Young People’s View on Participation and Their Attitudes Towards the European Union
Building a Bridge Between Europe and its Citizens – Evidence Review Paper Three
YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ON PARTICIPATION & THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION

BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN EUROPE AND ITS CITIZENS

EVIDENCE REVIEW PAPER THREE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trust

- British young people are more trusting of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) than of state political institutions. This trend can be seen across Europe.

- Young people are the same as other age groups in being less trusting of their national government when compared to their national parliament. They also have relatively low trust in political parties.

- Young people, as with other age groups in Scotland, are more trusting of the Scottish Executive (65%) than of the UK government (30%).

Knowledge & Interest

- There is an increasing understanding amongst young people about the Scottish Parliament in both the 11-16 age group and the 17-25 age group.

- Compared to the whole population, 18-25 year olds know less about both the Scottish Executive and the UK government and report lower levels of interest in politics.

- Young people’s explanations of why they are less interested include a belief that politics lacks relevance for them.

- “Young people's political interest is significantly affected by the discussions they hear at home (...) early exposure to talk about politics has an important influence on their own eventual interest in the subject” (Park, Philips and Johnson, 2004:17). This is a stronger factor than household income or education.

Participation

- Young people aged 18-24 are less likely than the population as a whole to vote in elections at all levels from local to European.

- More young people voted in the 2003 Scottish Parliament elections (42%) than in the 2002 English local elections (11%) and the Welsh Assembly elections (16%) though less than in the 2003 Northern Ireland Assembly elections (49%).

- Young people follow the pattern of other age groups in the UK in preferring to sign a petition or give money to a campaign/organisation.

- When compared to other European Union member states young people in the UK report lower levels of participation and engagement.

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1 However, there is some confusion in people’s minds about the difference between the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament.
There have been a number of initiatives in Scotland focused on involving young people in political decision-making including Dialogue Youth, Youthlink, the Trojan Project, Youth Scotland and the National Youth Information portal.

**Attitudes to Europe**

- Successive Eurobarometers have shown that young people in the UK are less sceptical about Europe than older age groups.
- Young people have less knowledge about the EU than older age groups.
- Young people are more likely than any other age group to emphasize the national government’s role in making EU law than the role of Brussels.
- Though a minority at 12%, young people in Scotland were more likely than any other age group to understand what their MEP does.
- Young people in Scotland are more positive than older people about increasing the integration process in Europe, although a third of young people are happy with things the way they are.
- One in five young Scots would like the powers of the European Union to increase.
- However, young people in Manchester place more emphasis on membership of the European Union than young people in Edinburgh.

**European Identity**

- A strong sub-national identity is associated with a relatively weak sense of being European. Young people in Edinburgh have a strong sense of being Scottish which leads to a relatively low sense of being European when compared to other European cities. This is also the case in Bilbao.
- Religious views are associated with a stronger sense of being European. Jamieson et al (2005) found that Muslims and Catholics had a stronger sense of being European than Protestants and people who did not indicate a religion.
INTRODUCTION

1. In the context of the French and Dutch referenda in which votes in those countries rejected the proposed constitution for the EU, the European Commission’s Vice-President Margot Wallström and Scotland’s First Minister announced the Building a Bridge project in October 2005. The aim is to look at how the experiences of Scotland, as a region with legislative powers and a new system of government, might help the EU connect better with its citizens. To that end, this project was included in the European Commission’s White Paper on a European Communication Policy.

2. This is the final of three evidence review papers prepared to support the Building a Bridge project. The review process involved three key steps: consultation with key agencies and academics, an analysis of the existing literature using specific search terms and, finally, disaggregating Scottish data from surveys carried out across European member states such as the European Social Survey and Eurobarometer.

3. This short paper aims to set the events for young people that occurred as a part of the Building a Bridge project within the wider context of a review of young people’s levels of trust and participation in political processes. It also reviews factors affecting such participation emphasizing the perceived relevance of particular issues to young people’s lives.

4. With young people in the United Kingdom being amongst the least likely to turn out to European Parliament elections when compared to those in other member states, the final part of the paper examines whether young people in Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole are uniquely placed in their perspectives on Europe.

LEVELS OF TRUST AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people: trust in institutions

5. British young people are more trusting of NGOs than of state political institutions, as is generally true for young people in the other European surveyed countries (EUYOUPART, 2005:131). British young people vary from their European counterparts in that their trust of their own government is the same as their trust in the European Commission and the European Parliament. As Table 1 makes clear there are higher levels of trust in these European Union institutions amongst other European than British young people. It is hard to compare the levels of trust reported by young people with the population as a whole as the response alternatives in surveys are worded different. However, the large increase in the last survey of British people trusting NGOs echoes a similar trend to be found amongst young people. Young people are the same as older age groups in being less trusting of the government as opposed to the parliament and are also less trusting of political parties.

6. Scottish young people have the least amount of trust and respect towards the press and politicians (Youthlink Scotland, 2005:6), which is similar to the low levels of trust adults demonstrate in press and political parties.

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2 The other European countries surveyed were Austria, Estonia, France, Italy and Slovakia.
7. Young people were more trusting than the sample as a whole, ‘most of the time/just about all of the time’ of the Scottish Executive and the UK government. They are more trusting of the Scottish Executive (65%) than the UK government (30%) to look after Scotland's best interests, as occurs with other age groups (Bromley and Given, 2005:18).

Table 1. Young people's trust in institutions in European countries 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amnesty International</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenpeace</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attac</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Parliament</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table 86, EUYOUPART (2005:130) – survey research conducted Nov-Dec 2004. % trust respond to the summed number of respondents indicating "much" and "very much". Note: some of these figures are based on 10% or more missing values.


YOUNG PEOPLE’S AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

8. More Scottish 17-25 year olds claim to have a great deal/fair amount of knowledge of Westminster than of the Scottish Parliament, whilst 11-16 year olds have a great/deal amount of knowledge of the local council, closely followed by the Scottish Parliament and then Westminster (see Youthlink Scotland, 2005:5). Moreover, whilst young people surveyed in 2005 had a greater amount of knowledge of political institutions across the board than in 2003, knowledge of the Scottish Parliament has seen a 7 percent increase amongst 11-16 year olds and a 6 percent increase among 17-25 year olds, suggesting that information about the Scottish Parliament is filtering through to young people.

9. Levels of knowledge of the European Parliament are not too far behind that of national institutions. The percentage of 17-25 year olds who claim knowledge about the EU has doubled (Youthlink Scotland 2005:5). Meanwhile there was a slight increase in the proportion of young people in 2005 who reported that they had never heard of a given institution. This was true for most institutions. The lowest levels of awareness were for the Scottish Youth Parliament.
10. The percentage of those who have heard or seen a ‘great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ about the work of the UK government or the Scottish Executive over the last twelve months is lower amongst young people surveyed. Levels of knowledge are particularly important in relation to political participation, with a lack of knowledge about politics being one explanation for young people not voting (Russell et al. 2002:1).

Table 2. Knowledge of Scottish Executive and UK Government activities over the last year 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of the sample</th>
<th>Scottish Executive</th>
<th>UK Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25 year olds</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Political interest

Levels of political interest

11. Park's analysis of social attitudes surveys looking at 12 -19 year olds in Britain leads her to remark that “young people are less interested in politics than adults” (Park, 2004:24) and identifies that political interest has fallen amongst this age group. Analysis of the 2001 and 2004 MORI surveys also found that the fall in political interest over time was most marked in young people (18-24 year olds) than in adults as a whole (Johnson and Marshall, 2004:11).

12. Qualitative research which seeks to make sense of this, usefully distinguishes between five different levels of interest – indifferent, cynically uninterested, selectively interested, generically interested, highly interested and connected. Research with young people in the UK reveals that there are disparities between different levels of interest (White, Bruce and Ritchie, 2000). These types vary in the kind of politics young people are interested in and their views of the political. This suggests that a uniform response to increasing young people's interest is maybe unlikely to reach all.

13. Comparison of the levels of political interest among the 18-24 year olds sampled in the British Social Attitudes Survey 2003 and the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003 (see Graph 3 below), reveal that the majority of people have ‘not very much’ interest in politics. This is different amongst adults as a whole where ‘some’ interest is the most common response.
Graph 3. Political interest of 18-24 year olds 2003 - 2004


Reasons for political interest

14. The reasons and factors associated with political interest include the subjective perception of politics, and this is particularly the case for young people:

“Typical explanations for the lack of interest in politics include young people’s belief that politics lacks relevance for them” (White, Bruce and Ritchie, 2000:2).

15. Park, Phillips and Johnson (2004) find that "once adult political interest [of adults in the child's household] is taken into account, a range of other factors (including education and household income) are no longer significantly related to levels of political interest amongst young people" (Park, Philips and Johnson, 2004:17). Before the effect of adult political interest is taken into account, it was the young people who lived in rich households with adults with higher educational qualifications that were most likely to be interested in politics (Park, Philips and Johnson, 2004:6). The role of adults is key in shaping political interest:

"This suggests that young people's political interest is significantly affected by the discussions they hear at home, and that early exposure to talk about politics has an important influence on their own eventual interest in the subject." (Park, Philips and Johnson, 2004:17).

16. European evidence supports this finding. A study of young people’s political interest in six different countries found "the level of parental politicization is very decisive, and especially if parents show a concrete political participation, for instance in voting or demonstrating" (EUYOUPART, 2005:101). For example 80% of young people are interested in politics when they have strongly politicized parents as compared to 14% when they have weak politicised parents (EUYOUPART, 2005:98).
LEVELS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

- Voting
- Other kinds of political participation
- Levels of organisational membership – organised civil society participation

Voting

17. As Table 4 illustrates, voter turnout is lower among young people than among the general population.

Table 4. Levels of Voting, Young People 2002-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election (Survey on which estimates based)</th>
<th>All (actual) %</th>
<th>18-24 (estimate) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English local elections – 2002 (NOP)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Parliament – 2003 (ICM)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Assembly for Wales – 2003 (NOP)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland Assembly – 2003 (MBU)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


18. Johnson and Marshall (2004:8) explore the idea that turnout has decreased across democracies. However, international comparative studies on the turnout of young people show that the gap in the UK is higher than in some other countries. EUYOPART research also demonstrates that the British young people in its sample have the lowest turnout at national and at European parliamentary elections (EUYOPART, 2005:23-24).

19. Analysis which attempts to understand voter engagement argues that turnout is a result of satisfaction and also possibly of different attitudes towards voting. Young people in Scotland perceive voting less of a duty (Johnson and Marshall, 2004:9). They argue that “apathy is not the problem, that the challenge is to make politics more relevant and responsive to young people and that disengagement must be tackled on many different fronts” (Johnson and Marshall, 2004:21).

20. Russell argues that there appears to be a range of factors which affect voting in general but these seem to hit the young generation most (Russell et al, 2002:1):

- Disillusion (the view that it makes no difference who wins)
- Apathy (the lack of interest in politics)
- Impact (the view that an individual vote won't make a difference)
- Alienation (the view that politics is 'not for young people')
- Knowledge (not knowing enough about politics to cast a vote)
- Inconvenience (voting is too time consuming)
Other kinds of political participation

21. Both young people in Scotland and young people in Britain appear less participatory than people in Scotland and people in Britain as a whole, with more young people not involved in any form of participation (see Table 5 and Hope and King, 2005:15). It is worth noting that such questions are not time-limited but cumulative, so older people are bound to have higher participation levels. The general trends for ways of participating remain the same as found in Evidence Review Paper One, with young people most likely to have signed a petition and generally carried out individualistic and contact actions.

22. The UK sample was the lowest in Europe on contacting a politician, collecting signatures, donating money to a party or an organisation, contributing to an internet discussion, writing a letter/email with a political content - although most of these percentages were fairly low, around 10% for top actions (EUYOUPART, 2005:30).

23. Generally unemployment affects participation negatively. Scottish and Swedish young people are less reluctant to participate in boycotts, strikes etc than other Europeans (Carle, 2003).

24. "Five key factors – gender, ethnicity, locality, religion, and family & friends were found to influence young people's willingness and ability to participate in some form of community action." For example, young men were less likely to sign petitions and give money to charity (Roker, Player and Coleman, 1999).

Table 5. Levels of Participation, Young people, Scotland & Great Britain 2003 – 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of participation</th>
<th>SSAS 2004 All</th>
<th>SSAS 2004 (18-24 year olds)</th>
<th>BSAS 2003 GB</th>
<th>BSAS 2003 (18-24 year olds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signed a petition</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a public meeting</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given money to campaign/organisation</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>20.57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted an MP or MSP</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken to an influential person</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gone on a protest or demonstration</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded to a consultation document</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted a government department directly</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended an event organised as part of a consultation exercise</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively took part in campaign (e.g. leafleting, stuffing envelopes etc.)</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined an existing organisation</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted radio, TV, or a newspaper</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised issue in an organisation I belong to</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formed a group of like-minded people</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No have not done any of these</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Scottish Executive – FCSD – Analytical Services using Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS) (2004), n of 18-24 year olds 176/175, British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS) (2003) Question: Have you ever done any of the things on this card as a way of registering what you personally thought about an issue? (SSAS) Have you ever done any of the things on this card about a government action which you thought was unjust and harmful? (BSAS).
Levels of organisational membership – organised civil society participation

25. The kinds of organisations that young people participate in do not appear to differ from other age groups, with young people being more likely to be a participant in social, youth and religious groups rather than political groups, as was found in Evidence Review Paper One (Moore and Longhurst, 2005).

26. Young people in Britain are much more involved with environmental and animal rights groups rather than political parties and trade unions (Moore and Longhurst, 2005). This gives some weight to the argument that young people are more interested in issue based politics than in traditional politics. There are differences within the kinds of groups young people join depending on their situation, with women more likely to be involved in campaigning and animal groups (Roker, Player and Coleman, 1999).

27. In comparison to other European young people, British young people in the sample, together with Estonians report the lowest levels of participation and volunteering in politically related organisations (EUYOUTHPART, 2005).

YOUNG PEOPLE’S INVOLVEMENT IN POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING

28. “Within Scotland, a raft of new platforms for facilitating the voices of young people has been developed over recent years with initiatives including the Youth Parliament, Dialogue Youth, Youth Link, the Trojan Protect, Youth Scotland and the National Youth Information portal” (Nicholson, 2005).

29. Many of these initiatives found that young people had been involved in consultations (York Consulting, 2005; The Scottish Community Education Council, 1998) and as a result sometimes even influenced policy spending (McKay, 2002:2). However, there is a concern expressed by some that initiatives to gain young people's views were tokenistic (Milburn, 2000:46).

30. Some of these initiatives have been particularly innovative. For example, the Scottish Executive worked with Children in Scotland on the development of its education needs review, over a two year period. Different communication methods such as drama and art were used with the children to gain their views (Cockburn, 2005:116). Use of IT was also evident to encourage wider consultation amongst the HYV and U'say youth project (Macintosh et al, 2003). Finally, the 3rd World Youth Congress was held in Scotland in 2005.

31. British young people are keen that they are given the opportunity to participate. When young people were asked whether young people should be consulted on issues that concerned them over two-thirds said this was very important (Matthews and Limb, 2003).

32. Some studies emphasize the role of the media in young people’s political understanding. Buckingham suggests that young people should be educated to become actively involved in the media culture around them not just in terms of critical viewing skills but also by being cultural producers of media in their own right (Buckingham, 1999).
Youth Councils

33. Evidence exploring the effectiveness of Youth Councils particularly in Britain, such as Matthews and Limb (2003:175), suggests that this is the “most ... favoured response by statutory and voluntary agencies”. Such councils require participation at local level and grassroots links (Green and Sender, 2005; Office for Public Management, 2004; York Consulting, 2005). Whilst some evidence reports that they can be positive experience (Matthews and Limb, 2003), there is concern that youth councils are perceived as adult structures.

Barriers to involvement

34. There are number of barriers facing young people, including the labels applied to young people as politically apathetic. Other barriers include a limited number of opportunities, lack of knowledge and process, not always being heard by parliament lacking representation in parliament and differences in power (White, Bruce and Ritchie, 2000; York Consulting, 2005; YWCA, 2003).

Recommendations for increasing young people's interest in politics

“What those young people appear to be saying is that, rather than expecting them to go and fit into those spaces and structures that adults find convenient and comfortable, adults should be prepared to enter their every day spaces and to consult with them in ways that resonate with their inner world” (Matthews and Limb, 2003:189).

35. A number of studies make recommendations about increasing young people's political interest and encouraging them to get engaged, including

- Meeting young people on their territory (eg to go to young people’s internet sites rather than making new websites).
- Giving young people power to influence decisions/commitment to listen (Cockburn, 2005)
- Demonstrating impact, 89% of young people want proof that getting involved makes a difference (Office for Public Management, 2004:82)
- Providing feedback (Office for Public Management, 2004)
- Promoting personal contact (Office for Public Management, 2004)
- Releasing information about how to get involved (Office for Public Management, 2004)
- Going local and demonstrating the relevance of politics to young people (Matthews and Limb, 2003; White, Bruce and Ritchie, 2000)
- Creating participation activities that are tailored to young people and fun (need extra time, cannot force people to participate)
- Encouraging celebrity endorsements (Office for Public Management, 2004)

36. Whilst there is evidence that young people show greater reluctance to participate and engage, care needs to be taken not to over-state the differences between them and other age groups. Young people in the main seem to be motivated by the same factors as other age groups and show a tendency to follow the same broad trends.
YOUNG PEOPLE’S ATTITUDES TOWARDS EUROPE

37. Successive Eurobarometers have shown that young people in the UK are slightly less sceptical about being part of the European Union than older age groups with 44% of 15 and 24 year old respondents indicating that they thought that ‘EU membership was a good thing’. In contrast to those over 55, 27% thought EU membership was a good thing (EB65-2006). This pattern was repeated when respondents were asked whether they thought the UK had benefited from EU membership. Of those aged 15-24, 51% of respondents thought the UK had benefited, whilst of those aged over 55, 30% thought the UK had benefited. The extent to which young people support further integration is discussed below.

38. Young people (15-24 year olds) surveyed this year are less likely to see the EU as bureaucratic - 6% compared to 38% of the over 55s. They are also less likely to see it as a ‘waste of time’ -14% compared to 40% of over 55s. However they are less likely to see the EU as playing an important role in their lives - 35% compared 46% of 40-54 year olds.

Knowledge of European governance

39. While perceptions may be positive, generally young people (15-24 year olds) claim to know less about the European Union than older people (EB65-2006). 43% state that they know nothing at all about it. Only 22% of people over 55 make this statement with the other age groups falling in between. Around 10% of young people state they know a great deal about the EU (Flash EB185-2006). It is interesting to note that in the recent study led by Professor Lynn Jamieson, over 50% of young people surveyed in Edinburgh said they learnt little or nothing about the European Union in schools, this contrast considerably with the other cities involved in the study (Jamieson, 2005).

40. When young people are asked specific questions which test their knowledge this relative ignorance is born out. For example, in 2005 only 22% of 15-24 year olds knew that the UK was holding the European Presidency, compared to 62% of over 55 year olds (EB64-2005).

41. When Eurobarometer asked people in the United Kingdom how EU law is made, 46% of 15-24 year olds thought it was made in Brussels, compared to 68% of 40-54 year olds. Young people were more likely to assume an important role was played by the British government – 43% compared 25% of 40-54 year olds (Flash EB185-2006).

42. In terms of representation Hope and King (2005) found that 12% of young people in Scotland knew what their MEP did. While this is a relatively small group, it was more than any other age group.

The future of Europe

43. Large scale European surveys may receive generally more positive responses on the future of Europe given that the whole survey asks questions on Europe. However social attitudes surveys in Scotland and Britain, which ask respondents questions on a whole variety of topics, also demonstrate that younger people have a more positive outlook on the Europe Union project.

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3 Within this paper Eurobarometers are referred to be the abbreviation ‘EB’ followed by number and publication date. Generally such surveys are carried out in the same year that they are published.
44. Young people in Scotland are more positive than older people about increasing the integration process. Although a third of them would opt to keep things as they are, one in five would prefer if powers were increased. Around 40% of people over 30 would reduce the EU’s powers, compared to only 20% amongst young people.

Table 6. Attitudes towards membership of the European Union, young people compared to other age groups, Scotland 1999-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>30-59</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>18-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave the European Union</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay in EU and reduce powers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave as they are</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay in EU and increase powers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single European government</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


45. In 2005 slightly more young people in Scotland would support a single European government than older people, though this remains a minority view amongst all age groups.

46. When assessing the overall trend, it is worth noting that support for leaving things as they are is increasing, with approximately third of young people now taking this view. Support for a single European government is steadily in decline, for example, in 1999 15% of young people supported this idea and this has now halved (see Table 6 above). However the proportion of young people in Scotland who would like the EU’s powers to increase – one in five - has stayed the same over the last six years.

47. Comparing young people in Scotland and young people in Britain (see Table 7 below) is a little difficult as small samples dictate against making too much of a few percent difference. Much of the overall trends are the same. Of interest, however, is the evidence to suggest that the idea of increasing the EU’s powers remains immune to political changes in Scotland, whereas in Britain as a whole this figure fluctuates year on year. As with Scottish young people, it is the desire to keep things the same that attracts the most young people in Britain, with around a third taking this view in 2005.

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4 The Scottish Social Attitudes survey is conducted annually by the Scottish Centre for Social Research.
Table 7. Attitudes towards membership of the European Union, young people compared to other age groups, Great Britain 1999-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18- 29</td>
<td>30- 59</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>18- 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave the European Union</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay in EU and reduce powers</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave as they are</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay in EU and increase powers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single European government</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


48. Jamieson’s study explored questions of citizenship and European identity with young people in 10 cities, 2 in five member states in Europe⁷, using surveys with a representative samples of 18-24 year olds and qualitative interviews with a targeted sample. The latter sample involved young people who had become more engaged in Europe through an education route. She found young people in Manchester place more importance on membership in the EU (34%) than young people in Edinburgh (29%) (Jamieson 2005).

49. When asked about the areas that the EU should take significant action in next, the younger people were, the less likely they were to talk about reform, and the more likely they were to talk about developing policies that preserve energy and finding alternatives to coal and petrol. However, with increased age they were less likely to emphasize environmental protection and global warming (Flash EB185-2006).

Young Scots as Europeans

“It is the essence of ‘being a European’ to have an essence that always stays ahead of reality” (Bauman 2004:5).

⁶ The British Social Attitudes survey is conducted annually by the National Centre for Social Research.
⁷ In Britain this was Manchester and Edinburgh, in the other countries Bregenz & Vorarlberg in Austria, Prague and Bratislava in Czech and Slovak Republics respectively, Chemnitz & Bielefeld in Germany and Bilbao & Madrid in Spain.
50. There has been much discussion about whether young people who see themselves as ‘Scottish’ may take the view that there are advantages in also seeing themselves as ‘European’. The social attitudes evidence above suggests that young people may be a new generation with a sense of being European.

51. Lynn Jamieson and colleagues found that young people in member states in Europe do have a distinct outlook in relation to European identity and citizenship, though this relates much more to differences between member states. Young people in both Manchester and Edinburgh have a low sense of being European compared to other cities.

52. The strength of the Jamieson study is that it used a composite measure of European identity, rather than asking people to tick any number of boxes marked British, Scottish or European etc in the way the social attitudes surveys tend to do. The study combines three questions on: ‘being a European is important to how I think about myself; ‘how attached do you feel to Europe”; and on ‘strength of feeling about being European’. The study is also sensitive to the extent to which the resources that might be the ‘raw materials’ of a European or even a cosmopolitan identity are not equally distributed. This was compared to young people’s sense of global identity.

53. Where regional identity was strong this was associated with a lower sense of being European in the same study. For example, in Bilbao 77% showed attachment to being from the Basque country and in Edinburgh 87% showed attachment to being from Scotland. This led to young people to being less likely to see themselves as being European when compared to other regions in Europe. When using the three questions only 6% of young people in Edinburgh compared to 10% in Bilbao and 11% in Manchester had a European identity. This can be compared to the cities in Germany and Slav and Czech republics where it was closer to 20% (Grundy & Jamieson, 2005).

54. A final interesting finding is that there appears to be a relationship between religious views and a sense of a European identity, with both Muslims and Roman Catholics across the five countries having the same relatively high levels of European identity, Protestants and people with no religion had slightly lower levels.

CONCLUSION

55. Young people are largely similarly to other age groups in their choices of how to participate in politics. They tend to favour individualistic approaches rather than acting as a collective. There is clear evidence that they participate less than other age groups. However this seems to be more than just apathy and recommendations include meeting young people on their own territory as well as information about how to get involved.

56. Young people’s optimism and attitudes to Europe stand in contrast to this. Whilst being readily prepared to admit that they do not know a great deal about how the EU works, young people are more positive about the integration process and are much less likely to see the EU as a waste of time. The evidence suggests that young people do have a distinct outlook on European governance which is worth exploring further. However a distinct sub-national identity - as occurs in Scotland - is not associated with a sense of being more European.
REFERENCES


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Young People’s View on Participation and Their Attitudes Towards the European Union
Building a Bridge Between Europe and its Citizens – Evidence Review Paper Three