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EUROPEANS AND LANGUAGES

REPORT

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FOR

The Education and Culture Directorate-General

MANAGED AND ORGANISED BY

The Education And Culture Directorate-General  
Unit « Centre for the citizen -  
Analysis of public opinion»

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This public opinion survey, managed and organised by the European Commission's Education and Culture Directorate-General, "Centre for the citizen -- Analysis of public opinion" Unit, was conducted on behalf of the Education and Culture DG's "Language policy" Unit.

The survey was conducted in all the Member at States of the European Union between 6 and 23 December 2000, under the general coordination of INRA (EUROPE) - European Coordination Office in Brussels.

The questionnaire, the names of the institutes involved and the technical specifications are contained in the Annexes.

The European Commission disclaims all responsibility for the report's contents.

The original language of this report is French.

## Introduction

The survey analysed in this report was conducted in the 15 Member States between 30 November and 24 December 2000 as part of Eurobarometer<sup>1</sup> 54, at the request of the European Commission's Education and Culture Directorate-General.

The survey was managed and organised by the Education and Culture DG's "Centre for the citizen - Analysis of public opinion" Unit.

The report analyses language knowledge in the countries of the European Union. It is divided into chapters covering the following aspects:

- Languages known
- Languages deemed useful to know
- Use of foreign languages
- How Europeans have learned these languages
- Language learning
- Reasons for learning or not learning a language
- Opinions on language knowledge and learning

The questions were put to a representative sample of the national population aged 15 years and over in each Member State. In total, 16,078 persons were questioned, i.e. an average of approximately 1000 persons per Member State, except for Germany (2.000, composed of 1.000 in the new Länder and 1.000 in the old Länder), the United Kingdom (1.300, composed of 1.000 in Great Britain and 300 in Northern Ireland) and Luxembourg (600).

The figures given for the European Union as a whole (EU 15) are a weighted average of the national figures. For each Member State, the weighting used is the ratio of the national population aged over 15 to the corresponding Community population (cf. Technical specifications annexed).

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<sup>1</sup> Eurobarometer surveys, or more precisely "Standard Eurobarometer surveys" have been conducted since 1973 (EB No. 0) for what used to be Directorate-General X of the European Commission, now known as the Education and Culture Directorate-General. They have included Greece since autumn 1980, Portugal and Spain since autumn 1985, East Germany since autumn 1990 and Austria, Finland and Sweden since spring 1995.

The technical specifications annexed give details of the methodology (survey dates, selection of the sample, population covered, weighting, confidence limits, etc.).

Some of the terms used in these technical specifications should perhaps be explained: marginal weighting is weighting based on a single variable, such as age or sex, while cross-weighting is based on cross-referencing two variables, such as age and sex. The NUTS regions are a classification of the regions of the European Union based on a three-level hierarchical structure. Eurobarometer is weighted on the basis of the NUTS 2 regions. It should also be noted that the percentages shown in the graphs in the report and in the tables annexed to the report may add up to more than 100% in cases where questions may have more than one answer. Similarly, some totals may be approximate to but not exactly 100% (e.g. 99% or 101%) due to rounding of figures.

The following abbreviations are used for the Member States:

B	Belgium
DK	Denmark
WD	old Länder
D	Germany
OD	new Länder
GR	Greece
E	Spain
F	France
IRL	Ireland
I	Italy
L	Luxembourg
NL	Netherlands
A	Austria
P	Portugal
FIN	Finland
S	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom

The distinction between the old and new German *Länder*, introduced when East Germany was first included in the countries covered by Eurobarometer in autumn 1990, has been retained in spite of Germany's re-unification, because it reflects an often clear division of opinion between the two territories.

The abbreviation used for the European Union as a whole is "EU 15". The abbreviation "DKn" stands for "Don't know".

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# REPORT

# 1 Languages known

## 1.1 Mother tongue

In each Member State the language cited most often as the mother tongue is the national language (or one of the national languages when there is more than one). The highest rates are in Portugal (100%), followed by Italy and Greece (99% each).

Four new items were introduced<sup>2</sup> into the pre-coded list of languages<sup>3</sup>, namely Irish, Luxembourgish, Turkish and sign language.

While this did not significantly affect the overall results for EU 15, the inclusion of these four languages highlights the fact that a significant proportion of the Irish population regards Irish as its mother tongue (14%), and that 62% of Luxembourgers regard Luxembourgish as their mother tongue.

Sign language, however, is cited as mother tongue by an infinitesimal proportion of Europeans (just 2 individuals in the survey). Turkish is the mother tongue of 2% of the population of the old German Länder and Belgium, and of 1% of the population of Greece and the Netherlands.

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<sup>2</sup> This same question was asked a year ago in Eurobarometer 52.0.

<sup>3</sup> These items are not shown to the respondents. However, the questioner can make use of a pre-coded list of languages for coding the responses.

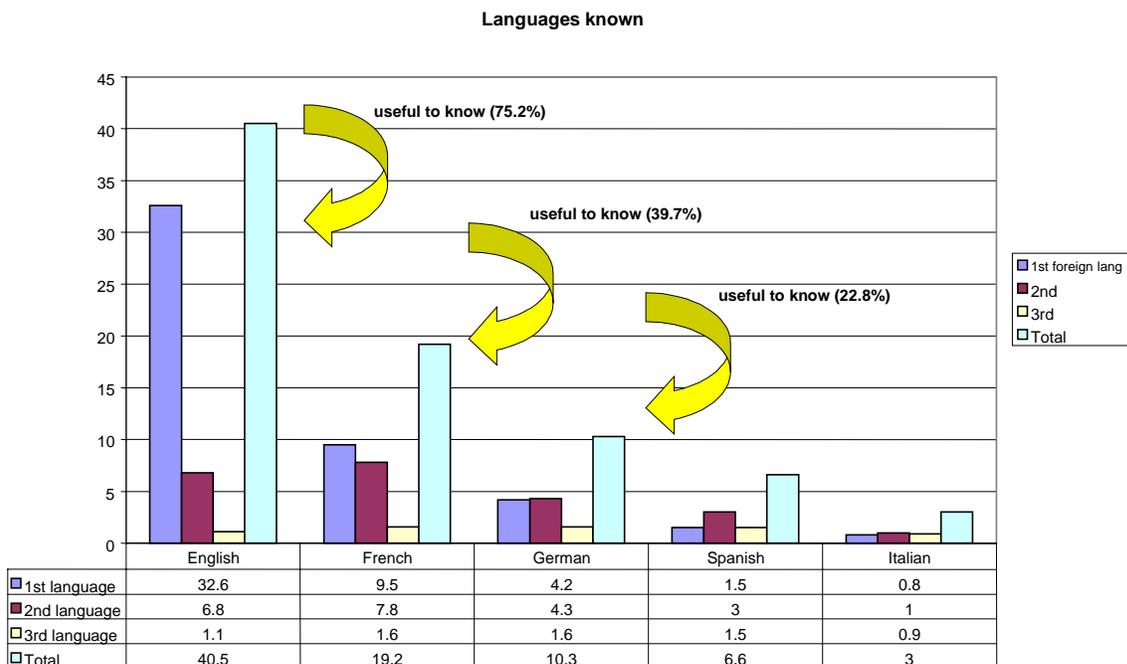
## 1.2 Other languages known

### 1.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

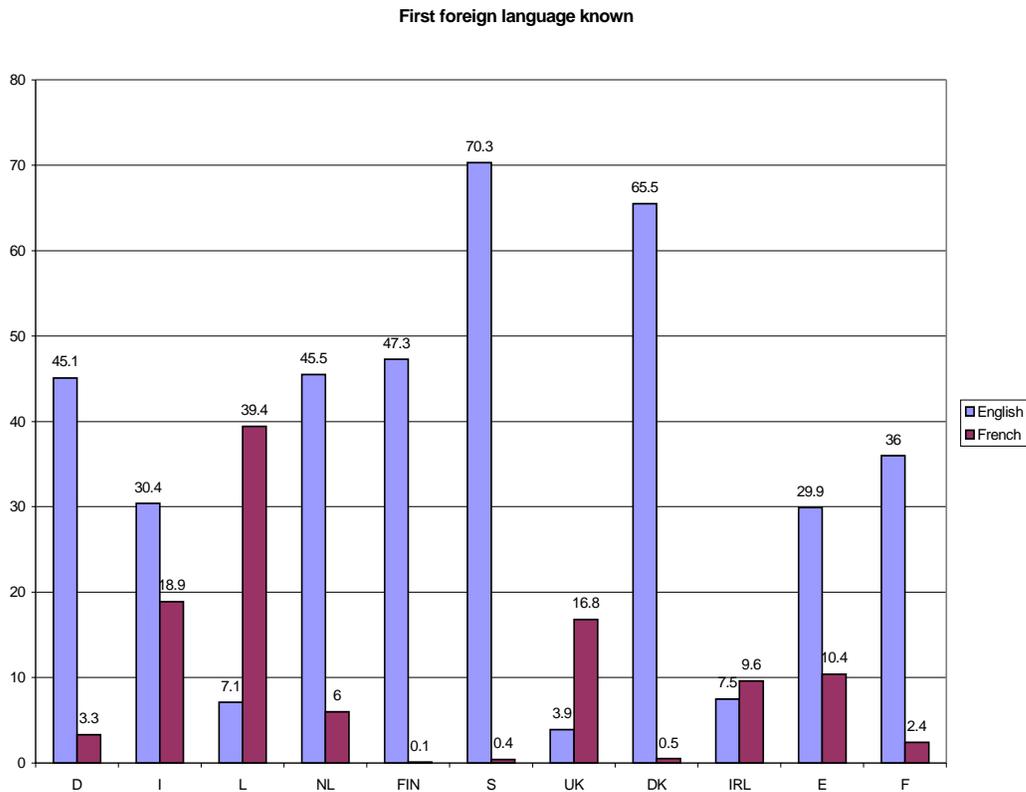
In addition to their mother tongue, the language most frequently known<sup>4</sup> by Europeans is English (41%), followed by French (19%), German (10%), Spanish (7%) and Italian (3%). 47% of Europeans claim to know only their mother tongue .

81% of Swedes, 80% of the Dutch and 78% of Danes claim to know English, compared with only 39% of Italians and 36% of Spaniards and Portuguese.

French is the most frequently known foreign language in the United Kingdom (22%) and Ireland (25%), while German is the most frequently known foreign language in the Netherlands (68%), Denmark (42%) and Sweden (36%).



English is the first foreign language most used by Europeans (70% in Sweden, 66% in Denmark and 47% in Finland, with an EU-15 average of 33%). Second comes French (19% in Italy, 17% in the United Kingdom, 14% in Portugal and 10% in Spain and Ireland, with an EU-15 average of 10%), third German (28% in the Netherlands and 18% in Denmark, with an EU-15 average of 4%) and fourth Spanish (3% in France and the United Kingdom, with an EU-15 average of 2%).



74% of European citizens do not know a second foreign language. However, 8% know French in addition to their mother tongue and their first foreign language, and 7% know English.

<sup>4</sup> These figures represent a total percentage, with no distinction made as to whether the language in question is the first, second, third or fourth language known after the mother tongue.

### 1.2.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The tendency to know other languages in addition to the mother tongue diminishes with age. Thus, 66% of the 15-24 year-olds claim to speak English, compared with 53% of the 25-39 year-olds, 38% of the 40-54 year-olds and 18% of the over-55s. This same pattern applies whatever the language.

The higher the level of education, the greater the likelihood of knowing another language. Knowledge of another language is therefore proportionally highest among students (78%), managers (67%) and white-collar workers (59%), and lowest among pensioners (17%) and house persons (27%).

If we consider just the first foreign language known, English follows exactly the same pattern as described above. The differences between age groups, education levels or socio-professional categories are less marked for the other languages. The only variable that still plays a relatively important role is education level, and this regardless of age. Thus, the higher the level of education, the greater the likelihood of speaking one or more foreign languages.

## 2 Languages deemed useful to know

### 2.1 The two most useful languages

#### 2.1.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

Europeans were asked which two languages they thought were most useful to know apart from their mother tongue. In all countries, English was mentioned as the most useful language to know (75%), followed by French (40%), German (23%) and Spanish (18%).

Remarkably, sign language was mentioned by 1% of Europeans as one of the two most useful languages to know, even though it is only known by 0.2% of citizens.

#### 2.1.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

English follows the same pattern as in the previous point (i.e. older persons are less likely to know English, the better educated are more likely to know English, those who know another foreign language are more likely also to know English, and knowledge of English is proportionally more frequent among students, managers and white-collar workers). The same goes for Spanish.

In contrast, French tends less to be regarded as useful by persons who stayed in education until at least age 20 than by those who ended their education at an earlier age (41% of those who ended their education before age 15, 42% of those who ended their education between age 16 and 19, and 34% of those who ended their education at age 20 or beyond, with an EU-15 average of 40%). Proportionally more manual workers (42%) and house persons (45%) believe that French is one of the two most useful languages to know.

German is mainly deemed a useful language to know by students and the self-employed (respectively 26% and 25%, against an EU-15 average of 23%). Those who least deem German useful to know are the unemployed (19%). The other variables produced no significant differences.

## 2.2 Usefulness of foreign languages

### 2.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

42% of Europeans believe that knowledge of foreign languages is or would be very useful to them personally, while 38% believe it would be fairly useful, 10% not very useful, 12% not at all useful, and 6% don't know.

Proportionally more Danes (97%), Greeks (91%), Luxembourgers (90%), and Swedes (89%) reply that knowledge of a foreign language is or would be very or fairly useful to them. In contrast, this view is shared by only 51% of citizens of the new German Länder (against a German national average of 62%) and 59% of Austrians.

39% of citizens of the new German Länder (against a German national average of 30%), 33% of Austrians and 31% of the Irish consider knowledge of a foreign language to be not very useful or not at all useful.

The "Don't know" rate is relatively high in Portugal (10%), the new German Länder (10%, against a German national average of 8%), Austria, Ireland and Luxembourg (9% each).

### 2.2.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The younger age-groups are more likely to regard knowledge of foreign languages as very useful or fairly useful. Thus, 87% of 15-24 year-olds share this view, compared with 78% of 25-39 year-olds and 76% of 40-54 year-olds. The over-55s are much less likely to share this view (57%, as against an EU-15 average of 72%).

Level of education is also a significant factor. The longer Europeans have stayed in education, the more they feel a knowledge of foreign languages is or would be very useful or fairly useful to them personally. Thus, only 56% of those who ended their education by the age of 15 share this view, with the rate rising fairly sharply thereafter to peak at 87% among those who remained in education until age 20 or beyond. The EU-15 average is 72%.

As could be expected from the previous results, students (92%) and managers (88%) are the most likely to think that a knowledge of languages is or would be very useful or fairly useful to them, compared with only 64% of house persons and 55% of pensioners.

These results are, of course, reversed in terms of those who consider a knowledge of foreign languages not very useful or not at all useful. The older generations and the less well-educated tend to take this view, which is therefore most common among pensioners (37%) and house persons (28%). And it is these two socio-professional categories who also have the highest "Don't know" rate.

## 3 Use of foreign languages

### 3.1 Level of knowledge

European citizens were asked to state their level of knowledge of the foreign languages that they claimed to know. They were offered three levels to choose from: very good, good and elementary<sup>5</sup>.

We decided to analyse the four languages mentioned most often, as analysis of these four was deemed likely to be most productive, i.e. English, French, German and Spanish.

#### 3.1.1 English

##### 3.1.1.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

Of the persons claiming to know English<sup>6</sup> in addition to their mother tongue, i.e. 41% of the Europeans questioned, 14% claim to have a very good level, 33% a good level and 29% an elementary level.

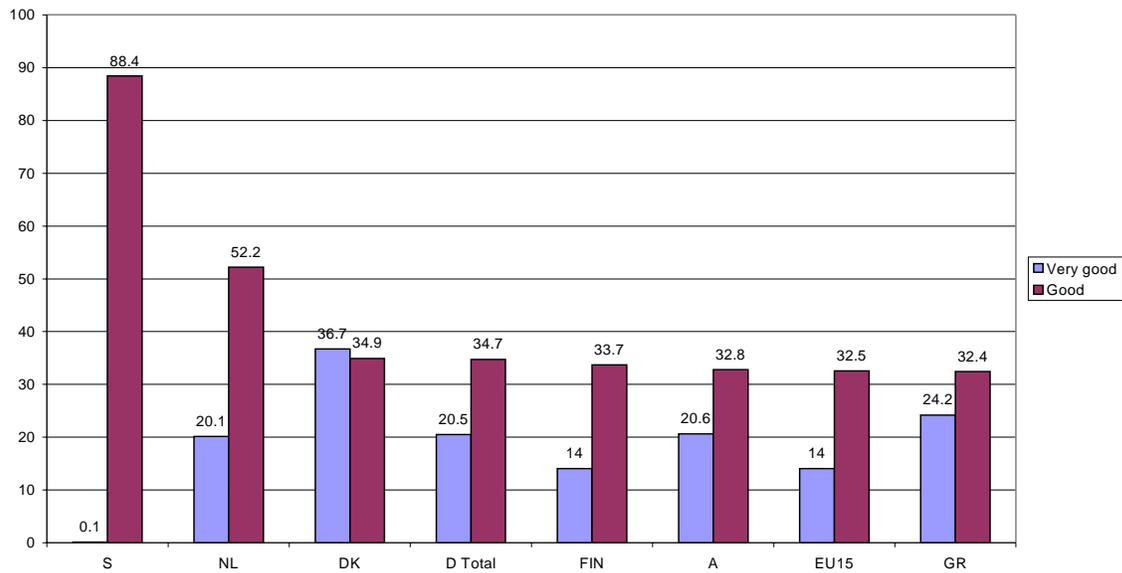
Of those claiming a very good level, the Danes are well out in front (37%), followed by the Greeks (24%), citizens of the old Länder (23%, as against a German national average of 21%), the Belgians and Austrians (21% each) and the Dutch (20%). The least numerous claiming a very good level are the Italians (6%) and the Swedes (0%).

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<sup>5</sup> The definitions of these levels can be found on the last page of the questionnaire annexed.

<sup>6</sup> All the rates shown relate to persons who counted English among the languages known after their mother tongue.

Level of English



In contrast, Swedes lead the field in claiming a good level of English (88%), followed by the Dutch (52%), the French (36%), the Germans and the Danes (35% each). The lowest rates are in Luxembourg (27%) and Spain (23%).

44% of Spaniards claim to have an elementary knowledge of English, as do 43% of citizens of the new German Länder (against a German national average of 33%) and 41% of Finns. Not a single Swede claims to have an elementary knowledge (0%).

### 3.1.1.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The longer European citizens have remained in education the more likely they are to claim a very good knowledge of English (7% of those who ended their education by age 15, 10% of those who ended their education between ages 16 and 19, and 22% of those who stayed in education until age 20 or older). In socio-professional terms, managers most frequently claim to have very good English (27%), contrasting with manual workers (8%).

The number of persons claiming a good level of English reduces with age and increases with level of education. 38% of citizens aged between 15 and 24 claim to have a good level, compared with 25% of the over-55s. And only 18% of persons who ended their education by age 15 claim to have a good level of English, compared with 39% of those who stayed in education until age 20 or older. As regards socio-professional categories, students, of course, lead the field (45%), followed by managers (37%), white-collar workers (35%) and self-employed persons (33%).

The proportion of respondents claiming an elementary level of English is slightly lower among those who stayed in education until age 20 or over, and slightly higher among those who ended their education between ages 16 and 19 (respectively 24% and 34%, as against a European average of 29%). The over-55s are those who least frequently claim to have an elementary level of English (21%). It is no surprise, therefore, that only 22% of pensioners claim to have an elementary knowledge. However, the lowest figure is that for managers (20%). The highest figure is that for manual workers (38%).

## 3.1.2 French

### 3.1.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

Of those Europeans claiming a knowledge of French in addition to their mother tongue<sup>7</sup>, 4% claim to have a very good level. Of this 4%, 38% are Luxembourgers, 22% Belgians and 11% Portuguese. At the bottom end of the scale are the Swedes, with virtually no mentions.

12% of Europeans who know French in addition to their mother tongue claim to have a good level. The same three countries head the list, with 43% in Luxembourg, 26% in Belgium and 21% in Portugal. Italy follows close behind with 20%. The lowest rate is in Finland (1%).

20% of Europeans who know French in addition to their mother tongue claim to have an elementary level. 49% of British citizens with a knowledge of French claim to have an elementary level, as do 36% of Portuguese and 33% of Italians. Not a single Swede mentioning French among his/her languages claims to have an elementary level.

### 3.1.2.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The older Europeans are, and the longer they stayed in education, the more likely they are to claim a very good level of French. Proportionally, managers and white-collar workers have the highest figures (respectively 8% and 6%).

The 25-39 age-group is lightly less likely than average to claim a good level of French (10%), and the over-55s slightly more likely (14%). The longer the time spent in education, the more likely the claim to have a good level of French. The socio-professional categories most claiming to have a good level of French are the self-employed (17%) and students (14%), with the unemployed at the bottom end of the scale (only 6%).

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<sup>7</sup> All the rates shown relate to persons who counted French among the languages known after their mother tongue.

As regards Europeans claiming to have an elementary level of French, there are very few differences in socio-demographic terms. We would merely observe that those having studied to the age of 20 or beyond are slightly less likely to claim an elementary level.

### 3.1.3 German

#### 3.1.3.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

5% of Europeans claiming to know one or more other languages in addition to their mother tongue claim to have German to a very good level. Some countries have very high response rates for this, such as Luxembourg (35%), followed a long way back by the Netherlands and Denmark (9%). At the other end of the scale are Sweden and Portugal, with rates of almost 0%.

The Luxembourgers are also proportionally more likely to claim a good level of German (45%, compared with an EU-15 average of 9%). They are followed by the Swedes and the Dutch (39% each) and the Danes (26%). Only 2% of Spaniards claim to have a good level of German.

Of those Europeans claiming at least one foreign language, 9% claim to have an elementary level of German. The highest rates are in Denmark (40%), followed by the Netherlands (29%) and Finland (25%). As with French, not a single Swede claims to have an elementary level of German.

#### 3.1.3.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

As regards those claiming a very good level of German, analysis of the socio-demographic variables shows little in the way of significant variations. The most that can be said is that manual workers are proportionally slightly more likely to claim a very good level (7%, compared with an EU-15 average of 5%).

The older the respondents, the more likely they are to claim a good level of German (7% of the 15-24 age-group, 9% of the 25-39 age-group, 10% of the 40-55 age-group, and 11% of the over-55s). Education-wise, those who ended their education between ages 16 and 19 are the least likely to claim a good level of German (7%), while those who stayed in education until age 20 or

beyond are the most likely (12%). Proportionally more pensioners and students claim to have a good level of German.

As regards persons claiming to have an elementary level of German, there are few significant differences in terms of the socio-demographic variables.

### 3.1.4 Spanish

#### 3.1.4.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

Of the Europeans who know one or more other languages in addition to their native tongue, 2% claim to have a very good level of Spanish, 4% a good level and 7% an elementary level.

5% of the French claim to have a very good level of Spanish, whereas the response is close to 0% in four countries (Sweden, Finland, Ireland and Luxembourg). To these should be added the new German Länder (0%, against a German national average of 1%).

Of those claiming a good level of Spanish, the French again lead the field (12%), followed by the Portuguese (8%) and the Swedes (7%). Not a single Finn claims to have a good knowledge of Spanish, and the Greek response rate is also very close to 0%.

Of those claiming to have an elementary knowledge of Spanish, it is again the French who lead the field (15%), followed by the United Kingdom (13%) and Portugal (12%). Again, as with the previous languages, not a single Swede claimed to have an elementary knowledge of Spanish.

### 3.1.4.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

Analysis of those claiming a very good level of Spanish reveals no significant variations in terms of socio-demographic variables.

As regards those claiming a good level of Spanish, the response rate is slightly higher among those who stayed in education until age 20 or beyond (6%). As might be expected, the highest results in terms of socio-professional category are for students (7%) and managers (6%).

Again in terms of education, the response rate for those claiming an elementary level of Spanish is higher among persons who stayed in education until age 20 or beyond (10%). However, in terms of socio-occupational category, the groups most frequently claiming an elementary level of Spanish are the unemployed (11%) and the self-employed (10%).

## 3.2 Frequency of use

Persons claiming to use one or more foreign languages were asked to say how frequently they use them: at least one hour a day, at least one hour a week, or occasionally (for example during trips abroad or with foreign visitors).

### 3.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

- **Languages used at least one hour a day**

14% of Europeans knowing at least one other language in addition to their mother tongue use English at least one hour a day, while 3% use French or German at least one hour a day, and 1% use Spanish or Dutch at least one hour a day.

Of those who use English at least one hour a day, the Dutch lead the field (23%), closely followed by the Danes (21%) and the Finns and Swedes (20%). At the other end of the scale are the French (8%).

French is used at least one hour a day by 58% of Luxembourgers, 22% of Belgians and 7% of the Irish. And of those who use German at least one hour a day, the Luxembourgers again lead the field (14%), followed by the Dutch (6%). 3% of the French use Spanish at least one hour a day, while 7% of Belgians use Dutch.

- **Languages used at least one hour a week**

15% of Europeans knowing at least one other language in addition to their mother tongue use English at least one hour a week, while 4% use French, 2% use German, and 1% use Spanish or Italian.

English is used at least one hour a week by 28% of Finns, 23% of Swedes, 22% of the Dutch and 21% of Austrians. At the other end of the scale, 11% of Danes and 12% of Greeks use English at least one hour a week.

French is used at least one hour a week by 23% of Luxembourgers, 13% of Belgians and 7% of Portuguese, but by only 1% of Danes and Finns.

German is used at least one hour a week by 25% of Luxembourgers, 11% of the Dutch and 5% of Belgians and Finns. The French and Portuguese lead the field for using Spanish at least one hour a week (4% each), as do the Luxembourgers and the Austrians for Italian (4%).

- **Languages used occasionally**

English is used occasionally, for example during trips abroad or with foreign visitors, by 35% of Europeans who know one or more languages in addition to their mother tongue. The second most common language used occasionally is French (19%), followed by German (11%), Spanish (7%) and Italian (3%). Swedish, Dutch, Portuguese, Greek and Arabic all achieve scores of around 1%.

English is most frequently used occasionally by the Danes (56%), followed by the Greeks (50%), the Swedes (47%) and the French (44%).

French is most frequently used occasionally by the British (58%), the Portuguese (42%), the Dutch (26%) and the Belgians (25%), German by the Danes and the Dutch (respectively 57% and 45%), Spanish by the British and the French (16% each) and the Portuguese (14%).

### 3.2.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

Just as education and age correlate with knowledge of foreign languages, so do they also with frequency of use.

- **Languages used at least once a day**

Of Europeans knowing at least one language in addition to their mother tongue, proportionally more men than women use English at least one hour a day (16% men, 12% women), and proportionally more younger people than older people (22% of 15-24 year-olds, 12% of 25-39 year-olds, 13% of 40-54 year-olds, and 8% of over-50s). The higher the level of education, the greater the likelihood of speaking English at least one hour per day. Thus, students and managers lead the field (31% and 18% respectively), while house persons are at the bottom end of the scale (6%).

There are no particularly noticeable socio-demographic determinants regarding the other languages, apart, perhaps, from the fact that students are slightly more likely to speak French and Spanish at least one hour per day than the other socio-professional categories.

- **Languages used at least one hour a week**

The younger Europeans are, and the better educated, the more likely they are to use English at least one hour a week. Thus, students score highest in this respect (32%), followed by managers (22%) and white-collar workers (15%). The same patterns also apply to French, German and Spanish. There is just one small difference in the case of French: proportionally slightly fewer of the 25-39 age-group use it, and proportionally slightly fewer of those who ended their education between ages 16 and 19.

- **Languages used occasionally**

Occasional use of English is most common among the 25-39 age-group (40%, as against an EU-15 average of 35%), among the better educated (42% of those who stayed in education until age 20 or beyond), and, in socio-professional terms, among white-collar workers (41%), manual workers (40%) and self-employed persons (39%).

Occasional use of French increases with age and level of education. As regards socio-professional categories, managers (27%), pensioners (24%) and house persons (21%) are those who most commonly use French occasionally.

German tends most to be used occasionally by the over 55s and those who stayed in education until age 20 or beyond, by pensioners (17%), and by house persons and managers (12% each). The same pattern applies to Italian, with pensioners and the self-employed obtaining the highest scores for occasional use.

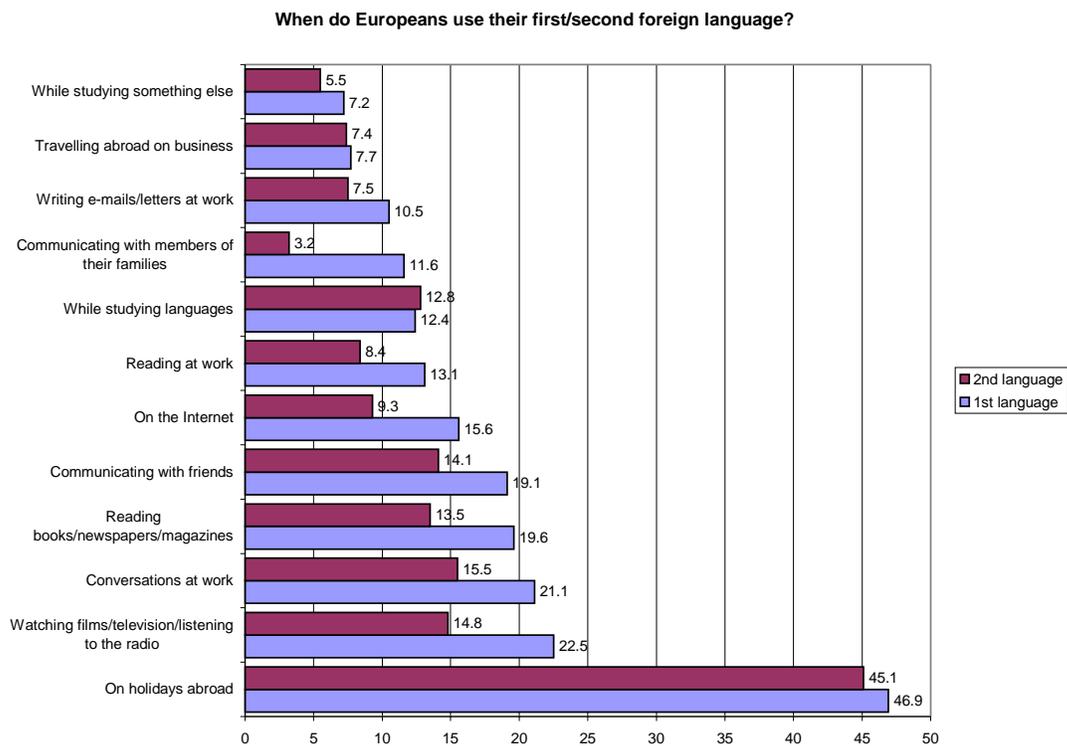
Occasional use of Spanish is commonest among those who studied until age 20 or beyond and those in the 40-54 age-group. 10% of managers and 8% of unemployed persons use Spanish occasionally.

### 3.3 Circumstances in which used

Europeans who claimed to speak at least one other language were asked to state in what circumstances they used their first foreign language after their mother tongue.

They were given twelve statements to choose from.

By far and away the most common circumstance in which Europeans use a foreign language is on holidays abroad. 47% of Europeans gave this answer.



### 3.3.1 Analysis by national variables

In the vast majority of cases the top three places are occupied by the same small group of countries, namely Finland, Luxembourg Sweden and Denmark.

Belgium features in the top three in three specific cases: conversations at work, communication with friends and communication with family members (respectively 35%, 29% and 21%). This has to do with Belgium's status as a trilingual country.

The Netherlands scores highly on three of the statements proposed: holidays abroad (60%), conversations at work (31%) and writing e-mails or letters at work (17%).

The United Kingdom and Ireland are in the top three for two statements: communicating with friends (respectively 26% and 25%) and communicating with family members (respectively 20% and 24%).

Spain and Portugal score highly on only one statement, namely "studying languages" (respectively 25% and 18%).

The citizens of the new German Länder occupy third place for the statement "studying subjects other than languages" (11%, compared with a German national average of 8%).

In all the other cases, it is the Nordic countries and Luxembourg that score highest.

At the other end of the scale, Italy has the lowest response rate on eight of the 12 statements proposed, Ireland on two of them ("on holidays" and "on the Internet": respectively 19% and 6%), France on one ("travelling on business abroad": 4%), and Austria on one ("studying subjects other than languages": 3%).

Looking at individual languages, whether this be the first or second language after the mother tongue, the circumstances in which Europeans use the main languages that they know (English, French, German, Spanish) are broadly the same.

The main circumstance in which a foreign language is used is "on holidays abroad", followed by "conversations at work", "watching films/television/listening to the radio" and "communicating with friends". English is also used a lot on the Internet and for reading books/newspapers/

magazines. Overall, the countries with the highest scores for the various languages analysed are the Nordic countries, plus Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium.

Overall, the same patterns are observed for the other main languages spoken by Europeans in addition to their mother tongue.

### 3.3.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The various statements proposed break down into three main groups in terms of the determining socio-demographic variables:

The first group, "holidays abroad", "conversations at work", "reading at work" and "travelling on business abroad" shares the following pattern:

- men cited these more often than women
- the number of persons citing them increases between ages 15 and 54 and decreases from age 55 onwards
- the better educated were more likely to choose these statements
- those citing them most often were white-collar workers, self-employed persons and manual workers. Those citing them least often were house persons and pensioners.

The second group, "on the Internet", "language studies" and "other studies", shares the following pattern:

- men cited these more than women (with the exception of "language studies")
- the younger their age, the more likely are Europeans to cite these
- the longer they have continued in education, the more likely are Europeans to cite these
- students, therefore, cite them most often.

The third group, "watching films/television/listening to the radio" and "communicating with friends" is cited most often by:

- men
- 15-24 year-olds. The rates then reduce until age 24, after which they remain stable
- those who remain in education until age 20 or beyond (the lowest rates are for those who ended their education between ages 16 and 19)
- students, unemployed persons, house persons and manual workers.

The three remaining statements each have a slightly different response pattern, the only common point between them being that the higher the level of education the more often they were cited:

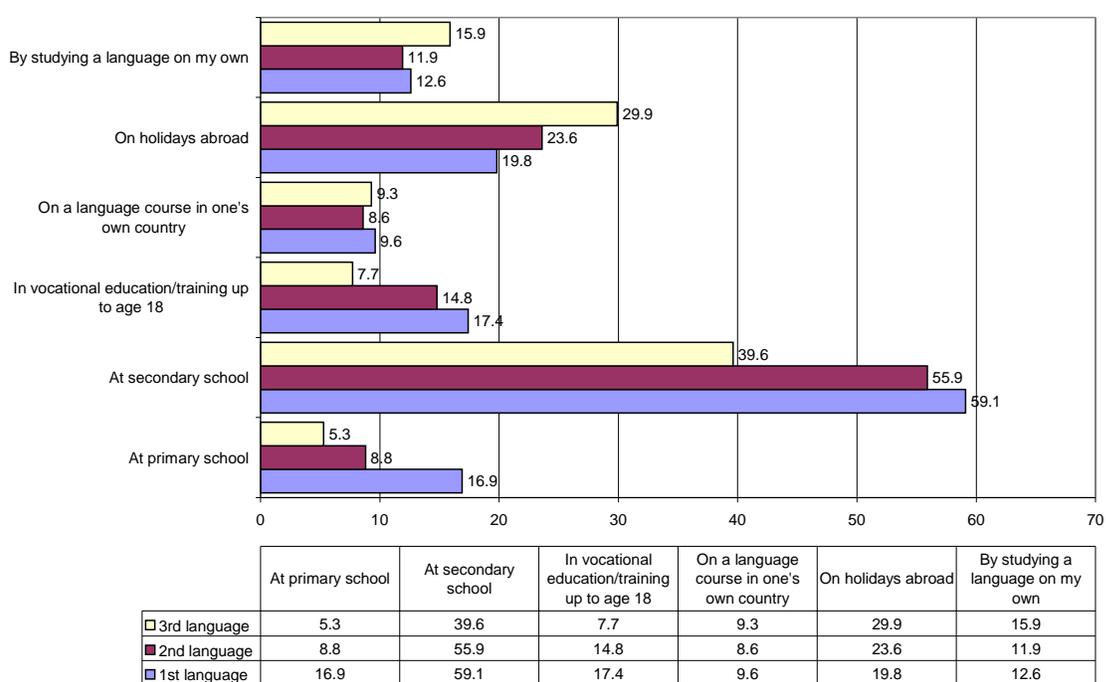
"Reading books, newspapers and magazines" is cited more frequently by the 15-24 age-group. The response rates then decline until age 54 and start to rise again after age 55. Proportionally more students and managers cited this option.

"Communicating with family members" is cited more often by women than by men, and the response rate increases with age. The rate is highest among persons who ended their education by age 15. House persons score highest rate on this response.

"Writing e-mails and letters at work" is cited more often by men than by women. The response rate increases between age categories 15-24 and 25-39 and then starts to decline. The longer the education, the higher the response rate. Proportionally more managers and white-collar workers chose this response.

## 4 How Europeans have learned these languages

Europeans speaking at least one foreign language in addition to their mother tongue were asked how they had learned or improved them. They were given 13 statements to choose from. The first results presented below are of a general nature and are analysed for the first, second and third languages mentioned. This analysis has been refined by language known in cases where the results differ from the general results.



Generally speaking, there are very few differences as regards how the first and second languages were learned. The third language is less likely to have been learned in primary school (the exception being English, which has been learned by 14% of Europeans at primary school as a third language) or within the family.

Whatever the language, and whether it be the first, second or third language known after the mother tongue, the main two ways in which it was learned or improved are always the same (with just two exceptions which will be mentioned later), namely: "at secondary school" and "on holidays abroad".

## 4.1 First foreign language

### 4.1.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

Europeans have generally learned their first foreign language at secondary school (59%) and on holidays abroad (20%). 17% have learned it "in vocational training up to age 18" and 17% also "at primary school", while 13% have studied it on their own or at university. Sixth place goes to "learning within the family" (11%), while seventh place goes to "language course in one's own country" (10%).

Of those who learned their first foreign language in secondary school, the Danes lead the field (79%), followed closely by the Swedes and the Portuguese (75%), the French (74%) and the Finns (72%). In contrast, only 28% of Greeks learned it in secondary school.

Of those who learned their first foreign language through holidays abroad, the Swedes lead the field (42%), followed by the Danes (35%) and the Finns and Dutch (27% each). Of those who learned their first foreign language in a vocational course up to age 18, the Italians lead the field (41%), closely followed by the Spaniards (38%), with the Portuguese coming last (only 2%). 70% in Luxembourg learned their first foreign language in primary school, and 10% even began learning it in kindergarten. In contrast, the Belgians are the most numerous to have learned their first foreign language within the family (24%), this being the third most frequent method mentioned by the Belgians, after secondary school and primary school.

As regards specific languages, we would simply note that:

- **German** is the language most frequently learned through working abroad (majority response in Portugal, Greece, Italy and Spain). It also has a very high response rate for being learned in primary school, caused by the very high proportion of Luxembourgers who gave this answer (83%).
- For **French**, the answer given second most often was "vocational training up to age 18".
- **English** is slightly less frequently learned within the family than the other languages.

#### 4.1.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

It is difficult to identify a common pattern.

Broadly speaking, there is a main category into which we can put the following options: "vocational training up to age 18", "higher education", "language course abroad", "other studies abroad", "self-taught" and "pre-primary school".

These options are cited more often by men. Age is not a significant variable. At most, we can note that the response rates are slightly lower for persons aged 55 or over.

There are no marked differences in response rate between those who ended their education by age 15 and those who ended their education between ages 16 and 19. However, the response rate is higher among those who stayed in education until age 20 or beyond, except for the "pre-primary school" answer, where there is no difference with the preceding categories. Managers tended to cite these options the most often, and house persons the least often (the exception once again being "pre-primary school", which is cited most often by women at home and pensioners and least often by managers).

The older the respondents, the less likely they are to give the answers "primary school", "secondary school" and "vocational training up to age 18".

These options were cited more often by persons who ended their education between ages 16 and 19 than by those who ended their education before age 15. "Secondary school" is cited most often by those who ended their education at age 20 or beyond. "Primary school" was mainly cited by manual workers and students, "secondary school" by students, managers and white-collar workers, and "vocational courses" by unemployed persons and students.

The proportion of those who learned their first foreign language within the family increases with age and with age of completion of studies. Proportionally more pensioners and house persons learned it within their family.

The older the respondents, the more likely they will be to have learned the language by working or through holidays abroad. Those who ended their education between ages 16 and 19 are the least likely to have learned the language while working abroad. Self-employed persons were the socio-occupational group that cited this option the most frequently. The longer the education, the greater the likelihood of having learned the language on holiday abroad. Obviously, therefore, this option was cited most often by managers and white-collar workers.

The option "language course in one's own country" obtained a relatively similar response rate across all socio-demographic categories, although the 15-24 age-group had the lowest response rate for this option.

## 4.2 Second foreign language

### 4.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

Broadly speaking, the order of the methods cited for learning the second foreign language follows the same pattern as observed for the first foreign language.

Learning in primary school was cited slightly less often than for the first foreign language, but it is still very high in Luxembourg (71%) and Finland (25%).

The Dutch are the most likely to have learned their second foreign language in secondary school (76%), closely followed by the Portuguese (75%) and the Finns (74%), while the Italians are the most likely to have learned it in vocational training up to age 18 (41%), and the Greeks through following a language course in their own country.

For all other countries, the leading source of learning a second foreign language is secondary school.

Regarding specific languages, we would simply point out that:

- **German** tends to be learned as a second language in secondary school, through self-learning, through vocational courses up to age 18 and through language courses abroad. These four methods were cited more often than "primary school".
- **English** is less frequently learned as a second language within the family.
- **Spanish** tends to be learned as a second language in secondary school, through working abroad and on language courses in one's own country, and less frequently in vocational training up to age 18.

### 4.2.2 Analysis by socio-economic variables

The patterns are broadly the same as for the first foreign language.

## 4.3 Third foreign language

#### 4.3.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

Secondary school and holidays abroad are once again the two main methods cited.

In contrast, "primary school", "vocational training up to age 18" and "within the family" are all cited less often. "Working abroad" is cited more often, however.

Italians and Spaniards have mainly learned their third foreign language through holidays abroad, and Greeks through language courses in their own country.

Regarding specific languages, we would simply point out that:

- **German** tends more than average to be learned as a third foreign language in vocational courses up to age 18
- **Spanish** is mainly learned as a third foreign language through holidays abroad (as mentioned above) and self-study.

#### 4.3.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

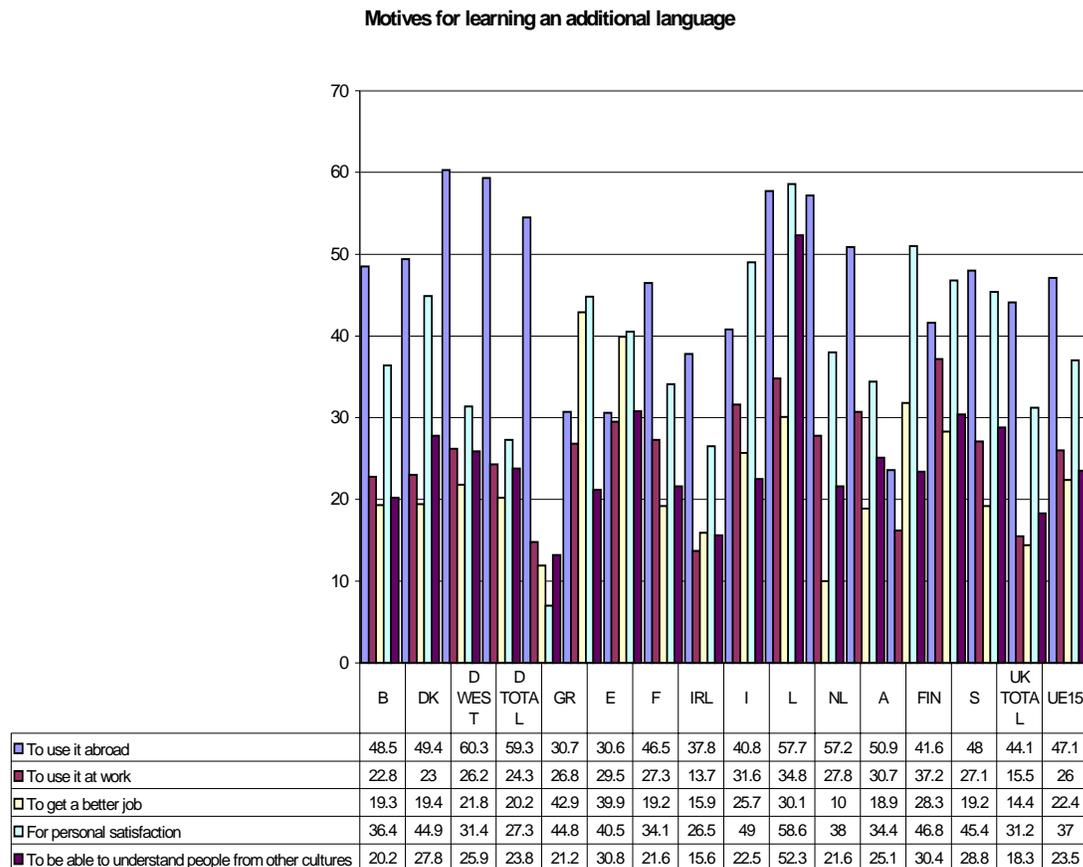
Same comment as for the second foreign language.

## 4.4 Motives for learning an additional language

Europeans who already know one or more languages in addition to their mother tongue were asked what their main motives would be for learning a new language.

### 4.4.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

Seven of the motives which respondents were given to choose from were cited by at least one respondent in four.



Thus, for 47% of Europeans who already know at least one foreign language, the main motive for learning a new one would be "to use it on holidays abroad", while for 37% the motive would be "personal satisfaction".

"To use it on holidays abroad" was cited most frequently by citizens of the old German Länder (60%, compared with a German national average of 59%), followed by the Luxembourgers (58%) and the Dutch (57%). The Portuguese cited this motive least frequently (24%).

"Personal satisfaction" was cited most often by Luxembourgers (59%), Portuguese (51%) and Italians (49%), and least often by citizens of the new German Länder (7%, compared with a German national average of 27%).

The third most important motive, cited by 26% of Europeans, would be "to use it at work (including on business trips abroad)". This response was highest in Finland (37%), Luxembourg (35%), Italy (32%) and Austria (31%), and lowest in Ireland (14%).

24% of Europeans said "to be able to understand people from other cultures": this was the case with 52% of Luxembourgers, 31% of Spaniards and 30% of Finns. Those citing this motive least often were the citizens of the new German Länder (13%, compared with a German national average of 24%).

22% of Europeans cited the motive "to get a better job". This was the case with 43% of Greeks, 40% of Spaniards and 30% of Luxembourgers, compared with only 12% of the citizens of the new German Länder (as against a German national average of 20%).

21% of Europeans cited the motive "to meet people from other countries": this was the case with 50% of Luxembourgers, 31% of Finns and 29% of citizens of the old German Länder (compared with a German national average of 26%).

The motive "to know a language which is widely spoken in the world" was cited by one European in five. The lowest score for this was the United Kingdom (9%), and the highest Luxembourg (48%).

Broadly speaking, Luxembourg is the country where people show the strongest motivation to learn new languages.

It should also be stressed that 5% of Europeans spontaneously replied that they would never want to learn another language. Of these, 20% were Irish, 13% Belgian and 10% French.

#### 4.4.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The male and female responses are broadly similar, with the following three exceptions: more men than women cite the motives "to use it at work" (respectively 30% and 22%) and "to be able to work abroad" (respectively 21% and 16%), while more women than men cite the motive "for personal satisfaction" (39% compared with 35%).

Education-wise, those who ended their education by age 15 are slightly less likely to cite the motive "to use it on holiday abroad". And occupation-wise, self-employed persons and house persons cite this motive the least often.

The motive "to use it at work" is cited less often after the age of 40. In contrast, it correlates directly with level of education.

"Personal satisfaction" is a more important motive for the over-25s and, even more so, for the longer-educated. Consequently, students cite this motive least often and self-employed persons the most.

The higher the age, and the lower the level of education, the less important are the motives "to be able to work in another country", "to get a better job" and "to meet people from other countries".

Those who studied until at least age 20 are more likely to cite "to be able to understand people from other cultures" as an important motive. The response rates for this are therefore proportionally highest among managers and students, and lowest among house persons and manual workers.

The other motives proposed elicit lower response rates, with no significant differences between the socio-demographic variables. The motive "to be able to use the Internet" is less important for the over-55s and those who ended their education before age 15.

**The results presented from now on represent the opinion of all European citizens, not just those who already know one or more foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue.**

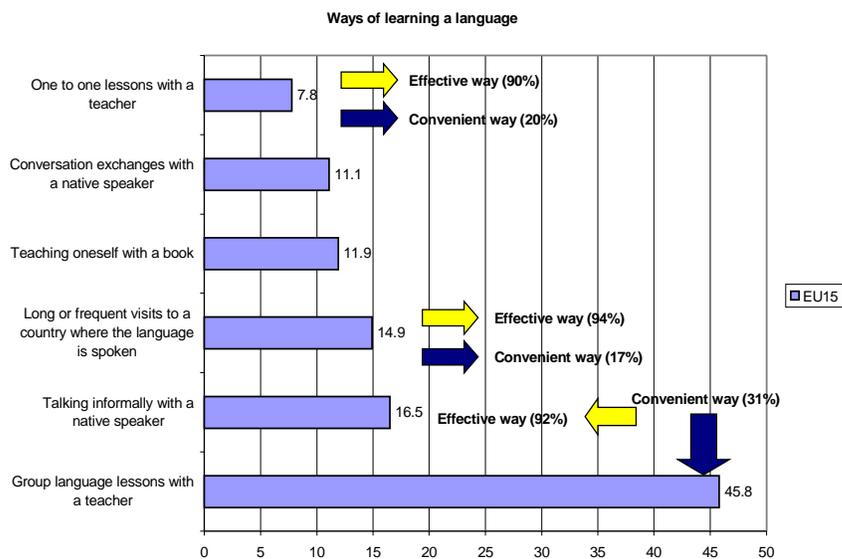
## 5 Learning a language

## 5.1 Ways of learning a language

### 5.1.1 Ways already used

#### 5.1.1.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

46% of Europeans have already followed group language lessons with a teacher in order to learn a foreign language. The second commonest way, "talking informally with a native speaker", comes a long way behind (17%), followed by "long or frequent visits to a country where the language is spoken" (15%) and "teaching oneself with a book" (12%).



The Danes and Swedes are the most likely to have used to be the leading method, i.e. "group language lessons with a teacher" (respectively 85% and 83%), and the Portuguese the least likely (22%).

"Talking informally with a native speaker" is commonest in Denmark and Luxembourg (42% each) and least common in the new German Länder (10%, compared with a German national average of 18%).

"Long or frequent visits to a country where the language is spoken" is the method used by 33% of Danes and Luxembourgers and 28% of Swedes, compared with only 4% of Greeks. "Teaching

oneself with a book" is also commonest in Luxembourg (39%) and in Finland and Sweden (31% each), and again is least common in Greece (6%).

38% of Europeans have never tried any way of learning a foreign language.

### 5.1.1.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The younger the respondents, and the better educated, the more likely they are to have tried one or more of the language learning methods proposed. Overall, managers and students are proportionally the most likely to have tried each of the methods, and house persons and pensioners the least likely (51% of house persons and 62% of pensioners have never tried any of them).

## 5.1.2 Effectiveness of ways already tried

### 5.1.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

94% of Europeans judge "long or frequent visits to a country where the language is spoken" to be the most effective way of learning. The second way cited as effective is "talking informally with a native speaker" (92%), third is "one-to-one lessons with a teacher" (89%), fourth is "conversation exchanges with a native speaker" (89%) and fifth is "group language lessons with a teacher" (78%).

In contrast, only 69% of Europeans judge "teaching oneself with an audio cassette or CD" to be effective, while 22% judge it to be ineffective.

The scores are high for all of the ways suggested.

Overall, analysis by nationality reveals very little in the way of differences, although the Austrians and Belgians are slightly less convinced that "one-to-one lessons with a teacher" are effective (respectively 74% and 73%, compared with the EU-15 average of 90%).

The British are the least likely to consider "group lessons with a teacher" to be effective (66%), and the Portuguese and the Dutch the most likely (respectively 92% and 91%).

### 5.1.2.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

With scores so extremely high, there are very few truly significant variations. The first two ways, "long or frequent visits to a country where the language is spoken" and "talking informally with a native speaker" are cited equally by all socio-demographic and occupational categories.

One or two points stand out:

- the younger and the better-educated are more likely to consider "one-to-one lessons with a teacher" and "group lessons with a teacher" effective.
- a higher proportion of the self-employed consider "teaching oneself with an audio cassette or CD" and "..... with a video" to be effective, while a higher proportion of the unemployed consider "teaching oneself with a book" to be effective.

### 5.1.3 Ways that would be most suitable in present circumstances

Europeans were asked to choose the two language learning ways that would most suit them in their present circumstances, e.g. in the light of their family situation and work responsibilities

#### 5.1.3.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

31% choose "group language lessons with a teacher", far ahead of "one-to-one lessons with a teacher" (20%) and "long or frequent visits to a country where the language is spoken" (17%).

The lowest score is for "teaching oneself in a language laboratory" (1%).

"Group language lessons with a teacher" is the first choice in all countries except Spain, where it comes second, behind "one-to-one lessons with a teacher".

The Greeks are the keenest on "group language lessons with a teacher" and "one-to-one lessons with a teacher" (scoring 60% and 39% respectively). Only 3% of Germans think "one-to-one lessons with a teacher" would suit them.

The Swedes have the highest response rate for "long or frequent visits to a country where the language is spoken" (31%), and the Greeks the lowest (5%).

It is worth pointing out that 25% of Europeans were unable to answer this question or to suggest a second way, the highest rates being in Germany (52%), Belgium (32%), Portugal (32%) and Italy (30%).

### 5.1.3.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The ways listed can be grouped into two categories:

- The first category consists of "group language lessons with a teacher", "one-to-one lessons with a teacher", "conversation exchanges with a native speaker", "talking informally with a native speaker", "long or frequent visits to a country where the language is spoken" and, to a lesser extent (since the scores are much lower), "teaching oneself by the Internet or CD-ROM". The younger the respondents, and the longer they have studied, the more these ways suit them. Students, white-collar workers and managers consider them the most suitable, and pensioners the least.
- The other ways listed obtained relatively low scores, with very little differentiation.

## 5.2 Time people are prepared to devote to learning

### 5.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

28% of Europeans would be prepared to devote between 1 and 2 hours per week to learning a language if good opportunities were available, in a convenient location and at a reasonable price.

16% would be prepared to devote between 3 and 4 hours, 6% less than one hour and 4% between 5 and 6 hours or more than 6 hours.

However, a full 34% of Europeans are not willing to devote any time to learning a foreign language. The Portuguese lead the field in this respect (50%), followed by the French (43%) and the Belgians (42%). In contrast, only 12% of Luxembourgers and 15% of Swedes are not willing to devote any time to language learning.

32% of Luxembourgers and Swedes, 31% of Finns and 30% of Italians would be prepared to devote between 1 and 2 hours per week to learning a foreign language.

Equally, 34% of Luxembourgers, 29% of Danes and 27% of Swedes would be prepared to devote between 3 and 4 hours per week, compared with only 9% of Portuguese.

10% of Belgians would only be prepared to spend less than one hour per week, as would 8% of citizens of the new German Länder (compared with a German national average of 5%).

In contrast, 13% of Greeks, 10% of Luxembourgers and 9% of Danes would be prepared to spend between 5 and 6 hours per week learning a foreign language. And 8% of Luxembourgers, Dutch people and Swedes would be willing to spend even more than 6 hours per week.

### 5.2.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

In general, it is the younger and the better-educated who are the most willing to devote time to studying a foreign language. Pensioners, therefore, are the socio-occupational group least willing to devote time to language learning, and the most numerous in not being prepared to devote any time at all to it.

Managers (9%) and self-employed persons and manual workers (8% each) are the most numerous in not wanting to devote more than one hour per week to language learning.

White-collar workers (39%), managers (35%) and students (34%) are the most numerous in being prepared to devote between 1 and 2 hours per week to language learning. Students are the most willing to devote between 3 and 4 hours per week (30%), and also to devote between 5 and 6 hours per week, together with the unemployed (8% each). These two categories are also the most prepared to devote more than 6 hours per week (9% and 6% respectively).

## 5.3 Sources of information

Europeans were asked where they would go to seek information on language learning possibilities. They were given 11 options to choose from.

### 5.3.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

The source cited most often is "a local adult training institute" (35%), followed by "friends" (19%), "a private language school" (14%), "the Internet" (12%), "the nearest school" (11%), "the town hall/local authorities" (11%) and "the family" (10%).

Danes (63%), Germans (60%) and Swedes (59%) would be the most likely to seek information from "a local adult training institute", while the least likely would be the Portuguese (13%).

Italians (24%) and citizens of the new German Länder (23%, compared with a German national average of 22%) and the Austrians (23%), would be the most likely to seek information from friends, while the least likely to do this would be the Irish (9%).

45% of Greeks, 32% of Luxembourgers and 28% of Spaniards would seek information from "a private language school", compared with barely 4% of the British.

The Dutch, Danes, Finns and Swedes would be the most likely to seek information on the Internet (respectively 31%, 26%, 25% and 24%), and the Greeks the least likely (3%).

A high proportion of Luxembourgers would also seek information from "the nearest school" (34%) or from "the town hall/local authorities" (36%). "The nearest school" would also be chosen by 18% of the Irish and 11% of citizens of the old German Länder (compared with a German national average of 10%), while "the town hall/local authority" would also be chosen by 17% of the British and 16% of the French. In contrast, only 3% of Belgians would use this source.

16% of the Dutch, 14% of citizens of the new German Länder (compared with a German national average of 11%), 14% of Luxembourgers and 13% of Austrians would seek information from "the family", compared with only 6% of the Irish

21% of Europeans said they would not seek information from anywhere. This response was highest in Belgium (44%), Portugal (37%) and France (35%), and lowest in Luxembourg (3%).

### 5.3.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

As we have already seen, the younger the Europeans and the better their level of education, the higher their response rate. Students, followed by managers, very often have the highest response rate, and pensioners the lowest.

In this instance, this is particularly true for the responses "friends", "the nearest school", "the Internet", "the nearest university" and "a private language school".

In contrast, students are the least likely to seek information from "a local adult training institute", while managers and manual workers would be the most likely to do this.

White-collar workers and managers are, naturally, the most likely to seek information from their employer. There are no significant variations in response rates for any of the other information sources suggested.

## 6 Reasons for learning or not learning a language

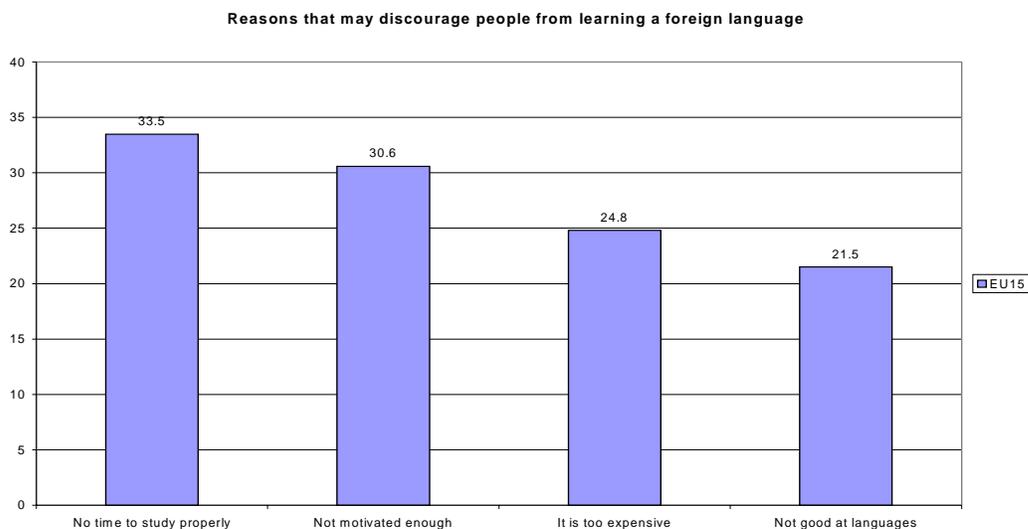
### 6.1 Discouraging reasons

Europeans were asked what reasons might discourage them from learning a foreign language. The results are analysed below in three parts: first, the overall results, i.e. covering both those who know one or more foreign languages and those who know no other language apart from their mother tongue; second, the results for those who know one or more foreign languages; third, the results for those who know no other language apart from their mother tongue.

#### 6.1.1 Analysis of the overall results

##### 6.1.1.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

The main reason likely to discourage Europeans from learning a foreign language is "no time to study properly" (34%). This reason is cited most by Luxembourgers (42%), Spaniards (40%) and Italians (38%), and least by Belgians (22%).



31% of Europeans say they are "not motivated enough", 25% say it is "too expensive", 22% say they are "not good at languages" and 19% say there is "not enough opportunity to speak the

language with other people". These are the main reasons cited as discouraging people from learning a foreign language.

The reason "not motivated enough" is cited most often by Swedes (50%), Finns (39%) and Danes (38%), and least often by Italians (18%).

The reason "too expensive" is cited most often by the Portuguese (36%), Spaniards (31%) and Greeks (30%), and least often by the Finns (8%).

The reason "not good at languages" is cited most often by the French (27%), followed by the Germans (26%) and Spaniards (25%), and least often by the Luxembourgers (11%).

The reason "not enough opportunity to speak the language with other people" is cited most often by the Germans (26%), the Irish (25%) and the Dutch, Austrians and Swedes (21% each), and least often by the Portuguese (11%).

#### 6.1.1.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The reason "no time to study properly" is cited more often by men than women (36% compared with 31%). It is also cited slightly less frequently by the 15-24 age-group and much less frequently by the over-55s (36% of 15-24 year-olds, 45% of 25-39 year-olds, 42% of 40-54 year-olds and only 16% of the over-55s). In contrast, it is cited more often by those who have remained in education longer. Of the socio-occupational categories, self-employed persons cite this reason most often (51%) and pensioners least often (10%).

The older the respondents, and the earlier they finished their education, the more likely they are to say "not motivated enough". 35% of manual workers say this, compared with 22% of students.

The reason "too expensive" is cited less often with age. Level of education does not appear to be significant. The unemployed cite this reason most often and pensioners least often.

The shorter their education, the more likely are people to cite the reason "not good at languages". Age is not a determining variable. This reason is most often cited by manual workers (25%) and least often by managers (15%).

The younger the respondents, and the longer they stayed in education, the more likely they are to cite the reason "not enough opportunity to speak the language with other people". Students cite this reason most often (22%), and self-employed persons least often (13%).

The other reasons listed in the questionnaire were cited less often than those mentioned above and the responses were not significantly different across the socio-demographic categories.

## 6.1.2 Europeans who know one or more foreign languages

### 6.1.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

Here too, the main potential discouragement to learning a foreign language is "not enough time to study properly" (39%). This reason is cited most frequently by Spaniards and Italians (45% each) and Luxembourgers (42%), and least often by Belgians (28%).

27% of these Europeans say "not motivated enough", 26% "too expensive", 22% "not enough opportunity to speak the language with other people" and 14% "not good at languages". These are the main reasons cited as likely to discourage people from learning a foreign language.

The reason "not motivated enough" is cited most often in Sweden (42%), the new German Länder (37%, against a German national average of 30%) and Denmark and Ireland (37% each), and least often in Italy (16%).

The reason "too expensive" is cited most often by the Portuguese (45%), followed by the Spaniards (35%) and Italians (34%), and least often by the Finns (8%).

"Not enough opportunity to speak the language with other people" is cited most often by the Irish (31%), the French (29%), the Germans (27%) and the Austrians (24%), and least often by the Portuguese (15%).

"Not good at languages" is cited most often by the Irish (20%), followed by the French (19%), the citizens of the new German Länder (18%, compared with a German national average of 17%) and the Austrians (17%), and least often by the British (6%).

### 6.1.2.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The trends based on socio-demographic variables are not significantly different from those described for the total results.

### 6.1.3 Europeans who know no foreign language

#### 6.1.3.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

The main discouragement cited by this group is being "not sufficiently motivated" (35%). This is cited most by the Swedes (55%), the Finns (54%) and the Danes (46%), while the Luxembourgers cite it the least (15%)

30% of these Europeans give the reason "not good at languages", 27% "no time to study properly" and 23% "too expensive". These are the main reasons cited as likely to discourage people from learning a foreign language.

The reason "not good at languages" is cited most often in the old German Länder (39%, against a German national average of 37%), and in Sweden and the Netherlands (38% each), and least often in Greece (14%).

"No time to study properly" is cited by 35% of Luxembourgers, 36% of Spaniards and 30% of Italians, but by only 12% of Danes and Belgians.

The reason "too expensive" is cited mainly by the Portuguese and Luxembourgers (29%), the Spaniards (28%) and the French (25%), compared with only 6% of the Finns.

#### 6.1.3.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The trends based on socio-demographic variables are not significantly different from those described for the total results.

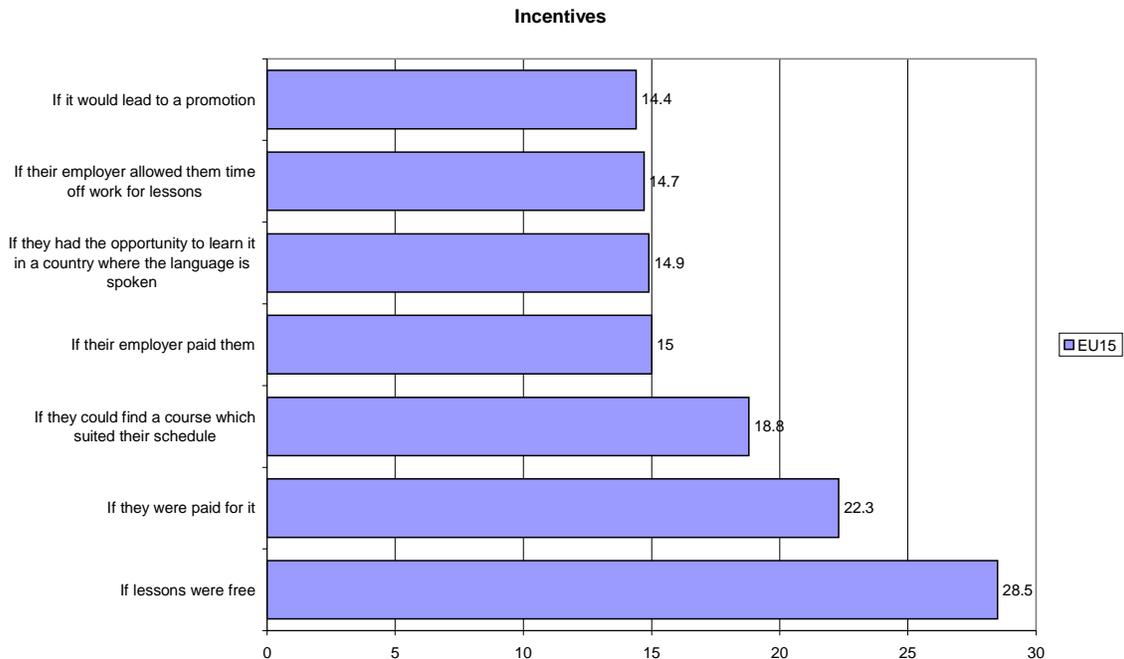
## 6.2 Incentives for improving skills

Europeans were asked what incentives might encourage them to learn a foreign language or improve their skills. The results are analysed below in three parts: first, the overall results, i.e. covering both those who know one or more foreign languages and those who know no other language apart from their mother tongue; second, the results for those who know one or more foreign languages; third, the results for those who know no other language apart from their mother tongue.

### 6.2.1 Analysis of the overall results

#### 6.2.1.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

The three main incentives that would probably persuade Europeans to learn a language or improve their language skills are "if lessons were free" (29%), "if I was paid for it" (22%) and "if I could find a course that suited my schedule" (19%). The following incentives all tied for fourth place, each scoring 15%: "if my employer allowed time off work for the lessons", "if my employer paid for the courses", "if I had the opportunity to learn in a country where the language is spoken" and "if there was a possibility of travelling abroad afterwards".



The top incentive, "if lessons were free" is cited most often by Luxembourgers (36%), Greeks (35%) and Spaniards (33%). The second, "if I was paid for it" is cited most often by Swedes (36%), the British (29%) and the Irish (28%), and least often by the Germans (15%). And the third, "if I could find a course that suited my schedule", is cited most often by Luxembourgers (46%), Danes (34%) and Finns (29%), and least often by the Portuguese (11%).

21% of Europeans reply that they do not wish to learn any foreign language or improve their language skills.

### 6.2.1.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

Each of the incentives listed follows the same response pattern, namely that the response rates fall with age, especially after age 55, are lowest among those who ended their education before age 15, and are lowest among pensioners, house persons and the self-employed.

## 6.2.2 Europeans who know one or more foreign languages

### 6.2.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

The main incentives that Europeans mention as likely to persuade them to learn a language or improve their language skills are "if lessons were free" (35%), and "if I was paid for it" and "if I could find a course that suited my schedule" (27% each). These are followed by: "if I had the opportunity to learn it in a country where the language is spoken" (22%), "if it would lead to a promotion or a better chance of promotion", "if my employer paid for the lessons" and "if there was a possibility of travelling abroad afterwards" (21% each).

The top incentive, "if lessons were free", is cited most frequently by the Portuguese (47%), the Greeks and British (43% each) and the Spaniards (40%). The incentive "if I was paid for it" is cited most frequently by the Swedes (40%), the British (35%), and the Spaniards and Irish (33% each), and least often by the Germans (19%). "If I could find a course that suited my schedule" is cited most often by Luxembourgers (46%) and by Finns and Danes (38% each), compared with only 16% of Belgians. And "if I had the opportunity to learn it in a country where the language is spoken" is cited most often by Luxembourgers (39%) and by Swedes and Austrians (34% each), and least often by the Irish (15%).

7% of Europeans who already speak at least one language in addition to their mother tongue reply that they have no wish to learn any other language or improve their language skills.

### 6.2.2.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The trends based on socio-demographic variables are not significantly different from those described for the total results.

## 6.2.3 Europeans who know no foreign language

### 6.2.3.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

37% of those Europeans who claimed to know no other language apart from their mother tongue spontaneously replied "I have no wish to learn another language or improve my language skills".

The main incentives that might persuade Europeans with no other language apart from their mother tongue to learn another language or improve their language skills are "if lessons were free" (22%), "if I was paid for it" (17%), "if I could find a course that suited my schedule" (10%) and "if my employer paid for the lessons" (9%).

The top incentive, "if lessons were free", is cited most often by the British and Spanish (27%) and the Greeks (26%), and least often by the Luxembourgers (13%). The second incentive, "if I was paid for it" is cited most often by the British (26%), the Irish (25%), the Finns (27%) and the Italians (19%), and least often by the Danes (6%). "If I could find a course that suited my schedule", is most often cited by the Luxembourgers (34%), the British (14%) and the Irish (12%), and least often cited by the Dutch (4%). And "if my employer paid for the lessons" is cited most often by the Austrians (14%), the British (11%) and the citizens of the old German Länder (11%, against a national German average of 10%), and least often by the Belgians (4%).

### 6.2.3.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The trends based on socio-demographic variables are not significantly different from those described for the total results.

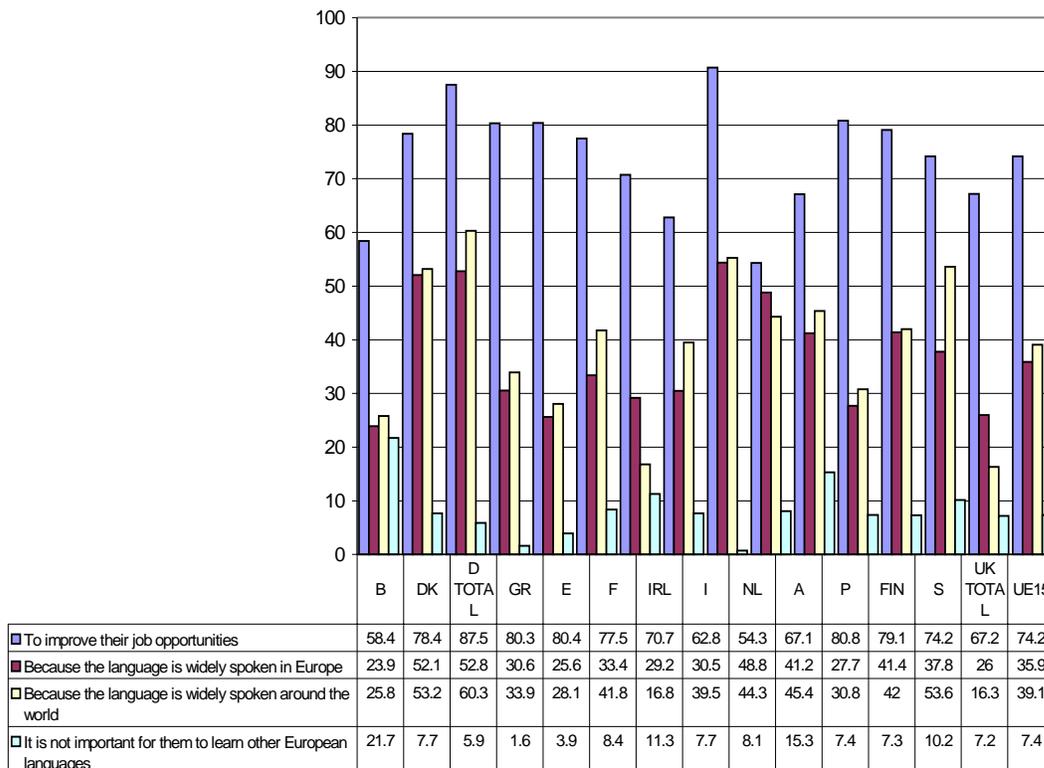
## 6.3 Why parents consider it important for children to learn languages

Europeans with children under 20 years of age were asked why they thought it was important for their children to learn other European languages at school or university. 32% of the Europeans questioned said that they had children aged 20 years or under.

### 6.3.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

74% of those with children under the age of 20 think it is important for their children to learn other European languages "to improve their job prospects". This view is held most widely in Luxembourg (91%), Germany (88%), Portugal (81%) and Spain and Greece (80% each), and least widely in the Netherlands (54%).

Importance of learning other European languages for children under 20



39% say it is important "because the language is widely spoken around the world". This view is held by 60% of the Germans, 55% of the Luxembourgers, 54% of the Swedes and 53% of the Danes.

36% of Europeans say it is important "because the language is widely spoken in Europe". This view is most widely held in Luxembourg (54%), followed by Germany (53%), Denmark (52%) and the Netherlands (49%), and least widely held in Belgium (24%).

34% say it is because they "want them to be multilingual". This reason scores highest in Luxembourg (67%), Sweden (54%) and the old German Länder (53%, compared with a German national average of 49%), and lowest in Portugal (6%).

7% spontaneously state that they do not think it is important for their children to learn other European languages. This rate is highest in Belgium (22%) and Austria (15%), and lowest in the new German Länder (0%, compared with a German national average of 5%).

The reason that appears to be least important is "because we have family or friends in a region where this language is spoken", which is cited by only 7% at EU 15 level.

### 6.3.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The same pattern of response emerges for all those who replied that they would like their children to learn other European languages at school or university: the highest response rates are among persons aged between 25-39 and between 40-54, and among those who stayed in education the longest. Occupation-wise, the response rates are lowest among students and pensioners, and highest among managers, white-collar workers and house persons.

Those who spontaneously replied that they do not want their children to learn other European languages tend to be the 15-24s and the over-55s. The longer the education, the less the likelihood of expressing this view. The socio-occupational categories with by far the highest response rates on this question are students and pensioners.

## 7 Opinions on language knowledge and learning

The questions in the first part were given to all the respondents, while those in the second part were given only to those who claimed not to know any other language apart from their mother tongue.

### 7.1 Opinions on knowledge of languages

Europeans were given nine statements relating to knowledge of languages and asked to say whether they tended to agree or disagree.

They tended to agree rather than disagree with four of the statements. These are analysed more closely below.

#### 7.1.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

- **Everyone in the European Union should be able to speak one European Union language in addition to his/her mother tongue**

71% of Europeans tend to agree with this statement, 20% tend to disagree and 9% express no opinion. The opinion is most widely shared by Luxembourgers (96%), Greeks (86%) and Danes (81%), and least widely shared by Austrians (55%). The "don't know" response rate is 19% in the new German Länder (against a German national average of 14%), 14% in Portugal and Austria, and 13% in Ireland.

- **Everyone in the European Union should be able to speak English**

The Dutch agree most strongly with this statement (82%), followed by the Luxembourgers (80%) and the Swedes (78%), while the Finns agree least (58%). The "don't know" response rates are again very high in Germany, Portugal and Austria.

- **Enlargement of the European Union to include new member countries means that we must protect our own languages more**

63% of Europeans agree with this statement, 23% disagree and 14% express no opinion. 90% of the Finns and Greeks, 78% of the Luxembourgers and 74% of the Spaniards tend to agree with the statement. The countries with the highest rate of disagreement are Sweden (34%), Denmark (33%) and Austria (32%). The "don't know" response rates are very high in Germany (22%), Ireland (19%), Austria (17%) and Portugal (16%).

- **There are good opportunities for learning languages in the area where I live**

Four out of ten Europeans agree with this statement, while three out of ten disagree and a further three out of ten "don't know". By far and away the most in agreement are the Luxembourgers and Danes (73%), followed by the Greeks (68%). In contrast, half of the Irish disagree, followed closely by the Portuguese (47%) and the Austrians (42%). The "don't know" response rates are 44% in the United Kingdom and 42% in the new German Länder (compared with a German national average of 36%).

### 7.1.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

Five of the nine statements have a similar response pattern. These are as follows:

"Everyone in the European Union should be able to speak a European language in addition to his/her mother tongue"; "Everyone in the European Union should be able to speak English"; "There are good opportunities for learning languages in the area where I live"; "Enlargement of the European Union to include new member countries means that we will all have to start speaking a common language"; and "In my region people are good at speaking foreign languages".

The younger the respondents, and the longer they have stayed in education, the more likely they are to agree with these statements. Thus, the highest response rates are found among managers and students, and the lowest among manual workers, house persons and pensioners. Those who disagree with these five statements do not correspond to any significant socio-demographic pattern, although the longer the education the lower the likelihood of answering "disagree". In contrast, the "don't know" response rate increases with age and falls as the length of education rises.

The older the respondents, and the shorter their education, the more likely they are to tend to agree with the statement that "Enlargement of the European Union to include new member countries means that we must protect our own languages more".

The statements "I prefer to watch foreign films and programmes with subtitles rather than dubbed" and "If there was a language centre nearby I would use it" produce almost identical response patterns: the older the respondents, and the shorter their education, the less they tend to agree. The "tend to disagree" rate, of course, follows the reverse pattern.

The responses to the final statement, "Everyone in the European Union should be able to speak two European Union languages in addition to their mother tongue", show no significant variations in terms of socio-demographic variables.

## 7.2 Opinions on language learning

Those Europeans who had claimed not to know any other language apart from their mother tongue were given a set of statements relating to language learning in general.

### 7.2.1 Analysis by national variables and EU 15

The respondents tended to agree rather than disagree with only two of the six statements put them.

65% tended to agree with the statement "Learning an additional language would be too difficult for me", while 24% tended to disagree. Those who most tended to agree with this statement were the Luxembourgers (74%) and citizens of the new German Länder (74%, compared with a German national average of 71%), while those who most tended to disagree were the Belgians (56%).

64% of the respondents agreed with the statement "Learning an additional language would be too time consuming for me", while 25% disagreed and 11% replied "don't know". The Spaniards had the highest agreement rate (80%), and the Dutch the highest disagreement rate (46%), followed by the Greeks (42%).

The agreement and disagreement rates to the statement "Only a minority of people have the chance to learn another language" were almost identical (43% agreed, 42% disagreed). The Portuguese and the Irish most tended to agree (respectively 56% and 52%), while the Luxembourgers and the Danes most tended to disagree (respectively 63% and 62%).

The majority of Europeans speaking no other language apart from their mother tongue tend to disagree with the other statements.

## 7.2.2 Analysis by socio-demographic variables

The following four statements shared a common response pattern: "If I had the chance I would learn another language"; "Learning an additional language would give me better employment prospects", "I often wish I could speak other languages" and "Learning an additional language would bring me advantages". The younger the respondents, the more likely they are to tend to agree with these statements. Those who ended their education by age 15 are less likely to agree with them. Students and managers therefore have the highest response rates, and pensioners the lowest.

The view that "Learning an additional language would be too difficult for me" is most widely held by the over-40s and those who ended their education by age 15. Students tend least to agree with this statement, while pensioners tend most to agree with it.

The view that "Learning an additional language would be too time consuming for me" is most widely held by the over-55s and those who ended their education between ages 16 and 19.

The responses to the statement "Only a minority of people have the chance to learn another language" show no significant differences in terms of socio-demographic variables.