



# Flash Eurobarometer 502

## Youth and Democracy in the European Year of Youth

Summary



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Survey requested by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and coordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication.

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## **Flash Eurobarometer 502**

# **Youth and Democracy in the European Year of Youth**

### Summary

February-March 2022

Survey conducted by Ipsos European Public Affairs at the request of the European Commission,  
Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

Survey coordinated by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication  
(DG COMM “Media Monitoring and Eurobarometer” Unit)



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## Introduction

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The European Commission has decided to make 2022 the ‘European Year of Youth’ to support the generation that has sacrificed the most during the COVID-19 pandemic. Marking this event and to involve the young people, the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture commissioned Ipsos European Public affairs to conduct a Flash Eurobarometer targeting young people, aged 15-30. The survey covered the following key topics:

- Youth’s expectations of the European Year of Youth, the priorities they think it should focus on, and the type of activities they would like to participate in;
- Youth’s participation in civic life, including how they think they can make their voice heard and what activities / youth organisations they participate in;
- Degree of participation in activities such as working, studying, etc. in another Member State of the European Union (EU) and the reasons for not taking part in these activities;
- Awareness about the EU youth offer, including EU-funded opportunities to stay in another EU country and initiatives to get young people more involved in EU politics;
- Youth’s expectations from the EU for their generation.

Ipsos European Public Affairs interviewed a representative sample of young people aged 15 to 30, in each of the 27 Member States of the EU. Between 22 February and 4 March 2022, 26 178 young people were surveyed via computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI), using Ipsos online panels and their partner network. A share of respondents in Luxembourg and Malta was recruited via social media networks. Survey data are weighted to known population proportions. The EU27 averages are weighted according to the size of the 15-30 year-old population of each EU Member State.

In this report, countries are referred to by their official abbreviation. The abbreviations used in this report correspond to:

BE  Belgium	FR  France	NL  Netherlands
BG  Bulgaria	HR  Croatia	AT  Austria
CZ  Czechia	IT  Italy	PL  Poland
DK  Denmark	CY  Rep. of Cyprus	PT  Portugal
DE  Germany	LV  Latvia	RO  Romania
EE  Estonia	LT  Lithuania	SI  Slovenia
IE  Ireland	LU  Luxembourg	SK  Slovakia
EL  Greece	HU  Hungary	FI  Finland
ES  Spain	MT  Malta	SE  Sweden

**Due to rounding, the percentages shown in the charts do not always exactly add up to the totals mentioned in the text.**

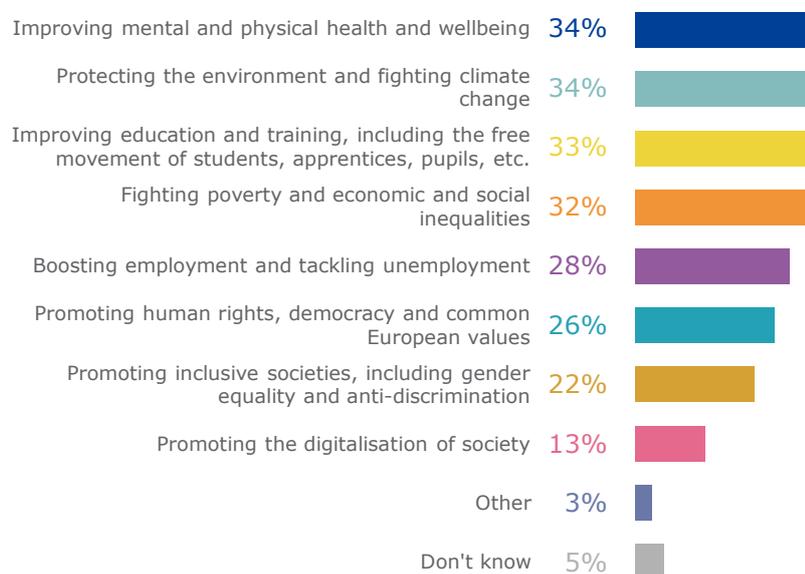
## Section 1. Youth's views on the European Year of Youth

### 1.1. Priority themes of the European Year of Youth

Respondents were asked which key themes the European Year of Youth should focus on (they could select up to three themes from a list of eight). **Four priorities are selected by about equal shares of respondents:** 1) Improving mental and physical health and wellbeing (34%); 2) protecting the environment and fighting climate change (34%); 3) improving education and training, including the free movement of students, apprentices, pupils, etc. (33%), and 4) fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities (32%).

Somewhat fewer respondents find that boosting employment and tackling unemployment (28%), promoting human rights, democracy and common European values (26%) and promoting inclusive societies, including gender equality and anti-discrimination (22%) should be key themes of the European Year of Youth. 13% think that promoting the digitalisation of society should be priority.

**Q12** The European Commission has decided to make 2022 the 'European Year of Youth' to support the generation that has sacrificed the most during the COVID-19 pandemic. What are the key themes you think the European Year of Youth should focus on? You can select up to three answers. [MULTIPLE ANSWERS] (% - EU27)



Base: All respondents (n=26 178)

**Improving mental and physical health and wellbeing is considered the (shared) most important priority theme for the European Year of Youth by young people in 16 of the 27 Member States.** Proportionally, improving mental and physical health and wellbeing is considered a priority for the European Year of Youth by between 26% of respondents in Germany and 56% in Estonia. Many also find this a priority in Malta (55%), the Netherlands and Ireland (both 50%).

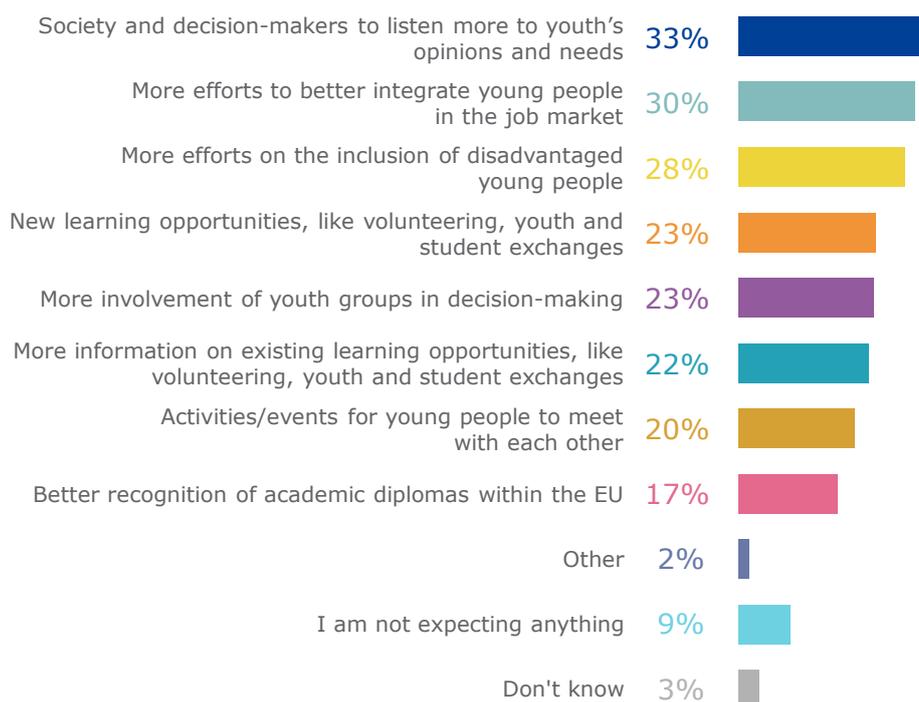
## 1.2. Expectations of the European Year of Youth

Respondents were asked what they expected most from the European Year of Youth, using a question allowing them to select up to three answers from a list of eight 'expectations' (excluding 'other').

**Young people most frequently expect from the European Year of Youth that society and decision-makers listen more to youth's opinions and needs, as well as more efforts to better integrate young people in the job market – 33% and 30% expect this, respectively.**

Slightly fewer (28%) expect more efforts on the inclusion of disadvantaged young people. Somewhat less than a quarter (22%-23%) expect 'new learning opportunities, like volunteering, youth and student exchanges', 'more involvement of youth groups in decision-making', and 'more information on existing learning opportunities, like volunteering, youth and student exchanges'. One in five (20%) expect activities/events for young people to meet with each other. 17% expect better recognition of academic diplomas within the EU. 9% do **not expect anything** from the European Year of Youth.

**Q14** What do you most expect from the European Year of Youth? You can select up to three answers. [MULTIPLE ANSWERS] (% - EU27)



Base: All respondents (n=26 178)

**At country level**, the proportion expecting from the European Year of Youth that society and decision-makers listen more to youth's opinions and needs ranges from 23% in Romania and 24% in Lithuania and Latvia, to 41% in both Luxembourg and Malta. The proportion of respondents expecting more efforts to better integrate young people in the job market is lowest in Finland (18%) and Germany (21%) and highest in Luxembourg, (42%), Cyprus (46%) and Greece (47%).

### 1.3. Activities young people would like to participate in

In the context of the European Year of Youth, **activities will be organised on topics that affect young people**, taking place either offline or online. The young people surveyed were asked in which activities, if any, they would be most interested to participate in (respondents could select a maximum of three out of eight activities listed).

**The great majority of young people surveyed (86%) are interested in participating in one or more of the activities listed** (including 2% who are interested in ‘other’ activities) – 9% indicate that they are not interested in any of the activities listed; 5% reply they ‘don’t know’.

The two activities young people are most interested in participating in are **festivals, artistic performances or concerts** and **meet-ups and exchanges with young people from other European countries** (both selected by 31%). This is followed by conferences, workshops or training sessions (27%) and opportunities to participate in learning and mobility opportunities (23%). Around one in five of the surveyed young people are interested in participating in opportunities to engage directly with national, regional or local politicians (21%), activities organised by youth organisations, and opportunities to engage directly with representatives or European institutions (both 19%). Least interest goes out to opportunities to engage directly with members of civil society and journalists (selected by 15%).

**Q13** In the context of the European Year of Youth, activities will be organised on topics that affect young people. In which activities, if any, would you be most interested in participating? Note that these activities can take place both online and offline. You can select up to three answers. [MULTIPLE ANSWERS] (% - EU27)



Base: All respondents (n=26 178)

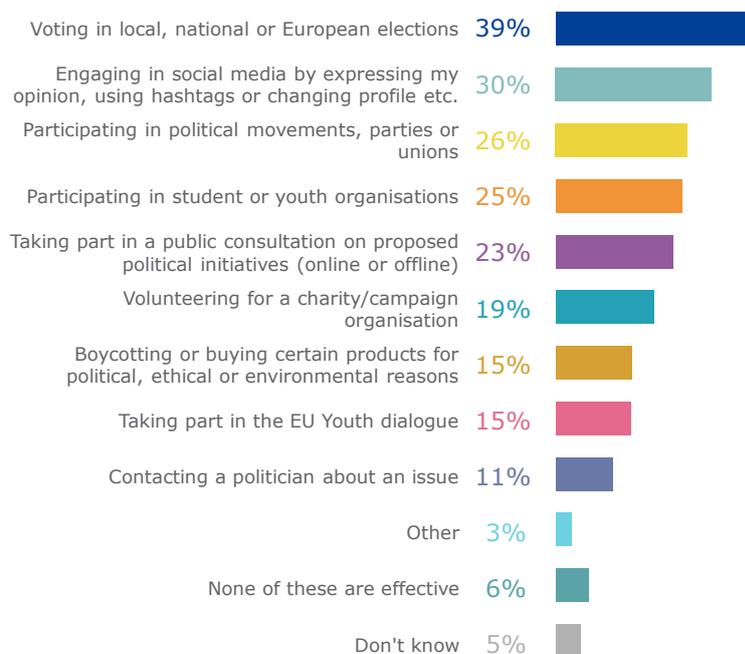
## Section 2. Youth participation in civic life

### 2.1. Making young people's voice heard

What do young people think are the most effective actions for making young people's voice heard by decision-makers? Respondents could select three actions, out of a total of nine (excluding 'other').

**Young people consider voting in local, national or European elections to be the most effective action for making their voice heard by decision-makers** – 39% of respondents select this action. In second place comes **'engaging in social media by expressing my opinion, using hashtags or changing my profile picture for example'**, which is selected by 30% of respondents.

**Q1** In your opinion what are the most effective actions for making young people's voice heard by decision makers? You can select up to three answers. [MULTIPLE ANSWERS] (% - EU27)



Base: All respondents (n=26 178)

Around a quarter think that the most effective actions for making young people's voice heard by decision-makers are participating in political movements, parties or unions (26%), participating in student or youth organisations (25%), or taking part in a public consultation on proposed political initiatives (23%). The other actions are selected by less than one in five respondents. 6% think that none of the listed actions are effective.

**'Voting in local, national or European elections' is considered the most effective action for making young people's voice heard in 19 Member States.** The proportion selecting this action ranges from 26% in Latvia, 28% in Lithuania and 29% in Hungary, to 54% in Portugal.

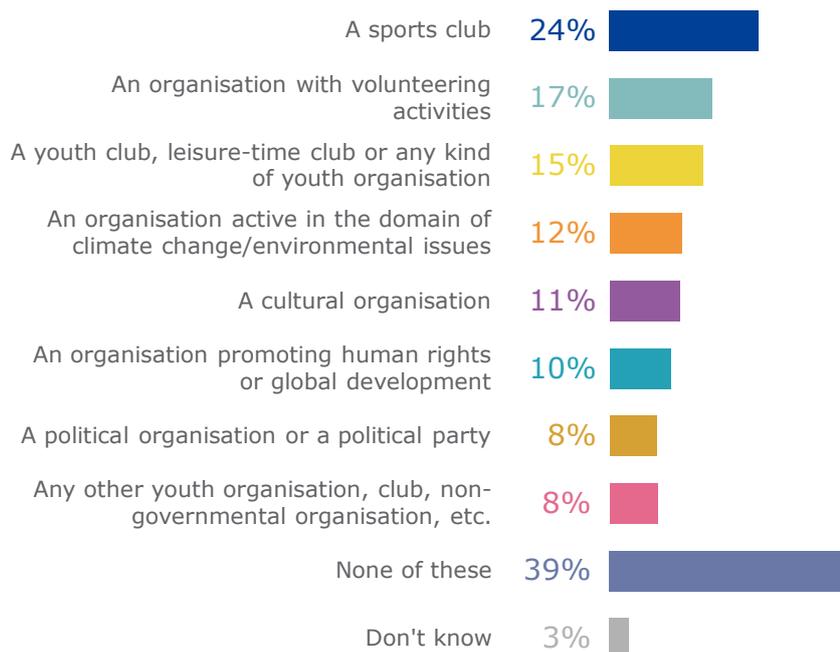
## 2.2. Youth participation activities

**A majority (58%) of young people have participated in one or more youth organisations over the last 12 months;** 39% have not participated in any of the organisations listed during this period, 3% don't know.

**Young people are most likely to have participated in a sports club** (24% indicate they have participated in this in the last twelve months), followed by an organisation with volunteering activities (17%), or a youth club, leisure-time club or any kind of youth organisation (15%).

About one in ten have participated in an organisation active in the domain of climate change/environmental issues (12%), a cultural organisation (11%), or an organisation promoting human rights or global development (10%). Of the organisations listed, young people are the least likely to have participated in a political organisation or a political party (8%). A similar share (8%) have participated in 'any other' youth organisation, club, non-governmental organisation, etc.

**Q2** In the last 12 months, have you participated in any activities of the following organisations?  
Select all that apply. [MULTIPLE ANSWERS] (% - EU27)



Base: All respondents (n=26 178)

In **all but six countries** (Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Poland and Slovakia), a majority of young people have participated over the last 12 months in one or more of the eight types of organisations listed. The proportion having participated in these organisations in this timeframe ranges from 45% in Latvia and 47% in both Cyprus and Malta, to 66% in Belgium and 67% in Ireland.

## Section 3. Participation in activities in another EU country

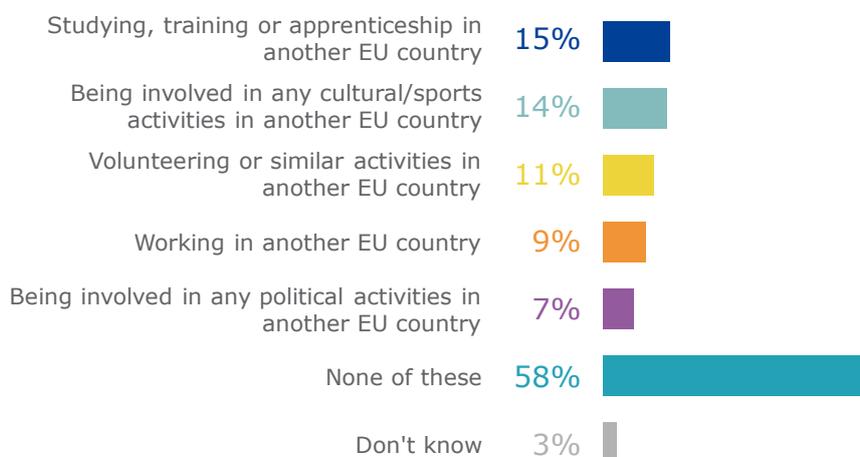
### 3.1. Participation in activities in another EU country

The young people surveyed were asked whether they have ever taken part in activities in another EU country, such as working or studying.

**About four in ten young people (39%) have participated in any of the professional, volunteering, learning or sporting activities specified.** A majority (58%) have not participated in any of these activities and 3% don't know.

With regard to the activities young people have participated in, **studying, training or apprenticeship in another EU country comes in first place** (15% note they did this), followed closely by 'being involved in any cultural/sports activities in another EU country' (14%). About one in ten respondents have volunteered (11%) or worked (9%) in another EU country. Respondents are the least likely to have been involved in political activities in another EU country (7%).

**Q5** Have you ever taken part in any of the following activities? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS]  
(% - EU27)



Base: All respondents (n=26 178)

The proportion of respondents who have **taken part in at least one type of activities in another EU country** varies between 24% in Sweden and 57% in Luxembourg. Other countries at the higher end of the country ranking include Germany (47%) and Austria (49%).

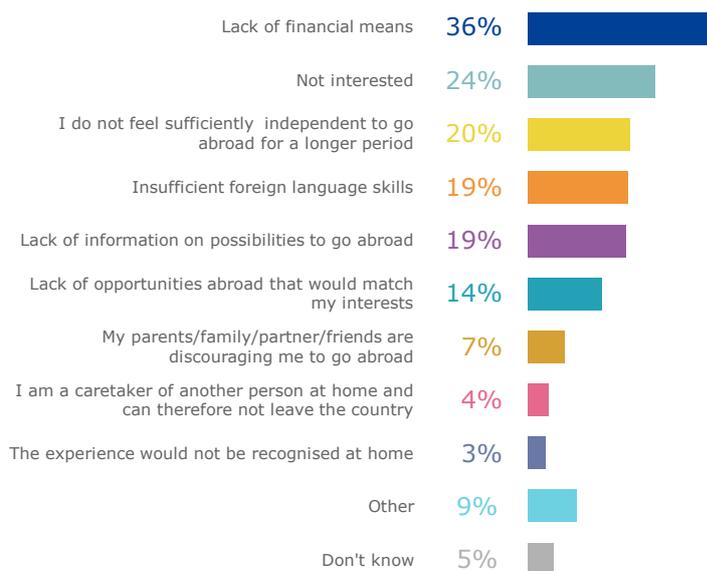
### 3.2. Reasons for not taking part in activities in another EU country

Respondents who did not take part in the activities in another EU country described above, where asked what refrained them from doing so.

**The largest share of respondents (36%) provide as a reason that they lack the financial means to take part in activities in another EU country.** 'Not interested' is the second most common reason (24%). About one in five do not feel sufficiently independent to go abroad for a longer period (20%), feel they have insufficient foreign language skills, or lack information on possibilities to go abroad (both 19%). 14% feel there is a lack of opportunities abroad that matches their interests.

Smaller proportions indicate as a reason for not taking part in activities in another EU country that their parents/family/partner/friends are discouraging them to go abroad (7%), that they are a caretaker of another person at home and can therefore not leave the country (4%), or that the experience would not be recognised at home (3%). About one in ten (9%) have another, not listed reason for not taking part in such activities in another EU country. Finally, 5% don't know.

**Q6** What stopped you from taking part in such activities? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS] (% - EU27)



Base: Respondents who did not participate in activities in another EU country (n=15 103)

**A lack of financial means is the most common reason for not taking part in activities in another EU country in all 27 Member States except Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden.**

A lack of financial means is a reason for not taking part in activities in another EU country for about half of respondents in Greece (53%), Ireland (48%) and Portugal (46%). By contrast, in Sweden 20% note they did not take part in activities in another EU country because they lacked the financial means. The proportion noting they are **not interested** in taking part in activities in another EU country ranges from 14% in Greece to 40% in Sweden. The proportion mentioning as a reason for not taking part in activities in another EU country that they **do not feel sufficiently independent** to go abroad for a longer period is lowest in Cyprus (11%) and highest in Poland (30%).

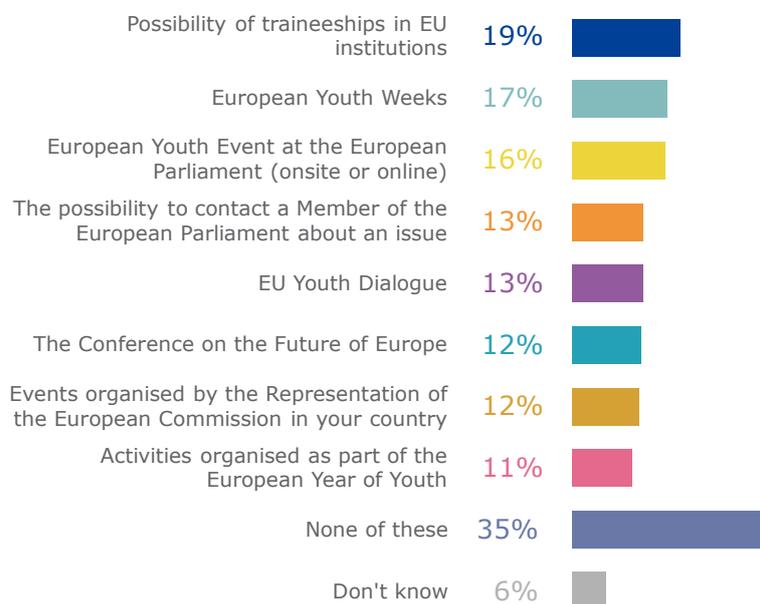
## Section 4. Awareness of the EU youth offer

### 4.1. Awareness about initiatives to get young people more involved in European level activities

The young people interviewed were asked which EU level youth participation initiatives they had heard of.

The results show that these initiatives are more or less equally known and that none of them are known by more than one in five young people. **The most well-known is the possibility of traineeships in EU institutions (19% note to be aware of this), followed by the European Youth Weeks (17%) and the European Youth Event at the European Parliament (16%).** Slightly more than one in ten are aware of the possibility to contact a Member of the European Parliament about an issue, the EU Youth Dialogue (both 13%), the Conference on the Future of Europe, events organised by the Representation of the European Commission in their country (both 12%) and activities organised as part of the European Year of Youth (11%). **Slightly more than one in three young people (35%) have heard about none of these initiatives.**

**Q11** The European Union offers various initiatives to get young people more involved in European politics. Which, if any, have you heard of? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS] (% - EU27)



Base: All respondents (n=26 178)

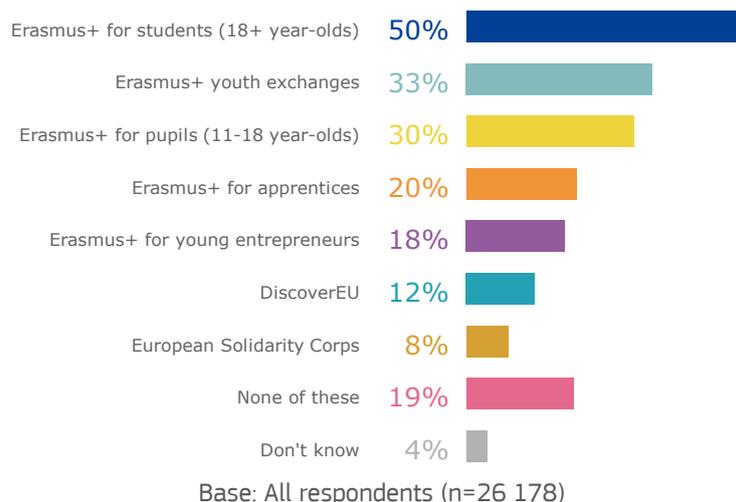
**Sweden is the only country where more than half or respondents (54%) are not aware of any EU initiatives to get young people more involved in European level activities.** Other countries where many are not aware of any initiatives include the Netherlands (46%) and Ireland (44%). By contrast, less than one in five young people are not aware of any initiatives to get young people more involved at European level activities in Bulgaria and Slovenia (19% in both countries).

## 4.2. Awareness of EU-funded opportunities to stay in another EU country

Respondents were asked which, if any, of the listed EU-funded opportunities for young people to stay in another EU country they had heard of.

**By far most well-known is Erasmus+ for students (18+ year-olds) – 50% of the surveyed young people are aware of this funding opportunity.** Also, the other Erasmus+ programmes are relatively well known: 33% of the surveyed young people have heard about Erasmus+ youth exchanges, 30% are aware of Erasmus+ for pupils (11-18 year-olds), 20% have heard of Erasmus+ for apprentices, and 18% note to be aware of Erasmus+ for young entrepreneurs. The other EU-funded opportunities to stay in another EU country are less well known. This includes DiscoverEU<sup>1</sup> (12%) and the European Solidarity Corps (8%). About one in five surveyed young people (19%) have not heard about any of the listed EU-funded opportunities to stay in another EU country.

**Q8** Below are some EU-funded opportunities for young people to stay in another EU country. Which, if any, have you heard of? [MULTIPLE ANSWERS] (% - EU27)



**In all 27 Member States, Erasmus+ for students is the most well-known EU-funded opportunity for young people to stay in another EU country.** The share of young people knowing Erasmus+ for students is largest in Greece (72%) and Cyprus (70%) and smallest in Sweden (26%).

Large country differences are also visible with regard to the awareness about other Erasmus+ programmes. The proportion of young people being aware of Erasmus+ youth exchanges ranges from 17% in Denmark and Sweden, 18% in the Netherlands and 19% in Germany, to 53% in Cyprus, 56% in Greece and 57% in Latvia. The share of young people knowing Erasmus+ for pupils ranges from 13% in Sweden, 14% in the Netherlands and 15% in Denmark, to 48% in Latvia, 49% in Slovenia, 50% in Cyprus and 51% in Greece.

<sup>1</sup> Note that in the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked about their knowledge of “DiscoverEU (Interrail)”. As the official name of the programme is DiscoverEU, the reference to Interrail was removed in the reports of this study.

## Section 5. Youth's expectations from the EU

### 5.1. What do young people expect from the EU for their generation?

The surveyed young people were asked what they expect of the European Union for their generation – they could select up to three answers from a list of nine.

**In first place comes 'preserving peace, reinforcing international security and promoting international cooperation', which 37% of respondents expect from the EU.** The next three expectations are: 'Increasing job opportunities for young people' (33%), 'fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities' (32%) and 'promoting environmentally friendly policy and fight climate change' (31%). Around a quarter expect the EU to promote Human Rights, democracy and common European values (27%) and inclusive societies, including gender equality and anti-discrimination (24%). Respondents are least likely to expect the EU to play a strong role in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and other health challenges, bring young people from different parts of the EU together (both 16%), or promote the digitalisation of society (13%).

**Q17** What do you expect of the European Union for your generation? You can select up to three answers. [MULTIPLE ANSWERS] (% - EU27)



Base: All respondents (n=26 178)

The share of young people expecting the EU to **preserve peace, reinforce international security and promote international cooperation** ranges from 28% in Spain and 31% in Belgium, to 56% in Estonia and 57% in Luxembourg. The proportion expecting the EU to **increase job opportunities** for young people ranges from 19% in Germany, 21% in Denmark and 23% in Austria, to 45% in Croatia and Greece and 53% in Cyprus. The share expecting the EU to **fight poverty and economic and social inequalities** is also highest in Cyprus (54%) and Greece (46%), while fewest expect this in Denmark (23%) and Sweden (26%). The proportion expecting the EU to **promote environmentally friendly policy and fight climate change** varies between 20% in Romania and 44% in Malta.



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