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**THE EUROPEANS, CULTURE
AND CULTURAL VALUES
QUALITATIVE STUDY IN 27 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
SUMMARY REPORT**

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

- ❖ **The European Commission – Directorate General Education and Culture – has commissioned OPTEM and its European partners to carry out a study among citizens in 27 countries¹ on the subject of culture and cultural values.**

The study was conducted under the aegis of the Framework Contract Eurobarometer “Qualitative Studies”².

- ❖ Its **objectives** were notably to analyze :

- The meaning or meanings, for the Europeans, of the notion of culture in a wide sense of the term – not limited to classical culture and fine arts – and the importance of culture in their life.
- Their perceptions of European culture and its components that make it specific and different from other cultures.
- The link between culture and values shared by the Europeans.
- Interest for the European cultural diversity and for the cultures of other Europeans.
- The perceived and the expected role of Europe in the domain of culture.

- ❖ The study was based on the **methodology of group discussions**. Two groups met in each country:

- One group of higher-middle social and educational level: socio-professional categories of business owners, liberal professions and top managers and middle-level managers; mostly university level of education.
- One group of higher-middle social and educational level: socio-professional categories of self-employed craftsmen and small shop owners, lower-level managers, (non managerial) office employees and manual workers; mostly secondary level of education.

Each group included both men and women, aged between 20 and 55 years.

- ❖ **This document is the overall pan-European report based on the analyses produced by the permanent partners of the network of research institutes coordinated by OPTEM.**

The group discussions took place between March 21 and May 16, 2006, depending on country.

- ❖ The report includes, in the annexes:

- The identity of OPTEM’s partner institutes in each country.
- The demographic composition of the groups.
- The discussion guide used by the moderators.

¹ The 25 current Member States, Bulgaria and Romania.

² Framework contract set up and managed by the Commission’s Directorate-General Communication – A/4.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- 1. The citizens questioned in the 27 European countries included in the study show a broadly similar understanding of culture.**

Their understanding includes several layers of meaning: culture as a human, artistic or aesthetic creation; culture as learning and acquired knowledge; culture as an anthropological or sociological concept that binds human communities together and distinguishes them from others; and culture as a normative system that sets out the rules for social conduct and etiquette.

- 2. Education, traditions and lifestyle are concepts that are intrinsically linked to culture. Knowledge, civilisation and leisure are also linked to culture, but to a lesser extent, and there is also more disagreement over them.**

Some participants see knowledge as an essential condition that is the key to accessing culture; but others – particularly participants in the lower-middle socioeducational groups – dispute that knowledge alone, which they understand to mean the accumulation of formal or “academic” learning, is a necessary or adequate condition.

As culture has its roots in the past and in tradition, education – as the teaching of knowledge and the acquisition of rules for living – is the essential structuring element that enables individuals to “acculturate” and allows culture to be passed down from generation to generation. Lifestyle represents the concrete manifestation of culture, as well as reflecting personal interpretations or variations on the dominant prevailing culture.

The relationship between culture and civilisation is more ambivalent. Civilisation can appear to be a hierarchical and normative notion that is implicitly Eurocentric. Moreover, human communities considered in this respect to be “less civilised”, can demonstrate a strong cultural identity.

Leisure is linked to culture at least in the sense that being able to take part in cultural activities assumes that one has the free time to do so. However, depending on how limited a definition of “culture” is used, different leisure activities can be perceived as being “cultural” to varying degrees.

- 3. Culture is seen in a positive light and is valued very highly; it is through culture that humans are somehow able to achieve intellectual or spiritual elevation.**

It is therefore a fundamental element in personal enrichment and development, after essential needs such as harmonious private life, material safety, job satisfaction and a balance between these different elements have been met.

- 4. Just as there are different ways of understanding culture, we can also draw a distinction between culture (in the singular) and cultures (in the plural), and between varying forms of cultural “consumption” or “production”.**

Besides culture in the traditional sense of the term (that can be intimidating and even perceived as being reserved for an “elite”), we can generally recognise on the one hand the existence of differentiated cultures (that vary depending for example on age, social and cultural environment, economic level – which is in part connected to it – origin, geographical location and lifestyle), and on the other hand the existence of a cultural dimension in a larger sense belonging to fields of interest or various non-professional activities.

5. **Obstacles hindering access to culture include: material conditions** that apply to varying degrees to all forms of cultural contact such as **lack of money and time**; and also unequal availability of cultural offers or information.

But there are also hindrances connected to the sociocultural context – that relate more particularly to “traditional” or “intellectual” culture – **and psychological hindrances**.

In this respect participants express expectations of measures that can bring culture closer to people, make it easier for them to access it, and encourage them to take advantage of it to a greater extent.

Among these “facilitating” measures, it is considered that new information technologies (e.g., the Internet) can play an important role, even though attitudes towards these new technologies as intrinsic elements of culture in their own right are much more ambivalent.

6. **Initial reactions to the idea of European culture are often marked by hesitation and confusion**, with a temptation to think initially of the differences that exist between Europeans and of national cultural singularities.

In reality, however, these perceptions coexist with a more or less diffuse feeling of cultural community and common ground between European countries. This common ground includes:

- **Common roots, a long history**, and consequently a rich **cultural heritage** – we saw previously how the past and tradition are highly valued;
 - The notion of a **certain amount of “wisdom”** as well as **“refinement”** stemming from this history, with all the trials and conflicts that have punctuated it and which have ultimately been overcome and assimilated;
 - **Organisational methods and a social project that are largely shared**, based around concepts such as democracy, freedom and secularism (which is a prerequisite);
 - And finally **cultural diversity**, which stems from this common base. **This is a very highly valued asset that is largely seen as being a distinctive European characteristic** and that gives rise to other specific values such as tolerance and open-mindedness.
7. **This common feeling is often strongly revealed or activated by the “mirror effect” caused by comparison with other countries or groups of countries around the world.**

In particular when considering the Western world (with which Europe has a natural relationship), **participants express and affirm a feeling of belonging to a European culture in juxtaposition to the United States.** In many ways, **the United States appears much less as an example than as an anti-model:** as a materialistic society without the strength of Europe's inherited values from the past; as a society that is less open-minded towards the world that it has a tendency to dominate; and as a leader and promoter of a “globalisation” that “erases” the diversity that we are striving to preserve.

8. **When asked about what they consider to be emblematic symbols of European culture, participants strongly confirm the existence of a feeling of cultural community.**

Whether it concerns a place, an historic person, a contemporary person, an historic event, a recent event, a work of art, a story or a legend, a line of thinking or a personal experience, interviewees' references are located within Europe as a whole much more frequently than within their individual countries.

9. **A series of values was presented to the interviewees in order to gauge their opinions on the European character of the values and how specific they are to European culture.**

Some of the values appear immediately as essentially European, and even as something that differentiates Europe from other places: “heritage from history” on the one hand (cf. supra), and **“respect for the earth”** on the other. (There is a clear perception that Europe leads the way in its consciousness of environmental problems and its desire to preserve the environment).

Freedom is also clearly a European value (but also more widely a Western value), **as are intellectual curiosity, respect for others, tolerance** (even if the reality is not always as flattering as the shared ideal), **and solidarity** (with the same reservations, but also a clear differentiation in favour of Europe compared to the United States). And finally, **the value of progress** is considered to be **characteristic of Europe to a greater or lesser extent** depending on the meaning assigned to it: it is largely characteristic if we think of “human” progress, but slightly less so if we consider scientific and technological progress – Europe was a leader and is still in the running today, but it has competition from and is even outperformed by the United States or certain Asian countries whose dynamism is particularly recognised.

10. **As a whole, interviewees** (and especially citizens from the new Member States) **express an interest in other Europeans and their cultures.** British participants, however, are more distant on this issue, as on other issues as well.

Nearly all participants wish to see increased mutual understanding. Among the factors that could contribute to it, **participants stress the necessary development of direct human contacts and events of all types that could encourage them.**

Participants spontaneously see **European institutions as the natural organisations to facilitate such a coming together.**

11. **Aside from exchange programmes for students and young people, which are recognised and highly valued, participants are not widely aware of European Union initiatives in the field of culture.**

When participants are reminded of **initiatives that do exist**, or when they are informed of them for the first time, **these initiatives are very well received**, despite uncertainty over the exact content of some of them.

12. **In conclusion we can confirm that culture is recognised as being a key element in the construction of a European identity, that the European Union and its institutions have a key role to play in this area, and that participants expect them to act.**

Two key words sum up the principal expectations: **diversity** – to be maintained, preserved and encouraged in the face of globalisation that brings uniformity in its wake – and **exchanges**.

At the same time, there are two pitfalls to be avoided: firstly the risk of supranational uniformity – a consideration that gives rise to reservations in some countries, especially the United Kingdom (where they are strong); and secondly the risk of initiatives focusing too heavily on an “elitist” culture that the general population will be unable to participate in.

DETAILED RESULTS

**CHAPTER I:
PERCEPTIONS OF THE NOTION OF
CULTURE**

I.1 CULTURE AND CULTURES

- ❖ Participants were initially invited to express spontaneous reactions brought to mind by the word “culture”.
- ❖ In general, **perceptions of culture in different countries and in different groups are broadly similar.**
- ❖ **The term culture is semantically very rich:** in all countries and all groups it always includes several layers of meaning (though expressed with variable content and articulacy):

- **Culture as a “human construct” that is artistic or aesthetic.** This descriptive definition is often the one that comes most readily to mind, especially in the lower-middle groups. It refers to the most obvious and well known cultural “productions” such as the fine arts, painting, music, theatre, opera, literature, cinema, museums and architecture.

“Culture is all that relates more or less closely to art – music, painting, literature, etc.” (Germany. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“(Culture)... is expressed in such forms as theatre, painting... That is everything you may be knowledgeable about and practise.” (Romania. Higher-middle social and educational level)

Depending on the individual and the field, we can note that proximity, ease of access and interest for these “cultural products” all vary.

“At my age, museums are not a major centre of interest. When I go out with friends and we go from bar to bar, to me that is a form of culture.” (Germany. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- **Culture as “learning” and acquired knowledge.** Most of the time this dimension introduces a value judgment that attaches a higher “price” (in all senses of the word) and greater value to “superior” or “erudite” culture as opposed to “mass” or “popular” culture. This hierarchical categorisation is often evoked in order for it to be subsequently torn down in a wider denunciation of “elitism”, and in order to recognise the value of all types of “knowledge”, no matter what they are, regardless of social level, and regardless of whether one has multiple qualifications or is self-taught.

“Culture is acquiring knowledge. It is accumulated knowledge... It is infinite, there is always something to learn about...” (France. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Personally, I don’t care about distinctions between low and high culture. I am interested in whether it’s fun. High culture is often something you ‘ought’ to do” (Denmark. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Culture should be regarded value-free. There is high culture and there is working-class culture and there is a culture of how you behave. That’s completely value-free, it only means that there has been a historic development” (Austria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- **Culture as an anthropological or sociological concept.** Culture is defined as all the characteristics (such as value systems, manners and behavioural models, traditions, culinary practices and religious rites) belonging to a group of people, a country, or a group of countries. In this sense, culture is both **that which brings a human community together and that which distinguishes it from others**. As such, we could give the example of our own “national” culture, “Western” culture, “Asian” culture, “Christian” culture or “Muslim” culture. In this way we can also talk of cultures **in the plural**, and of “subcultures” (in the sense of “subdivision” and not in the sense of them being inferior) in order to highlight specific traits belonging to a group existing within a given society: for example “youth” culture, “homosexual” culture, “urban” culture or “rural” culture.

“Culture is an attitude, an approach to life which is shared by a group or a nation, or the values common amongst a society” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“It’s kind of characteristics of features of a certain country and people who live there” (Slovakia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Culture is something that distinguishes us from others. There are several cultures, youth culture, contemporary culture, western culture, Islamic culture and so on” (Finland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- **Culture as a normative system** that sets out rules for social behaviour and relationships. Culture appears here to be likened to “good manners”, “etiquette” and “good upbringing”. This “cultural training” that prepares people for life in society is highlighted particularly by older participants and more frequently by interviewees in some new Member States (or acceding countries) in Central Europe. In some cases, it is the opportunity for these people to give a reminder of the respect that people should pay to their elders and/or to condemn the breakdown of relationships between individuals and generations and the fact that manners have become more lax. They also express an ambivalent attitude towards a new found “freedom” that is certainly welcomed but also sometimes associated with excessive “permissiveness”.

“For me, culture equals to civilised man. One who is well educated, erudite, emotional, sharing certain beliefs, consistent with certain norms of behaviour” (Lithuania. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“If you are being nice, if you behave well, they say you have culture...” “Culture means helping the elderly” (Slovenia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“Now it is a mess. We have no traditions, no manners. We lack the foundation to build on... After 1990, we were thrown in the street to find our own way...” (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“There is a decline of general cultural level in Latvia. That is because of our poor economic situation and the introduction of incorrect values from USA and Europe in the globalisation process” (Latvia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ In summary, culture in all of its forms appears to be that which “differentiates man from animals”. In essence it is a specific “value” that gives rise to “intellectual” and “spiritual” elevation, or in other words, it is a **concept that is eminently positive and valued**.

“Something that is created by mankind ... Things, expressions, agreement, etc.” (Netherlands. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“It could be anything created by man, from music to Internet” (Sweden. Lower-middle social and education level)

Yet it is precisely the fact that it is highly valued that on a personal level – “intellectual baggage”, “cultural level”, capacity to appreciate or be involved in the arts – can make some people feel **intimidated** and/or **excluded**.

- ❖ It is interesting to note that certain people attempt to qualify the notion and put the associated “value” **into perspective**. In this way, “culture” appears to be **strongly conditioned by decisive external factors**:

- **Age** is one of these factors and can be viewed from two distinct angles:

- Firstly it allows time for experience, training and study, and helps to deepen and develop the individual’s cultural level;
- Secondly, it is a characteristic of a “class” of individuals that defines “generational” cultural differences such as tastes, lifestyles, behaviour, customs and style of dress. In many cases we can note both virulent and less marked criticism of “youth culture”, which is judged as being too closely linked to “marketing” and consumerism.

“Someone who is 50 years old compared to someone who is 18, have different views on culture because of the big age gap as well as the times and situations that one has been through growing up” (Cyprus. Lower-middle social and education level)

“There is a growing cultural gap among the young these days, it changes faster and faster, and this young culture is actually created by marketing” (Belgium. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“I’ve got my problem with young people’s culture because I don’t think that’s culture at all... Young people’s culture is no longer about creativity but more about consumption” (Austria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- **Surroundings and location.** The environment, in the concrete sense of the term, is also considered to be an important element that can facilitate or hinder a certain degree or “type” of culture. In this way, cities can be compared to the countryside and “urban residents” can be compared to “rural residents”: these “subcultures” are not, however, subjected to a value judgment. Furthermore Internet access can be considered as an available cultural “tool” for an increasing number of people, regardless of their geographical location.

“Those who live in a wealthy area have more cultural openings” (Belgium. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“If you are curious, you can broaden your mind from the remotest rural area using the Internet” (France. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- **Social and cultural environment.** This is a crucial factor affecting culture. It is not only parents, but also professional and social acquaintances and friends, who can potentially initiate and stimulate an individual’s cultural development, practices and consumption (e.g., visits to museums, concerts, plays, etc.).

“If the parents do not have culture or traditions, then children will not learn the meaning of culture” (Malta. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Culture is more for people who work with their brain” (Czech Republic. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“With friends you have similar likes and what you enjoy, but you can take on some of their other likes as well. If you didn’t like a type of music that they did you listen to it more and decide that actually I do like that” (United-Kingdom. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- **Economic level.** This is linked to the sociocultural aspect and is also described as crucial, even though some participants maintain that culture is, or should be, wholly outside of the commercial system. It is clear that the “cost” (of theatre or concert tickets, of books, of museum and exhibition admission tickets) is one of the main obstacles to access to certain cultural areas.

“I don’t have enough money to dedicate myself to culture in the way I would like to” (Czech Republic. Lower-middle social and educational level)

*“Those who are underprivileged think first of all of survival, not of going to museums!”
“Culture is primarily having a curious mind, regardless of being rich or poor” (Belgium, Lower-middle social and educational level)*

- **Lifestyle and time available.** Many participants, and particularly those in the new Member States, criticise the “modern” way of life, the stress inherent in city living, and increasing professional pressure. Many of them “confess” that on returning home in the evening or at the weekend they do not have the energy to read or to go to a show, and that they willingly stay “in front of the television” because it is easy – incidentally, television in itself is not credited as having great cultural value. Furthermore, some stress the lack of time available to working women in general and to mothers in particular.

- ❖ In the same spirit of putting things into perspective, participants often mention that culture is an **ever-evolving construct that is always in the process of being created**, both on a collective and “historical” level (societies are continually evolving), and on an individual level (we never stop developing our cultural level).

“It is no static. You only have to look at Ireland over the past few years to realise that” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ Finally some groups find that **contrast facilitates their perception of their own culture as well as their perception of other cultures**. Travel provides this contrast, and in fact, many participants mention “travel” as a “cultural” activity in its own right, as a positive step helping different cultures to discover each other. As such, freedom of movement in Europe is seen as something that encourages exchanges and mutual understanding.

“I think when you go abroad, you should also look at the country’s culture and not only make holidays. In fact, only few people do that” (Austria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“You want to communicate with people in different countries” (Italy. Lower-middle social and educational level)

I.2 CULTURE AND RELATED NOTIONS

- ❖ In order to specify how culture is perceived, participants were asked to consider several concepts and to discuss how and to what extent they were linked to culture. For the most part the observations confirm the **multidimensional character** of culture, and for some participants they demonstrate its complexity and the ambiguity of some of its aspects.

Although all of the terms suggested are in fact closely linked to culture to varying degrees, they are not all unanimously or undisputedly linked.

- Three concepts are overwhelmingly perceived as being **intrinsically linked** to culture:
 - Education
 - Traditions
 - Lifestyles
- Depending on the groups and participants, three other concepts are **closely related to culture but less directly, more inconsistently and more controversially so**:
 - Knowledge
 - Civilisation
 - Leisure

A. Knowledge

For some interviewees, knowledge is seen as being an **essential link to culture** in that it is a “key” or a “requirement” for accessing culture. Interviewees refer explicitly or implicitly to “learning” in the traditional sense of the word, i.e. to intellectual attainments or a form of academic “scholarship” that is “official”, recognised and valued by society.

“There are things you need to know to be a cultured person” (Belgium, Lower-middle social and educational level)

“It’s a conglomeration of all branches of knowledge, including music, cinema, theatre ...” (Spain. Lower-middle social and education level)

For others, on the other hand, the **link between knowledge and culture is not “automatic”**. The word is therefore used in the “sociological” sense instead, as a system of behaviour and values belonging to a given society. In general, this prevailing perception is expressed more frequently by participants in the lower-middle socioeconomic groups who believe that academic “learning” (where they could feel lacking) does not automatically lead to “manners” or “culture”. Similarly, participants express their appreciation of the “cultural” value of “self-taught” learning, and conversely, state that an accumulation of knowledge in itself is not the only evidence of being cultured.

“Culture does not have to do with knowledge, you learn from what you hear and see. You may increase your culture with knowledge but culture is present anyway without knowledge” “Culture is passed on from one generation to another and not through knowledge” (Cyprus. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“I had an uncle who had finished only three years at school, but had been reading a lot all his life. He was very knowledgeable and cultural, which is more than can be said for nowadays’ professors and other knowledgeable people” (Latvia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

B. Education

The link between education and culture is uncontroversial: it appears to be undisputed, and very similar reactions are seen in all countries and groups. In the sense that education encompasses the **teaching of knowledge**, the acquisition of rules for living and the **transfer from generation to generation**, it is an essential structuring element of individuals’ “acculturation”. Furthermore, educational systems in themselves are judged as being revealing of the prevailing culture, whether they be strict, highly supervised, flexible, lax, etc.

“Education is a key to culture” (Netherlands. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“The way in which education is organized depends on the culture. Conversely, different forms of education and different types of schools give way to different cultures” (Belgium. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“One can be mentally cultivated without necessarily being scholarly educated” (Greece. Higher-middle social and educational level)

C. Civilisation

The concept of civilisation leads to fairly contrasting reactions and can give rise to controversy.

For some, “culture” and “civilisation” are perceived as being **synonymous**, as being concepts that are very closely dialectically linked or inseparable from each other, even though civilisation can assume a more abstract or “philosophical” character, including precepts for life, education, thought etc., and as such, **extend to cover several cultures**.

“Civilisation is something huge which is connected with our entire existence. Can we call civilisation a culture? Can we call culture a civilisation? These are connected too closely to be able to define more accurately” (Latvia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Culture creates civilisation and civilisations are part of culture, they cannot be separated” (Malta. Lower-middle social and educational level)

On the other hand, for a large number of other participants, civilisation is **a relative notion that in fact introduces a value scale and categorises cultures into hierarchies** depending on their degree of “civilisation”, i.e., their level of intellectual, moral and behavioural progress. This “subjective” notion is auto-centred on a particular nation or individual, and can represent an excuse for racism, colonialism and hegemonic impulses under the cover of a “civilising” mission. Some interviewees, from various groups and countries, are particularly sensitive to this dimension.

“We would call ourselves civilized and then when we look at the world, it can be a ‘them’ and ‘us’ situation. But, it’s a very western viewpoint” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Crusades took place in the name of civilisation but, in reality, they were destroying other people’s civilisations” (Greece. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“Western societies are supposed to be culturally more developed than others, it means to be civilised, which is a bias” (Portugal. Higher-middle social and educational level)

Another meaning of the term “civilisation” serves to distinguish it from “culture”: it can also encompass the sense of “**civility**” and “good manners in company”. In this sense of the word, the interviewees who mention it do not see any similarity between “civilisation” and “culture”, as a person can be “cultivated” but still not “civilised”, and certain “cultural” practices can also be judged as “barbaric” and “uncivilised” from the point of view of one’s own culture and/or opinions.

“In the case of civilisation there are two different meanings. Some of us have referred to civilisation at the level of society. Others have considered civilisation in terms of how you behave” (Romania. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“There are uncivilised peoples who, however, do have culture” (Spain. Higher-middle social and educational level)

Finally, civilisation can sometimes bring to mind cultures from the past or “extinct” cultures such as the Ancient Greek civilisation, the Greco-Roman civilisation, the Egyptian civilisation and the Inca civilisation.

All things considered, culture and civilisation seem to be most closely linked in the sense of organising and governing relationships between individuals belonging to the same community.

“The alternative to that is anarchy” (Ireland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

D. Traditions

For everyone, tradition is clearly **closely linked to culture**. Traditions are often mentioned as elements that are particularly “characteristic” of a culture. Folklore, rites, celebrations, costumes and songs that are typical of a particular culture come to mind, regardless of whether they are national, regional or even local.

Traditions are therefore a strong component of the identity of a culture and are anchored in the past. They are considered to be important by older participants and refer back to a notion of heritage that **should be preserved** and kept “alive”. In fact, many people lament the fact that they are being weakened or that they are disappearing altogether.

“Culture comes from past generations and traditions, that is the same thing. Roots, landmarks” (France. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“For example, in the past Cypriot traditional weddings would go on for three days, now people have weddings in hotels that last only a few hours” (Cyprus. Higher-middle social and educational level)

On the other hand, in some cases participants feel that some traditions are being restored and that people are “returning to their roots” precisely as a reaction against “modern life”, globalisation and distance from their culture of origin (in the case of immigrants).

“The immigrants keep the traditions much more alive than we do. In the shows they have on TV, you can hear old folk songs being sung” (Slovenia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

E. Lifestyles

Lifestyles are perceived as incontestably **belonging to the realm of culture**. They are the expression and manifestation of it, unless they are very marginal or minority lifestyles, in which case they can be said to represent “subcultures”.

For participants, lifestyle does not simply express the prevailing culture in which it exists; it also expresses **“individual culture”** and personal preferences. For many in Europe and the West in general, there is enormous freedom of choice when it comes to personal lifestyle. Several different lifestyles can therefore coexist successively in the same culture or even within the same individual. In other words, lifestyles can be variations on an overarching theme or **a personal “interpretation” of the prevailing dominant culture**.

As with education, parents (as an example or potentially a counter-example) play a key role, as do friends, membership groups (particularly age groups), and socioeconomic and cultural status.

“Hip hop is a subculture, a lifestyle aside but inside the common culture” (Portugal. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Our daily habits are greatly influenced by the culture we have learned; it is the way we do our hair, the clothes we wear or even what we eat...” (Greece. Higher-middle social and educational level)

Lifestyles, in contrast to culture, of which they are constituent elements, are perceived as less durable and more changeable.

F. Leisure

Participants often spontaneously see **a link between leisure and culture**. Leisure is described as the time set aside “for oneself” outside of professional duties and the obligations of day-to-day life that allows one to devote oneself to so-called cultural activities (such as reading, going to the cinema or theatre, or visiting an exhibition), or even spending time oneself on cultural or artistic creation.

“I think culture is only possible in your leisure time” (Austria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

Of course, for a large number of participants, **not all leisure time is automatically occupied in “cultivating oneself” or in indulging in cultural activities**. Here we once again see the **ambiguity** that surfaced previously in relation to “knowledge”: i.e., the implicit split between “cultural” leisure activities and purely entertaining leisure activities that fall within the sphere of so-called “popular” culture. In this way, playing sport, doing DIY, going to a football match, or not doing anything in particular are, for some people, not really seen as “culture”.

In response to this kind of observation, others maintain that “everything is culture” and that the way in which a society regards leisure (cf. the “35 hour week in France”, and the “leisure society”) or simply the kind of leisure activities that exist in any given country do in fact **reveal a great deal** about the culture in question. For example, from a cultural point of view it is “very Irish” to go to the pub, whereas Austrians would be more inclined to play sport.

“Going to the cinema is culture, and also entertainment” (Portugal. Lower-middle social and educational level)

*“Reading a book is leisure and at the same time an act of culture, from what I get from it”
(Portugal. Lower-middle social and educational level)*

All things considered, there is agreement on the idea that **cultural “activities” require free time**, i.e., leisure time, although leisure activities are not in themselves necessarily regarded as cultural in the “valued” and “worthy” sense of the term. Here we can see once again the idea of culture as a form of “luxury” reserved for the favoured classes.

“Ancient Greeks used to have slaves doing all jobs and so philosophers and scientists had all the time they needed to reflect and achieve great things” (Greece. Higher-middle social and educational level)

I.3 CULTURE AS AN ASPECT OF PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

- ❖ The aspects of personal development mentioned spontaneously when this theme was introduced are broadly similar in all countries. They relate first of all to the **personal and emotional sphere** (family, romantic relationships, friends, health of friends and family, etc.), then to **the world of work** (having an interesting job, a certain amount of success, economic security etc.), and finally to **having a good balance** between the two.
- ❖ **Culture is rarely excluded from this design, but it is not always cited as being “essential” to a full and successful life.** In particular, many participants from the lower-middle groups are far from making it a priority, indicating that they have **more pressing concerns** and suffer from a lack of time and money.

“The average price of a book is 17 euros! How can I afford it when I need that money for the basic things?” (Portugal. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“In Ireland today, leisure can wait until you have the house, the car and all that!” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Just the basic things are important, a house, a good job, and a partner” (United-Kingdom. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ Similarly, but from a different perspective, a minority of interviewees think that “contemporary” society is dominated by **materialism** and the promotion of consumerism, and that it does not therefore contribute to individuals’ cultural development.

“In our times, the material surpasses the spiritual” (Bulgaria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ Nevertheless, for a large majority (which is more marked in the higher-middle groups) **culture is a fundamental element in personal enrichment and development**, and this is sometimes the case precisely because it is a reaction against a world that is seen as being too “materialistic”.

“It is how spiritually to escape the surrounding materialism.” (France. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Having centres of interest enables you to break with routine and open yourself to the world.” (France. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“Without reading a good book, or going to exhibitions, I would feel lost” (Portugal. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“When I meet people who are more cultured than me I am happier” (Spain. Lower-middle social and educational level group)

“Culture is enriching because it makes me feel I am a part of our society”(Sweden. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Culture defines how rich and fulfilling your life is. It is something you grow up in, where you live in” (Netherlands. Higher-middle social and educational level)

CHAPTER II:
CULTURAL CONSUMPTION
AND PRACTISE

II.1 CULTURAL CONSUMPTION

- ❖ For the most part, participants from all countries affirm that they are quite “large consumers” of culture. It is notable that the term “consumption” is rarely questioned (only really in France and Germany, and even then infrequently): it seems to be taken for granted that culture forms part of the commercial world, and the term “sponsor” has become more common than patron. In addition, many participants stress that culture requires time, and especially money.
- ❖ In terms of spontaneous observations about cultural products that are “consumed”, we can note that:
 - The higher-middle groups have a greater tendency to refer spontaneously to socially valued cultural activities such as reading, the theatre, museums, exhibitions and concerts;
 - And the lower-middle groups more frequently mention cultural practices understood in the broader sense of the term, such as leisure activities, travel and sport.

A. Reading books

Reading appears frequently in the first spontaneous observations, but not all groups mention it to the same extent: participants in higher-middle groups tend to mention it immediately; whereas participants in lower-middle groups bring it up either later on or rarely do so at all.

It seems that participants often mention reading or wish they read more, but in fact actually “practise” it less. However, it is clear that it is a **valued cultural activity and that people potentially feel guilty if they do not read or if they read very rarely**. Moreover, on the subject of reading books, participants often bring up lack of time, stress, fatigue and their jobs, but also sometimes the attraction of easier and more passive “leisure” activities such as television, the Internet and reading newspapers and magazines.

The price of books is sometimes given as an excuse, but it is striking that no one brings up municipal libraries or book-lending schemes.

For some “big” readers, reading is described as a vital daily need. Women seem to be slightly keener on reading than men.

Although reading straddles the middle ground between “knowledge” and “leisure”, and even though it is sometimes “easy” (detective novels or airport novels), it is still associated with free choice and requires an “effort” to be made; it is an **active** process to be distinguished from other more “passive” practices.

The perceived dominant trend is that of a **relative decline** and a loss of “literary culture” among young people, which is naturally lamented by older interviewees. The attraction of the Internet and audio-visual media in general is identified as one of the main causes, accompanied by school curricula that devote less time to it.

B. Listening to music

Music is manifestly **the most widespread and appreciated form of cultural consumption**, regardless of age, sex, sociocultural level or country of residence. Almost all participants listen to music every day, though with varying levels of concentration (from attentive listening to background noise, usually in the car). It provides pleasure, emotion and relaxation.

We can distinguish **different types of music** and consequently different types of music fans.

- “Classical” music is more frequently enjoyed by the higher-middle groups and older participants; it is also more frequently listened to in social settings such as concert halls. Similarly, attending the opera appears to be limited to a small number of people who are both economically and culturally privileged (the general feeling is that it is best to be “initiated”).
- “Contemporary” music such as pop, jazz, rock, soul, world music and hip hop, essentially concerns the youngest interviewees, regardless of group. It is also very much associated with modern IT and communications devices (such as CDs, DVDs, the Internet, MP3 players and downloads) but also with large indoor or outdoor concerts that either charge an entrance fee or are free.
- “Traditional music” such as folk music, at festivals for example, tends to interest the older participants, and in certain countries in Central and Southern Europe it can include personal or family involvement either through playing an instrument or singing in a choir.

Age appears to be the **most important** criterion influencing musical consumption. Young people are clearly more “enthusiastic” than older people, listening to several hours per day on their “portable music devices”. They have more eclectic tastes and at the same time and are not generally fans of so-called “classical” music (sociocultural obstacles, stereotypes, etc.).

C. Cinema

In most countries the cinema seems to engage more specifically participants in **higher-middle groups and young people**, who state that they go to see more than two or three films per month.

On the whole, cinema attendance seems to be relatively low, as it faces competition from television, videos and DVDs. It is only really in France, Belgium, Greece and Italy where participants discuss enthusiasm for the cinema or the “seventh art” as it is known. Subscription systems established by certain distributors (in France for example) are considered to provide an incentive and to be effective.

The principal motivation remains distraction and relaxation, hence the avowed taste for comedies and action films. In this genre, Hollywood productions dominate; something that is sometimes openly deplored.

D. Live performances: theatre, opera, ballet, etc.

Going to the theatre, opera or ballet is definitely the **cultural practice where differences are most glaring**. They are perceived as being accessible to only a small number of **initiated people** who have both the required economic level (as places are seen as being very expensive) and the requisite “knowledge” (or the aptitude to appreciate such performances). In fact, very few participants say that they regularly go to these kinds of performances, which remain, even for them, relatively exceptional events (a few times per year). They are generally people of a certain age, principally from the higher-middle groups.

However, the findings are more complicated than they first appear.

- It is particularly the opera that is seen as being aimed at specialists or at a sort of elite consisting of educated spectators who are “cultivated” in the erudite sense of the word; in fact certain participants who are opera lovers or regulars enjoy the fact that the audience is restricted to “well educated” and well mannered people.
- Dance also brings to mind the same “separate” world, but this is less marked due to the fact that contemporary dance performances can attract a wider, younger audience.
- Equally, the theatre is seen as being less elite, even less “snobbish” in particular because, aside from “traditional” dramatic works, it can also offer “light comedies” or contemporary plays; in Slovakia for example, participants in the two groups without distinction attend the theatre several times a year.
- Musicals (particularly ones for children) are also appreciated by a wider section of the public.

Apart from the price, some participants feel that it is sometimes complicated trying to get hold of tickets for opera, dance and theatre performances (e.g., difficulty getting correct information, having to travel to reserve tickets, etc.).

E. Concerts

Although we saw earlier that all participants listen to music, they do not all go to concerts. Nonetheless, concerts appear to be **the most popular live performances**. The specific pleasure of the music is greatly enhanced by the emotion, the atmosphere and the sense of sharing involved.

Just as in the music category, we can distinguish fans of classical concerts (who tend to come from the higher-middle groups), and fans of more contemporary concerts (who tend to be young), although there is always some overlap between these two groups.

As a general rule, **young people** seem to be the greatest “consumers” of concerts, particularly of pop, rock and jazz concerts by their favourite groups or singers. Furthermore, they are particularly keen on open-air concerts in the summer, and naturally on large free concerts.

But in this category, once again, ticket prices are a significant obstacle.

F. Museums and exhibitions

This is **one of the most valued aspects of culture in the “worthy” sense of the term**. It is connected to artistic national heritage and, in a wider sense, to the heritage of humanity as a whole.

Despite this, however, **visits** to museums and exhibitions remain **relatively infrequent**, even rare, particularly in the lower-middle groups and among young people (unless they are photographic exhibitions). However, holidays and trips abroad very often provide the opportunity to visit museums, and this in turn can give rise to an interest in national museums.

Admission prices are not often cited as an obstacle to attendance; on the other hand, participants are more inclined to mention a lack of interest, a feeling that they lack the requisite knowledge, and that they have an insufficient ability to appreciate the displays, particularly where the visual arts are concerned.

G. Festivals

This type of event linking a particular place and a particular theme (e.g., cinema, theatre or operatic arts) is generally quite popular in principle.

The most well known festivals often appear to be opportunities to promote a particular type of art or cultural activity in the media, but they are **very rarely attended** by the interviewees. In fact, the vast majority of participants have never attended a festival.

There are only a handful of national or local festivals that affect interviewees directly: for example the Hungarian Spring Festival; the Dun Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures in Ireland; and the Folk Song Festival in Bulgaria.

The fact that there are a large number of people in one place – **the festive spirit** – is seen as an attraction, especially among young people who go mainly to music festivals.

H. Reading newspapers and magazines

The daily reading of newspapers remains widespread particularly in the higher-middle groups, but it seems to be in decline among young people who either do not read newspapers, read them only once or twice a week, or look at them online. Magazines are also very popular in all countries and cover a wide range of subjects such as political news or more specialist information (sport, cars, IT and gadgets, photography, DIY, women's magazines, etc.).

Whether or not this is “cultural” is debatable, but for the most part it is clearly seen as a “cultural” act **in the broader sense of the term**, in that they do not just provide information and knowledge but also stimulate reflection, and contribute to the overall cultural landscape (they reflect and create the “surrounding culture”).

I. Television and radio programmes

We can draw a distinction here between television and radio.

Television is not highly valued but watched by most people, whereas radio is less “culturally” disparaged but listened to less frequently.

Almost all participants “confess” that they spend several hours per day in front of their TV sets and all agree that television provides low level “mass culture”; some even see it as broadcasting a “counter-culture” (Italy). Most also admit that they watch the television because it is “easy” and see this as a weakness.

Some participants state, however, that they have reduced the amount of time they spend watching television and spend time on the Internet instead, whilst others stress that the advent of subscription channels allows them to watch more interesting and targeted content including documentaries, history, music, cinema, news, the economy, science, nature and animals.

Despite the fact that **radio** faces competition from television, it is still listened to relatively frequently, as background noise or for particular programmes such as interviews and political debates.

Depending on how they are used, many participants feel that these two widespread and popular media can either provide **the best or the worst aspects of culture**.

J. Travel

Travel is always **seen in a very positive light, but not all participants associate it with culture in the same way:**

- Travel is either described as an extraordinary way to discover the world, to “open one’s eyes” to new things and to put one’s own behaviour and values into perspective (normally by participants in the higher-middle groups).
- Or, more prosaically, it is directly connected with holidays, enjoyment and relaxation without any particular references to discovery and culture (normally by participants in the lower-middle groups).

Most interviewees travel at least once a year. Travel within participants’ own countries usually involves visiting parents or other relatives. Travel abroad is more widespread in the most developed countries (in Western and Northern Europe), in higher-middle groups and among young people (from all social groups).

Long-haul travel (e.g., to the Far East, Asia and South America) is valued particularly highly.

Naturally, the high cost of travel is frequently raised as an obstacle.

K. Cuisine and gastronomy

Cuisine and gastronomy are **subjects** that are generally seen as being **both very pleasurable** (as they provide great culinary and social enjoyment) **and cultural**, as they are particularly representative of the way of life of a particular country and its population.

This attitude surfaces in both groups, although participants in the higher-middle groups (who are also more frequent travellers) place greater emphasis on “foreign” and “exotic” cuisine (e.g., French, Italian, Asian and Indian). Conversely, young people seem to be (and are perceived as being) less interested.

The groups who are most effusive on this subject and who are most attached to cuisine as a cultural expression are to be found in Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Hungary, Sweden, Finland and Slovakia. Some participants are also concerned by the threat posed by “fast food” (particularly in Greece).

We should also note that there are a few concerns about more “healthy/diet” cuisine expressed particularly in Sweden, Malta and the Czech Republic.

L. Fashion and design

There is very **little consensus** on the subject of fashion and design: people either show little interest in it, or they do not consider it to be an essential element of culture.

Overall, participants in the higher middle groups react more and are more communicative on the subject, and they are also more inclined to see fashion and design as a significant element of culture.

In this way, design (e.g., of cars, furniture and technical objects) can be valued as a significant production by a “creator” located in a particular culture and time period.

In addition, women are more heavily involved in fashion: some see sartorial style as an interesting cultural expression that defines an era; and some are of the opinion that their style of dress can represent an expression of their personality.

M. Other leisure activities, hobbies and personal passions

Participants report a **wide range** of **varied** activities and there is some overlap with the “personal culture production” detailed in the following sub-chapter (II.2).

Open-air activities predominate, such as all kinds of sport, walking, hiking, skiing, skating, boating, fishing and caring for animals.

Manual activities, such as gardening, DIY and interior decoration, are equally popular.

Similarly, **social activities**, such as outings, meeting friends (cinema, restaurant, etc.) games events (bridge, poker, etc.) and community commitments are also specified.

The Internet is mentioned as a fairly popular leisure activity or hobby (developing websites, blogs, chat rooms, etc.) particularly by the youngest interviewees, as is photography.

We also noted more sporadic mentions of activities such as playing a musical instrument, painting, drawing, going to the sauna and enjoying tourism-related activities.

II.2 PERSONAL CULTURE PRODUCTION

- ❖ Participants can be split into two main groups in terms of “personal culture production”.

- In the minority, there are those who understand culture production in the “learned” or “academic” sense of the term and consider that they are not “producers” of culture in any way.

“When I try to think of things I could produce it all seems too pretentious. I am not artistic at all ... Perhaps holding on to traditions in our family is a kind of culture production ...”
(Sweden. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- In the majority, there are those who liken the concept of culture production to “personal expression” in the wider sense, including all “free” activities outside of the professional or commercial sphere that are a source of individual enrichment or development.

“This is where culture intertwines with entertainment” (Spain. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ From this point of view (i.e., culture in the broader sense of the term) numerous activities are highlighted. We distinguish the following main types.

- **“Amateur”** artistic activities, especially: playing a **musical instrument** alone or in a group (violin and piano more frequently in the higher-middle groups and guitar more frequently in the lower-middle groups); **singing**, sometimes in traditional choirs (Greece, Hungary and Cyprus); **writing** children’s books, songs and poems (sometimes including public readings); **acting** (in an amateur theatrical company); **dancing** (potentially folk dance); **photography**; **painting**; **drawing**; and **sculpture**.
- **Manual activities** undertaken alone or in a workshop, including: jewellery making, pottery, ceramics, weaving, embroidery, flower arranging and making clothes; as well as gardening, DIY, interior design, cooking, learning or making up recipes, and restoring old cars.
- **Physical and sporting activities** such as hiking, football, tennis and martial arts. Participants sometimes connect these to their “national cultures” (for example, horse racing in the UK and skating in Sweden).
- **Teaching or passing on knowledge**: leading IT workshops; developing websites; assembling computers; participating in visual arts classes for children; helping with a club or at a municipal cultural facility; and quite often simply being “parents” or “grandparents” which can involve telling national or family stories, and passing down knowledge on anything from cheese and wine to cooking.

II.3 ACCESSIBILITY OF CULTURE

- ❖ Participants were invited to identify obstacles that make cultural activities difficult to access and to discuss ways of overcoming them.
- ❖ We can identify **three types of obstacles (objective, sociocultural and psychological) that make culture less accessible.**
- ❖ **Objective material factors** are cited first by participants in all countries and in all groups, although interviewees in the lower-middle groups stress them more.
 - **Money and time:** lack of money for admission tickets (especially for families) or to pay to learn a musical instrument; and lack of free time, the “stress of modern life”, an invasive job, and too many tasks to complete on a day-to-day basis (particularly for working mothers).

“Our daily programmes are so full that it is difficult to make time for cultural functions even if we would like to” (Cyprus. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Culture is expensive, not all of it, but cinema, opera, etc.” (Spain. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“The truth is this is one of the main reasons why we have no free time. The standard of living is very low, people have two jobs and run from one to the other. They become like robots. They need money and they have no free time left” (Romania. Higher-middle social and educational level)
 - **Lack of information** (or too much information, causing confusion and discouragement).
 - **The distance needed to travel in order to take part in cultural activities** is mentioned especially by those who do not live in a city, as is the poor quality of what is available in some regions.

“They do not bring all bands here. Also what regards good literature. I cannot read in German or in French. And not everything is translated. They translate more where the market is bigger” (Estonia. Higher-middle social and educational level)
- ❖ **Sociocultural factors** are often cited as an obstacle, and they primarily apply to more “learned” culture.
 - **The education system:** an educational system that does not provide children with enough stimulation (culture is not promoted enough in schools), and that puts children off (“compulsory” trips that are poorly organised and boring).
 - **The social environment:** parents, colleagues and friends who do not provide encouragement and who are not “educated” themselves.
 - **Prevailing cultural standards and values:** these can put up “invisible” barriers and intimidate those who are “not initiated”, who are “ignorant” or who perceive themselves as such. They can create, both in reality and in people’s minds, a “two speed” cultural structure comprising a “closed club” of connoisseurs or an “elite” that can be seen as “snobbish” and exclusive, and a so-called “popular” culture that includes the “mass” media (mainly television), entertainment and sport aimed at ordinary people.

- ❖ **Psychological obstacles** are often only mentioned to a significant extent after other things, but they are numerous and encounter varying degrees of acceptance.
 - **Lack of confidence:** a feeling of inferiority, ignorance and incomprehension, in particular with regard to cultural productions that are considered to be complex and/or that require an understanding of how they work (e.g., opera, ballet and art exhibitions).
 - **Lack of interest, motivation and “desire”:** some participants blame themselves whilst others attribute it to an education system that does not sufficiently promote culture.
 - **Fatigue:** the need for rest and relaxation can lead people to favour “non intellectual” activities that are perceived as being non-cultural or as representing a different form of culture (e.g., outings with friends, sports and various hobbies).
 - **Ease and “intellectual laziness”:** this is often expressed as a tendency to follow the “prevailing trends” and passively to abandon oneself to the plentiful supply of television provided.

“Fear of not being at the right level, fear of social pressure. That is an obstacle.” (France. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“When there isn’t much spare time, one prefers to relax rather than do anything else” (Greece. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“More should be done to take out the snobbish element.” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“We have perceptions about the Opera or the Ballet... if education started much earlier in schools they would learn a lot. I had two people come in and perform an opera and the children who had never seen anything like that before were riveted by it, and by coming into school they were exposed to something that they would never get at home... if there was more money for theatre groups to go to school it could be great” (United-Kingdom. Higher-middle social and educational level)
- ❖ It is interesting to note that psychological obstacles are more often stressed by participants from the former Eastern Bloc (Central Europe and the Baltic countries) who think that cultural activities are “accessible” for everyone and that the objective and sociocultural obstacles are “excuses”.
- ❖ **The suggestions** made to remove the obstacles are remarkably similar and “logical”. They include:
 - Offering families reduced entrance prices and membership cards, and offering free access (notably to museums) to students and seniors;
 - Stimulating interest in culture and motivating people to take part;
 - Integrating culture into school and university courses better in order to increase young people’s awareness;
 - Providing more information;
 - Encouraging and supporting cultural activities in schools, companies and associations (e.g. success of the municipal music academies in Sweden);

- Improving what is already available, and increasing the number of “quality” events such as festivals, book fairs, theatre tours and regional exhibitions.

II.4 ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

- ❖ In all countries and groups, when participants think of new technologies they almost invariably focus on the **Internet**.
- ❖ The Internet is unanimously seen, above all, as a fantastic **tool for accessing culture**, saving time (one can obtain an almost instant response) and space (it is available at home at any time of day). It represents:
 - A source of information on various cultural programmes and events (cinema, museums, theatre, exhibitions, etc.);
 - An online ticket office;
 - An inexhaustible virtual library;
 - A space where “cultural products” are available at the “click” of a mouse – museums, downloadable films and music, newspapers and the radio (particularly foreign), etc.;
 - A discussion forum on all subjects, and a space for exchange and debate.

“Modern technologies help to take more “culture” from many sources in a short time. Using traditional means it would take days, but with modern technologies it only takes a couple of minutes” (Latvia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“I have the ability to visit a well-known museum of a foreign country without leaving my own room” (Greece. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ Despite these positive functional points, some participants point out that there is also a downside and highlight specific **reservations and criticisms** or at least warnings:
 - The vast amount of information available requires sorting and discernment;
 - The data obtained is not always reliable and requires verification;
 - The culture accessed can be superficial and simplistic;
 - Ease of access could, paradoxically, distance people from “real” culture: a virtual visit does not replace real life contact with works of art for example. In addition, time spent on the Internet is not necessarily devoted to culture – young people in particular are seen as being dependent on games and chat rooms.

“You need to sort it out... On a subject like Islam, I prefer my books” (France. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“You don’t get the atmosphere and the same feeling as if you had been there. Using these new technologies is good but still only second best” (Sweden. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“Maybe it takes people away from real culture. They spend time with the Internet instead of going to the theatre” (Estonia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“When I bought a computer for my kids, they stopped playing with each other!” (Greece. Higher-middle social and educational level)

❖ As for the notion of **“Internet culture”**, it gets a mixed reception and is the subject of some controversy.

- For some people, the Internet (along with other technologies such as mobile phones, “iPods”, MP3 and text messages) is an **integral part of a new interpersonal communication system** that has its own rules, customs, language, codes, style and signs of recognition, and it can therefore be considered as a “culture” whose best representatives are recruited principally from among the ranks of the young. In this way, blogs, chat, forums, interactive games and personal sites are seen as a form of cultural expression or at least as a “subculture” that has its own “tribe” and “creators”.

“For example, the Internet already has its own language: that is also the element that most people find irritating with the Internet. I mean certain abbreviations, languages or these smiles. I would say that’s also part of the Internet culture” (Austria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“My child watches TV, downloads music, writes a letter..., all at the same time” (Austria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- However, participants are more numerous in seeing the Internet as a **“container” rather than content in its own right**: it does not “produce” culture, even though it can be a broadcasting space for individual production. It is therefore another way of communicating and another way of potentially consuming culture, much more than a form of culture in itself.

“It gives you access to all cultures but it is not a culture per se” (Spain. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“This is a double-edged sword: the communication is impoverished by the new technology but, in other hand, young talents who still do not have a name are able to produce cultural products for all of us” (Finland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“This expression of ‘Internet culture’ hurts my ears. It is not a culture, it is a machine. It cannot be called a culture. Culture is everything else” (Estonia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- For a minority of participants, who are primarily older, the Internet is seen as a **quasi “counter culture”** that sucks users into a virtual world, cutting them off from reality and society, and targeting them with a “fake mass culture of brands”.

“On the one hand you can be in touch with lots of people, on the other you often sit alone in front of a screen.” (Luxembourg. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“It has a destructive effect. One day it won’t be that we come together to meet” (Hungary. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“I don’t see it as Internet culture as such – that’s more like chat-rooms, where people practically live” (Denmark. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“The big brands are the ones with the spending power so they’re the ones which are a lot more visible on the Internet” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

CHAPTER III:

EUROPEAN CULTURE

III. 1 PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPEAN CULTURE AND CHARACTERISTIC COMPONENTS OF EUROPEAN CULTURE

- ❖ The idea of the existence of a “European culture” gives rise **initially to hesitation and confusion. However, the ensuing discussions reveal similar ideas of a widely shared “European” culture.**
- ❖ **Without being prompted, a large number of interviewees tend to think initially of the differences that exist between Europeans and of their own national cultures, rather than the idea of a homogenous European culture.**

This, however, is true to a lesser extent of participants in the higher-middle socioeducational groups in many countries who often speak about elements common to all Europeans, or even mention the (prized) European cultural diversity that exists within a common framework.

In some countries the idea of a European cultural community is mentioned quite widely from the outset. This is particularly true in most of the new Member States (with more reservations in Estonia), and even more true in the acceding countries of Bulgaria and Romania. Older Member States such as Italy, Greece, and Portugal in the South of Europe and Finland also frequently bring up the idea of a cultural community.

“I can’t define European culture because, to me, it does not exist – I agree, the countries are too different”

“European concepts, European culture, European currency... are all concepts imposed from above” (Germany. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“For me, Europe is so political that I do not associate culture with it” “Europe is a patchwork” (Austria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“We may all be Europeans and members of a union, but this doesn’t and shouldn’t mean that we have a common cultural identity” (Greece. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“There is something from each culture. Thus, it is mixed – if we want to talk about European culture, then it is neither Slovak culture, nor Hungarian, nor Polish but a small piece from all cultures” (Slovakia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“The classical pieces of art and literature are all related to Europe” (Hungary. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“When I say European culture, I see common values in it – it’s the first thing that comes to mind. You can speak of a European tradition as a model for other regions” (Romania. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ In fact, the difficulty of “defining” what “European culture” is, **often coexists with a diffuse feeling of cultural community** that is more noticeable when participants distance themselves and see things from a more international perspective **in comparison** to other great “cultures” on a continental scale, e.g., oriental, Far-Eastern, Arab or African cultures.

“The fact we have already mentioned about having a lot of in common with Europe proves the existence of global (European) culture that is ignoring borders and we are a part of it” (Lithuania. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“You cannot give a general definition of European culture. However, when you go outside of Europe, then you realise what constitutes European culture” (Belgium. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Perhaps people coming from outside of Europe will say ‘This is how Europeans are’, but we are in fact very diverse” (Denmark. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ After their initial reactions, participants also express the idea that **diversity itself is an “asset” that is unique to Europe and that reveals certain specific European characteristics such as tolerance and openness.**

In fact, the sheer variety of European cultures is identified in most countries and groups as being an incomparable asset that has been preserved by the respect that all cultures show towards each other. The “cultural exception”, supported particularly by France, is an example.

“The diversity of European culture..., because there is such a concept as European culture but it has numerous nuances! While in USA there are differences as well, but not as characteristic as in Europe where hundreds of nuances exist!” (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Culture expression is more tolerant in Europe than in any other corner of the globe. There is a moral and reactionary wind sweeping through the American hemisphere as well as in the Muslim world. Old Europe is all alone to fight for these values today” (Sweden. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ Beyond this, participants generally agree that Europeans share **a long common history**, spanning several centuries. In this historic heritage, hostilities and even wars themselves (especially the two World Wars) are viewed as “interactions” and shared trials that have ultimately helped to forge and cement **a collective desire for peace.**

In addition, the fact that these common foundations stretch back through history is often associated with ideas of **“refinement”**, **“sophistication”** and **“wisdom”** that have been developed and refined over the centuries and that mark Europeans out as being different to younger peoples.

“You can assume that we learned from the mistakes of World War II unlike other nations” (Austria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“We became wise through all the mistakes, wars..., we have made.” (Netherlands. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“The European countries are old. Their cultures are built on a foundation of Christianity and royalty. We feel part of something larger. USA doesn’t have a coherent culture. They buy their culture” (Denmark. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“We have our history. Our backbone that is grounded many hundreds of years back in time. They – USA – are lacking something and they really want it” (Denmark. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Art is a good distinctive point from the USA: they can only refer to modern art” (Italy. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ Similarly, **Europe's Christian and Judo-Christian heritage** is mentioned as one of the main foundations of “European culture”, especially in comparison to the Muslim world – and especially in some lower-middle groups (e.g., in Greece, Austria and Ireland) – in relation to Turkey’s potential accession to the EU.

In this respect, however, we should point out that the vast majority of interviewees tend to think of the historic influence of Christian values and not current faith or religious practices. Rather than a Christian Europe being put forward as a contrast to an Islam that is frequently viewed as totalitarian for its intervention in private and public life, Europe is seen as a collection of States that are above all characterised by their secularism – whether this term is expressly used or whether observations are couched in other words that express the same idea.

- ❖ From this point of view, **European culture is seen as being the framework for so-called “Western” culture**, possessing characteristics that draw it closer to the United States and differentiate it from other cultures such as African and Arab-Muslim cultures:

- **Democratic** regimes;
- **Secular** states;
- **Liberal** or capitalist economic systems;
- **Freedom** of expression.

“We Europeans are different from each other but that is a cultural added-value, but we also have things in common, such as religion and political regimes, among others” (Portugal. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ **Participants from all countries recognise this general “European component” in their own national cultures** – the general foundation and philosophical principles, political and social choices. On the other hand, elements that are specific to national cultures tend to be less universal: traditional music, popular arts, architectural style, culinary specialities (or specific drinks), types of celebrations held, or even typical “temperaments” – more reserved and introverted in northern Member States and more expansive and extrovert in southern Member States.
- ❖ **Participants are often ambivalent towards “Western” culture and sometimes see it as negative in that it asserts itself as superior and tries to dominate world culture.** It is therefore often **associated with “globalisation”**, which itself is primarily **associated with the United States, and denounced** as a threat both to the “rest of the world” and to participants’ own cultures.

“It’s a term that only serves to present our values as good and great and devalue other cultures” (Austria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“I would immediately think of America when I hear of Western culture, I think greed, oil, exploitation, colonialism and certain religious values” “Americans tend to think the US is the world” (Ireland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“I have the feeling what is at stake is rather globalisation. It mainly comes from the Americans and the English, whether you are in a discotheque here in Cologne or in Madrid or Warsaw, you hear the same music” (Germany. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ **In fact, it is with the United States in mind that the feeling of belonging to a “European culture” takes shape and finds expression** in a general appreciation for Europe and therefore also for its “culture”. In this confrontation between European and American culture, some participants who initially felt uncomfortable with the notion of “European culture” start to become more aware of it. It is also interesting to note that at this point in the discussion, participants use the collective pronoun “we” and frequently express feelings of “pride”.

“Europe is a collection of small histories meeting each other. We Europeans have the advantage of having a history... Compared with the United States, we can be proud of it...”
“When you think of the American ogre and its cultural atom bomb, you feel it enables you to resist culturally” (France. Higher-level social and educational level)

“We should have an identity that Americans do not have. European identity” (Hungary. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“I would define the European culture as more creative. The Europeans are active and energetic. I cannot imagine the Americans as active and creative” “The European culture has a past. That is exactly why the Americans envy us. Their history goes back in time to some 200 years..., you can extract whatever pottery from the earth on our lands” (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Having a general culture, we think more. We refine our judgements by reading a book which also enriches our vocabulary. Then by discussing the book with someone else, we also improve our reasoning capacity and our capacity to question things. That does not happen among Americans. They have no personal opinions on any subject” (Romania. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“There is in the USA a go-getter mentality, of taking care of oneself. In Europe, welfare, food-control quality, for instance, is traditional” (Denmark. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“I think that Europeans, including Poles, we unite in common pride of being Europeans”(Poland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ In summary, **compared to “European culture”, the United States is seen as being representative of the most extreme example of “liberal Western culture” in the economic sense of the word:**
 - Less solidarity
 - Less democratic
 - Excessive value placed on earnings, financial success and competition (*“the struggle to reach the top”*)
 - More “materialistic” and “consumer” orientated; less focused on spirituality, arts and culture
 - Less tolerant
 - More “imperialistic” and less open to other cultural influences
- ❖ Two countries (**the UK and Ireland**) are caught in the middle between European and American culture, but in completely different ways.

- **Groups from the UK** react to the idea of “European culture” typically by associating it with France as a way of showing a clear distinction between their own national culture and European culture. In general they do not dispute the existence of “European culture” but they identify it in order to **distance themselves from it**: they claim to be “different” and to have more in common with America (especially the youngest interviewees) than with continental Europe. They exist as an “insular race”, focusing on themselves, displaying little curiosity about other cultures, speaking only English and showing no interest in foreign films.

“I think England is very different from the rest of Europe culturally. The Spanish and the French are more into their family” (United-Kingdom. Lower-middle social and educational level)

Participants nonetheless think that British individuality is partly “influenced” by Europe and express regret and anxiety over a loss of British identity, although they also sometimes see it as a positive change that has led, for example, to them adopting certain new “Mediterranean” social customs such as outdoor cafes.

“I think European law is beginning to affect us because they are beginning to impose things, it gets rid of some of the English culture like in the markets where they are not allowed to use pounds and ounces and that’s a loss in culture” (United-Kingdom. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- In common with the British participants, **the Irish groups** also refer to a “continental European culture” that they do not feel completely involved in. But contrary to their British neighbours, they are much more welcoming, **open and willing to “Europeanise”** rather than “Americanise”, despite the links that bind them to the United States and their emigrant communities. Many interviewees hold views that are quite “anti-American”, rejecting the “alienation” of dominant American culture and revealing themselves to be in favour of exchanges and a mutually beneficial relationship between Europe and Ireland.

“It used to be something that was ‘over there’ and something that we weren’t necessarily a part of. Whereas now, there is a feeling that we want to be integrated into Europe and a part of it. And there’s also a feeling that we’ve something to bring to it” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ In summary, despite initial doubts and hesitations, and despite the underlying risk mentioned by some participants of national cultures becoming increasingly similar, **interviewees generally recognise that “European culture” is a reality and that it is something to be celebrated**. Finally, the singular and paradoxical quality of European culture is exactly that it has been able to preserve the specific identities of the different cultures that make it up. **Within the context of ever-increasing “globalisation”, Europe will be the guardian of a uniquely rich culture.**

“The EU doesn’t want to dismantle our culture differences, their aim is to unify us as to an economic and political federation” (Greece. Lower-middle social and educational level)

III.2 SYMBOLIC ELEMENTS OF EUROPEAN CULTURE

- ❖ Participants were invited to choose a series of emblematic symbols that they consider to be representative of “European culture”.
- ❖ **This exercise confirmed, and even sometimes revealed, the existence of a concealed feeling of European cultural community.** Moving beyond the difficulties and debates triggered by the idea itself, interviewees primarily suggested things from **outside of their national frame of reference**, and for some of the categories, the majority of them made identical choices regardless of their country of origin. For example: Paris and Brussels for the place; the fall of the Berlin Wall or the Second World War for the historic event; the introduction of the euro or the latest round of enlargement for the recent event; and Guernica or the Mona Lisa for the work of art.

A. A place

The vast majority of interviewees chose a historically rich city containing monuments to the past (famous cultural sites or buildings) and whose influence stretches beyond its own national borders. Numerous great capitals from “old Europe” were therefore mentioned, e.g., Brussels, Paris, Rome, London, Athens and Berlin, with some participants identifying a specific symbolic monument such as the Eiffel Tower, the Coliseum, the Acropolis or Big Ben.

Paris and Brussels – as the historic heart and geographical centre of the original construction of the European Union – were the most popular choices, particularly in the new Member States.

Rome, Athens and ancient Greece, representing the long history of our common origins, came second.

No participants in any country mentioned solely national places (and some groups did not specify any national places at all).

B. A character of the past

Choosing a person from the past turned out to be more complicated. The most popular choice was a **politician**, but participants were torn on the one hand between a great positively viewed figure from the Second World War (e.g., Churchill, De Gaulle) and on the other hand, a conquering figure towards whom they have negative or ambivalent feelings (e.g., Hitler, Napoleon, Charlemagne, Julius Caesar).

Great “Europeans” in the context of the EU, such as Robert Schuman and Willy Brandt, were either not mentioned or were only infrequently chosen.

Participants also identified personalities from the arts, particularly musicians (showing an “emotional” dimension) such as Mozart, Bach, Verdi and Chopin; as well as great thinkers and philosophers such as Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and more recent philosophers.

C. A character living today

The answers given to this question were naturally very diverse, and no particular living person or function received a large number of votes.

The only choice that gained any real popularity was the Pope (without specifying which one), doubtless due to the “moral authority” that some people feel he holds and due to the great popularity of John-Paul II.

Aside from the Pope, a range of prominent personalities who are active in European institutions or debates were chosen: Jacques Delors, Romano Prodi, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Jean-Claude Juncker, Jacques Rogge; and even Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac and Silvio Berlusconi.

Finally, several royal figures that are emblematic of “old Europe”, its past and its traditions were also mentioned: Queen Elizabeth, Prince Charles, Queen Margaret of Denmark and the Royal Family of Monaco.

The important thing to note is that the person chosen, as with the place or historical figure, was usually a person from **another European country** and not from participants' own countries.

D. An historical event

Most of the events chosen occurred in the recent past. The only event to be mentioned several times that took place more than a century ago was the **French Revolution** (mentioned in Ireland, Greece, Italy, Germany, Austria and Hungary). The revolutions of 1848 were also cited in Romania. In addition, participants sometimes mentioned great battles or national uprisings (Trafalgar in the UK, Poltava against the Russians in Sweden, 1916 in Ireland, regime change in Poland, the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, independence in Slovenia, Estonia, etc.).

The most popular choices made by participants in a range of countries concerned relatively recent events.

The fall of the Berlin Wall received an extraordinary amount of votes (in three quarters of the groups) in all countries and in all types of social group. Furthermore, if participants did not bring it up at this stage in the discussions, they often mentioned it under the next point (“a recent event”).

This choice **shows that participants feel a real sense of contributing to Europe**, and that they feel a sense of belonging to a wider community, particularly when faced with the threat of the ex-Soviet Bloc. Implicitly, the choice of this event shows an appreciation of democracy and freedom.

The Second World War was also often mentioned, as if the fact that the obstacle was overcome together makes it something that brings European countries closer together. It also provided the impetus for the construction of a peaceful Europe.

Although mentioned less frequently, it is also significant that the **terrorist attacks** in Madrid and London (and sometimes also the Twin Towers) were mentioned. Once again, this choice reveals a sense of union and solidarity in the face of an “external” threat, i.e., fundamentalist Islam.

E. An event that took place in recent years

Two particular events were mentioned by the majority of participants: **the latest round of enlargement** (mentioned especially by citizens in the new Member States who specifically referred to **their own accession**), and **the introduction of the single currency**.

A small number of participants also mentioned sporting events such as the European Football Cup, the World Cup and the Olympic Games in Greece.

F. A piece of art

Italian heritage came frequently to mind in this category. A large majority of the references focused on the **Mona Lisa**, which was seen as being particularly representative of European art. Michelangelo's **David** and the **Sistine Chapel**, were also mentioned several times, as was **Guernica** by Picasso. In this painting we see references to war, which highlight the contrast with the current state of peace in Europe.

G. A story or legend

In this category participants were more likely to quote a **national story or legend** such as the Nibelungen in Germany, Don Quixote in Spain, Robin Hood in the UK and Hamlet in Denmark.

Aside from this, **Greek and Roman mythology** were the most popular choices (participants even sometimes specified the Greek myth known as “the rape of Europa” from which the continent of Europe derived its name).

H. A frame of thinking

Participants' comments in this category can be split between positive philosophies and more debatable or negative philosophies: **forms of “political” organisation** (e.g., democracy and liberalism) were mentioned alongside **mental attitudes** (e.g., individualism and xenophobia). **Philosophical ideas** and great thinkers (e.g., Freud and Nietzsche) were seldom mentioned.

- Openness, “the enlightenment”, freedom of expression, tolerance and democracy form a group of interrelated concepts and seem to be marginally the most popular choices.
- Individualism and egoism (even xenophobia) were also quite frequently mentioned and sound, in contrast to the previous group, like a form of self-criticism or “rich” country latent guilt.
- Rationalism, positivism and pragmatism were mentioned particularly in the new Member States in Central and Eastern Europe.
- Capitalism, liberalism, Marxism, socialism and communism were also mentioned by a handful of participants.
- “Arrogance” was mentioned by one British group, as was “racketeering”.

- Finally, philosophies associated with a particular personality were rarely mentioned: Freud, Kant, Nietzsche, Montesquieu; a few important religious figures such as Calvin, Luther; and occasionally great intellectuals such as Newton and Copernicus.

The dominant feeling underlying the observations was “liberal” in the wider sense of the term.

I. A moment which you have lived through yourselves

As a general rule, participants mentioned “**emotional**” **events**, that affected them deeply either individually or collectively. Experiences ranged from an attack or a tragic event such as the death of a famous person (e.g., Princess Diana, John-Paul II, and the murders of Olof Palme and Theo Van Gogh), to more festive and enjoyable events such as attending a large sporting event, seeing a famous person during a visit, and the Catholic World Youth Day held in Cologne (which a couple of people mentioned).

In a more anecdotal and personal way, participants frequently mentioned **travel within Europe**, (with special mention in the new Member States of freedom of movement) and sometimes specified a particularly enjoyable event during their trip (e.g., a visit to the European Parliament, museum visits, a concert at La Scala, etc.).

Similarly, student **exchanges** (Erasmus) and professional internships were seen as a positive and personal way to feel more involved in the European Union. On their return from these trips, participants felt “different” and “more European”.

Significantly, though only rarely, **the introduction of the euro** was also mentioned at this point in the discussions.

III.3 SPECIFICITY OF EUROPEAN CULTURE

- ❖ When invited to identify the specific features of “European culture”, participants mentioned the principal characteristics that have already been detailed in III.1. As a general rule, each group tends to feel attached to at least two or three specific features of “European culture”, **essentially in comparison to other great cultural entities** such as the Arab-Muslim world, Asia and Africa, but especially as a counter to North American “hegemony”.

“We can’t refer to a ‘Western Culture’: the European culture is different from the American culture. Still a Finn is different from a Spaniard exactly as a Texan is different from a Californian, but they speak the same language, have the same quite short historical background, while in Europe each country went through a different history, growing at different stages, cultivating own traditions, achieving democracy and freedom at a different time...in my opinion the notion of European culture nowadays is a forcing, we need time to benefit from a too recent history” (Italy. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ In summary, here are the **main specific features most frequently attributed to “European culture”**:
 - **Cultural diversity** which is seen as a **blessing** and an asset, in addition to the capacity to promote, preserve and encourage it through customs, traditions, popular and classical arts, languages, cuisine, etc.
 - **The past, long-standing common roots**, experience, and the lessons learnt from this shared history.
 - **Tolerance, openness, intellectual curiosity**, a thirst for new knowledge and discoveries, and a desire to meet new people and to travel.
 - **Freedom of thought and expression**, which is sometimes also linked to resistance movements (e.g., against the Roman Empire, the French Revolution and the current alter-globalisation movement).
 - **Solidarity**, especially with regard to welfare systems, and contrary to the system in place in the United States.
 - **Humanism**, in particular in contrast to the hyper-materialistic “consumer society” that the Americans are seen as championing.
 - **Democracy**
 - **A certain “refinement” and sense of subtlety**, especially compared to American pragmatism.
 - **A vast artistic and architectural heritage.**
 - **A high standard of living**, a certain “art of living” and a particular “quality of life”.

“A great variety concentrated on a small geographical territory is characteristic of Europe” (Latvia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Culturally, there are a 50 year-old and a 20 year-old. The younger is more open and initiative, the older more experienced and thoughtful. The American is the younger, the European the older!” (Hungary. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“The European culture is so valuable that it should be taken to the world, not in the way we are better, but to share with other cultures as we also have to learn with other cultures” (Portugal. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ Some participants in certain countries, and more frequently in the lower-middle groups, express a **fear that the various European cultures will “become more uniform”**. This is particularly the case in the groups from Greece (especially among men), as well as in the groups from Malta, Cyprus and Estonia. This fear is linked to anxieties over European diversity being “diluted and smoothed over” by globalisation.

In Germany, participants also greatly fear and lament an invasion by Anglo-Saxon and American culture.

- ❖ In the **United Kingdom** European culture is criticised in the lower-middle group precisely because it allows a form of questionable “multiculturalism”. Respondents in the higher-middle group, although less negative, still find it difficult to perceive European culture as anything more than the mere addition of the different countries’ cultures.

It should be noted, however, that despite the avowed difficulty of “identifying specific features” European culture, British groups are in agreement at this stage of the discussions in identifying an “indefinable” feeling of community, despite or even because of European cultural diversity.

- ❖ To conclude this chapter on “European culture” we can note the following points.
 - It is usually the new and future Member States that are most unanimously open to European culture. The same is also true of Portugal and (less spontaneously so) of Spain.
 - The “founding” countries, doubtless the most unsettled by the recent enlargement, are attached to the notion of European culture but are more distant and have more of a “wait and see” attitude: Germany and France in particular appear to be in a temporary phase of critical uncertainty.
 - In Austria, interviewees are quite resistant to the idea of European culture and/or do not value it very highly (or even not at all), doubtless because of similar fears.
 - Some “small” countries (i.e., Malta, Cyprus and Estonia) display greater fears of a possible smoothing out of particular national traits or customs. This type of attitude also surfaces in Greece.
 - Many participants stress the dynamic, living and changing nature of European culture; it is a concept that is constantly developing and evolving.
- ❖ Finally, for the majority of interviewees, **European culture is characterised by its singular “diversity” and as such is a positive and valued shield against globalisation and the risk of cultural uniformity** (or even standardisation).

CHAPTER IV:

CULTURE AND VALUES

- ❖ A series of values was presented to the participants, and for each value they were invited: firstly to assess whether or not it forms part of European culture, particularly in comparison to other countries around the world; and secondly to identify how in their opinion the value finds expression in European culture as they have previously defined it.
- ❖ On the whole, **all of the concepts presented are viewed as common “European” values**, but they are not all unanimously recognised as being unique to Europe and are therefore not always necessarily seen as differentiating Europe from other cultures.

Two main reasons are advanced to explain why certain values cannot be characterised as purely “European”:

- Firstly, they are “universal” rather than European, or are even represented better in other countries or cultures;
- And secondly, they are not really “concretely” visible in the way that citizens view the construction and running of today’s EU.

It is therefore evident that each value can be assessed in a multitude of ways depending on the group or the country concerned.

However, two of the values presented are specifically attributed to “European culture”: heritage from history and respect for the earth. The other values trigger debates and varying levels of controversy.

A. Freedom

From the outset the vast majority of participants see freedom as a typically European value.

- In particular in reference to democracy and the introduction of “laws” on concepts such as freedom of movement, thought, expression and religion, and on individual freedoms.
- Similarly, in relation to great symbolic institutions – the “universal declaration of human rights” in particular and also the European Court of Justice – which constitute the bedrock of the EU.
- Historically, many European countries have had to “fight” to obtain it.
- Less frequently, because it is particularly “treasured” and cherished in Europe, and because it enjoys an elevated position close to citizens’ hearts (e.g., in Poland and the Czech Republic).

“Yes! Freedom is a feature of this culture. Basically starting from the Renaissance, it manifests itself all the time. Even when it’s not about the regime, it’s about freedom of thinking, about liberation of censorship or superior power” (Poland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Those who do not have freedom cannot join” (Spain. Higher-middle social and educational level)

*“Looking back at Europe’s history, it was always fighting for freedom”
(Malta. Higher-middle social and educational level)*

*“Yes, it is a foundation. Also compared to other western countries”
(Netherlands. Lower-middle social and educational level)*

Nevertheless, after their initial comments, many participants then strongly **associate liberty with the United States** (perhaps even more than they associate it with Europe). This is particularly the case in groups from the new Member States in Central Europe. This point can cause heated debate: some participants maintain that Europe specifically enables and encourages “freedom of thought” and “expression”; others assert that it is exactly this that is threatened and give the example of blasphemy becoming once again something that is forbidden (cf. the Mohammed cartoons and also the Austrian cartoonist who was summoned to appear before a Greek court due to a work on Jesus).

“I believe freedom is a common value, yet not specific” (Romania. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“I see freedom on the American side, if I was to ascribe it to one continent, I would say on the American side” (Austria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“In France, Europe has not brought us more freedom of speech than 20 years ago. On the contrary, perhaps there are more obstacles” (France. Lower-middle social and educational level)

B. Solidarity

Solidarity is **understood** by participants **from several angles**: between individuals; within one particular society; and more specifically, between Member States.

In general, participants rarely dispute that solidarity forms part of European culture, and it is even largely associated with it, but subtleties nonetheless emerge in the responses.

“Yes! It is typical European...” (Netherlands. Higher-middle social and educational level)

It is in its form as a social welfare system that solidarity is perceived as being **a purely European creation and achievement**. Workers’ struggles and the organisation of social protection are examples of events that mark it out as such.

Northern European countries are particularly held up as examples and inspire great hope in new Member States and acceding countries. On the contrary, in other countries, including in some of the founding members (i.e., France and Germany), participants fear that global pressure and economic depression will cause solidarity to decline in favour of an “ultra-liberal” or American model.

“The history of solidarity is closely related to the workers’ movement. Solidarity is characteristic of Europe” (Austria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Our social welfare systems are based on the principle of solidarity. You can spend a lot of time trying to find other examples in the world” (Germany. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“Our social networks are built on a foundation of solidarity. That’s not the case in many other European countries. And it is not like that at all in USA where people have no social safety net” (Denmark. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“In Europe we are all in the same class, whereas America is more stratified. America does not know such solidarity or a social State as we do. But I feel we are more and more like them. Solidarity is perishing” “It won’t last long. I think America is putting a lot of pressure on Europe and that things will change here in the near future” (Slovenia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

In terms of solidarity between individuals, participants are more inclined to mention other cultures that are perceived as being more cohesive and fraternal (particularly between different generations) such as Asian, Jewish and Muslim cultures. Moreover, it is interesting to note that some groups describe themselves or their fellow citizens as lacking in solidarity.

“People in Japan, in China help each other more” (Czech Republic. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“You have to got to have a tragedy before that happens, like in the London bombings, everyone was there to help, otherwise people just get with their own lives” (United-Kingdom. Lower-middle social and educational level)

However, many participants bring up the solidarity and generosity shown by “European” peoples in times of disaster such as floods, the Asian tsunami and hurricane Katrina.

Finally, from the Community angle, the idea of solidarity between Member States can give rise to very variable observations. For some participants (particularly in the older Member States) it is one of the EU’s founding values that is to be celebrated and that has produced “tangible” benefits such as economic expansion in Spain and Ireland. In contrast, for other participants (particularly in newer Member States), the much hoped for solidarity has not really appeared as the “big” countries have not shown proof of the support that was expected of them – although some participants, in Slovakia for example, recognise that Community aid has contributed to their development and sometimes even express their “gratitude” for this.

“I don’t know if you have as much solidarity as we would like to think” (Germany. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“The Irish attitude to Europe seems to be we’re in it for what we can get out of it, like with the Structural Funds, and so on” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Solidarity is not characteristic of big countries. For example Germany focuses on its own interests. Pull of Moscow is felt in this regard when it comes to the biggest EU countries and nobody represents us” (Lithuania. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“It could be European but as time goes by, the more the countries within the Union become competitors and solidarity disappears” (Estonia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

"Solidarity was just written on paper!" (Poland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

Despite the disputes and the room for improvement identified, we can conclude that **solidarity, in the sense of social security and protection is a specifically European value, particularly when Europe is compared to the rest of the world or to the American system.**

C. Progress

Progress is clearly seen as a **"universal" value** – a commendable and recognisable aim, both for individuals and for societies.

In general, participants identify **two types** of progress: firstly **"technological and scientific progress"** that often comes to mind first; and secondly a more "abstract" type of progress known as **"human" progress** (i.e., philosophical, political and social progress). Whether participants see progress in the more concrete or abstract sense of the word affects **how characteristic of "European culture"** they judge it to be.

In terms of technological and scientific progress, most groups seem to share a similar feeling: **Europe "used to be" a leader in the field and is still active, but is now being outperformed by the dynamism of the United States and some Asian nations** (such as Japan, China and India).

"All those things that scientifically influence the world largely come from Europe. When it comes to new inventions, for example nuclear research. Progress in the scientific sense largely starts in Europe" (Austria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

"I think that it rather distinguishes Americans. They are more progressive. It's among Americans absolutely. There is an industrial progress there" "I think that progress characterises Europe very much" (Poland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

However, many participants still stress that **Europe remains an innovator**, in the medical field for example, but they often think that European scientists lack the means to pursue their research at home, and that there is therefore unfortunately a "brain drain" in favour of other countries.

"I think that most of the progress stems from Europe" (Slovenia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

"There are very good thinkers in Europe but labour costs are so high that we end up sending our ideas to the Far East where the ideas are feasible to develop" (Malta. Higher-middle social and educational level)

We should note that for some participants technological progress is not necessarily recognised as merely an intangible feature but can, on the contrary, have adverse and very damaging effects (e.g., the atom bomb). This point is highlighted particularly by the German groups.

In terms of “abstract” progress in the sense of the “progressive” movement, many participants still think that Europe has an undeniable edge in that it strives to improve quality of life and education, aims to make economic and social changes, and endeavours to move democracy forward. For some participants, this represents one of the EU’s “founding” values, and is thus an entry requirement for candidate countries.

In this respect, Europe is credited as being a driving force that supports and contributes to Member States’ advancement. Some participants stress this more forcefully, especially in Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Slovenia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

“We are giving countries like Poland and Latvia a helping hand just like Europe helped us in progress in the seventies and eighties” (Ireland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

D. Heritage from history

We saw previously that the possession of a long, rich and complex history and heritage was **spontaneously cited as a particular feature of European culture**. Only very few participants dispute this (in France, the UK and the Netherlands), mentioning that other cultures display an equally ancient and venerable heritage.

Not only is this history seen as being one of the main foundations of the EU (with the wars being a kind of “anti-heritage”), but for many participants Europe’s singularity consists of the **respect for and preservation of a cultural and historic heritage** that is described as “exceptional” and enviable.

Feelings of “pride” often accompany these kinds of observations. On the other hand, a few rare criticisms are expressed over Europe’s “handling” of certain works of art that have been “stolen” from other civilisations (e.g., from Africa or the Far East) in order to be exhibited in “our” museums.

“Our history is one of the reasons why we have a United Europe” (Ireland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“Here absolutely. That’s what I feel. The European culture has enormous historical heritage. The European culture leads among other cultures. Either American or African ones” (Poland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“The history of European culture is like an Oriental carpet sewn of many coloured patches. It seems that no other region has a history that would be so rich in events” (Latvia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“UNESCO proves historic heritage to be a value and an exceptionally European value as her heritage is rather rich” (Lithuania. Lower middle social and educational level)

Heritage from history is therefore mentioned almost unanimously as **a foundation unique to the European community, distinguishing it especially from the “young” history of North America**. As such, Europe’s “ancientness” is appropriated and held up as an invaluable, multifaceted and living feature that anchors all the Member States together.

“People like their environment and cultural monuments. The Americans don’t know this, they are always on the move and they can’t put down roots” (Czech Republic. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“(Europe is) a tree with strong and deep roots, many branches and a rich head. A tree is something any human being can easily relate to. A tree is alive” (Italy. Lower-middle social and educational level)

E. Intellectual curiosity

Intellectual curiosity is often seen as an individual characteristic, or at a stretch, as a “national” characteristic, rather than as a truly “European” quality.

Having said this, however, we saw in the previous chapter that “openness” was spontaneously mentioned as a specific European feature. In this category once again, many participants think that **over the centuries Europe has shown proof of a highly developed spirit of adventure and discovery**, citing the emblematic example of Christopher Columbus, and also examples of intellectuals such as Copernicus and Galileo. Great philosophical controversies, the “Renaissance”, the age of “enlightenment”, the hunger for knowledge, the tradition of the “humanities”, a certain intellectual “eclecticism”, and an education system that encourages great “freedom of thought” are all also quoted as being symbols of Europe as a “melting pot” for great discoveries and as a passionate “debating arena”.

“In the past Europe has proved to be curious: Columbus discovered America, the cinema was developed here and so on...” (Slovenia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“A greater percentage of Americans takes over the opinion that they hear somewhere. But Europeans are so thinking or curious that they meditate and think – and they make their opinion themselves” (Slovakia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“Intellectual curiosity – a key thing in Europe unlike in the States where the people are more framed” (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

More prosaically, the majority of interviewees see themselves as being more open and inclined to learn about other countries and cultures, and as greater “travellers” than the Americans.

“I think we have more interest in the world around us than the USA” (Netherlands. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“I think that it’s true. That on the background of American cultures, this mass culture, the European one is leading” (Poland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

Despite this, **some other cultures**, particularly in Asia (e.g., China and Japan) **are also seen as demonstrating great intellectual curiosity**, as is the United States occasionally.

We should note, however, that sometimes participants mention that other countries are catching up with Europe in terms of intellectual curiosity, and that intellectual curiosity is not sufficiently encouraged and developed at home, forcing intellectuals to move abroad.

“All the recent greatest ideas come from Europe, but, due to strange reasons they are realized somewhere else...” (Latvia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

F. Respect for others and tolerance

Participants display varying views depending on whether they are speaking about tolerance or respect for others. Tolerance refers to the capacity to accept others, without judging them pejoratively or discriminating against them. Respect for others relates to consideration, manners and civilities.

Tolerance was previously mentioned spontaneously as a feature associated with Europe. The majority of participants see Europeans in general as **more** tolerant than other cultures, especially Muslim cultures, and the United States above all. Tolerance is naturally **related to the openness** that has already been mentioned **and the respect shown within Europe** for its own cultural diversity.

Similarly, Europe is considered to be tolerant of minority groups and more inclined to combat racism than other States.

“I think we are social and tolerant, more than the USA” (Netherlands. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“In Europe the minorities, gays are accepted. The Western Europeans are more tolerant and their tolerance is again the result of their culture, because the people were taught to be tolerant, to support each other and abide by the rules” (Bulgaria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“We are tolerant, sometimes too much” (Czech Republic. Higher-middle social and educational level)

However, participants frequently express the view that this value is **losing ground** due to illegal immigration and the terrorist threat that has led to increased distrust, nationalism and xenophobia. (These views are voiced particularly in Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and Spain).

“Tolerance would like to be a European value...!” (Luxembourg. Lower-middle social and educational level)

Some participants (e.g., in Portugal and Ireland) think that attitudes towards Turkey represent a good “test”, the result of which is currently inconclusive.

“The people who come here... there is a lack of respect and tolerance towards them... Their own cultures aren’t more tolerant though...” (Denmark. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“Europe sings praise to tolerance but, in fact, has a majority of people extremely intolerant in the religious or any other sense” (Slovenia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“The Germans and the Austrians are not very tolerant either. The moment they see you and find out you are a foreigner. As a whole their attitude to foreigners is bad” (Bulgaria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

Groups in the United Kingdom (and especially Londoners) see their country as being particularly tolerant of other cultures.

“I think in this country, especially in London, we are very tolerant. Other European cultures are not as tolerant as we are” (United-Kingdom. Higher-middle social and educational level)

In terms of respect for others, interviewees often think of consideration, and courtesy between individuals and particularly towards elderly people. From this point of view, “respect for others” in European countries – and in participants’ own countries in particular – is perceived as being in considerable **decline**: we are currently in an age of bad manners, a lack of consideration and uncouthness. From this standpoint, Asian and Arab cultures are seen as being more attentive and respectful towards superiors, parents, elderly people and others in general.

“I can see that as Europeans we are more tolerant. But with lower respect for others. It seems that in Arabic countries, respect for elder people or from family circles is much higher than at ours. Maybe there’s aggression towards a different nation, different religion, but internally there’s more respect there. But they are less tolerant than we are” (Poland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Tolerance should be a European value or it could be one! But I think you still have to work on it” (Austria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

Finally, we can report noticeable bad feeling in one Lithuanian group whose participants lament the lack of consideration and tolerance that older Member States show towards new joiners. This feeling also surfaces in other new Member States.

“Old Member States do not demonstrate bigger tolerance for newcomers” (Lithuania. Higher-middle social and educational level)

G. Respect for the earth

Despite recognising that this is as much a mental standpoint and a matter of personal behaviour as a “cultural” characteristic, the vast majority of interviewees think that Europe is not only **highly sensitive to and visibly concerned about environmental issues but that it has introduced specific rules and laws**.

In terms of the environment, northern European countries such as Sweden (above all) and Finland, as well as Germany (in particular for its sorting of rubbish) are usually mentioned and seen as being advanced pioneers.

All participants consider it as a value that should be “globally” recognised and respected, but most States (and indeed individuals) are still far from behaving in an “ecologically” responsible manner.

In fact, despite all the efforts and considerable progress that are still to be achieved, participants judge **Europe as much better placed** in environmental terms **than the rest of the world** and, once again than the United States in particular, which has not signed the Kyoto Protocol.

In this sense, “respect for the earth” appears to be **one of the most typically European values**.

“We are actually quite concerned with the environment. The Americans far less. Europe is working on it in a more concrete way. We develop a lot of environment-friendly products” (Netherlands. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Here things are changing for the better and the EU is spending quite some money in this respect” (Slovenia. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Contrary to the other cultures, I think that this is an extremely European value” (Austria. Higher-middle social and educational level)

❖ As a conclusion we can note the following points.

- Some of the values presented (i.e., freedom, tolerance, historic heritage and solidarity) had previously been **spontaneously** associated with “European culture”, which is seen as providing the perfect environment for them to flourish in. Although Europe is not the only cultural environment to display these values, it has its own unique way of assimilating them.
- Other values such as progress and intellectual curiosity are not disputed as in the past they **“have been”** leading European values, but they are **now being taken over by other countries and cultures** that are more dynamic and entrepreneurial (especially where “technological progress” is concerned).
- The two values of historic heritage and respect for the earth are **more specifically** associated with Europe and serve clearly to mark it out as different from other cultures.
- Participants **primarily use the United States** as a reference, “foil” or anti-model to compare and evaluate the “Europeanness” of the values presented.

CHAPTER V:

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INTEREST
FOR THE CULTURES OF OTHER
EUROPEANS**

V.1. INTEREST IN OTHER EUROPEANS AND THEIR CULTURES

- ❖ As a general rule, participants are almost unanimous in expressing an interest in other Europeans and their cultures, seeing them in a positive light.

“I like to watch Arte because I learn a lot of things on France, or 3 Sat about Austria and Switzerland. We should have even more of this type of channels” (Germany. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ This **“declared” interest** is often strong and presented with conviction.

- The specific diversity of European cultures is a big attraction, an opportunity for personal enrichment, and a chance to expand one's horizons. It is also a way of resisting globalisation and the risk of uniformity.

“Differences remain, despite globalisation... or as a reaction to globalisation” (Italy. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Anything which helps to stem the flow of American culture is worthwhile” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- It provides an opportunity of better understanding one's own culture through reflection (i.e., “how ‘we’ are perceived by other countries”) or by contrast and comparison.
- It is a good way of increasing understanding and tolerance, and of fighting against stereotypes and prejudices.

“The more you know, the more respectful you are” (France. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“The knowledge increases the interest. The more you know about a place, the more you are interested in knowing” (Finland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- It sometimes helps to develop a feeling of supranational belonging or of “pan-European” identity.

“To feel at home while being in a different country. Like in your homeland. We go to France and we feel like home” (Poland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ **Citizens from the new Member States** are generally **more effusive** on the subject and declare themselves to be more attentive to, curious about and attracted by other European countries. Among other things, many of them are interested in the lifestyles, quality of life, customs, educational systems, and social, economic and political successes of certain countries (particularly Scandinavian countries).

“I would like to know, they learn to respect so much everything that surrounds them, we are lacking this respect in Cyprus” (Cyprus. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“They managed to unite unbelievable things i.e. implement socialist capitalism!” (Lithuania. Higher-middle social and educational level)

On the other hand, many participants from these new Member States feel that they do not attract equal attention, curiosity or interest in return and that they are poorly-understood – even “underrated” – by the older Member States.

- ❖ In fact on the contrary, many of the interviewees from founding countries (e.g., France, Germany and Italy) and more recent Member States (e.g., Sweden and Spain) express a certain amount of interest – or at least “state” an interest – **in the countries in Central Europe** that have been closed to outsiders and cut off from external influences for too long.

“The Eastern European countries have been secluded for decades and today when the walls have been torn down, we are more eager to pay a visit to the former ‘East bloc’” (Sweden. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ We should, however, introduce **a few subtleties and reservations** to temper these positive “exclamations” of interest:

- The “avowed” **interest** is sometimes **more “tourism based” than really “cultural**, with many participants emphasising an interest in landscape and climate (sunny preferably) or in gastronomy (e.g., French or Italian). As such, despite appearing to be favourable opportunities to get to know other cultures and Europeans, holidays are often in fact relatively “limited”.

- In certain cases (notably in the higher-middle groups) Europe does not seem to be as attractive as **more far-flung or “exotic” lands** such as Asia, Africa and South America. Participants sometimes assert that they already know Europe well, having visited it in the 70s and 80s, or see it as too “uniform” and “insufficiently” different from their own countries (particularly in Western Europe).

“European countries are not that different in terms of culture and landscapes” “I would like to be able to travel to and get to know countries such as China or India” (Greece. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- Finally, interviewees from the **United Kingdom** state that they are **“relatively uninterested”** in other European cultures. The British participants do not consider European diversity to be a particular feature of European culture and believe that their own “singularity” interests “other” Europeans more than the other way around.

“America and Australia certainly have lots of diversity, a lot of ethnic groups, bring lots of different traditions. Like in America you have got Hispanics, Africans and all different types”(United-Kingdom. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“They all come over here and learn about us and our culture, but we don’t really ever go and learn about them” (United-Kingdom. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- **In other insular countries, a certain distance** pervades some interviewees’ attitudes. In this way, the idea of getting to know other European countries better remains rather abstract for Maltese participants who do not travel abroad.

In Ireland, the groups are more open and welcoming – notably towards workers from countries of Central Europe (e.g., Polish supplement in evening papers) – even though some participants stress both their desire to get to know other cultures (e.g., learning European languages) and anxieties over preserving their own.

“People growing up now, they want to have French or German or Spanish instead of just Irish” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

V.2 LIKELY FACTORS AND ACTORS OF BETTER MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE

- ❖ Participants are unanimous **in desiring greater mutual understanding** between the countries and cultures of the European Union.
- ❖ They also express largely the same ideas, regardless of country or group, with regard to **the factors** that could facilitate this understanding:

- **The idea of developing relationships and direct “human contacts”** gives rise to various ideas for meeting other Europeans such as: travel (naturally); but also exchanges between schools, students, teachers, and professionals; links between towns; hosting strangers; and house swapping. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of participants particularly stress the importance of involving **young people** in these exchanges, even at primary school level. Leonardo and Erasmus programmes are often mentioned with interviewees expressing a desire for them to be extended, more actively promoted and more accessible.
- The lack of a **common language** is frequently brought up, although the idea of a sort of Esperanto is seen as unrealistic and inadequate and the use of English – recognised as being dominant in reality – is sometimes lamented (notably in countries in Central and Eastern Europe). Many participants suggest the ideal solution of learning at least “one” European language from a young age or financing school trips and language holidays.

“English will unfortunately probably win...” (Czech Republic. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- **Supporting and sharing common events such as: festivals** (e.g. national festivals to which other Europeans are invited, or participation in festivals organised by other Europeans living in the country); **cultural events** (e.g., film, music and theatre festivals, book fairs and art exhibitions); **commercial events** (e.g. gastronomic specialities and craft products); and **sporting events**.

“In Düsseldorf the Japanese community has a celebration every year in which they invite the inhabitants. It is a way of getting culturally closer” (Germany. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“We need more events like the Dun Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures and they have to be promoted right” (Ireland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- **Media specialising** in Europe and its cultural news; regular columns in the press; a specialised television channel; specific programmes; trans-European “cultural games”; and the distribution of a “European cultural calendar”, a “European guide” or a “European recipe book”.
- **Promoting and supporting intra-European travel**, including more information, advertising, reduction cards valid on all rail networks, reduced price flights, a “European tourist agency”, “discovery tours” and so on.
- Better **information**: raising awareness and involving the “man on the street” (especially parents, colleagues, etc.).

“I used to live in a house with 26 students. One half of them were foreign people. This was a long moment of European culture” (Finland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“We should get to know the people. Sitting at the same table we can realize that we eat differently” (Hungary. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Good exchange, either students or citizens of organisations would help the EU countries come closer to each other” (Cyprus. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“A year abroad should be mandatory now” (Italy. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“This kind of news is never printed. All that is said about the EU in Swedish papers is the negative ones. It could be the shape of bananas and cucumbers, the size of tomatoes and strawberries, etc. It is ludicrous!” (Sweden. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“A lot of it is down to ourselves, as individuals, that we make the effort to mix with people. In my work for example, the Irish tend to sit together and the Poles will sit together and the French, and so on. We should do more to integrate, really” (Ireland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- Creating and promoting **websites** and discussion **forums**.
- **Publicising and promoting “European culture”** in Europe, but also around the world.

“The European culture should be strong in the world, so the EU should promote it all over the world” (Portugal. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- More anecdotally, suggestions such as: launching a common European identity card; organising “gastronomic fairs”; and developing a network of “European guest houses”.

❖ We noted that in some Member States (notably in Central and Eastern Europe) participants were keen to stress:

- That the **opening of borders** greatly contributes to meetings and mutual understanding;
- And that **improving quality of life** in all Member States should be a priority in order to enable as many people as possible to improve their understanding of their own culture as well as of cultures in other European countries.

❖ **The organisations** spontaneously associated with developing mutual understanding for the majority of interviewees fall into two categories: European and national.

- Most participants see **Europe** (via the Commission, the Parliament or an organisation such as a European “Ministry for Culture”) from the outset as legitimate and effective. It would undertake initiatives primarily by providing financial support.

“But why not create a cultural body, that would take care of it? A specialist department of the Union” (Romania. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- Most participants also see Member State **national governments** as necessary partners. It is considered relevant and desirable for Ministries for Culture and Education (with schools and universities) in each country to work together.
- More infrequently, participants also mention **associations of Member States** who have cultural and historical affinities or are engaged in joint projects: “Latin” countries; “Scandinavia”; “Celtic” countries; “Hanseatic” towns or countries; or “European cinema”.
- ❖ In addition to these principal leading institutions that are always envisaged working together, some participants also mention ideas such as: cultural associations; large multinational companies (sponsoring, professional exchanges, cooperation, etc.); private foundations; sporting clubs; churches; and NGOs.
- ❖ A **minority** of European citizens **resist the idea of “European” supervision or leadership** in the field of culture, fearing a standardising form of “organisation”, “increasing bureaucracy” and a dilution of the cultural and historical peculiarities that give them their national identity. This minority includes numerous British interviewees, as well as some participants from the Netherlands, Scandinavian countries and Estonia.

“It’s trying to make everything too politically correct. When we had the Nelson thing you couldn’t have the French flag and the British flag because it might upset the French and that’s part of our history you can’t change it. It was Blue verses Red instead of France versus England, you can’t change history...” (United-Kingdom. Lower-middle social and educational level)

CHAPTER VI:

THE ROLE OF EUROPE IN

THE FIELD OF CULTURE

VI.1 AWARENESS OF EUROPEAN UNION INITIATIVES IN THE FIELD OF CULTURE

- ❖ Participants were questioned on their knowledge of action undertaken by the EU in the field of culture
- ❖ **Ignorance and vague understanding predominate** in the vast majority of cases. If participants are completely ignorant, however, they “suppose” that the EU provides funding.
- ❖ However, **a few initiatives** are mentioned by some participants.
 - Student exchange programmes are the most well known initiatives – essentially Erasmus, frequently Socrates or Leonardo, and occasionally Minerva.
 - The European Capital of Culture is referred to relatively frequently, either because participants are aware of one of them (e.g., Porto in 2001) or because they know of a future one (e.g., Vilnius in 2009).
 - Some participants are also aware of town twinning.
 - Support for maintenance and restoration of architectural heritage is sometimes known of and/or has been seen by participants “with their own eyes” (e.g., restoration of an arts library in Slovakia and buildings in the Czech Republic). Similarly, a few participants are aware of support for Heritage Days.
 - European Days of Culture are very occasionally mentioned.
 - Other mentions include: projects in Spain (ORES and IMSERMO); support for European orchestras in Finland; the Jacques Delors Institute in Portugal; and the Europalia festival promoting European cinema in Belgium.
- ❖ In general, **participants are in favour of the initiatives they mention or presume to be taking place**, but feel uninformed on the subject.

It is only really participants in the **United Kingdom** who, without being aware of European cultural initiatives, are nevertheless **doubtful or openly hostile**. In terms of criticisms, some other participants (e.g., in Poland) also question the relevance and efficacy of the EU, which is seen as being too bureaucratic and cumbersome.

We observed that citizens from the founding countries are generally particularly ignorant of European initiatives in the field of culture. Only the lower-middle group in Belgium seems to be relatively well informed.

VI.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ROLE OF EUROPE IN THE FIELD OF CULTURE

- ❖ We saw in chapter V.2 that the EU is clearly seen as an important organisation in terms of increasing understanding between Member States. We can also confirm here that **the vast majority of participants consider the EU to be a relevant and legitimate institution in terms of taking action in the field of culture.**

“If it wants to have a European culture (the European Union) should promote this European culture. Otherwise, its name should be European Economic Union” (Belgium. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“You could log on and find out more about cultural diversity. But in practical terms that doesn’t really do anything. It’s only at a Community level that cultural integration can really happen” (Ireland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“These institutions are appropriate, because they cover the whole Europe. And others will either reach an agreement or not” (Poland. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ And this feeling is more than just an opinion; it is also **an aspiration**. In fact, many interviewees think that the EU should move beyond being a simple economic community and also embody a system of positive values. This is particularly desirable in our era of globalisation. It could provide support for educational systems, the preservation of cultural heritage in Member States and the development of mutual understanding and tolerance, and could promote Europe’s aura abroad. In this respect, many participants think that the EU should be “even more active” in this area.
- ❖ **On the other hand, a minority of participants are doubtful about or even hostile towards this idea. The United Kingdom** in particular stands out: the British groups generally think that the EU is not very active in the field of culture and that things **should** stay that way. It is too bureaucratic and expensive, and is judged as having neither the necessary aptitude nor the required legitimacy. Only a handful of participants from the lower-middle group suggest that the EU could contribute to “breaking down barriers” but even they remain uncertain over whether it actually has the ability to do so.

In Lithuania, Estonia and Hungary, reservations are sometimes expressed regarding the risk of excessive supranational organisation that could lead to standardisation or to an “official culture”, doubtless in reference to a suffocating communist past. However, this opinion is held by only a minority of interviewees.

Similarly, **in the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Austria and Luxembourg**, worries are expressed, notably in the higher-middle groups, about European bureaucracy, with participants suggesting that the EU be restricted to simply allocating funds so that countries can be left free to decide on their own cultural policies.

“There’s no reason why our own Culture Secretary can’t do these things, we have people from different backgrounds in there bringing in their own cultures and ideas anyway” (United-Kingdom. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“Doesn’t the EU have other problems than the subject of culture?” (Austria. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“They should not try to make it a boring unity” (Netherlands. Higher-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ **Irish interviewees** seem to have more mixed feelings, but are ultimately in favour of European intervention. In fact, participants are afraid of the possible risk of “standardisation” at the same time as stating that they are placing great hope in the EU, which is apparently the only body able to help preserve certain local and national peculiarities (particularly linguistic) that are threatened by globalisation. The Gaeltachts (Irish speaking regions) are specifically mentioned here.

VI.3 ATTITUDES TOWARDS SPECIFIC INITIATIVES SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

- ❖ Certain specific initiatives supported by the EU were presented to the participants in order to gauge their reactions.
- ❖ **Participants are in favour of most of the initiatives.** Some initiatives meet with complete agreement or receive the favourable opinion of the vast majority of interviewees; others trigger more debate; and some range from uninteresting to not a priority.

- **Financial support for actions aiming to preserve the historical, architectural and artistic heritage**

Not all participants are aware of this funding and it is sometimes associated with UNESCO.

It is well received across the board as it often touches on participants' "pride" in their national historical heritage.

It often jogs the memory of participants who did not previously mention it. Some participants brought up restoration work seen in their own countries and praised that kind of initiative and its funding from the EU. In the new Member States this support is particularly appreciated because it is too expensive for the state to undertake it.

"You can't disagree. The heritage is really something we have in common. If the European Union does not have responsibility for preserving it, who else?" (Germany. Lower-middle social and educational level)

We did, however, note some minor reservations:

- The feeling that the "rich" countries are paying for the "poor" ones (France);
- And that obtaining funds is too complex (Poland).

- **Support to the organisation of the European Heritage Days**

In the end, this initiative seems to be more widely known than it appeared to be in the previous chapter. It is very closely linked to Heritage Days organised in specific countries and can bring back happy personal memories and once again touch on participants' emotions. However, information seems to be lacking on this subject, many participants having never heard of it.

The idea is well received for the most part, as potentially helping to create a feeling of belonging.

"Seems meaningful to me. Also for creating 'a sense of we'" (Netherlands. Higher-middle social and educational level)

Criticisms and reservations relate to:

- It “wasting” money (the UK);
- And the existence of more important or urgent areas that need European funds, for example, support for education, or help to raise the minimum wage (Poland).

“Maybe more money should be given for something concrete, like education, not Heritage Day. Because for me it’s less important” (Poland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

➤ **Annual nomination of a European Capital of Culture in which many events are organised**

This is one of the most well known and appreciated initiatives. The idea is credited as having beneficial effects for the cities involved, observable in numerous examples such as Cork, Dublin, Stockholm, Luxembourg City, Pécs, Patras, Madrid, Salamanca, and even Liverpool and Glasgow.

Aside from the resulting economic and tourism-related benefits, it is seen as an excellent symbol of belonging to European culture. However, it is perhaps not sufficiently promoted and publicised.

The participants who are most resistant to the idea are found in the UK, where they often see it as a relatively superficial “gadget”, and in Denmark where they reduce it to an advertising and commercial campaign without any valuable “cultural” content.

➤ **Support to town twinning in Europe**

Town twinning within Europe is quite well known. The idea is well received by all participants as it enables very “concrete” cooperation initiatives to take place and helps “grassroots citizens” to meet each other, therefore encouraging greater knowledge and mutual understanding.

“I heard about it. My hometown has got such a twin town in Greece and there is exchange of trips... You can learn their customs in such small towns. It’s nice!” (Poland. Lower-middle social and educational level)

There are very few criticisms of the scheme. However, in Italy it is criticised for being a chance for councillors to travel at low cost, in Spain as being superficial and lacking in content, and in the UK for being once again a pointless “waste” of money.

➤ **Support to film festivals that are organised in several hundred European cities and to the distribution of European film**

Although it is not very well known, this initiative **is almost unanimously supported**, even in the United Kingdom. In this case, the EU is seen as **legitimate, necessary and effective**, notably in the face of the expansion of the American film industry. It preserves not only European identity and creation, but also identity and creation in the rest of the world (e.g., Asian, South American and Middle Eastern cinema).

➤ **Support to translation, notably of literary works**

Very few interviewees are aware of this initiative, but the vast majority of them approve of it and recognise its “public utility”.

The EU seems to be particularly suitable for this kind of initiative, as it supports both linguistic diversity and the cultural community being built.

➤ **Exchange and visit programmes between artists from different European countries.**

Once again, most participants are unaware of these schemes. They find it difficult to imagine the content and many of them, and therefore, do not express an opinion.

Among those who do, there are mixed feelings: they are either seen as relatively unproductive meetings despite being “enjoyable”; or participants imagine fertile and productive debates.

➤ **Exchange programmes for students and teachers such as ERASMUS AND LEONARDO.**

As we have already mentioned, this is one of the EU's most popular initiatives that participants feel most “enthusiastic” about. These programmes create long-lasting links, fruitful exchanges, a “real” understanding of the host country, and a feeling of belonging to a community for young Europeans who participate.

The only real criticism is actually a wish for the future: participants would like to see the scheme expanded and made accessible for more people.

➤ **The “European Borders Breaker Awards” – i.e. awards which are given each year to artists and composers of music that young people listen to.**

These awards are almost unknown and trigger either very few observations or comments such as, “Why not?” Participants would need to know more about them in order to evaluate them.

The positive side of the idea is the emotional and unifying character of music.

- ❖ We can see that **examining “specific” initiatives often helps to remove the reservations that were previously expressed about EU intervention in the field of culture. Overall, EU support for culture is largely seen as a good thing.**

VI.4 FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN IDENTITY

- ❖ Culture is a **key component in the construction of a European identity**. In terms of creating an integrated, peaceful and prosperous Europe, it seems to be a more powerful driving force than the economy.

“When Muses are playing, nobody fights” (Slovakia. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“The economy is the leading idea but it is worth nothing if culture does not follow. So, culture is important” (Luxembourg. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“We will not forge a European identity with the economy. It is clear that it is through culture that we will make it.” (Belgium. Lower-middle social and educational level)

“Culture gives life quality, not only economy. If strong economically and weak in culture, there is not real development” (Portugal. Lower-middle social and educational level)

- ❖ **There is no fundamental contradiction between diversity and European integration; on the contrary, diversity is a unique European asset.**

- ❖ The very existence of this cultural richness **leads to a “European spirit” based on common values** – tolerance, solidarity, freedom of thought, independence of spirit – **able to withstand the standardising forces of globalisation.**

- ❖ However, there are **two pitfalls** to be **avoided**:

- A kind of impoverishing uniformity under cover of supranational unification;
- And the development of a “European culture” solely for elite or affluent groups.

“It is one of the most interesting things about Europe that everybody is different and so instead of trying to make everything the same, they need to see everybody is different” (United-Kingdom. Higher-middle social and educational level)

“If not more affordable for all, then culture has no role in any construction, it will remain for the elites” (Portugal. Lower-middle social and educational level)

ANNEXES

ANNEX I

PARTNER INSTITUTES

Belgium	EADC – Yellow Window (Antwerp)
Czech Republic	MARECO (Prague)
Denmark	Ulveman Explorative (Copenhagen)
Germany	Echanges Marktforschung (Cologne)
Estonia	TNS EMOR (Tallinn)
Greece	FOCUS (Athens)
Spain	Escario Research (Madrid)
France	CSA (Paris)
Ireland	TNS – MRBI (Dublin)
Italy	Market Dynamics International (Milan)
Cyprus	Synovate – Cyprus (Nicosia)
Latvia	TNS Baltic Data House (Riga)
Lithuania	Baltic Surveys (Vilnius)
Luxembourg	Ilres (Luxembourg)
Hungary	Ad Hoc Plus Research (Budapest)
Malta	MISCO (Valletta)
Netherlands	PQR (Amsterdam)
Austria	Karmasin Motivforschung (Vienna)
Poland	BSM (Warsaw)
Portugal	TNS Euroteste (Lisbon)
Slovenia	RM Plus (Maribor)
Slovakia	Psymareco (Bratislava), in cooperation with MARECO
Finland	Marketing Radar (Helsinki)
Sweden	Kommunicera (Stockholm)
United Kingdom	Andrew Irving Associates (London)
Bulgaria	Alpha Research (Sofia)
Romania	Data Media (Bucharest)

ANNEX II

DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION

OF THE GROUPS

DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF THE GROUPS BY SEX AND AGE										
	Higher-middle social and educational group					Lower-middle social and educational group				
	M	W	20-24	25-39	40-55	M	W	20-24	25-39	40-55
Belgium	4	4	3	1	4	3	4	3	1	3
	Antwerp, 05.04.06					Brussels, 22.03.06				
Czech Republic	4	5	3	3	3	5	4	3	3	3
	Prague, 21.03.06					Prague, 21.03.06				
Denmark	4	3	3	3	1	4	3	1	3	3
	Copenhagen, 06.04.06					Copenhagen, 06.04.06				
Germany	4	4	2	3	3	3	5	2	3	3
	Cologne, 10.04.06					Cologne, 10.04.06				
Estonia	5	4	3	3	3	3	5	4	1	3
	Tallinn, 11.05.06					Tallinn, 16.05.06				
Greece	3	4	2	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Athens, 06.04.06					Athens, 05.04.06				
Spain	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	1	3	4
	Madrid, 03.04.06					Madrid, 04.04.06				
France	4	5	2	4	3	5	5	4	3	2
	Paris, 07.04.06					Paris, 05.04.06				
Ireland	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Dublin, 21.03.06					Dublin, 21.03.06				
Italy	4	4	2	3	3	4	4	2	3	3
	Torino, 23.03.06					Milan, 22.03.06				
Cyprus	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Nicosia, 04.04.06					Nicosia, 07.04.06				
Latvia	4	5	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Riga, 22.03.06					Riga, 23.03.06				
Lithuania	4	5	3	3	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Vilnius, 06.04.06					Vilnius, 07.04.06				
Luxembourg	5	5	3	3	4	4	6	4	3	3
	Luxembourg, 30.03.06					Luxembourg, 04.04.06				
Hungary	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Budapest, 27.03.06					Budapest, 28.03.06				
Malta	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Valletta, 05.04.06					Valletta, 06.04.06				
Netherlands	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Amsterdam, 22.03.06					Amsterdam, 22.03.06				
Austria	5	4	2	4	3	2	4	3	1	2
	Vienna, 11.04.06					Vienna, 10.04.06				
Poland	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Warsaw, 04.04.06					Warsaw, 04.04.06				
Portugal	3	4	2	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Lisbon, 06.04.06					Lisbon, 07.04.06				
Slovenia	5	2	1	4	3	3	6	2	3	4
	Ljubljana, 11.04.06					Ljubljana, 10.04.06				
Slovakia	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Bratislava, 21.03.06					Bratislava, 22.03.06				
Finland	4	3	2	2	3	4	4	2	3	3
	Helsinki, 05.04.06					Helsinki, 04.04.06				
Sweden	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Stockholm, 20.04.06					Stockholm, 25.04.06				
United Kingdom	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	2	3	3
	London, 04.04.06					Reading, 30.03.06				
Bulgaria	4	4	2	3	3	4	5	2	3	4
	Sofia, 21.03.06					Sofia, 23.03.06				
Romania	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3
	Bucharest, 03.04.06					Bucharest, 04.04.06				

ANNEX III

DISCUSSION GUIDE



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**QUALITATIVE STUDY
ON CULTURE
(FINAL) DISCUSSION GUIDE
(03.03.2006)**

THEME I (CULTURE)

I.1 Our discussion today will be about culture. This is a vast subject, which may lead us to discuss quite a few different issues. To start with, could you please tell me what you first think about when you hear the word culture – anything that may come to your mind in this respect.

I.2 Culture can be considered in the singular or in the plural. I mean by this that everyone does not necessarily have the same idea about culture and does not necessarily include the same notions in it :

- Depending on age – for example, we hear of young people's culture
- Depending on where we were born and where we live
- Depending on the social environment in which we live – for example we hear of working class culture
- Depending on different types of cultural expression – i.e. classical culture or contemporary culture
- Etc, etc

Considering it from this viewpoint, how would you define culture – or cultures ?

I.3 Several other notions can be related to culture. I am going to suggest a few of them to you. For each one, please tell me whether you feel it is a notion that is related to culture or not, and in what ways.

- A Knowledge
- B Education
- C Civilisation
- D Tradition
- E Life style
- F Leisure

I.4 I will now ask you a more general question : what can make us feel that we are leading a full and enriching life ?

First, let us discuss the different elements in our personal or professional life that give us this feeling.

Then, what is the place that culture has for you in a full and enriching life ?

THEME II (CULTURAL « CONSUMPTION » AND « PRODUCTION »)

- II.1** Another way of considering the subject we are discussing is to think of what we « consume », so to speak, in terms of culture – through our diverse activities, leisure, hobbies, etc.
Could each of you tell me what he/she “consumes” in this respect, considering culture and cultural “consumption” in the widest sense of the term.
- II.2** Here is a short questionnaire. I will ask each of you to fill it in, and then we will resume our discussion after looking at your replies.
- A. Reading books
 - B. Listening to music
 - C. Cinema
 - D. Going to the theatre, the opera, ballets...
 - E. Concerts
 - F. Museums, exhibitions
 - G. Festivals
 - H. Reading newspapers and magazines
 - I. TV and radio programmes
 - J. Travelling
 - K. Cuisine, gastronomy
 - L. Fashion and design
 - M. Other leisure activities, personal hobbies and passions
- II.3** We are « consumers » of culture, but we can also be, on our own level, « producers » of culture – through our diverse activities, leisure, hobbies, etc.
Still taking culture in the most general sense of the term, could each of you tell me what he/she does, which such activities he/she has personally?
- II.4** Let us now discuss what could be done to make culture – in all its diverse forms, which we have discussed – more accessible.
What are the obstacles preventing us from being in closer contact with culture, what should be done to enable us to enjoy it more ?
- II.5** The new technologies – electronic, computer-based, Internet – could serve to disseminate culture more widely.
How do you feel about this ? How could usage of these technological tools contribute ?
Is it possible to speak about electronic or Internet culture, and what does it mean to you ?

THEME III (EUROPEAN CULTURE)

- III.1** Let us now turn to the subject of European culture. If you had to define European culture, what would you say, how does it manifest itself, by what is it characterized in your own view ?
- III.2** Thinking of European culture compared with our national culture, what would you say ?
What is common, what is different ?
- III.3** We sometimes hear more widely about global culture, or Western culture.
What does this mean to you ?
What is different, if anything, between Europe and the cultures of other countries of the world ?
- III.4** European culture can be symbolised or represented by different things.
We will look at this aspect from different angles ; for each one, please tell me what it makes you think of, what spontaneously comes to your mind.
- A. A place
 - B. A character of the past
 - C. A character living today
 - D. A historical event
 - E. An event that took place in recent years
 - F. A piece of art
 - G. A history or legend
 - H. A frame of thinking
 - I. A moment which you have lived through yourselves
- III.5** Keeping in mind everything that you have said, let me ask again the question I asked you earlier – what is European culture, what makes it specific and different from other cultures ?

THEME IV (CULTURE AND VALUES)

Another question, which can be related to culture, is the question of values.

Every human community is based on a set of values that are shared between members of that community. These values are not necessarily the same, or do not necessarily have the same meaning for different people in different areas of the world.

I am going to quote several values.

I would like to discuss each one from two angles :

- In what is it, or not, a common value to Europeans and a value that is specific to Europe compared with other countries of the world ?
- How does this value translate in European culture, as you have defined it earlier ?

- A. Freedom
- B. Solidarity
- C. Progress
- D. Heritage from History
- E. Intellectual curiosity
- F. Respect for others and tolerance
- G. Respect for the earth

THEME V (EUROPEAN CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INTEREST FOR OTHER EUROPEANS)

V.1 We hear people say that cultural diversity is something specific to Europe.

This leads me to ask you what interests you in the other European countries and peoples, how curious you are of who those people are and what they do, what you would like to know better about them – or some of them in particular, which ones then?

V.3 Staying on the same subject, what do you feel could or should be done in order that European people knew each other better, and had better knowledge of the various aspects of their cultures ?

Please let your imagination go, and feel free to make any suggestions that come to your mind – without stopping at the question whether it could easily be implemented or not.

V.4 Now, who do you think could contribute to better mutual knowledge between the Europeans and better knowledge of their cultures ?

Who could take initiatives for it, and how – ranging from public, private or non-profit organisations, etc, etc, to private citizens – including each of us.

THEME VI (THE ROLE OF EUROPE IN THE AREA OF CULTURE)

- VI.1** One of the organisations that can play a role in this area is the European Union.
From what you know about it, are there currently EU actions in the area of culture – or not – and if yes what types of actions ?
- VI.2** Another question is whether Europe should be active in the area of culture.
How do feel about it generally, and what types of action and initiatives do you think it should take or support? Why ?
- VI.3** I will now mention to you several types of actions which the European Union actually has in the cultural area, including through financial support. For each one, could you first tell me if you remember hearing about it, and then what you think about it.
- A. Financial support to actions aiming to preserve the historical, architectural and artistic heritage
 - B. Support to the organisation of the European Heritage Days
 - C. Nominating each year a European Capital of Culture, in which many events are organised
 - D. Support to town twinning across Europe
 - E. Support to film festivals that are organised in several hundreds of European cities, and to the distribution of European films
 - F. Support to translation, notably in literature
 - G. Exchange and visit programmes between artists from various European countries
 - H. Exchange programmes for students and teachers, such as Erasmus or Leonardo
 - I. The “European Borders Breaker Awards”, i.e. awards which are given each year to artists and authors of music which young people listen to

THEME VII (EXPECTATIONS VS. EUROPE)

Just to conclude our discussion, what role do you feel culture could play in the building of Europe and in bringing European citizens closer to each other ?