



CHAPTER 4:

Students' perceptions of Europe and the future of Europe

Chapter highlights and summary

Nearly all surveyed students endorsed cooperation among European countries on specific issues.

- Statements related to cooperation in guaranteeing high levels of employment, strengthening countries' economies, preventing and combating terrorism, and protecting the environment attracted the higher levels of agreement. ([Table 4.1](#))
- Associations between students' views on cooperation among European countries and high civic knowledge scores (at or above Level B on the civic knowledge scale) were observed. ([Table 4.2](#))

Majorities of students expressed positive expectations with respect to Europe's future, although some issues raised concern.

- Students believed that cooperation among European countries would probably increase and that peace and democracy across Europe were likely to strengthen. ([Table 4.3](#))
- Students viewed terrorism and the influence of non-European powers as the most problematic issues. ([Table 4.4](#))

Most students held positive views of the EU

- Majorities of students tended to agree with statements related to the role of the EU in guaranteeing respect for human rights, safety in Europe, protecting the environment, strengthening the economy, and sharing a set of common rules and laws. (see [Table 4.5](#))
- Most of the surveyed students expressed trust in the European Commission and the European Parliament. ([Table 4.6](#))
- Students' expectations of voting in European elections in the future varied across countries. (see [Table 4.7](#))

Nearly all surveyed students had positive perceptions of their own life in the future.

- In most of the participating countries, majorities of students were positive about their respective futures. The extent to which students thought their financial situation would be better than that of their parents varied across countries. ([Table 4.8](#))

This chapter examines constructs related to students' attitudes toward civic society and systems (i.e., students' attitudes toward European cooperation and the European Union, and students' perceptions of Europe in the future). It also examines a construct related to students' attitudes toward civic identities (i.e., students' perceptions of their own individual future) (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, & Agrusti, 2016).

Students' attitudes toward cooperation among European countries

Cooperation among European countries is essential for the ongoing emergence and establishment of a common European space that brings European citizens closely together, enabling them to share ideas and develop solutions to common problems. Results from the Standard Eurobarometer 86 survey (European Commission, 2016a) showed that majorities of Europeans support the development of a common defense and security policy among EU member states and also the development of a common European policy on migration. According to this survey, of the respondents in the ICCS 2016 European countries, almost 90 percent in Sweden and 87 percent in the Netherlands would have agreed that their countries should help refugees. Bulgaria would have recorded the lowest percentage of agreement with this notion.

Another important issue in relation to cooperation among European countries is recognition of educational qualifications achieved in other European countries. Cooperation in this area helps increase young Europeans' voluntary mobility as well as their aspiration to work, study, or undergo training in another EU member country.

In 2014, an opinion survey was conducted among 13,437 young Europeans between 16 and 30 years of age in the 28 EU member states. The survey was part of the 2014 European Youth Event (EYE) organized by the European Parliament (Flash Eurobarometer of the European Parliament, 2014). The survey found that approximately four in 10 young people (43%) aspired to freedom of mobility. Among the ICCS 2016 European countries, this aspiration was shared mostly by Slovenia, Estonia, and Italy, with around 60 percent of respondents stating that they wanted freedom of mobility. Young people from Belgium and the Netherlands recorded the lowest percentages in relation to this matter. Around 30 percent of respondents expressed a wish to work, study, or undergo training in another EU country (European Parliament, 2014).

The Flash Eurobarometer survey of 2014 showed that about 26 percent of young respondents felt they would be compelled to move (i.e., go to another EU country to study or work) due to the financial crisis in various European countries. Of the respondents in the ICCS 2016 European countries, around 40 percent in each of Slovenia, Italy, and Bulgaria would have held this view of mobility, as would 53 percent (the highest percentage) of respondents in Croatia. ICCS 2016 European countries with lower unemployment rates recorded lower percentages of young people feeling compelled to move. This would have been the case for Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, and Sweden, where more than 90 percent of young respondents anticipated that they would not be forced to move (European Parliament, 2014).

Another relevant issue raised at the European level concerns cooperation among European countries in dealing with the recent mass-movement of refugees. From 2014, Europe has experienced the greatest mass movement of people seeking asylum since the Second World War, the majority of them fleeing from war zones such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Many people reach the EU after perilous journeys over land or by sea. They mostly first arrive in Greece or in Italy and then try to reach other EU countries in Northern Europe (e.g., Sweden or Germany), passing through other EU member states such as Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia on the way. In 2015 and in 2016, the number of asylum applications within the EU-28 was approximately 1.3 million (Eurostat, 2017).

This huge flow of migrants has caused tension among EU member states about asylum-seeker relocations, particularly because the number of asylum applications is not equally allocated across

EU countries. In 2015, five member states (Germany, Hungary, Sweden, Austria, and Italy) registered 75 percent of all asylum applications (Sabbati, 2016). Another critical issue pertains to the transit countries. Typically overwhelmed by the ongoing stream of arrivals and the commensurate strain of providing basic humanitarian assistance, these countries have been requesting EU assistance. The restoration of internal border controls among EU countries, thus limiting freedom of movement across the Schengen Area countries, has been one of the most striking effects of the tension that has arisen among member states because of this mass movement of people.¹

The ICCS 2016 European regional questionnaire included a set of eight items investigating students' attitudes toward cooperation among European countries. This question sought to capture students' views on the adoption of common policies in Europe (e.g., environmental policies) or on cooperation in specific areas (e.g., strategies to reduce unemployment and to address economic crises).

More specifically, the question asked students to "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree" with the following statements: (a) "European countries should cooperate to protect the environment (e.g. through programs to limit pollution, programs to combat climate change);" (b) "European countries should cooperate to guarantee high levels of employment;" (c) "European countries should cooperate to strengthen their economies;" (d) "European countries should recognize all educational qualifications achieved in any other European country;" (e) "European countries should have a European army for peacekeeping missions;" (f) "European countries should cooperate to prevent and combat terrorism;" (g) "European countries should cooperate to combat illegal entry from non-European countries;" and (h) "European countries should cooperate to provide shelter to people escaping persecution in their countries for reasons of race, religion, or political opinions."

The subsequent eight-item scale had a satisfactory average reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.79 for the combined international dataset), with the positive scale scores reflecting more positive attitudes toward cooperation between European countries (see the item map in Figure 4.1, Appendix C).

Nearly all of the surveyed students favored cooperation among European countries. Across these countries, the average percentages agreeing with the statements ranged from 84 percent (European countries should have a European army for peacekeeping missions) to 98 percent (European countries should cooperate to protect the environment). There was therefore little variation in the extent of agreement with the statements, as is also evident from the European ICCS average percentages in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 also records the national averages for participating countries on this scale (i.e., students' attitudes toward cooperation among European countries). The highest average score that we recorded was for Croatia with 54 score points.

When we examined the association of students' views on cooperation among European countries with students' gender, students' background (student from an immigrant family versus student from a non-immigrant family), and civic knowledge, we found only a few substantial differences in terms of gender and immigrant status (see Table 4.2). Males were significantly less positive than females in Belgium (Flemish), Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden, while students from non-immigrant families in Denmark, Estonia, Italy, and Latvia held more positive attitudes toward cooperation than their immigrant peers did. Sweden was the only country in which students from an immigrant family scored higher than students from a non-immigrant family on the cooperation scale (two points higher on average).

¹ We need to stress that the European regional questionnaire was developed before the mass movement of refugees. Recent growth in the numbers of refugees in many European countries was not reflected in the development of the ICCS 2016 study, and the European regional student questionnaire addressed this topic in one item only. However, the mass movement of refugees was a relevant issue at the time the European regional questionnaire was administered and may have influenced students' answers.

Table 4.1: Students' attitudes toward cooperation among European countries

Country	Percentages of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:								Average scale score for students' attitudes toward cooperation among European countries
	European countries should cooperate to protect the environment (%)	European countries should cooperate to guarantee high levels of employment (%)	European countries should cooperate to strengthen their economies (%)	European countries should recognize all educational qualifications achieved in any other European country (%)	European countries should have a European army for peace-keeping missions (%)	European countries should cooperate to prevent and combat terrorism (%)	European countries should cooperate to combat illegal entry from non-European countries (%)	European countries should cooperate to provide shelter to refugees (%)	
Belgium (Flemish)	98 (0.3) ▲	96 (0.4) ▲	95 (0.5)	88 (0.8)	89 (0.7) ▲	96 (0.4)	85 (0.7) ▽	89 (0.8)	50 (0.3)
Bulgaria	96 (0.4) ▽	92 (0.7) ▽	91 (0.7) ▽	88 (0.8)	83 (0.8)	90 (0.8) ▽	88 (0.7)	81 (0.9) ▽	49 (0.3) ▽
Croatia	98 (0.3) ▲	99 (0.2) ▲	98 (0.3) ▲	95 (0.5) ▲	93 (0.6) ▲	98 (0.3) ▲	94 (0.5) ▲	95 (0.4) ▲	54 (0.2) ▲
Denmark [†]	99 (0.2) ▲	95 (0.4)	93 (0.4) ▽	88 (0.5)	73 (0.9) ▼	97 (0.3) ▲	85 (0.7) ▽	93 (0.5) ▲	48 (0.2) ▽
Estonia [‡]	98 (0.3)	95 (0.5)	96 (0.4) ▲	93 (0.7) ▲	85 (0.7)	97 (0.4) ▲	91 (0.5) ▲	86 (0.8) ▽	50 (0.3)
Finland	97 (0.3)	97 (0.3) ▲	97 (0.3) ▲	82 (0.7) ▽	82 (0.9) ▽	98 (0.3) ▲	93 (0.5) ▲	91 (0.5) ▲	49 (0.2) ▽
Italy	99 (0.2) ▲	92 (0.5) ▽	96 (0.4) ▲	95 (0.4) ▲	90 (0.5) ▲	97 (0.3) ▲	82 (0.8) ▽	91 (0.6) ▲	51 (0.2) ▲
Latvia [‡]	97 (0.4) ▽	94 (0.6) ▽	94 (0.5)	90 (0.7) ▲	78 (1.0) ▽	93 (0.6) ▽	87 (0.8)	84 (0.8) ▽	48 (0.3) ▽
Lithuania	98 (0.2) ▲	95 (0.5)	96 (0.4) ▲	95 (0.5) ▲	92 (0.5) ▲	96 (0.5)	89 (0.6) ▲	87 (0.8) ▽	52 (0.3) ▲
Malta	97 (0.3)	95 (0.4)	93 (0.5) ▽	92 (0.5) ▲	90 (0.5) ▲	93 (0.5) ▽	84 (0.6) ▽	89 (0.6)	51 (0.2) ▲
Netherlands [†]	95 (0.5) ▽	93 (0.6) ▽	93 (0.6) ▽	81 (0.8) ▽	83 (0.9)	95 (0.6)	85 (0.9) ▽	89 (0.7)	47 (0.2) ▽
Norway (9) [‡]	98 (0.2) ▲	95 (0.3)	92 (0.4) ▽	77 (0.7) ▼	73 (0.8) ▼	96 (0.3) ▲	84 (0.6) ▽	93 (0.3) ▲	49 (0.2) ▽
Slovenia	98 (0.3)	97 (0.4) ▲	95 (0.5)	92 (0.5) ▲	87 (0.7) ▲	95 (0.5)	84 (0.8) ▽	91 (0.6) ▲	51 (0.2) ▲
Sweden [‡]	98 (0.3)	93 (0.5) ▽	94 (0.5)	89 (0.6)	82 (0.9) ▽	97 (0.4) ▲	86 (0.7)	94 (0.6) ▲	50 (0.3)
European ICCS 2016 average	98 (0.0)	95 (0.1)	94 (0.1)	89 (0.1)	84 (0.1)	96 (0.1)	87 (0.1)	89 (0.1)	50 (0.0)
Benchmarking participant not meeting sample participation requirements									
North Rhine-Westphalia Germany) [‡]	96 (0.6)	94 (0.8)	92 (0.9)	91 (1.1)	81 (0.8)	94 (0.8)	84 (0.9)	94 (0.8)	51 (0.4)

National ICCS 2016 percentage or average:

▲ More than 10 percentage points or 3 score points above the European ICCS 2016 average

△ Significantly above European ICCS 2016 average

▽ Significantly below European ICCS 2016 average

▼ More than 10 percentage points or 3 score points below the European ICCS 2016 average

Notes:

0 Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.

(9) Country deviated from International Defined Population and surveyed adjacent upper grade.

† Met guidelines for sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.

‡ National Defined Population covers 90% to 95% of National Target Population.

Table 4.2: National average scale scores indicating students' views on cooperation among European countries by gender, immigrant background, and level of civic knowledge

Country	Scale score average by gender group										Scale score average by immigrant background										Scale score average by level of civic knowledge									
	Male students					Female students					Non-immigrant family					Immigrant family					Civic knowledge below Level B (below 479)					Civic knowledge at or above Level B (479 and above)				
	9	6	3	0	3	6	9	9	6	3	0	3	6	9	9	6	3	0	3	6	9	9	6	3	0	3	6	9		
Belgium (Flemish)	51 (0.3)																													
Bulgaria	49 (0.4)																													
Croatia	54 (0.3)																													
Denmark [†]	49 (0.3)																													
Estonia [†]	50 (0.4)																													
Finland	49 (0.3)																													
Italy	51 (0.3)																													
Latvia [†]	48 (0.4)																													
Lithuania	52 (0.4)																													
Malta	51 (0.3)																													
Netherlands [†]	48 (0.3)																													
Norway (9) [†]	49 (0.2)																													
Slovenia	51 (0.3)																													
Sweden [†]	51 (0.3)																													
European ICCS 2016 average	50 (0.1)																													

■ Difference between comparison groups statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

□ Difference between comparison groups not statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Notes:

0 Standard errors appear in parentheses.

Score averages that are significantly larger ($p < 0.05$) than those in the comparison group are displayed in **bold**.

(9) Country deviated from International Defined Population and surveyed adjacent upper grade.

† Met guidelines for sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.

‡ National Defined Population covers 90% to 95% of National Target Population.

^ Number of students too small to report group average scores.

In all countries, the students with a higher level of civic knowledge were the students who expressed the more positive views on adoption of common policies and on cooperation among European countries. On average, the statistically significant difference between students with higher and lower levels of civic knowledge was four scale points.

Students' perceptions of Europe's future

The ICCS 2016 European regional questionnaire included a question that sought to capture how students imagine Europe's future might be with respect to potential problems and developments in Europe. The question asked students if they thought the following positive scenarios (items a, b, f, h) and negative scenarios (items c, d, e, g) were likely to happen in Europe in the future (response categories of "very likely," "likely," "unlikely," "very unlikely"): (a) "There will be stronger cooperation among European countries;" (b) "There will be greater peace across Europe;" (c) "Terrorism will be more of a threat all across Europe;" (d) "Europe will be more influenced by non-European powers like China, India, and the United States;" (e) "The economy will be weaker in all European countries;" (f) "There will be less air and water pollution in Europe;" (g) "There will be a rise in poverty and unemployment in Europe;" and (h) "Democracy will be strengthened across Europe."

The resultant scales had average reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha = 0.64 for students' positive expectations for Europe's future, and 0.62 for students' negative expectations for Europe's future) for the pooled ICCS sample with equally weighted countries (see the item maps in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, Appendix C).

The percentages of students expressing positive expectations ranged from 86 percent (cooperation will strengthen among European countries) to 47 percent (air and water pollution will lessen in Europe); see [Table 4.3](#).² Denmark, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Norway recorded percentages significantly above the European ICCS 2016 average in relation to students' expectation that cooperation among European countries would be stronger in the future.

On average across the ICCS 2016 European countries, 64 percent of students thought that the future would see greater peace across Europe. The highest national percentages of agreement were evident in Italy; Denmark, Finland, Malta, the Netherlands, and Sweden recorded percentages significantly above the European ICCS 2016 average. In Slovenia, students' positive perceptions toward greater peace across Europe were more than 10 points below the European ICCS 2016 average. Countries with percentages significantly below the ICCS average included Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Norway.

Across the European ICCS 2016 countries, only half of the students believed Europe would be less polluted in the future (average agreement: 47%). The highest national percentage of students holding this belief (more than 10 points above the European ICCS 2016 average) that we recorded was for Denmark; the lowest such percentage (10 points below the European ICCS 2016 average) was for Croatia. Bulgaria, Finland, Malta, the Netherlands, and Norway showed percentages significantly above the European ICCS 2016 average.

Seventy-eight percent of students on average felt that democracy would be strengthened across Europe. The students in Denmark were the most positive in this regard; the students in Bulgaria the least. [Table 4.3](#) also shows the national average scale scores indicating students' positive expectations with regard to Europe's future. We observed scale scores significantly above the European ICCS 2016 average in Denmark, Finland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

² Findings from the Standard Eurobarometer 86 survey (European Commission, 2016b) showed that half of the respondents were optimistic about the future of the EU. Among the students participating in the European ICCS 2016 survey, those in Lithuania and Malta were the most optimistic about Europe's future, while those in Italy and Sweden were the least optimistic.

Table 4.3: Students' positive expectations regarding the future of Europe

Country	Percentages of students who expected that the following positive scenarios may likely or very likely happen in Europe:				Average scale scores for students reporting on positive expectations of the future of Europe
	There will be stronger cooperation among European countries (%)	There will be greater peace across Europe (%)	There will be less air and water pollution in Europe (%)	Democracy will be strengthened across Europe (%)	
Belgium (Flemish)	86 (0.7)	64 (1.2)	43 (1.1) ▽	79 (0.9)	49 (0.2) ▽
Bulgaria	80 (1.1) ▽	59 (1.3) ▽	50 (1.1) △	64 (1.1) ▼	49 (0.3) ▽
Croatia	80 (1.0) ▽	61 (1.1) ▽	34 (1.0) ▼	71 (1.0) ▽	49 (0.2) ▽
Denmark [†]	92 (0.5) △	71 (1.1) △	57 (0.8) ▲	88 (0.6) ▲	51 (0.2) △
Estonia [†]	87 (0.8)	62 (1.2)	42 (1.3) ▽	76 (0.8)	49 (0.3) ▽
Finland	91 (0.6) △	67 (1.2) △	52 (1.1) △	84 (0.6) △	51 (0.2) △
Italy	88 (0.5) △	76 (0.8) ▲	47 (1.0)	79 (0.8)	50 (0.2) △
Latvia [†]	85 (0.7) ▽	57 (1.3) ▽	47 (1.1)	73 (1.0) ▽	49 (0.3) ▽
Lithuania	90 (0.6) △	59 (1.1) ▽	41 (1.0) ▽	78 (0.8)	50 (0.3)
Malta	87 (0.5)	69 (0.8) △	52 (0.9) △	81 (0.6) △	53 (0.2) △
Netherlands [†]	89 (0.6) △	73 (1.2) △	52 (1.2) △	79 (0.8)	51 (0.3) △
Norway (9) [†]	90 (0.5) △	62 (0.7) ▽	50 (0.8) △	82 (0.7) △	50 (0.1)
Slovenia	79 (0.9) ▽	49 (1.2) ▼	40 (1.0) ▽	74 (1.1) ▽	48 (0.3) ▽
Sweden [†]	86 (0.8)	67 (1.0) △	48 (1.0)	82 (0.9) △	51 (0.2) △
European ICCS 2016 average	86 (0.2)	64 (0.3)	47 (0.3)	78 (0.2)	50 (0.1)
Benchmarking participant not meeting sample participation requirements					
North-Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) ¹	74 (1.5)	52 (1.7)	43 (1.5)	75 (1.3)	48 (0.4)

National ICCS 2016 percentage or average:

- ▲ More than 10 percentage points or 3 score points above European ICCS 2016 average
- △ Significantly above European ICCS 2016 average
- ▽ Significantly below European ICCS 2016 average
- ▼ More than 10 percentage points or 3 score points below European ICCS 2016 average

Notes:

- () Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.
- (9) Country deviated from International Defined Population and surveyed adjacent upper grade.
- † Met guidelines for sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.
- ¹ National Defined Population covers 90% to 95% of National Target Population.

The percentages of students holding this negative expectation varied markedly across the countries, with the range extending from 68 percent (Terrorism will be more of a threat all across Europe) to 43 percent (The economy will weaken in all European countries). The students who were most likely to anticipate an increase in terrorism were those in Belgium (Flemish), Italy, Malta, and Slovenia (Table 4.4).

About 67 percent of students anticipated that non-European powers would have an increased influence on Europe. We recorded percentages that were more than 10 points above the European ICCS 2016 average in Denmark and more than 10 points below in Bulgaria and Croatia.

On average, 43 percent of surveyed students believed that the economy would weaken in all European countries; 52 percent envisaged a rise in poverty and unemployment in Europe (Italy and Slovenia recorded percentages more than 10 points above the European ICCS average for this statement). Of the participating countries, Denmark recorded the lowest percentages of agreement

Table 4.4: Students' negative expectations regarding the future of Europe

Country	Percentages of students who expected that the following negative scenarios may likely or very likely happen in Europe:				Average scale scores for student disagreement with negative expectations of the future of Europe
	Terrorism will be more of a threat all across Europe (%)	Europe will be more influenced by non-European powers like China, India, and the United States (%)	The economy will be weaker in all European countries (%)	There will be a rise in poverty and unemployment in Europe (%)	
Belgium (Flemish)	73 (1.0) △	67 (1.3)	43 (1.3)	55 (1.2) △	49 (0.2) ▽
Bulgaria	62 (1.2) ▽	57 (1.1) ▼	46 (1.1) △	59 (1.2) △	51 (0.3) △
Croatia	69 (1.1)	50 (1.2) ▼	39 (1.0) ▽	53 (1.1)	51 (0.3) △
Denmark [†]	68 (0.8)	79 (0.9) ▲	30 (0.8) ▼	36 (0.9) ▼	52 (0.1) △
Estonia ¹	67 (1.1)	69 (1.1)	42 (0.9)	49 (0.9) ▽	50 (0.2)
Finland	67 (1.1)	69 (0.9) △	45 (0.9) △	47 (0.9) ▽	50 (0.2) △
Italy	77 (0.8) △	77 (0.8) △	52 (1.1) △	64 (0.9) ▲	47 (0.2) ▽
Latvia ¹	63 (0.9) ▽	66 (1.2)	44 (1.1)	52 (1.0)	51 (0.2) △
Lithuania	61 (1.0) ▽	69 (1.1)	38 (1.3) ▽	44 (1.0) ▽	52 (0.2) △
Malta	77 (0.7) △	65 (0.8) ▽	50 (0.9) △	59 (0.8) △	48 (0.2) ▽
Netherlands [†]	68 (1.2)	64 (1.2) ▽	37 (1.5) ▽	43 (1.2) ▽	51 (0.3) △
Norway (9) ¹	63 (0.7) ▽	69 (0.7) △	49 (0.6) △	57 (0.7) △	50 (0.1)
Slovenia	75 (1.1) △	73 (0.9) △	50 (1.1) △	67 (1.0) ▲	47 (0.2) ▽
Sweden ¹	60 (1.1) ▽	71 (0.9) △	37 (1.0) ▽	49 (1.2) ▽	51 (0.2) △
European ICCS 2016 average	68 (0.3)	67 (0.3)	43 (0.3)	52 (0.3)	50 (0.1)
Benchmarking participant not meeting sample participation requirements					
North-Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) ¹	75 (1.1)	54 (1.6)	43 (2.0)	52 (1.6)	50 (0.3)

National ICCS 2016 percentage or average:

- ▲ More than 10 percentage points or 3 score points above European ICCS 2016 average
 △ Significantly above European ICCS 2016 average
 ▽ Significantly below European ICCS 2016 average
 ▼ More than 10 percentage points or 3 score points below European ICCS 2016 average

Notes:

- () Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.
 (9) Country deviated from International Defined Population and surveyed adjacent upper grade.
 † Met guidelines for sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.
¹ National Defined Population covers 90% to 95% of National Target Population.

with these statements (more than 10 percentage points below the European ICCS 2016 average).

Table 4.4 also shows the national average scale scores for students' disagreement with statements indicating negative expectations of Europe's future. The average scale scores for students in Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Sweden were all significantly above the European ICCS 2016 average.

The ICCS 2016 international student questionnaire asked students how concerned they felt about potential threats to the world's future (e.g., pollution, global financial crisis, violent conflict, climate change, unemployment, terrorism). Some of these aspects align with the topics included in the items in the European ICCS 2016 student questionnaire that sought to record students' positive and negative expectations with respect to Europe in the future. The students from the European countries considered pollution and terrorism to be main threats to the world's future, but deemed crime, violent conflict, financial crises, and unemployment as less serious.³

³ For further details, see Chapter 5 of the ICCS 2016 international report (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, Agrusti, & Friedman, 2018).

Students' perceptions of the European Union

According to the Standard Eurobarometer 86 survey (European Commission, 2016a), peace, human rights, and democracy are the values that best represent the European Union. The ICCS 2009 European regional survey found that the level of support for enlarging the EU varied across participating countries. In addition, on average across the ICCS 2009 countries, majorities of students wanted to see greater harmonization of policies in Europe (Kerr, Sturman, Schulz, & Burge, 2010).

The ICCS 2016 European regional questionnaire asked students about their perceptions of the European Union. The question included a set of five items that together covered a large variety of topics, from politics to the economy, from the environment to human rights. The question asked students to what extent they agreed ("strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," "strongly disagree") with each of these five statements about the EU: (a) "<EU> guarantees respect for human rights all over Europe;" (b) "<EU> makes Europe a safe place to live;" (c) "<EU> takes care of the environment;" (d) "<EU> is good for the economy of individual countries;" and (e) "<EU> is good because countries share a common set of rules and laws."

The scale that we derived from these items had average reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.80) for the combined international dataset. The higher scores on the scale indicate more positive perceptions of the EU (see the item map in Figure 4.4, Appendix C).

As illustrated in Table 4.5, most of the surveyed students were positive about the European Union: on average, 88 percent of them agreed that the EU safeguards human rights and that the EU is good because it allows countries to share a common set of rules and laws. The only country to record a percentage more than 10 points below the European ICCS 2016 average for this item was Latvia. A large majority of students (European ICCS 2016 average: 85%) agreed that the EU makes Europe a safe place to live. The average percentage of agreement for this item in Slovenia, however, was more than 10 points below the European ICCS 2016 average. Most students (82%) also agreed that the EU is good for the economy (although, again, the percentage in Latvia was more than 10 points below the European ICCS 2016 average). Seventy-seven percent of students agreed that the EU takes care of the environment. However, the percentage agreeing with this statement was more than 10 points below the European ICCS 2016 average in Belgium (Flemish).

Table 4.5 also shows national average scale scores indicating students' attitudes toward the EU. The highest national averages that we recorded were those for Croatia, Lithuania, and Malta (percentages significantly above the European ICCS 2016 average). The lowest national averages that we observed were those in Belgium (Flemish), Denmark, Latvia, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden.

The ICCS 2016 student questionnaire included a set of questions related to students' trust in civic institutions, groups, and sources of information and to students' intentions to participate in elections once they reached adulthood ("expected electoral participation"). Both questions encompassed specific options for students from European countries, namely students' trust in the European Commission and in the European Parliament, and students' expected participation in European elections.

Most of the surveyed students expressed quite a lot or complete trust in the European Commission and in the European Parliament (Table 4.6). The majority of students trusted the European Commission (European ICCS 2016 average: 70%) and the European Parliament (European ICCS 2016 average: 72%), with Finland, Italy, Lithuania, and Sweden showing percentages significantly above the European ICCS 2016 average for both items. Countries with percentages significantly below the European ICCS 2016 average for both items included Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, and Slovenia.

Table 4.5: Students' attitudes toward the European Union

Country	Percentages of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:						Average scale scores for students' attitudes toward the European Union
	EU guarantees respect for human rights all over Europe (%)	EU makes Europe a safe place to live (%)	EU takes care of the environment (%)	EU is good for the economy of individual countries (%)	EU is good because countries share a common set of rules and laws (%)		
Belgium (Flemish)	91 (0.6) Δ	88 (0.7) Δ	67 (1.0) ▼	83 (0.8)	92 (0.5) Δ		49 (0.2) ▽
Bulgaria	87 (0.7) ▽	78 (1.1) ▽	76 (1.0)	82 (0.9)	83 (1.0) ▽		50 (0.3)
Croatia	92 (0.6) Δ	84 (0.7)	80 (1.0) Δ	88 (0.8) Δ	90 (0.6) Δ		52 (0.3) Δ
Denmark [†]	81 (0.8) ▽	86 (0.6) Δ	72 (1.0) ▽	81 (0.7)	84 (0.6) ▽		47 (0.2) ▽
Estonia [‡]	87 (0.7)	85 (0.9)	79 (1.0) Δ	86 (0.7) Δ	88 (0.7)		50 (0.2)
Finland	89 (0.6)	89 (0.7) Δ	81 (0.9) Δ	80 (0.9)	93 (0.4) Δ		50 (0.3)
Italy	90 (0.7) Δ	82 (0.9) ▽	77 (1.0)	73 (0.9) ▽	88 (0.7)		50 (0.2)
Latvia [‡]	83 (0.9) ▽	82 (1.1) ▽	79 (1.0)	70 (1.0) ▼	77 (1.0) ▼		47 (0.2) ▽
Lithuania	92 (0.7) Δ	88 (0.8) Δ	87 (0.8) Δ	86 (0.8) Δ	90 (0.7) Δ		52 (0.3) Δ
Malta	93 (0.4) Δ	88 (0.5) Δ	86 (0.6) Δ	86 (0.5) Δ	88 (0.6)		54 (0.2) ▲
Netherlands [†]	89 (0.9)	91 (0.8) Δ	76 (1.2)	82 (0.8)	91 (0.7) Δ		50 (0.3)
Norway (9) [‡]	90 (0.4) Δ	88 (0.4) Δ	73 (0.7) ▽	81 (0.6)	89 (0.5)		50 (0.2) ▽
Slovenia	84 (0.7) ▽	71 (1.1) ▼	78 (1.1)	85 (0.9) Δ	89 (0.7)		49 (0.3) ▽
Sweden [‡]	86 (0.8) ▽	87 (0.6) Δ	69 (1.1) ▽	79 (0.9) ▽	90 (0.7) Δ		49 (0.2) ▽
European ICCS 2016 average	88 (0.2)	85 (0.2)	77 (0.3)	82 (0.2)	88 (0.2)		50 (0.1)
Benchmarking participant not meeting sample participation requirements							
North-Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) [‡]	86 (1.4)	81 (1.5)	64 (2.0)	76 (1.5)	84 (1.2)		48 (0.5)

National ICCS 2016 percentage or average:

▲ More than 10 percentage points or 3 score points above European ICCS 2016 average

Δ Significantly above European ICCS 2016 average

▽ Significantly below European ICCS 2016 average

▼ More than 10 percentage points or 3 score points below European ICCS 2016 average

Notes:

() Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.

(9) Country deviated from International Defined Population and surveyed adjacent upper grade.

† Met guidelines for sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.

‡ National Defined Population covers 90% to 95% of National Target Population.

Table 4.6: Students' trust in European institutions

Country	Percentages of students trusting completely or quite a lot in:					
	European Commission			European Parliament		
	2016	2009	Difference	2016	2009	Difference
Belgium (Flemish)	71 (1.1)	52 (1.2)	19 (1.6)	73 (1.3)	54 (1.2)	19 (1.8)
Bulgaria	66 (1.1) ▽	60 (1.1)	6 (1.6)	69 (1.2) ▽	63 (1.1)	6 (1.6)
Croatia	65 (1.4) ▽	–	–	68 (1.4) ▽	–	–
Denmark [†]	71 (0.9)	60 (1.1)	12 (1.4)	75 (0.9) △	63 (1.0)	12 (1.4)
Estonia [†]	64 (1.3) ▽	54 (1.5)	11 (2.0)	68 (1.3) ▽	58 (1.5)	10 (1.9)
Finland	79 (0.8) △	70 (1.0)	9 (1.3)	80 (0.7) △	72 (0.8)	8 (1.1)
Italy	75 (1.0) △	75 (1.0)	0 (1.4)	75 (1.0) △	79 (0.9)	-4 (1.3)
Latvia [†]	66 (1.3) ▽	49 (1.6)	16 (2.0)	68 (1.3) ▽	51 (1.4)	16 (1.9)
Lithuania	80 (0.9) △	66 (1.2)	14 (1.5)	82 (1.0) △	70 (1.2)	12 (1.5)
Malta	70 (0.8)	61 (1.8)	8 (2.0)	72 (0.7)	62 (1.7)	10 (1.9)
Netherlands [†]	70 (1.5)	–	–	71 (1.4)	–	–
Slovenia	63 (1.1) ▽	59 (1.3)	4 (1.7)	64 (1.2) ▽	58 (1.4)	5 (1.8)
Sweden [†]	73 (0.9) △	66 (1.3)	7 (1.6)	75 (0.9) △	69 (1.2)	6 (1.5)
European ICCS 2016 average	70 (0.3)			72 (0.3)		
Common countries average	71 (0.3)	61 (0.4)	10 (0.5)	73 (0.3)	63 (0.4)	9 (0.5)
Benchmarking participant not meeting sample participation requirements						
North-Rhine-Westphalia [†] (Germany)	72 (1.7)			73 (1.6)		

National ICCS 2016 percentage:

- ▲ More than 10 percentage points above European ICCS 2016 average
- △ Significantly above European ICCS 2016 average
- ▽ Significantly below European ICCS 2016 average
- ▼ More than 10 percentage points below European ICCS 2016 average

Notes:

- () Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.
- (9) Country deviated from International Defined Population and surveyed adjacent upper grade.
- † Met guidelines for sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.
- ¹ National Defined Population covers 90% to 95% of National Target Population.
- No comparable data available.

In comparison with their ICCS 2009 counterparts, the ICCS 2016 students expressed greater trust, on average, in the European Commission and in the European Parliament. The differences over that time period were 10 and nine points respectively. Italy was the only country to show no difference between cycles in relation to trust in the European Commission. However, Italy also recorded a four-point decrease over time for trust in the European Parliament.

The national percentages of students who reported that they would certainly or probably vote in local, national, and European elections in the future were, on average, lower for European elections (European ICCS 2016 average: 65%) than for local and national ones (European ICCS 2016 average: 85%) (see [Table 4.7](#)). Countries where the percentages of students expecting to vote in European elections were more than 10 percentage points above the European ICCS 2016 average included Croatia, Denmark, Italy, and Sweden. The lowest such percentages were evident in Estonia and in Slovenia.

Students' expectations of participating in elections increased between ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016. The highest increase that we recorded was for expected participation in European elections.

Students' perceptions of their life in the future

In 2015 the youth unemployment rate reached 19.7 percent in Europe, reflecting young people's difficulties in finding a job (Eurostat, 2017). The Standard Eurobarometer 86 survey (European Commission, 2016a) included a question asking respondents if their quality of life "was better before." Majorities of respondents in 21 member states agreed with this statement. Among the European countries participating in ICCS 2016, Italy and Croatia recorded the highest percentages of agreement. Sweden, Finland, and the Netherlands, however, recorded the highest percentages of disagreement.

In the opinion survey conducted for the 2014 European Youth Event (EYE 2014), more than half of the respondents thought that the financial crisis had marginalized and excluded young people from economic and social life in their countries. Among the ICCS 2016 European countries, the highest percentage of young people holding this view was recorded in Croatia; the lowest percentage was reported in Denmark (European Parliament, 2014).

The ICCS 2016 European regional questionnaire contained a question asking students about their expectations in relation to different aspects of their future, namely their job, salary, and cultural opportunities. Students were asked how well the following statements reflected their expectations of their life in the future (response categories of "very likely," "likely," "unlikely," "very unlikely"): (a) "I will find a steady job;" (b) "My financial situation will be better than that of my parents;" (c) "I will find a job I like;" (d) "I will have the opportunity to travel abroad for leisure;" and (e) "I will earn enough money to start a family." The resultant scale had a good average reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$ for the pooled international sample), with the positive scale scores reflecting more optimistic expectations (see the item map in [Figure 4.5](#), Appendix C).

The lower-secondary students surveyed during ICCS 2016 expressed mainly positive attitudes about their respective futures ([Table 4.8](#)). We observed little variation in the extent of optimism across the countries for each of the items. Majorities of students felt that they would very likely or likely find a steady job (European ICCS 2016 average: 95%), find a job they liked (European ICCS 2016 average: 91%), and earn enough money to start a family (European ICCS 2016 average: 96%). On average, 89 percent of students believed that they would have the opportunity to travel abroad for leisure. Only one country recorded low percentages—Croatia.

We did, however, record slightly lower percentages and more variation across countries with respect to students thinking their financial situation would probably be securer than that of their parents. On average, about 78 percent of the respondents held this view. However, the corresponding national percentages in Belgium (Flemish) and Sweden were more than 10 points below the European ICCS 2016 average.

Table 4.7: Students' expected electoral participation

Country	Percentages of students expecting to certainly or probably									
	Vote in local elections			Vote in national elections			Vote in European elections			Difference
	2016	2009	Difference	2016	2009	Difference	2016	2009	Difference	
Belgium (Flemish)	81 (1.1) ▽	75 (1.1)	6 (1.5)	80 (1.1) ▽	72 (1.3)	7 (1.7)	62 (1.3) ▽	52 (1.1)	10 (1.7)	
Bulgaria	84 (0.8)	78 (1.0)	6 (1.3)	79 (1.0) ▽	69 (1.0)	10 (1.4)	65 (1.2)	55 (1.3)	9 (1.8)	
Croatia	92 (0.6) △	-	-	88 (0.8) △	-	-	76 (1.1) ▲	-	-	
Denmark [†]	89 (0.6) △	80 (0.7)	9 (1.0)	94 (0.5) △	89 (0.6)	5 (0.8)	77 (0.9) ▲	54 (1.0)	23 (1.4)	
Estonia [†]	81 (1.1) ▽	78 (1.2)	3 (1.7)	77 (1.1) ▽	73 (1.3)	5 (1.7)	35 (1.1) ▼	30 (1.0)	5 (1.5)	
Finland	86 (0.7)	85 (0.7)	0 (1.0)	87 (0.8) △	85 (0.7)	2 (1.1)	64 (0.9)	53 (1.0)	11 (1.3)	
Italy	92 (0.5) △	91 (0.6)	1 (0.8)	90 (0.6) △	88 (0.6)	2 (0.8)	82 (0.7) ▲	78 (0.9)	4 (1.1)	
Latvia [†]	80 (0.8) ▽	81 (1.1)	-1 (1.4)	78 (0.9) ▽	77 (1.2)	0 (1.5)	63 (1.2)	62 (1.1)	1 (1.6)	
Lithuania	88 (0.6) △	88 (0.8)	1 (1.0)	88 (0.6) △	88 (0.8)	0 (1.0)	70 (0.9) △	58 (1.1)	12 (1.4)	
Malta	81 (0.6) ▽	81 (1.3)	1 (1.4)	85 (0.6)	86 (1.2)	-1 (1.4)	69 (0.7) △	60 (1.3)	9 (1.5)	
Netherlands [†]	77 (1.2) ▽	-	-	75 (1.2) ▽	-	-	60 (1.3) ▽	-	-	
Norway (9) [†]	91 (0.4)	87 (0.8)	5 (0.9)	91 (0.5) △	86 (1.0)	5 (1.1)	-	-	-	
Slovenia	82 (1.0) ▽	79 (0.8)	3 (1.3)	82 (0.8) ▽	81 (0.8)	2 (1.1)	47 (1.2) ▼	43 (1.0)	4 (1.6)	
Sweden [†]	89 (0.7) △	81 (1.1)	8 (1.3)	93 (0.5) △	85 (0.9)	8 (1.0)	77 (1.1) ▲	63 (1.3)	14 (1.7)	
European ICCS 2016 average	85 (0.2)			85 (0.2)			65 (0.3)			
Common countries average	85 (0.2)	82 (0.3)	3 (0.4)	85 (0.2)	82 (0.3)	4 (0.4)	65 (0.3)	55 (0.3)	9 (0.5)	
Benchmarking participant not meeting sample participation requirements										
North Rhine-Westphalia	61 (2.0)			72 (1.4)			61 (1.7)			
Germany) [†]										

National ICCS 2016 percentage:

- ▲ More than 10 percentage points above European ICCS 2016 average
- △ Significantly above European ICCS 2016 average
- ▽ Significantly below European ICCS 2016 average
- ▼ More than 10 percentage points below European ICCS 2016 average

Notes:

0 Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.

Statistically significant changes ($p < 0.05$) between 2009 and 2016 are displayed in **bold**.

(9) Country deviated from International Defined Population and surveyed adjacent upper grade.

† Met guidelines for sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.

¹ National Defined Population covers 90% to 95% of National Target Population.

- No comparable data available.

Table 4.8: Students' expectations for their individual future

Country	Percentages of students who expected that the following may likely or very likely happen:				
	I will find a steady job (%)	My financial situation will be better than that of my parents (%)	I will find a job I like (%)	I will have the opportunity to travel abroad for leisure (%)	I will earn enough money to start a family (%)
Belgium (Flemish)	98 (0.3) △	68 (1.1) ▼	94 (0.5) △	96 (0.5) △	98 (0.3) △
Bulgaria	92 (0.6) ▽	84 (0.8) △	86 (0.9) ▽	81 (1.0) ▽	90 (0.9) ▽
Croatia	90 (0.7) ▽	76 (1.0) ▽	84 (0.9) ▽	74 (1.1) ▼	94 (0.4) ▽
Denmark [†]	98 (0.2) △	84 (0.6) △	98 (0.2) △	97 (0.3) △	98 (0.2) △
Estonia ¹	95 (0.5)	84 (0.8) △	93 (0.5) △	89 (0.8)	95 (0.4)
Finland	97 (0.3) △	76 (0.9) ▽	94 (0.4) △	93 (0.5) △	96 (0.4)
Italy	92 (0.5) ▽	81 (0.8) △	89 (0.5) ▽	79 (0.8) ▽	95 (0.6)
Latvia ¹	96 (0.5)	87 (0.8) △	90 (0.6)	89 (0.6)	95 (0.4)
Lithuania	97 (0.4) △	86 (0.7) △	91 (0.6)	90 (0.7)	97 (0.4) △
Malta	93 (0.4) ▽	85 (0.6) △	89 (0.5) ▽	88 (0.7)	92 (0.5) ▽
Netherlands [†]	97 (0.3) △	71 (1.2) ▽	96 (0.5) △	96 (0.5) △	98 (0.4) △
Norway (9) ¹	98 (0.2) △	75 (0.7) ▽	97 (0.3) △	96 (0.3) △	97 (0.3) △
Slovenia	92 (0.6) ▽	71 (1.1) ▽	88 (0.7) ▽	80 (0.9) ▽	95 (0.5)
Sweden ¹	96 (0.4)	68 (1.2) ▼	89 (1.0) ▽	92 (0.5) △	96 (0.4)
European ICCS 2016 average	95 (0.1)	78 (0.2)	91 (0.2)	89 (0.2)	96 (0.1)
Benchmarking participant not meeting sample participation requirements					
North-Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) ¹	97 (0.6)	74 (1.7)	94 (1.0)	87 (0.9)	96 (0.7)

National ICCS 2016 percentage:

- ▲ More than 10 percentage points above European ICCS 2016 average
- △ Significantly above European ICCS 2016 average
- ▽ Significantly below European ICCS 2016 average
- ▼ More than 10 percentage points below European ICCS 2016 average

Notes:

() Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.

(9) Country deviated from International Defined Population and surveyed adjacent upper grade.

† Met guidelines for sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.

¹ National Defined Population covers 90% to 95% of National Target Population.

References

- European Commission. (2016a). *Standard Eurobarometer 86 "European citizenship" report*. Brussels, Belgium: Author. Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2137>
- European Commission. (2016b). *Standard Eurobarometer 86 "Public opinion in the European Union, first results."* Brussels, Belgium: Author. Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2137>
- European Parliament. (2014). *Flash Eurobarometer of the European Parliament (EP EB395): European youth in 2014*. Brussels, Belgium: Author. Retrieved from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2014/youth/eb_395_synthesis_youth_en.pdf
- Eurostat. (2017). Migration and migrant population statistics. *Eurostat statistics explained* [Website]. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/migration_and_migrant_population_statistics
- Kerr, D., Sturman, L., Schulz, W., & Burge, B. (2010). *ICCS 2009 European report: Civic knowledge, attitudes and engagement among lower secondary school students in twenty-four European countries*. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).
- Sabbati, G. (2016). *Recent migration flows to the EU* (European Parliamentary Research Service PE 580.893). Retrieved from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2017/595918/EPRS_ATA%282017%29595918_EN.pdf
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., & Agrusti, G. (2016). *IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016: Assessment framework*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., Agrusti, G., & Friedman, T. (2018). *Becoming citizens in a changing world: IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016 international report*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

