The Role of Language Skills and Foreign Country Experiences in the Development of European Identity

Results from a Cross-cultural Youth Research Project[1]

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The Role of Language Skills and Foreign Country Experiences in the Development of a European Identity. Starting from the idea of a *'People's Europe'* the paper examines language skills and foreign country experiences among young men and women from selected European cities. Data from the research project *'Youth and European Identity'* show significant differences with regard to the average number of languages mastered and the frequency of stays abroad. The statistical findings indicate that the more languages an individual is able to speak, and the more foreign country experiences he or she has, the stronger is his or her identification with Europe. Hence, the analyses support a basic assumption of the European Union's education policy: promoting a sense of European-ness by fostering foreign language learning and encouraging personal contacts beyond national borders. On the other hand, language skills and foreign country experiences are not independent of an individual's value preferences. Rather, capabilities and experiences tend to go together with a general orientation towards values of *'Openness to Change'*.
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Despite controversial debates about the future of Europe, there seems to be a broad consensus in the public discussion about the need for a sense of European identity to legitimatise and continue the process of Europe's political integration. Until a few years ago, the project of Europe was primarily a matter of economics and politics, far away from individuals' worries. Since the introduction of the Euro at least, common support by the population has become increasingly important for the continuation of European integration. And with this comes the question of how to foster a feeling of European solidarity (Shore, C. – Black, A., 1994; Cerutti, F. – Rudolph, E., 2003; van Ham, P., 2001).

Creating a *'People's Europe'* is a long-term ambition of the EU. In past years, several measures were taken to back up this concept. Apart from common symbols such as the European flag or an anthem, major efforts have been made to promote transnational contacts and cross-border exchanges. Being able to modify one's identity, such as developing a stronger sense of Europeanism, suggests that one's identity is not a fixed, unchangeable aspect of the self. This understanding of identity has been theorized in the approach of social constructionism. It stresses the idea "that people have one self but many identities, some more 'primary' than others" (Jamieson, L., 2002: 507). Identities are seen as resources that people 'use' or something that they 'do', not as attributes that people 'have' or 'are' (Hall, S. - Du Gay, P., 1996).

Language skills are one of the key resources in the process of identity formation. Language skills enable communication, personal contact and, thereby, social identification (Byram, M. – Planet, T. M., 2000). Accordingly, it is a main objective of the European Union "to promote European multilingualism by promoting the early teaching of European languages, while maintaining Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity" (European Commission, 1995). The EU believes that people should be placed in a position to make use of all the advantages of European citizenship, including travel, study, and work abroad. The *'European Year of Languages 2001'* and the *'Socrates'* programme[3], among others, have been established by the European Union in order to improve foreign language skills among young people. Thereby, the EU intends to encourage an understanding between the citizens of Europe and to create a feeling of being European: "Multilingualism is part and parcel of both European identity/citizenship and the learning society" (ibid.).

There is not much empirical evidence, however, for the success and effectiveness of such measures (Teichler, U., 2002). The special Eurobarometer Survey *'Europeans and Languages'* (2001) has shown that a majority of about 70% of all citizens of the European Union share the view that everyone in the European Union should be able to speak one European language in addition to their mother tongue. But the survey

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[3] The Socrates programme comprises eight initiatives, some with a specific focus on language learning and exchange between young people (Comenius, Erasmus, Lingua). For example, from 1987 to 2000, about 750,000 university students spent an Erasmus period abroad. For the current period of Socrates/ Erasmus from 2002 to 2006, the EU budget amounts to around 950 million Euro.

includes no information about the relevance of foreign language skills with regard to the development of a European identity. In contrast, there are a number of studies drawing attention to the role of national or regional languages and dialects in identity formation processes. On a supranational level such analyses are rare.

The following text compares language skills and foreign country experiences of young men and women from different nations and regions. The first part of the paper presents descriptive material. The second part links language skills and foreign country experiences with personal feelings of "being European". The analyses are complemented by looking at the role of individual value preferences for learning foreign languages and travelling abroad.

2. Empirical Data

Empirical data come from the research project *'Youth and European Identity - Orientations of Young Men and Women towards Citizenship and European Identity'*. The international project is part of the 5th Framework Programme of the European Commission. Its fundamental intention is to improve knowledge about the salience and meaning of "being European" among young adults from different political, historical and social contexts (see Jamieson in this journal).

The study was conducted in summer 2002 in Vienna and Bregenz including its surroundings (Austria), in Bielefeld and Chemnitz (Germany), in Madrid and Bilbao (Spain), in Manchester and Edinburgh (Great Britain), in Prague (Czech Republic), and in Bratislava (Slovak Republic). The crucial element of this research design is the comparison across and within European countries, including four long-standing members of the European Union and two accession states. Representative samples of 18-24-year-olds were sampled from each of the cities[4]. All participants are "locals" in terms of being residents of their cities for at least the last five years. Sample sizes vary between 308 for Edinburgh and 424 for Bilbao (see Table 1).

Table 1: **Research Design and Sample Characteristics**

Country	City	Region	Sample Size	Average Age	♂ / ♀ (%)
Austria	Vienna	Viennese Region	400	21.0	49.3 / 50.2
	Bregenz	Vorarlberg	400	20.5	51.2 / 48.8
"Czecho-Slovakia"	Prague	Czech Republic	396	21.0	47.5 / 52.5
	Bratislava	Slovak Republic	397	21.2	49.6 / 50.4
Germany	Bielefeld	West Germany	400	20.5	51.0 / 49.0
	Chemnitz	East Germany	400	20.5	55.7 / 44.3
Spain	Madrid	Madrid Aut. C.	401	21.1	49.6 / 50.4
	Bilbao	Basque Country	424	21.2	50.0 / 50.0
Great Britain	Manchester	England	364	20.6	41.8 / 58.2
	Edinburgh	Scotland	308	20.8	45.1 / 54.9

The ten cities were strategically selected: From every country included the study aimed at surveying a city from the power centre of that country and from a loosely defined periphery. For example, the "power centre" city of Germany should be a West German city, while the peripheral city should be an East German city. Each pair of localities not only represents regions of centre vs. periphery, but also reflects contrasting alignments to Europe and different patterns of political identities, caused by histories of complex relationships of cultural, economic or political dominance vs. subordinance.

The commonly used questionnaire includes a wide range of standardized questions with regard to relevant socio-demographic characteristics, political attitudes and a number of particularly identity-related issues such as language skills or experiences of other countries.

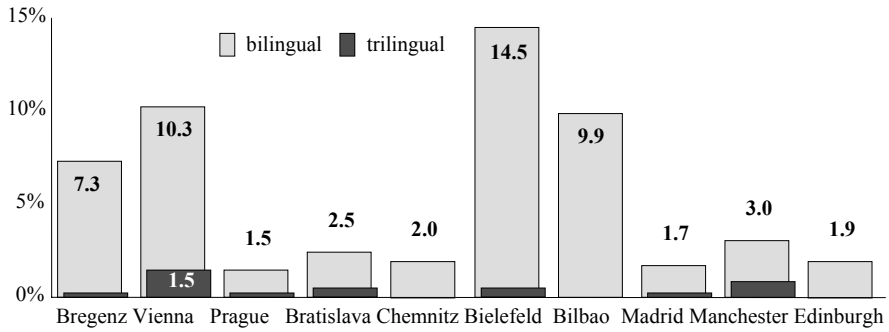
3. Language Skills

3.1 Mother Tongue(s)

[4] To complete the comparative research design, additional data from a selected sample of well-educated young adults who are focused on a "European" career and particularly likely to be pro-European were gathered in each city. However, these target samples are not included in the analyses presented here.

Respondents were asked to name all languages they had spoken at home before entering school. Fig. 1 shows the variation in the portion of bilingually raised youth, ranging from about two per cent in Prague to almost 15 per cent in Bielefeld. Trilingual youth are very exceptional.

Figure 1: **Portion of bi- and trilingual respondents**



The vast majority of multilingually-raised individuals come from immigrant families, in which both the national language of the host country and the family's original language are spoken. In Bielefeld, Vienna and Bregenz - the samples with the highest share of multilingual respondents - more than 80 per cent of young adults with more than one mother tongue are either born abroad or have at least one parent who was born in another country. Similar percentages can be found in Manchester and Prague. Only in Bilbao, and partly in Madrid, the situation appears to be somewhat different because of the spread of regional languages in Spain[5].

The numbers in Table 2 show that more than every tenth respondent from Bilbao spoke Basque and Galician before he or she was old enough to go to school. In contrast, the dominant non-national mother tongues in Bregenz, Vienna, Chemnitz, Bielefeld and Manchester correspond to the major groups of immigrants there: Turkish and Serbo-Croatian are most common after German as national language in both Austrian cities. In Germany, Russian is a relatively widespread mother tongue due to the high share of so-called "repatriated citizens" who mainly immigrated from republics of the former Soviet Union. The sample in Manchester includes a number of young people who speak either Punjabi or Urdu languages of India and Pakistan.

Table 2: **Most frequent mother tongues + portion of respondents who speak them**

City	Mother Tongue 1	Mother Tongue 2	Mother Tongue 3
Vienna	German (86.5%)	Turkish (5.8%)	Serbo-Croatian (5.0%)
Bregenz	German (87.5%)	Turkish (11.0%)	Serbo-Croatian (3.3%)
Prague	Czech (99.2%)	Slovak (1.5%)	Romanian (0.5%)
Bratislava	Slovak (97.7%)	Hungarian (2.5%)	Czech (2.0%)
Bielefeld	German (86.5%)	Russian (8.8%)	Turkish (7.3%)
Chemnitz	German (98.3%)	Russian (1.8%)	English (0.8%)
Madrid	Spanish (97.0%)	Galician (2.0%)	English (0.7%)
Bilbao	Spanish (95.5%)	Basque (12.3%)	Galician (0.7%)
Manchester	English (88.7%)	Punjabi (4.4%)	Urdu (3.3%)
Edinburgh	English (98.1%)	German (0.6%)	Spanish (0.6%)

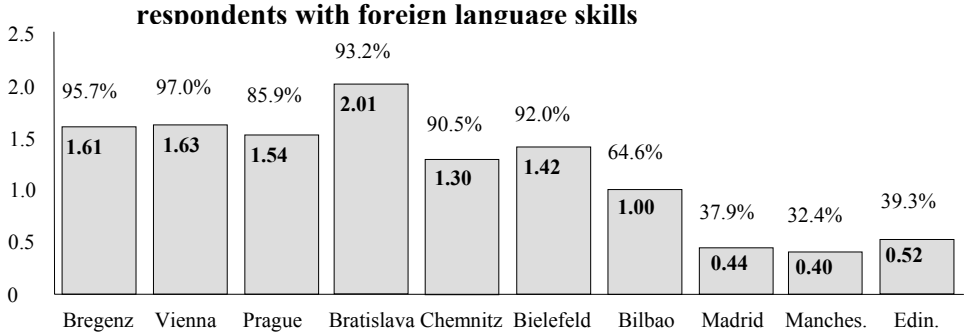
Across all samples a second mother tongue without a migration background is very rare. English is the most frequent non-migrant and non-national mother tongue, but less than one per cent of all respondents spoke it before entering school.

[5] Regional languages such as Basque or Catalan in Spain or Gaelic in Great Britain are not foreign languages in a narrow sense. On the other hand, they are not dialects but independent and officially acknowledged languages. Therefore, these languages are counted as foreign languages in terms of "other languages". However, especially with regard to Bilbao it has to be considered that all descriptions and analyses are based on that broad definition of foreign language skills.

3.2 Foreign Languages

Secondly, every respondent was asked to list all additional languages he or she knows well enough to converse in. Due to its formulation, the question sets no definite standard for the quality of foreign language skills' context or frequency of use. However, it can be assumed that most respondents have based their answers on a rather broad understanding of "being able to communicate in". Fig. 2 gives two pieces of information for each sample - the average number of foreign languages mastered (bold) and the percentage (figures above the columns) of young men and women who have skills in at least one language in addition to their mother tongue(s).

Figure 2: **Average number of mastered foreign languages + portion of respondents with foreign language skills**



Again, there are remarkable differences between the researched cities. On average, a young man or woman from Bratislava is skilled in about two foreign languages, whereas in Edinburgh, Madrid or Manchester only every second respondent is able to speak a language in addition to his or her mother tongue. These cross-national differences are particularly striking -- they all reach statistical significance. However, there are also significant variations at the national level between Bratislava and Prague as well as between Bilbao and Madrid. On the other hand, young adults from Bregenz and Vienna, Bielefeld and Chemnitz, Edinburgh and Manchester do not differ significantly in their average number of mastered foreign languages. The same picture emerges when focusing on the share of respondents who speak at least one foreign language. In both Austrian samples, almost every respondent is able to communicate in another language. In contrast, only one third of the Manchester sample report similar skills. In other words, the share of young people without foreign language skills varies between three per cent in Vienna and 67 per cent in Manchester. In general, young men and women from Austria, Germany, and the Czech and Slovak Republics prove to be clearly more skilled in languages than their peers from Spain or Great Britain.

A look at the specific foreign languages in Table 3 confirms the general expectation of English as the most frequently spoken foreign language in all non-British samples. But again, the share of respondents who regard themselves as being able to have a conversation in English differs from sample to sample. Nine out of ten respondents from Bregenz, Vienna, Chemnitz and Bratislava report such skills, compared to less than half of all Spanish respondents. The second most important foreign language is French. Between one third and a quarter of young men and women from Bregenz, Vienna, Chemnitz, Bielefeld and Edinburgh tend to master it. German as the third most important foreign language appears to be of particular relevance in Bratislava and Prague.

Table 3: **Most frequent foreign languages + portion of respondents who speak it**

City	Foreign Language 1	Foreign Language 2	Foreign Language 3
Vienna	English (90.8%)	French (32.3%)	Italian (14.3%)
Bregenz	English (92.5%)	French (37.5%)	Italian (10.3%)
Prague	English (76.0%)	German (38.9%)	Slovak (23.0%)
Bratislava	English (89.5%)	Czech (58.4%)	German (50.4%)
Bielefeld	English (84.0%)	French (24.0%)	Spanish (15.3%)
Chemnitz	English (89.5%)	French (24.5%)	Russian (8.0%)
Madrid	English (35.2%)	French (6.0%)	Italian (1.0%)
Bilbao	English (49.5%)	Basque (30.7%)	French (8.3%)
Manchester	French (11.5%)	English (9.3%)	German (5.5%)
Edinburgh	French (23.4%)	German (12.3%)	Spanish (6.2%)

A further interesting difference can be observed with regard to the distribution of Czech and Slovak as foreign languages among young adults from Bratislava and Prague. Table 3 indicates that twice as many

respondents from Bratislava report Czech language skills as the other way around. Both languages were official national languages in the former Czechoslovakia. On the one hand, young people in the Slovak Republic are more exposed to the Czech language because more books are written in or translated into Czech than into Slovak. Moreover, many Slovaks watch Czech TV channels, whereas the reverse is less common. On the other hand, the difference can partly be interpreted as a result of different attitudes towards the "other" language. The languages are in fact so close that, with the exception of extreme conditions, a passive understanding of spoken language may be expected on both sides, thus enabling an active communication between Czech and Slovak persons using their native languages.

English as second most frequent foreign language in Manchester is surprising but has its cause in the portion of respondents who were born into families originally from abroad, who came to Great Britain and learned English as a second language. Of course it is likely that their use of English in everyday life is of another quality than foreign language skills originating from ordinary school education.

4. Foreign Country Experiences

4.1 Stays abroad

The survey also includes a few questions with regard to foreign country experiences. In one of them, respondents were asked to list the names of all European countries they have visited since the age of 16. The item refers to visits to European countries and excludes those countries which respondents just passed through.

The percentages in Fig. 3 above the bars show that about 90 per cent of young men and women from Austria, Germany, Czech and Slovak Republics have been in at least one other European country for a longer stay in the past years. Again, a significant difference between young adults from Spain and Great Britain is more than obvious. The respondents from Madrid in particular prove to have clearly fewer foreign country experiences. Madrid is the only location in which a majority of young men and women have not travelled abroad in recent years. Accordingly, the average number of European countries visited is lowest in Madrid. In comparison, an individual from Bilbao has been to more than twice as many other countries. This in turn is quite a small number, compared to the travelling of young people from Prague, Bratislava, Chemnitz and Bielefeld[6].

There is a general correspondence between the number of European countries visited and the level of foreign language skills. Both figures have a similar appearance - a main difference being with regard to the Spanish and British samples on the one hand and the remaining samples on the other hand, and smaller, but still significant, variations on the national level.

Respondents were asked to name all European countries they had visited, and also to give the main reason for each stay abroad. All responses have been categorized into nine types of answers. As Fig. 4 shows for the total sample, the main reason for visits abroad is holiday/sightseeing tour[7]. More than half of all stays in other European countries are holiday trips. Other reasons of importance are school trips or exchanges, visits of relatives or friends who live abroad, and shopping tours. Of course, there are also variations between the samples, but the general picture is always the same. Holiday visits are the dominant reason for visiting another European country.

[6] Significant mean differences on the national level can be observed for Prague and Bratislava ($p = .004$), Chemnitz and Bielefeld ($p = .005$), Bilbao and Madrid ($p = .000$), Manchester and Edinburgh ($p = .015$).

[7] The Austrian samples are missing in this analysis because the respective questions were not asked there.

Figure 3: **Average number of stays abroad + portion of respondents**

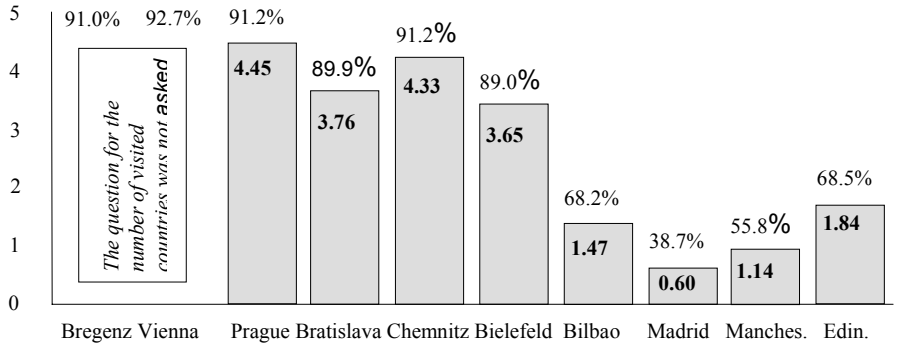
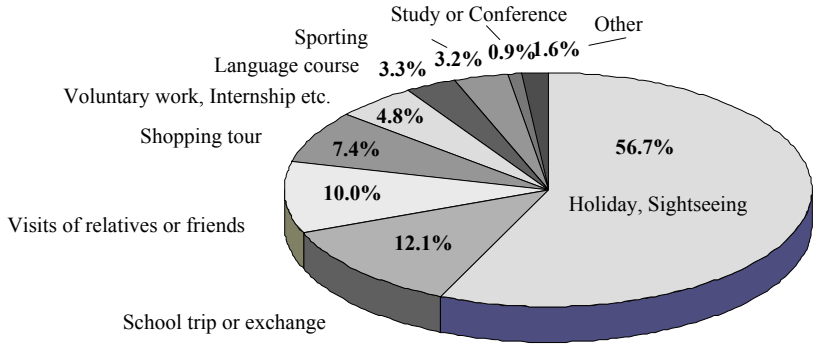


Figure 4: **Reasons for visiting European countries**

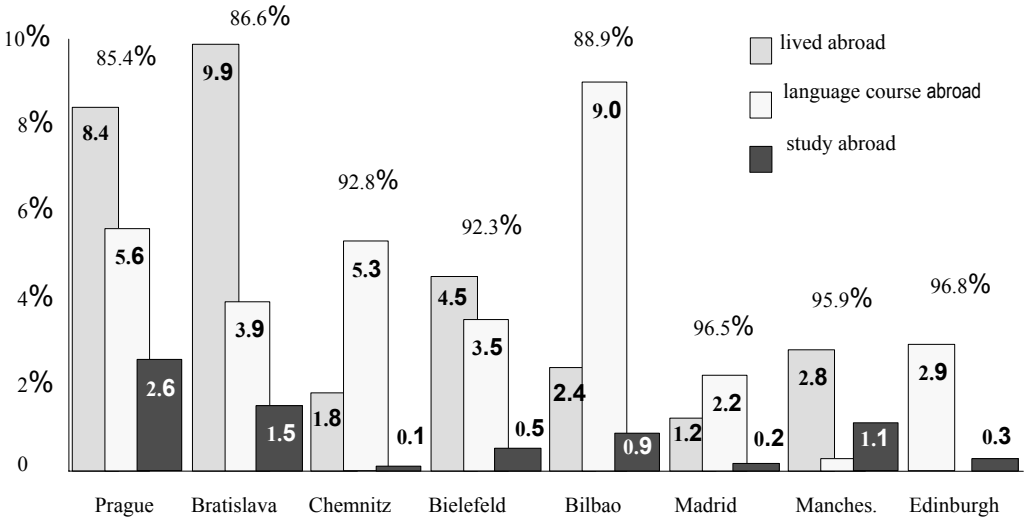


4.2 Intense experiences of other countries

As one can see in Fig. 4, the percentages of young people living, studying languages or generally studying abroad are very small. However, those who have lived or studied abroad are of particular interest to us with regard to understanding the development of European identity. Those individuals, who have lived in another country for six months or more, are also considered. These three kinds of staying abroad are most likely connected with a more intense communication and exchange with people from beyond national borders. Fig. 5 compares the corresponding percentages of young men and women with such experiences for each sample.[8]

Figure 5: **Intense foreign country contacts + portion of respondents without such contacts**

[8] Again, neither Austrian sample can be considered in this analysis.



Prague and Bratislava feature the highest portion of respondents with long-term experiences of living in another country, mainly in the United Kingdom. There is also a relatively high number of young adults who either studied abroad or completed a language course abroad. In comparison, only a very small minority of respondents from Manchester, Edinburgh and Madrid has had any such foreign country experiences. Especially striking is the finding that the completion of language courses is significantly more common among young men and women from Bilbao compared to those from Madrid. About five per cent of all respondents from Bilbao have been in Ireland for that reason. Generally, the most favourite countries selected for staying abroad are Great Britain, Germany, and France.

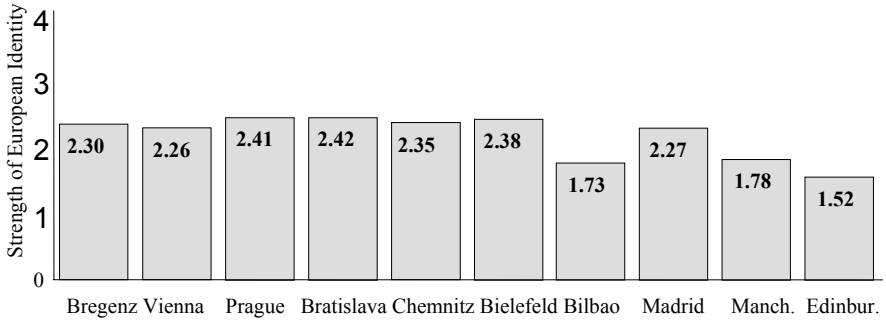
In none of the eight samples are there more than 15 per cent of respondents with such intense foreign country experiences. Only a small minority can be attributed to the group of highly mobile and cosmopolitan youth. The question for the following analyses is whether and to what extent these young men and women can be distinguished by their attachment to Europe.

5. Language skills, foreign country experiences, and European identity

5.1 European identity among young men and women

The research project *'Youth and European Identity'* goes beyond counting how many young men and women come to have a sense of European identity; it aims at unpacking the types of European identities by exploring the meaning of "being European" in relation to other sources of identity. To measure the strength of a respondent's European identity, three items were used, namely, the feeling of attachment to Europe[9], the strength of feeling about being European, and the importance of being a (future) citizen of the European Union. These items cover evaluative as well as emotional aspects of identification. For each answer a 5-point-scale was provided ranging from 0 for *'no identification at all'* to 4 for *'very strong identification'*.

Figure 6: **Level of identification with Europe**



An index variable of all three items generates a mean of $\mu = 2.18$ for the total sample of 3,890 respondents[10]. This mean is slightly above the central point of the answer scale. To illustrate this finding, almost 38 per cent of young adults show a strong identification with Europe, having a mean greater than

[9] Due to budget restrictions, this question was not asked in the Austrian surveys.

[10] The computed index variable for European identity is consistent and reliable; the value for Cronbachs Alpha is more than satisfying ($\alpha = .72$). Interestingly, it does not seem to make a difference for European identity if the respondents are asked for Europe in general or for the European Union in particular.

2.50. Only every fourth respondent reports a low level of European identity, having a mean less than 1.50. In general, young women regard themselves as more European than their male peers.[11] The average level of European identity, however, is by no means equally distributed within and across the sampled cities, as Fig. 6 demonstrates.

Interestingly, young men and women from both accession states, the Czech and the Slovak Republic, are heading the list of strong European sentiments. Prague and Bratislava are the only samples in which an absolute majority of respondents hold strong feelings of European identity. Without significant variations, respondents from Bielefeld and Chemnitz as well as from Bregenz and Vienna follow. The lowest level of European identity is observed for both British samples and for Bilbao. Every second respondent in Edinburgh and more than 40 per cent of the respondents from Manchester have little or no personal sense of European identity. Differences in the degree of European-ness seem to be a matter of national rather than regional variations. Only respondents from Madrid identify themselves significantly more strongly with Europe than do their compatriots from Bilbao.

5.2 Comparison of language skills and foreign country experiences with regard to European identity

The different levels of European identity among young people from different nations and regions give a first hint of the validity of the initial assumption that better knowledge of languages and more frequent or more intense foreign country experience are connected with a stronger feeling of "being European." Correlational analyses and mean comparisons largely confirm this supposition.

The first two columns in Table 4 show that in nine out of ten cities the level of European identity is higher among those young men and women who speak at least one language in addition to their mother tongue(s). Madrid represents a special case in this context. It is the only sample in which the difference is the other way around. Not all differences are statistically significant, but this is mainly due to the extremely unequal size of both groups (see the percentages in Fig. 2). However, on the basis of the total sample it can be stated that those 1,051 respondents without any foreign language skills feel significantly less attached to Europe than the remaining 2,839 respondents with such skills (see the last line of Table 4).

The bivariate correlation coefficients in the third column take the total number of mastered languages into account. For that purpose, mother tongue(s) and foreign languages are simply added for each respondent. Therefore, the index reflects the pure number of languages in which a person is able to communicate, independent of whether the language is his or her mother tongue or was learned as a foreign language. In general, the coefficients support the finding of a positive relation between language skills and the strength of European-ness: The more languages an individual knows, the more strongly he or she feels European. That relation applies to the total sample as well as to half of the separate samples[12]. For young men and women from Manchester, Chemnitz and Prague the strength of European identity is largely independent of the number of mastered languages. In Madrid, both features are negatively correlated.

Table 4: **Language skills and foreign country experience in relation to European identity**(1)

City	Language Skills			Foreign Country Experience		
	foreign languages		all lang.	stays	intense experiences	
	no	yes	skills	abroad	no	yes
Vienna	2.19	2.26	**.22**	-	-	-
Bregenz	**1.75**	**2.32**	**.12**	-	-	-
Prague	**2.02**	**2.47**	.09	**.19**	2.40	2.47
Bratislava	**1.62**	**2.49**	**.26**	**.33**	2.38	2.66
Bielefeld	2.15	2.40	**.17**	**.13**	2.37	2.49
Chemnitz	2.27	2.36	.03	-.02	2.34	2.41
Madrid	**2.35**	**2.14**	**-.13**	.06	2.27	2.26
Bilbao	**1.58**	**1.81**	**.16**	.07	**1.69**	**2.03**
Manchester	1.77	1.81	.02	-.08	1.78	1.92
Edinburgh	**1.33**	**1.82**	**.24**	**.19**	1.50	1.92
Total Sample	***1.85***	***2.27***	***.21***	***.15***	***2.10***	***2.36***

(1) Significant mean differences and correlation coefficients are printed in bold.

[11] The only exception is Bregenz in Austria, where young men have a slightly higher mean for European identity.

[12] Almost identical results emerge when excluding from the analyses all non-European languages (in a narrower sense) such as Turkish, Russian or Punjabi.

It is not only language skills that prove to be of some relevance for the level of identification with Europe. Experiences of other countries play a role as well. As shown in column five in Table 4, there is a significant positive relation between the total number of stays abroad and the strength of identification with Europe in the total sample and in half of the separate samples: The more European countries a respondent has visited in recent years the more European he or she feels. Again, a largely independent relation between both factors can be observed for young adults from Chemnitz and Manchester, complemented by the Spanish respondents from Bilbao and from Madrid.

The last two columns show that those young men and women who have been abroad for studying, living, or for doing a language course are also distinguished by a higher level of European identity. An exception is Madrid, where the majority of young people without such intense foreign country experience feel equally attached to Europe than their peers who have been in another country for one of these three reasons. However, the difference reaches statistical significance only for the Bilbao sample and in the total sample.

Language skills and foreign country experience seem to have an effect on the development or the level of European identity. That leads to the question of what distinguishes those young men and women with foreign language skills and experiences of other countries. It can be assumed that individual value preferences are not independent of either characteristic. The underlying motivations of value preferences are relevant for a person's attitudes and behaviour. The following paragraphs will give some details whether, and to what extent, value preferences play a role in foreign language skills and foreign country experiences.

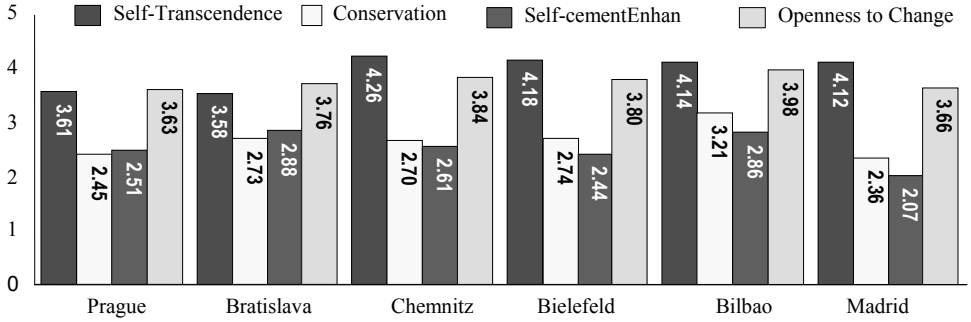
5.3 The role of individual value preferences

The surveys in Spain, Germany, the Czech and Slovak Republics included a short version of the *'Personal Values Questionnaire'* by Schwartz et al. (2001). Respondents were asked to assess how much a described person is like them. For example, "She/He believes that people should do what they're told. She/He thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no one is watching" is a short verbal portrait of an individual for whom conformity values are of importance. Each item was provided with a 6-point-scale ranging from 0 for *'not like me at all'* to 5 *'very much like me'*.

In his theory of basic human values, Schwartz adopts a definition of values as desirable, transsituational goals varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz, S. H., 1992, 1994, cf.; Kluckhohn, C., 1951; Rokeach, M., 1973). The content component of Schwartz's theory postulates a comprehensive and universal set of ten motivationally distinct value constructs: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security. The structural component of the values theory explicates a circular structure according to the relations of conflict and congruity among the value constructs. For example, the pursuit of achievement values is likely to conflict with the pursuit of benevolence values: seeking personal success for oneself may obstruct actions aimed at enhancing the welfare of others who need one's help. Thus, achievement and benevolence are oppositely arranged in the circle. In contrast, the pursuit of tradition values is congruent with the pursuit of conformity values: both motivate actions of submission to external expectations. Therefore, tradition and conformity are neighbouring value constructs in the so-called *'Circumplex-Model'*. Two basic dimensions summarize this structure of dynamic relations: *'Self-Enhancement' versus 'Self-Transcendence'* opposes power and achievement values to universalism and benevolence values. *'Openness to Change' versus 'Conservation'* opposes self-direction and stimulation values to security, conformity, and tradition values.

The value constructs were measured by a maximum of two items only; therefore the analyses are limited to the higher-order value dimensions. The means in Fig. 7 show that values of *'Self-Transcendence'* enjoy highest priority among young men and women from both German and Spanish samples, followed by values of *'Openness to Change'*. In Prague and Bratislava, this order is reverse. Both contrary poles of the value dimensions *'Self-Enhancement'* and *'Conservation'* are clearly less preferable in all localities. In general, the differences between the samples are rather small. The most significant variation is the one between Bratislava and Chemnitz concerning the relative importance of *'Self-Transcendence'*. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the strongest emphasis on conservation values is observed in Madrid, while the lowest rank for those values is that of the other Spanish sample, Bilbao.

Figure 7: **Value Preferences**



Meanwhile, Schwartz and his colleagues have validated the content aspect of the theory of basic human values by relating its value constructs to a number of other variables such as age, gender, religiosity, political orientation, autocratic interpersonal behavior, the use of alcohol (see Schwartz, S. H., 2001), or worries and subjective well-being (Boehnke, K., et al. 1998; Schwartz, S. H., et al. 2000). Studies about the relation between individual value preferences and foreign language skills or foreign country experiences, however, are not yet in that list. It can be assumed that both characteristics have their sources in the pursuit of exploration, independent thought (self-direction) and excitement, novelty, and challenge in life (stimulation). Furthermore, it is possible that individuals learn an additional language or live for a longer period in another country in order to improve their chances of a professional career connected with striving for personal success through competence (achievement) and more prestige or a better social status (power). This leads to the hypotheses that foreign country experiences and foreign language skills correlate most positively with values of *'Openness to Change'*, positively with values of *'Self-Enhancement'*, and most negatively with conservative values.

Comparisons based on the total sample of 2,167 Czech, Slovak, German and Spanish respondents reveal the expected differences. On the one hand, young adults with foreign language skills give higher priority to values of *'Openness to Change'* and less priority to values of *'Conservation'* than their peers who speak their mother tongue(s) only. With regard to the other two value types the means in Table 5 show no significant differences between the two groups. On the other hand, comparing young adults who have lived, or studied or completed a language course abroad with those who have not results in an almost identical pattern. Again, young men and women of the first group attribute more importance to values of *'Openness'* and *'Conservation'*, while the value dimension of *'Self-Enhancement'* vs. *'Self-Transcendence'* does not make a difference.

Table 5: **Values and foreign language skills + intense foreign country experiences**(1)

Values	**Foreign language skills**		**Intense experiences abroad**	
	no	yes	no	yes
Transcendence	4.95	5.00	4.99	4.99
Conservation	**3.81**	**3.66**	**3.71**	**3.53**
Enhancement	3.57	3.55	3.55	3.60
Openness	**4.68**	**4.81**	4.77	4.84

(1) Significant mean differences are printed in bold.

Moreover, the number of foreign languages mastered at a conversational level is most positively and most negatively correlated with values of *'Openness'* and *'Conservation'* respectively[13]. The corresponding coefficients for the total sample in the first row of Table 6 are weak but significant. However, there are some variations at the regional level. The more foreign languages a respondent is able to speak the more emphasis he or she puts on values of *'Openness'* and the less importance he or she gives to conservation values. Only in the Bilbao sample do none of these associations exist. Interestingly, data do not support the hypothesized motivation of learning or using additional languages for career purposes; the correlation coefficients with

[13] All analyses were controlled for the effects of scale use in the instrument. For this purpose, the mean rating of each respondent to the whole set of items was used as a covariate (see Schwartz 1992).

values of *'Self-Enhancement'* are either insignificant or negative. But universalistic and benevolent values (*'Self-Transcendence'*) seem to play a more important role for knowledge of other languages, at least for respondents from Prague, Bratislava, and Madrid.

Table 6: **Value preferences and foreign language skills**(1)

City	Transcendence	Conservation	Enhancement	Openness
Prague	**.14**	**-.16**	-.07	**.12**
Bratislava	**.21**	-.07	**-.10**	.04
Bielefeld	.08	**-.12**	-.01	**.15**
Chemnitz	-.01	**-.18**	.09	**.17**
Madrid	**.15**	**-.16**	-.05	.08
Bilbao	-.04	.01	.09	-.04
Total Sample	*-.01*	***-.07***	*-.01*	***.06***

(1) Significant correlation coefficients are printed in bold.

A look at the relations between values and the number of stays abroad in Table 7 supports the assumption that the central motivation for the wanderlust of young men and women originates from excitement, flexibility, independent action-choice and curiosity – values of *'Openness'* that at the same time undermine conformity and tradition values. Although almost all corresponding coefficients are positive, not all of them are significant. The value dimension of *'Self-Transcendence'* vs. *'Self-Enhancement'* proves to be independent of the number of European countries visited. Only in Prague and Madrid are stronger associations observable.

Although most relations between individual value preferences and foreign language skills or foreign country experience are weak, a general distinction with regard to the value dimension of *'Openness to Change'* vs. *'Conservation'* can be postulated.

Table 7: **Value preferences and stays abroad**(1)

City	Transcendence	Conservation	Enhancement	Openness
Prague	**.12**	-.09	**-.13**	**.12**
Bratislava	.01	**-.20**	.07	**.11**
Bielefeld	.08	**-.19**	.07	**.13**
Chemnitz	-.01	**-.16**	.09	**.12**
Madrid	**.15**	-.10	-.03	-.03
Bilbao	.05	.01	-.07	.02
Total	*.00*	***-.13***	***.06***	***.09***

(1) Significant correlation coefficients are printed in bold.

6. Conclusion

Analyses have revealed substantial differences in language abilities and foreign country experiences among young men and women. Respondents from Austria, Germany, and the Czech and Slovak Republics, countries surrounded by several neighbouring states with other national languages, have a greater repertoire of languages at their disposal than do their peers from Spain or Great Britain. Other relevant factors in this context are, of course, the general necessity for foreign language skills in transnational communication and different national education policies.

Second, the findings confirm the initial assumption that knowledge of other languages is associated with a higher level of identification with Europe. A similar effect can be observed for foreign country experiences. According to the basic intention of European Union education policies, language skills and personal contacts beyond national borders prove to be relevant factors for the establishment of a common feeling of European-ness among young men and women. Hence, the data presented support the general idea of multilingualism and transnational exchange as promising ways towards a *'People's Europe'*.

Third, analyses have produced some empirical evidence for the idea that young adults who are able to communicate in more than one language or who have more experiences with other countries are characterized by a higher appreciation of values of *'Openness to Change'* in contrast to conservative values.

They are more curious about new experiences in life (stimulation) and more willing to do things in their own way (self-direction).

Finally, it has to be pointed out that language skills as well as foreign country experiences are not simple constructs. Especially with regard to foreign language skills the data do not explain whether a foreign language was a compulsory subject at school and acquired on a mandatory basis. Further difficulties arise from the fact that some non-national languages are commonly used regional languages, as is the case for Basque in the Bilbao sample. Finally, no data about the frequency and kind of use of foreign languages were gathered in the quantitative survey. However, an important potential of the project *'Youth and European Identity'* is its integrative approach using quantitative and qualitative techniques of data collection. The importance of foreign language skills and their use are a main issue of the in-depth interviews with a number of individuals surveyed from each locality. Because most of the interviews were conducted in the Spring/Summer 2003, not all analyses are completed yet. But it can be expected that the interview material will provide further insights into the role of language skills for developing a sense of European identity among young men and women.

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