



Who counts on Europe? – An empirical analysis of the younger generation's attitudes in Germany ⁽¹⁾

This article analyses the status and perspectives of political and social unification in Europe focusing on the younger generation in Germany. Do young people feel they understand how politics work or do they consider political structures and processes too obscure? How have young people's attitudes towards Europe and European institutions changed? How do feelings of attachment to Europe develop? Does commitment towards Europe conflict with national identifications? What factors determine attitudes towards Europe? These questions will be examined using the Youth Survey conducted by the German Youth Institute (DJI). Data from the three waves of the 'DJI Youth Survey', carried out in 1992, 1997 and 2003 will be analysed. Each wave is based on personal interviews with approximately 7,000 16-to 29-year olds. The analysis shows links between young people's attitudes towards Europe and sociodemographic characteristics as well as other personal variables.

The results reveal considerable differences: part of the younger generation in Germany definitely sees Europe as a realistic prospect, whereas others, i.e. those who are at risk of being the losers of the modernisation process, tend to be more reserved about Europe.

Introduction

The «Project Europe» not only targets economic harmonisation and political unification but also social integration. The focus is thus not only on harmonising living conditions and political structures but also on mutual relations and bonds. Within this context, «the subjective identification of individual citizens and their sense of belonging and solidarity with Europe may be regarded, on an individual level, as a benchmark of European integration» (Noll & Scheuer, 2006, p. 1). Although there are some indications that the general public's identification with Europe has not grown in spite of increasing economic and political integration, the younger generations, for whom the EU has been a natural part of the political setting in which they grew up, tend to have a more positive attitude towards Europe.

Some of the results are contradictory: when the referenda on the EU constitution were rejected in the Netherlands and in France in early 2005, for example, young people were accused of Euroscepticism. A closer look at the results, however, reveals that this critical view of young people must be put into perspective: although a majority of 55 % of voters in France and 62 % in the Netherlands rejected the EU constitution in the referenda held there in 2005 -to the dismay of EU supporters in all countries- the proportion of

(1)
This article is in part based on:
Gaiser et al., 2006.

young people in France who rejected the constitution was not overly large, with middle-aged groups tending more towards rejection and approval being strongest among the over 54-year olds. In the Netherlands, by contrast, the proportion of young people, who rejected the referendum was larger, even in comparison to the middle-aged groups, and the rate of rejection again lowest among the over 54-year olds. Proof that a sceptical attitude is *generally* more pronounced in young people thus cannot be supported.

The Eurobarometer survey carried out in the 25 EU member states in summer 2005 also underlined the fact that young people form the optimistic segment of the European population. This assessment was confirmed by the fact that 63 per cent of Europeans aged 15 to 24 years rate their country's membership in the European Union as positive. Considering that the EU average concerning this question was approximately 54 per cent, the age group of 15-to-24-year olds thus has a more positive attitude towards the EU than older age groups (European Commission, 2005, p. 96). This trend, i.e. that younger generations have a more positive attitude towards the future of Europe or EU enlargement than older generations was also confirmed by the two Eurobarometer surveys of early 2006 (European Commission, May 2006, European Commission, July 2006). One problem cited in this context is the fact that this trend is mainly that of young people with university-entry qualifications (Abitur) and young people with a university degree.

Now, what are young people's attitudes towards Europe in detail? Has the EU become a fact of life for them, whose importance, functioning and future significance are not questioned and go without saying or do ignorance and scepticism prevail in many instances? And: can the younger generation be divided into two groups, one of which is familiar with and optimistic about the EU, while the other displays a more negative attitude towards this project? What are the reasons for the differences in attitudes towards Europe? As such detailed analyses in terms of nation and youth are almost impossible in Europe-wide surveys, given the sample size, suitable questions were included in the DJI Youth Survey. Young people's attitudes towards and feeling of solidarity with Europe and their trust in European institutions will be examined below on the basis of the data collected in the DJI Youth Survey and correlations with socio-demographic and attitude variables analysed. (2)

The variations in the attitudes of Europeans towards the political community of Europe have evolved within the context of long-term processes of European unification and also issues that are of a more national nature. Young people's feeling of solidarity with the EU and Germany has developed in a similar way: in his theoretical reflections and trend assumptions about the processes leading to a European identity, Lepsius, for example, arrived at the diagnosis that national and European criteria influencing identity formation are becoming increasingly intertwined, even if identification with Europe is far less pronounced than identification with national institutions (Lepsius, 2004, p. 4). Until recently, according to Lepsius, many citizens had regarded Europe as a mere additional operating level of the nation state(s) very much in line with the EU-type institutionalisation. The growing competencies of the European institutions were now activating the need for solidarity on a European level and more pronounced European identification. Nation states as centralised objects of political identification, were not losing significance, as the integrative strength of a society could not be replaced by the new

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The DJI Youth Survey of the German Youth Institute (DJI) in Munich is one of the large replicative research projects carried out in the context of the Youth Institute's social reporting (project homepage: www.dji.de/jugendsurvey). The Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supports this research in the context of DJI funding. So far, three waves of the survey have been conducted: 1992, 1997 and 2003. In each of the first two waves, about 7,000 16- to 29-year-old Germans were interviewed (West: about 4,500, East: about 2,500), and in the third wave 9,100 12- to 29-year-olds with German and non-German citizenship were interviewed (West: about 6,300, East: about 2,800; see Gille et al., 2006). *In this article we will refer to the 16- to 29-year-old Germans.* The first two waves were based on a random selection of several layers (Random-Route), the third wave on a sample survey of the citizens' registration office. For the 16- to 29-year-olds, the samples of 1997 and 2003 showed relatively strong differences regarding age in comparison with the total population. For attitudes depending to a large extent on the age of interviewees, reports on findings always had to be controlled according to age. The results for the 16- to 29-year-olds are presented with the help of a redressment evaluation that corrects the deviations of the sample for the 16- to 29-year-olds with regard to the distribution of age groups and aligns it to the distributions of the total population.

European organisations. At the same time, he said, the nation states were becoming Europeanised and multilingual functional elites were coming into being. From other quarters, however, cautions have also been voiced against assuming an automatic reduction of regional and national identifications in favour of growing European identification (Westle, 2003).

Habermas in particular emphasised the significance of subjective elements, including attitude-related elements, for the further development and integration of Europe. Apart from politico-structural processes and institutions in Europe, for which a European constitution would also be important, he lists a European civil society, a Europe-wide political public and a political culture accessible to all EU citizens as criteria for supra-national forms of identity (Habermas, 2001). According to Habermas, the development of such a general public is not restricted to conventional forms of political participation, such as voting in the European Parliament elections (whose limited significance compared to national elections is reflected in voter turnout) but also includes parallel supra-national forms of unconventional political participation, which he believes could be seen in the major demonstrations against the impending war in Iraq in a number of European cities in February 2003. Habermas points out that it is not so much a question of the development of a strong European identity that will ultimately replace value attitudes oriented to one's own national political community but rather of open-mindedness towards supranational political opinion and political will formation concerning European issues. In somewhat emphatic terms: It is a question of conditions that must be fulfilled for citizens to be able to extend their civil solidarity beyond the borders of their nation states and thus achieve mutual inclusion (Habermas, 2004, p. 76).

What empirical evidence can be found as an answer to these theses and questions regarding the development of Europe-oriented awareness? Attitudinal elements, such as feeling a sense of belonging to Europe, being Europe-oriented and trust in European institutions play a role within this context. Generally speaking, within the scope of pan-European surveys, such analyses relating to adolescents and young adults are only possible to a limited extent on the national level, given the sample size. The three waves of the DJI youth survey (1992/1997/2003) allow empirical analysis of a number of questions targeting Europe and young people's understanding of Europe within Germany and over time. (3) Analyses based on German data are meaningful not only because the subject of Europe has moved to the centre of public debate in this EU member state with the highest population, which has taken over the EU Council Presidency in 2007 (cf., for example, Gaiser et al., 2006), but also because possible differences in attitudes towards Europe in the two German 'Länder' might illuminate differences in proximity to 'core Europe' (Hübner-Funk & Du Bois-Reymond, 1999).

Van Deth (2004, p. 10 et seq.) also argues in favour of differentiating between East and West Germany in politico-cultural analysis, because this approach allows examination of the extent to which certain political attitudes in West Germany tend to correspond to those found in Western European countries and which attitudes in East Germany are more like those found in Eastern European countries. What are the attitudes of young East and West Germans towards Europe? Has the EU become a fact of life for them, whose importance, functioning, significance for the future and institutions are not questioned and go without saying or do ignorance and scepticism prevail in

(3)

Although the interviews were carried out prior to the EU's enlargement to the East in May 2004, considerable changes in fundamental links between attitudes towards Europe and sociodemographic and attitude characteristics cannot be assumed; cf. results regarding the development of attitudes towards Europe until 2006 quoted above.

many instances? Are there any differences associated with educational qualifications? What is the connection between national and supranational solidarity? Is it possible to discern constellations of conditions relevant for certain attitudes towards Europe?

The 2003 DJI Youth Survey investigated young people's attitudes towards Europe and European institutions from three different perspectives. First, their familiarity with Europe was surveyed, i.e. their general understanding of how the European Union functions, the extent to which they are personally affected by decisions made by the EU government and the importance of Europe for their personal future. Second, the survey inquired about young people's solidarity and identification with Europe as compared with their own country. The young people interviewed were also asked how much trust they placed in European institutions.

The empirical results concerning these three aspects of attitude and their key objective influencing factors (such as educational qualifications, regional differentiation by West and East Germany) and selected subjective influencing factors (such as interest in politics and the feeling of being socially disadvantaged) will be described below.

Finally, the article will examine the connections between these different attitudes towards Europe. The young people interviewed were between 16 and 29 years old, i.e. a broad age range covering many situations in life, and no differences were made between phases of life such as «youth», «emerging adulthood» or «young adulthood», which, from the point of view of certain aspects, would most probably provide interesting differences (Arnett, 2006). Instead, our analysis focuses on the above objective and subjective characteristics of differentiation which we will scrutinise from the perspective of attitudes towards Europe.

Attitudes towards Europe

Young people's attitudes towards Europe are anything but uniform (cf. Table 1). The statement (item A) «Europe is becoming increasingly important for my future» receives the highest score (72 % in Germany as a whole), followed by item B, which concerns the extent to which young people feel personally affected by decisions made by the EU government (67 %). As many as half of the young people interviewed (50 %) consider themselves to have a certain level of political expertise, i.e. to understand how the European Union works. The fact that only 5 % of the young people interviewed awarded the highest answer category (6 points on the scale), 18 % the second highest answer category (5 points) and 27 % the third highest answer category (4 points) should be borne in mind, however.

Seeing Europe as a significant political community is a matter of course for the vast majority of young people. However, when asked whether they consider themselves personally affected by decisions made by the EU government, 10 % of the young people interviewed replied «Don't know» (wording of item see item B in Table 1). This answer was also given by approx. 5 % of the young people interviewed when asked whether Europe was becoming increasingly important for their future and whether they understood how the European Union works (see items A and C, Table 1). Interviewees with lower educational qualifications, in particular, more often do not have any opinions on these items. (4)

(4)

In the DJI Youth Survey, the level of general education of interviewees who have already left the general education system is determined by the highest qualifications achieved; those who are still going to a school of general education are recorded with the qualifications they want to achieve. Therefore, it is possible that the level of education suggested by highschool students is higher than the one they will actually achieve. Calculations done with and without these students show that this has no effects on the findings related to political attitudes. The higher level of education refers to the school leaving certificate 'Abitur/Fachhochschulreife', the medium level to 'Mittlere Reife/Realschulabschluss', and the lowest level to 'Hauptschulabschluss' or less education.

Table 1. **Attitudes of young people 16 to 29 years to Europe, according to gender and region, 2003 (in percentages)***

| | West | | | East | | | Germany |
|--|--------|------|-------|--------|------|-------|---------|
| | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total | Total |
| A. I understand how the European Union | 45 | 58 | 52 | 42 | 49 | 45 | 50 |
| B. The decisions taken by the European Commission in Brussels affect me | 65 | 74 | 70 | 57 | 60 | 59 | 67 |
| C. Europe is increasingly important for my future | 72 | 76 | 74 | 63 | 64 | 64 | 72 |

Source: 2003 Survey of Youth DJI

* "Please tell how far you can apply to each of the following statements."

The scale of responses ranging from 1 "does not apply to anything" to 6 "will be fully implemented"; points 4 to 6 of the scale are identified as "applies". "I do not know" is not included in the calculations.

The percentage of interviewees who think that they understand how the European Union works (item A) and feel affected by decisions made by the European Commission increases with age, with the percentage of affirmative answers being lower among girls and young women throughout all age groups. These gender-specific differences confirm the findings that women are generally less interested in politics and consider themselves to have less political expertise than men (cf. Gille, 2004, Gaiser & Gille & de Rijke, 2006). When it comes to influencing factors, political interest, educational qualifications and knowledge of foreign languages are more important than gender (see below: «Factors that foster orientations towards Europe?») (5).

The fact that adolescents and young adults in East Germany have a more reserved attitude about Europe, as already evident in their attitudes towards Europe, is also reflected in their affective ties. Since the early 1990s, the DJI Youth Survey has been collecting data on young people's subjective identification with their geographically or politically defined territory by questioning them about their feelings of belonging and solidarity (cf. Table 2), which point to growing solidarity with both

Table 2. **Degree of identification with the reunified Germany and with the European Union among young people 16 to 29 years in 1992, 1997 and 2003 in West Germany and East Germany (in percentages)***

| Sense of solidarity with | West | | | East | | |
|------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1992 | 1997 | 2003 | 1992 | 1997 | 2003 |
| Germany's part of | 58 | 49 | 50 | 68 | 69 | 69 |
| The other part of Germany** | - | 17 | 25 | - | 23 | 34 |
| The reunified Germany | 53 | 52 | 71 | 54 | 55 | 64 |
| The European Union | 37 | 26 | 40 | 21 | 19 | 31 |

Source: Survey of Youth DJI 1992, 1997 and 2003

* "Below you will be questioned about your feeling of attachment to your community or city, the old and new German Länder, Germany as a whole and the European Union. How strong are your ties with Germany as a whole and its citizens? How strong are your ties with the old German Länder and their inhabitants? How strong are your ties with the new German Länder and their inhabitants? How strong are your ties with the European Union and its citizens?" Answer options included: "I feel: rather strong ties, somewhat strong ties, slight ties, no ties at all".

** In 1992 this question was not asked.

(5)

The correlations between the three attitudes towards Europe and interest in politics range from -.30 to .40 (Spearman), between attitudes towards Europe and knowledge of foreign languages from .10 to .20 (Cramers V).

Germany as a whole and the European Union since 1997 in the old and new German *Länder*. Solidarity with Europe, however, ranks much lower than solidarity with other territories.

Noteworthy with respect to both aspects of territorial solidarity, i.e. solidarity with Germany as a whole and with the European Union, is the fact that they are less pronounced in East than in West Germany. Young people in the East German *Länder* feel that they have more bonds with their part of Germany, i.e. East Germany, than with Germany as a whole, which is in stark contrast to the West German *Länder*, where young people clearly identify more with Germany as a whole than their own part of Germany, i.e. West Germany. This may be due to the differences in the historical experiences of the people in the two parts of Germany. Until re-unification in 1990, «Germany» meant the old Federal Republic of Germany. After re-unification, the institutional, economical and political system of the old German *Länder* was transferred to the new German *Länder*. For people in the new German *Länder*, who account for about one-fifth of the German population, the political and economic situation in life changed drastically: positively, in terms of more democratic rights and possibilities of participation and negatively, in terms of the difficult economic situation, which has led to a high unemployment rate.

The affective ties with the two parts of the country as well as Germany as a whole and Europe are relatively closely and positively interlinked, thus confirming the thesis of multiple identities (6). This means that the various commitments strengthen one another and by no means conflict with one another. Among East German adolescents and young adults identification with East Germany, which is particularly significant for historical reasons, is also associated with affective ties with Germany as a whole. In general, there can thus be no talk of a sense of separate identity among young East Germans (Cf. Sardei-Biermann et al., 2005, Noll & Scheurer, 2006).

National and European solidarity is expressed more commonly by young people interested in politics. A feeling of social disadvantage is also very important for both types of affective bonding, viz, with Germany as a whole and Europe. For young East Germans, the extent to which they feel relatively disadvantaged plays an especially important role. In the new German *Länder*, the percentage of young people interviewed who feel strong or rather strong ties with Germany as a whole and Europe is far lower among young people who consider that they receive far less than «their fair share» of social wealth as compared with others living in Germany than it is among young people who think they receive their fair share or more (cf. Table 3). Among young West Germans, this connection is also noticeable but far less pronounced. The percentage of young East Germans who feel disadvantaged in this respect is also far higher (52 % of young East Germans versus 32 % of young West Germans consider that they receive much less or somewhat less than their «fair share»). Thus feelings of relative deprivation seem to encourage a reserved attitude towards political communities.

(6)
The correlation coefficient
(Pearson's r) is .37. cf. B. Westle
2003 (Note. 3).

Table 3. **Degree of identification with Germany and the European Union in 2003 according to different factors influence the differentiation and East/West (in percentages)***

| | Strengths rather strong ties with... | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | <i>Germany West</i> | <i>European Union</i> | <i>Germany East</i> | <i>European Union</i> |
| Interest in politics** | | | | |
| <i>Strong</i> | 74 | 52 | 70 | 42 |
| <i>Average</i> | 75 | 41 | 67 | 32 |
| <i>Low</i> | 65 | 31 | 58 | 24 |
| Fair in life*** | | | | |
| <i>What is fair or more</i> | 75 | 44 | 69 | 38 |
| <i>Slightly less than what is fair</i> | 66 | 32 | 61 | 27 |
| <i>Much less than what is fair</i> | 64 | 30 | 50 | 13 |

Source: Youth Surveys 2003 DJI

* Cf. note in table 2.

** The question was: "How strong is your interest in politics?" Of the answer options "Very strong", "strong", "average", "very slight" and "not at all", "very strong" and "strong" are compiled in this table.

*** The question was: "In comparison to others who live in Germany; do you believe that you receive your fair share, more than your fair share, somewhat less or much less?" The results for the categories "fair share" and "more than your fair share" are compiled in this table.

Trust in European institutions

Many adolescents and young adults –also many adults– still feel far removed from Europe as a political region, as illustrated by the fact that over one third (37 %) of the interviewees, were unable to supply an answer when questioned about their trust in European institutions such as the European Commission or the European Parliament. (7) Admittedly, almost one in five (16 %) of the young people were also unable to say how much trust they placed in national institutions such as the Federal Constitutional Court or citizens' action groups. (8) As far as Germany's Parliament was concerned, 9 % of interviewees were unable to provide an assessment, whereas this applied to only 3 % of the young people, when asked how much trust they placed in the German government. The lower house of Germany's parliament (Bundestag) and the German government are the political institutions that play a central role in media reporting on politics and are strongly exposed to public criticism.

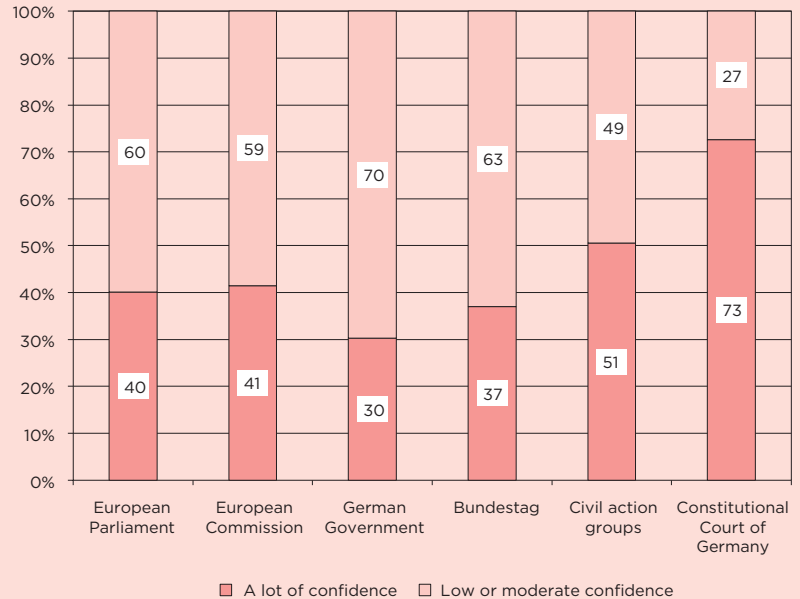
In the following we will take a closer look at the trust in various institutions by those interviewees, who had a decided opinion on the subject –whether positive or negative (very large amount of trust or no trust at all). Interviewee groups that did not supply a rating were here excluded. About 40 % of the young interviewees express a large amount of trust in European institutions such as the European Commission and the European Parliament (cf. Figure 1), while they place less trust in German political institutions such as the German government or the lower house of the Parliament in Germany (Bundestag); only approximately one-third of the young people place a large amount of trust in the latter, with the percentage of young people able to give an assessment being much larger, however. Young people in other European countries also place a larger amount of trust in European institutions than in national institutions, e.g. 15-to-25-year olds in Austria, France, Italy, Estonia and Slovakia, but not in the United Kingdom (EUYOUPART, 2005, p. 130). The trust placed in public institutions can be shown to increase, the more remote these institutions are from everyday

(7)
The exact wording of the question is quoted in the Note to Figure 1.

(8)
The majority of young people who do not provide an assessment reply «Can't say» and only a minority reply «Don't know»; according to their own statements, European institutions are not known to 6 % of the young people interviewed.

political activities (Gaiser et al., 2005). The only institution that succeeds in winning the trust of a majority of young people is the judiciary, e.g. Germany's Constitutional Court, which plays the role of mediator between politics and the law, a domain that is relatively remote from politics. Young people thus place a relatively large amount of trust in European organisations as compared with German institutions, although considerable differences in the ability to provide an assessment can be seen.

Chart 1. **Confidence in German and European institutions 2003* (in percentages)**



Source: 2003 Survey of Youth DJI: Base: Respondents Germans. N = 6326

* The question was: Now I will read a list of public institutions and organizations, please tell me how confident you are in every organization or institution. They had to use a scale of 1 to answer "no confidence at all" to 7 "a lot of confidence."

The interviewees also could respond "I do not know judge" or "I'm not familiar with this institution." The responses of 5 to 7 are designated as "very trustworthy" and from 1 to 4 as "low or moderate confidence", the two categories "I do not know prosecute" and "I'm not familiar with this institution" are not included in the calculations.

| | A lot of confidence | Low or moderate confidence |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| European Parliament | 40,1154548 | 59,8845452 |
| European Commission | 41,4650471 | 58,5349529 |
| German Government | 30,341219 | 69,658781 |
| Bundestag | 37,0324597 | 62,9675403 |
| Civil action groups | 50,5902488 | 49,4097512 |
| Constitutional Court of Germany | 72,6231033 | 27,3768967 |

In line with the clear, age-dependent increase in subjective political expertise among young people (de Rijke et al., 2006), their ability to judge also rises considerably, as witnessed by their assessment of European institutions: among the 16-to-17-year olds, 45 % see themselves as unable to provide an assessment, although even among the 27-to-29-year olds this applies to as many as 30 %. The age-related rise in ability to judge, however, does not result in a higher percentage of young people placing a large amount of trust in European institutions. Quite the contrary: this percentage decreases slightly with age. The same age-related differences are also noticeable when it comes to judging German political institutions. Regarding gender: the percentage of young men and young women who place a large amount of trust in European institutions is roughly the same. Gender-specific differences become evident, however, in the subjective ability to judge. Here young women are more reserved than young men, which is in line with the gender-specific differences noticed in young people's self-assessment of their subjective political expertise (cf. de Rijke et al., 2006).

As with political attitudes in general, pronounced educational-level-dependent differences are also noticeable in the assessment of European institutions. The trust that young people place in political institutions and their ability to judge increase considerably along with their level of education; while approx. one-third of young people with university-entry qualifications place a large amount of trust in political institutions, the same can be said only of one-fifth of young people with basic school leaving qualifications (Hauptschulabschluss). As with pro-European attitudes, a better knowledge of foreign languages and more interest in politics, which all depend on the level of education, are accompanied by a larger amount of trust in European institutions.

Trust in European institutions is strongly linked with a feeling of disadvantage concerning one's own situation in life; this link is also evident in both European and national ties. While less than one in five of the young people who think they receive somewhat or much less than their fair share compared to others in Germany, place trust in political institutions, the same can be said of approx. one in three of the young people who do not feel disadvantaged. Feeling disadvantaged apparently encourages reserve towards Europe.

Although the percentage of East Germans expressing solidarity with Europe was considerably lower than that of West Germans even in 2003 (cf. Table 2), there are only minor East-West differences when it comes to the trust young people place in European institutions. The percentage of young people, who say they place a large amount of trust in European institutions is only 4 % lower in East Germany than in West Germany, with the differences in the subjective ability to judge being equally small.

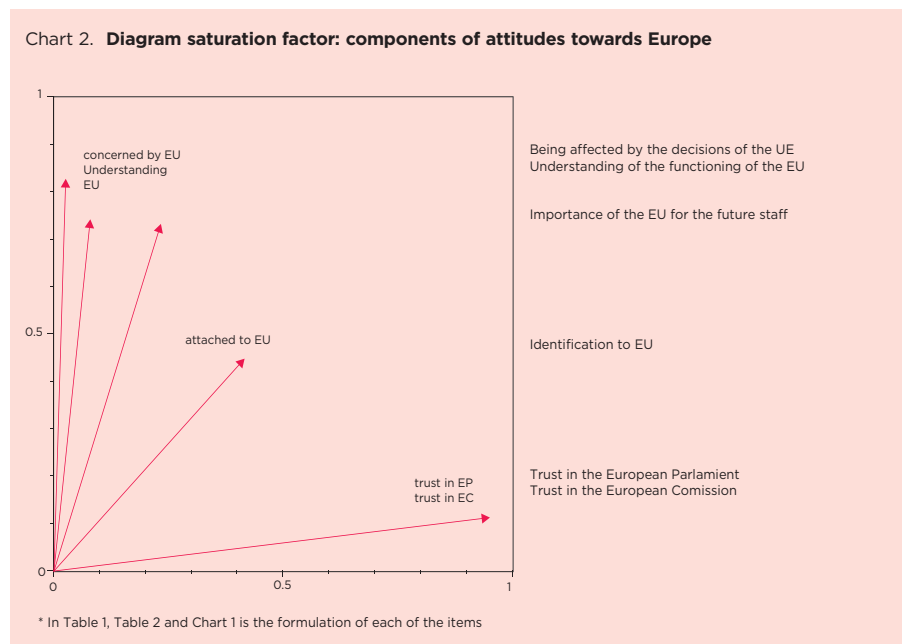
The DJI Youth Survey data allow changes in the amount of trust placed in European institutions to be analysed with the help of a comparison between 1997 and 2003. Analysis reveals that both trust and subjective assessment have increased slightly over this period of time, in particular in East Germany.

Links between attitudes towards Europe, feeling of attachment to Europe and trust in European institutions

The three aspects of young people's attitudes towards Europe addressed in the DJI Youth Survey (cf. Table 1) together, constitute a single attitudinal

dimension. (9) They include awareness of the significance of Europe, and thus of the processes of European unification, accompanied by awareness of the political significance of and understanding for Europe as a political entity. To be sure, only one element of possible attitudes towards Europe that might be important for a sustainable Europe, for example, as a political self-image as Europeans and a certain feeling of civic solidarity, is covered in this way (cf. Habermas, 2004, p. 57). Among adolescents and young adults, these attitudinal aspects may be regarded as favourable prerequisites for their coming to grips with Europe as a political community in the future.

Can the other two aspects of attitudes, e.g. ties with the European Union and trust in the political institutions of the EU be combined with these attitudes towards Europe? Whether a single dimension can be formed from the above characteristics or whether they are better described by two or several separate dimensions was investigated in a principal components analysis.



(9) An empirical analysis of one-dimensionality reveals a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.69 for the three attitudes towards Europe.

(10) Together, the two dimensions explain 67 % of overall variance; the loadings of the aspects on these two dimensions according to varimax rotation (forming the coordinates in Figure 2) are as follows: Trust in the European Parliament .95/.11, Trust in the European Commission .95/.11, Feeling affected by EU decisions .03/.82, Understanding how EU works .08/.74, Europe important for future .23/.73, Feeling solidarity with the European Union .41/.45.

The principal components analysis (PCA) in fact produces a two-dimensional relational structure between the characteristics. (10) Figure 2 shows a loading plot of the variables on the two dimensions. The proximity of the two vectors to one another (more precisely: the angle between them) corresponds to mutual relationships or distances (for loading plot interpretation, cf. Schnell 1994, p. 168, Tabachnick/Fidell 1996, p. 675 et seq.). The three items of attitude towards Europe are closely related, forming a single dimension. A high level of trust in European institutions, by contrast, constitutes an independent dimension. This level of trust probably reflects how young people perceive and evaluate the narrower political sector, which is structured by these institutions and activates, as policy of «remote» Brussels or Strasbourg, other attitude segments than those that concern the significance of Europe for their own lives, which is of a more diffuse nature.

A feeling of solidarity, in turn, seems to include sub-aspects of this link with the EU, as indicated by moderate empirical relations with the two distinguishable areas of attitude. In line with the above, this position is situated between the two other bundles of variables in the figure.

It is thus impossible to speak of a homogeneous complex of «attitudes towards the EU», instead various aspects thus have to be considered. (11) The dimension of attitudes towards Europe consisting of the following elements will be examined more closely below: the extent to which young people feel affected by the EU, their understanding of how the EU works and their assessment of the importance of Europe for their future.

Factors that foster orientations towards Europe?

What factors foster a pro-EU position? A number of features that may be regarded as skills for coping with an increasingly complex modern society characterised by economic globalisation and the factual relevance of European unification processes are addressed below. In this context, the aspects that proved to be closely interrelated in the above section, will be taken as attitudes towards the EU (see Table 1).

Which attitudes and skills can influence such EU orientations? Four characteristics will be examined in more detail below: the first is interest in politics. Europe is a political entity involving complicated functional mechanisms and repeated presence in the political media. For young people who are more interested in politics in general –without necessarily focusing on European or global politics– Europe will thus be more important than for young people who are not very interested in politics. Greater interest in Europe can also be assumed in young people with higher educational qualifications, who have spent many years in general educational institutions such as high schools (Gymnasium) or technical colleges (Fachoberschule). These institutions focus more on European perspectives in their curricula and are also more likely to offer possibilities of direct exchange, such as school exchanges or trips to other European countries. The fact that languages are more intensively and comprehensively taught at these schools, for example, contributes to a broadening of the horizon through European perspectives. Knowledge of several languages, should be seen as an additional characteristic, even if it is strongly associated with the length of school education (cf. Fuss et al., 2004).

Last but not least, confidence in one's own scope of action should also be included among those characteristics that may have a positive effect on EU attitudes. Such confidence was conceived as a person's «internal locus of control» and confidence that own actions and endeavours play a central role in influencing the sense of their lives, i.e. their belief, that goals and objectives can be achieved through their own abilities and efforts, irrespective of fate, chance or luck (Jacoby & Jacob, 1999). Such confidence concerning the reliability of one's own scope of action might also promote a broader horizon that includes the EU as a relevant field for one's interests and activities –this, at least, is the assumption made in this article.

Two further characteristics that can be assumed to influence young people's attitudes towards Europe also will be examined. First, on a personal level, the feeling of general uncertainty or disorientation, which tends to have an inhibiting effect, of course. This is a feeling of living in a world with an

(11)

Our data do not empirically support the theory of a conflict between EU orientations and national feelings or attitudes, also discussed by Westle, 2003. To be proud of being German has hardly any association with any of the three aspects of EU orientation (all correlations being under .05). National pride is thus independent from attitudes towards Europe.

«uncertain» future and, was treated as a consequence of processes of disintegration, i.e. the disadvantages of individualisation, by Heitmeyer, above all (Heitmeyer et al., 1995, Heitmeyer, 1997). As a subjective reaction to societal changes associated with uncertainty and disorientation concerning the ability to plan and pessimistic views of the future, this feeling may also stand in the way of openness towards Europe and European development processes. The second aspect, assessment of democracy, is more on the evaluative level.

Finally, Westle provided empirical proof that democratic action and satisfaction with democratic processes strengthen a sense of solidarity with the European community. She concluded that citizens' satisfaction with democracy in the EU and in their own country is an important requirement for identification with these two political structures (Westle, 2003). This being the case, this article examines the extent to which satisfaction with the democracy of one's own country strengthens a pro-European position.

The question of how the above characteristics influence attitudes towards Europe is investigated below. In this context, interactions, rather than clear causal relationships, must probably be expected. A better knowledge of foreign languages, for example, should not be interpreted as a clear «cause» of a more pro-EU position because it can also be assumed, on the other hand, that awareness of the significance of the EU motivates people to learn foreign languages.

(12)

Variables were constructed as follows: Strong EU orientations: percentage of young people interviewed who gave 4-6 points on the scale for all three items (cf. Table 1). Political interest: question "How strong is your interest in politics?": "strong", when answer options "very strong" or "strong" were selected, "moderate/low", when answer options "average", "very little" or "not at all" were selected. Educational qualifications: "Abitur" means university or university of applied sciences qualification, "MR/HS" means intermediate or basic school leaving qualifications. Trust in ability to determine the course of one's own life: Mean sum score of 3 items ("I like to take responsibility", "It has turned out to be better for me to make decisions myself than to depend on fate", "When I am faced with problems or obstacles, I usually find ways and means to be successful"; Answer scale from 1 "does not apply at all" to 6 "completely applies"); "high": values exceeding 5, "moderate/low": values up to 5 (these dichotomisation was chosen since values 1 to 3 only received a small number of answers). Language skills: question: "Which languages (besides German) do you know so well that you can converse with others? 10 possible languages,

Table 4. **Determinants of attitudes towards Europe (OLS regression)**

| Predictors | Beta (standardized coefficient) |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>Gender (male)</i> | .09 |
| <i>Age</i> | .04 |
| <i>West-East (West)</i> | .06 |
| <i>Member clubs or organizations</i> | .05 |
| <i>Educational qualifications</i> | .15 |
| <i>Knowledge of languages</i> | .09 |
| <i>Interest in politics</i> | .24 |
| <i>Confidence in the ability to defirmir the course of one's life</i> | .13 |
| <i>Disorientation</i> | -.08 |
| <i>Satisfaction with democracy</i> | .11 |
| Explained variance (R²) | .25 |

Source: Youth Surveys 2003 DJI
Definition of factors and level of pronouncement, see Note 12

First of all, clear associations with orientations towards the EU can be ascertained for all characteristics: a pronounced interest in politics, higher educational qualifications, a large amount of trust in one's ability to influence the course of one's life, satisfaction with democracy and knowledge of several foreign languages have a positive influence on EU attitudes. Table 4 shows the standardised regression coefficients for European orientations in relation to the above characteristics. Other control variables include gender, age, regional living situation in the old and new German *Länder* and membership in clubs and associations.

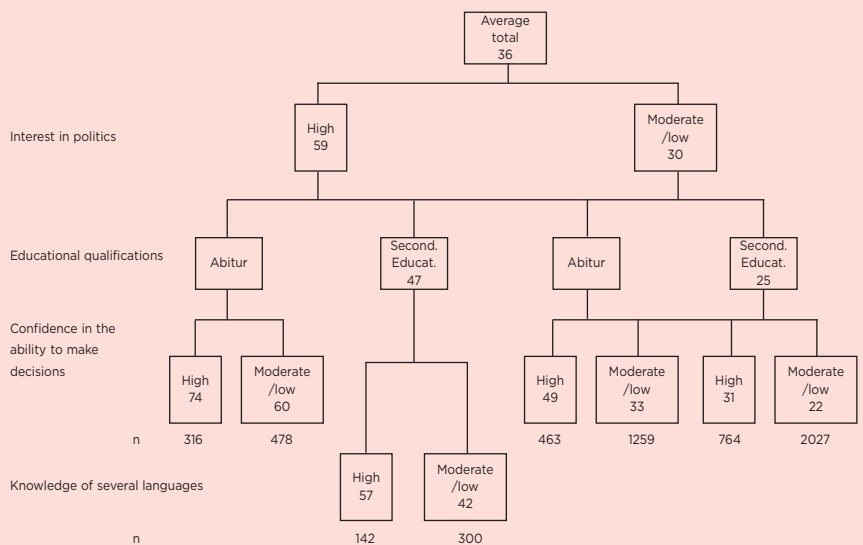
It can be seen that the competence characteristics addressed have a pronounced influence. Satisfaction with democracy also exerts a considerable influence, which may be considered as a confirmation of Westle's hypothesis.

Below, the article will focus above all on those characteristics that can be seen as competencies that foster pro-European attitudes, i.e. educational qualifications, interest in politics, internal locus of control (i.e. trust in one's ability to influence the course of one's life) and knowledge of foreign languages. Contrast groups were compared to obtain a simplified picture of the joint effects of these variables. In Figure 3, these characteristics were dichotomised; the percentage of young people with a highly positive attitude towards the EU is indicated in each sub-group defined by these characteristics or combinations thereof. (12) The sample is hereby broken down according to the extent of the above characteristics, and the percentage of young people with a highly positive attitude towards the EU is identified in each resultant group. Each of the groups formed at the lowest level of the breakdown is thus characterised by different combinations of the variables examined here. (13)

“high”: more than one other language, “moderate/low”: at most one additional language. – (For the purpose of regression, variables were not used in dichotomized form).
 Uncertainty or disorientation: Sum index of one of the following three items: A. Nowadays everything has become so uncertain, that one has to be prepared for anything. B. Today everything changes so fast that one doesn't know what to rely to C. People were better off before, because everyone knew what he or she had to do. Answer options are: 1=not true at all, 2=somewhat untrue, 3=somewhat true, 4=completely true. Satisfaction with democracy. Question: «All in all, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the democracy found in the Federal Republic?» – Answer options: Very satisfied - Quite satisfied - Somewhat satisfied - Somewhat dissatisfied - Quite dissatisfied - Very dissatisfied - Don't know.

(13)
 Breakdown was effected with the «SPSS Answer Tree» software. The CHAID algorithm was used as criterion for successive breakdown, starting from the «Overall average» cell, which, on the basis of chi-square statistics, selects the most discriminating characteristics at every further level.

Chart 3. Attitudes towards the EU, as interest in politics, educational qualifications, confidence in the ability to make decisions and knowledge of languages (The percentages quoted refer to positive attitudes towards the EU)



Source: Youth Surveys 2003 DJI
 Definition of factors and level of pronouncement, see Note 12

Interest in politics is clearly one of the most differentiating characteristics. 59 % of people with a pronounced interest in politics have a positive attitude towards the EU, while the same can be said of only 30 % of people with a moderate or small interest in politics, a difference of 29 %. The level of education comes into play at the next level. As many as 66 % of people with a pronounced interest in politics and university-entry qualifications (Abitur) have

a positive attitude towards the EU, in contrast to 47 % among young people with intermediate leaving qualifications at the most. The corresponding values for people who are less interested in politics are clearly lower, whereby an education-related effect can still be seen (38 % versus 25 %).

Finally, as the third most important characteristic, trust in one's internal locus of control, is also included. In people with a pronounced interest in politics and high educational qualifications, this aspect further strengthens a pro-EU position. 74 % of those who, in addition to the above combination of characteristics, also have a large amount of trust in their own abilities to determine the course of their lives have a very pro-EU position, while the same can be said for only 60 % of young people with a small amount of trust. Approval of the EU is lowest, i.e. only 22 %, in the group of young people with a low level of interest in politics, a low level of educational qualifications and a low level of trust in their abilities to determine the course of their own lives. Noteworthy is the fact that 49 % of the group with a low level of interest in politics but a high level of education and high internal locus of control have a pro-EU position, considerably more than the overall average (36 %, top cell). High educational qualifications and a high level of self-confidence may lead to recognition of the importance of the EU, even in young people with a low level of political interest. The figure also shows that low educational qualifications in people with a pronounced political interest may be compensated by a high level of language skills. 57% of those in this group have a positive attitude towards the EU. In other groups, knowledge of several languages, which represents the next level, does not have any additional effects; i.e. the groups are not further subdivided in Figure 3.

Overall, multivariate analysis confirms the effects of the examined characteristics on positive perception of EU significance, with interest in politics producing the most pronounced differences, followed by level of education which results in the second most pronounced differences and trust in one's ability to determine the course of one's life ranking third on the list. As already mentioned, these aspect should be seen more as characteristics, factors acting in a mutually reinforcing, dynamic manner and not so much as clearly directed causal relationships. Within this context, the combinations at the two opposing ends of the scale are 74 % (high interest in politics, educational qualifications, internal locus of control) and 22 % (moderate to low levels in each case). It must be noted, however, that case numbers in the «high level» groups were generally smaller than in the «low-end» groups.

Summary and outlook

Attitudes towards Europe have many aspects and cannot be covered by a single dimension. Within this context, a distinction must be made between sceptical attitudes towards the political sphere in the narrow sense of the word and a tendency towards pro European attitudes as far as one's own plans for life are concerned. The attitudes towards Europe of adolescents and young adults show that the majority of the upcoming generation in Germany is indeed aware of the significance of Europe and the processes of European unification and recognises the importance of Europe as a political entity. A positive attitude towards Europe, however, is clearly more pronounced in West than in East Germany, but has been on the rise since 1997.

When it came to evaluating European institutions, however, a considerable percentage of the young interviewees lacked the confidence to do so, thus confirming the frequent complaints about a deficit in information about the institutional procedures and the possibilities of participation within the European context. Those, however, who had the confidence to do so, considered the Brussels and Strasbourg-based European institutions even more credible than the corresponding German institutions, namely the German government and the lower house of the German parliament (Bundestag).

A high level of interest in politics, a higher educational level, trust in one's ability to determine one's course of life and language skills are associated with pro-EU positions. Even in those who are not very interested in politics, a higher level of education and awareness of the efficacy of their own actions may result in a high level of recognition of the importance of Europe. A lower level of education, however, is not necessarily associated with a reserved attitude towards Europe, as it may be compensated by interest in politics and language skills.

The results presented here thus indeed provide evidence confirming the assumption of the development of multilingual European functional elites, which was formulated by Lepsius. Since this assumption only applies to a certain percentage of the younger generation, however, the following question arises: what about the others, who run the risk of being among the losers of modernisation processes. In this connection, people excluded from inclusion processes on both the political and economic level may face a further serious problem (Blossfeld et al., 2005).

European unification is a lengthy process. Whereas older people have accompanied every step of this unification process, young people growing up in Europe today experience Europe as a complex and dynamic scope for political processes and individual action. Competences and the ability to seize opportunities during adolescence help them to make the most of this scope for action and the possibility of developing European awareness. A feeling of disadvantage and lack of access to the more far-reaching possibilities of supra-regional and supra-national integration, however, have a limiting effect on a positive European image. For this reason too, a higher level of education, in particular political education, and the fostering of individual competencies are important for the sustainability of future generations.

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