italy (25,108).

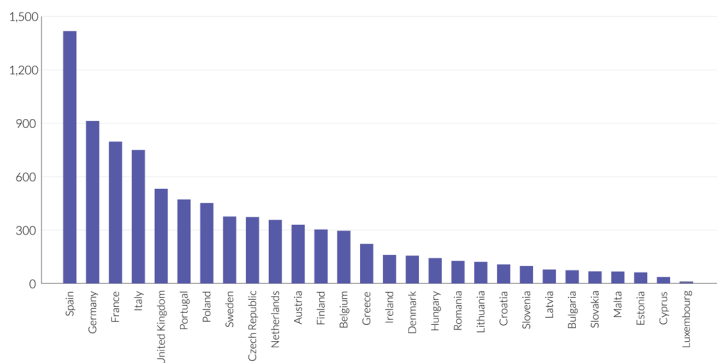


Figure 11 - EU Countries of the exchange (n=8,897)

⁹ Table KA103 - Higher Education mobility within programme countries - Student mobilities by sending/receiving country under Call 2016.

From the 1,155 respondents who went or are currently on an exchange in a non-EU country, 213 experienced their mobility in Turkey (18.44%), 193 in Norway (16.71%), 106 in the United States (9.18%) and 83 in Switzerland (7.19%). It is worth mentioning that despite being non-EU countries, both Turkey and Norway are full members of the Erasmus+ Programme. Moreover, Switzerland participated in the Erasmus Programme until 2014.

Besides 20 countries shown in Figure 20, the remaining 114 respondents went to another 44 countries on all continents (besides Antarctica).

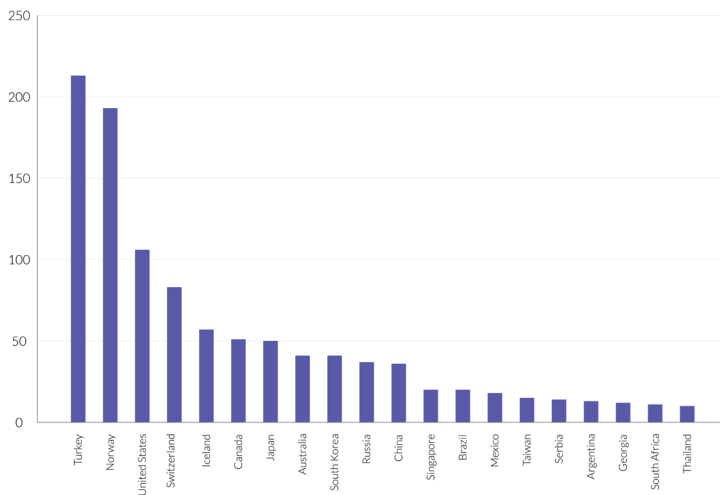


Figure 12 - Top 20 Non-EU countries of any student exchange (n=1,155 shown in the chart)

Year and duration of exchange

The mobility experience of 10,052 (68.47%) respondents, as shown in Figure 13, is spread in time. As we may notice, the numbers drop almost logarithmically as the vast majority of answers came from people with a very fresh mobility experience. Answers from people on exchanges years ago are much lower. On one side, the distribution is not equal within years, but on the other side, it means that most of the answers came from people still on an exchange or just after one.

There are clearly higher numbers for EU-funded exchange programmes (Erasmus+ from 2014 and LLLP before that) in comparison to other

exchange programmes. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that this relation was constantly growing year by year. Before 2014, 86 students from other exchange programmes compared to 215 Erasmus students gave a coefficient of 0.40, whereas for the last academic year 2018/2019, this ratio is 0.10.

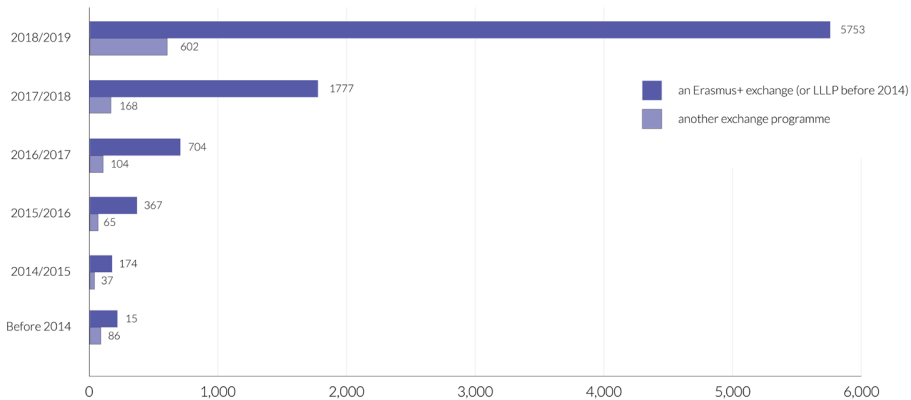


Figure 13 - Periods abroad (n=10,052)

When it comes to the duration of exchange, the biggest group (6,385) are students who went abroad for four to six months which usually corresponds to one semester of studies. The second group (2,604) are students who went for studies from seven to twelve months which usually corresponds to two semesters. The remainder (111) claim they stayed for a period of over 25 months.

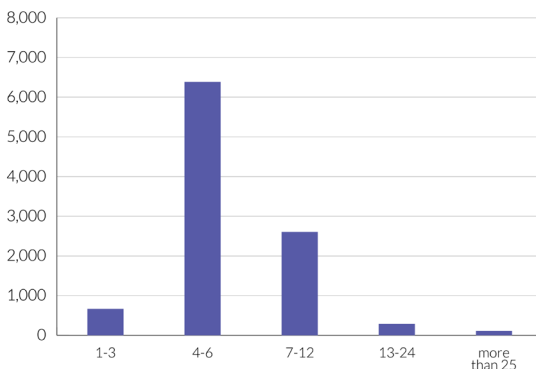


Figure 14 - Duration of time spent abroad (n=10,052)

Reasons (not) to study abroad

Regarding the reasons to study abroad, most respondents chose “I am/ was interested in knowing/experiencing other cultures” (8,761) followed by “Erasmus or other programmes give a student and future employee added value” (5,978).

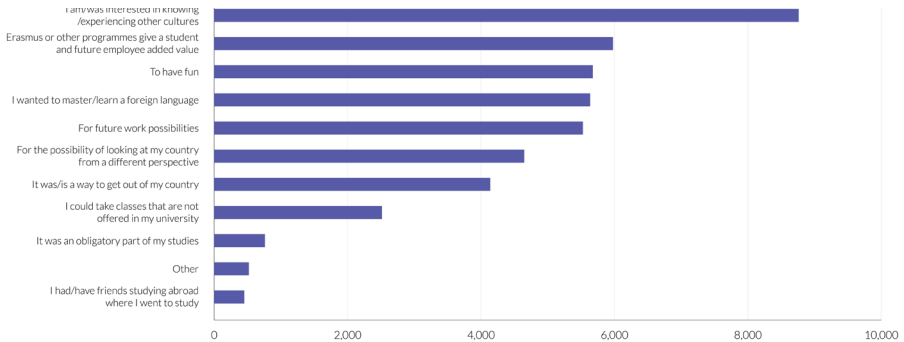


Figure 15 - Reasons to study abroad (n=10,052, from multiple choice)

Those who answered “No” to the question “Are you planning to study abroad?” (726 respondents out of the 4,629 who never studied abroad) were given another set of questions to evaluate the impact of several potential reasons. The chart was ordered by the amount of “Very Important” answers.

As can be seen in the chart, the outstanding factor is “Costs/Financial conditions”, to which also the least respondents answered “Not at all important”. The second most important factor is “Fear of courses recognition”.

“Not at all important” was chosen as the most times for “Visa issues” and “Health problems”. “Very important” was opted for the least times for “Visa issues” and “Not enough information”.

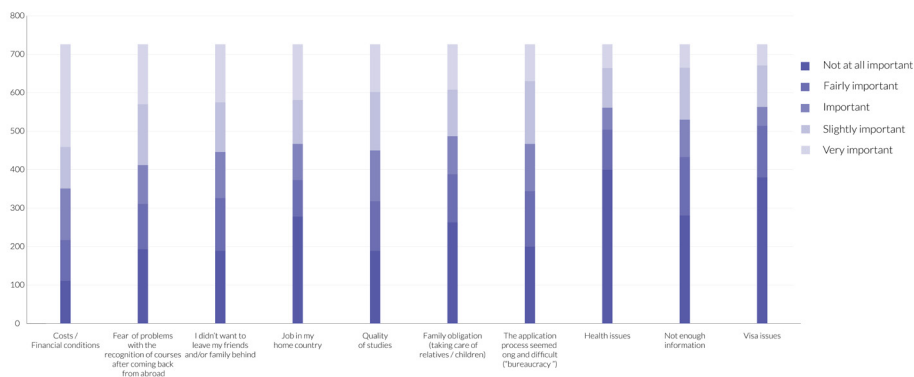


Figure 16 - Rating of different aspects and their role in a decision not to study abroad (n=726)

The chart shows that financial aspects and recognition of courses seem to be the key problems and lack of information or visa issues the least important to respondents. Similarly, in the Erasmus Impact Study (2014), financial reasons are the main barrier for students to not go on exchange followed by family issues or personal relations. It is important though to account for the fact that for most participants visa was not applicable. Moreover, out of the 726 people who are not planning to study abroad there are 52 from non-EU countries. Among these, 38.46% mentioned “Visa issues” as a “Very Important” reason for them not to go abroad. This number is much higher than the EU citizens’ 7.58%, as shown in Figure 16. Hence, visa issues are still perceived as a very important barrier for non-EU citizens, a factor to take into consideration when the Erasmus+ Programme becomes more globalised.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

by Nata Japiashvili

Inspired by Marshall’s “Theory of Citizenship”¹⁰, civil participation relates to the actions of signing petitions, debating, protesting and public speaking, as ways of exercising civil rights. These are the instruments of an ideal citizen to demonstrate their ideas and beliefs on the horizontal and vertical levels of the community. In the framework of this research, these are some of the main aspects to “measure” the civil activism of a citizen. In this chapter, the dependence of our target group towards civil participation and its activities is described.

Knowledge of the term “civil participation”

“Do you know what civil participation is?” – was the first question in this chapter to identify how many respondents understand the meaning of the term. The question itself does not contain any true or false answers and the main aim is to make the respondents think about this action – what is that? Do I know? Am I participating? Overall, 58.31% of respondents think that they know what civil participation is and 41.69% do not (Figure 17).

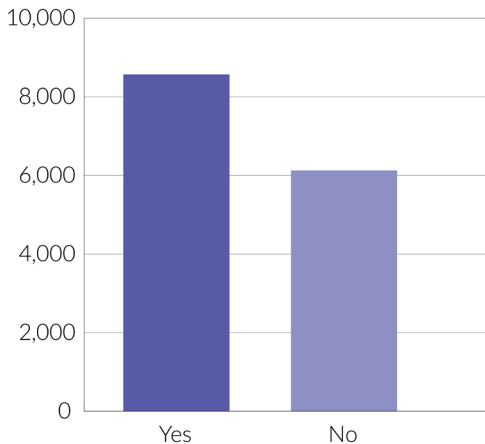


Figure 17 - Knowledge of the meaning of the term “civil participation” (n=14,681)

10 Marshall, T H. *Citizenship and Social Class: And Other Essays*. Cambridge [Eng.: University Press, 1950. Print]

Engagement in different types of participation

In this section, respondents were asked to choose in which of the following activities they have participated during the last two years. Using multiple choice questions, the respondents were given eight different activities (plus the options “None of these” and “I don’t know”) and they could mark more than one option at one time. This question was based on the “Report of Europeans’ engagement in participatory democracy” – Flash Eurobarometer 373 - Report of Europeans¹¹.

As we compared our numbers to the Flash Eurobarometer 373 survey results and as this question referred mostly to the European Union member states, at the beginning we filtered countries by citizenship and in the chart it is possible to see only the answers of EU citizens. In the results (see Figure 18), the most popular choice of our respondents (66.41%) was “Signed a petition (on paper or online)”. This result is very different from the Eurobarometer 373 in which only 34% of the respondents (the highest number in that study) had signed petitions. This contrast illustrates that students with the experience of student exchanges are twice as likely to engage in this form of civil participation. Another relevant conclusion from our questionnaire is that 35.02% of respondents say that they have expressed their views on public issues on the internet or in social media, a number higher than the Eurobarometer’s 28%. The rest of the answers have less than 10%.

Having said that, only 7.57% of respondents say that they have expressed their views on public issues with their elected representatives at the local or regional level, a number which is much lower than the European average of 24%, as shown by the same Eurobarometer. This figure gets worse as the level gets higher with only 1.55% and 0.81% expressing their views in public with their elected representatives at the national and European levels respectively, with the latter number being lower than the European average of 4% according to the Eurobarometer.

This tendency is also confirmed by the 3.64% of respondents who have taken part in a public debate at the local or regional level, a number which is much lower than the 18% of the same Eurobarometer. At the national level, only 0.53% have engaged in public debates and only 0.42% did so at the European level, both of which are half of the European average of 1% for the two cases.

11 Marshall, T H. *Citizenship and Social Class: And Other Essays*. Cambridge [Eng.: University Press, 1950. Print

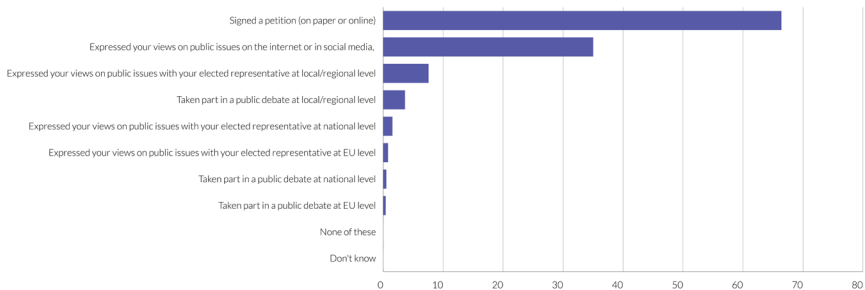


Figure 18 - Participation in different activities connected to civil participation (n=13,196)

Within the frame of demographic data, we see that 66.67% of women and 64.21% of men signed a petition (on paper or online). More information about the gender distribution can be found in Figure 3.

	Female	Male
Signed a petition (on paper or online)	67.66%	64.21%
Expressed your views on public issues on the internet or in social media	34.23%	36.16%
Expressed your views on public issues with your elected representative at local/regional level	6.31%	9.61%
Taken part in a public debate at local/regional level	2.72%	5.11%
Expressed your views on public issues with your elected representative at national level	0.90%	2.62%
Expressed your views on public issues with your elected representative at EU level	0.41%	1.47%
Taken part in a public debate at national level	0.22%	1.06%
Taken part in a public debate at EU level	0.18%	0.83%
None of these	0.00%	0.04%
Don't know	0.00%	0.02%

Table 1 - Redistribution of gender towards participation in different civil activities (n=13,196)

Participation in public debates

When asked if they have ever participated in public debates, 78.02% of respondents said that they have participated in public debates and 21.98% had not. When the numbers are broken down according to the exchange status of the respondents, it is possible to see that 80.99% of those who are currently studying abroad, 75.05% of those who never went on exchange and 78.80% of those who went on exchange before have not participated in public debates. For people who participated in public debates, 19.01% are currently studying abroad, 24.95% never went on exchange and 21.20% already did an exchange (Figure 19).

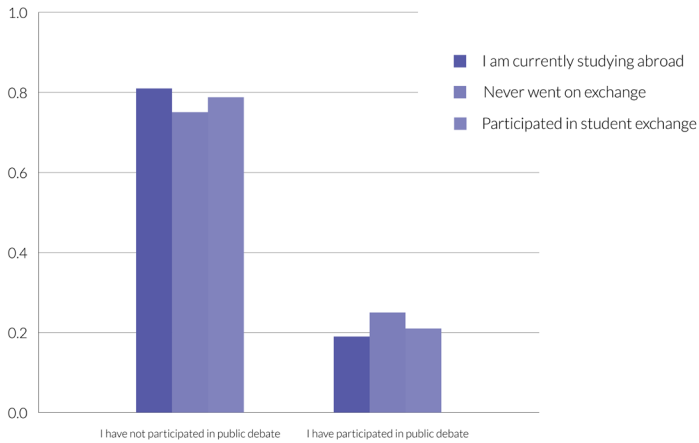


Figure 19 - Participation in public debates in the framework of exchange status (n=14,681)

From those who participated in public debates, 25.38% have participated once, 31.64% twice, 14.91% three times, and 3.01% four times and 25.07% more than four times (Figure 20).

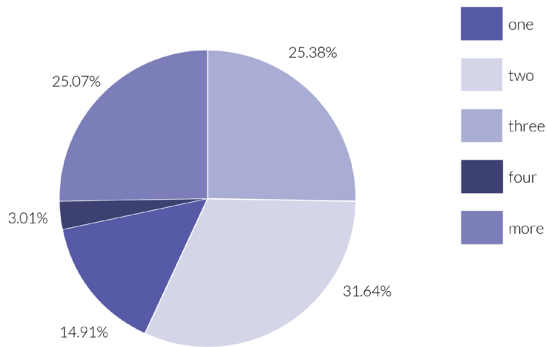


Figure 20 - Frequency of participation in public debates (n=3,227)

Participation in public demonstrations

On the question “Have you ever participated in public demonstrations?”, 55.16% have never participated in one and 44.84% have done so. From those who have participated, 62.54% were female, 36.14% were male and 1.32% preferred not to state their gender.

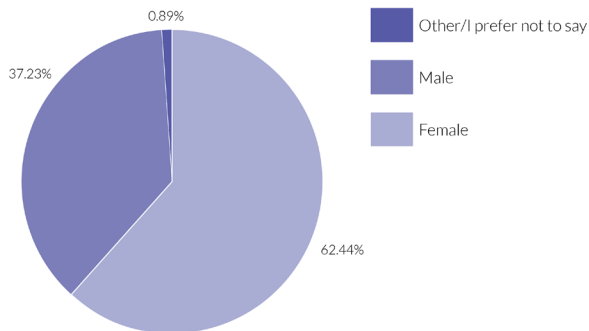


Figure 21 - Participation in public debates in the framework of gender (n=14,681)

The respondents had four different options to choose – marches and parades, political rallies, sit-ins, street theater and, in case they had a different experience, they could specify it in “other”. This was a multiple choice question and respondents were allowed to mark more than one option. Marches and parades are the most frequent type of demonstration, used by 5,691 (77.16%) respondents. Political rallies are used by 1,316 (17.84%), sit-ins by

272 (3.69%), street theatre by 72 (0.98%) and 25 (0.33%) used other types of demonstration.

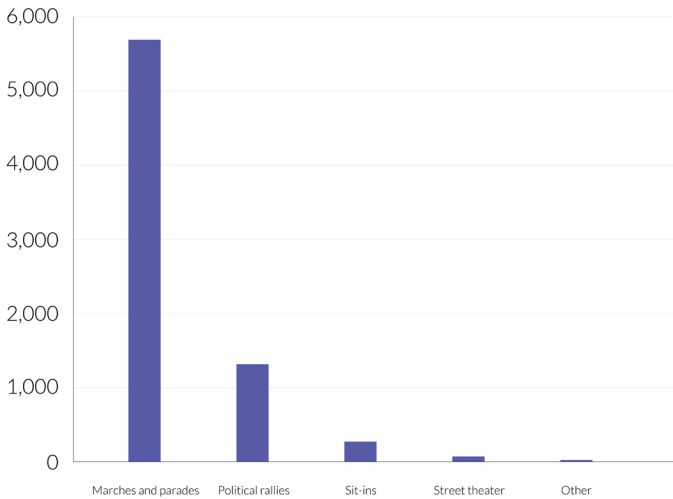


Figure 22 - Participation in different kind of demonstrations (n=14,681)

To determine the aim of the respondents while participating in public demonstrations, we offered six different options plus the option “Other”. In total, 5,771 people use demonstrations to support a cause, 3,561 to call for actions, 747 to protest against another demonstration, 163 to meet and network with people, 61 to get the emotional effect and 44 to draw media and public attention.

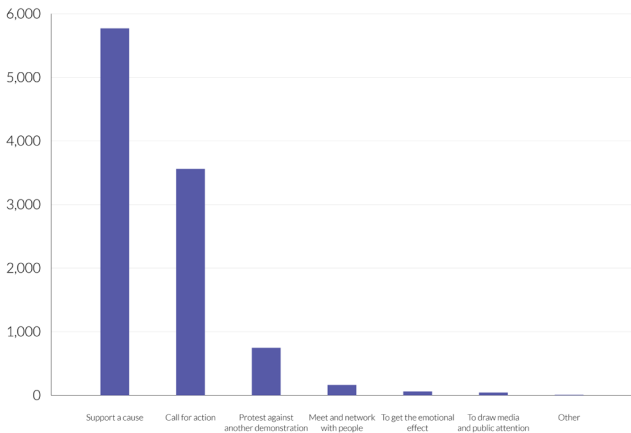


Figure 23 - Different reasons of participation in demonstrations (n=14,681)

Effectiveness of participation in public protests

On the question “How effective do you think it is when everyday Europeans participate in public protest for political reasons?”, the respondents’ opinions differ significantly. Around 30% think that this is effective, 40.55% moderately effective, 15.32% somewhat effective, 9.75% very effective and 4.56% think that this act is not effective.

From the respondents who answered “Yes” to the question “Have you ever participated in public demonstrations?”, 13.14% think that this is very effective, 33.69% effective, 38.05% moderately effective and 12.24% somewhat effective. Only 2.87% describes this action as ineffective (Figure 24). Overall, whether it is worth organising demonstrations or not at all, 66.84% think that it is worth it, 25.21% are not sure and 7.95% answered “No”.

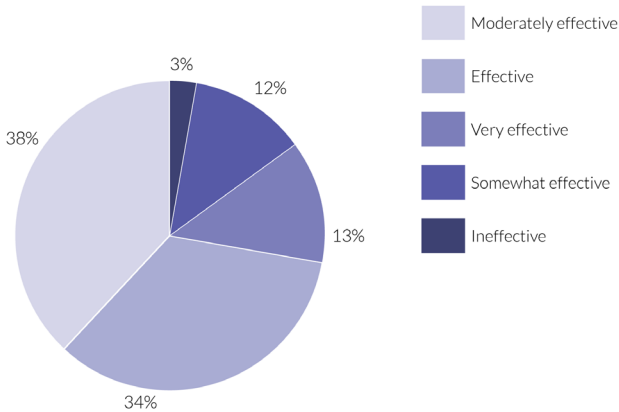


Figure 24 - Effectiveness of participation of everyday Europeans in public protests for political reasons (n=14,681)

Conclusion

The numbers in this chapter show that our respondents are more comfortable with online interaction as a means of participating in society and that academic exchanges have little connection with this fact. About half have participated in public demonstrations, mostly to support a cause or call for action, and two-thirds of those who participated in demonstrations consider it is worth organising them.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

by Nata Japiashvili

Social participation is another important element of active citizenship, referring Marshall's social citizenship. Social participation is about being aware of the different levels of civil society, volunteering or participating in different organisations, movements, syndicates and social centres working to improve social rights.

Information about the work of civil society organisations

In the first question, the respondents were given a matrix/rating scale to evaluate how informed they were concerning the work of civil society (non-governmental associations, etc.) at the local, national or European levels. For each of them, it was possible to choose different options - "Very informed", "Quite informed", "More or less informed", "Not at all informed" and "Hard to say".

Figure 25 shows that 35.34% of respondents feel quite informed about the work of civil society at the local level. Other than that, 33.38% feel more or less informed, 15.15% very informed, 11.78% not at all informed and for 4.35%, it is hard to say. When it comes to the national level, 37.80% feel quite informed, 36.18% more or less informed, 12.01% very informed, 9.92% not at all informed and 4.09% chose "Hard to say". At the European level, the picture is different – 43.88% feel more or less informed, 23.14% quite informed, 20.43% not at all informed and for 7.17%, it is hard to say. Only 5.37% feel very informed.

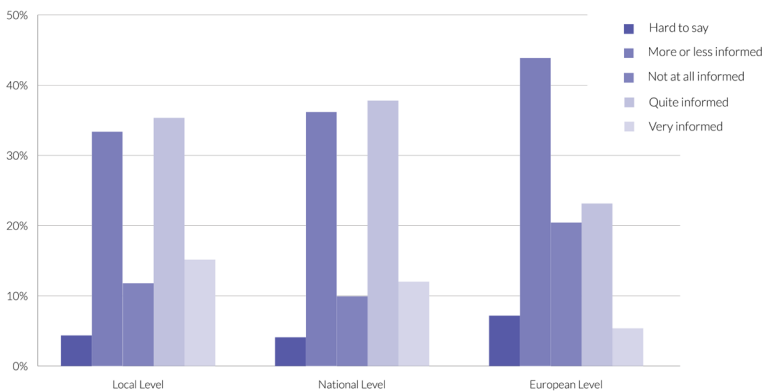


Figure 25 - Level of information concerning the work of civil society (non-governmental associations, etc.) at the local/national/European level (n=14,681)

Attitudes towards civil society organisations

The question “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about these types of organisations?” served to compare the results with the numbers of Flash Eurobarometer 373 (European Commission, 2013) and we asked respondents the same question. The format was again a matrix/rating scale with the following options: “I don’t know”, “Strongly Agree”, “Strongly Disagree”, “Tend to Agree” and “Tend to Disagree”.

As this is a comparison with the results of Eurobarometer, only the answers from EU respondents were taken into consideration. In Figure 26, it is possible to see that 1.05% strongly disagree and 8.25% tend to disagree that these organisations can influence decision-making at local or regional levels. Moreover, 23.11% strongly agree, 58.43% tend to agree with this statement and 9.17% say they do not know. On the same question in EB (it is important to keep in mind the difference in target groups in Eurobarometer and ESNsurvey 2019 research), 75% of respondents totally agreed, 21% totally disagreed and 4% did not know.

When asked about the national level, 16.62% of the respondents of our study strongly agree and 58.40% tend to agree that these organisations have some influence. Only 1.65% strongly disagree, 13.78% tend to disagree and 9.56% do not know. These numbers are in line with those of the Eurobarometer in which 70% totally agreed, 26% totally disagreed and 4% did not know.

At the European Level, 16.63% of respondents strongly agree and 50.93% tend to agree that these organisations can influence decision-making. When added together, these numbers are somewhat more optimistic than the European average of 53% totally agreeing, according to the same Eurobarometer. In our study, 2.76% strongly disagree with this capacity to influence, 17.44% tend to disagree and 12.24% do not know, numbers which are below the Eurobarometer’s 41% that totally disagree.

On the statement “You share the values or interests of some of these organisations and you trust them to act in the right way to influence political decision-making”, 19.92% strongly agree and 49.95% tend to agree, meaning that over two-thirds of respondents trust the work of these organisations. Only 2.71% strongly disagree, 12.69% tend to disagree and 15.63% do not know. Again, the numbers of our study are more optimistic than the European average of the Eurobarometer, with 59% totally agreeing, 36% totally disagreeing and 5% not knowing.

Finally, the respondents of our study were also asked for their opinion on the sentence “European citizens do not need these type of organisations, they have other means to influence political decision-making”. Again, the numbers illustrate a general trust in these organisations with only 3.99% strongly agreeing and 14.96% tending to agree with this sentence. This is below the European average of 41% that totally agreed, according to the same Eurobarometer. Ultimately, 33.31% strongly disagree and 33.26% tend to disagree, a much higher number than the European average of 52%. Finally, 14.47% of our respondents did not know, double the Eurobarometer’s 7%.

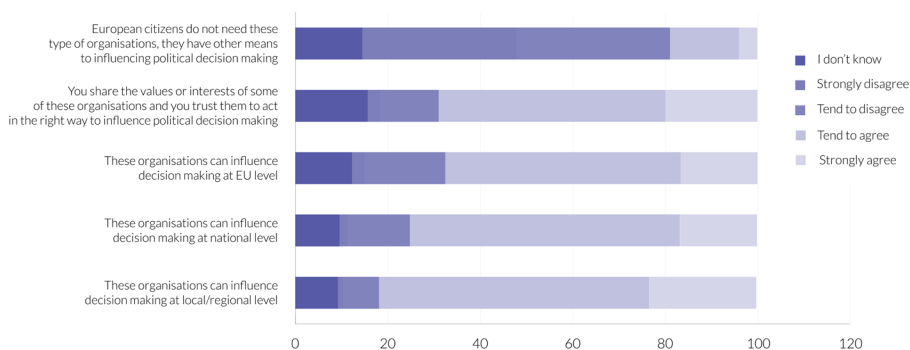


Figure 26 - Attitude towards civil society organisations (non-governmental organisations, etc.) (n=14,681)

The survey compared EU and non-EU countries when it comes to the importance of the role of civil society organisations in promoting and protecting democracy and common values, (Figure 27). This is very important for 51.12% of EU citizens and 52.53% of non-EU citizens and somewhat important for 38.70% of the former and 35.22% of the latter. Only 3.33% of EU and 3.91% of non-EU citizens choose the option not very important and for 0.70% of EU and 1.08% non-EU citizens the role of civil society in promoting and protecting democracy and common values is not at all important. Finally, 6.14% of EU and 7.27% of non-EU citizens do not have an answer to this question. These numbers, which corroborate the trends presented above, show that within our target-groups there is no significant difference between EU and non-EU citizens when it comes to their perception of the role of civil society organisations in promoting and protecting democracy and common values.

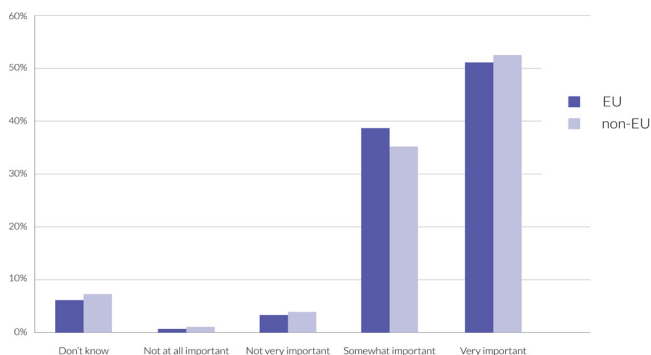


Figure 27 - Importance of the role of civil society organisations in promoting and protecting democracy and common values for EU (n=13,196) and non-EU (n=1,485) citizens

Involvement in civil society organisations and volunteering

Inspired by the Flash Eurobarometer 455¹²- European Youth (European Commission, 2018), the respondents of our survey were asked about the involvement of a citizen in different kinds of activities. They could choose multiple options. Overall, 35.99% are involved in a sports club, 31.76% in a youth club, leisure-time or any kind of youth organisation, 37.25% in cultural organisations, 9.05% in a local political organisation or a political party, 21.78% in a local organisation aimed at improving their local community, 15.37% in an organisation active in the domain of climate change or environmental issues, 16.33% in an organisation promoting human rights or global development, 18.87% in any other non-governmental association, 19.08% in none of these and 3.45% preferred not to answer to this question.

All of these results are considerably better in terms of social engagement than those of the Flash Eurobarometer 455. In this study, 29% of European youth participated in a sports club, 20% in a youth club, leisure-time club or any kind of youth organisation, 15% in a cultural organisation, 7% in a political organisation or a political party, 13% in a local organisation aimed at improving own local community, 5% in an organisation active in the domain of climate change or environmental issues, 7% in an organisation promoting human rights or global development, 12% in any other non-governmental association and 47% in none of these. Thus, it can be considered that stu-

12 European Commission (2018). Flash Eurobarometer 455 "European Youth". Brussel, Belgium.

dents with some exchange experience or at least connected to the community of international students are more engaged in civil society organisations than the average European youth.

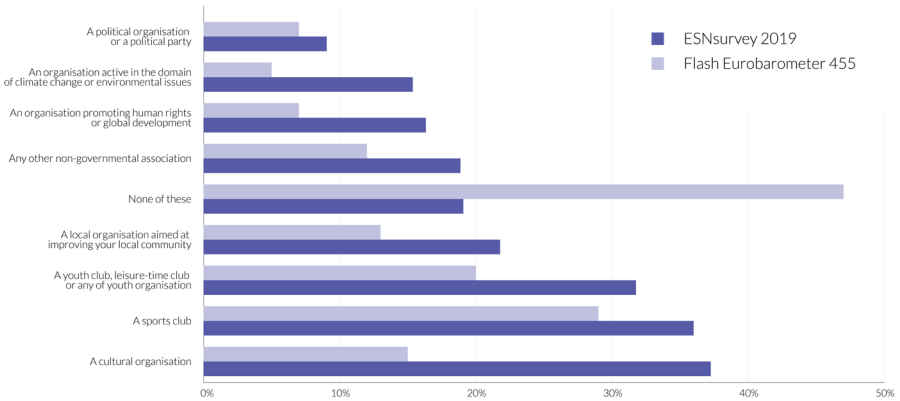


Figure 28 - Involvement in civil society organisations (n=14,681)

When examining the involvement of the respondents in any organised volunteer activity, results show that 52.70% of those who have participated in student exchange are volunteers. This result is only 30.72% for those who never went on exchange. Only 16.58% of those currently studying abroad are engaged in volunteer activities.

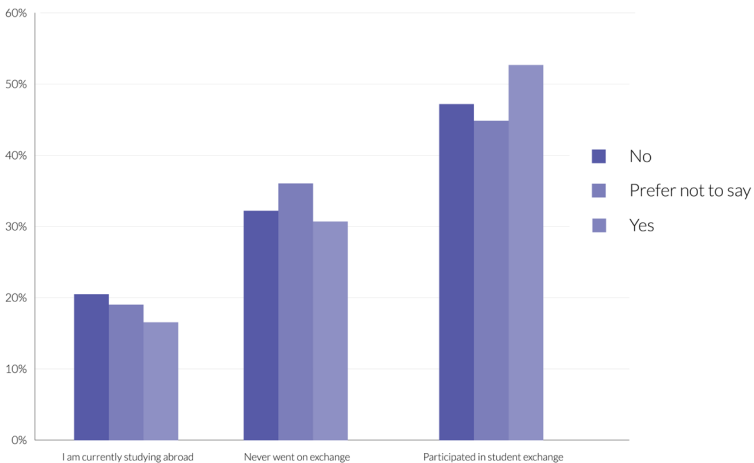


Figure 29 - Involvement in any organised volunteer activity

Conclusion

Overall, when it comes to social participation it can be observed from this chapter that studying abroad has a positive impact in the younger population. Those with this kind of experience, or at least some connection to it, are more active in civil society organisations and in general volunteer more than the European average.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

by Kyriaki Rousou

In many citizenship related surveys, voting is considered the basic indicator for active citizenship, but in our survey we have decided to integrate more indicators related to democratic participation. When Marshall (cited in European Youth Forum, 2016¹³) introduced his theory of citizenship and talked about political citizenship, he was referring to a variety of political rights such as the right to vote, the right to be elected, the right of political assembly, etc. With this in mind, this chapter examines multiple indicators of active citizenship, such as the participation of the population in democratic processes but also their beliefs and knowledge of institutions and procedures.

Firstly, the research interrogates the knowledge of the European Parliament's work and then, the belief in the importance of European and national elections. Secondly, it looks into voting intention and turnout at the European elections, in comparison with other types of elections. Additionally, the reasons for participating in or abstaining from voting are presented. Finally, part of the voting behavior is also the willingness to run as a candidate at the local, regional, national and European levels.

Results in this chapter are collected from both questionnaires, as in the first one we examine knowledge, beliefs and intentions, while in the second, the actual turnout and reasons for abstention are investigated. Questions were proposed by the team, taken or adjusted from other questionnaires (Erasmus Voting Assessment study¹⁴, Special Eurobarometer 477 Democracy and Elections¹⁵ and Eurobarometer 89.2 Democracy on the move - European Elections: One year to go¹⁶).

Concerning the analysis of the results, when comparing EU and non-EU populations, for the EU population with dual citizenship, the first citizenship that the respondents submitted was taken into account for reasons of feasibility. The second questionnaire was sent only to respondents with EU citizenship so the whole population is taken into consideration in the results.

13 European Youth Forum. (2016). Youth organisations contribution to citizenship education. Brussels: Belgium.

14 Report and questionnaire available in issuu.com/generationeurope/docs/evaproject_final_report_fordistribu.

15 Report and questionnaire available in ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2198.

16 Report and questionnaire available in europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/eurobarometer/eurobarometer-2018-democracy-on-the-move.

Knowledge of the European Parliament's work

Firstly, the knowledge of our population concerning the work of the European Parliament is examined and a combined percentage of 29.75% of respondents affirms to be “Very informed” or “Quite informed”, with 30.46% of EU citizens affirming the same. A percentage of 26.36% of women state to be very or quite informed in comparison with 35.29% for men is observed. The three EU countries with the highest very informed percentages are Estonia (18.18%), Sweden (13.27%) and Latvia (13.11%), while the ones with highest not at all informed percentages are Cyprus (41.77%), Spain (32.16%) and Ireland (31.90%). Also, the percentage of respondents who declare to be very informed is very similar between EU (5.46%) and non-EU countries (4.78%).

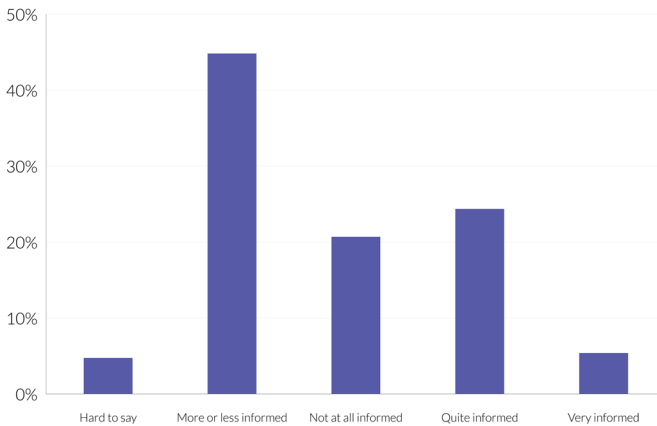


Figure 30 - Knowledge of the European Parliament's work and functioning (n=14,681)

Importance of voting in European elections

When it comes to the importance of voting, 60% of EU citizens participating in the survey say that it is of high importance to them to vote at the European elections. More specifically, for persons who have been on exchange, the percentage is 60.86%, for those who are currently abroad 52.08% and 55.65% for the ones who have not been abroad. This percentage is significantly higher than the European averages for the younger age groups, as presented in the “Eurobarometer 89.2” (European Parliament, 2018a¹⁷), which were 42% for the 15-24 age group and 47% for the 25-39 age group.

17 European Parliament. (2018a). Eurobarometer 89.2 Democracy on the move - European elections: One year to go. Brussels: Directorate-General for Communication.

In comparison with the general European average, it is higher by 11%.

Numbers are similar between students of all levels (bachelor's, master's, PhD) but graduates present bigger differences. PhD graduates report high importance at 90%, master's at 64.33% and bachelor's at 55.91%. As also presented by "Eurobarometer 89.2", graduates have higher percentages of interest in elections than students. While 49% of students say that voting in European elections is of high importance for them, this is the case for 58% of people who finish their education in their twenties. Furthermore, people who do not identify as male or female give higher importance to voting at European elections (70.77%).

	Currently abroad	Never been on exchange	Exchange amumni	Eurobarometer
High importance	52.08%	55.65%	60.86%	49%
Medium importance	33.48%	31.78%	29.39%	33%
Low importance	14.43%	12.57%	9.57%	17%

Table 2 - Importance of voting at EU elections for EU citizens (n=13,196)

Importance of voting in national elections

In comparison to national elections, it is possible to observe that the sampled population of EU citizens finds it more important to vote in national elections rather than the European ones as 78.84% chose "High importance". Again, the percentage mentioned is significantly higher than the European average found in the "Eurobarometer 89.2" (European Parliament, 2018a) which shows 68%.

	Currently abroad	Never been on exchange	Exchange amumni	Eurobarometer
High importance	79.74%	75.58%	80.53%	68%
Medium importance	16.99%	19.31%	16.16%	22%
Low importance	3.27%	5.11%	3.31%	9%

Table 3- Importance of voting in national elections for EU citizens (n=13,196)

Non-EU citizens attributed high importance to voting at national elections at 63.70%. Mobile students (alumni and currently on exchange) present slightly higher percentages, by approximately 5%, than non-mobile students.

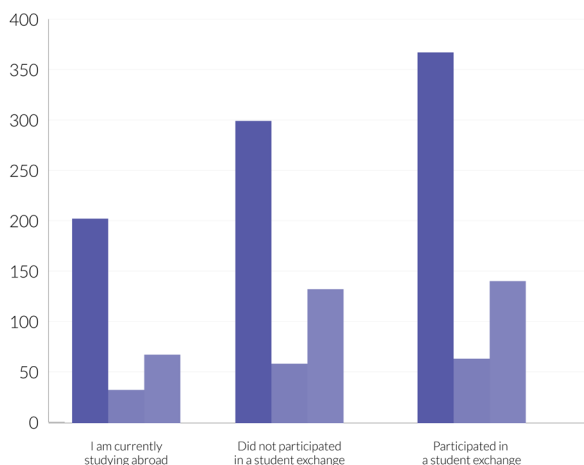


Figure 31 - Importance of voting in national elections for non-EU citizens (n=1,485)

Voting in national elections while living abroad seems to be an important matter as a combined 84.17% said it is very or fairly important to do so. According to “Special Eurobarometer 477” (European Parliament, 2018b)¹⁸, the European combined percentage is 74%. Nevertheless, only one out of five persons (19.64%) states that they are very informed about the ways of voting while living abroad.

Voting in European elections

Firstly, while only 33.71% of EU citizens from the respondents of the survey claim they voted in the 2014 European elections and 40.33% were not eligible at the time, alumni of exchange programmes and current exchange students had a much higher turnout than non-mobile students.

¹⁸ European Parliament. (2018b). Special Eurobarometer 477 Democracy and Elections. Brussels: Directorate-General for Communication.

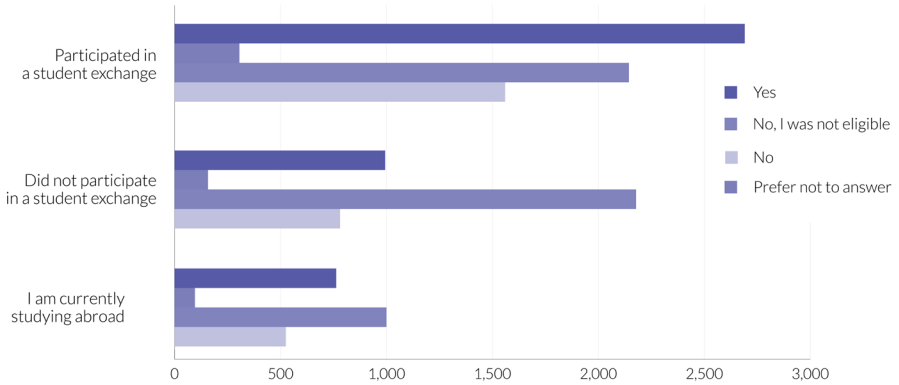


Figure 32 - Turnout in 2014 EU elections (n=13,196)

When it comes to voting intention, 72.55% said that they intended to vote in the 2019 European elections with mobile and non-mobile students presenting similar percentages. In more detail, the percentages of those who intended to vote in the 2019 European elections are 76.60% for respondents who participated in a student exchange, 74.92% for those who did not and 57.09% for those currently on exchange. While exchange alumni have the highest percentage of likeliness to vote, we also observe that the different exchange programmes have a similar effect, as their percentages are very close (76.18% for Erasmus alumni and 80.59% for alumni of other exchange programmes). These percentages are significantly higher than the European average presented in the “Eurobarometer 89.2” (European Parliament, 2018a), where a combined percentage of 49% said that they are “Very likely” and “Likely” to vote in the European elections.

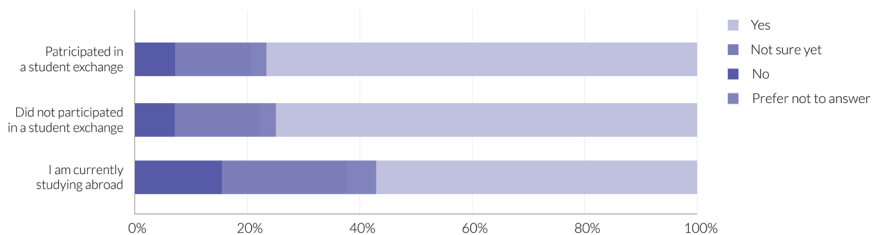


Figure 33 - Intention to vote in 2019 European Elections (n=13,196)

Looking into the main reasons why our different groups decide to vote, they turn out to be similar. “Voting is a duty as a European citizen” is the most popular one, followed by “You believe that democracy is important” and “You believe that voting is the right way to influence political decision-making”. In the “Eurobarometer 89.2” (European Parliament, 2018a), Europeans similarly state that they intend to vote because it is their duty, because they can change things by voting and because they always vote.

Similarly, for the intention not to vote all three groups voted that, while they were eligible, “There are too many obstacles for you to vote”, “You believe you are not sufficiently informed to vote” and “You are not interested in politics or elections in general”. On the other hand, the intention to abstain in the general European population is a result of not believing that voting will change something, of distrust in the political system and of the lack of interest in politics. It is therefore clear that the reasons chosen by the respondents for not voting are different than the general EU population. While the majority of Europeans have lost their belief in the power of voting, our target-groups point to more technical reasons for not voting.

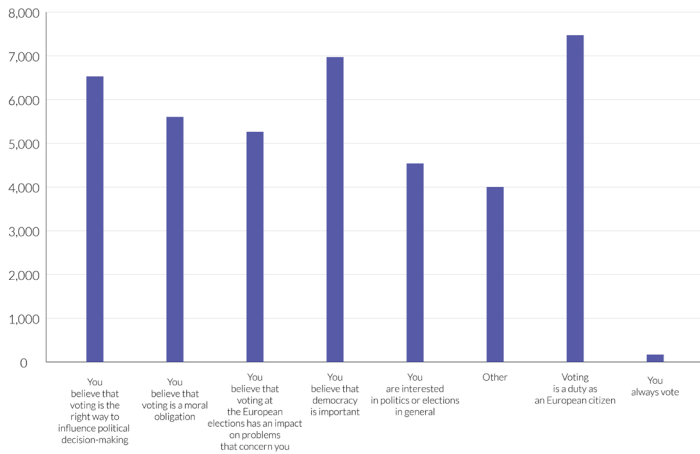


Figure 34 - Reasons to vote (n=14,681, multiple answers per person possible)

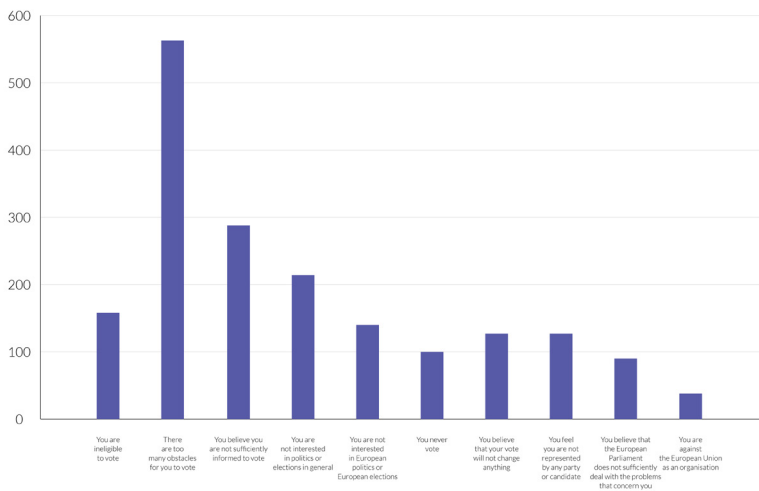


Figure 35 - Reasons to abstain (n=14,681, multiple answers per person possible)

Finally, students who are currently on exchange have a significantly higher percentage of intention to vote in the future European elections (70.54%) than in the current ones (51.19%). This resonates with data from “Eurobarometer 89.2” (2018), where being busy and away from home were presented as the main reasons why people between 15 to 39 years old were not able to vote in local, national and European elections.

The actual turnout at the European elections, measured in the second

questionnaire, presents a slight decrease from the measured intention to vote. The final percentage of voters is 68.77%. The percentages for current exchange students (47.27%) and exchange alumni (71.68%) dropped by a few points, while the percentage for non-mobile students remained stable (74.92%). In comparison with the European population's turnout of 50.6% (European Parliament, 2019)¹⁹ we observe a much higher turnout among the respondents of our survey. This is still the case when compared with younger age groups at the European level, which were 42% for 18-24 years old and 47% for 25-39 years old. Furthermore, in 2019, current exchange students and non-mobile students voted similarly to five years ago, according to EVA (Generation Europe Foundation, 2014)²⁰. Only the percentage of mobile students, which was 81%, presented a significant change.

	Currently abroad	Never been on exchange	Exchange alumni	Eurobarometer
High importance	79.74%	75.58%	80.53%	68%
Medium importance	16.99%	19.31%	16.16%	22%
Low importance	3.27%	5.11%	3.31%	9%

Table 4 - Turnout in 2019 EU elections (n=4,381)

The countries with the highest turnout are Luxembourg (100%), Belgium (90.91%) and Estonia (90%). The lowest turnout rates were observed in Ireland (64.71%), Cyprus (56.25%) and Latvia (55.56%).

¹⁹ European Parliament. (2019). First results of the European Parliament post-electoral survey. Brussels: Directorate-General for Communication.

²⁰ Generation Europe Foundation. (2014). Final report of the Erasmus Voting Assessment Project. Brussels, Belgium.

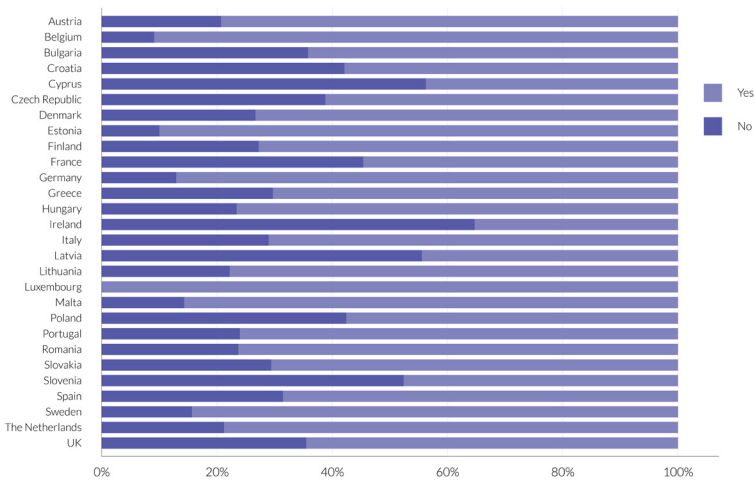


Figure 36 - Turnout in European elections by country (n=4,381)

The reasons for abstention vary among our population. Students who are currently on exchange did not vote mostly due to practical reasons such as lack of money to go back home to vote and procedural difficulties concerning registration and voting. Other groups (mobile and non-mobile students) refer to other commitments and lack of time as well. As mentioned above, the second questionnaire was sent only to EU citizens who were eligible voters so even if a part of the population answered that they did not vote because they were not eligible, this can be attributed to a different understanding of the term by the respondents and we do not take into account this percentage.

It is worth noting that students who participated specifically in an EU funded exchange programme (Erasmus+ or previously Erasmus) give a higher importance to the European elections (60.69%), had a higher intention of voting in these elections (76.18%) and had a higher election turnout (71.20%) when compared to the European average of the younger population (18-39), as presented by the Eurobarometer surveys²¹.

Voting in other elections

When it comes to other elections at the local, regional and national levels

²¹ Eurobarometer 89.2 Democracy on the move - European elections: One year to go (2018) and First results of the European Parliament post-electoral survey (2019).

in the past five years, nine out of ten exchange alumni and current exchange students said they voted, while the non-mobile students percentage is about 82.18%. Attendance in elections seems to increase based on education level as we observe escalating percentages in bachelor (90.32%), master (94.24%) and PhD graduates (100%).

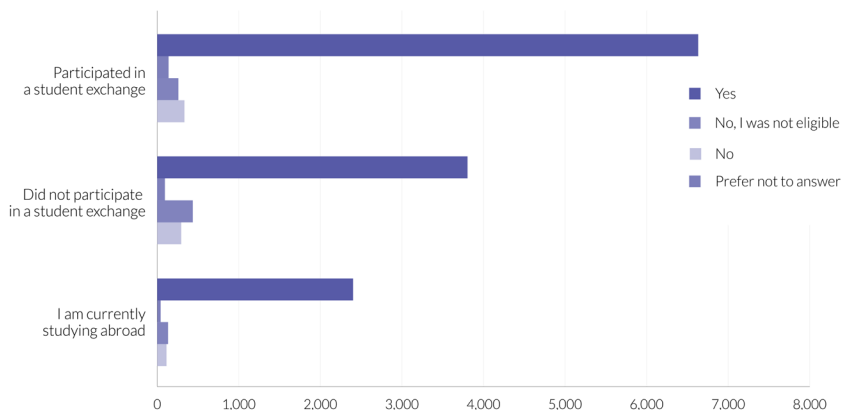


Figure 37 - Turnout in other elections in the past five years (n=14,681)

National elections seem to be the most attractive, while the local and regional ones follow in terms of participation. European citizens who voted in previous elections voted in their national elections in 79.31% of the cases.

Running as a candidate

Voting is not the only way to participate in democratic processes. Running for office is equally as important and discussions on the representation of young people in public bodies happen from time to time. This is reflected in the survey's results as a low percentage of the respondents (9.52%) would consider running as a candidate in local, regional, national and European elections. Young people would more easily consider running in local (11.41%) and European elections (10.09%). Gender is an important factor, as men and non-binary persons are in most cases twice as likely to consider running for office. There is no significant difference in most fields while measuring this intention of people who have been abroad during their studies or not, but alumni of exchange programmes would more easily consider running in European elections (10.86%) than the rest of the groups.

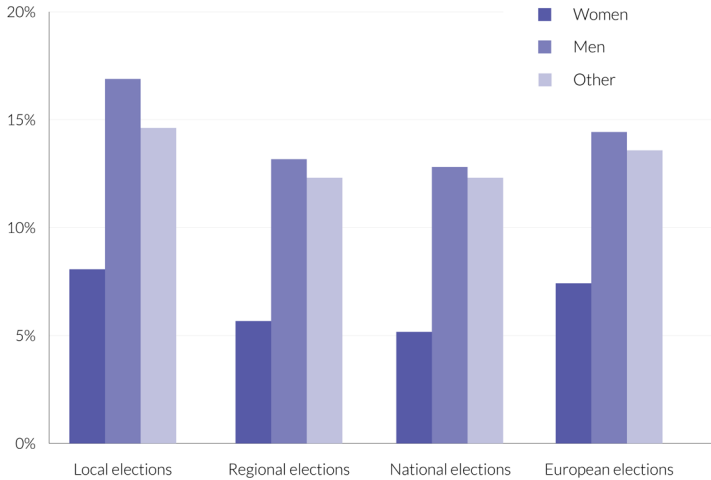


Figure 38 - Percentage of each population who would consider running as a candidate in elections (n=14,681)

Conclusion

The numbers presented in this chapter show that the majority of our respondents do not feel informed enough about the work of the European Parliament. This conclusion is relevant given that our population is, according to the Erasmus Impact Studies (2014 and 2019) among the most protective of the European project. That feeling is translated into a higher interest, higher intentions to vote, and higher turnout in the European elections when compared with the European average. Those who vote consider it a duty and a way to influence politics. Those who don't, and particularly those on exchange, mostly point technical reasons for their abstention. Finally, while voting in national elections is considered to be the most important, our respondents would rather run as candidates in local and European elections.

PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

by Tina Katava

In the last part of the survey, the respondents were asked about their feelings and views towards the EU, with a particular focus on the values they wish to see the Union being based upon. This part of the questionnaire draws some inspiration from the “Standard Eurobarometer 90 European Citizenship” (European Parliament, 2018c) and “Eurobarometer 79.5 One year to go to the 2014 European Elections” (European Parliament, 2013) in order to allow for future comparison between its results and those of the specific population addressed by our study.

Feelings towards nationality

In the first question, the respondents’ feelings and attitudes towards their nationality were examined. They were able to identify themselves either as their own nationality, as European and their own nationality, as their own nationality and European, only as European or with none of the above. Overall, 76.68% of respondents identified themselves as both their nationality and European out of which 45,83% see themselves first as their own nationality and then European. Moreover, 30.85% consider themselves firstly European and then their nationality and 12,70% of respondents identified themselves only as their own nationality. Only 3.60% identifies themselves as only Europeans, while 7.02% marked the answer none of the above. The majority of the respondents who expressed their feelings on both being European and their nationality (or vice-versa) are the ones who experienced some sort of exchange.

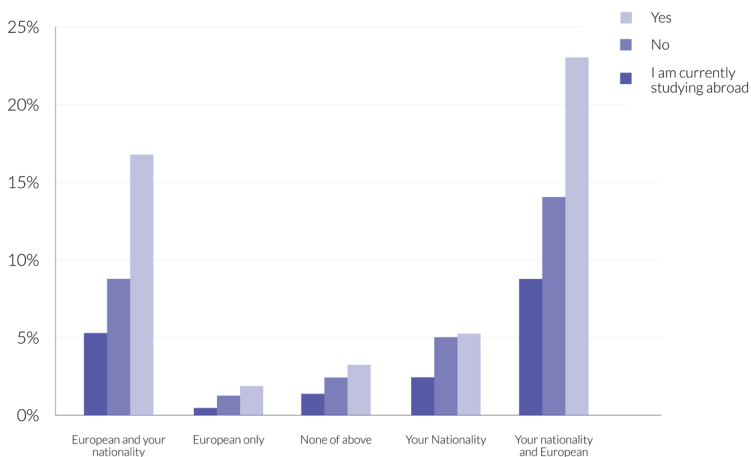


Figure 39 - Identifying with the European and/or national identity (n=14,681)

The percentage of young people who identify as both European and their nationality in our survey (76.68%) is higher than the European average as presented in “Standard Eurobarometer 90 European Citizenship”, which is 67% and 69% for the 15-24 and 25-39 age groups respectively. Another difference is that in our group of respondents, there is a significantly higher percentage that feels European first and then their nationality in comparison with the European average, which is 11% for both age groups mentioned before (European Parliament, 2018)²².

Acknowledgement of EU citizenship

Regarding the question in which respondents express whether they consider themselves as citizens of the EU, 83.25% of the overall respondents said yes, 6.41% said no, 6.54% do not know and for 3.80% of the respondents this was not applicable. In “Standard Eurobarometer 90” (European Parliament, 2018c), a joint percentage of 71% of the general population feels “definitely” or “to some extent” European, with this percentage being 82% for the 15-24 age group and 76% for the 25-39 age group.

²² European Parliament. (2018c). Standard Eurobarometer 90 European Citizenship. Brussels: Directorate-General for Communication.

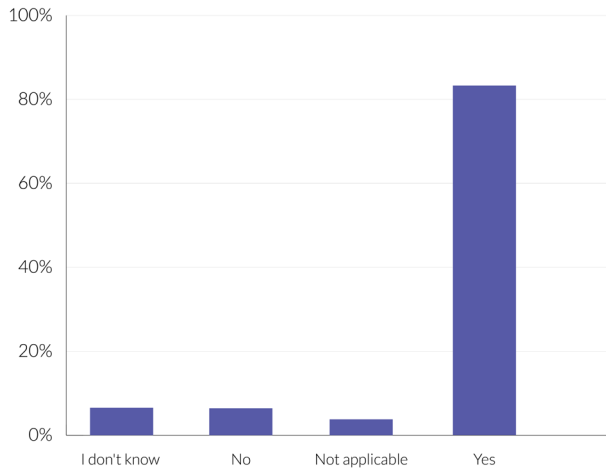


Figure 40 - Identifying as an EU citizen (n=14,681)

On the question of knowledge of their rights as EU citizens, 63.76% of respondents said they know their rights, 12.29% do not know their rights, 19.09% are not sure if they know them and for 4.86% this was not applicable.

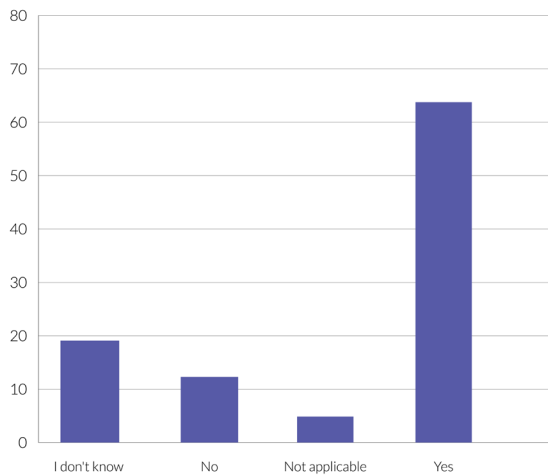


Figure 41 - Knowledge of citizens' rights in the EU (n=14,681)

Half of the respondents of this question (50.16%) are the ones who experienced some sort of exchange and almost two-thirds of them (66.02%) said that they know their rights. A total of 10.88% of respondents said they do not know their rights, while 18.62% are not sure if they know them. Almost one third (31.53%) never experienced any kind of exchange. Their knowledge of their rights as EU citizens is slightly smaller: 61.37% know their rights, 14.52% do not know their rights, 19.51% do not know if they know them, and for 4.60% this was not applicable. The results for those currently studying abroad (18.31%) are similar.

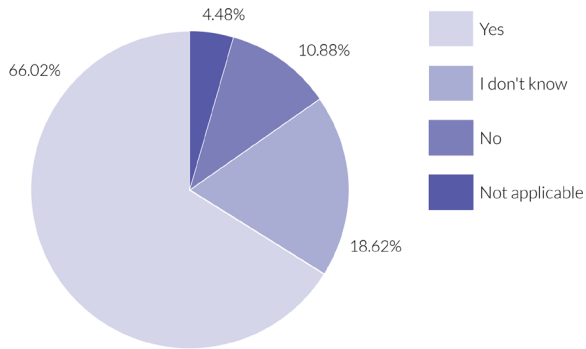


Figure 42 - Knowledge of EU citizens' rights amongst alumni of exchange programmes (n=7,364)

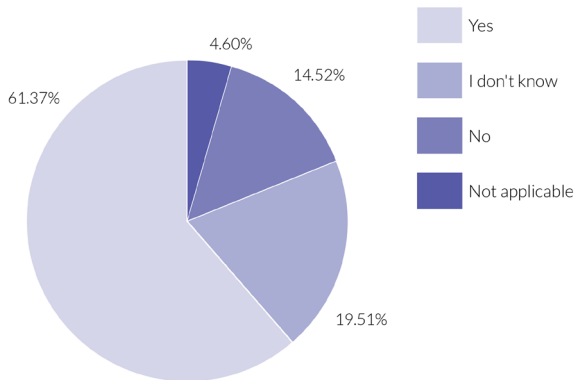


Figure 43 - Knowledge of EU citizens' rights amongst non-mobile students (n=4,629)

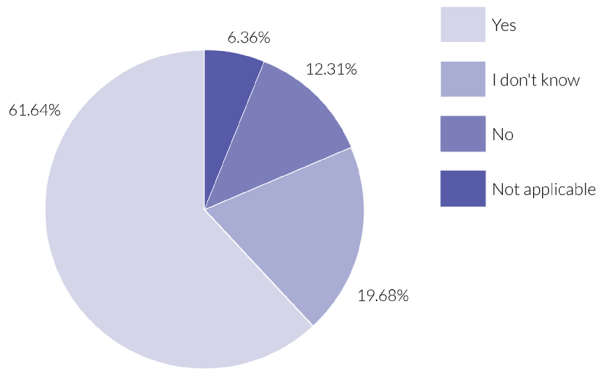


Figure 44 - Knowledge of EU citizens' rights amongst students currently on exchange (n=1,657)

The European average of knowing rights as an EU citizen is 55%, but younger populations can reach up to 63% (15-24) and 61% (25-39) (European Parliament, 2018c).

Connected with the previous question and relating to the general knowledge on their rights, the respondents were asked if they would like to know more about their rights. Overall, 83.62% would like to know more about their rights, 4.75% do not want to know more, 6.85% do not know if they want to know and for 4.79% this was not applicable.

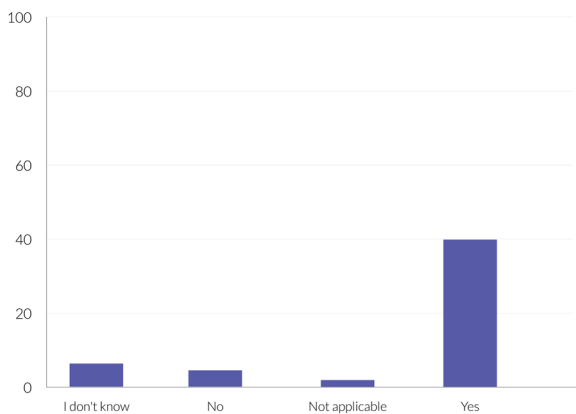


Figure 45 - Willingness to learn more about EU citizens' rights (n=14,681)

Out of the 63.76% of people who said they know their rights as citizens of EU, 86.25% said they would like to know more about them, while only 5.36% said they do not want to know more. Finally, 10.88% of respondents said they do not know their rights, but 86.53% of these would like to know more about them. In both cases, the percentage of people wanting to learn more about their right is higher than the European average of 66% (European Parliament, 2018c).

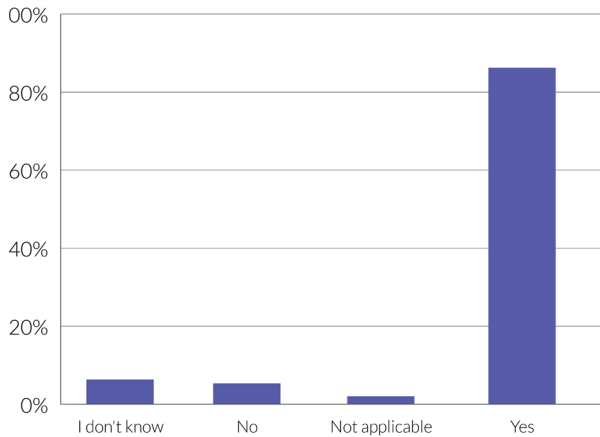


Figure 46- Willingness to learn more about EU citizens' rights by informed respondents (n=9,360)

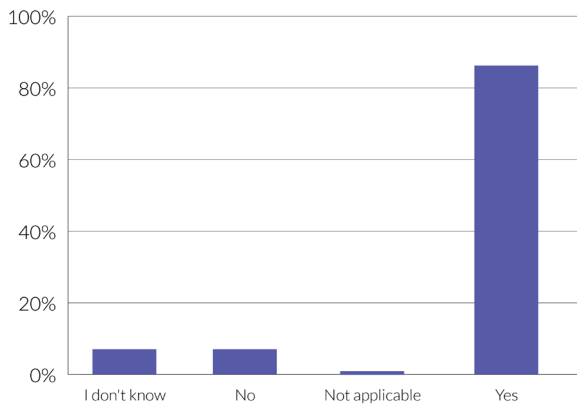


Figure 47- Willingness to learn more about EU citizens' rights by non-informed respondents (n=1,804)

Feelings towards EU citizenship

On the question “Which of the following things would do most to strengthen your feeling of being a European citizen?”, respondents were presented with a multiple choice question between fifteen statements, “None of the above” and “Do not know the answer”. The top five answers chosen were: “Being able to live anywhere in the EU after you retire and draw your pension there directly” (58.37%), “A European social welfare system harmonised between the member states (health, pensions, etc.)” (55.55%), “The generalised recognition of national qualifications in every EU country, without fresh examinations” (50.15%), “European civic education classes starting in primary school” (46.64%) and “European emergency services to combat international natural disasters” (45.96%). The top results show that there is a connection between economic and social rights and feelings towards European citizenship within the specific population addressed by this study. As most of our respondents have experienced student mobility and since studies such as the Erasmus Impact Study (European Commission, 2014) have shown that this population is more ready to work and start a family abroad, the outcomes of this question in our survey seem to confirm this tendency.

If we compare the results of our respondents with the ones from the “Eurobarometer 79.5” (European Parliament, 2013)²³, we can find the same top three key aspects ranked for strengthening European identity: pensions, harmonisation of social welfare systems and qualifications. However, there is a significant difference when we compare the results of our population with the ones from “Eurobarometer 79.5”: our fourth key aspect, which is “European civic education classes starting in primary school” was marked by 46.64%, whereas in the results of “Eurobarometer 79.5”, it is situated in eighth place with 20%.

²³ European Parliament. (2013). Eurobarometer 79.5 One year to go to the 2014 European Elections. Brussels: Directorate-General for Communication.

Values	Total (absolute)	Total (%)	Total (EU average in %)
Being able to live anywhere in the EU after you retire and draw your pension there directly	8570	58.37	34.00
A European social welfare system harmonised between the member states (health, pensions, etc.)	8156	55.55	41.00
The generalised recognition of national qualifications in every EU country, without fresh examinations	7363	50.15	31.00
The generalised recognition of national qualifications in every EU country, without fresh examinations	6847	46.64	20.00
European emergency services to combat international natural disasters	6748	45.96	24.00
A European identity card in addition to your national identity card	6508	44.33	24.00
Being able to shop online in all EU countries at the same price and with the same consumer protection legislation	5409	36.84	16.00
EU embassies in countries outside the EU	4237	28.86	10.00
Having the right to vote in all the elections held in the Member State where you live, even if you are not a citizen of this member state	4078	27.78	23.00
The replacement of national income tax with a European income tax	2833	19.30	13.00
A European army	2460	16.76	11.00
Seeing a European researcher win a Nobel prize	1969	13.41	5.00
A European Olympic team	1612	10.98	6.00
Other	870	5.93	2.00
I don't know	809	5.51	5.00
You don't want to be a European citizen/you don't feel like a European citizen (Spontaneous)	349	2.38	6.00
None of the above	294	2.00	11.00

Table 5 - Actions strengthening the feeling of being European (n=14,681)

Conclusion

Hence, from the numbers extracted from this part of the questionnaire, it can be understood that there is a connection between student mobility and positive feelings towards the European Union. The respondents of our survey emphasised their wish for a stronger Europe that can grant more economic and social rights, while not being so keen to defend a European project based on a common army or sports team. Studying abroad also has a slightly positive impact on the citizens' knowledge about their rights as EU citizens, the majority of which identify themselves both as their nationality and as European.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions of this study show clear trends that can only be addressed with adequate strategies based on strong political will. To solve the challenges and strengthen the good practices identified by this ESNsurvey, ESN calls for:

The EU Member-States and the European Commission must work together to provide more opportunities for EU citizens to learn about their rights and enhance their knowledge on the functioning of the European Union.

When asked about what could strengthen the feeling of being European, one of the most popular options was European civic education classes from primary school. This is related to a clear appetite to gain more knowledge about how the EU works, a fact in line with the European Commission's wish to strengthen education about the EU at all levels, as stated in its contribution to the informal Sibiu Summit on the 9th of May 2019. It is also in line with our respondents' positive understanding of the EU's economic and social added-value. The European dimension of citizenship must be part of every student's curriculum and practiced frequently, a challenging task that can only be fulfilled through a collaboration between national governments and the EU but also between schools and civil society organisations.

National governments and Parliaments must provide a stronger support to and recognise the role of civil society organisations as enablers of an active citizenship.

The survey responses demonstrate a positive perception of civil society organisations, including their capacity to influence decision-making. Erasmus+ Alumni also use them as platforms to learn and become more engaged citizens. A stronger support for the work of these organisations could take many forms, such as a better legal framework that ensures their representation in decision-making and long-term financing of the services and opportunities they provide. As the space for civil society shrinks around the world, including in some EU Member-States, such consideration for the work done by organisations representing civil society could send a strong signal that being an active citizen is taken seriously and should not be limited to voting.

National governments across the EU must work together to harmonise electoral rules and procedures for voters studying abroad.

A clear result from this ESNsurvey is that students vote less when abroad. Students face practical and procedural challenges to vote during their exchange even though they want to vote, according to our results. This is a paradoxical fact when they are not able to cast their vote on the future of the EU because of their participation in a EU-financed programme. As the EU and its members look into ways to reduce abstention, it is clear that the disparity of the voting procedures across the EU is an objective obstruction to the exercise of the European dimension of citizenship, hurting one of its core elements.

The European Parliament and the responsible national authorities must enhance and increase the visibility of information on how to vote from abroad.

One of the most fundamental elements of democracy is having access to clear information on how to vote, also from abroad. Our study shows that only one out of every five respondents were fully aware of how to vote from abroad. The European Parliament has created a website (european-elections.eu) dedicated to provide this information but work must be done to increase its visibility and the usefulness of the instructions provided for exchange students.

Higher Education Institutions must foster genuine contact and dialogue between international students and local communities as an integral part of the Erasmus+ Programme.

When asked about the reasons to study abroad most respondents chose “I am/was interested in knowing/experiencing other cultures” (87.16%) followed by “Erasmus or other programmes give a student and future employee added-value” (59.47%). These numbers show how relevant the intercultural experience is for Erasmus+ participants and how much this Programme is about building a shared European consciousness. Programmes like SocialErasmus foster this dialogue and instigate students to “give back” to their host societies, thus practicing active citizenship while abroad. This practice allows them to later become more engaged Erasmus+ Alumni, as shown by the numbers of this study.

The European Commission, with the adequate financial support of its Member-States, must properly address the financial barriers limiting access to student mobility through a more generous and sophisticated grant system.

This ESNsurvey is yet another study proving that financial barriers are

still the number one reason for students not to study abroad. The Erasmus+ Programme needs a more robust financial envelope that can match the expectations of the European citizens - and politicians. This study shows that Erasmus+ alumni perceive the EU in a more positive manner and are better informed about its added-value. Since Euroscepticism is also related to lack of understanding of the added-value of the EU, a proper investment in Erasmus+ equals an investment in the future of the EU as a whole and in creating a generation of Europeans who actually feel European.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gathering a combined total of almost 20,000 responses has only been possible thanks to the help of all the local associations of the Erasmus Student Network and the support of many other associations and institutions active in the field of international education.

ESN wishes to thank the representatives of the European Commission for their kind and highly appreciated support of the ESNsurvey project. Our gratitude goes to all the National Erasmus+ Agencies and Higher Education Institutions that helped us promote this important research project of ESN to their students and members to reach a higher and more diverse audience.

The ESNsurvey benefited from a grant called “Erasmus in Action”²⁴, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme through the Belgian-Flemish Agency for Youth, JINT. It also received support from the grant “Erasmus Participation in Elections”, from the European Parliament²⁵. We are thankful for the support and trust from both institutions which made this a viable study.

The authors would also like to thank the representatives of the organisations they met in Brussels: the Directorate-General for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports of the European Commission, the Lifelong Learning Platform, and the European Parliament. We also appreciate all time spent by experienced ESNers and external consultants who supported the preparation of the final report by reviewing and providing valid suggestions: Oana Dumitrescu from the European Commission, Andrew Todd from the Lifelong Learning Platform, Agata Lech, Angela Russo, and Wim Gabriels. Our gratitude goes also to Inês Sá for the graphic design, Joana Ribau Leite and Benedikt Baecker from ESN’s International Committee for Education for meritorical support. Special thanks to the President of ESN AISBL 2019/2020 Kostis Giannidis, the ESN Secretariat’s Director Rasmus Benke-Åberg, and the Liaison Officer towards the Lifelong Learning Platform João Costa for supporting the project. And certainly, thank you to 14,681 respondents of the main questionnaire, and 4,381 respondents of the follow-up questionnaire helping us in reaching a high total of 19,062 answers to the ESNsurvey 2019.

The promotion this year was also supported by commercial partners. A competition was organized and the winners of a lottery organized for the

24 2018-1-BE05-KA205-002386.

25 We are thankful for the support and trust from both institutions which made this a viable study.

respondents received the Ultimate Ears Loudspeakers. They were randomly selected and the results were announced on ESN's social media on the 9th of July.

Last but not least, the ESNsurvey final report is a product of countless days of work of the ESNsurvey team, composed of ESN members from different countries and cultures. It consists of **João Pinto** (Portugal), President of ESN International 2017/2019, **Robert Banet** (Poland), ESNsurvey Project Manager 2018/2019, **Nata Japiashvili** (Georgia), **Kyriaki Rousou** (Cyprus), and **Tina Kristina Katava** (Croatia).

The ESNsurvey 2019 Team started their one-year term on the 1st of November 2018, and since then worked continuously, mostly online, on further statistical analysis and the final report. They met twice to plan work, organise questionnaires, meet stakeholders, and discuss the analysis of the results of the surveys in Brussels, Belgium, in February 2019 and in Cologne, Germany, in June 2019.

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ABOUT ESN

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is the biggest inter-disciplinary European student organisation in the field of mobility. ESN is a non-political, non-profit and non-religious organisation with over 15,000 volunteer members from local student groups (so-called sections) in more than 1,000 Higher Education Institutions in 41 countries. Supported by so-called buddies, ESN involves around 40,000 young people. ESN supports educational, social and cultural integration of international students and provides practical information for incoming and outgoing students about various exchange programmes. It was born on the 16th October 1989 and legally registered in 1990 for supporting and developing student exchange.

Furthermore, ESN provides intercultural experiences to students who cannot access a period abroad (internationalisation at home). The vision of ESN is the enrichment of society through international students – thus, ESN works to foster the mobility of students under the principle of Students Helping Students. The organisation provides its services annually to about 350,000 international students in Europe and beyond. ESN's activities comprise hundreds of projects developed at all levels.

ESNsurvey (<https://esn.org/esnsurvey>) is a European-wide research project covering different topics concerning mobility and education. It is conducted annually and surveys students at higher education institutions, with an average response rate of 14,000 answers. Starting in 2005, the ESNsurvey is the biggest regular European research project planned and carried out entirely by students for students. So far, it has investigated the following topics – Experience of Studying Abroad (2005), Exchange Students' Rights (2006), Generation Mobility (2007), Exchanging Cultures (2008), Information for Exchange (2009), E-Value-ate Your Exchange (2010), Exchange, Employment and Added Value (2011), Exchange: Creating Ideas, Opportunities and Identity (2013), International Experience and Language Learning (2014) and Local integration, economic impact and accompanying measures in international mobility (2015), The International Friendliness of Universities (2016), Mapping the challenges and enablers of mobility for students with disabilities (2018), and finally, Active citizenship and student exchange in light of the European elections (2019).

The Erasmus Student Network is a full member of the European Youth

Forum and is a member of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe. ESN is also a courtesy member of the European Association for International Education, a full member of the Informal Forum of International Student Organisations (IFISO), the European Movement International (EMI), the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) and the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLp).

CONTACT

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