

EUROPE FOR CITIZENS. STRAND 1 "EUROPEAN REMEMBRANCE"

**PROJECT "15TH ANNIVERSARY OF EU ENLARGEMENT"**

REF.NO. 609177-CITIZ-1-2019-1-LV-CITIZ-REMEM



Co-funded by the  
Europe for Citizens Programme  
of the European Union

# **PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"**

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



**2021**

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## PROJECT PARTNERS

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# **PROJECT RESEARCH**

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Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)

Rezekne, 2021



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## Introduction

Project "The 15th Anniversary of the EU Enlargement" was created by 4 organizations from 4 European countries - Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and Poland. Year 2019 was a year of remembrance, marking the 15th Anniversary of the enlargement of the EU. All participating countries joined European Union in 2004. What has changed and what are people's views on 15 years in the European Union?

The aims of the project included:

1. To raise awareness of the citizens about an important historical, economic and political event in 2004 - the enlargement of the EU, which was the largest expansion of the EU in terms of territory, number of states and population
2. To involve into the project social organizations, town municipalities, museums, libraries, universities and schools for cross-sectorial cooperation to achieve more success in the project.
3. To create the stable network of the Eastern European countries with the aim to disseminate the values of the EU among European and neighboring countries, to strengthen the EU on its eastern border, to work together for the benefits of the EU.

To implement the aims of the project, one of the tasks was to carry out **research on the attitudes** of the population to the European Union and the issues related to the EU development. It was decided to divide the research in two parts and to organize both qualitative and quantitative survey. The qualitative structured interviews aimed to collect in-depth insights of the respondents on the topics being researched. Parallely, the questionnaire including mostly the same questions was developed and allocated in the internet platform [visidati.lv](http://visidati.lv) aiming to collect information that could be quantified.

## Methodology

The general population were the residents of four countries involved in the project - Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, and the sample proposed was kind of stratified sampling: the respondents were drawn at random from the following groups: age, occupation, place of residence (urban and rural areas), level of incomes, education. Developing the questions, the methodology of one of the most popular surveys - EUROBAROMETER - was taken as the basis. The questions were arranged in several groups: (1) questions about **the identity** included self-evaluation of the respondents of their attachment to the EU in comparison with their country or local settlement, as well evaluation of the achievements of the EU; (2) questions on awareness of the EU citizenship advantages, place of their country in the EU; (3) questions on the challenges of the EU and national level and their possible impact on the lives of the respondents in the future; (4) expectations and concerns of the respondents of the EU future and image of the EU; (5) group of questions aimed at identifying active involvement of the respondents in the EU projects, participation in the activities of non-governmental organizations, their motivation to take an active position in the life as active citizen of society.

In the result, 88 in-depth interviews (20 in Poland, 22 in Lithuania, 24 in Estonia, and 22 in Latvia) were carried out, and 467 respondents (115 from Estonia, 137 from Poland, 108 from Latvia, and 107 from Lithuania) participated in the online survey. The research took place from the pre-pandemic time February 2020 till May 2021.

The surveyed sample includes 55% respondents residing in large cities, 27% in small towns, and 17% in rural areas. Generations represented: 28% born after 1995 (so called Gen Z), 33% - born 1981-1994 (Gen Y), 20% - born 1965-1980 (Gen X), 16% - born 1946-1964 (Baby Boom), and 3% of respondents born before 1946. The education and schooling criteria included the age the respondent has completed the formal education (taken from Eurobarometer methodology): age 15 or earlier (3%), age 16-19 (19%), age 20+ (48%), and "still studying" (31%). One more parameter that was used to compare the respondents answers was level of incomes, which in the surveyed sample was represented by the indication by the respondents if they have difficulties paying bills (Eurobarometer): most of the time (6%), from time to time (26%), almost never (33%), never (35%).

The following pages includes review of the main questions, search for possible correlations of the answers and their social and demographic criteria, and provides "colorful" quotes from the qualitative interviews.





# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## How attached do you feel to your city/ town/ village/ country/ Europe?

According to Eurobarometer survey close to nine in ten Europeans (89%, same as in summer 2020) say they feel attached to their 'city/town/village', including over half (52%) who are "very attached" to it. Over nine in ten Europeans (92%) feel attached to their 'country', with 56% who feel "very attached" to it. Close to seven in ten Europeans (69%) say they are attached to 'Europe', with 21% "very attached" to it. Six in ten respondents (60%) answer they feel attached to the 'European Union', including 17% who feel "very attached" to it.

Our survey shows that half of the respondents feel attached to their city/ town/ village, and one third (32%) feel very attached to it. Almost 8 in ten respondents (77%, which is almost 15% less than in EB survey) feel attached to their country, including 36% very attached to it (56% in EB survey). 72% of the respondents feel themselves belonging to the Europe and 65% - as a part of the world. The respondents name common values, history, and shared experiences as base for this attachment. Those expressing negative feelings, indicate disagreement with the national policy, lack of satisfaction with external factors impacting their lives.

### Interviews

*Generally I'm most connected to the country. I feel Pole. Then, of course regionally, with my - as we call it - "little homeland" meaning my city and the region I live in, I do feel that I belong here and here is a lot of things I feel connected to. (Wojtek, PL)*

*Nowadays, everything has evolved so much that modern man is less and less aware of what he has and who owns it. Only a few (...) realize what it is like to have to protect a family, a country, and only a few know what it is like to be deported or sent to war. (...) I feel part of the world, of Europe, of the country and the city, because I am part of it. But the most proud thing is that I belong to Latgale, a region with the most sincere and generous people. I think young people today should appreciate the past, which, thanks God, they have not experienced. (Velta, LV)*

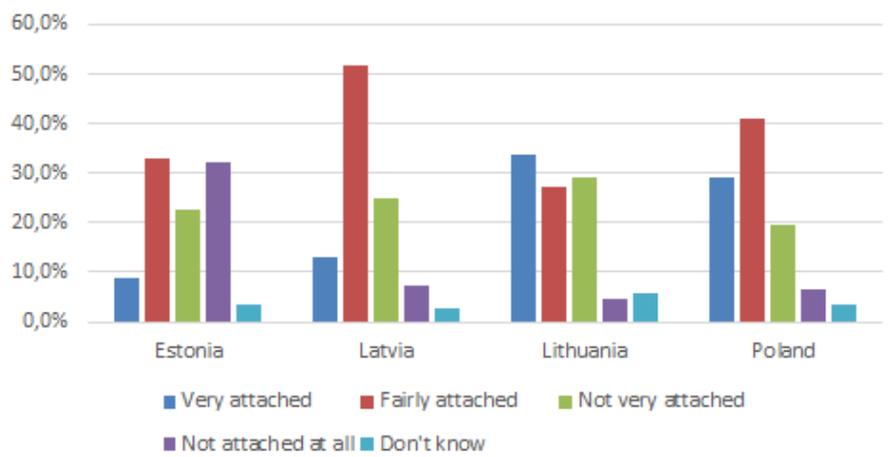
*The strongest connection or feeling of belonging is still with the country or nation, as I feel we have shared history and values, also the common language and culture than unites us. (Riina, EE)*

*I see myself as a citizen of the Earth. While I respect the different cultures all over the world and wish to see them preserved, I still believe that in our core we are the same and if one day we would have the chance to unite under a single flag then humanity as a single race would soar. (Sebastian, EE)*

*"This feeling of belonging to the European Union is kind of important and some kind of feeling of safety - I don't know how much this is real and how much this is just imagination but there is this feeling of safety while belonging to a bigger union of countries that, just in case something is happening, there will be this union that will help you."(Ola, Poland)*

*In general I feel European because I travel around Europe - so mainly European. And I'm happy that Poland has been included in the European Union, that we have the opportunities that we have now and we can travel within European countries without any problems. (Zbigniew, PL)*

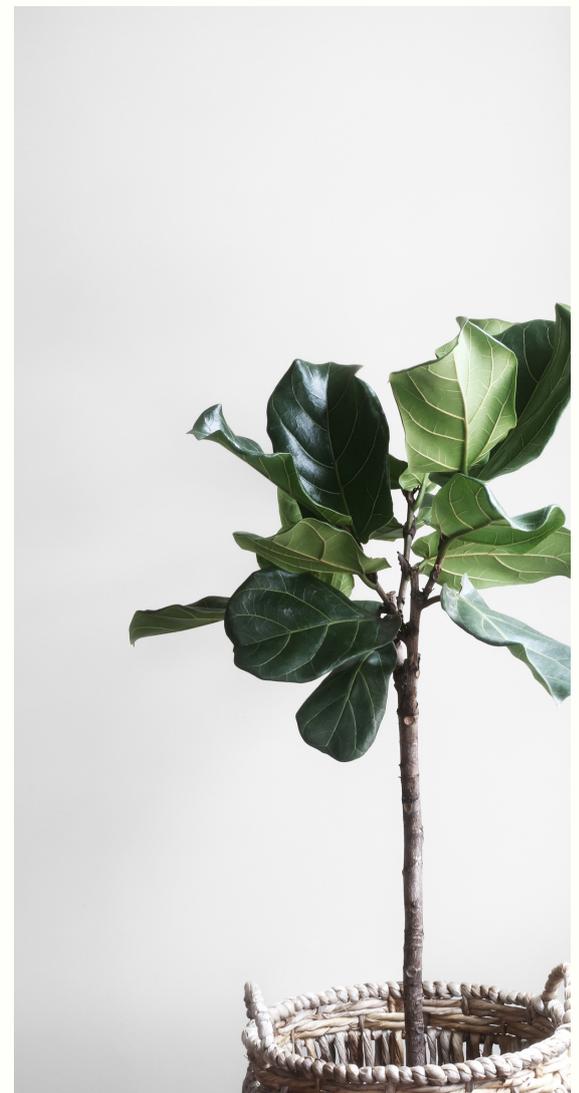
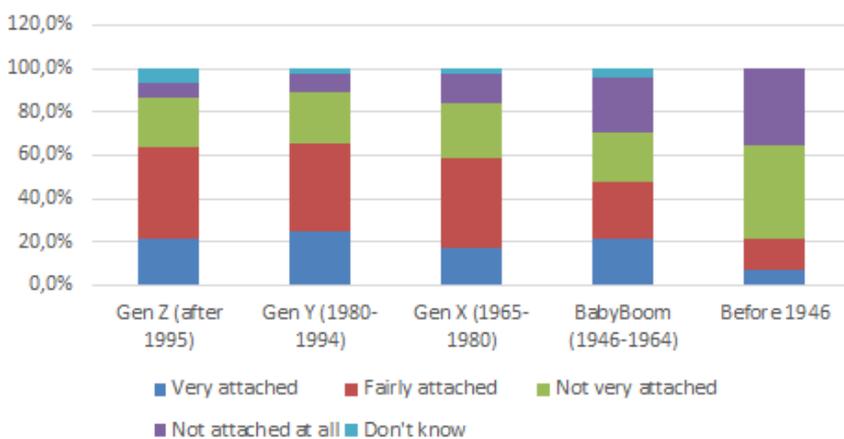
**Fig.1. How attached do you feel to the EU? (% , N=467)**



Looking at the differences by countries, the data shows that six to seven in ten respondents feel attached to the EU. A little higher number shows Poland (70%), which could be explained by a larger share of respondents from large cities (76%), and lesser number by Estonia, where more respondents come from rural areas (25%). The survey shows significant correlation between city and countryside residents and their answers - 56% in this population feeling not very much or not at all attached to the EU.

Regarding generations, there are almost no differences among people born after 1980, slightly less attached feel Gen X respondents. This could be explained by the fact that X and Y were those who took active part in changes in their countries before the accession to the EU, but Z have feeling of belonging to the EU granted

**Fig.2. How attached do you feel to the EU? (% , N=467)**



# CONCLUSION

This is a new concept focusing on the emotional dimension of local/ national/ European identity, that is attachment to or sense of belonging to the collective. This enables us to study the impact of collective identities.

Affective support in the form of a common identity is typically seen as the glue that holds political systems, in this case the EU. It has become ever more important to understand whether there is this widespread affective attachment to the idea of 'Europe' and what exactly that attachment entails.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## Do you feel yourself as the European Union citizen?

The concept of European citizenship is based on the notion if Europeans see themselves as European citizens. There are several elements that create the sense of European citizenship, including if Europeans know their rights as European citizens. In our research, we wanted to collect opinions on self-identification of our respondents.

Our survey shows that more than 7 in ten respondents (74.9%) feel themselves as the European Union citizens, which is even slightly more than feeling attached to Europe.

Most often in the interviews, the respondents name freedom of movement as the most obvious factor letting them feel as the EU citizens, as well using the infrastructure improved due to the EU funding, using euro. Many of them have travelled outside the EU, and emphasize that feeling of the EU citizenship raises when contacting other countries, cultures. The privileges of being the EU citizen is more seen in contrast with others.

### Interviews

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*Yes, I do feel as an European citizen. I've definitely enjoyed the freedom of traveling without customs or visas in Europe. Also, the most evident in everyday life is the use of euro, a shared currency. (Riina, EE)*

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*In my opinion this leads again to the freedom of movement because when I was going on holidays I never had any problem to move from one country to the other. And yes, for sure I do feel a European citizen, I also benefit a lot from the fact that we are in the EU - I use the roads, I use the highways, the infrastructure in general. Also during my studies I've been participating in the educational activities led by the Clinical-Educational Centre which were co-financed from the European funds so that's really cool. (Julia, PL)*

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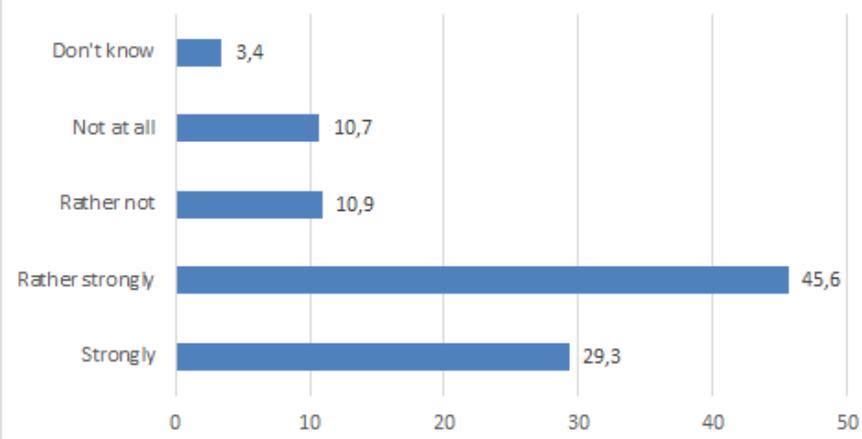
*Yes, I feel like the EU citizen, because, above all, it is the euro that always makes us remember that we belong to the EU. (Lolita, LV)*

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*Actually, even before we were in EU, I felt as European citizen, not Asian. So, I don't pay much importance to this fact. We have maybe more freedoms. I mean after getting into EU. I felt European all the time, even in those old, unmodern times I kept myself European citizen (Raimundas, LT)*

*I felt that the EU gives us the opportunity to be treated as human being with no kind of boundaries so, yes it feels like we are privileged. (Kasia, PL)*

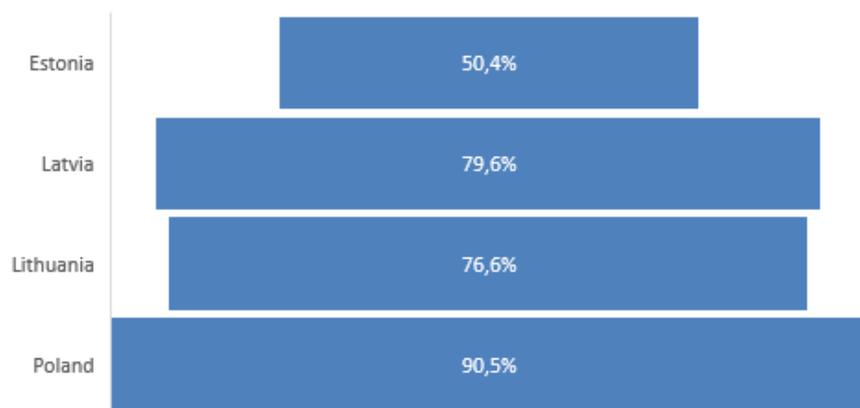
**Fig. 3. Do you feel yourself as the EU citizen? (% , N=467)**



It should be noted that in all generations is rather strong feeling of being the EU citizen: 78% of the youngest generation (Gen Z), slightly more (84%) those born between 1980-1994 (Gen Y), and so called Gen X (1965-1980) (76%) identify themselves as the EU citizens "strongly" or "rather strongly".

Among countries, nine in ten respondents from Poland has the identity of the EU citizens, in average eight in ten - in Latvia and Lithuania, and only half of Estonian respondents. It could be explained by the more representative sample in Estonian case, where different generations are more represented in the sample, keeping in mind that, for example, Baby Boomers are more reluctant to identify themselves as the EU citizens (55%).

**Fig. 4. Do you feel yourself as the EU citizen? (% , answers "strongly", "rather strongly", N=467)**



## CONCLUSION

There is a possibility for range of the NGO projects explaining EU citizenship to people expanding their focus from freedom of movement to other freedoms and rights of the EU citizens.

Taking into account the issue of ageing population in Europe, there is a large share of population that could use more education and training on the EU awareness.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## What are the EU achievements you are proud of?

Both in the interviews and online survey, the respondents were asked to name what are the EU achievements they are proud of. In the interviews, this was preceded by the question "What would you think of a person saying "I am proud to be a part of the EU?" There certainly is part of people who are focused on the problems and challenges of the current situation, which causes negative answers like "Do not understand - what to be so proud of?" (Martin, EE). Some respondents understand that it goes without saying - it is just geographical fact of belonging to certain part of the world. Nevertheless, it is nice to hear the views like "That it is a person who is educated and understands the benefits of the European Union" (Nomedas, LT) or "It's a happy person and it's Europe-friendly person" (Rysiek, PL).

In many interviews, the respondents emphasize the feeling of safety and peace in the region as very important achievement of the EU to be proud of, and remember the history of the establishment of the EU and one of its aims - restoring the peace during the after-war period.

### Interviews

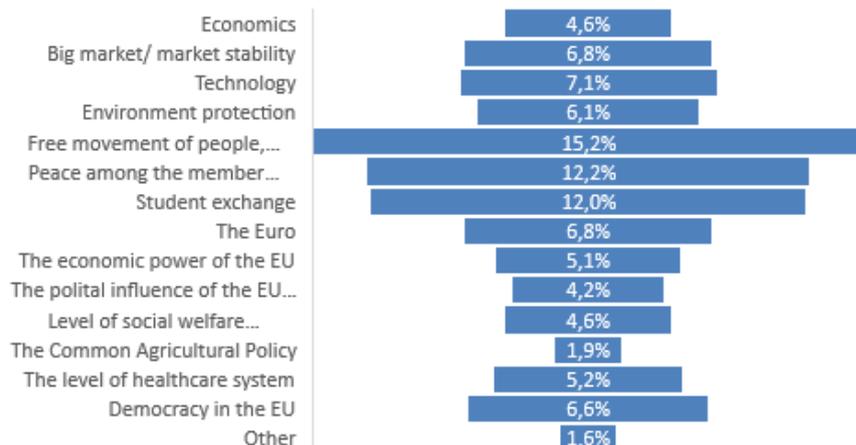
*From what I have read, the EU took care of our peace in this period we live. The longest period of peace in Europe. That is why I think it is good. (Zuza, PL)*

*I would say that I'm mostly proud that the EU is somehow still „holding on” in the sense that people and countries can still find consensus - that's the basis - that was the initial idea, to discuss and come up with a common position to present it to the rest of the world and in the relation to diverse conflicts and overall politics towards let's say Russia or the USA. And somehow this works even though, of course, there are differences, different approaches, etc. this „unity in diversity” (Stanislav, PL)*

*First of all, from creating a really big area, let's say, without borders. For me that's super impressive. (Anna, PL)*

*For me it's the unity. The unity of this continent of ours in the sense that, as I've mentioned before, we can freely move within Europe. As countries we help and support each other, we have equal rights, there is a common currency, not only in Poland but in the whole Europe there are also many common cultural projects and initiatives and also growing infrastructure. For me it's these kind of things.*  
(Julia, PL)

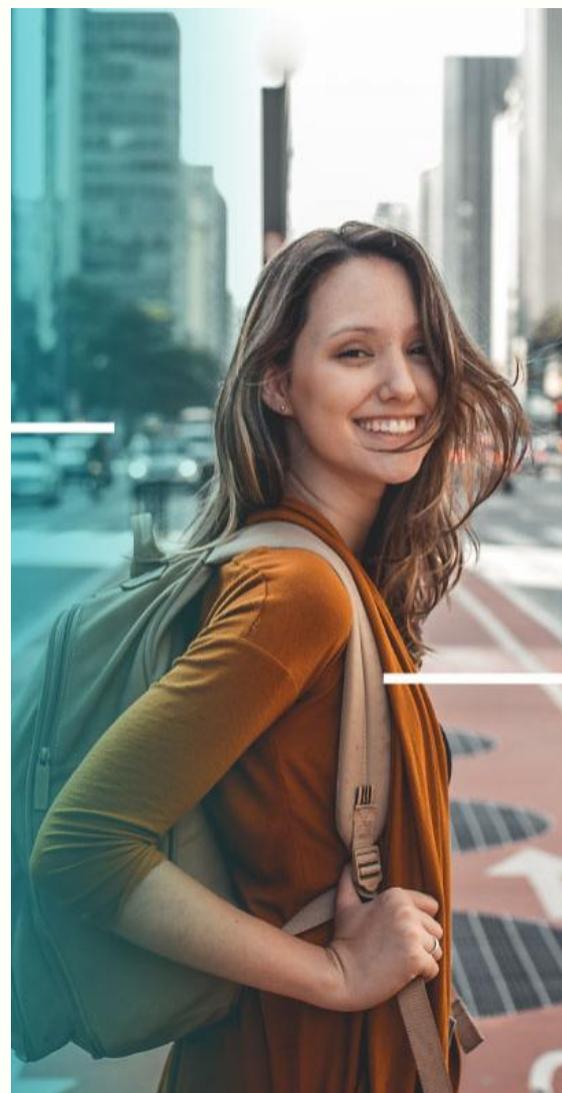
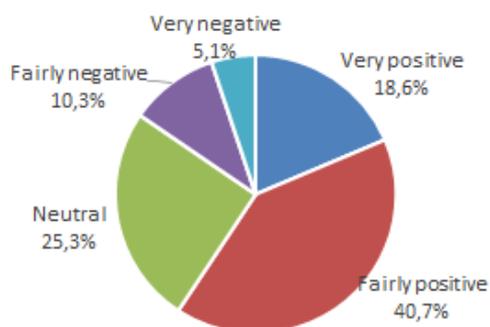
Fig. 5. What are the EU achievements you are proud of?



The survey affirms that free movement of people, goods and services, peace among the member states, and the student exchange (which, in fact is again the freedom of movement) are three of the most popular achievements (the respondents were asked to mark several options from the list). The least marked options were the common agricultural policy (1,9%), the political influence (4,2%), level of social welfare (4,6%), economics(4,6%).

In general, the respondents consider that the EU conjure up to very positive (18,6%) or fairly positive (40,7%) image, which is good in relation with evaluation of its image as fairly negative (10,3%) or very negative (5,1%). Still, 1/4 of the respondents are neutral in their position evaluating the overall image of the EU.

Fig. 6. In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative, or very negative image?



## CONCLUSION

The authors of the research believe that the image of the EU is related with its achievements the people can be proud of. The respondents name basic freedoms of the EU, especially freedom of the movement of people (students exchange), as

well as peace among member states as the main reasons to be proud of being part of the EU. In the result, more than half of the respondents consider the EU image as positive (very/ fairly), while 1/4 of the respondents stay in neutral position.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## What are 3 words that come into your mind when someone says „Europe”?

This question was included in the interviews to find out what are values that possibly are shared by people. In the respondents' answers, of course, their personal values are reflected as well. Intentionally, the authors of the research mentioned "Europe" in this question instead of the "European Union", so the attitude towards the organization, institutions would not prevail over the factors that unite people living in Europe as part of the world.

The European Union's fundamental values are respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. These values unite all the member states – no country that does not recognise these values can belong to the Union. (<https://europarlamenti.info/en/values-and-objectives/values/>) The main goal of the European Union is to defend these values in Europe and promote peace and the wellbeing of the citizens. For its part, the European Parliament seeks to ensure that these values are realised in the EU legislation.

### Interviews

*Cocktail of cultures and cooperation.  
(Edgars, LV)*

*Unity. Obstacles. Opportunities. - these are  
3 words that came to my mind. (Ola, PL)*

*Europe as family, as relationship of countries.  
Europe as community. (Zosia, PL)*

*Europe. Firstly - Christianity. Because as I  
love history, Christianity in Europe has  
been like so deep rooted in its culture.  
Second - democracy, because it mainly like  
become dominant in Europe. (Jonas Z, LT)*

*I can see literally a picture of people  
holding hands together and I can see circle.  
So that would be probably friendship,  
community and I can just see different  
languages symbols or flags (Renata, LT)*

*First of all, first thought, European history. A  
story about what rich European old countries  
are. (Danguole, LT)*

*Well, stability, I would say. Permanent laws, the tax system. More stable. The second, freedom. Which does not restrict the choice of values. The third, perhaps, a great opportunity. Great opportunities are for business creation, study choice.*

*(Jonas O, LT)*

*I'm happy, when I go to other countries to see that there is not only „McDonald's” everywhere (that's a metaphor) - but that I can learn from other countries and I admire - the clothing, the culture, foreign customs - this is for me very important, this variety. I'm happy that so far it is respected (..) And I would like the EU to keep it - this distinctiveness, colourfulness (Andrzej, PL)*

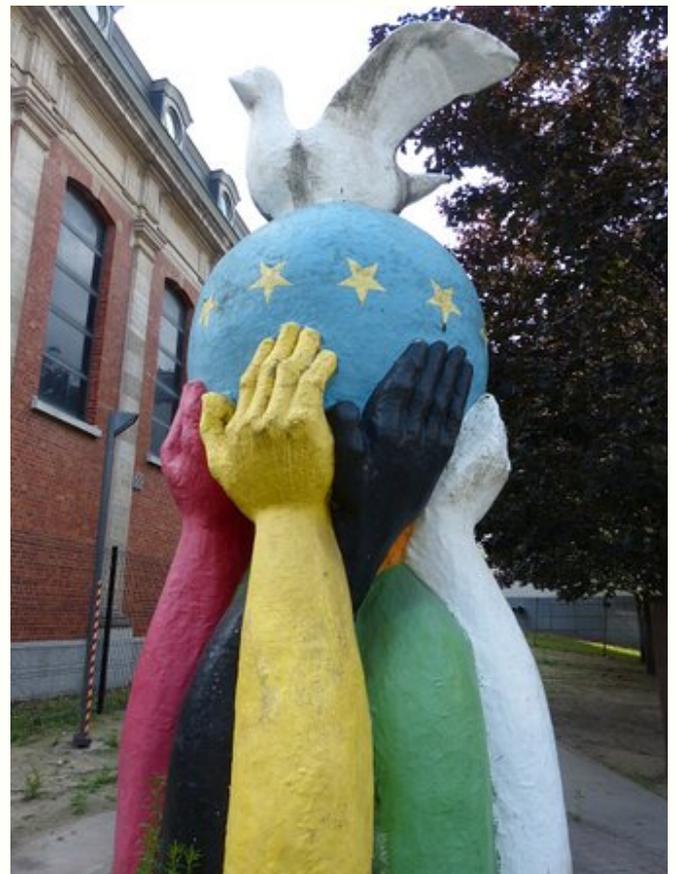
Only by implementing the values declared by the EU, it is possible that the values named by our respondents could flourish. One of the most popular associations named by the respondents is culture - including deep cultural roots, as ancient Greek or Roman cultures, and diversity of national cultures, which are maintained within the union, not being "unified". Of course, there are respondents that are concerned about disappearing of cultural differences under pressure of global/ continental European cultures. Still, most of the respondents name unity as a positive association.

The European history is shared by all the peoples - the history of Christianity is mentioned, as well as history of wars.

It should be noted that all associations mentioned by the respondents are of positive connotations: cooperation, unity, opportunities, democracy, stability, freedom.

One of the most touching is the comparison of the respondent expressing the following vision of Europe - "I can see literally a picture of people holding hands together and I can see circle. So that would be probably friendship, community" (Renata, LT).

In Eurobarometer survey, the question is asked "Which are the subjects that most create a feeling of community among EU citizens" and list of subject provided. Over one in five respondents cite 'values' (23%) and 'history' (22%); at least a quarter of Europeans mention the 'economy' (26%), which is the most common answer in this survey, and 'culture' (25%). (Standard Eurobarometer, Winter 2020-2021) The authors of the project research consider that the answers of the interviewed respondents reflect the Eurobarometer survey results and illustrate them.



## CONCLUSION

Most of the respondents mention positive associations with Europe: cooperation, unity, opportunities, democracy, stability, freedom. These are possible only because of implementing the European values defined by the EU.

Commonly Europe is associated with its history, values, religion. In comparison, the Eurobarometer survey ranges the 'culture' as the second subject shared by Europeans, following 'economics', and being followed by 'values' and 'history'



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## In your opinion, what is the position of your country in the EU ?

The respondents were asked to evaluate what, in their opinion, is the position of their country in the EU. Here, the answers of the respondents are not so optimistic. This question to some extent relates to the question, if a citizen can make their impact to the world, to what is happening in the world or just be a passive token in the big game.

The interviewees believe that 15 years after accession have not be enough to prove stable position of their countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland) in the European Union - "We are still only establishing this position" (Andrzej, PL), "I feel Estonia has little effect in the EU" (Terhi, EE), "I doubt they are hardly proud of us as a Member State" (Edgars, LV) - mentioning reasons as low GDP, mentality, national politics, etc.

At the same time, it is positive that the respondents see the advantageous aspects for the EU of having their countries in the union - " I think that Poland is enriching the EU" (Renata, PL)

### Interviews

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*Very insignificant, because we have a small GDP, that's why we are fading comparing to many EU countries, such as Germany, France - we are not counted on.*  
(Roberts, LV)

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*We are still only establishing this position. (..) And we still have to fight for our identity in Europe. That's because for a long time, hundreds of years of partitions, then a short period in-between wars and then again, we didn't exist so - the don't know us, we don't know Europe. Our mentality, who we are - we have to show it all still, who we are and it has to take some time, and it's happening now - we are learning Europe and Europe is learning us and this requires time.* (Andrzej, PL)

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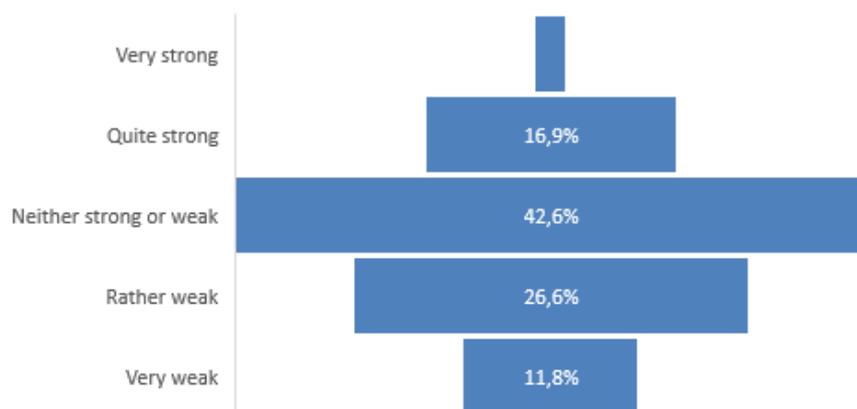
*I'm happy that we are trying to fight for our position in the EU, it's hard for me to judge if we are doing this in a good way or in a wrong way but still I believe that each country should also have the right to have a voice.* (Ola, PL)

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*When we joined the EU, we were one of the countries that needed the most help for developing the country and its infrastructure but now we are finally catching up with our 'bigger brothers' and can perhaps say that we have more and more also to teach or give back to other countries (i.e related to IT infrastructure or education for example). (Riina, EE)*

*Our position is that we can speak. And discuss. (Rysiek, PL)*

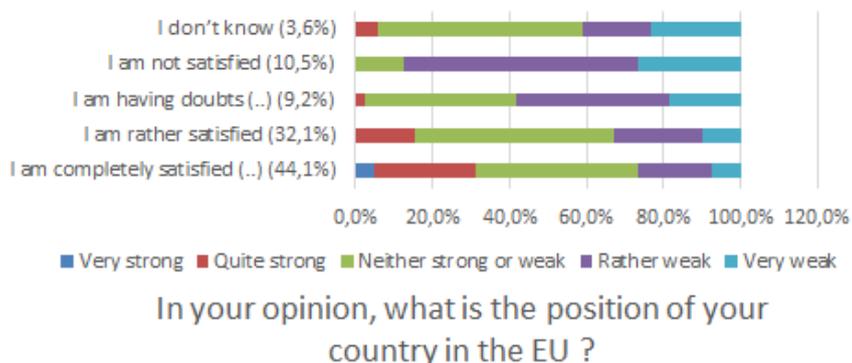
**Fig. 7. In your opinion, what is the position of your country in the EU ?**



There are two in ten respondents considering their country's positions as very strong or quite strong in the EU (2,1% and 16,9% respectively). Almost four in ten are pessimistic (or realistic?) on this position identifying it as rather weak or very weak (26,6% and 11,8% respectively). 42,6% choose the middle opinion, which is "neither strong, or weak".

It is interesting to correlate answers to this questions with the replies to the question about the respondents' attitude of accessing the EU by their country. As the graph shows, those respondents, who are satisfied that their country has joined the EU, have more positive opinion and less negative opinion about their country's current position in the EU.

**Fig. 8. What is your attitude now about joining the EU by your country in 2004?**



## CONCLUSION

The respondents have quite negative opinion about their country's position in the EU. There is opinion that national politics influence this position quite strongly. At the same time there is opinion that each country enriches the Union.

Among those respondents who positively evaluates their country's accession to the EU 15 years ago, there are more of those who evaluate their country's current position more positively and see the development perspectives.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## What are the benefits of your country being a member of the EU?

The European Parliament Eurobarometer survey "A glimpse of certainty in uncertain times" (2020) includes a regular question to its respondents: "Taking everything into account, would you say that (OUR COUNTRY) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the EU?" The Parlemeter 2020 survey finds that in all 27 EU member states more than 50% of respondents believe that their country has benefited from being a member of the EU. Particularly, 90% of Lithuanian, 89% of Estonian, 88% of Polish, and 77% of Latvian respondents. (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2020/parlemeter-2020/en-key-findings.pdf>)

Similar as in the Parlemeter survey, among the benefits of being part of the EU are mentioned economic growth, improved cooperation, strengthening security, new work and travelling opportunities, democracy, availability of the funds for various projects - from infrastructure and environment protection till education and human rights.

### Interviews

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*Complete freedom for travelling. This is fantastic. You woke up in the morning - today you want to fly to other country. You search via Internet - see there is a ticket to Spain - and off you go! (Darius, LT)*

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*There is financial support for development- we are in the eastern block and we had to catch up with the others and its very nice that the EU, the European policy of supporting the poorer/weaker helped us in development (economic, environmental on the level of infrastructure) - these are for sure important and needed things and in this sense, this oneness and unity of the EU gives us a lot, that's for sure. (Wojtek, PL)*

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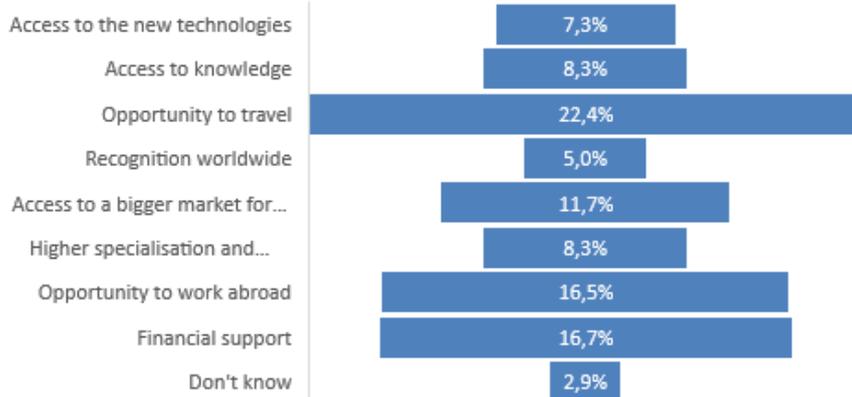
*The most beneficial it has been to our nature. Building the protected Natura areas, and removing dams from rivers would have never occurred without EU. (Martin, EE)*

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*Making it easy to collaborate with other countries because there are so many projects right now which purpose it is to give people the possibility to work with others. (...) now I think it is easier to fight for human rights in Europe, thanks to the European Union. (Zuza, PL)*

*I don't really feel it when I'm inside of the Europe. Because, I think, we're so used to all the European Union rights that it's quite difficult to understand how lucky we are. But I really feel it when I'm abroad. (Vasare, LT)*

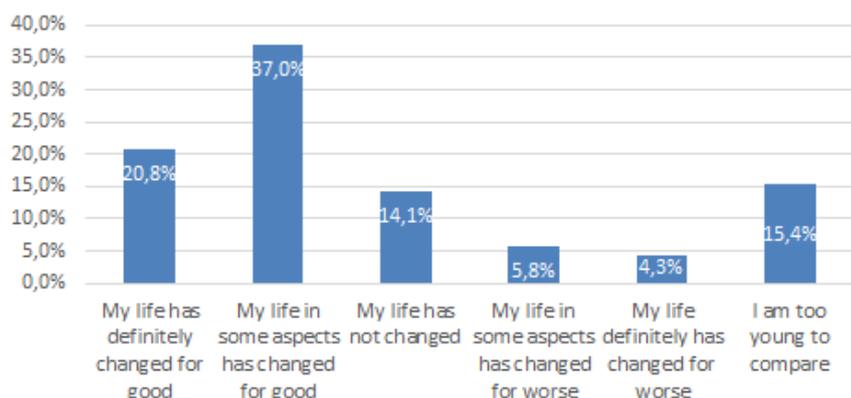
**Fig. 9. What are the benefits of your country being a member of the EU?**



To quantify the data, our survey confirms that three top positions in the list of benefits of the country being a member state of the EU take opportunity to travel (22,4%), opportunity to work abroad (16,5%) and financial support of the EU (16,7%), followed by access to a bigger market for businesses (11,75%).

Asked individually, more than half of the respondents (excluding 15,4% who are too young to compare) evaluate the changes in their lives for good - 20,8% reply that their life has definitely changed for good and 37% - their life in some aspects has changed for good. Of course, the changes could be affected by various, including, personal factors, but to large extent it is also of being within the EU.

**Fig. 10. Has the quality of your life changed after your country joined the EU in 2004?**



## CONCLUSION

Among the benefits of being part of the EU the respondents mention opportunity to travel and work, economic growth, improved cooperation, security, democracy, availability of the funds for various projects - from infrastructure and

environment protection till education and human rights. More than half of the respondents indicate that their lives have definitely or in some aspects changed for good after the accession the EU 15 years ago .



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## What are the most important challenges the EU is facing at the moment?

The Special EB-500 "Future of Europe" (FoE) was conducted between 22 October and the 20 November 2020 in the 27 EU Member States. Climate change is clearly regarded as the main global challenge affecting the future of the EU, with 45% of Europeans selecting this as the main challenge. The second and third most mentioned issues, mentioned by a similar proportion of Europeans are terrorism (38%) and health-related risks (37%). The fourth most cited challenge, mentioned by just over a quarter of Europeans, is forced migration and displacement (27%). Other challenges mentioned by just under one in five Europeans include the further rise of populism (17%).

(<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2256>)

In our interviews, the respondents in addition to the mentioned problems, indicate economic challenges (mostly due to the pandemics) and about Brexit as a concern about stability and continuity of the EU.

### Interviews

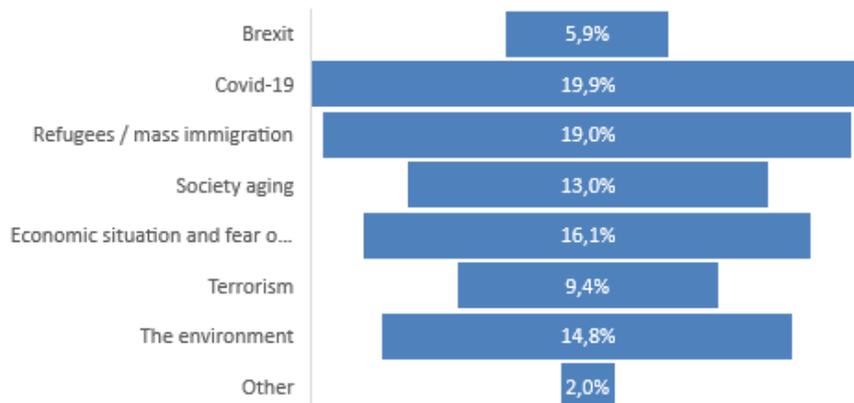
*Brexit is probably one of the things that makes me worry, that England is the first member witch leave the EU, (..) it's worrying that what's next because you don't want it. I would like that kind of stability so that people can continue to plan and put everything into the future and beyond (Egle, LT)*

*The main challenge is to lift the economy, so economical challenges connected to the epidemics, ensuring the conditions of financial functioning also for the financial security of many social groups of people (Kamila, PL)*

*The rise of populism in various countries and the increase of anti-European voices, financial stability, when it comes to also competing with mainly the USA and China and yeah, the migration crisis and building the unified politics regarding this issue. (Michal, PL)*

*Much bigger topic, in my opinion, now is the violation of human rights in other countries. Now, we have the case of Belarus and when we see all that is happening, we don't like it. And even though it is not a democratic country, because it's not - we can not close our eyes and pretend we don't see anything, especially that they are our neighbours and human rights are being violated there, afterwards the people from there become refugees, they need help ... (Stanislaw, PL)*

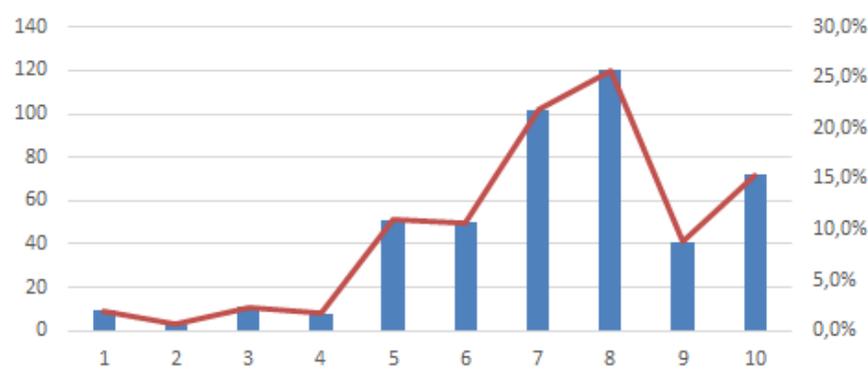
**Fig. 11. what are three the most important challenges the European Union is facing at the moment?**



To quantify the data, top three challenges as ranged by the respondents are health related issues, i.e., Covid-19 (20%), refugees and mass migration issues (19%), economic situation and fear of economic crisis (16%), closely followed by the environment issues (15%) and society ageing (13%). In the interviews, as well in the open ended question, the rise of populism and human rights issues are mentioned as a concern by the respondents.

Eight in ten respondents (82,4%) are concerned that these challenges would impact their lives (marks 6 and above in scale of 10) in answer to the question "To what extent these EU level challenges could impact your personal life in the future).

**Fig. 12. To what extent these EU level challenges could impact your personal life in the future? (%)**  
(In scale 1-10, where 1-no impact at all, 10-strong impact)



## CONCLUSION

Health related issues (Covid-19), refugees and mass migration issues, economic situation and fear of economic crisis, environment issues, society ageing, rise of populism, and protection of

human rights issues are mentioned as main challenges of the EU level in the future. The respondents are definitely concerned that these EU level challenges could impact their lives in the future.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## What are the most important challenges your country is facing at the moment?

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in March, 2021, has mentioned six pressing challenges national governments are facing nowadays. These are economy (due to jobs lost during the pandemics); healthcare (due to Covid-19); education (due to the pandemics but not only that); national safety and security; climate; trust in government. (<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/reinventing-the-future/take-on-tomorrow/government-challenges.html>)

The same issues, in general, are reflected in our interviews. In addition, to the countries participating in our project emigration is still one of the important issues emphasized by the respondents: "One of the biggest, probably what we have been talking about for a number of years, again emigration, that people are leaving Lithuania. Lately, maybe a little less, but still, a lot of people have gone to other countries" (Laima, LT).

### Interviews

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*Increasing bureaucracy and lot's of controlling mechanisms. You have to follow strict rules within projects, and answer stupid questions of controllers that decrease the time for actual activities and increase the manpower used for bla-bla-bla. (Hele, EE)*

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*Main challenges perhaps the ones I could single out are emigration, brain drain when skilled people go to work abroad, as well as the high level of incapacity for work in a country that is, well, constantly rising, and an aging population. These are the problems that can have a strong impact on future generations and on us. (Nomedas, LT)*

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*One of the challenges for Lithuania is to develop a long-term education strategy (Danguole, LT)*

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# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## Challenges: Education

In the research, education is mentioned as one of the national level challenges. The European Union policy is designed to support national education systems, facilitate cooperation and address common challenges. The whole range of shared EU challenges includes integrating migrants and refugees, promoting inclusion and fundamental values, early childhood education, early school leaving, higher education attainment, adult learning, quality assurance in vocational education and training, standards of teaching and teacher education, quality of higher education, recognition of skills and qualifications, development of skills, learning mobility, funding and organisation of higher education, university business cooperation, apprenticeships, traineeships. ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/education/policy-educational-issues\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/education/policy-educational-issues_en))

What is mentioned in the interviews by the respondents - teaching of practical skills in schools is one issue that is emphasised (case studies, learning by doing, cooperative learning), as well as educating special subjects as, for example, civic education.

### Interviews

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*In my opinion, the education in Poland goes wrong direction and we have a problem especially in the areas of sexual education and civic education - we are not taught civic education, we are more being taught of individualism. (Ewelina, PL)*

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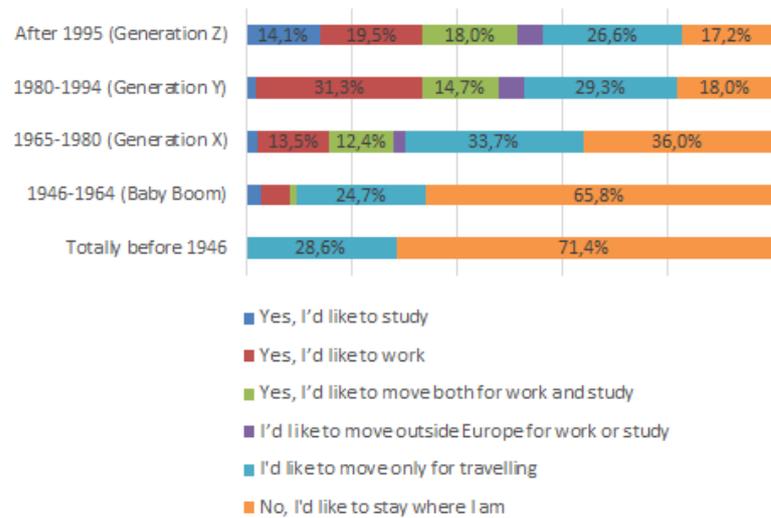
*I would also like to implement in Poland in the schools (...) the idea is to learn to cooperate in a group, that whatever we do we do in a team and when we need to solve any problem at school, we do it together because as a single person we can not make it, unless you are very talented but other than that to do things as a group. (...) I think we need is to have more realistic case studies at school, not only learn the theory - as we do in Poland, but have more realistic case studies, everyone is learning better: when you have realistic case studies and more learning by doing and the collaboration and cooperation in a team, we don't have it in Poland. (Andrzej, PL)*

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One of the challenges for Lithuania is to develop a long-term education strategy  
(Danguole, LT)

I think that school should teach how to find a job and by job I don't mean just discussing it theoretically but I mean a whole set of practical skills and real-life tasks to do. Education, education and one more time: education. It's crucial.  
(Andrzej, PL)

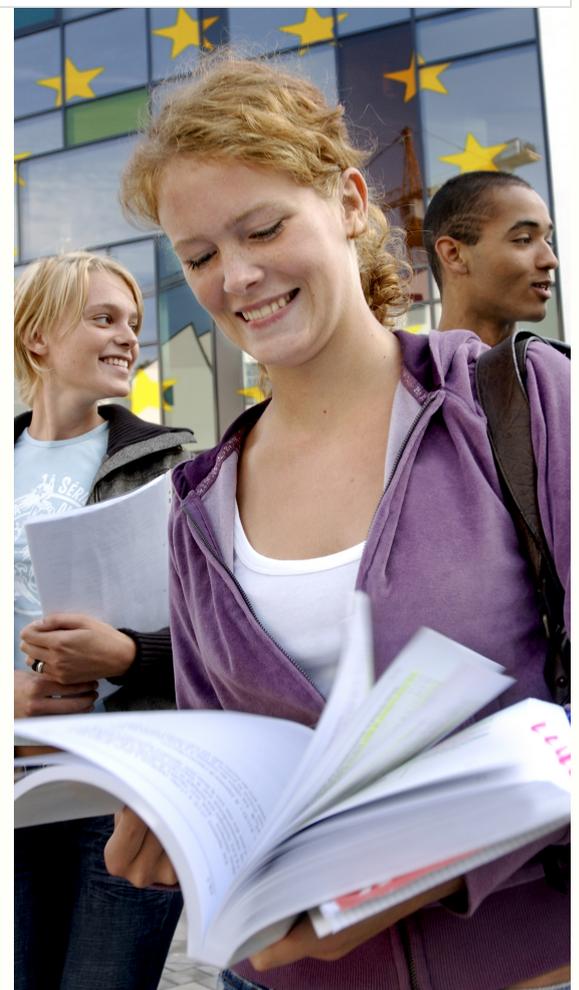
Fig. 14. In future, would you like to work/study in another European country?



It is clear that long-term strategy is needed to solve the mentioned issues, and the EU provides the possibilities of doing that - just to mention ERASMUS+ program and other programs that includes educational components.

The respondents mention possibilities that they have used in field of education: "I benefit a lot from the fact that we are in the EU - (..) during my studies, I've been participating in the educational activities led by the Clinical-Educational Centre which were co-financed from the European funds so that's really cool." (Julia, PL). "It easier for people to expand their education in different countries" (Michal, PL). "I hope that we all will grow and I hope the education will develop quick enough that people grow into better democratic maturity and will kind of work more for the benefit of all" (Kasia, PL).

It is clear that studies in different countries open horizons and provides new opportunities. The graph shows that there are respondents who would like to study abroad in all generations, but most of all, of course, in Gen Z, which is obviously. In all age groups there is a similar share of respondents who would move only for travelling (which, in fact, is kind of practical intercultural education). It surprises that almost 1 in 5 both Gen Y and Gen Z respondents wants "to stay where I am".



## CONCLUSION

In the interviews, the respondents mention teaching of practical skills in schools as an important issue (case studies, learning by doing, cooperative learning), as well as providing education on special subjects as, for example, civic education. The education strategy on national level is needed to implement changes

Almost 8 in 10 Generation Y and Generation Z respondents want to travel for education, work or both education and work to expand their intercultural competences. Many of interviewees have used education opportunities provided by the EU program.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## Challenges: Refugees/ Mass Migration/ Immigration

"Migration has been a constant feature of human history with a profound impact on European society, its economy and its culture. With a well-managed system, migration can contribute to growth, innovation and social dynamism" - says a New Pact on Migration and Asylum released by European Commission in September, 2020.

It aims to put in place a comprehensive and sustainable policy, providing a humane and effective long-term response to the current challenges of irregular migration, developing legal migration pathways, better integrating refugees and other newcomers, and deepening migration partnerships with countries of origin and transit for mutual benefit.

Globally, public opinion is divided on the question of whether to increase, decrease or keep present immigration levels. People in Europe tend to hold more negative views towards immigration, with the majority (52%) saying immigration levels should be decreased. (<https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/public-opinion-migration>)

### Interviews

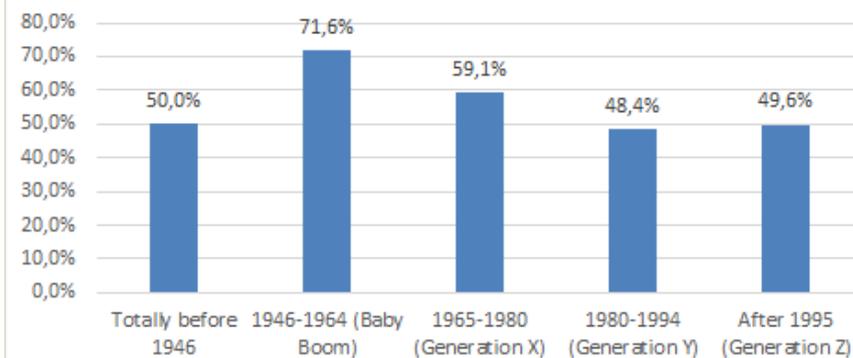
*Migrations were and will always be, because people move. And you know, if they are connected to the political situation we have to, of course help and support with humanitarian aid - so as much as we can, as the European Union and Poland as a part of the EU, we have to help as much as we can also because we also have been helped when we were not in the best situation and many Poles found a job and good life abroad (Stanislaw, PL)*

*I like immigrants who want to integrate in the local community, learn local language and culture. They have to work themselves up and not hope or demand or lay on local social security system. If they are looking only for social support and are not ready to contribute themselves, I do not welcome them anywhere. (Hele, EE)*

*In the history of humanity migration has always been, is and will always be and I think that it's a very enriching and good process. (Renata, PL)*

*I can not say that if Poles emigrate aboard that's fine but when someone comes to Poland that's not fine anymore - this kind of thinking doesn't make sense to me. It depends why people migrate, what's the purpose. If there is war, there is hunger, there are no jobs - then that's obvious, but when there are cases of people, migrants who rob other people, rape, kill - then, obviously I do not support that.*  
(Przemyslaw, PL)

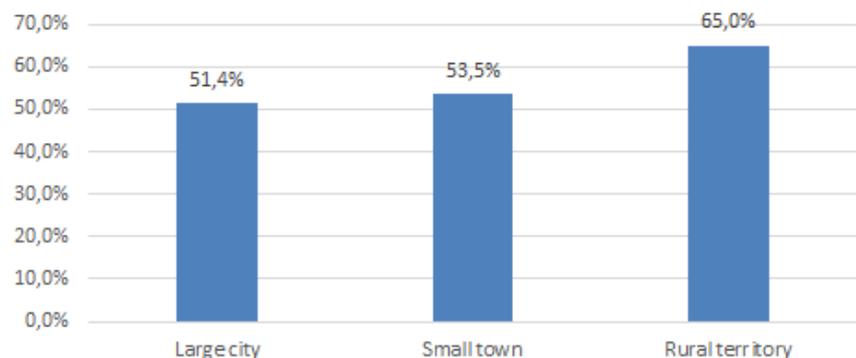
**Fig. 15. "REFUGEES/ MASS MIGRATION" as one of three biggest EU challenges by age group (optional choice, N=255)**



In our research, the opinions on the immigration are split - from strictly negative ("Mass Immigration is no solution and should be blocked before it forever changes the cultures of European countries" (Martin, EE)) to positive and supporting ("In the history of humanity, migration has always been, is and will always be and I think that it's a very enriching and good process. (Renata, PL)).

It is interesting to observe that, among those respondents mentioning refugees and mass migration as one of the major challenges, the largest share is of age group of Gen BB (Baby Boom), and more concerned of refugees/ migration challenges are residents of rural territories than those living in towns or large cities.

**Fig. 16. "REFUGEES/ MASS MIGRATION" as one of three biggest EU challenges by place of residence (optional choice, N=255)**



## CONCLUSION

Migration has been a constant feature of human history with a profound impact on European society, its economy and its culture. Public opinion is divided on the question of whether to increase, decrease or keep present immigration levels.

Elder generation people more than Gen Y and Gen Z respondents are concerned about migration issues as challenge facing the EU, and respondents living in rural areas are more concerned about it rather than residents of large cities or towns.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## Challenges: Economic situation/ Unemployment

The global economic crisis strikes hard in Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic has plunged the European Union into the most severe recession in its recent history. With new waves of COVID-19 infections hitting Europe, the recovery remains halting. Certain measures are required to stimulate hiring and investment once the pandemic is under control. Such measures will foster a quicker and fuller recovery, by reducing scarring from unemployment, missed education and training, and low investment.

People's opinions are formed by their experience. Therefore, in our interviews, there are quite a few respondents expressing their negative experience regarding economic situation - "It is really bad at the moment and unemployment is really growing" (Sofia, EE), "Economy is very vulnerable. It is built up on the wrong foundation. Main thing is to produce but we have forgotten the quality" (Endrik, EE). At the same time, there are respondents who emphasise role of personal responsibility - "I can't change economics myself, but I can change myself and my attitude" (Mia, EE).

### Interviews

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*There is always some unemployment, the question is rather because unemployment is usually prevented with fiscal policy and creating new workplaces and now we would have to see what kind of work places to create - I think. That there should be a creative approach towards this matter. (Stanislaw, PL)*

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*Open-minded people will always find a way to manage and succeed. I can't change economics myself, but I can change myself and my attitude. (Mia, EE)*

---

*It's a very difficult question because we are after or during the epidemic of coronavirus where a lot of people lost their jobs. Companies collapsed so are these workplaces for people and it will take some time to re-build it and we will see to what extent it will be re-build. For now, a big part of the economy moved to the online environment and that's it. We will see what will happen. (Gosia, PL)*

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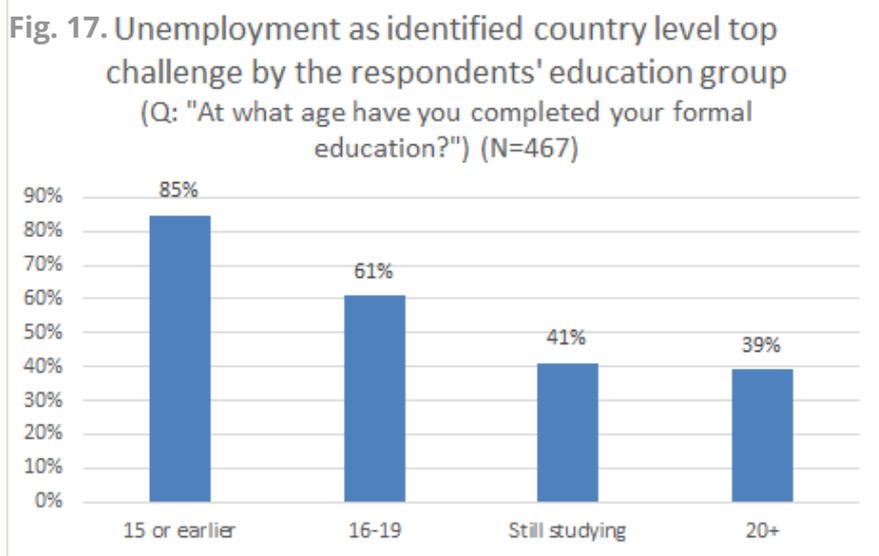
*I'm a person who would never be in a situation not having work. I'm a dentist but apart from it I can do a 1000 different things (...) if I didn't have a job. So for me it's the matter of education and helping people to develop themselves, to become useful or not useful (...) depending on the choice (...) providing education and supporting people, providing psychological help is needed more than giving money for being unemployed, though, obviously the people need to survive too. (Kasia, PL)*

Still, unemployment is a crucial economic factor for a country; youth unemployment is often examined separately because it tends to be higher than unemployment in older age groups. It comprises the unemployment figures of a country's labour force aged 15 to 24 years old (i.e. the earliest point at which mandatory school education ends). Typically, teenagers and those in their twenties who are fresh out of education do not find jobs right away, especially if the country's economy is experiencing difficulties.

Youth unemployment rate in EU member states as of June 2021 shows that EU-27 average is 17%, whereas in Estonia - 18,1%, in Latvia - 14,1%, Lithuania - 10%, and Poland - 12,7% (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/266228/youth-unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/>).

Several respondents note the relation between employment and education, emphasizing role of education in preparing and individual for the existence in certain economic conditions - "We need to learn how to search for jobs (...) I think that school should teach how to find a job and by job I don't mean just discussing it theoretically but I mean a whole set of practical skills and real-life tasks to do. Education, education and one more time: education. It's crucial." (Andrzej, PL).

The graph shows the respondents who have identified unemployment as the national level challenge in their opinion - and we see that the respondents studying for degree or those who have already higher education have more resilience regarding the issue.



## CONCLUSION

People's opinions are formed by their experience. Therefore, in our interviews, there are quite a few respondents expressing their negative experience regarding economic situation. Positive views include notion that individual responsibility should be taken by individuals in any economic situation.

Youth unemployment is considered as one of the crucial problem in the EU. The respondents note that education is the key factor to improve the situation. There is correlation between education level of the respondents and their evaluation of economic situation.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## Challenges: Climate changes/ Environment protection

Europe's economic prosperity and well-being is intrinsically linked to its natural environment — from fertile soils to clean air and water. It is not just a vision for the environment, but also a vision for the economic and societal context of environmental issues. (<https://www.greenfacts.org/en/state-european-environment/>)

Climate change is already happening: temperatures are rising, drought and wild fires are starting to occur more frequently, rainfall patterns are shifting, glaciers and snow are melting and the global mean sea level is rising. To mitigate climate change, we must reduce or prevent the emissions linked to human activities. (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/climate/>)

Understanding the reasons of the climate changes and recognising necessity of environment protection is not enough - involvement of every citizen is necessary to protect the Planet and ensure quality of our lives in the future - this is the idea expressed by our respondents, reminding slogan "Think global, act local!"

### Interviews

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*We have only one planet and we should take very good care of it. (Julia, PL)*

---

*Global warming affects our lives on various levels and it doesn't just mean that its getting warmer but it changes the climate patterns, changes the amount of rainfall and types of agriculture and also living conditions in various regions not only in Europe but also on the world and I think also that the EU is one of the structures in the world that tries to regulate and help in this matter mostly in the world. (Michal, PL)*

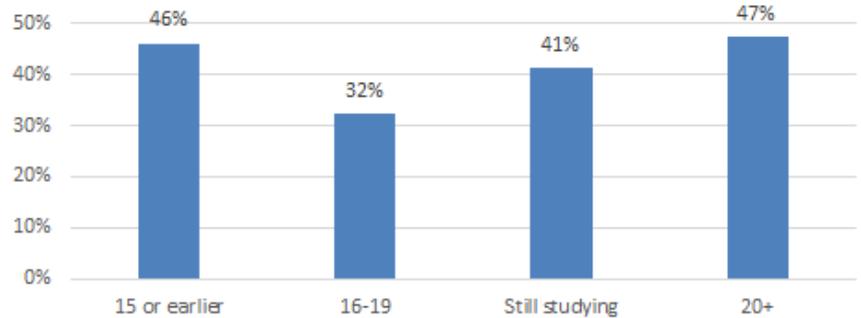
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*If it comes to the ecology and protecting the environment, we should really act local- like this saying - „think global, act local” (..) So I strongly think that these small steps everyone can make and then probably it would influence the more general term and wider situation. So for me it is connected with very local actions and what I can do every day. (Ola, PL)*

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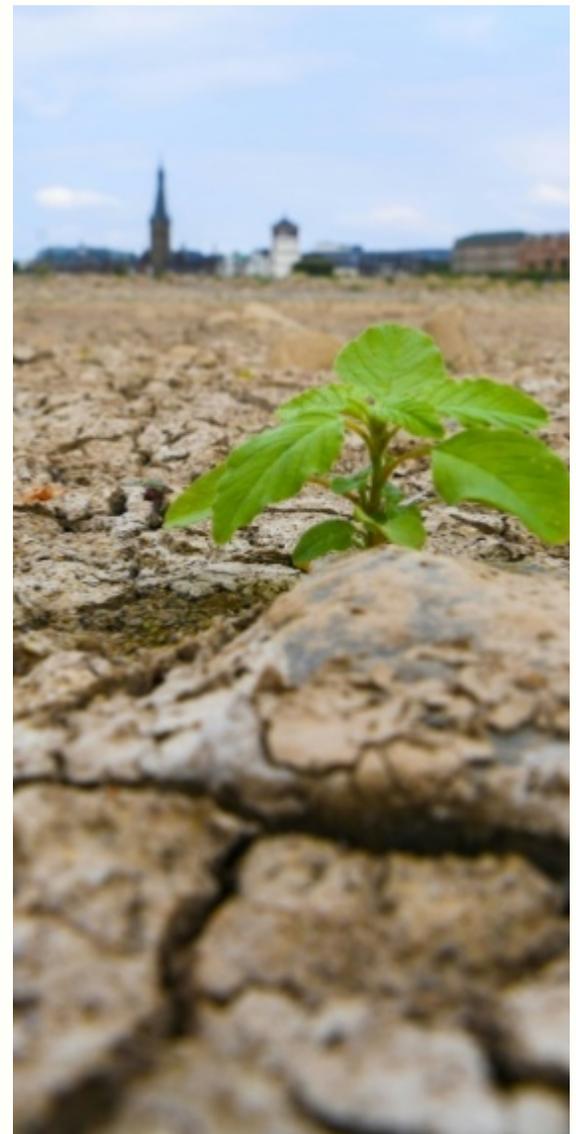
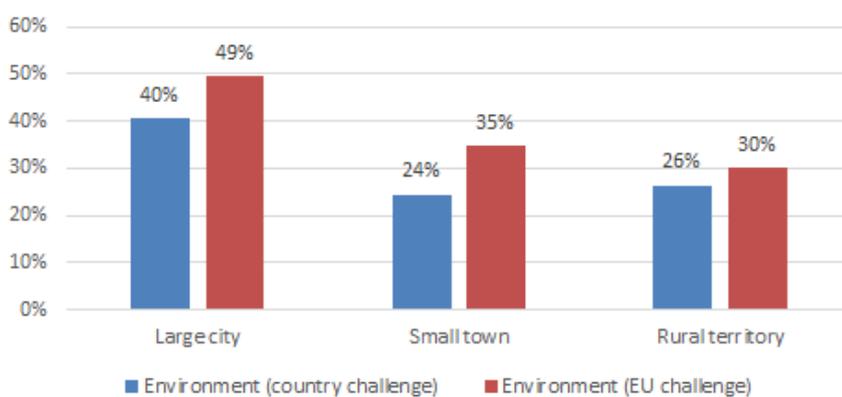
*I think the government needs to speed up the adaptation of sustainable energy and resource and to replace them. All the electricity is made from a fuel and we need to go more sustainable energy. We need to go to green technologies and to make solar systems more affordable and testable for everyone in the world. (...) People who have solar system they don't need so much electricity or a gas. (...) EU is trying to do that. (Ernesta, LT)*

**Fig. 18. At what age have you completed your formal education? \* The environment (In your opinion, what are three the most important challenges the EU is facing at the moment?) (N=467)**



There is not observed strong correlation between age or education level and identifying the ecology as the EU level challenge. Among the respondents who have completed education at age 15 or earlier, 46% mark the environment as the EU level challenge, significantly less - 32% of the respondents - in the group with secondary or uncompleted secondary education, and similar share of the respondents who are still studying or have completed the degree education (respectively 41% and 47%). The residents of large cities and towns are more concerned of the EU level environment challenges in comparison to the national level environment challenges (almost 10 percent point difference), whereas people in rural areas are more equally concerned of these (30% and 26%). At the same time 5 in 10 inhabitants of large cities have chosen ecology as one of top 3 EU challenges, and 4 in 10 - as one of top 3 national level challenges (1 in 4 and 3 in 10 of rural area residents).

**Fig. 19 Environment issues as one of Top-3 country level and EU level challenge (N=467)**



## CONCLUSION

Climate change is already happening. To mitigate climate change, we must reduce or prevent the emissions linked to human activities. The respondents emphasize individual responsibility to take small local steps to protect environment, while observing or waiting for government actions.

Attitude to environment protection and climate change does not depend on age or education of the respondents. 5 in 10 inhabitants of large cities have chosen ecology as one of top 3 EU challenges, and 4 in 10 - as one of top 3 national level challenges (1 in 4 and 3 in 10 among rural area residents).



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## Challenges: Health/ Social security

Apart from the Covid-19 pandemics challenges, promoting good health is an integral part of Europe 2020, the EU's 10-year economic-growth strategy. More specifically, health policy is important to Europe 2020's objectives for smart and inclusive growth because (1)keeping people healthy and active for longer has a positive impact on productivity and competitiveness; (2)innovation can help make the healthcare sector more sustainable and find new cures for health conditions; (3)the healthcare sector has an important role to play in improving skills and creating jobs as it employs 1 in 10 of the most qualified workers in the EU; (4) with a projected 45% increase in the number of people aged 65 and over in the next 20 years, financing rising healthcare costs and access to a dignified and independent life for the aging population will be central to the political debate. ([https://ec.europa.eu/health/europe\\_2020\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/health/europe_2020_en))

At the same time, social security challenges are related with the ageing population. Population ageing in Europe is caused primarily by three factors: declining fertility rates, increased life expectancy, and migration. The causes of population ageing vary among countries.

### Interviews

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*Physical health is being treated superbly, but the country should be more concerned about mental health. (Sofia, EE)*

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*We have to take care ourselves. No-one will do that for us - that's the first thing. Because no health care or any system can deal with it for us. That's the matter of education. A little bit has been done already in education about healthy lifestyle, good food, physical activity (..) And everything is the matter of awareness and education but, again I would like to underline that for our health we have to take care ourselves and especially we should focus on prevention - because, first of all that's few times cheaper and second of all that's just better - the prevention, our lifestyle and some examinations once in a while. (Stanislaw, PL)*

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*Homeless people. There is a big problem, when I go to work I can see how many people have this problem and it's not old people, it's people my age! (Piotr, PL)*

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*The EU needs to participate in a global discuss on the topic of public health, because different countries are on a different level regarding medical development, and the pandemic showed that individual countries are quite weak in dealing alone with such issues. Economy is taken care of more or less, the agriculture, the culture, but in this aspect (medicine and health care system) the gaps are more and more visible. (Ewelina, PL)*

The respondents name range of the issues that would need solution on the national level, including pensions, social security bonuses for parents and children, health care institutions, mental health issues, remuneration for the health system workers, long waiting ques to receive qualified health services. Especially public health services are emphasized in relevance with the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemics - "The EU needs to participate in a global discuss on the topic of public health (..) because different countries are on a different level regarding medical development and health issues and the pandemic showed that individual countries are quite weak in dealing alone with such issues. Economy is taken care of more or less, the agriculture, the culture are taken care of but in this aspect (medicine and health care system) the gaps are more and more visible" (Ewelina, PL) .

At the same time, there are many respondents who evaluate the EU social security system highly - "Europe is one of the places in the world where social security and health care are on the highest level. (..) when it come to availability, for the average person, to healthcare - it is on a reasonably good level. Europe is one of the best places to be and to receive it - same with social safety, social care. (Michal, 32, PL)

Indeed, there are quite a few respondents who emphasize individual responsibility and role of education regarding the health and social security issues - taking preventive measures, practicing healthy lifestyle, doing sports, consuming healthy food - "I should take care of myself and the doctor is my help only in the situation that the things got really complicated (..) but prior I wake up in the morning, I do my gymnastics, I eat what is good for me, this kind of things - me, myself should know my body, should know what is good for me and what not, what supports my health and what not, I should be the master of my body, take care of it" (Andrzej, PL)

It is clear that society needs more education in the field of healthy lifestyle, and regarding this many EU projects could be efficient. "Eating not enough vegetable or fruits, are the major issues." (Zuza, PL); "If you are healthy, have hands, legs, you have to support yourself. It's not country's responsibility" (Danute, LT).



## CONCLUSION

In the EU agenda, there is a range of issues regarding health and social security: from keeping people healthy and active for longer to society ageing which is rising healthcare costs. In general, the respondents are satisfied with the health care and social security services provided. Though, they name range of the issues that would need solution on the national level, including

pensions, social security bonuses for parents and children, health care institutions, mental health issues, remuneration for the health system workers, long waiting ques to receive qualified health services, etc. Individual responsibility for health and necessity of educating people about healthy lifestyle are emphasised by several respondents.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## Challenges: Safety/ Terrorism threats

Almost half of all Europeans fear climate change more than losing a job or of a terrorist attack, a study by the European Investment Bank (EIB) showed in November, 2019. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-climate-eib-survey-idUSKBN1Y21PQ>)

Eurobarometer survey "Future of Europe" in October-November, 2020, confirms that Europeans see climate change (45%), terrorism (38%), health-related risks (37%) and forced migration and displacement (27%) as the main global challenges for the future of the EU. In detail, the top in Estonia is forced migration and displacement (48%), in Latvia and Poland - risks related to health (40% and 50% respectively), and in Lithuania - climate change and environmental issues (47%).

That is reflected in our survey, as most of the respondents do not express much concern on this issue.

### Interviews

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*I feel safe, and when traveling in the European Union, there is no great fear, but since we often see and hear it, it... (..) Somehow it is touching, it is scary when you see so many deaths (Laima, LT)*

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*Europe is one of the safest places - in my opinion - to live in, especially when it comes to conflicts in the Middle East or Africa which consume much more lives than terrorist attacks. And also when it comes to crime, I think it's relatively safe. Most of the crimes are manifests and there are, at least in Poland ... the rate of burglaries, the rate of people, you know - I feel much safer going outside, even in the dark and in the night, it's a lot better - it changed over the last 10-20 years, definitely. (Michal, PL)*

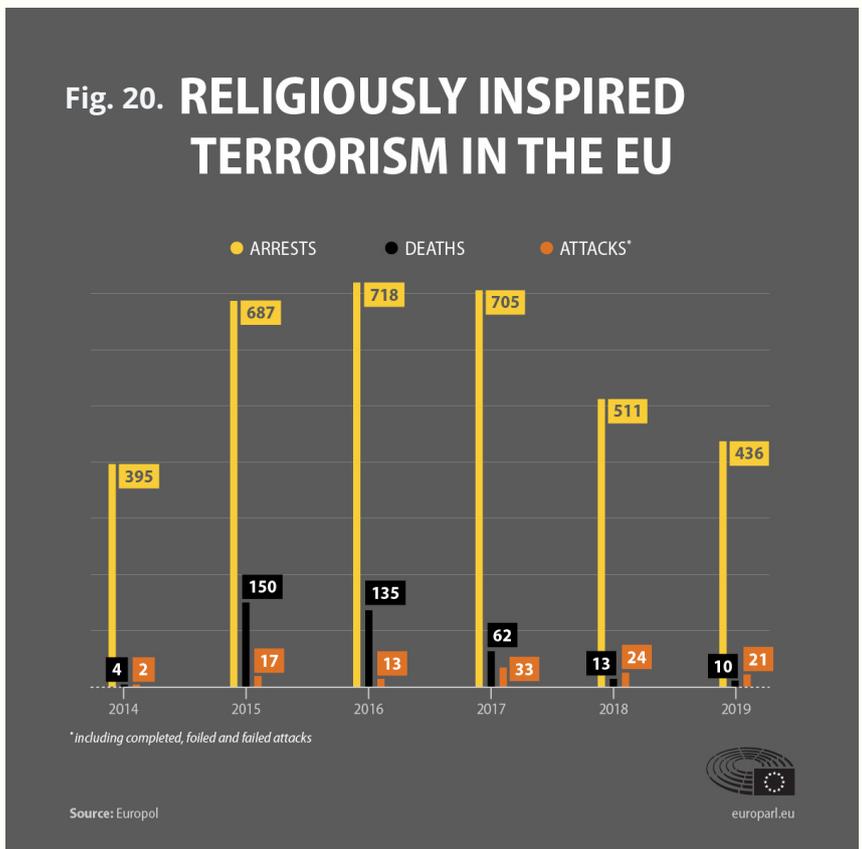
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*I have fear of attending large scale events. (Alise, LV)*

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*Terrorism is a problem and generally I don't see any other way of fighting it than education because this is all the matter of mainly poverty and the fact that some areas and environments were left to themselves, there are no other ways and people are prone to manipulation and then there is the recruitment. It's now also in Europe and some Europeans were also drawn into it. So proper education and, of course the support from relevant services (Stanislaw, PL)*

*I don't feel any dangers on this topic, I don't know how is it in other countries but to be honest it's not on the list of my concerns nowadays, I don't feel that there can be any danger for now. (Ola, PL)*



This graph by Europol (Fig. 20) shows that the number of terrorist attacks and victims of terror in the EU continued to decrease in 2019. "Reinforced cooperation between EU countries and information sharing have helped to prevent attacks or limit their impact," says Europol report.

The respondents feel safe in their countries. Though, some of them relate the terrorism threats with migration issues. Some have been concerned about the risk posed by migrants trying to enter Europe - "In Estonia, thank God, situation is pretty ok. But not everywhere in EU. And this is related directly to over-migration that's leading to conflict of different cultures and finally to terrorism and less security" (Adrus, EE)

To oppose, Europol 's report reiterates that as in previous years there are no signs of systematic use of irregular migration by terrorist organisations. In fact, in more than 70% of arrests related to jihadist terrorism, for which citizenship was reported to Europol, the individuals were nationals of the EU country in question. (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/security/20180703STO07125/terrorism-in-the-eu-terror-attacks-deaths-and-arrests-in-2019>)

The respondents show empathy to the countries where terrorism attacks have happened. "We were going to London and were going through completely the same place, that bridge near to Big Ben where terror act took place. So it really becomes uncomfortable when you hear such things. And such alertness arises in the head. (..) It is really horrible what happens, it's a pity for those people who suffered from it." (Milda, LT)

## CONCLUSION

According the EB survey, terrorism (38%) along with climate change (45%), health-related risks (37%), and forced migration and displacement (27%) is top global challenge at the EU level as indicated by the respondents. At the same time, neither in LT, LV, PL or EE it is ranged at the top.

The respondents in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland feel safe in their countries, express empathy to the countries where terror attacks happen, some try to relate terrorism with migration waves, although Europol data oppose that there would be such a correlation.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## How do you feel about EU future?

Eurobarometer survey "Future of Europe" (October-November, 2020) shows that comparable living standards (35%) and stronger solidarity among Member States (30%) are regarded as the two most helpful developments for the future of Europe. Europeans also prioritise the development of a common health policy (25%) and comparable education standards (22%). Lower ranked priorities, mentioned by less than two in ten, include energy independence (19%), deeper economic integration (17%), a stronger industrial capacity (16%), and a common army (10%). Finally, less than one in ten respondents mention the introduction of the euro in all EU countries (7%).

Despite concerns and challenges that the EU is currently facing, 7 in 10 respondents feel optimistic about the future of the EU (including 59,1% fairly optimistic and 11,8% very optimistic). Though, there is opinion that "Always all unions, empires collapse" (Anna, LV) and Brexit and covid-19 have affected trust in the future of the EU, most of the interviewees consider themselves as optimists.

### Interviews

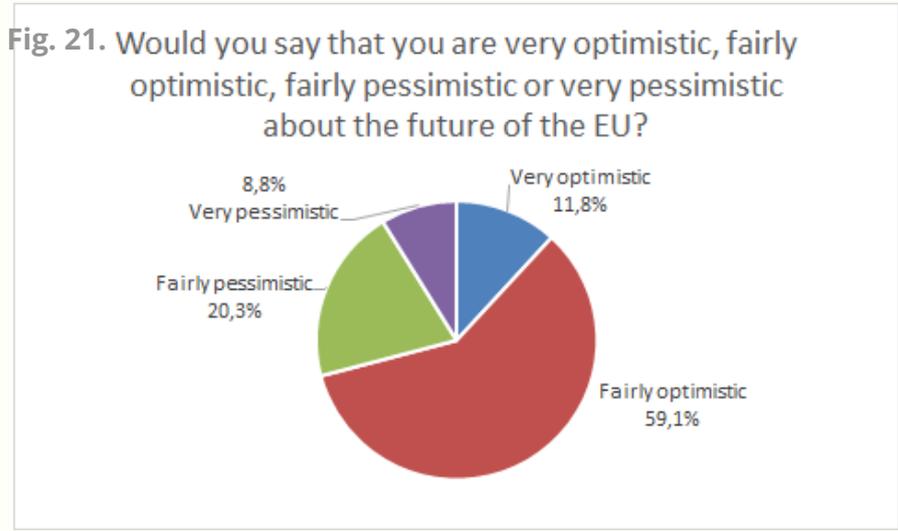
*I really want that EU to be strong and stable because it really offers a lot of opportunities and I don't want to lose them.*  
(Egle, LT)

*I am very optimistic of EU future. I think all the human beings need to get closer to each other and fight all world problems and global climate issues. I think so EU will grow and will remain peace and freedom, health and safety.*  
(Ernesta, LT)

*I hope it stays that way, but it's not very likely anymore since the UK left and history likes to repeat itself.*  
(Lisandra, EE)

*I believe that the EU has a good future ahead of it, because it has shown that many countries can be united in one union. The fact that there are still countries that want to join the EU also shows the future.*  
(Lolita, LV)

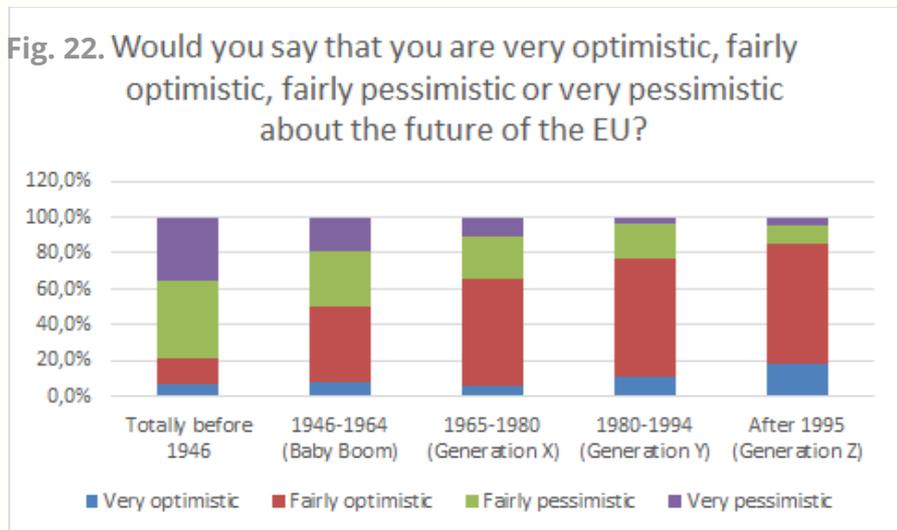
*I really hope that this ethos and initial idea of Schumann about united trade and economy will come back and be more visible, that there will be free trade, free market, no restrictions regarding work in different EU countries etc. But in general, in this vision our strength is our diversity (...) Everybody has their preferences, their traditions, places they grew up in or are more connected to and I think that this diversity creates the potential of European creativity. (Wojtek, PL)*



In order to last, the EU shall tackle all its challenges - "I believe that EU won't last. At least, it can't go on like this any longer. There have to be a lot of changes - in politics, people have to change, more equality must occur and only then this union may last." (Luule, EE)

Analysing by the age group, it is obvious that there are more optimistic respondents in Gen Z (84,7%) and Gen Y (76,8%) age groups, less in Gen X (65,6%), only half of Baby Boomers generation (50%) feel themselves optimistic, and even less the elder population respondents.

Active involvement and active life position also determine the positive attitude to the future.



# CONCLUSION

Despite concerns and challenges that the EU is currently facing, 7 in 10 respondents feel optimistic about the future of the EU (including 59,1% fairly optimistic and 11,8% very optimistic). Active involvement and active life position determine the positive attitude to the future.

Analysing by the age group, there are more optimistic respondents in Gen Z (84,7%) and Gen Y (76,8%) age groups, less in Gen X (65,6%), only half of Baby Boomers generation (50%) feel themselves optimistic, and even less the elder population respondents.

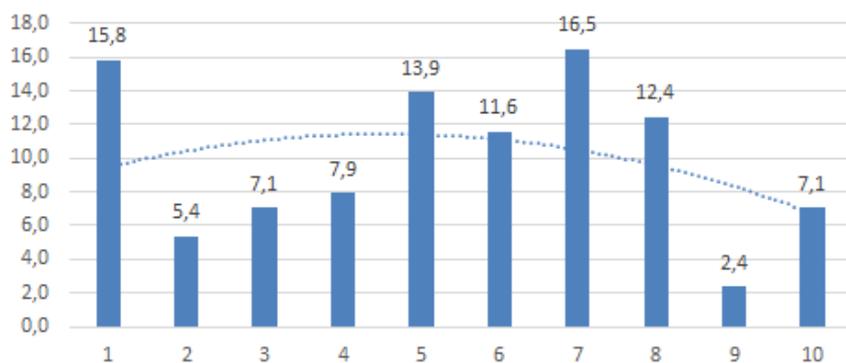
# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## Civic society

Fig. 23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement "My voice counts in the EU"? (%)  
 (In scale 1-10, where 1-totally disagree, 10-totally agree)



Large majority of the Europeans (92%) agree that the EU citizens' voices should be taken more into account for decisions relating to the future of Europe. (EB "Future of Europe", 2020). Our survey shows that only 5 in 10 respondents have feeling that their voice counts in the EU. In the interviews, voting in European elections is clearly regarded as the most effective way of ensuring voices are heard by decision-makers at EU level. Other types of participation mentioned by are: taking part in events such as citizens' debates, joining a political party, and joining or supporting a civil society organisation, such as a non-governmental organisation.

## Interviews

*I went to the polls and thought that my voice was changing something. I am more or less involved in European projects, in education and in some exchange trips and so on. I think each of us should feel like part of it all. (Edgars, LV)*

*There is also the parliament where we have our representatives and this is important in the case of issues which concern and affect us all, like for example the climate issues - the voice of one country wouldn't matter but the voice of the whole EU - the world has to take into consideration. (Stanislaw, PL)*

*I can express my opinion (...). No one will force me for whom to vote. I choose the person who fits my views. (...) I'll take a deeper look at whether they're not populists here or else somehow. But that inner freedom is what I say and it is a very great value that I feel that I do not have to be the way someone wants me to be. The way I am. (Danguole, LT)*

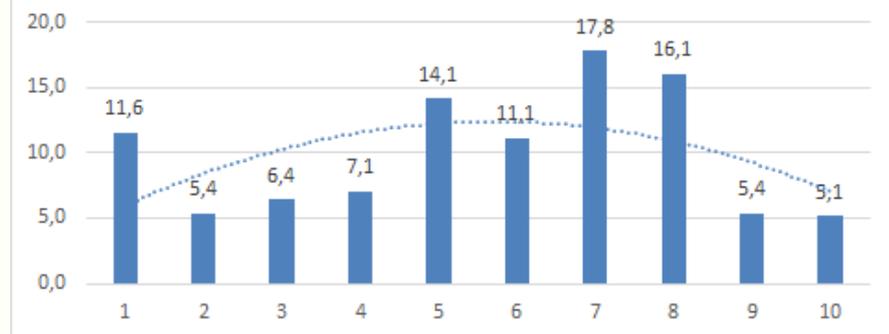
*So, as a big organisation, big body and, yeah, democracy - is a problem because, you know, I'm not quite sure if everyone is mature enough to, to live in really democratic conditions which European Union, I think aim for but kind of but ... ideas about real democracy and this is a challenge. (Kasia, PL)*

*Yes, it is a pity that we have lost such a country [UK], a strong state of the European Union. Huge market. On the other hand, if what the European Union drops from above, those values are democracy. This is a democratic decision. (Marius, LT)*

*What are the main concerns about the EU? It has lost its trustworthiness- it makes me sad. (Rasmus, EE)*

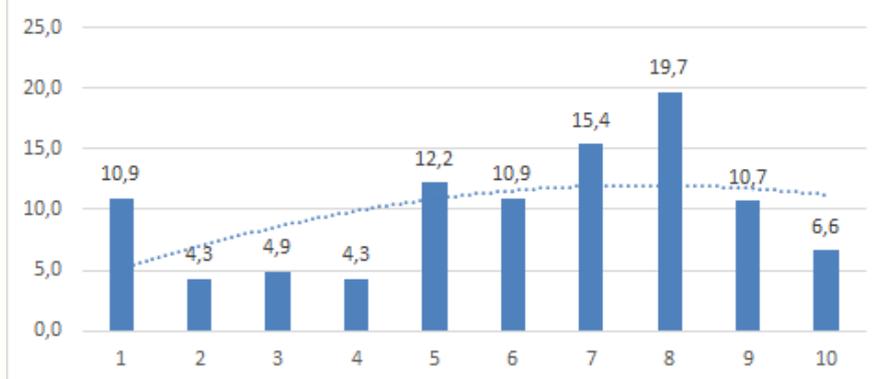
*And what are the advantages of being a member of the EU, it's hard to say. (...) It's good that it's there, for sure there are some advantages but for sure I wouldn't trust it 100%. (Przemyslaw, PL)*

**Fig. 24.** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement "I am satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU"? (%)  
(In scale 1-10, where 1-totally disagree, 10-totally agree)



Democracy issues as the challenges the EU has to face in the future, problems with the way how democracy works are mentioned in the respondents' answers to the question "In your opinion, what are three the most important challenges the European Union is facing at the moment?" The standard Eurobarometer survey (Spring, 2019) shows that 55% of Europeans say they are satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU. In our survey this is the same number - 55,5% of the respondents have marked 6 and above on the scale 1-10, where 1-totally disagree with the statement, and 10-totally agree. Though, the numbers by country in EB survey show total satisfaction with the way democracy works in Poland 70%, Lithuania 67%, Latvia 66%, and Estonia 61%. So, it seems that the indicator has decreased during last years due to the range of challenges the EU is facing at the moment.

**Fig. 25.** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement "I trust in the EU"? (%)  
(In scale 1-10, where 1-totally disagree, 10-totally agree)



Despite the problems, taking into account the benefits and advantages being part of the EU, 63,4% of the respondents of our survey trust in the EU (marks 6 and above in 10 point scale). In the mentioned EB survey, the corresponding number is 44% of the respondents (leading by Lithuania 77%, Estonia 60%, followed by Poland 54% and Latvia 51%). We haven't compared our data by country as the sample could not be considered fully representative.

## CONCLUSION

In accordance with Eurobarometer, large majority of Europeans (92%) agree that the EU citizens' voices should be taken more into account for decisions relating to the future of Europe. Our survey shows that only 5 in 10 respondents have feeling that their voice counts in the EU.

Our survey shows that 55,5% of the respondents say they are satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU. Despite problems, taking into account the benefits and advantages being part of the EU, 63,4% of the respondents of our survey trust in the EU.



# PROJECT RESEARCH "ATTITUDES ON THE EUROPEAN UNION 15 YEARS AFTER ACCESSION"

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (2020-2021)



## Citizen involvement

One of the most effective way of ensuring citizens' voices are heard by decision-makers is joining or supporting a civil society organisation, such as a non-governmental organisation. Our survey shows that a slightly more than 2 in 10 respondents (22,7%) know an European association/ organization and have taken part in their activities. Almost half (46%) have never heard about one.

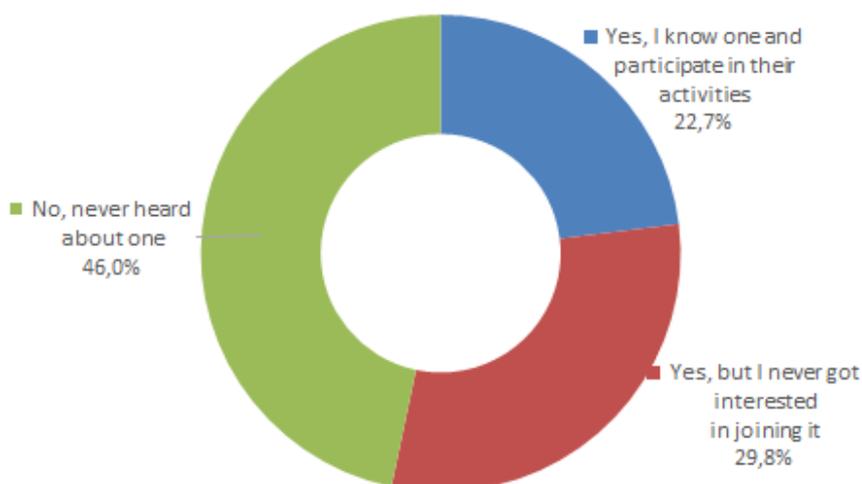
### Interviews

*Yes, I know and I have joined European projects implemented in my little town. I was supporting these kind of projects locally as a volunteer - „The prospectors of lost ideas” - it was a project about revitalisation of urban areas.*  
(Renata, PL)

*Yes, I know quite a few - just to mention some, I know Kobiety.lodz.pl but also FERSO or the Institute of Creative Actions, with whom I work and I joined a very nice event organised by all 3 of them and also some other separately. It was nice.*  
(Ola, PL)

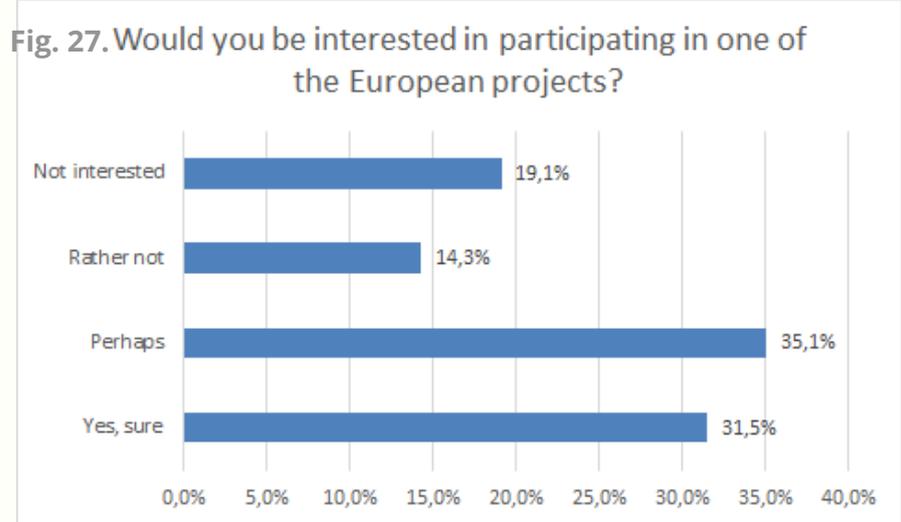
*Yes, I have actually participated in a European senior volunteering project , which was focused on social issues, social photography etc. We were exploring the situation of homeless people in in Greece. Of course, I would like to participate and I was searching for some options of volunteering connected to wildlife and nature*  
(Stanislaw, PL)

Fig. 26. Have you ever heard about a European Association in your city or nearby? (N=467)



*I am a member of and me and my family are supported by the „Polish Multiple Sclerosis Association”. There we take part in the projects financially supported by the EU - rehabilitations, summer holidays with therapy elements and many more.  
(Wojtek, PL)*

*Yes, I know and I have joined European projects implemented in my little town. I was a volunteer in the project „The prospectors of lost ideas” about revitalisation of urban areas. (Renata, PL)*



There are many respondents who would be ready to participate in European projects - 31,5% answer "Yes, sure" and 35,1% - "Perhaps". Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.

The fields the respondents are interested to cover within the projects range from culture, democracy, education, tourism, sports till gender and generation issues, science, human rights, mental health, and others (see wordcloud).



## CONCLUSION

Slightly more than 2 in 10 respondents (22,7%) know an European association/ organization and have taken part in their activities. Almost half (46%) have never heard about one. 31,5% of the respondents surely and 35,1% perhaps would be ready to participate in European projects.

The fields the respondents are interested to cover within the projects range from culture, democracy, education, tourism, sports till gender and generation issues, science, human rights, mental health, and others.