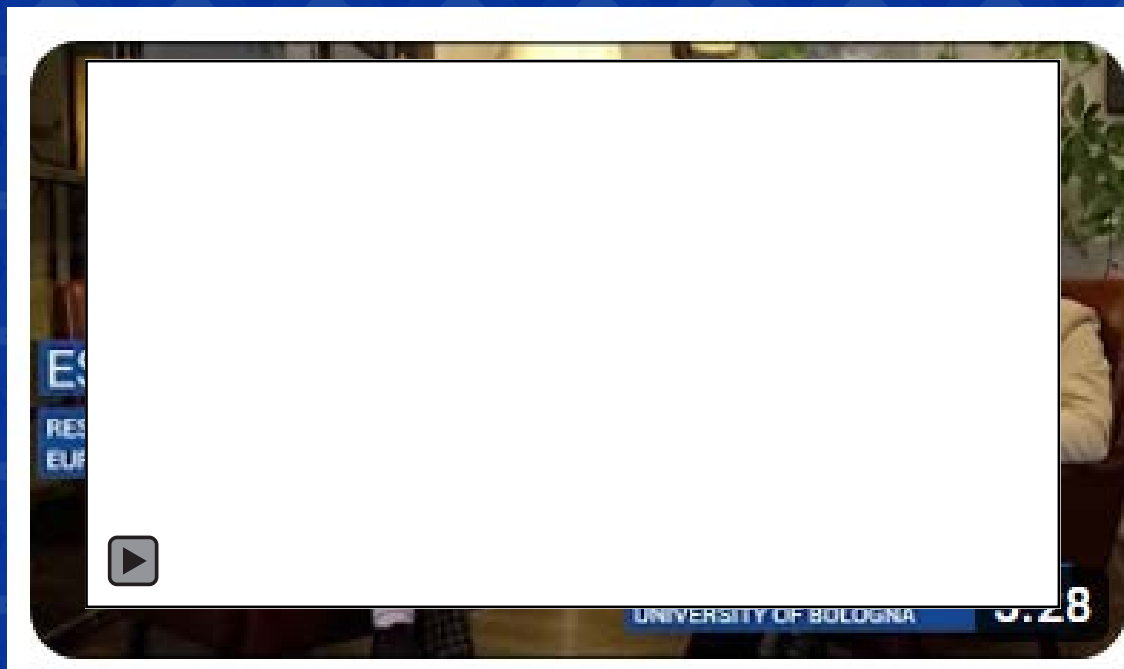


Working group 1

“Voting for European Democracy”

Seville (Spain)



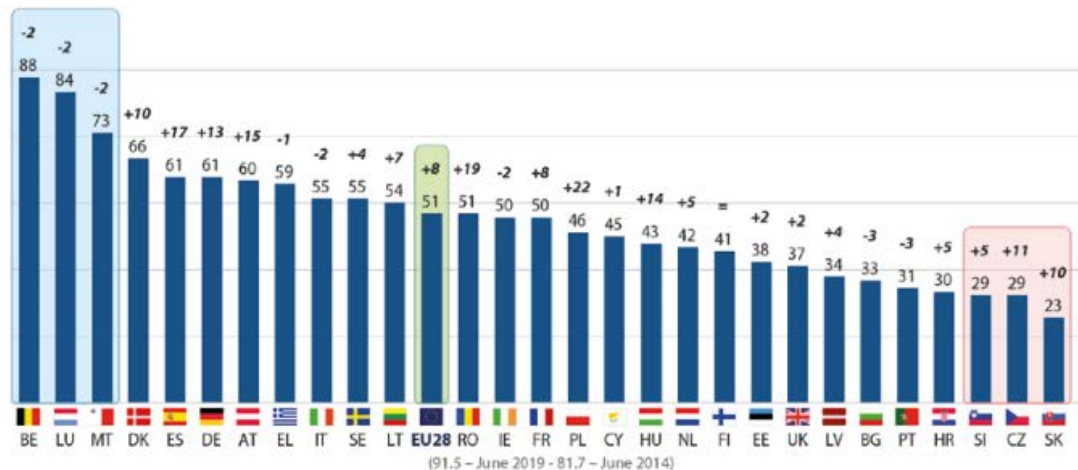
Two topics

1. Learning mobility and European elections
2. Under-representation of youth

Theme 1. Learning mobility and European elections

There are significant differences in turnout of voters for European elections between EU member states.

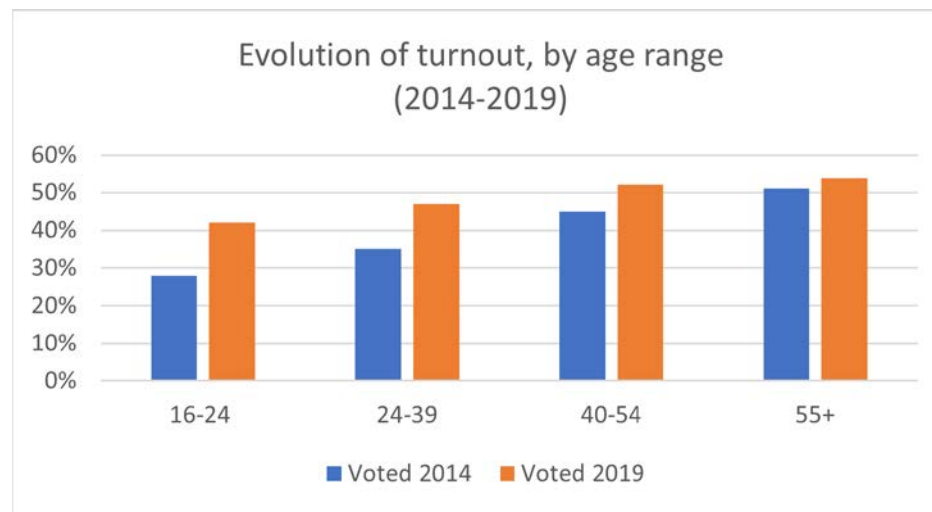
Q European Parliament elections were held on the (DATE ACCORDING TO COUNTRY). For one reason or another, some people in (OUR COUNTRY) did not vote in these elections. Did you yourself vote in the recent European Parliament elections? (% - voted)



Base: respondents of voting age, 98% of the sample
Source: Eurobarometer 2019 (91.5), QG1

Theme 1. Learning mobility and European elections

e Young people generally participate less in domestic and European politics. The abstention of the youngest voters in the European parliamentary elections is particularly high (over 60% in the 2019 European elections, whereas the general turnout was 50.6%).



Source: Eurobarometer survey 2019

Theme 1. Learning mobility and European elections

- With the upcoming European parliamentary elections in June 2024, this is a major concern. The less young people participate, the less they are represented in politics, and the less governments and European institutions have incentives to create policies that explicitly address the youth's concerns.
- One “fun fact” is that – globally - only around 2 % of parliaments have members that are younger than 30 years old, a dynamic that will probably get worse if youth participation continues to decline.

Theme 1. Learning mobility and European elections

- e What may be the role of learning mobility and Erasmus+ in stimulating civic and political engagement? One of the four priorities of Erasmus+ is **engagement**.
- e It is, however, not clear how the Erasmus+ programme stimulates engagement in practice.
- e It is not evident for instance volunteering or how civic, community types of engagement actually contribute to *active political awareness, political and human rights literacy*, and the development of a political sense of *European citizenship*.

Theme 1. Learning mobility and European elections

- Therefore, examining the role of learning mobility programs like Erasmus+ in fostering civic and political engagement becomes really important.
- As we shall see in the following survey findings, understanding the practical implications and effectiveness of such initiatives remains a complex and nuanced endeavour.

Learning mobility and European elections

Do you feel to be:

European and regional

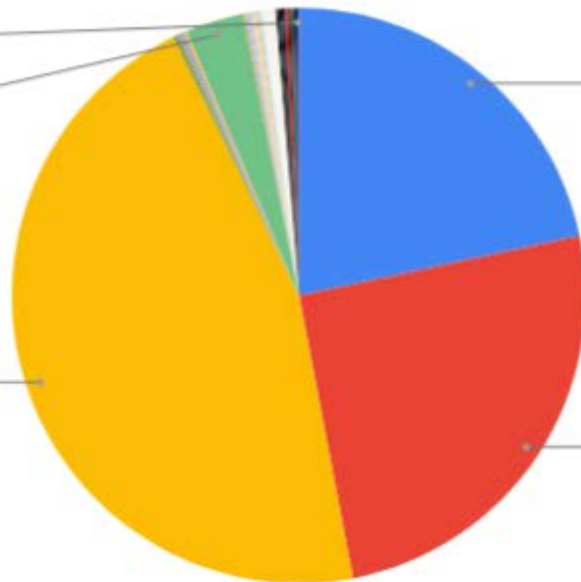
0.1%

A national citizen (of a non-EU member state)

3.3%

Both European and national

45.8%



A national citizen (of an EU member state)

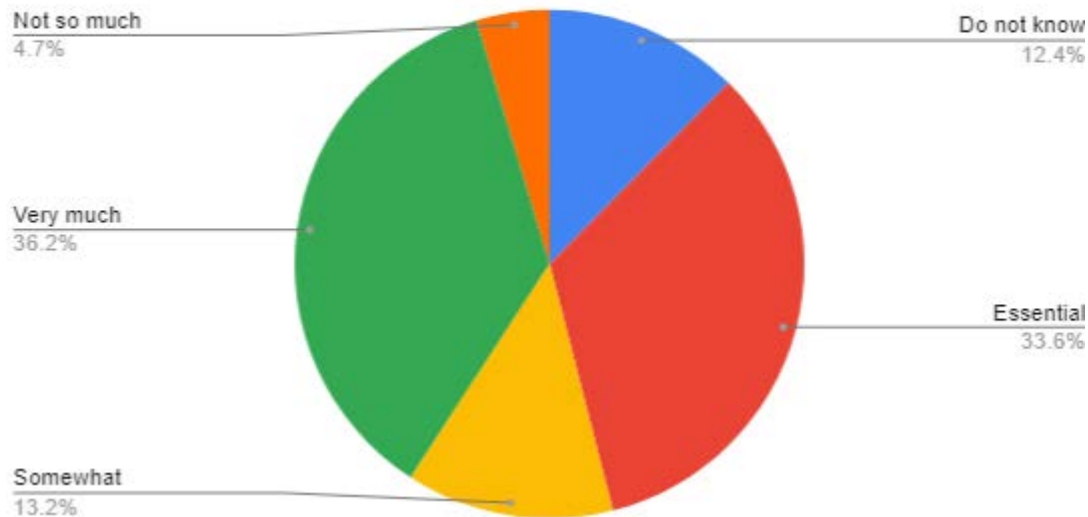
21.7%

A European citizen

25.3%

Learning mobility and European elections

How much do you think the Erasmus programme stimulates the following dimensions? [Strengthening European studies/European citizenship education]



Learning mobility and European elections

Theme 1. Learning mobility and European elections

Contrasting positions

1.

*“There is no need to change Erasmus+ as it is. Learning mobility and Erasmus+ currently **contribute sufficiently** to participants’ political and democratic skills and willingness to engage. And Erasmus+ is currently sufficiently inclusive. Everybody can participate.”*

2.

*“Learning mobility and Erasmus+ need a **much more intense focus** on participants’ political and democratic skills and willingness to engage, not least by developing new tools and programmes strengthening a European idea politics. Also, Erasmus+ needs to involve more marginalized young people.”*

Learning mobility and European elections

Position-taking by participants

(participants choose one of the two positions above and justify their position; the facilitator can help, also by referring to the questions below)

In what ways does Erasmus+ currently explicitly develop skills of engagement and of political awareness?

Can you give explicit examples of how an Erasmus+ activity has enhanced political and civic skills of participants?

To what extent does learning mobility stimulate engagement?

How does learning mobility make (young) people more aware (explicit examples) European politics (that is different from national politics)?

How could Erasmus+ develop more robust engagement tools to favour transnational civic participation (on the European level)?

Theme 2. Under-representation of youth

- European citizens have the right to vote in the European Parliament elections held **every five years**. By participating in elections, citizens can choose their representatives (Members of the European Parliament) who will shape EU policies and legislation. Every citizen of the Union has also the right to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament.

Theme 2. Under-representation of youth

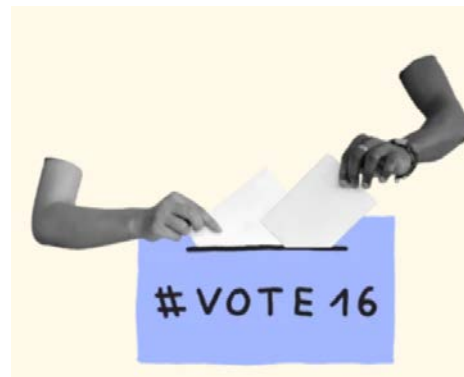
- There is a **clear representation gap** that regards youth representation. The average age of MEPs is 50 years. Two-out-of-three MEPs are 41 to 60-years old. Currently only 37 MEPs – out of 705 – are under the age of 35, around five percent of all parliamentarians.
- This shows a large gap with the percentage of under-35s in the entire EU population (ca. 16 %) and means young people's main issues, problems and policy preferences are not well-represented in the European Parliament.

Theme 2. Under-representation of youth

e *Eligibility criteria* for voting in European Parliament elections vary slightly between Member States. In general, EU citizens who are at least **18 years** old and reside in an EU Member State have the right to vote in the European Parliament elections.

Theme 2. Under-representation of youth

- e Only in a few member states young people **under 18** are allowed to vote.
- e For the 2024 elections, this age is set at **16** in **Austria, Belgium, Germany and Malta**, **17** in **Greece**, while it **remains 18** in the remaining Member States.

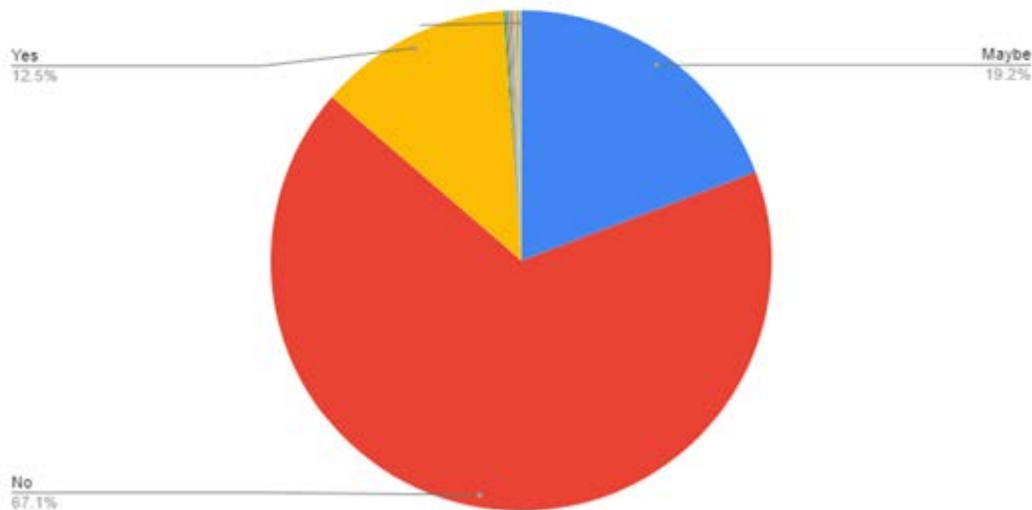


Theme 2. Under-representation of youth

- Despite efforts to enhance youth engagement, the broader representation gap remains glaring. Our survey data pertaining to voting behaviour and aspirations for candidacy among European youth shows valuable insights into the extent of youth involvement in European politics.

Theme 2. Under-representation of youth

In the current 705-member European Parliament, only 37 members are below 35 years of age. Have you yourself ever considered running for the European Parliament?



Theme 2. Under-representation of youth

Theme 2. Youth and under-representation

Contrasting positions: Voting age

1.

*“The general voting age of **18 years** is fine, as this is the age that young people become adults and become politically competent. The 16-years-old are not yet capable of understanding political issues”.*

2.

*“The voting age should be lowered everywhere to **16 years** of age. This will enhance the engagement and representation of young people”.*

Theme 2. Under-representation of youth

Position-taking by participants

(participants choose one of the two positions above and justify their position; the facilitator can help, also by referring to the questions below)

What are young people lacking in political and voting skills?

What are the main differences between adolescents and adults?

At what age are the democratic and political values of people (also regarding the EU's fundamental values) being formed?

What can be the contribution of young people under 18 to (European) politics and civic engagement?

What may be the positive outcomes of a minimal voting age of 16?

How does Erasmus+ contribute to helping young people going through the "transition" from being adolescent to becoming adult?

Under-representation of youth

Contrasting positions: under-representation young people

1.

*“Only 37 Members of European Parliament **under the age of 35** is not a problem. Older people can represent young people, as they are more experienced and may be parents.”*

2.

*“The number of **young people** in the European Parliament needs to **increase** importantly, so as to directly represent young people’s interests, to allow them to co-shape their future and that of Europe, and represent the European ideal”.*

Theme 2. Under-representation of youth

Position-taking by participants

(participants choose one of the two positions above and justify their position; the facilitator can help, also by referring to the questions below)

Is learning mobility through Erasmus+ a process of preparing young people to become full European citizens or political beings? Is it only after they finish their studies or traineeships that they will be prepared sufficiently?

Do older generations “know best” because of more experience?

How does Erasmus+ contribute to preparing young people for engaging in political life, also by standing as a young politician, as well as by engaging in (European) civil society?

How can young people be included in all kinds of political and social contexts where decisions are being made? How can Erasmus+ help to guide this process developing a stronger transnational European public sphere?



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