

Youth Study of TUI Foundation: Support for European idea rises again/Scepticism remains over democratic institutions

- **71 per cent of Europe's young adults would vote against in a referendum on leaving the EU**
- **Fighting terrorism is considered as the principal task for the EU, while reducing social injustice is regarded as the key national priority**
- **Only one in three young Europeans trust EU institutions – even fewer trust trade unions, churches and media**
- **17 per cent of respondents believe the political system is working well in their own country – almost one in two (45 per cent) see a need for reforms**
- **“Young Europe 2018 – The Youth Study of TUI Foundation”: Online survey carried out in seven EU countries (Germany, France, Spain, Italy, UK, Poland, Greece) polling 6,080 young adults aged between 16 and 26**

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Hanover/Berlin, 3 May 2018 – Support for the EU is rising again among Europe's young adults, while their scepticism over the democratic institutions remains strong. This is one of the key results of the second European Youth Study carried out by pollster YouGov on behalf of TUI Foundation. Pro-European views have increased versus 2017 level in all countries surveyed. If the countries were to hold a national referendum about EU membership today, 71 per cent of the respondents would vote to stay, up from only 61 per cent in 2017. In Germany, even 80 per cent of young people would vote against an exit (in 2017: 69 per cent). Overall, opinions have become more favourable towards the European Union, as also reflected by the proportion of young Europeans exclusively describing themselves as citizens of their country. Their proportion is declining: in 2018, it has fallen to 34 per cent from 42 per cent in 2017. “These figures show that Europe is making a comeback among young people. Brexit has shaken things up. We now talk about strengths, opportunities and achievements again. In a world that is in turmoil in many places, where national isolation rather than cooperation is being promoted, Europe is taking on a new shape. We are having real debates again that strengthen positive attitudes towards the EU”, said Thomas Ellerbeck, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of TUI Foundation. Elke Hlawatschek, General Manager of the TUI Foundation is presenting results in Berlin on Thursday.

Young Europeans: Fighting terrorism is the principal task for the EU

According to the young Europeans taking part in the poll, the principal task for the EU for the next five years is the fight against terrorism (44 per cent), followed by environmental and climate protection (34 per cent) and the regulation of immigration (33 per cent). At the national level, young Europeans regard the promotion of economic growth (39 per cent) and the reduction of social injustice (35 per cent) as the top priorities, with 29 per cent naming the fight against terrorism. Young Europeans also tend to consider the support of education and science to be more of a national task, with 17 per cent naming this area as a key priority for the EU, while 26 per cent believe it is an important task for national authorities. German young adults attach particular importance to the promotion of new technologies, the Internet and

digitalisation, named as one of the three key priorities for the EU by 21 per cent and a national priority for as many as one in three (29 per cent). This is the highest proportion among the seven countries surveyed, while this aspect is only named by 7 per cent (EU) and 5 per cent (national) among Spanish respondents.

Young adults distrust authorities and institutions

While pro-European attitudes are rising, the young adults continue to distrust authorities and institutions. Only one in three (33 per cent) trust EU institutions such as the European Parliament or the EU Commission. In Germany, this proportion is somewhat higher with no fewer than 37 per cent of respondents expressing their trust

Across Europe, the results are even worse for trade unions, banks, churches public media as well as groups of companies. The respondents place the highest levels of trust in science and scientists (71 per cent), the police (52 per cent) and the courts (39 per cent). Political parties land at the bottom of the league: In Germany as in all other countries, young people have least trust in the reliability of political parties and do not place great trust in parliaments and governments, either.

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Young Europeans express a strong wish for political change: Less than one in five (17 per cent) voice the view that the political system in their country works as it should. Almost one in two (45 per cent) think that the political systems needs to be reformed, while a further 28 per cent believe that only "radical change could fix it" again. While the proportion of young adults assessing the political system as well-functioning is above-average (39 per cent) in Germany, the proportion of proponents of radical change is particularly high in Greece (52 per cent), Italy (43 per cent) and Spain (35 per cent).

7 to 23 per cent have populist attitudes

For the first time, this year's study also measured populist tendencies among young Europeans. It included 15 questions relating, for instance, to anti-elitism ("People like myself have no influence on the government"), popular sovereignty ("The people should have the final say in all important decisions"), and the concept of people as a unity ("All ordinary people pull together"). The results show that the proportion of young people with populist attitudes ranges from seven per cent in Germany to 23 per cent in Poland. Respondents answering 12 of the 15 questions in the affirmative are considered populist. These young people tend to be more critical of the design of the democratic system: 39 per cent rate the political system in their country so poorly that they see a need for radical change. This view is predominantly expressed by respondents from Greece (66 per cent), Italy (51 per cent), Poland (41 per cent) and Spain (39 per cent). Young people with populist tendencies are more inclined to dispense with fundamental democratic elements. 64 per cent of these young people would prefer important political decisions to be taken by independent experts rather than elected politicians. "For populist-leaning young people, democracy is a form of government very often perceived as an empty term – they associate it with an illiberal democracy showing little regard for, or overturning, the principles of the rule of law. More than 35 per cent of them can imagine restricting the rights of the opposition.

They thus perceive the political process as laborious and highly intransparent,” said Marcus Spittler of the Berlin Science Research Centre for Social Research (WZB), who had provided scientific support for the study.

Only little trust in Facebook

This is also reflected in the respondents’ media usage: 82 per cent of all respondents use the Internet to inform themselves about current political affairs, while only 30 per cent of them use printed newspapers and news magazines. When searching information on the Internet, Facebook ranks top at 44 per cent, followed by online newspaper and news magazine versions (34 per cent) and YouTube (28 per cent). Public broadcasters enjoy a high level of trust, in particular in France, Germany and the UK, while the number of respondents trusting public broadcasters is particularly low in Poland and Greece. Although Facebook is a highly relevant source of information, respondents assess it as untrustworthy. At 37 per cent, the print versions of newspapers and news magazines rank top of the trustworthiness league, while only 17 per cent of respondents trust Facebook – in Germany, the social network is the least trustworthy option identified by the respondents (8 per cent).

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Elke Hlawatschek, Managing Director of TUI Foundation, commented as follows: “Democracy and rule of law go hand in hand. The concept of a hollow democracy, observed among young people with populist tendencies, is problematic. Political education remains a key task for all social stakeholders, not just politicians. As TUI Foundation, we are seeking to play our part in explaining the benefits of a democratic Europe to young people.”

Background to the study

In order to better understand the life environment, identity/ies and attitudes towards Europe of young Europeans in 2018, TUI Foundation commissioned YouGov with polling young people in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK. A total of 6,080 young people between the ages of 16 and 26 years were polled by online surveys from 14 February to 4 March 2018.

In each country, a representative sample of online panel participants was recruited to reflect the age and gender characteristics corresponding to the actual ratios in the country. Results reported across all countries were weighted so that each country has the same weight.

About TUI Foundation

TUI Foundation supports and implements projects around the topic of ‘Young Europe’. Its goal is to foster the European project. It therefore engages in long-term investments in regional, national and international projects focusing on education, training and individual as well as professional development. The independent and unaffiliated foundation serving the public good is based in Hannover.

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