

Representative survey of young adults regarding their attitudes towards the EU and their appraisal of European projects

Results

Contents

Summary	Page 3
Europe in people’s personal lives.....	Page 4
Political attitudes towards Europe.....	Page 8
Expectations towards the EU	Page 11
European projects and policy fields	Page 15
Survey design	Page 20

About TerraEuropa

TerraEuropa is an international platform in order for young adults to exchange their ideas on Europe among themselves and with representatives from politics, business and society. It was initiated by Michel Marlière, a French entrepreneur who chose to live in Germany. In the face of growing euroscepticism and separatism, he aims to encourage the young generation to more actively engage in Europe and participate more strongly in shaping the European House.

TerraEuropa cooperates with Stiftung Genshagen, the French university Sciences Po, the Free University Berlin and the Franco-German Youth Office. Ipsos, the international market and social research company, is partner for opinion research.

Summary

How does the young generation see Europe? Is the Union as important to young Europeans as it was to generations before them? How satisfied are they with the EU's policies? In this representative survey, performed by marketing research institute Ipsos, 1,006 German and 1,003 French young adults aged 18 to 29 provide answers on how the European Union influences their lives. And why they feel so little concerned by political decisions.

The good news: Europe is so self-evident for this generation that more than one third of all respondents can imagine living in other European countries. Yet, the study shows equally well that respondents barely identify with the EU's policies. For Europe to also become a political home for them, young Europeans wish for concrete common projects by all EU members in the fields of education, the environment and sustainable energy. That way, the young generation's Europe has a future.

Europe in people's personal lives

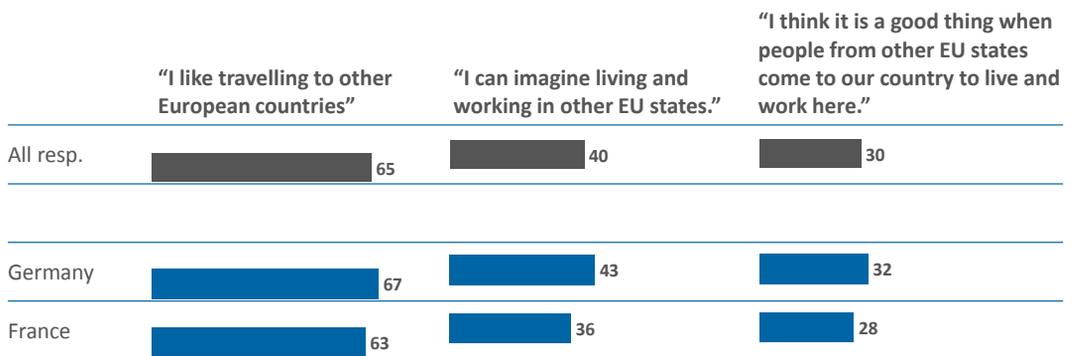
Although young adults essentially appreciate Europe as a travel destination – two thirds of the respondents like travelling to other European countries – as many as 40 percent can imagine working and living abroad within the European Union.

In their daily lives, they first and foremost experience Europe as a monetary and economic union: Far more than half of the respondents say that the Euro has the greatest impact on their lives. Merely one third, in turn, feels personally affected by EU Commission decisions. Europe is thus tangible as an economic area, while people have a hard time grasping Europe as a political entity.

Citizens' individual self-conceptions remain closely tied to the national level, notably in France; yet more than one third of respondents also say that belonging to Europe is important to them. Anything European is greatly valued by the young generation and does not compete with national identity.

Europe is more than a travel destination

Europe is a travel destination and yet so much more than that: 65 percent take advantage of the open borders and like to travel to other European countries. Frenchmen and Germans differ little in that respect. 40 percent of all respondents can even imagine living and working in another EU country. Here, the difference between France and Germany is slightly bigger. All in all however, there is a great, shared and common interest in Europe.



Base: all respondents n=2,009; Germany n=1,006; France n=1,003
 Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
 Aggregate percentage: agreement is composed of answers 5&6 (Scale 1-6)

At the same time, these developments are seen more sceptically the other way around: Only 30 percent (32 percent in Germany, 28 percent in France) welcome other EU citizens’ coming to their own country to live and work there. Thanks to the qualitative interviews that were carried out with young adults in Berlin and Paris in order to attain to deeper insights in addition to the present survey, we know that this scepticism is due to fears of increasing competition among European peers, i.e. fears of a “fight club Europe”.

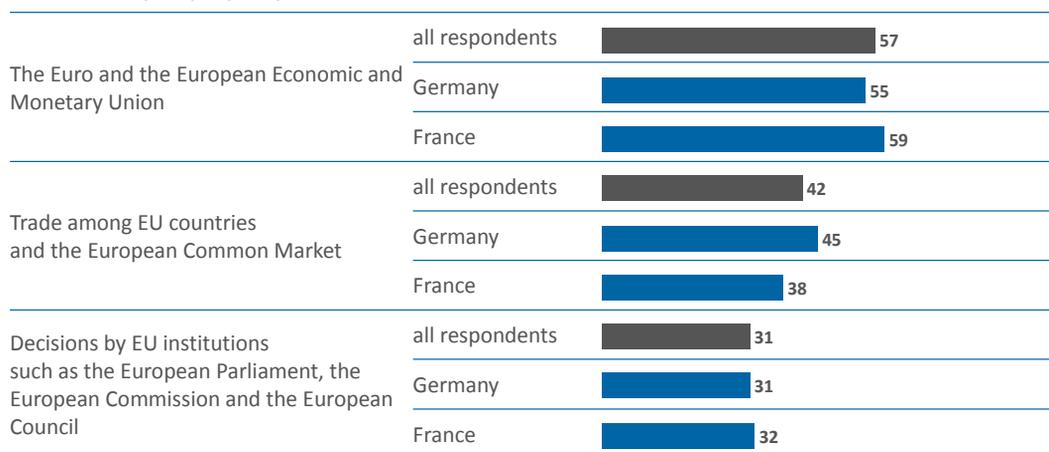
People’s high readiness to move is also shown in other studies, such as for instance the European Commission’s Eurobarometer*. The Eurobarometer however shows that only 14 percent of EU citizens aged 15 to 35 actually went abroad for study or education purposes (in Germany: 21 percent , in France: 14 percent). To what extent young adults perceive Europe as a living space they really use remains an unanswered question.

*European Commission: Flash Eurobarometer on Youth on the Move 13 May 2011 (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-11-292_en.htm)

Europe as an economic area, political institutions are hardly present

Europe mainly has an impact on people's personal lives because of the Euro. This is what 57 percent of young adults say. 42 percent moreover believe that the Common Market and trade among EU member states has great influence on their everyday lives.

What does impact people's personal lives?



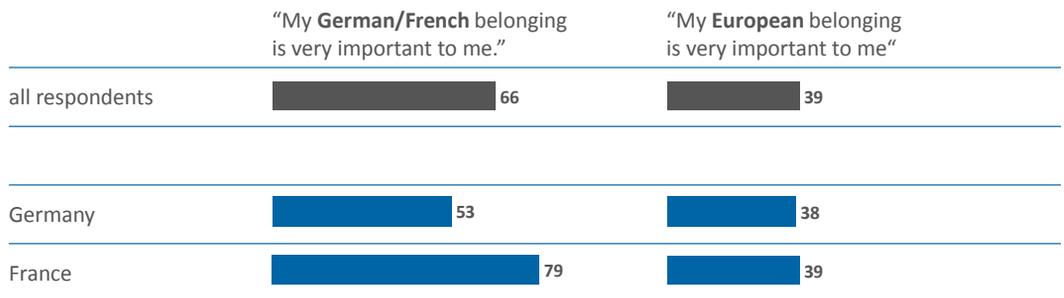
Base: all respondents n=2,009; Germany n=1,006; France n=1,003
 Question: What do you think: How strongly do the following aspects impact your personal life?
 Aggregate percentage: "important" is composed of answers 5&6 (Scale 1-6)

Only one third of the respondents perceive their own lives to be affected by EU institutions' decisions. The political authorities and their influence remain scanty tangible in everyday life – and this has nothing to do with the level of education and the individual's employment situation (not in the graph).

In their everyday lives, young Europeans primarily perceive Europe as an economic area. "Political Europe", in turn, is said to remain diffuse as far as respondents' daily realities are concerned.

Nationally framed self-conceptions, yet also European consciousness

Young adults primarily define their identities on the basis of nationality. Two thirds of respondents from Germany and France consequently say that their respective national belonging is important to them. 39 percent of young Europeans yet consider their European belonging to be equally important.



Base: all respondents n=2,009; Germany n=1,006; France n=1,003
Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
Aggregate percentage: agreement is composed of answers 5&6 (Scale 1-6)

When comparing the two countries, there are obvious and considerable differences in Germans’ and Frenchmen’s national consciousness. In France, national belonging clearly is important (79 percent). Germans are more diffident (53 percent). For much more than one third of respondents from both countries, belonging to Europe is very important. For them, national and European consciousness do not compete with each other.

Political attitudes towards Europe

In young adults' everyday lives, all things European clearly are relevant. There is, however, a lot of indifference when it comes to politics: One respondent in ten thinks that EU membership is “not important“, about one third do not have an opinion on the matter. This sort of attitude is more common in France than in Germany.

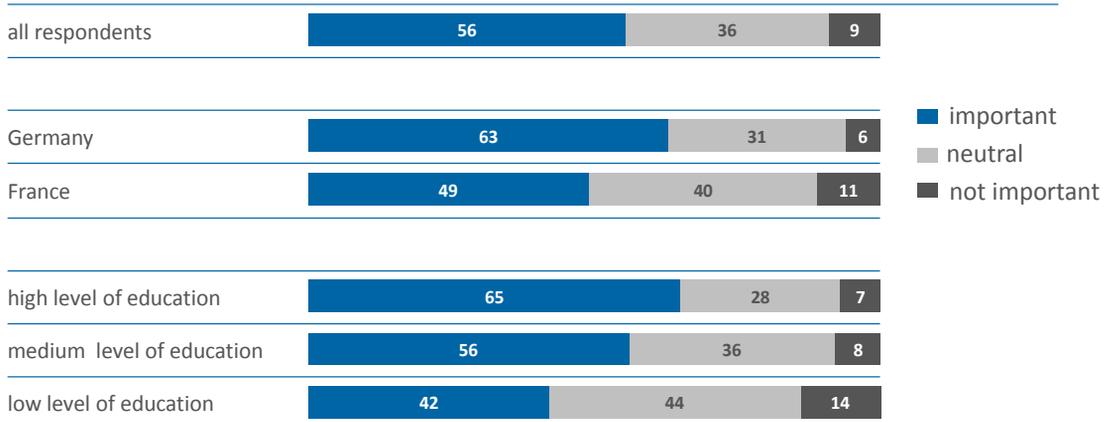
In the majority of young Europeans' eyes, the advantages of EU membership prevail. Yet, especially in France, that result is by a narrow margin: 36 percent of French respondents believe that EU membership is beneficial for France, 31 percent primarily see disadvantages. Assessments are more positive in Germany, though even there, one respondent in five (23 percent) has doubts on the EU's overall benefits.

Political attitudes towards EU membership are heavily dependent on education. Young adults with a low level of education hold much more Eurosceptic views in both countries; the EU is on the verge of losing them.

EU membership's relevance is not always clear to young people

For 56 percent of the respondents, their country's membership in the EU is an important achievement. Almost one in ten (9 percent) nevertheless says that EU membership is "not important" and slightly more than one third (36 percent) act indifferent. The EU's political relevance has not yet become self-evident to young Europeans from France and Germany.

How important is EU membership for Germany respectively France?



Base: all respondents n=2,009; Germany n=1,006; France n=1,003; level of education high n=433; medium n=1,255; low n=433
 Question: How important is EU membership for Germany/France?
 Aggregate percentage: "not important" is composed of answers 1&2, "neutral" of 3&4 and "important" of 5&6

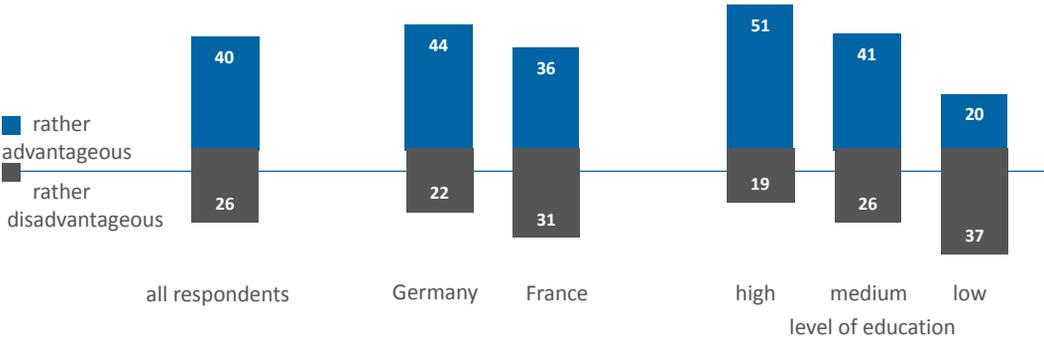
There are considerable differences among the countries: respondents in Germany clearly see higher relevance for Europe (63 percent) than respondents in France (49 percent).

In both countries, levels of education matter greatly. Respondents with higher levels of education far more often consider their country's EU membership to be important (65 percent) than respondents with a lower level of education (42 percent). Moreover, the majority of respondents with a low level of education (44 percent) have no opinion at all on participation in the European community of states.

Advantages with EU membership prevail, depending on the level of education

In both countries, the prevailing opinion is that EU membership is rather beneficial for Germany and France respectively. In Germany, Europe-friendly views are much more common than in France.

Is EU membership rather advantageous or rather disadvantageous for Germany respectively France?



Base: all respondents n=2,009; Germany n=1,006; France n=1,003; level of education high n=433; medium n=1,255; low n=433
 Question: Is membership in the EU rather advantageous or rather disadvantageous for Germany/France? Assuming that it represents zero, the neutral answer is not depicted.

Yet again, comparing on the basis of levels of education is interesting. While young adults with high levels of education (in both countries) predominantly make positive assessments, respondents with low levels of education hold more negative opinions. EU membership has obvious acceptance issues with the latter group.

Expectations towards the EU

The young generation is discontent with the current state of affairs in Europe. In both France and Germany, only one respondent in ten believes that the EU should stay the way it is.

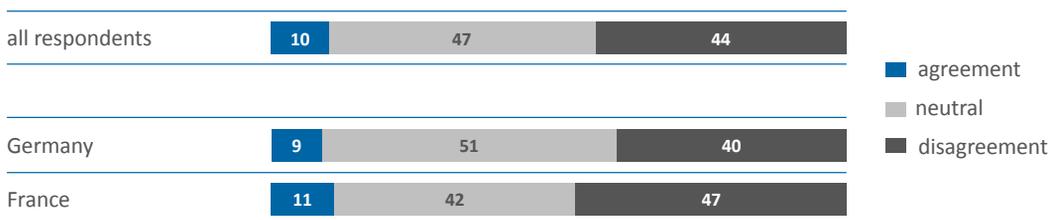
Europe is at the crossroads: 43 percent advocate more European integration, 45 percent more independence for the member states. German respondents are slightly more Europe-friendly than the French ones. And the level of education also matters: The lower the level of education, the higher the preference for nation-state level approaches .

There is a need for action in Europe – this is the majority appraisal in both countries. More acceptance for the EU can emerge through determinedly and successfully implementing concrete political projects – as is expected by 55 percent of the respondents.

Discontent with the EU's state of affairs

The European Union's current state of affairs is met with little approval by the young generation. Only one respondent in ten thinks that the EU should stay the way it currently is. Almost every other (44 percent) explicitly disapproves of this.

"The EU should stay as it currently is."

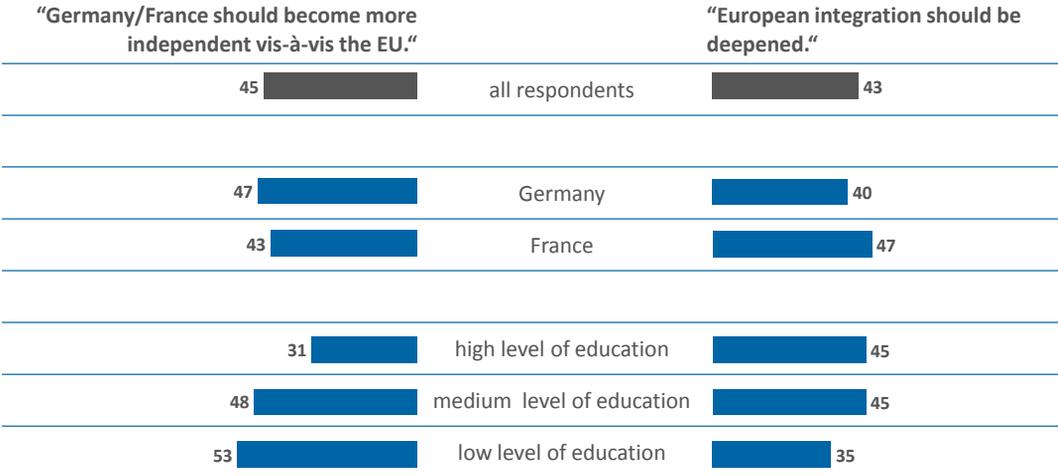


Base: all respondents n=2,009; Germany n=1,006; France n=1,003
Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
Aggregate percentage: "disagreement" is composed of answers 1&2, "neutral" of 3&4 and "agreement" of 5&6

Germany and France differ little in that respect. The above described dissatisfaction occurs at all levels of education and irrespective of respondents' professional situation (not in the graph).

The unresolved question of integration vs. independence

How should the European Union develop? In that respect, opinions are divided: 45 percent of the respondents believe that Germany and France respectively should become more independent vis-à-vis the EU; almost equally as many (43 percent) favour deepened European integration.



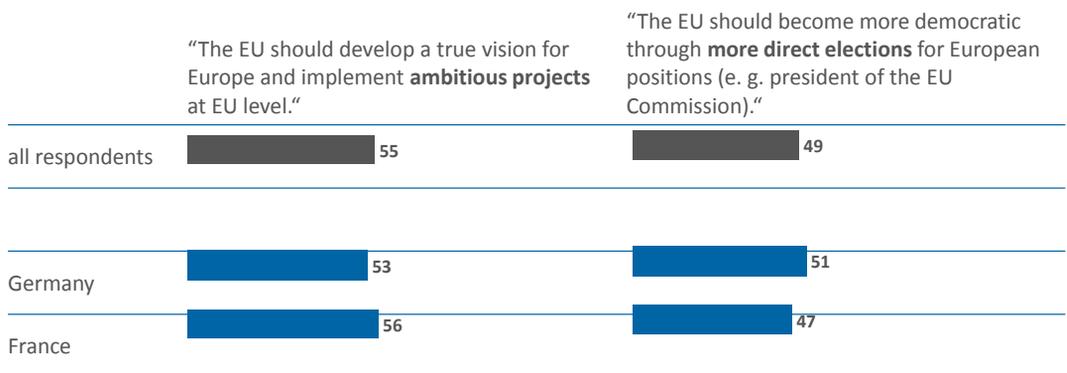
Base: all respondents n=2,009; Germany n=1,006; France n=1,003; level of education high n=433; medium n=1,255; low n=433
 Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
 Aggregate agreement in percentages, composed of answers 5&6 (Scale 1-6)

Germany has a slightly stronger tendency towards more independence than France.

Attitudes diverge more strongly when compared on the basis of levels of education. The call for more independence for the respective state is particularly common among respondents with a low level of education (53 percent), while it is rarer among respondents with a high level of education (31 percent).

More acceptance through the implementation of concrete projects

Young Frenchmen and Germans agree again: There is a need for action for Europe. 55 percent of all respondents think that the European Union must develop a true vision for Europe and implement ambitious political projects at the European level. Concrete actions are necessary.



Base: all respondents: Total n=2,009; Germany n=1,006; France n=1,003
 Question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
 Aggregate percentage: agreement is composed of answers 5&6

Almost as many (49 percent) call for more democracy in Europe, for instance through direct elections for important European positions.

European projects and policy fields

Education, the environment and energy are on top of the agenda for Europe, as seen from the young generation's vantage point. Both Germans and Frenchmen demand constructive, joint efforts by all European states in order to find future-proof solutions.

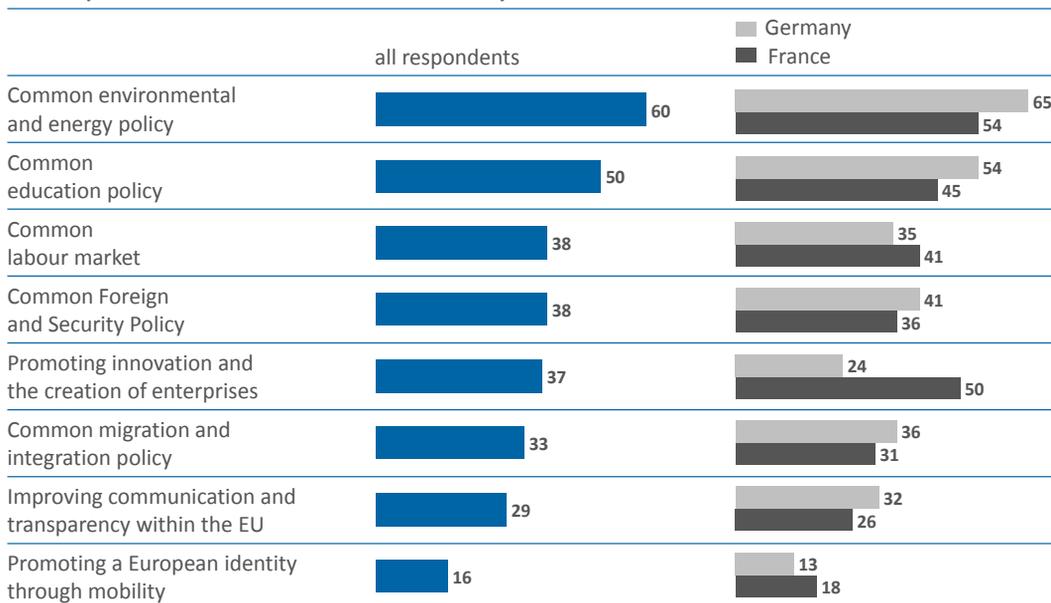
A sustainable and "green" energy policy is a priority in both Germany and France. Almost three quarters of the respondents in both countries advocate the fast and consistent further development of renewable energy, bolstered research activities in order to increase energy efficiency and an EU energy policy with greater overall coherence.

The efforts undertaken so far in order to harmonise paths to education and training in Europe are not enough in the young adults' eyes: 82 percent advocate pan-European recognition of university degrees and vocational training. Another demand pertains to including pupils in Erasmus programmes.

The most urgent need for action is in the fields of energy and education

As far as the key issues are concerned, Germans and Frenchmen agree: the conviction that a common environmental and energy policy should be on top of the European agenda is shared by a total of 60 percent of the respondents. Joint solutions at the European level are necessary.

What topics should the EU address more intensively?



Base: all respondents n=2,009; Germany n=1,006; France n=1,003

Question: Below is a list of eight areas in which the European Union is more or less active. We are interested in knowing what topics you think the EU should address more intensively. Please select the three topics you consider most important.

A common educational policy ranks second on the agenda (50 percent). The topic directly impacts the respondents. Both Frenchmen and Germans wish for more harmonised paths to (further) education.

Beyond energy and education, opinions on priorities differ only slightly. When it comes to supporting innovation and starting enterprises, Frenchmen see a lot more EU responsibility than their German counterparts. A Common Foreign and Security Policy, in turn, is more important in Germany. Unlike in France, it ranks ahead of a common labour market.

The survey also shows: promoting a European identity is of rather secondary importance. A European identity cannot be decreed; at best, it arises through concrete common projects.

Proposals for a sustainable environmental and energy policy

Within the framework of the survey, respondents were asked to assess policy fields previously identified as urgent by students of political science from Germany and France.

What concrete measures are important in energy policy?



Base: Respondents who considered this policy field important(n=741)

Question: You have selected three topics as particularly important for the European Union. For these three topics, we now present you with concrete measures. We are interested in finding out how important you consider the respective measures to be.

As far as environmental and energy policies were concerned, the young adults consistently advocate more sustainability. They demand greater efforts, both in terms of scientific research on increased efficiency in using energy and in terms of production, storage and distribution of renewables (73 percent each). Moreover, they believe that fair pricing for green electricity and the build-up of intelligent grids are equally important (69 percent for both).

For young adults, solving the environmental, climate and energy problems will clearly not happen at the national level, but at the European level. They demand a consistent European energy policy (69 percent).

Differences between Germans and Frenchmen in terms of their attitudes towards the proposed measures are negligible (not in the graph). The energy revolution is a common concern for the young generation in France and Germany.

Measures in order to harmonise education policies

The Bologna process has clearly not led to satisfying results yet. 82 percent of the young adults in the survey ask for university and vocational training degrees to be recognised throughout Europe. As many as 55 percent would like to see a European secondary education diploma. The majority think that further harmonisation in education would be desirable. Half of the respondents say that creating a European ministry of education would be useful for coordination purposes.

What concrete measures are important in education policy?

Recognising university and vocational training degrees throughout Europe (82 %)

Introducing a common European secondary education diploma in all EU member states (55 %)

Creating a European ministry of education in order to coordinate all cross-national education programmes (50 %)

More strongly adapting research and teaching at universities to businesses' needs (57 %)

Facilitating a several months long stay in another EU country for all European pupils 15 or more years of age (60 %)

Obligation for foreign language teachers to spend at least one year as a language assistant in the country where the language they teach is spoken (53 %)

Base: Respondents who considered this policy field important(n=741)

Question: You have selected three topics as particularly important for the European Union. For these three topics, we now present you with concrete measures. We are interested in finding out how important you consider the respective measures to be.

Another measure many agree with (60 percent) consists of facilitating a longer stay in another EU country for all European pupils aged 15 or older. Targeted support in learning languages is generally very important: 53 percent demand that all foreign language teachers must have worked at least one year in a country where the language they teach is spoken.

Starting points for labour market regulations

Youth unemployment in Europe is an issue that very much affects the young generation in both Germany and France. 68 percent demand guaranteed vocational training opportunities for unemployed youths.

What concrete measures are important on a common labour market?



Base: Respondents who considered this policy field important (n=741)

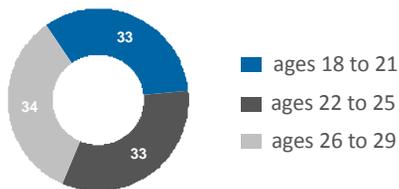
Question: You have selected three topics as particularly important for the European Union. For these three topics, we now present you with concrete measures. We are interested in finding out how important you consider the respective measures to be.

Moreover, people who want to work abroad should receive concrete support, for example through language classes (67 percent). 63 percent are in favour of introducing industry-specific minimum wages in the entire EU, determined in relation to the different countries' spending power.

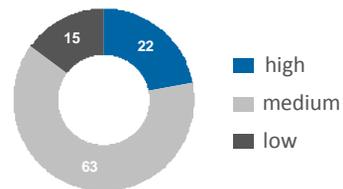
Survey design

Results are based on online interviews with 2.009 young adults aged 18 to 29, half of them from Germany and France respectively, in April 2013. The study is therefore representative for this age class in both countries.

Age



Highest level of education attained*



Implementation



Ipsos Loyalty GmbH

Analysis/Report

A&B One

A&B One Kommunikationsagentur GmbH

*Definitions levels of education (according to completed, not currently pursued level of education)

- low: no completed level of education/ completed lower secondary education = equivalent to UNESCO'S International Standard Classification of Education Level 2
- medium: completed secondary education, completed vocational training , = equivalent to UNESCO'S International Standard Classification of Education Levels 3, 4 and 5
- high: university degree, = equivalent to UNESCO'S International Standard Classification of Education Level 6, 7 and 8

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