

Brussels, 10 October 2003

## **Eurobarometer survey in the acceding countries and candidate countries reveals young people's high expectations of the European Union**

*The lifestyles and personal aspirations of young people in the 10 acceding countries (the countries due to join the EU on 1 May 2004<sup>1</sup>) and in the three candidate countries<sup>2</sup> are relatively similar to those of young people in the 15 present Member States. These are the findings of a Eurobarometer survey of 10,000 young people conducted in the spring of 2003 for the European Commission's Education and Culture Directorate-General. The survey also shows that youngsters in these countries have different views from youngsters in the present EU on issues affecting society, as well as different expectations of the EU.*

"With 7 months to go until the biggest enlargement in the history of the European Union, it would appear that, in many respects, young people in the acceding and candidate countries share similar tastes and lifestyles to those of young people in the 15 existing EU Member States", emphasised Viviane Reding, the Commissioner for Education and Culture. "However, as the survey also shows, these young people have very high expectations of the Union, and these must be taken into account when preparing the next generation of European programmes for which I am responsible, and in which most of these countries are already participating."

In the course of this survey, conducted between 21 March and 4 May 2003, 9,754 young persons aged between 15 and 24 years were questioned face-to-face in their homes.

As the same questions were put to young people in the present European Union of 15 Member States in 2001, we can analyse what the two groups have in common and what they have apart.

### **Keen mobile phone users, but little involvement in clubs and societies**

Young people in the existing 15 Member States, the acceding countries and the candidate countries share three main leisure activities in common: watching television, listening to music and meeting up with friends.

However, twice as many young people in the acceding and candidate countries help with work around the house. They go less often to the cinema, to concerts or to the theatre, but slightly more of them enjoy reading.

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<sup>1</sup> Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia.

<sup>2</sup> Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

As regards information technology, more young people in the countries due to join the EU in 2004 than in the present EU use<sup>3</sup> :

- the computer: 63%, compared with 56%, use the computer at least once a week;
- the Internet: 50%, compared with 37%, use the Internet regularly;
- e-mail : 34%, compared with 31%.

The most commonly used form of technology is the mobile phone: three-quarters of young people in the acceding countries use a mobile phone every week (80% in EU 15).

Like their counterparts in EU 15, young people in the acceding and candidate countries have relatively little involvement in clubs and societies (over half do not belong to any club or society).

Like their counterparts in EU 15, they consider school to be the main way of learning to participate in society (26% put school in first place).

While they agree with their counterparts in EU 15 that in order to encourage participation there should be more information campaigns specifically targeted at young people, that they should be consulted before decisions are taken and that citizenship programmes should be introduced, a much higher proportion are in favour of schemes to encourage voluntary activities (51%, compared with 19% in EU 15) and of young people's associations (45%, compared with 28% in EU 15).

### **Less well-travelled, but more proficient in foreign languages**

56% of young people in the acceding and candidate countries, as against 63% in EU 15, have visited at least one foreign country in the past two years. 98% of young Turks, 82% of young Bulgarians and 78% of young Romanians have not visited any of the countries listed in the survey.

While the main reason for visiting a foreign country is the same for everyone – holidays – the destinations differ: young people from the acceding and candidate countries chiefly visited Germany, Austria, Italy, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, while young people from the present Union chiefly visited Spain and France.

The disincentive to mobility most commonly mentioned by both groups is the language problem. Nevertheless, the survey shows that a higher proportion of young people in the acceding and candidate countries than in the present Union know 1, 2 or 3 foreign languages (two thirds can take part in a conversation in a language other than their mother tongue, and only 17% know no foreign language at all, as opposed to 32% in EU 15).

As in EU 15, the main foreign language known by young people in the acceding and candidate countries is English (47%, compared with 50% in EU 15). This is followed by German (17%), Russian (8%) and French (7%).

Language proficiency is also cited as an essential skill for finding a good job (81% of the young people in the countries due to join in 2004, compared with 44% of their counterparts in the present Union).

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<sup>3</sup> But this finding could be due to the two years that separate the 2 Eurobarometers

## **Wider gap on issues affecting society**

Young people over 18 were asked how they felt their generation thought on various issues affecting society (the same issues as were asked about in the EU 15 Eurobarometer survey).

A higher proportion of young people in the acceding and candidate countries than in EU 15 think their generation favours compulsory AIDS testing (66% compared with 61%), compulsory medical treatment of paedophiles (74% compared with 62%), birth control for the poor (32% compared with 27%) and the death penalty (47% compared with 27%).

In contrast, a lower proportion think that their generation favours euthanasia (39% compared with 50% in EU 15), homosexual marriages (38% compared with 59%) and child adoption by homosexual couples (19% compared with 40%).

The gaps are even wider if we compare the data for all the acceding and candidate countries with the data for EU 15 (average difference: 20 percentage points).

These young people also gave their opinions regarding their perception of the presence of foreigners in their countries.

49% of young people in the acceding and candidate countries think there are not many foreigners in their country, compared with only 9% of respondents in the EU 15 survey. Also 46% (compared with 27% in the EU) think that foreigners should have the same rights as their own country's nationals, and 55% are happy to have foreigners in their country.

## **Greater dependence on the family**

This question was approached from the point of view of financial independence from the family home.

72% of the respondents in the acceding and candidate countries cite material difficulties: they can't afford a place of their own.

70% of young people in these countries say they get the majority of their income from their parents or families, compared with only 52% in the EU countries. The second main source of income is regular employment (18%, compared with 35% in the EU), and in third place comes occasional work (12%).

In 12 of the 13 countries in which the survey was conducted, young people's main source of income is the family. In Malta, the family and regular employment share equal place as young people's main source of income (43% in each case).

On the issue of unemployment, young people in the acceding and candidate countries have more categorical attitudes than those in the present Union.

Thus, if they found themselves unemployed most would accept a job, on condition that it was stable, well-paid and commensurate with their qualifications (22%). 18% of youngsters in the countries due to join the EU in 2004 take such an approach, while this possibility ranks only fourth among youngsters in the present Union (13%).

A comparison with the responses given by young people in the present EU reveals that the latter are more prepared to accept a job even if the job does not meet all the ideal conditions, or to undertake training in order to improve their chances of finding a job (12%).

However, slightly fewer young people in the present EU (13%) than in the acceding and candidate countries (15%) would be prepared to accept a job whatever the conditions.

### **High expectations of the European Union**

Young people in the 13 countries in which this survey was conducted have much higher expectations of the European Union. For them, the European Union chiefly signifies a better future (61% for the 13 countries and 47% for the 10 countries due to join in 2004, compared with 28% in EU 15), and this for three main reasons: more job opportunities, freedom to move wherever they want within the EU, a better quality of life thanks to a better economic situation.

Asked what the concept of European citizenship signifies to them, their responses are: the right to work anywhere in the EU (75%), the right to settle anywhere in the EU (70%) and the right to study anywhere in the EU (69%).

58% of young people in the acceding and candidate countries claim to have been informed about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, either in school or at university.

Asked what the EU's priorities should be, almost two thirds of the young respondents put education and training in first place, and the freedom to travel and study, to live and work wherever they want in the EU in second place.

For more details: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion/cceb\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/cceb_en.htm)

Frédéric Vincent : 02.298.71.66

Mona Lund : 02.299.90.20