



Attitudes towards vocational education and training

SUMMARY

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Special Eurobarometer 369

ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Conducted by TNS Opinion & Social at the request of
Directorate-General Education and Culture

Survey co-ordinated by Directorate-General
Communication

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union has identified Vocational Education and Training (VET) as an essential tool in its attempts to prepare young people for work in the modern economy and also in its bid to ensure that Europe remains competitive and innovative in the face of increasing global competition and shifting demographics.

Building on the 'Copenhagen Process'¹, which set out in 2002 to develop new European policies to improve the quality of VET in the EU, as well as some non-EU countries, the European Commission launched a ten-year plan in 2010 with the aims of encouraging more people into VET and of raising the standard of vocational training still further. This action falls within the wider 'Europe 2020' initiative², which is designed to ensure Europe's healthy development in a range of policy areas over the next decade. It also ties in with the Europe 2020 Flagship initiatives 'Youth on the Move'³ which aims to improve education and training systems, youth employment and mobility, as well as 'An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs'⁴, which aims to improve the relevance of education and training systems to labour market needs.

Announcing the initiative in June 2010, Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, said the plan was intended "to transform the image of vocational education and training across Europe and make it more relevant to today's realities"⁵. Specifically, this means: ensuring that access to training and qualifications is flexible and open to people of all ages; promoting mobility to make it easier for individuals to gain experience abroad or in different sectors of the economy; ensuring the highest possible quality of education and training; providing more opportunities for disadvantaged groups, such as the low-skilled and migrant workers; and nurturing creative, innovative and entrepreneurial thinking in students.

The details of the ten-year plan were finalised by European ministers in December 2010 and published in the Bruges Communiqué⁶. This communiqué discussed some specific initiatives through which "by 2020, European VET systems should be more attractive, relevant, career-oriented, innovative, accessible and flexible than [they were] in 2010". It also outlined a timetable for the individual projects that fall within the overall VET strategy.

¹ More information on the Copenhagen Process can be accessed here:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc1143_en.htm

² More detail on Europe 2020 can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

³ Information about Youth on the Move is accessible here: http://ec.europa.eu/youthonthemove/index_en.htm

⁴ Information about An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs is accessible here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=958>

⁵ The announcement of the initiative is available here:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/707&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

⁶ The text of the Bruges Communiqué can be read here: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf

Within this context, this Eurobarometer survey sets out to gauge the opinion of European citizens about vocational education and training in 2011 to help inform the work of the European Commission and Member States as they begin to implement the new VET strategy. It sets out to assess the image of vocational education and training, and people's impression of VET's potential benefits within the EU. It evaluates the impact of VET on society and on the economy, and looks at the factors that influence young people as they choose between VET and other forms of education.

In the course of this survey, 26,840 European citizens aged 15 and above were interviewed about VET by the TNS Opinion & Social network between the 4th and the 19th June 2011 in all 27 European Union Member States⁷, as requested by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture. The methodology used is that of surveys as carried out by the Directorate General for Communication ("Research and Speechwriting" Unit)⁸. A technical note on the methodology for interviews conducted by the institutes within the TNS Opinion & Social network is annexed to this report. This note indicates the interview methods and the confidence intervals⁹.

This summary is divided into three main sections and is structured as follows:

- The attractiveness of vocational education and training in the European Union
- Perceptions of the impact of vocational education and training in society
- Guidance and information for choosing a learning path

A more detailed report including complete analysis of the results is also available.

The Eurobarometer web site can be consulted at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the respondents throughout the continent who gave their time to take part in this survey.

Without their active participation, this survey would quite simply not have been possible.

⁷ Further information on the methodology used can be found in the technical note which specifies the interview methods as well as the confidence intervals.

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

⁹ The results tables are included in the annex. It should be noted that the total of the percentages in the tables of this report may exceed 100% when the respondent can give several answers to the same question.

In this report, the countries are referred to by their official abbreviation:

ABREVIATIONS

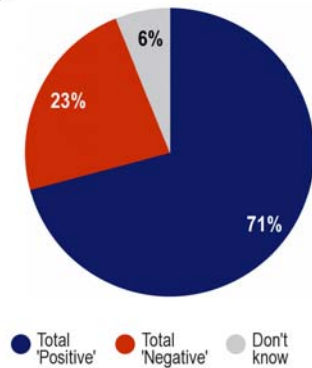
EU27	European Union – 27 Member States
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czech Republic
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
CY	Republic of Cyprus
LT	Lithuania
LV	Latvia
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	The Netherlands
AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom

1. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

1.1 The general image of Vocational Education and Training

- Most people in the EU think that VET has a positive image in their country, although this belief is held more strongly in some countries than in others -

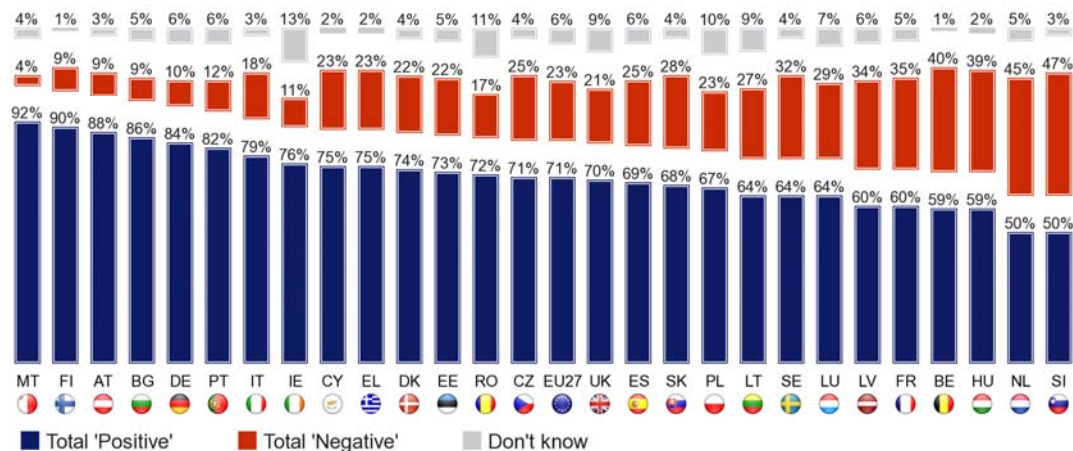
QA9. And do you think that vocational education and training has a very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative image in (OUR COUNTRY)?



European citizens generally think that vocational education and training has a positive image in their country, with nearly three quarters (71%) believing this to be the case¹⁰. However, that leaves around one in four respondents (23%) who think that VET has a negative image in their country.

At least 50% of people in all Member States think that vocational training and education has a positive image, but the differences between individual countries are considerable. At least three quarters of respondents in 10 countries say that vocational training has a positive image, with levels of approval highest in Malta (92%), Finland (90%) and Austria (88%). However, in Slovenia and the Netherlands only 50% of people say that vocational training has a positive image despite the fact that many people in those countries say they have taken VET themselves, especially those in the Netherlands¹¹.

QA9. And do you think that vocational education and training has a very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative image in (OUR COUNTRY)?



¹⁰ QA9: 'And do you think that vocational education and training has a very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative image in (OUR COUNTRY)?' Possible answers: very positive; fairly positive; fairly negative; very negative; don't know.

¹¹ In reference to chapter 1.1: The proportion of respondents who are taking/took VET.

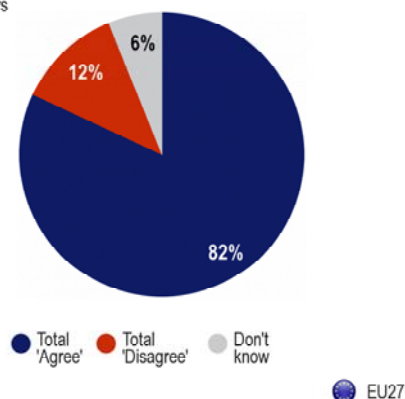
1.2 Perceptions of relevance of Vocational Education and Training provision for the labour market and learners' needs

1.2.1 Match-up between skills provided by VET and employers' needs

- There is widespread agreement that VET meets employers' expectation -

QA10.6. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

People in vocational education and training learn skills that are needed by employers



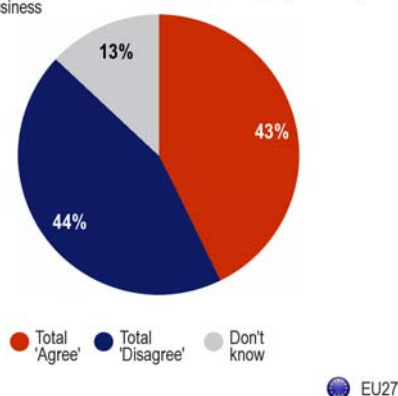
There is even stronger agreement across the EU that people in vocational education and training acquire skills that are needed by employers¹²: 82% of people think this, while only an eighth of respondents (12%) disagree. In fact, over 75% think that people in VET acquire skills that are needed by employers in all but four Member States: Hungary, where just 62% agree, Romania (68%), Lithuania and Slovenia (both 74%). Elsewhere, in Cyprus (95%) and Sweden (91%) for example, agreement is extremely high.

1.2.2 Preparing people to set up their own business through VET

- There is uncertainty about whether VET prepares people to set up their own business -

QA10.7. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training does not prepare people to set up their own business



Opinion is more divided on the question of whether vocational training prepares people for setting up their own business¹³. While 43% of people agree that VET does not prepare people for this, an almost identical number – 44% – disagree that this is the case. A majority of respondents agree that VET does not prepare people for setting up their own business in five countries – Hungary (62%), Italy (55%), Slovenia (53%), Lithuania and Denmark (both 51%) – though under one-third of respondents agree in the same number of Member States, with just 16% agreeing in Malta and 23% in Ireland.

¹² QA10.6: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statement: People in vocational education and training learn skills that are needed by employers.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

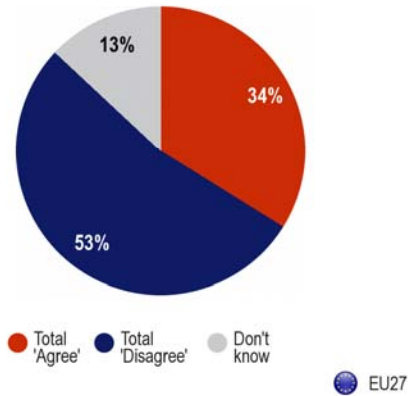
¹³ QA10.7: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statement: Vocational education and training does not prepare people to set up their own business.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

1.2.3 Provision of soft and transversal skills in VET

- Most respondents believe that VET teaches communication and teamwork -

QA10.8. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

In vocational education and training, people do not learn skills such as communication or teamwork,



There is a general belief among European citizens that VET teaches such skills as communication and teamwork¹⁴. Only one-third of respondents (34%) agree that VET does not teach these kinds of skills, whereas a little over half (53%) disagree with this position. A majority of respondents agree that VET fails to teach communication and teamwork skills in just three Member States: Hungary (60%), Italy (53%) and the Czech Republic (50%) (people in these countries also strongly agree that VET does not prepare people to set up their own business). But in 15 countries, less than one-third of respondents agree. In Cyprus just 11% of people see it this way.

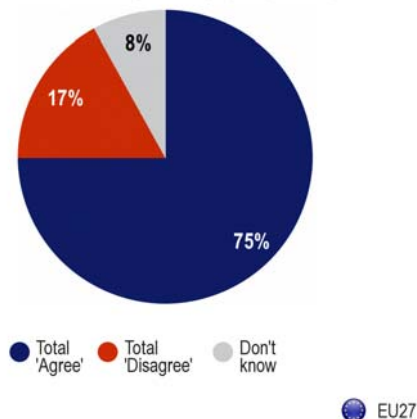
1.3 Perceptions of quality of Vocational Education and Training provision

1.3.1 Quality of VET learning

- A large majority of Europeans think that VET offers high-quality learning -

QA10.1. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training offers high quality learning



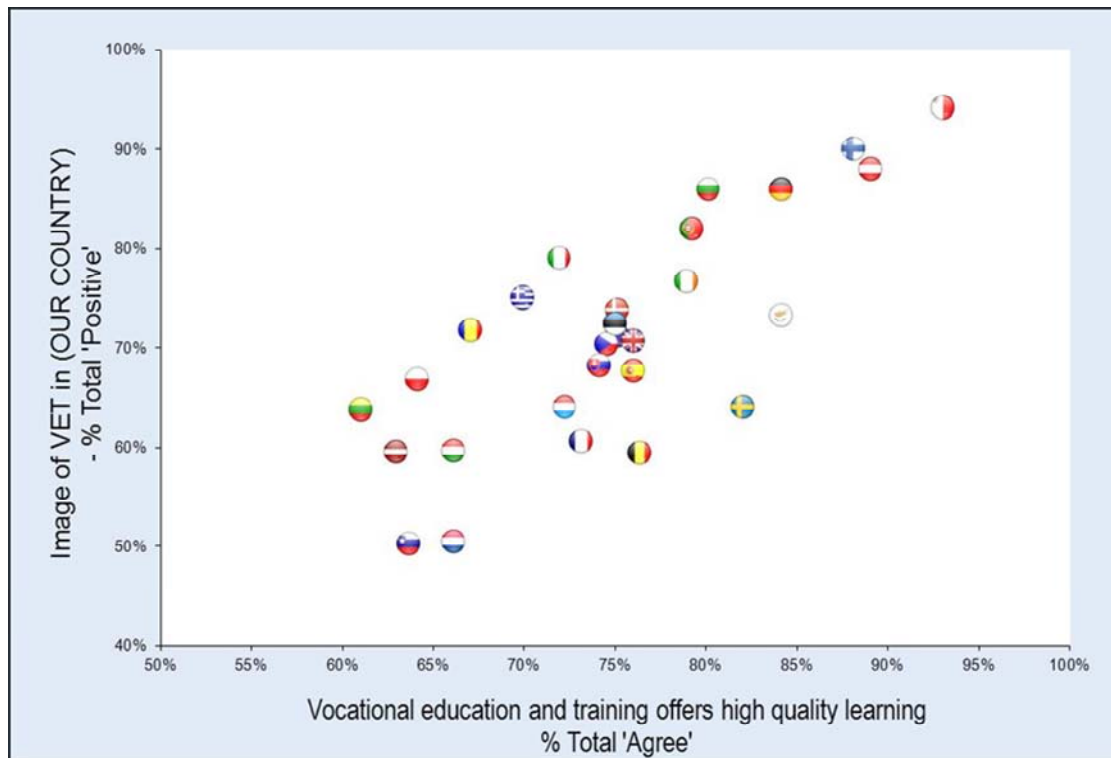
In what is a very positive finding, three-quarters of all respondents (75%) agree that VET offers high-quality learning, while fewer than one in five (17%) say they disagree with this¹⁵. Respondents in the EU15 countries appear more likely to agree than those in the NMS12 by a margin of 77% to 67%.

A majority of respondents in all 27 Member States agree that VET offers high-quality learning, and at least 75% do so in 15 countries.

¹⁴ QA10.8: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statement: In vocational education and training, people do not learn skills such as communication or teamwork.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

¹⁵ QA10.1: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training offers high-quality learning.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

Cross-referencing the national results with those of the earlier question asking whether VET has a positive image in each Member State, we can see, as illustrated in the graph below, that there is a correlation between people's overall impression of VET and whether they think it offers high-quality learning. Malta (93%), Austria (89%) and Finland (88%), the three countries with the highest level of agreement that VET offers high-quality learning, are also the three countries with the most positive image of VET. But respondents in countries with a relatively negative image of VET – such as Latvia (63%), Lithuania (61%) and Slovenia (64%) – are also more likely to disagree that VET offers high-quality learning.

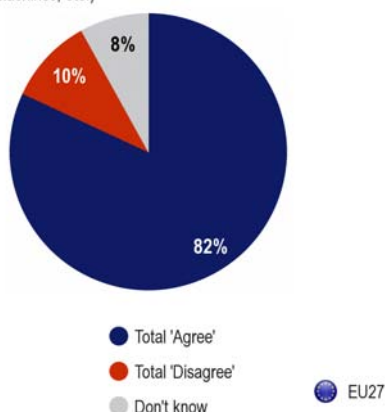


1.3.2 Access to state-of-art equipment in VET

- VET is widely thought to give access to modern equipment -

QA10.2. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training gives access to modern equipment (computers, machines, etc.)



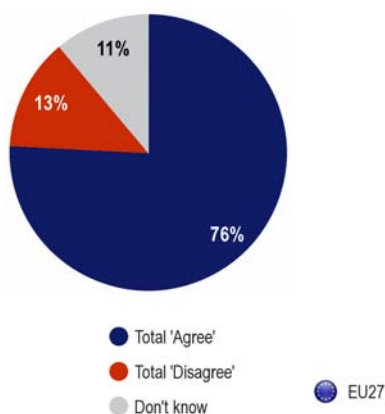
There is a strong consensus that VET gives people access to modern equipment: over 82% of respondents agree that this is the case, and only 10% disagree¹⁶. At least 70% of respondents in all Member States agree that VET gives access to modern equipment, with at least 80% agreeing in 18 countries. Respondents in the EU15 countries are again more likely to agree than their NMS12 counterparts: 84% of EU15 respondents agree that VET gives access to modern equipment, compared with 76% of NMS12 respondents.

1.3.3 Competence of VET teachers and trainers

- Most EU citizens have confidence in the competence of VET teachers -

QA10.3. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Teachers and trainers in vocational education and training are competent



This is another area in which the general public’s assessment of VET is highly encouraging. Three-quarters of respondents (76%) take the view that teachers and trainers in VET programmes are competent, with only one in eight (13%) disagreeing¹⁷. There are not wide variations between individual country results on this question. Over 70% of respondents in all but one Member State (the Netherlands – 64%) consider VET teachers and trainers to be competent.

¹⁶ QA10.2: ‘Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training gives access to modern equipment (computers, machines, etc.).’ Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don’t know.

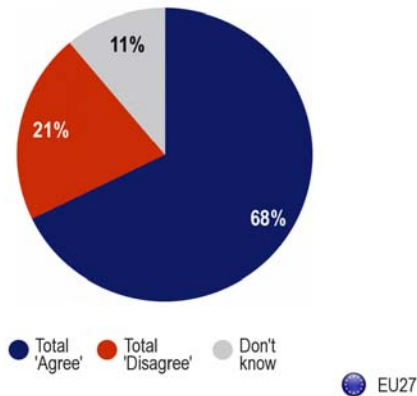
¹⁷ QA10.3: ‘Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Teachers and trainers in vocational education and training are competent.’ Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don’t know.

1.3.4 The opportunity for VET graduates to study at university

- VET is widely thought to enable people to continue with university studies afterwards -

QA10.4. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training enables people to continue with university studies afterwards

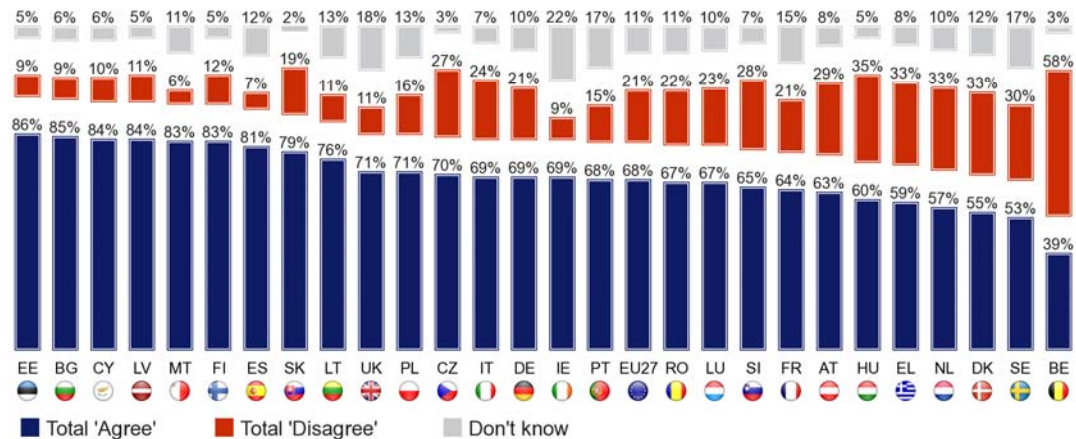


Over two-thirds of respondents (68%) believe that VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards, though a fifth of people (21%) disagree with this point of view¹⁸.

At least two-thirds of respondents think that VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards in 18 Member States, and a majority agree in every country except for Belgium, where only 39% agree that VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards and where 58% disagree. The individual country results vary considerably on this question, with 86% of people in Estonia agreeing that VET enables people to continue with university studies afterwards.

QA10.4. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training enables people to continue with university studies afterwards



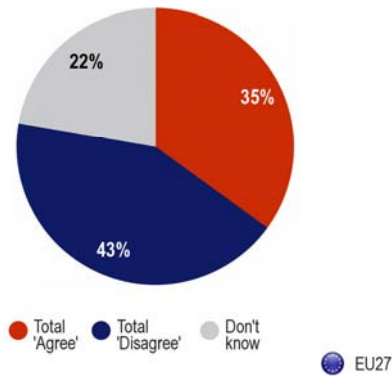
¹⁸ QA10.4: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training enables people to continue with university studies afterwards.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

1.3.5 Opportunities for VET learners to study abroad

- Views are mixed as to whether VET provides opportunities to study abroad -

QA10.5. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training does not provide opportunities to study abroad



Opinion is also divided on the question of whether VET enables people to study abroad¹⁹, and these results therefore pose a challenge to the EU's social mobility objectives. Over one-third of respondents (35%) agree that VET does not offer this opportunity, but more positively 43% of people disagree, arguing that VET does give people the chance to study abroad. At least one-third of respondents agree that vocational training does not provide opportunities to study abroad in 14 countries, though, and 50% do so in Italy. A high proportion of respondents in several countries,

notably the UK (37%), Ireland (35%) and Sweden (33%), say they don't know whether VET provides opportunities to study abroad. NMS12 respondents are slightly more likely to agree on this question than people in the EU15: 39% of people in the NMS12 think that VET does not provide opportunities to study abroad, whereas only 34% of those in the EU15 agree.

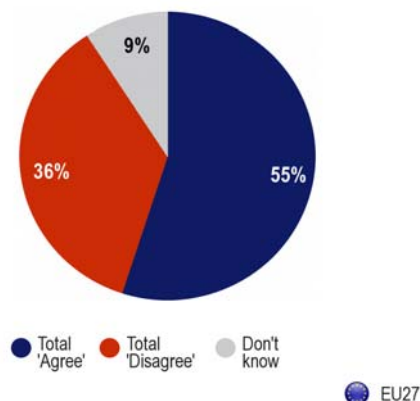
1.4 Perceptions of status of vocational occupations

1.4.1 Level of salaries in vocational occupations

- While up to three quarters of people believe that VET is a route to a well-paid job in some Member States, in others only a third of people take this view -

QA10.9. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training leads to jobs which are well paid



A majority of EU respondents (55%) believe that vocational training leads to jobs which are well paid²⁰, although over a third of people (36%) disagree that this is the case. The individual country results show a very wide difference of opinion about whether VET leads to jobs which are well paid. A majority of people believe that it does have this potential in all but six Member States, and in some cases confidence in VET is very high on this issue.

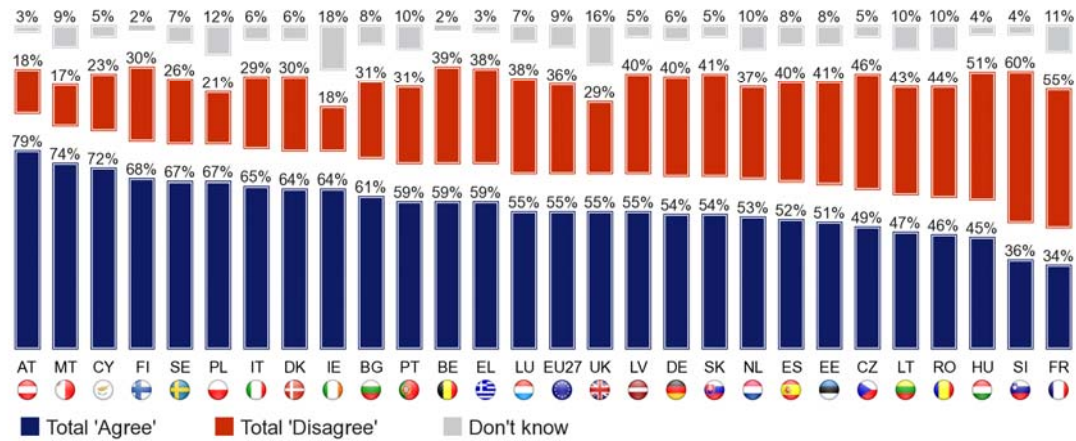
¹⁹ QA10.5: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training does not provide opportunities to study abroad.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

²⁰ QA10.9: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training leads to jobs which are well paid.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

In Austria, for example, four people in five (79%) think VET leads to jobs which are well paid; but in France only a third of respondents (34%) agree with this.

QA10.9. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training leads to jobs which are well paid

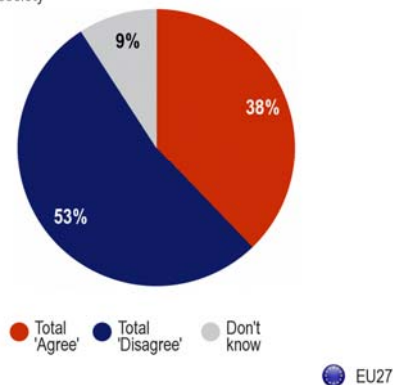


1.4.2 Societal appreciation of vocational jobs

- In a handful of Member States there is a widespread belief that vocational training leads to jobs which are not well regarded in society -

QA10.10. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training leads to jobs which are not well regarded in society



While nearly four in ten EU respondents (38%) believe that VET leads to jobs which are not well regarded in society²¹, a majority (53%) disagree with this suggestion. Only three Member States have majorities that agree with the suggestion that VET leads to jobs which are not well regarded in society: Slovenia (63%), Belgium (52%) and Hungary (51%). But in seven countries, less than a third of people believe that VET leads to jobs which are not well regarded in society, with agreement lowest in Malta (15%), Bulgaria (22%) and Ireland (25%). NMS12 respondents are slightly more likely to agree than EU15 respondents on this

question. While 42% of those in the NMS12 agree that VET leads to jobs which are not well regarded in society, only 37% of EU15 respondents say this.

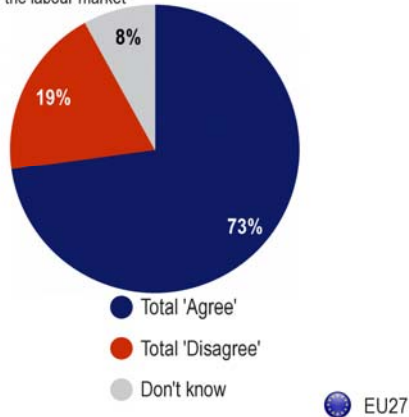
²¹ QA10.10: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training leads to jobs which are not well regarded in society.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

1.4.3 Demand for vocational occupations in the economy

- Most people believe that vocational training leads to professions which are highly demanded on the labour market -

QA10.11. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training leads to professions which are highly demanded on the labour market



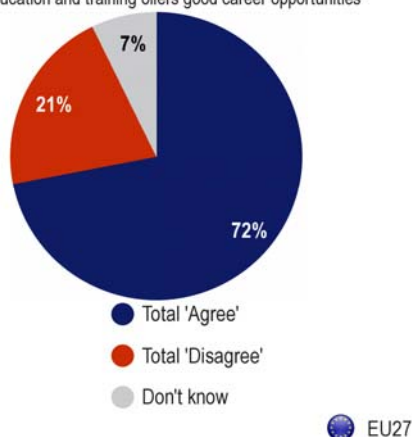
In a very positive result, nearly three quarters of EU respondents (73%) take the view that VET leads to professions which are highly demanded on the labour market²². One respondent in five disagrees (19%), however. A majority of people in all Member States agree that VET leads to professions which are highly demanded on the labour market, and at least 70% of people share this opinion in 18 countries. Country results range from the 89% of people who agree in Finland to the 58% who do so in Romania.

1.4.4. Career perspective of vocational professions

- Most people think vocational training offers good career opportunities, though this is seriously questioned in some countries -

QA10.12. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training offers good career opportunities



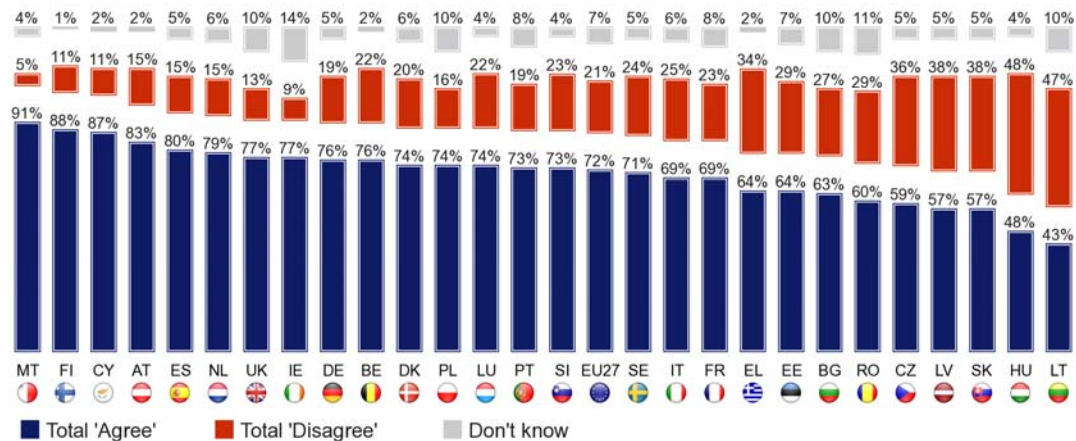
Nearly three-quarters of EU respondents (72%) express confidence that vocational training offers good career opportunities²³, although a fifth of respondents (21%) disagree. People in the EU15 are more ready to argue that VET offers good career opportunities than those in the NMS12: 74% of EU15 respondents take this line, whereas only 64% of NMS12 respondents say this.

²² QA10.11: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training leads to professions which are highly demanded on the labour market.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

²³ QA10.12: 'Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training offers good career opportunities.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

QA10.12. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Vocational education and training offers good career opportunities

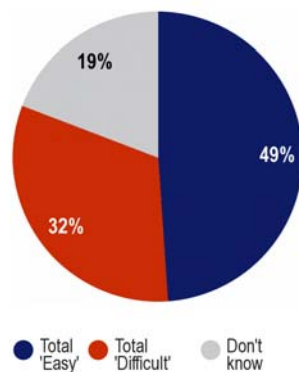


However, this question again exposes the broad difference between the assessments of VET in individual Member States. At least two-thirds of respondents agree that VET offers good career opportunities in 18 countries, with agreement highest in Malta (91%), although fewer than half do so in Lithuania (43%) and Hungary (48%).

1.4.5 The possibility of practising a vocational occupation in another Member State of the EU

- Half of EU respondents think that it is easy for people who received VET to practise their profession in another EU Member State -

QA14. For people who received a vocational education and training, do you think that practicing their profession in another EU Member States is easy or difficult?



EU27

Half of European respondents (49%) think that it is easy for people who received vocational education and training to practise their profession in another EU Member State²⁴. However, one-third of respondents (32%) think that this is difficult – an outcome that again poses a challenge to the EU’s social mobility goals. However, a majority of people in 17 Member States think that people who received VET should find it easy to practise their profession in another EU country. Country variations are again fairly broad: while 72% of people in Denmark and 70% in Malta say that practising one’s profession in another EU country should be easy, only 32% in Spain and 34% in the UK say the same. People in the NMS12 countries are slightly more likely than EU15 respondents to agree that it is easy for people with vocational training to practise their profession in another EU Member State: 53% of NMS12 respondents agree with this, compared with 47% of EU15 respondents.

²⁴ QA14: 'For people who received a vocational education and training, do you think that practicing their profession in another EU Member State is easy or difficult?' Possible answers: very easy; fairly easy; fairly difficult; very difficult; don't know.

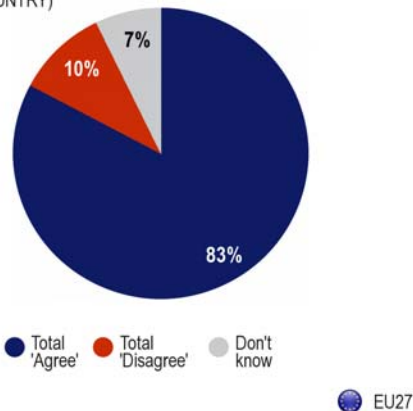
2. PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SOCIETY

2.1 The impact on the economy

- Mainstream opinion holds that VET contributes positively to the economy -

QA13.1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Vocational education and training contributes positively to the economy of (OUR COUNTRY)



There is overwhelming agreement among EU citizens that VET contributes positively to the economy of their country²⁵: 83% of people agree that this is the case, and only one in ten do not agree. At least 80% of people believe that VET has a positive economic effect in all but seven Member States, including Latvia (67%) and Romania (70%). But elsewhere, notably in Finland (97%), agreement is close to unanimous. EU15 respondents are more inclined to agree that VET contributes positively to the economy, with 84% of people from those countries saying VET has a positive economic effect, as

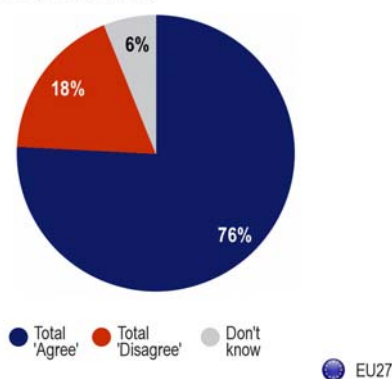
opposed to 79% of NMS12 respondents.

2.2 The social impact

- VET is widely accepted to play a role in reducing unemployment -

QA13.2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Vocational education and training is playing a role in reducing unemployment in (OUR COUNTRY)



Three-quarters of EU respondents (76%) believe that vocational training plays a role in reducing unemployment in their country²⁶. Around a fifth of people (18%) do not think VET plays a role in reducing unemployment. Country variations are quite wide on this question, ranging from over 90% of people who agree in Finland, Austria and Sweden, to the 59% in Latvia and 65% in Ireland who say the same. . EU15 respondents more readily agree that VET plays a role in reducing unemployment, with 78% of people in the EU15 countries agreeing it has this effect as opposed to 71% of NMS12 respondents.

²⁵ QA13.1: 'To what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training contributes positively to the economy of (OUR COUNTRY).' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

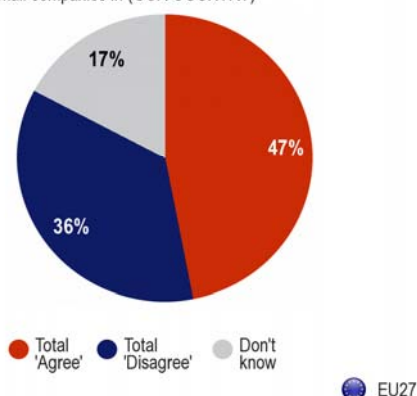
²⁶ QA13.2: 'To what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training is playing a role in reducing unemployment in (OUR COUNTRY).' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

2.3 The impact on entrepreneurship

- ***Close to half of EU respondents believe that vocational training does not sufficiently stimulate the creation of small companies-***

QA13.3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Vocational education and training does not stimulate enough the creation of small companies in (OUR COUNTRY)



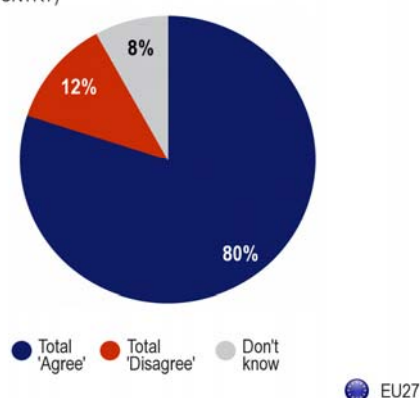
In a finding that questions VET's ability to boost economic growth through small business creation, almost half of EU respondents (47%) agree that vocational training does not sufficiently stimulate the creation of small companies in their country²⁷. Around a third (36%) disagree and say that VET does sufficiently stimulate the creation of small companies. A considerable 17% minority also say they don't know whether VET stimulates the creation of small companies. A majority of respondents agree that VET does not sufficiently stimulate the creation of small companies in nine Member States, foremost among them being Hungary (63%), Belgium (62%) and Slovenia (57%). However, 62% of respondents in Cyprus and 60% in Greece disagree with this.

2.4 The impact on the quality of services

- ***There is a clear link between vocational training and the quality of services, according to four-fifths of respondents -***

QA13.4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Vocational education and training contributes to the quality of services in (OUR COUNTRY)



In one of the clearest outcomes of this section of the survey, a very strong majority of EU respondents (80%) take the view that vocational training contributes to the quality of services in their country²⁸. Just one person in eight (12%) disagrees with this. At least 80% of respondents agree that VET boosts the quality of services in 17 Member States, and over 90% agree in Malta, Cyprus, Austria and Finland. However, only 67% in Romania and 72% in Latvia so so.

²⁷ QA13.3: 'To what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training does not stimulate enough the creation of small companies in (OUR COUNTRY).' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

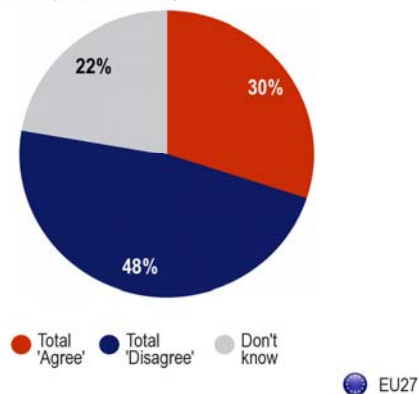
²⁸ QA13.4: 'To what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training contributes to the quality of services in (OUR COUNTRY).' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

2.5 The impact on the environment

- Less than half of EU citizens (48%) think that VET encourages environmentally-friendly attitudes -

QA13.5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Vocational education and training does not encourage environmentally friendly attitudes in (OUR COUNTRY)



VET's ability to promote the EU's green objectives is called into question here, with almost a third (30%) of EU respondents agreeing that vocational training does not encourage environmentally-friendly attitudes²⁹. However, almost half – 48% – disagree with this, and think that VET does encourage environmentally-friendly attitudes. At least one-third of respondents agree that VET does not promote environmentally-friendly attitudes in 11 countries, notably Hungary (45%), Italy (42%) and Slovakia (41%). Disagreement is again highest in Cyprus (71%). NMS12 respondents are

somewhat more likely to agree on this question: 35% of people in the NMS12 do not think that VET encourages environmentally friendly attitudes, whereas only 29% of EU15 respondents agree with this point of view.

²⁹ QA13.5: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Vocational education and training does not encourage environmentally-friendly attitudes in (OUR COUNTRY).' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

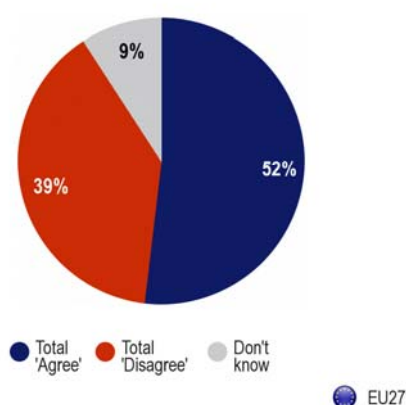
3. GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION FOR CHOOSING A LEARNING PATHWAY

3.1 Guidance for learning pathway choices

3.1.1 Quality of guidance services in general

- A majority think that young people receive enough advice concerning their learning and career opportunities from schools and employment services -

QA6. Could you tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: In (OUR COUNTRY) young people receive enough advice concerning their learning and career opportunities from schools and employment services.



A majority (52%) of EU citizens think that young people receive enough advice concerning their learning and career opportunities from schools and employment services³⁰, though a large minority (39%) do not agree that this is the case. At least 50% of people in all but four Member States – France (36%), Romania (45%), Lithuania (46%) and Luxembourg (48%) – agree that young people receive enough advice from this source. In some countries, a considerable majority of respondents believe that a satisfactory level of advice is provided to young people: in Malta

85% of respondents agree that this is the case, as do 78% in Finland and 70% in both Slovakia and Austria.

3.1.2 Actors influencing the choice of a learning pathway

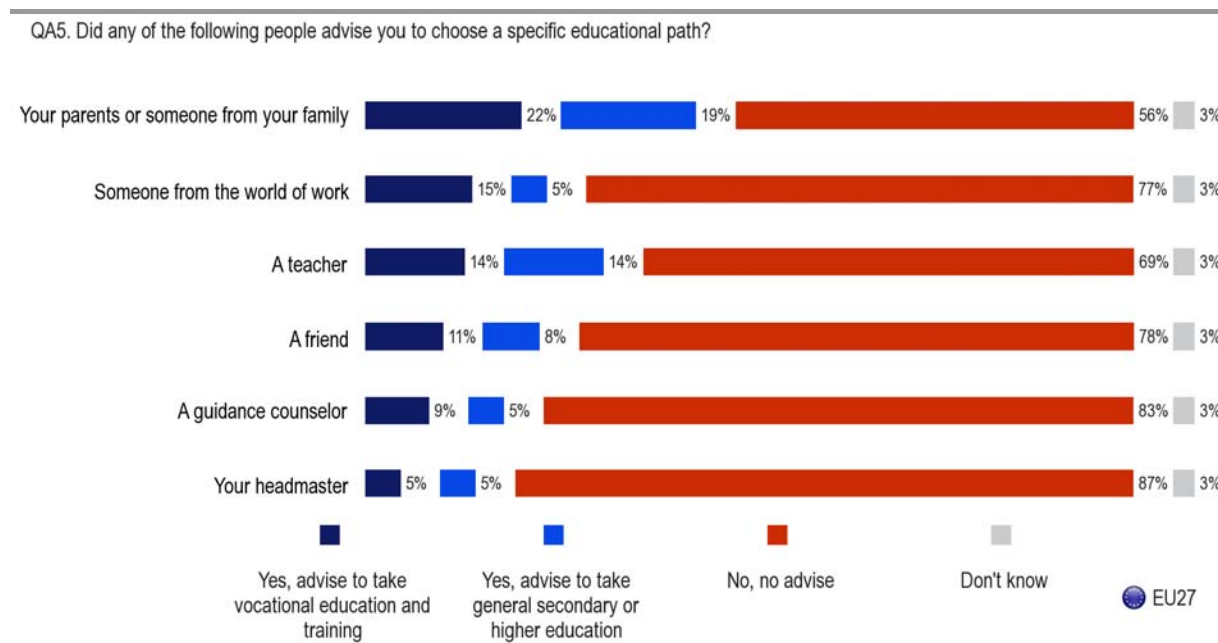
- More people in the EU are advised to choose vocational training than are advised to pursue general secondary or higher education –

The most common source of advice for EU respondents is parents or another family member³¹: 41% of people say they received advice from this source, with 22% saying that their parents or family advised them to choose vocational education or training, and 19% saying their parents or family advised them to choose general secondary or higher education. However, 56% of EU citizens say that they received no advice on learning pathways from their family.

³⁰ QA6: 'Could you tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: In (OUR COUNTRY) young people receive enough advice concerning their learning and career opportunities from schools and employment services.' Possible answers: totally agree; tend to agree; tend to disagree; totally disagree; don't know.

³¹ QA5: 'Did any of the following people advise you to choose a specific educational path: your parents or someone from your family; a friend; a teacher; a guidance counsellor; your headmaster; someone from the world of work?' Possible answers: no, no advice; yes, advice to take vocational education and training; yes, advice to take general secondary or higher education; don't know.

NMS12 respondents are more likely than their EU15 counterparts to receive advice from this source: 50% of NMS12 respondents say that their family advised them about their education, compared with just 39% of EU15 respondents. NMS12 respondents are also much more likely to be advised by their family to choose vocational training, by a margin of 30% to 20%.



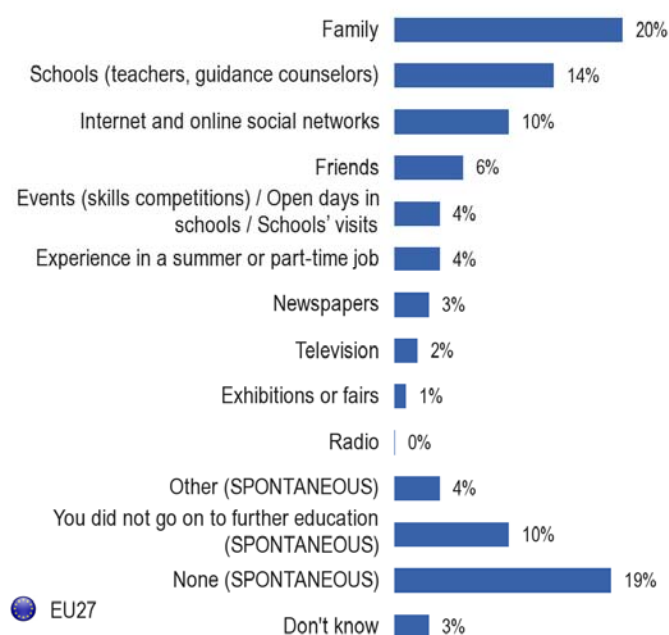
Overall, 20% of EU respondents say they took educational advice from someone from the world of work. 28% say they obtained educational advice from a teacher. 19% of people say that they received educational advice from a friend. 14% say they took educational advice from a guidance counsellor. And 10% of EU citizens say they were given educational advice by their headmaster.

At individual country level, a majority of respondents in eight Member States say that they received educational advice from their family, with the highest proportion of people answering this way in Slovakia (67%), the Czech Republic (66%) and Romania (66%).

3.1.3 Sources of information used for choosing a learning pathway

- Most people in the EU cite family as the source that influenced their educational choices -

QA7a. Which of the following sources of information, if any, have you used or are you using to choose your educational path? Firstly?



Family is the source of information that EU respondents use the most when it comes to choosing an educational path³²: 20% of people say this is their primary source (34% when first answers and the other answers are combined). Schools are cited as the most important information source by 14% (28% in total). 10% of respondents say that the Internet and online social networks are their primary information source when making educational choices (17% in total). Just 6% of respondents identify friends as their main information source (21% when considering total answers).

Events and open days in schools are cited by 4% of respondents as their primary information source (12% in total). 4% say that work experience or a part-time job was their main source of educational information (10% in total). Newspapers are named first by 3% of respondents (10% in total), television by 2% (7% in total), and exhibitions or fairs by 1% (5% in total). 19% of people say they did not use any source of information.

Family is the most commonly cited source of information used in choosing an educational path in 20 Member States, with at least a third of people mentioning family in 13 countries. Schools are the main source of information used in choosing an educational path for respondents in six Member States, with at least a third of people mentioning schools in nine countries. And friends are said to be the most important source of educational information used in choosing an educational path in just one country, although at least a quarter of respondents mention friends in 13 countries.

The socio-demographic data show that the respondent's age affects the types of information sources that he or she is likely to use. Young respondents tend to be more inclined to use a whole range of sources in order to obtain information about their educational pathway than older individuals.

³² QA7: 'Which of the following sources of information, have you used/are you using to choose your educational path? Firstly? And then?' Possible answers: family; schools (teachers, guidance counsellors); friends; internet and online social networks; events (skills competitions)/ open days in schools/ schools' visits; newspapers; experience in a summer or part-time job; television; exhibitions or fairs; radio; other (SPONTANEOUS); you did not go on to further education (SPONTANEOUS); none (SPONTANEOUS); don't know.

For example, young respondents are much more likely to have sourced educational information online. While 43% of 15-24 year-olds say they made use of online sources, this falls to 25% among 25-39 year-olds, 14% among 40-54 year-olds, and again to 4% among respondents over 55 years old. Respondents in the 15-24 bracket are also the most likely to make use of events, exhibitions or fairs, their school, family, and friends, with reliance on all of these sources decreasing with age. Older respondents are the most likely to say that they did not go on to further education (17% of over-55s say this, compared with 4% of 15-24 year-olds) and that they did not use any educational information: 42% of over-55s say this, compared with just 19% of 15-24 year-olds.

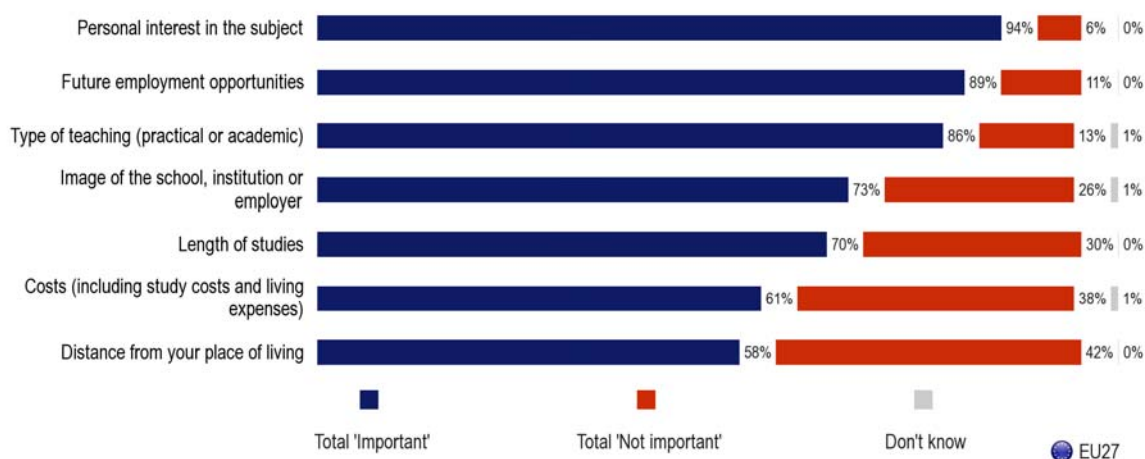
3.2 Choosing VET or general secondary/higher education

3.2.1 Factors for choosing a vocational course

- Interest in the subject and future employment opportunities are generally thought to be more important factors in choosing a vocational pathway than issues such as cost -

Personal interest in the subject being studied is the reason cited by most respondents for deciding to follow a vocational pathway³³: 94% of people who decided to follow a vocational pathway say this was important, with just 6% of respondents saying that interest in the subject was not an important factor.

QA4a. When you decided to follow a vocational pathway, how important was each of the following factors for you?



Asked to those who took a vocational pathway (n= 12610) excluding those who answered "not applicable"

³³ QA4a: 'When you decided to follow a vocational pathway, how important was each of the following factors for you? Personal interest in the subject; future employment opportunities; type of teaching (practical or academic); image of the school, institution or employer; length of studies; costs (including study costs and living expenses); distance from your place of living.' Possible answers: very important; fairly important; not very important; not at all important; not applicable (SPONTANEOUS); don't know.

Future employment opportunities are the next most important factor determining the choice of a vocational pathway: 89% of respondents say that future employment opportunities were an important consideration, while 11% say that future employment opportunities were not important to their decision. The type of teaching (practical or academic) was important to 86% of individuals, but unimportant to 13%. The image of the school, institution or employer influenced 73% of people in deciding to follow a vocational pathway, with 17% saying it was not very important in their calculations. 70% of respondents say that the length of studies was important in deciding to follow a vocational pathway, with 30% of respondents not being influenced by this. Costs including study costs and living expenses were important for 61% of people, and unimportant factor to 38% of respondents. Finally, the distance from their place of living is seen the least important of the factors under consideration: 58% of individuals say it was important in deciding to follow a vocational pathway, with 42% of respondents saying it was not important.

At individual country level, personal interest in the subject was important in deciding to follow a vocational pathway for at least 90% of respondents in all but five Member States, and for at least 80% of respondents in all 27 EU countries.

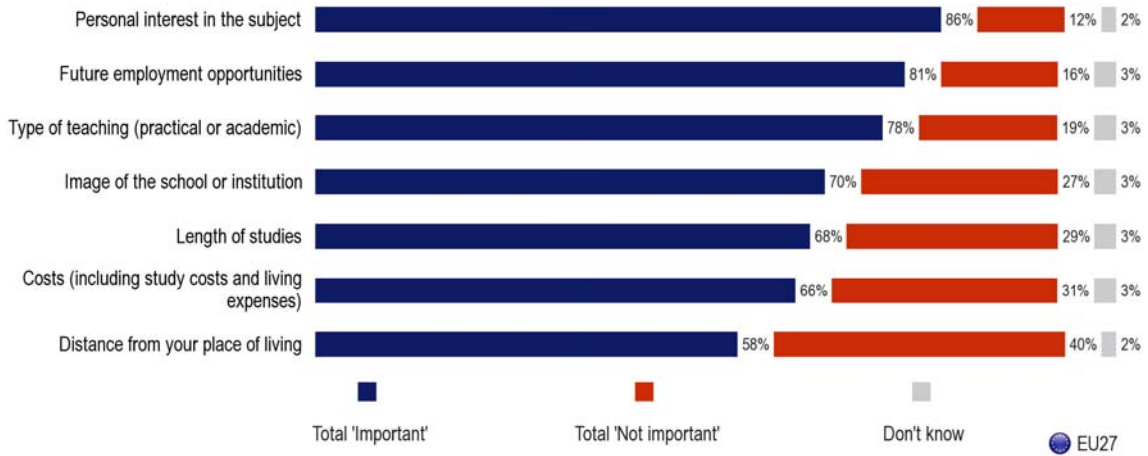
3.2.2 Factors for choosing general secondary or higher education

- Cost is the only factor regarded as being important by more people who decided to follow general secondary or higher education than people who decided to follow vocational pathways -

The priorities of people deciding to follow general secondary or higher education³⁴ are very similar to the priorities of people deciding to follow vocational pathways, with the seven factors under consideration here ranked in the same order of importance by the two different groups. However, cost is the only factor which more people who decided to follow general secondary or higher education than people who decided to follow vocational pathways rank as having been important to their decision.

³⁴ QA4b: 'If applicable, when you decided to follow general secondary or higher education, how important was each of the following factors for you? Personal interest in the subject; future employment opportunities; type of teaching (practical or academic); image of the school, institution or employer; length of studies; costs (including study costs and living expenses); distance from your place of living.' Possible answers: very important; fairly important; not very important; not at all important; not applicable (SPONTANEOUS); don't know.

QA4b. If applicable, when you decided to follow general secondary or higher education, how important was each of the following factors for you?



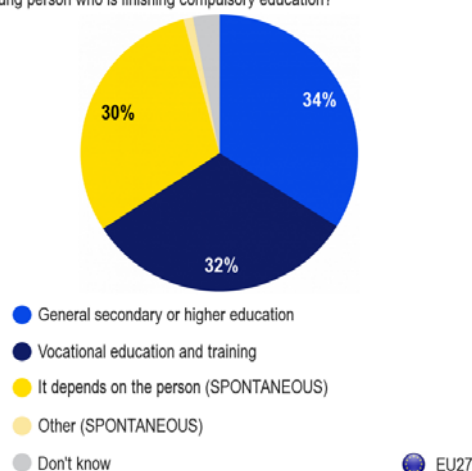
Asked to those who followed general secondary or higher education (n= 14230) excluding those who answered "not applicable"

Personal interest in the subject is the reason given by most people who decided to follow general secondary or higher education: 86% say this was important (compared with 94% of VET students who said the same). Future employment opportunities are the next most significant factor: 81% of respondents say this was an important consideration (compared with 89% of people who decided to follow vocational pathways). The type of teaching was important to 78% of respondents who decided to follow general secondary or higher education (compared with 86% of people who decided to follow vocational pathways). The image of the school, institution or employer was thought to be important by 70% of respondents (compared with 73% of people who decided to follow vocational pathways). Length of studies was important to 68% of respondents (70% of people who decided to follow vocational pathways said the same). Costs including study costs and living expenses were an important consideration to 66% of people who decided to follow general secondary or higher education (compared with 61% of people who decided to follow vocational pathways), And the distance from home to the place of learning was a significant issue for 58% of those who decided to follow general secondary or higher education (58% of people who decided to follow vocational pathways also think this).

3.2.3 Whether to recommend VET or general education

- Public opinion is evenly split between recommending general secondary or higher education, VET and tailoring educational advice to the individual -

QA8. Nowadays, which of the following would you recommend to a young person who is finishing compulsory education?



At EU level, slightly more respondents (34%) say they would recommend general secondary or higher education to a young person than say they would recommend vocational training (32%)³⁵. Almost as many people (30%) say that their advice would depend on the person concerned. NMS12 respondents are quicker to recommend general secondary or higher education, with 44% doing so compared with 32% of EU15 respondents. However, people in the EU15 are more likely to say that their advice would depend on the person they were talking to, by a margin of 33% to 19%.

At individual country level, general secondary or higher education is the most common response in 14 countries, with a majority of people recommending this in Lithuania (58%) and Romania (52%). By contrast, general secondary or higher education is not so widely recommended in France (18%) or Austria (21%). VET is the most common response in eight Member States³⁶, including France (50%) and Bulgaria (47%). Only 10% of respondents in Ireland say they would recommend VET, however, as would just 14% of people in Denmark. In six EU countries, the commonest response is that educational advice would depend on the person concerned.

The socio-demographic data show that younger respondents are the most likely to recommend general secondary or higher education and the least likely to recommend vocational training. 41% of people in the 15-24 group say they would recommend general secondary or higher education, but this falls to 34-36% in the two middle age groups and again to 30% among over-55s. By contrast, only 27% of 15-24 year-olds say they would advise someone to take VET, as opposed to 32% of those in the two middle age groups and 34% of over-55s.

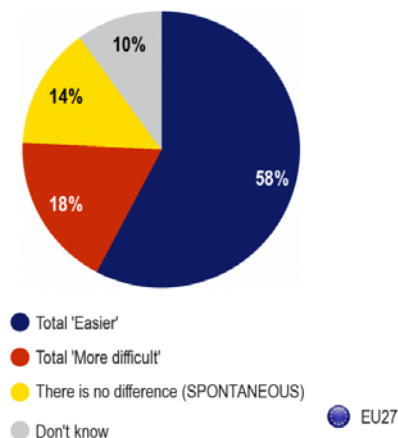
³⁵ QA8: 'Nowadays, which of the following would you recommend to a young person who is finishing compulsory education?' Possible answers: general secondary or higher education; vocational education and training; it depends on the person (SPONTANEOUS); other; don't know.

³⁶ Equal numbers of people (41%) in the Czech Republic say they would recommend general secondary or higher education and VET.

3.2.4 Accessibility of different educational systems

- In all Member States, with one exception, VET is perceived as being easier to be accepted for than general secondary or higher education -

QA11. Compared to general secondary or higher education, do you think that it is easier or more difficult to be accepted for a vocational education and training?



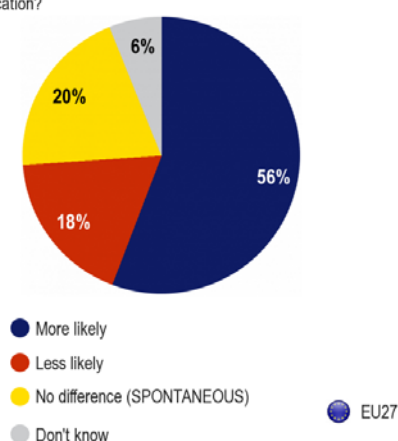
A clear majority (58%) of EU respondents think that it is easier to be accepted for VET than for general secondary or higher education course³⁷. However, 18% of respondents think that it is more difficult to be accepted for VET, while 14% say there is no difference.

More than half of respondents think that vocational education and training is easier to be accepted for than general secondary or higher education courses in all but four Member States: Lithuania (37%), Bulgaria (44%), Germany (45%) and the Netherlands (48%).

3.2.5 Ease of finding a job after obtaining a VET qualification

- Across most of the EU, people who have completed their vocational education and training are believed to be more likely to find a job after their studies than people who have completed their general secondary or higher education -

QA12. Do you think that people who completed their vocational education and training are more likely or less likely to find a job after their studies than people who completed their general secondary or higher education?



Most EU respondents (56%) express confidence that individuals who have completed VET are more likely to be able to find a job than individuals who have completed their general secondary or higher education³⁸. However, around one person in five (18%) thinks that someone will be less likely to find a job after completing VET than someone who has completed general secondary or higher education, while a similar number (20%) say they do not think there is any difference.

³⁷ QA11: 'Compared to general secondary or higher education, do you think that it is easier or more difficult to be accepted for a vocational education and training?' Possible answers: much easier; slightly easier; slightly more difficult; much more difficult; there is no difference (SPONTANEOUS); don't know.

³⁸ QA12: 'Do you think that people who completed their vocational education and training are more likely or less likely to find a job after their studies than people who completed their general secondary or higher education?' Possible answers: more likely; less likely; no difference (SPONTANEOUS); don't know.

A majority of respondents in 19 Member States believe that completing vocational education and training makes a person more likely to find a job than someone who has completed general secondary or higher education. Significant numbers of people believe this to be the case in Sweden (78%), Finland (77%) and France (73%), though at the other end of the scale only 30% of respondents in Ireland and 31% in Lithuania think that VET makes people more likely to find work than people who have completed their general secondary or higher education.

CONCLUSION

The European Union is seeking to modernise vocational education and training in order to help young people into work and give adults the chance to build upon their existing skills, and the findings of this report provide a useful guide that should inform this undertaking.

First, it is encouraging to observe that there is generally no kind of stigma attached to vocational training as an alternative to academic studies, with 71% of all European respondents saying that VET has a positive image in their country. However, the significant difference between the image of VET in different Member States – only 50% of people in both the Netherlands and Slovenia, for example, say that VET is viewed positively – highlights the fact that making VET a universally attractive option within the next decade will be more challenging in some countries than in others.

Many of the metrics in this report suggest that some of the important messages about VET – that it teaches skills that employers require, that it offers high-quality learning – have already got through to most parts of European society. But in some cases, there is a lack of confidence in VET in certain geographies: in Lithuania and Latvia, for example, only 61% and 63% of people respectively (far lower than the EU average) regard VET as offering high-quality learning. In Lithuania, uniquely among the 27 EU countries, more people also say that having a VET qualification actually makes a person less likely to find a job than someone who has completed their general secondary or higher education, suggesting specific issues in that country either with the information that the public receives about VET or structural problems within the VET system itself.

In other cases, there is a lack of confidence in VET in certain socio-demographic groups. For example, people who see themselves as being low down on the social scale have less belief that VET can improve their job prospects than people higher up the scale. This represents a major challenge: one of the EU's main objectives is to open up opportunities to disadvantaged groups, but these results show that these very groups, which have the lowest aspirations in general, have the least faith in the ability of vocational training to change and improve their circumstances. Informing and educating these underprivileged groups about the potential that VET can unlock is therefore an obvious priority.

With VET's ability to guide and influence society in line with the EU's wider policy goals in mind, it is disconcerting to find that less than a half (48%) of all respondents think VET encourages environmentally friendly attitudes, with 30% saying it fails to do this. At least one-third of respondents agree that VET does not promote environmentally friendly attitudes in 11 countries. This outcome poses a challenge for VET's potential in supporting the green agenda and in assisting Europe's transition to a low-carbon economy.

VET's ability to boost the economy by stimulating the creation of small companies is also less proven, with around half of all respondents saying that VET does not stimulate small companies (only 36% of people think that it does). This is a disappointing result in the context of the slow economic growth that most of Europe is currently experiencing.

Also somewhat mixed are the findings on VET's capacity to improve the geographical mobility of students by enabling VET learners to study in another country. Though 43% of people think that VET does give people this opportunity, 35% do not think it enables them to study abroad. While it is encouraging to see that a relative majority regard VET as a route to educational mobility, more work is clearly needed to ensure that an absolute majority comes to view it in this positive light.

Europeans are slightly more positive when it comes to the possibility of practising a vocational occupation abroad, with 49% of respondents thinking that it is easy for people who received VET to practise their profession in another EU Member State (and 32% finding it difficult).

The fact that students selecting vocational education and training take much the same factors into consideration as students selecting general secondary or higher education suggests that there is no great social divide separating the young people who choose the two different educational pathways. The struggle may instead be to reach those parts of society which do not seriously consider taking either educational route. A fifth (21%) of all EU respondents currently believe that VET does not offer good career opportunities, and this is one of the key statistics that the EU initiative needs to improve by 2020, both through enhancements in the VET system and through the education of young people and of the adult workforce. Unlike purely academic studies, vocational courses are very much tied to careers and job prospects, and as such the 21% of European society who currently do not see VET as a route to a good career have no reason to take VET themselves or advise others to do so.

SPECIAL EUROBAROMETER 369

“Vocational Education and Training”

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Between the 4th of June and the 19th of June 2011, TNS Opinion & Social, a consortium created between TNS plc and TNS opinion, carried out the wave 75.4 of the EUROBAROMETER, on request of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for Communication, “Research and Speechwriting”.

The SPECIAL EUROBAROMETER 369 is part of wave 75.4 and covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union Member States, resident in each of the Member States and aged 15 years and over. The basic sample design applied in all states is a multi-stage, random (probability) one. In each country, a number of sampling points was drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and to population density.

In order to do so, the sampling points were drawn systematically from each of the “administrative regional units”, after stratification by individual unit and type of area. They thus represent the whole territory of the countries surveyed according to the EUROSTAT NUTS II (or equivalent) and according to the distribution of the resident population of the respective nationalities in terms of metropolitan, urban and rural areas. In each of the selected sampling points, a starting address was drawn, at random. Further addresses (every Nth address) were selected by standard “random route” procedures, from the initial address. In each household, the respondent was drawn, at random (following the “closest birthday rule”). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in people’s homes and in the appropriate national language. As far as the data capture is concerned, CAPI (*Computer Assisted Personal Interview*) was used in those countries where this technique was available

ABBREVIATIONS	COUNTRIES	INSTITUTES	N° INTERVIEWS	FIELDWORK DATES		POPULATION 15+
BE	Belgium	TNS Dimarso	1.025	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	8.939.546
BG	Bulgaria	TNS BBSS	1.002	04/06/2011	13/06/2011	6.537.510
CZ	Czech Rep.	TNS Aisa	1.019	04/06/2011	16/06/2011	9.012.443
DK	Denmark	TNS Gallup DK	1.012	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	4.561.264
DE	Germany	TNS Infratest	1.572	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	64.409.146
EE	Estonia	Emor	1.001	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	945.733
IE	Ireland	Ipsos MRBI	1.016	04/06/2011	17/06/2011	3.522.000
EL	Greece	TNS ICAP	1.000	04/06/2011	17/06/2011	8.693.566
ES	Spain	TNS Demoscopia	1.004	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	39.035.867
FR	France	TNS Sofres	1.068	07/06/2011	19/06/2011	47.756.439
IT	Italy	TNS Infratest	1.044	04/06/2011	18/06/2011	51.862.391
CY	Rep. of Cyprus	Synovate	504	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	660.400
LV	Latvia	TNS Latvia	1.019	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	1.447.866
LT	Lithuania	TNS Gallup Lithuania	1.026	04/06/2011	16/06/2011	2.829.740
LU	Luxembourg	TNS ILReS	507	04/06/2011	17/06/2011	404.907
HU	Hungary	TNS Hungary	1.004	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	8.320.614
MT	Malta	MISCO	500	04/06/2011	18/06/2011	335.476
NL	Netherlands	TNS NIPO	1.001	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	13.371.980
AT	Austria	Österreichisches Gallup-Institut	1.005	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	7.009.827
PL	Poland	TNS OBOP	1.000	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	32.413.735
PT	Portugal	TNS EUROTESTE	1.048	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	8.080.915
RO	Romania	TNS CSOP	1.075	04/06/2011	15/06/2011	18.246.731
SI	Slovenia	RM PLUS	1.019	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	1.759.701
SK	Slovakia	TNS Slovakia	1.000	04/06/2011	17/06/2011	4.549.955
FI	Finland	TNS Gallup Oy	1.008	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	4.440.004
SE	Sweden	TNS GALLUP	1.019	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	7.791.240
UK	United Kingdom	TNS UK	1.342	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	51.848.010
TOTAL EU27			26.840	04/06/2011	19/06/2011	408.787.006

For each country a comparison between the sample and the universe was carried out. The Universe description was derived from Eurostat population data or from national statistics offices. For all countries surveyed, a national weighting procedure, using marginal and intercellular weighting, was carried out based on this Universe description. In all countries, gender, age, region and size of locality were introduced in the iteration procedure. For international weighting (i.e. EU averages), TNS Opinion & Social applies the official population figures as provided by EUROSTAT or national statistic offices. The total population figures for input in this post-weighting procedure are listed above.

Readers are reminded that survey results are estimations, the accuracy of which, everything being equal, rests upon the sample size and upon the observed percentage. With samples of about 1,000 interviews, the real percentages vary within the following confidence limits:

Observed percentages	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
Confidence limits	± 1.9 points	± 2.5 points	± 2.7 points	± 3.0 points	± 3.1 points