

Youth Study “Young Europe 2019” of TUI Foundation: Disappointed with Europe? Young people support more integration and political participation in Europe

- **Young people between 16 and 26 name “asylum and migration” as the EU’s key political problem, followed by environmental protection and economic policy**
- **They want stronger European integration, but do not believe it will succeed**
- **Young adults believe they are better represented in national parliaments than in the European Parliament – European elections are “second-order elections”**
- **“Young Europe 2019” was carried out by YouGov as an online survey in eleven European countries (Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, the United Kingdom, Italy, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Spain), polling 8,220 young people aged between 16 and 26**

Hanover/Berlin, 3 May 2019 – Young Europeans do not consider themselves to be adequately represented in the European Parliament, regard the European elections as second-order elections – and yet, support the European idea. “In all EU countries surveyed, at least 60 per cent of the 16- to 26-year-olds would opt to remain if a referendum on leaving the EU were to be held, with Spain ranking top at 79 per cent. Young Europeans manifest particularly strong pro-European views. This positive fundamental attitude is encouraging. It should inspire us to intensify dialogue with young Europeans, take their questions, concerns and criticism seriously. This may help to convert support into enthusiasm for Europe,” said Thomas Ellerbeck, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the TUI Foundation. With a view to the next legislative period of the European Parliament, young people from ten EU countries and Norway have named environmental policy as one of the most important challenges to be solved within the EU. The topic came in second, with migration and asylum even more important for them and economic and financial policy in third place. In their view, the environment is a topic for the future. “Young people see climate protection as an opportunity rather than a threat,” explains Ellerbeck.

Pro-European views have increased steadily since 2017 and remain strong this year. In 2019, support for the EU ranges from 61 per cent in Italy and Sweden to 79 per cent in Spain. In the UK, Greece and Poland, support for EU membership has continually grown since 2017. In France, Spain and Italy, by contrast, support for EU membership declined from its record level observed in 2018. The same trend was also observed in Germany: The proportion of young respondents advocating EU membership grew from 69 per cent in 2017 to 80 per cent in 2018 and declined to 74 per cent in 2019.

“As the results show, support for Europe cannot be taken for granted and the importance of Europe needs to be continually explained. Politicians and EU officials should realise and respect that phenomenon. The needs of young people have to be more successfully integrated into the political agenda,” said Elke Hlawatschek, Managing Director TUI Foundation, at the presentation of the results in Berlin.

One in five young Europeans took part in a demonstration in the past 12 months

One in five young Europeans took part in a demonstration within the past twelve months (22 per cent, in Germany: 18 per cent). About the same percentage of young people chose not to

buy certain products for political or ethical reasons or to buy them precisely for these reasons (28 per cent, in Germany: 33 per cent). The key topic motivating young people to take action is environmental protection: 43 per cent engaged in political action in this respect within the past twelve months (in Germany: 41 per cent). Discussions about equal pay and gender equality also seem to have promoted political action among young people: Equal opportunities ranks second on the list of topics for which young people engaged in political action (40 per cent, in Germany: 32 per cent).

Apart from opportunities for political participation taking place offline, the study also included questions relating to different types of online participation. The results show that political engagement of young people tends to take place online or as a mix of online and offline activities. It includes, for instance, "liking" political contributions in social media, named as one of the activities carried out in the past twelve months by 49 per cent of the young respondents. Activities also include participation in online petitions (42 per cent) and sharing political contributions of other persons in social media (31 per cent).

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Climate protection and environmental policy: an opportunity rather than a threat

A majority of young people in the EU (55 per cent) tend to regard climate protection and environmental policy as an opportunity rather than a threat for their own personal lives. "We see a generation that no longer regards climate and environmental protection as a necessary evil, but as a natural component of the political agenda," said Hlawatschek.

Young Europeans are divided with regard to asylum and migration: Around one third of the respondents consider this topic as an opportunity for their own life, while one third regard it as a threat and one third state that they do not know. The topic of "asylum and migration" is also named as the EU's most important current problem. However, this does not mean that the respondents reject open borders: 43 per cent of those naming "asylum and migration" as the key problem consider open borders within the EU as an opportunity, with only 27 per cent regarding it as a threat. "Attitudes towards EU freedom of movement are predominantly positive, and the concept is beyond discussion for young people."

In Germany, the weighting differs to some extent from the overall picture: For young Germans, social policy (25 per cent) ranks third on the list of the most important political problems to be addressed by the EU, behind migration/asylum (55 per cent) and environmental policy/animal welfare (35 per cent). Germany outweighs all other countries in terms of the number of young people assessing "social policy" as a key issue for the EU.

European election only second-order election for young Europeans

Young Europeans tend to regard the European elections as "second-order elections": Only 50 per cent of them indicate that the elections to the European Parliament are "important" (in Germany: 56 per cent). By contrast, 73 per cent state that elections to their national parliament are "important" (in Germany: 74 per cent).

Nevertheless, 38 per cent of all respondents (in Germany: 54 per cent) want "more" Europe and hope that the EU member states will grow closer together. However, only 23 per cent (in Germany: 21 per cent) believe that this will actually happen within the next five years. "Young

people clearly express their wish for European countries to move closer together. However, they do not believe this will actually happen. This generation is the natural ally of all those who believe in Europe as a political project", commented Elke Hlawatschek.

Ten per cent of young Germans are not sure whether they are entitled to vote in the European election

In Germany, 64 per cent of the respondents indicate they are entitled to vote in the forthcoming European elections, while 10 per cent are not sure. In response to the question regarding their likelihood of voting in the EU elections, half of all German respondents (53 per cent) state that they will "definitely" vote, with 22 per cent indicating they will "probably" vote. Only four per cent state they will "definitely not" vote (with six per cent stating they will "probably not" vote and 13 per cent answering "maybe").

"In the past, the election turnout rate was usually lower for young adults compared with the overall population, and the gap is growing. One of the reasons is the change in the perception of civic responsibilities. Young people seem to be less inclined to consider voting as a civic duty. Above all, they do not always seem to consider the traditional, conventional forms of participation to be sufficiently attractive, and they tend to believe political parties and the political system are not very responsive," said Marcus Spittler of the Berlin Social Science Centre (WZB), who had provided scientific support for the study. "The Youth Study has shown that 45 per cent of the respondents agree with the statement that they feel able to understand and assess important political issues well or very well. At the same time, only 17 per cent believe that politicians care about what people think" Spittler continued.

Scepticism regarding the effectiveness of representative democracy

Slightly more than half (58 per cent) of the young people polled are convinced that democracy is the best form of government. Support for democracy is strongest in Greece (73 per cent), Germany and Sweden (66 per cent each) as well as Denmark (65 per cent). Support for democracy is very low in France (38 per cent), Italy and Poland (46 per cent each). Only a minority (six per cent) of young people believe other forms of government are better than a democracy.

If you ask young people how well they feel represented by the national and European parliaments, a uniform picture emerges. They all feel better represented by their own national parliament (with 30 per cent stating they are "very strongly" or "strongly" represented) than by the European Parliament (20 per cent). The proportion of young people feeling strongly represented by their own national parliament is strongest in Sweden (45 per cent), Denmark (40 per cent), Poland and Italy (35 per cent each). Regarding this issue, Germany ranks in the middle of the league table at 24 per cent. Young people in Italy (29 per cent), Denmark (28 per cent) and Poland (27 per cent) feel most strongly represented by the European Parliament compared with their European peers. In Germany, 18 per cent of young people state they feel "strongly" or "very strongly" represented by the European Parliament.

Only 18 per cent of the young people polled agree with the statement that politicians seek to reach out to the population. Here, the lowest percentages were recorded for Germany and Spain with twelve per cent, while the Nordic countries delivered the highest values with 27 per

cent for Norway and 25 per cent for Sweden. Another aspect used as an indicator of the effectiveness of democracy was assessed in a rather negative way: Only 17 per cent of the young people agree with the statement that politicians care about "what ordinary people think" (Germany: twelve per cent, Greece: eight per cent).

"Charta of Young Europe": An "Office for Human Dignity" for Europe!

Parallel to the survey of more than 8000 young Europeans for the Youth Study, the TUI Foundation together with the independent German think tank iRights.Lab carried out the "Young Europe" project. Young people in Germany between the ages of 16 and 26 were called upon to articulate their ideas about the future of Europe – by text, photo, video or audio message. Within a few weeks, more than 100 young people took part. Some of them were invited to workshops in Berlin by the TUI Foundation. The graphic novel on the topic of Europe, which was conceived in this context, will be presented in summer 2019. In addition, a "Charta of Young Europe" was created, in which young people show which topics are important to them shortly before the European elections. In the preamble they write: "With this charta we want to give a concrete as well as idealistic impetus to European politics, economy and society. We believe that we can only shape a future worth living in with courage and unity." From an "Office for Dignity" in the EU, to a stronger commitment to environmental protection, to a call for "cultural and language exchange programmes" or the establishment of an European competence centre for the social aspects of digitisation, young people show that they have concrete ideas for the future of Europe. The Charta can be found at www.young-eu.com.

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Background to the study

Since 2017, TUI Foundation has implemented the "Young Europe" study in order to better understand the life environment, identity/ies and political attitudes of young Europeans. For the most recent study "Young Europe 2019", young people in the following eleven countries were polled from 21 January 2019 until 12 February 2019: Germany, the UK, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Poland (as in 2017 and 2018). For the first time, young people in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway were included in the poll in 2019. Overall, 8,220 young people aged between 16 and 26 were polled by online surveys in 2019. In each country, a representative sample of online panel participants was recruited to reflect the age, gender and educational level reflecting actual ratios in each country. Results were additionally weighted according to age, gender and education for the analysis so as to compensate for minor deviations. Results reported across all countries were weighted so that each country has the same weight.

About TUI Foundation

TUI Foundation supports and implements projects relating to the topic of "Young Europe". Its goal is to foster the European idea. 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 Hanover.

All results of the study are available here: <https://www.tui-stiftung.de/en/>

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