

YOUNG EUROPEANS AND THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC



IMPRESSUM

AUTHORS

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LINGUISTIC VERSIONS

Original: EN

Manuscript completed in October 2021

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This study was commissioned by the Youth Outreach Unit and by the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit within the Directorate General for Communication (DG COMM) of the European Parliament.

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Catalogue number	QA-09-21-432-EN-N
ISBN	978-92-846-8620-9
DOI	10.2861/89952
PE	PE 698.945

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Desk Research European Youth in 2021

This desk research presents an analysis of the pandemic's effects on young European people and of their judgment about the national governments' and EU's action during the health crisis. The first part of the research focuses on the pandemic's impact on young people's feelings, on their habits, and on their financial resources. The second part is aimed at understanding youth' opinion on the role of the EU during the pandemic.

Introduction

The current report employs data collected through different opinion surveys conducted **between October 2020 and June 2021**. By looking at these data, this desk research investigates young Europeans' opinions about the Coronavirus pandemic. This includes the pandemic experience, its economic and social impact, the political responses to the crisis and, finally, the vaccination campaign. The scope of the research is that of building a comparative assessment of the pandemic's consequences and of young people's view of the EU taking into consideration:

- Differences between the distinct **age groups**, and between young (16-30) and older citizens (31+);
- Geographical and cultural variations between the **27 EU Member States**;
- Elements of divergence depending on **socio-demographic variables**, such as gender, but also age (comparing for example the 16-20 to the 26-30 age groups) and educational levels.

The analysis proposed below offers food for thought for a wider consideration of what being a young European during the Coronavirus pandemic means in the distinct phases of the pandemic, what are young people's state of mind and expectations from the EU and their national governments, and whether the EU's action against the pandemic has met their expectations or not.

Methodology used for this Desk research

This research employs data issued from the following surveys. Two are Eurobarometer surveys, conducted face to face in the respondents' homes. However, since the start of the pandemic, face-to-face interviews are complemented with online interviews where face to face was not possible.

Survey name	Period	Type
<u>Kantar International Survey</u>	May-June 2021	Online
<u>Special Eurobarometer for the European Parliament</u>	March-April 2021	Face to face, online
<u>Standard Eurobarometer 94</u>	February-March 2021	Face to face, online
<u>Public Opinion in the EU in Time of Coronavirus Crisis</u>	September-October 2020	Online

This analysis is done for the European Parliament (Youth Outreach Unit and Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, POMU) in view of the European Youth Event (EYE) 2021. This desk research has been conducted by the Centre Kantar sur le Futur de l'Europe.¹

All the results are presented in the accompanying Power Point Presentation published here: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/eurobarometer>

¹ Established within Kantar Public, a global consulting and research business, the 'Centre Kantar sur le Futur de L'Europe' brings together a pan-European team of researchers with expertise in political and opinion polling, social and economic trends, and migration. The Centre aims to contribute to the quality of public debate through Kantar's analysis and knowledge of public opinion and political change in Europe and its member countries.

EU citizens and the pandemic

The economic impact of the pandemic has been felt the most by the weakest segments of society. Young Europeans' income has been particularly affected by the pandemic. 35% declare that the pandemic impacted on their personal income and a further 26% of them expect that it will eventually impact on their income. **Youth have borne the economic consequences of the pandemic to a greater extent than older individuals.** They are more likely (+4 pp) to say that the pandemic impacted on their income and less likely to think that it will have no impact (-5 pp).²

In the Eastern and Southern European countries youth are more likely to declare that the coronavirus pandemic has had or will have an impact on their income. In Greece, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Portugal, over three-quarters of them expressed this opinion. Only in the Northern European countries, and in Estonia, Belgium, and the Netherlands, less than half of the young people interviewed thinks coronavirus will have no impact on their personal income.

Young active, aged over 20 years-old are more likely to declare that the pandemic has impacted on their personal income. Those aged 26 to 30 are 16-points more likely to say that the pandemic impacted on their income, compared to those aged 16-20. This is probably because young people until the age of 20 are often relying on their families from a financial point of view. **Similarly, students are also less likely to have been impacted by the pandemic, probably because they are more economically dependent on somebody else.**

Those with lower levels of education have been most affected by the pandemic. Young people with a low educational level (those who left their studies at the age of 15 or earlier) are significantly more likely to claim that their income has been impacted by the pandemic (61%) compared to youth with a high educational level (36% among those who continued their studies until the age of 20 or after). Overall, a majority (60%) of young people with a high educational level have been economically affected or expect to be affected by the pandemic. These are 76% among those with a low educational level and 73% among those with an intermediate educational level.

Thinking about your personal income, which one of these statements comes closest to your current situation?

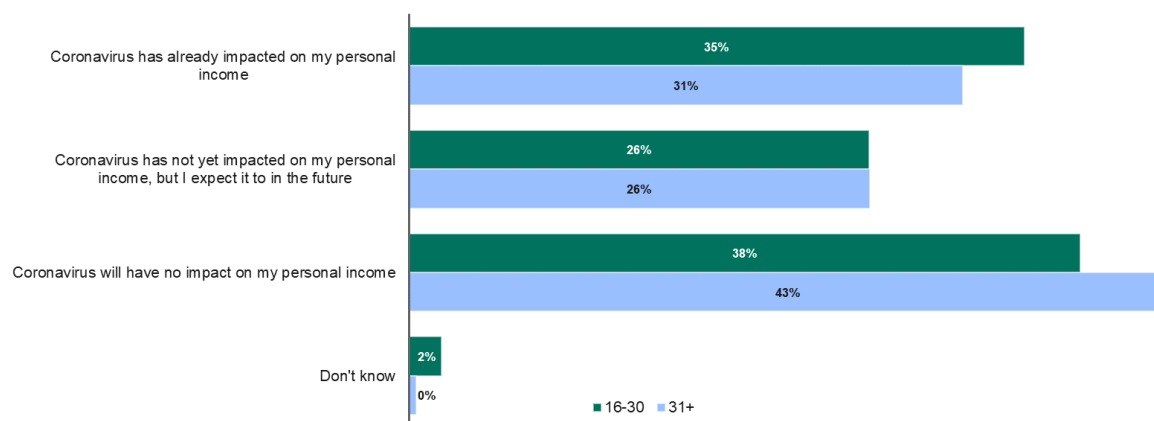


Figure 1. Source: Special Eurobarometer for the European Parliament, Spring 2021

² Special Eurobarometer for the European Parliament, Spring 2021

Emotions and feelings

Young EU citizens have been deeply impacted by the pandemic, and not only from an economical but also from a psychological point of view. The multiple lockdowns implemented have limited their social interactions, disrupted their life projects, and ultimately affected the normal course of time in a key moment of their lives.

A comparison between an online survey conducted during September and October 2020 and the results of the Spring 2021 Special Eurobarometer for the European Parliament, reveals how **negative feelings like frustration, helplessness and anger have increased over time and among young people.**

While 29% of youth described themselves as frustrated in autumn 2020³, this proportion increased to 41% by the spring of 2021. **Frustration** grew over two-times more among young (+12 pp) than among older people (+5 pp). **Anger** also increased considerably in the same period of time (22% in spring 2021, +8 pp). **Helplessness** increased by 7 pp between autumn 2020 and spring 2021, while **confidence** decreased by a similar amount in that same period (-6 pp).

The feeling of uncertainty remains the most diffused both among young and older Europeans. 47% of youth describe themselves as uncertain and this value remained unchanged between autumn 2020 and spring 2021. In spring 2021 over half of young people said that “uncertainty” was the feeling that best described their emotional status in Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Portugal, Lithuania, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Czechia, Finland, the Netherlands, and France. In some of those countries, like Ireland, Greece, Belgium, Czechia, Finland and Cyprus, a majority also felt frustrated. On a positive note, in Malta and the Netherlands, more than 50% of them described themselves as hopeful. **Overall, the feeling of Hope has remained unchanged for young people between autumn 2020 and spring 2021, in third position.**

What feelings best describe your current emotional status?

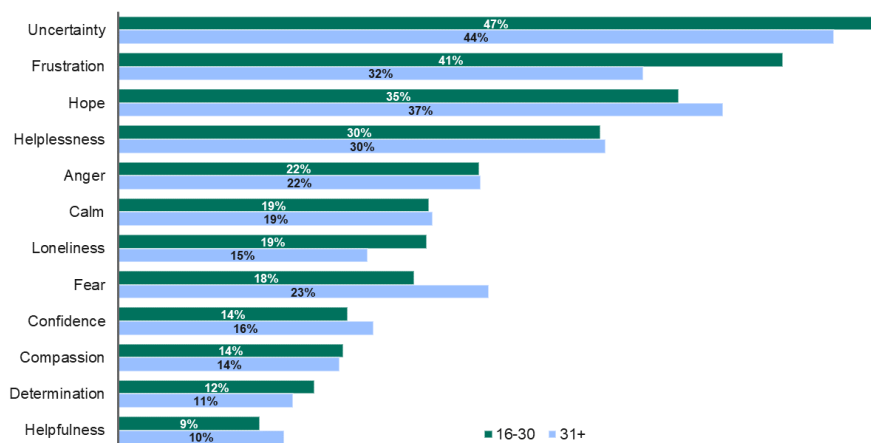


Figure 2. Source: Special Eurobarometer for the European Parliament, Spring 2021

³ Public Opinion in the EU in Time of Coronavirus Crisis, September–October 2020

Young women and students' state of mind should be a cause of concern

In spring 2021 young women were more fearful (+9 pp), helpless (+8 pp), frustrated (+4 pp), and less confident (-5 pp) than young men. On the contrary, young men were significantly more likely to describe themselves as determined (+6 pp) and calm (+9 pp). Multiple circumstances might indicate that women have faced a greater psychological burden during the pandemic. Women are more likely to be employed in sectors, which have been directly impacted by the pandemic, such as the healthcare one. They are also more fragile from an economic point of view, being less paid than men, and more likely to be employed in occupations that have been negatively affected by the lockdowns, such as the hospitality ones. Besides this, lockdowns, school closures, and telework, might have posed a greater strain on women. The greater need for childcare and housekeeping might have fallen largely on women, many of whom worked from home during the lockdowns.

Students tend to describe themselves as lonely to a much greater extent than other young people. 23% of them expressed this feeling in spring 2021, 12 percentage points more than people who left school aged 15 or younger. Compared to this category, they are also significantly more likely to feel frustrated (+13 pp). These results, and the evolution of feelings among young Europeans, provide a good representation of the pandemic's impact on young people's mental health. The growing frustration and helplessness among youth, and especially students, should sound the alarm.

Coping with the restriction measures

Restriction measures, like lockdowns, have put a strain on everybody's physical and mental health. 40% of young EU citizens found those measures fairly or very difficult to cope with.⁴

Young people are slightly more likely (+1 pp) than older ones to affirm that these measures were very difficult to cope with, and even endangering their mental and physical health. Still, they were also more willing to display a mixed opinion towards those measures compared to older people. 34% found them both easy and difficult to cope with, versus 30% of respondents aged 31 and over.

People living in the Mediterranean countries have particularly struggled to cope with confinement

In Greece (69%), Italy (63%), Portugal (56%), Cyprus (53%), and Slovenia (51%) more than half of young people found the confinement measures difficult to cope with. In France, about 40% described those measures as difficult, and 29% considered them easy. Finland is the only country where a majority of young people (52%) found those measures easy to cope with.

These different perceptions of the lockdown measures might have been determined both by the distinct types of policies implemented in each country and by the geographical characteristic of each Member State. In some Southern European countries, like Italy or France, lockdowns have been particularly strict. Moreover, people living in densely urbanised areas might have suffered more the confinement situation because they are more likely to live in smaller houses or apartments. Young people living in urban areas are indeed between 2 and 3 percentage points more likely to say that the measures were difficult to cope with, compared to youth living in rural areas.

Attitudes during confinement: an unequal increase of negative habits, more pronounced among the younger

The restriction measures implemented during the pandemic have disrupted people's habits to an extent yet unforeseen in peaceful times. For some respondents, bad habits have found fertile ground during a distressing time, but for others the lockdowns have been occasions to cultivate hobbies or change long-established habits. The results of the Kantar International Survey conducted in May and June 2021 allow us to assess the impact of confinement measures on Europeans' habits. This survey has studied the impact of confinement in five countries: France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain.

In the Netherlands and in Poland, for example, young people have used the lockdowns to dedicate more time to their hobbies.⁵ This has not occurred in France, Germany, or Spain, where the time assigned to hobbies has decreased.

Negative habits, like drinking alcohol or smoking tobacco, increased in some countries but not in others. Alcohol consumption among youth decreased in every country except for Poland, in this country the difference between the

⁴ Standard Eurobarometer 94, Winter 2020/2021

⁵ Kantar International Survey, May-June 2021

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increase and the decrease in alcohol consumption is positive (+6 percentage points). In France and in the Netherlands smoking tobacco increased among the younger, respectively by 5 and 10 percentage points, and to a greater extent than among older people (for them it was +2 pp in France and +10 pp in the Netherlands). In France, also gambling increased among youth. The difference between the decrease and increase in gambling among the young in France is 3 percentage points.

Governments in some countries implemented lockdowns to try to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. If you experienced a lockdown, to what extent did it have an impact on your behaviours and activities from the following: Drinking alcohol

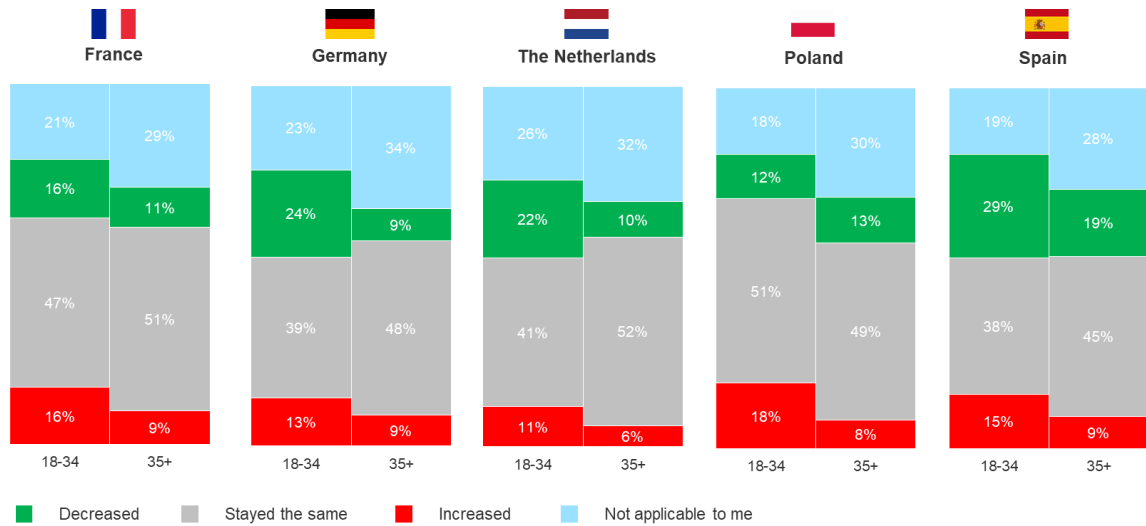


Figure 3 Source: Kantar International Survey, May-June 2021

Although young and older Europeans often display distinct habits, isolation has had similar effects on these two age groups when it comes to eating and using technology. **During the lockdowns, both young and older people ate more and spent more time in front of a screen. However, in every country young people are those who ate more and looked more at screens.** Food consumption increased for 38% of young people in Spain, and 32% in France and Germany. Those same countries also have the highest percentage of young people who spent more time in front of a screen. They are 73% in Spain, 63% in Germany and 58% in France. Once again, these higher estimates for Spain, Germany and France, might be determined by specific type of social distancing measures there implemented.

Governments in some countries implemented lockdowns to try to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. If you experienced a lockdown, to what extent did it have an impact on your behaviours and activities from the following: Screen time

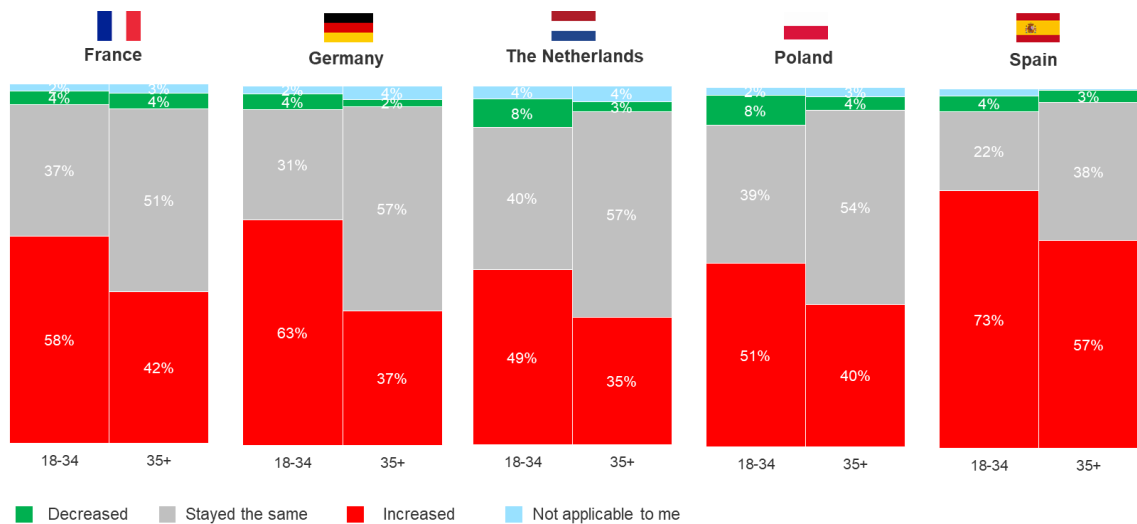


Figure 4. Source: Kantar International Survey, May-June 2021

An impact of the pandemic on the health services which has not spared young people

Equally concerning were the consequences of the pandemic on access to health. Although young people are relatively less concerned by this issue than people from the 31+ age group, overburdened hospitals and limitations of movement posed significant problems in terms of access to health services, also for young Europeans.

Spain is again one of the Member States where young people have suffered the consequences of the lockdowns on their health the most. Almost half of them (47%) declare that they had a medical appointment delayed or cancelled during the lockdown. Multiple Spanish hospitals closed due to saturation, especially during the first pandemic wave, which meant that they could not continue their normal activity. **In all the countries analysed at least 30% of young people experienced a delay or a cancellation of medical appointments.**

In Spain, but also in the Netherlands, Germany and France, young people have been more likely to see their medical appointments cancelled or postponed during the lockdowns compared to older people. **Young Europeans might have suffered more delays and cancellations because older patients with multiple or more serious pathologies were prioritised over younger ones in a context of limited time and human resources.**

A look at which types of appointments were affected reveals indeed that young people were more likely to have tests and scans, or psychological appointments, delayed or cancelled. These types of appointments are more likely to correspond to routine checks, or they might be linked to less urgent (although not necessarily less important) health conditions.

If they might have been given less priority over older patients, young Europeans are no less concerned than older ones by the delay or cancellation of their medical appointments. On the contrary, in France, Germany and the Netherlands youth are significantly more likely than older people to claim that the missed appointment has had a negative impact on their health.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, have you experienced any delay or cancellation of appointments or treatments by a hospital, or another healthcare professional (e.g. a doctor, nurse, psychologist)

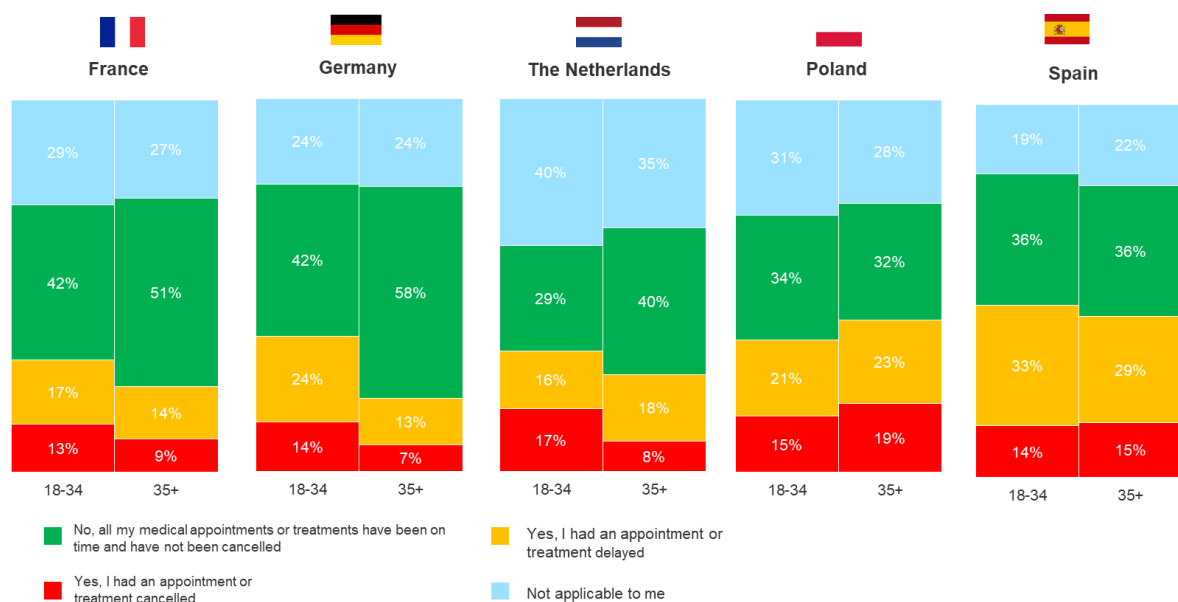


Figure 5. Source: Kantar International Survey, May-June 2021

Opinion on vaccination

As countries are trying to cope with new variants of Covid-19 by vaccinating the largest possible share of their population, vaccination is being a central topic of debate. Young Europeans' opinion about vaccines thus deserves a special attention.

In winter 2020/2021, few months after the first vaccine doses were being administered around Europe, young Europeans showed at least a certain degree of scepticism towards them.⁶ An absolute majority of them (52%) agreed at least in part with the statement that "vaccines are being developed, tested and authorised too quickly to be safe". Only a relatively small minority of them totally disagreed with such statement (15%), although young people were slightly more likely to disagree with that statement compared to older respondents (44% versus 41%).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

'COVID-19 vaccines are being developed, tested and authorised too quickly to be safe'

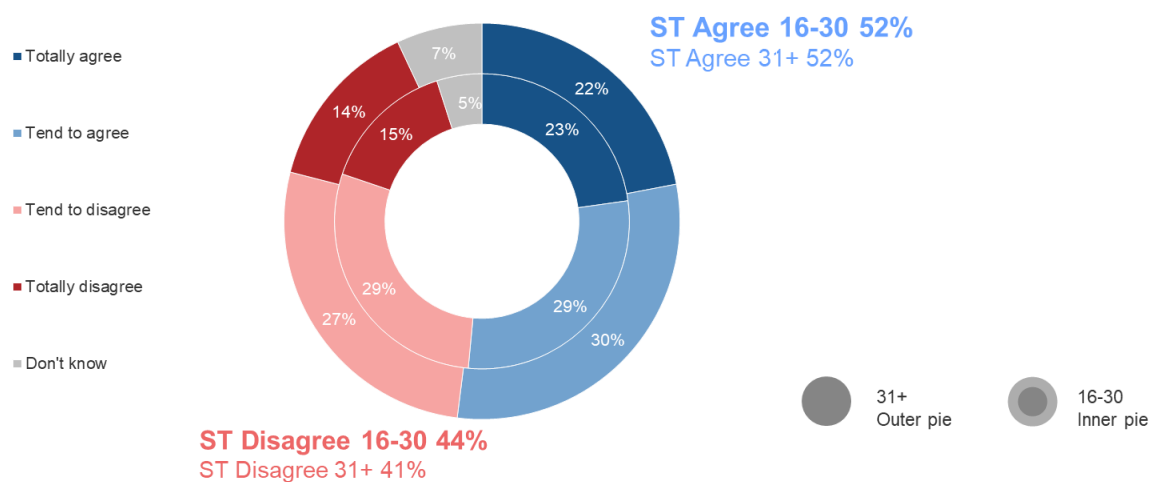


Figure 6. Source: Standard Eurobarometer 94, Winter 2020/2021

Cyprus is the country with the highest number of young people expressing doubts about the vaccine (82%), followed by Croatia (73%), Hungary (72%), Greece (66%), Poland (65%), Lithuania (64%), and Slovenia (63%). France represents an exception among the Western European countries because here young people are significantly more sceptical about the vaccine (62%). This share is equal to those of Romania, Austria and Bulgaria.

Scepticism towards the vaccine might be explained by a more general distrust towards national or European institutions when it comes to handling the pandemic. France (60%), Cyprus (59%) and Greece (54%) are the three countries where disapproval of the EU actions against the pandemic is the highest. Also in Slovenia the disapproval rate is particularly high (52%). Disapproval of the national government's actions against the pandemic might also be linked to distrust towards vaccination in some Member States. Slovenia (71%) and France (69%) have two of the highest disapproval rates among the EU countries when it comes their national governments' measures. Also in Greece (66%) and Poland (65%) a large majority of respondents disapproves their governments' measures against the pandemic. **It is possible that for some states, like Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Austria, and Bulgaria, as well as the other countries analysed, other cultural or political factors contribute to the higher scepticism.**

⁶ Standard Eurobarometer 94, Winter 2020/2021

The Member States where youth are the most likely to trust the vaccine are the Northern and Western European ones. Denmark is the only country where less than a quarter of young people agree with the proposed statement (23%). In Finland (31%), Ireland (34%), the Netherlands (35%), Sweden (36%), Germany (39%), and Belgium (39%) less than 40% of the young people interviewed agreed. Czechia is an outlier among Eastern European countries, since only 39% of young people here displayed a sceptical attitude towards vaccines.

The level of education does not seem to significantly affect the degree of scepticism towards the vaccine. Young people, with a low educational level (who finished their studies at the age of 15 or before), are only slightly more likely (+2 pp) to agree with the statement “vaccines are being developed, tested and authorised too quickly to be safe” compared to those with a high educational level (who continued their studies until the age of 20 or after). Interestingly, youth with an intermediate educational level (who left their studies between 16 and 19 years old) are significantly more likely to agree with such statement, both compared to those with a low educational level (+8 pp) and to those with a high educational level (+10 pp).

Doubts about the safety of the vaccine are more likely to be expressed by youth living in rural areas, compared to youth living in urban areas. 60% of young people who live in rural areas agree with the proposed statement, contrary to 44% of those living in large towns and 51% of those living in small or middle-sized towns.

Prospect of ending the crisis

Young Europeans are significantly more optimistic than their older counterparts about the short-term evolution of their financial and job situation.

Although an absolute majority of youth think their household’s financial situation will be the same in one year, 33% think that it will be better (+14 pp compared to older respondents), and only 14% anticipates that it will be worse (-4 pp compared to the 31+).⁷

Ireland (54%), Estonia (49%), Lithuania (48%) and Sweden (47%) are the Member States where young people display most optimism about their household’s financial situation. Romania is by far the country where young respondents are the most pessimistic (41% think their household’s financial conditions will be worse in twelve months),

Young respondents appear relatively optimistic also about their personal job situation. Although 44% think that it will be the same in 12 months, 36% imagine that it will be better. This is significantly more than among older respondents (+19 pp). Young people are more likely to envisage a better job situation in Ireland (54%), Estonia (50%), Lithuania (46%), and Luxembourg (43%) compared to the other countries. In Poland (23%), Lithuania (22%), Slovenia (22%), and Austria (20%), instead, over a fifth forecast a worse job situation.

An absolute majority of young EU citizens (59%) expect their country’s economy to recover in 2023 or later. Only a quarter of them (25%) think it will recover in 2022. These estimates are comparable to those for older respondents (31+). Poland (35%), Malta (34%), Sweden (33%), and Romania (33%) have the highest percentages of respondents who think their country’s economy will recover in 2022. Youth in Portugal (9%), Czechia (12%), Belgium (15%), Luxembourg (15%), and Greece (15%) instead are the least optimistic about this prospect.

In some Member States, a relatively high share of young people believe that their country will never recover from the crisis. In Poland 21% of the 16-30 years old share this opinion, in Latvia this is 17%, in Croatia 16%, and between 11% and 10% in Bulgaria, Italy, Slovenia, Lithuania and Czechia. In all the other Member States this group of respondents is more marginal.

In some cases, the countries where young people are less likely to foresee an improvement in their personal financial or job situation are also those where they tend not to anticipate a quick economic recovery. In Portugal, where 89% expect the crisis to end in 2023, later, or never, only 31% consider that their household financial situation will improve. Similarly, in Greece an equal share of respondents think that their household finances will be better in one year, and up to 82% foresee the exit from the crisis in 2023, later, or even never. In Czechia, only 30% of young people expect their personal job situation to improve and 87% think the crisis will end in 2023, later, or never. Somewhat surprisingly, Finland is also among the countries where young people are less likely to expect a quick recovery from the crisis: 75% think

⁷ Ibid.

this will not come before 2023, or that it will never come. Also in Finland, just 27% envisage an improvement of their financial or personal job condition in the coming year, one of the lowest estimates among the EU Member States.

When do you think (OUR COUNTRY)'s economy will recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic?

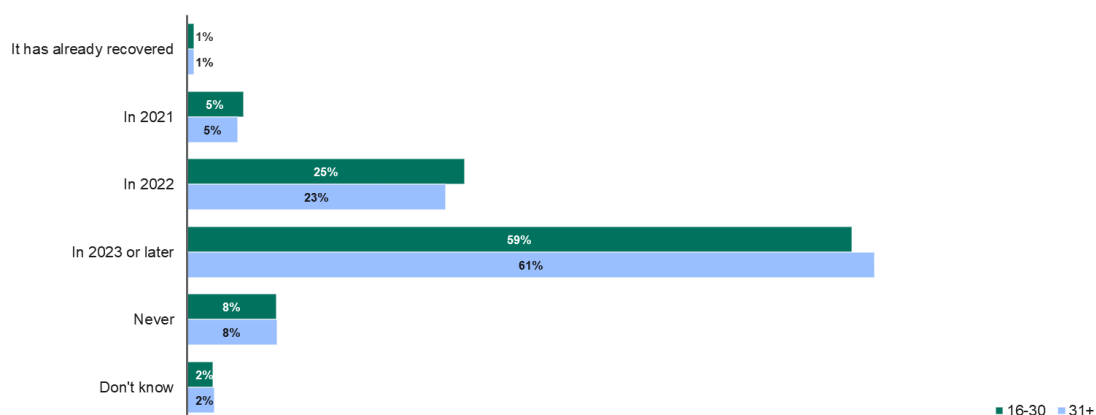


Figure 7. Source: Standard Eurobarometer 94, Winter 2020/2021

The EU in the context of the pandemic

The pandemic and the measures implemented by the national governments to curb the diffusion of Covid-19 had a huge impact on young people's lives. These measures generated an intense public debate and governments were sometimes severely judged by their citizens because of their supposed inaction or ineffectiveness in fighting the virus.

The following part will review young people's opinion about the national governments' and EU's action against the pandemic, with a focus on youth' assessment of the NextGenerationEU plan and of the degree of solidarity between Member States.

Satisfaction with the national and EU action

A majority of EU youth are not satisfied with the measures taken by their national governments to curb the coronavirus pandemic⁸. Only 40% is fairly or very satisfied with them, while 58% is not. Young Europeans are more unsatisfied with those measures than older Europeans (+3 pp). Since the health consequences of the virus are less serious on young people, it is possible that EU youth have understood less the necessity of certain measures compared to older citizens. Moreover, limitations to freedom of movement and social distancing rules may have affected young people's lives more than on those of older people, increasing their dissatisfaction with the governments' action. The four Member States where young's dissatisfaction is the highest are Czechia (89%), Spain (76%), Slovenia (71%) and France (69%). Those where young people are more satisfied with the national governments' measures are Denmark (82%), Luxembourg (68%), Finland (68%) and Malta (60%).

If young people's judgement of the national governments' action against Covid-19 is severe, **their opinion about the EU measures against the pandemic is relatively more positive**, despite significant variations from country to country.

In most of the countries analysed, a majority of young people are satisfied with the measures that the European Union has taken to fight the coronavirus pandemic⁹. In general, youth are more satisfied with the EU action against the pandemic in the Northern European countries, followed by the Eastern European ones. In the Mediterranean states, but also in France, Germany, and Belgium, young respondents are way less satisfied with those measures.

⁸ Standard Eurobarometer 94, Winter 2020/2021

⁹ Special Eurobarometer for the European Parliament, Spring 2021

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In France and Germany only 36% and 35% of respondents aged to 16 to 30 are satisfied with the European measures against Covid-19, the lowest estimates in the whole Union. They are only 47% in Italy and Belgium. In Cyprus (41%), Greece (46%), and Slovenia (47%) less than half of EU youth say they are satisfied with the measures. On the opposite, in Denmark (84%), the Netherlands (75%) and Sweden (72%), young people are significantly more satisfied with the European action against coronavirus.

In general, how satisfied are you with the measures taken to fight the coronavirus pandemic by the European Union?

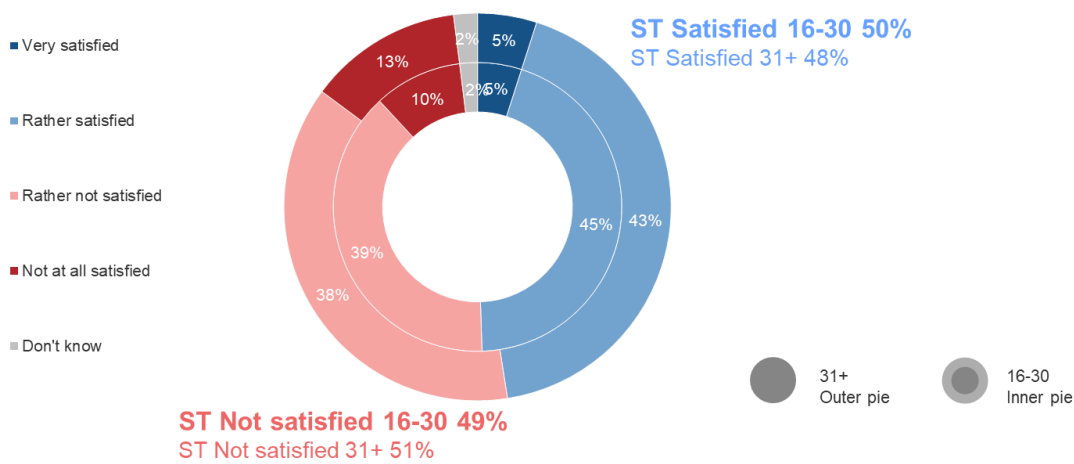


Figure 8. Source: Special Eurobarometer for the European Parliament, Spring 2021

Opinion on NextGenerationEU

The NextGenerationEU plan represents an unprecedented amount of resources which the European Union is delivering to its Member States in order to help their economies recover from the impact of the pandemic. As its name suggests, this plan's long-term objective is that of improving the economic and life prospects of the future generations of Europeans. Being especially concerned by NextGenerationEU, young people's opinion about this historic economic package is of key importance.

A large majority of young Europeans think that the large-scale recovery plan will be effective in responding to the pandemic's effects on the national economies.¹⁰ Young citizens in Malta (85%), Denmark (75%), Ireland (75%), Estonia (73%) and the Netherlands (71%) are more likely to hold this opinion. Finland (46%), France (46%), Spain (47%) and Portugal (47%), instead, are the only Member States where less than 50% of young respondents share this view. It is possible that for some of these countries **distrust towards NextGenerationEU is motivated by their particularly pessimistic view of the national economy situation**. Both in Spain (91%) and Portugal (88%), young people are extremely likely to judge their national economic situation as bad. In other Member States, like Finland, **the effectiveness of the NextGenerationEU plan might be questioned due to its high cost, and the mechanism through which it is financed**. Finland is indeed the country where young respondents are the most concerned by the conditions of Member States' public finances, with 33% of them considering it one of the two most important issues the EU is currently facing.

Young people with a lower educational level are less likely to think that the NextGenerationEU plan will be effective to respond to the economic consequences of the pandemic. Young people who concluded their studies at 15 or younger are about three-times more likely to think that the plan will not be effective at all compared to youth with higher

¹⁰ Standard Eurobarometer 94, Winter 2020/2021

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educational qualifications (21% hold this view versus 6% to 7% of youth who concluded their studies aged 16-19, or older). This category of citizens might be more dissatisfied and less optimistic about the European Union's ability to mobilise those financial resources and especially about the Member States' capacity to design effective economic policies.

The European Union has designed a recovery plan of 750 billion euros, NextGenerationEU, to support the economy through grants and loans. How effective or not do you think that this measure is to respond to the economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic?

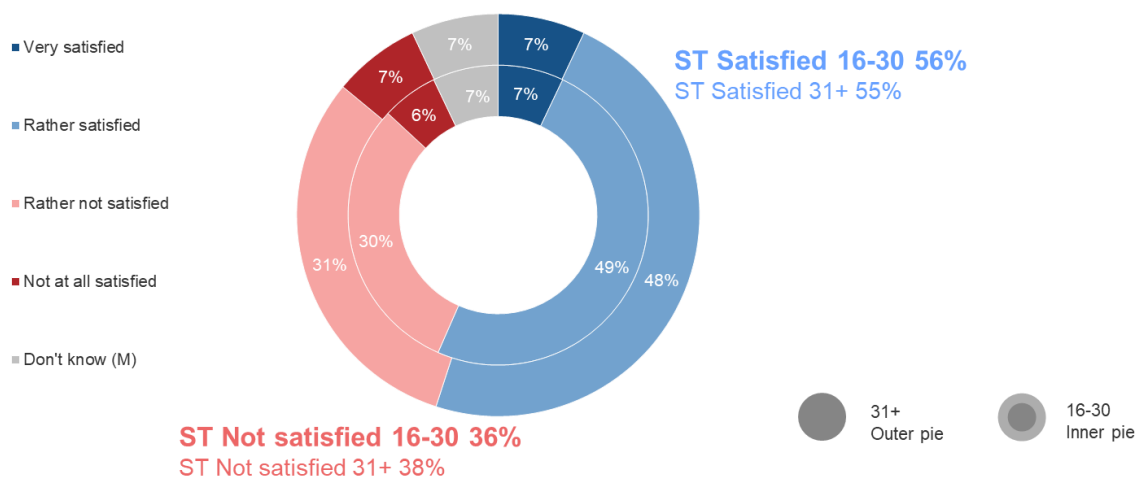


Figure 9. Source: Standard Eurobarometer 94, Winter 2020/2021

Satisfaction with the solidarity between Member States to face the pandemic

Close to half of young Europeans are satisfied with the solidarity between Member States which has been displayed during the pandemic.¹¹ Young people are more likely to be satisfied than respondents aged 31+ (+7 pp), but their view on solidarity between Member States varies significantly from country to country.

In Belgium (67%), Greece (61%), Spain (57%), Sweden (54%), Germany (54%), Luxembourg (50%), Italy (50%), and Ireland (50%) an absolute majority of young people are not satisfied with the solidarity between Member States in facing the pandemic. In France almost half of them are not satisfied, and up to 11% do not know (a significantly higher rate than in other Member States, except for Bulgaria). Some of these countries, like Italy, have been severely hit by the first pandemic wave, which found many countries, and the European Union as a whole, unprepared in facing the virus. The chaos which unfolded, and the limitations imposed by each state to both freedom of movement and the export of essential goods, like masks, may have engendered distinct opinions about European solidarity in these early-hit countries. Sweden might be a special case in this sense. The country has been criticised by other EU states for its *laissez-faire* strategy against the pandemic. The relaxed social distancing measures adopted in Sweden have led its neighbouring states to introduce specific measures concerning people coming from this country. In all the other Member States, except for Cyprus, a majority of youth are satisfied by the solidarity between European states during the pandemic. The most satisfied are young people in Eastern European states like Hungary (73%), Czechia (70%), Croatia (68%), and Lithuania (66%).

¹¹ Special Eurobarometer for the European Parliament, Spring 2021

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How satisfied are you with the solidarity between EU Member States in fighting the coronavirus pandemic? (%)

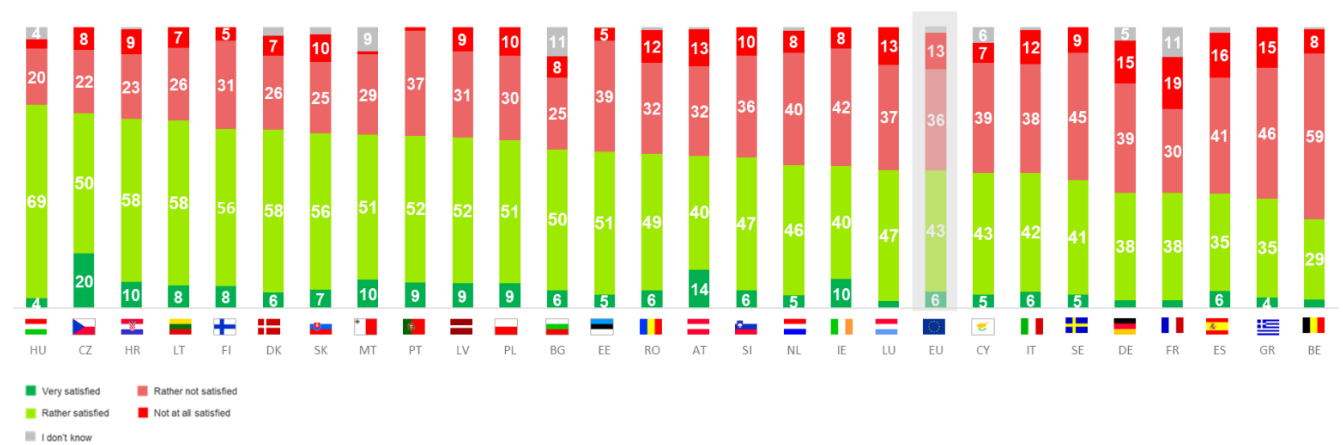


Figure 10. Source: Special Eurobarometer for the European Parliament, Spring 2021. Results for young aged 16-30

Women are on average more satisfied than men about between-state solidarity during the pandemic (+5 pp). Younger respondents in the 16-20 age range are also more satisfied with Member States' solidarity (52%) compared to young people in the 21-25 (47%) or 26-30 (46%) age groups.

On the contrary, young people with low educational qualifications (who stopped their studies at the age of 15 or younger), are much less satisfied by Member States' solidarity than youth with higher educational qualifications. They are 12 percentage points less likely to be satisfied by European solidarity than youth who left education at the age of 20 or after.

The coronavirus pandemic strongly impacted European youth. Although the perception of the confinement measures differs from state to state, most young Europeans have struggled to cope with them. The confinement measures have affected young people from an economic and psychological point of view. Not only are young Europeans more likely to declare that their income has been impacted by the pandemic, their state of mind has also progressively changed over time. If they were relatively confident at the beginning of the health crisis, now they are more frustrated, angry, and helpless.

This state of mind has potentially affected on their perception of the measures taken by their national governments in fighting the pandemic. In general, young Europeans are unsatisfied with their national government's action, perhaps because social distancing measures have strongly impacted on their lives and immediate aspirations. The data analysed in this report reveal also that, at the very beginning of the vaccination campaign, young Europeans were relatively sceptical about the safety of the Coronavirus vaccine, although to a slightly smaller extent than the older generations, and this despite being less exposed to the most severe consequences of the virus.

On a positive note, young people in the EU remain relatively hopeful, especially with respect to the prospect of their country recovering from the economic crisis. In this sense, most of them think the NextGenerationEU plan may be an effective mean to boost the economy. As suggested by its name, the NextGenerationEU plan is a key economic measure designed to help youth' future economic and employment prospects. The Plan also represents an example of European solidarity, something which has been missed during the health crisis according to almost half of young Europeans, and especially those living in the hardest-hit counties. Despite this severe judgment, this research also reveals that youth have been more satisfied by the European Union's action against the pandemic compared to their national governments' one. In order to maintain young people's trust in its institutions, the EU needs to live up to their expectations on the Union's capacity to support its younger citizens during this unprecedented health, economic and social crisis.