

Values and policies in the European Union: an international perspective

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This paper presents the main findings of a test performed with a group of international students on issues regarding the functioning of the European Union. Some of its conclusions are surprising, in that they show an unexpected degree of maturity from the part of the respondents. If the findings of this test were to be replicated on a larger scale, decision-makers in the EU could feel emboldened to take some measures that were so far considered too risky, for the better functioning of the Union.

1. Description of the test

On August 24, 2016, under the aegis of the Bucharest Summer School organized by the University of Economic Studies in Bucharest, a group of 52 international students visited the National Bank of Romania for attending some lectures. My lecture was titled “Values and policies in the European Union” and I used this opportunity to perform a test in order to find the students’ perception about some strengths and weaknesses of the EU.

The 52 international students were 26 students coming from EU member-states and 26 students coming from non-EU member states. Making things even more interesting, some of them were from outside Europe. In the end, three main groups resulted:

- 26 citizens¹ of EU states, coming from: Belgium (1), Bulgaria (1), Croatia (1), Germany (1), Greece (1), Latvia (1), Poland (4), Romania (10);
- 19 citizens of European non-EU states: Albania (4), Armenia (2), Republic of Moldova (4), Russia (4), UK²(2), Ukraine (3);
- 7 citizens of non-European states: China (1), Indonesia (2), Nigeria (1), Peru (1), Tanzania (2).

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¹ The relevant criterion was judged to be the nationality of the student (and not the country where he/she studied) because value judgments tend to be closer associated with home environment.

² After the Brexit vote of June 23, 2016, the UK was considered in the group of European non-EU states.

The composition of the sample might not be representative of the respective geographic areas. Yet this study does not attempt to satisfy scientific statistical criteria, but rather to inform policy-makers about some surprising findings.

Further, the students were asked if they had an economic background (around 80 percent of them did), if they came from an environment where challenging the dominant opinion was encouraged (around 10 percent of them came) and if they considered that moral principles should stay at the foundation of policy decisions (some 20 percent of them thought so).

Afterwards, they were asked to answer a series of 14 questions, having for each of them four options: to strongly agree, to somewhat agree, to somewhat disagree or to strongly disagree.

Each of the questions was read and completed by students before actually any discussion took place. As such, this test represents the unbiased opinion of the 52 students with the information they had at the moment of completing the test.

The test was anonymous, the only information requested being the nationality of the person who completed it.

The 14 statements were the following:

I Values

1. The EU has been important in preserving peace in Europe in the last 70 years.
2. The EU is very important for the freedom to travel, work and study throughout Europe.
3. The EU has increased the general level of well-being in all member states.(explanation: comparing the present moment with the moment of EU accession)
4. The EU should continue promoting multi-culturalism. (explanation: versus favouring integration of newcomers)
5. The EU should continue promoting moral relativism. (i.e. drugs use, gay marriage, abortion, pornography etc.)
6. The EU should continue promoting disarmed pacifism.
7. The EU should forgive debt for individuals and for states.
8. The EU could (and should) promote growth through higher deficits.
9. The EU should guarantee the well-being of each citizen. (the emphasis being on the words “guarantee” and “each”)

II Policies

1. Policies at EU level should be adopted by majority voting, not by consensus.
2. States breaching fiscal criteria should be penalized automatically (not subject to political judgment).
3. Common monetary policy should be reinforced by common fiscal policy, common diplomatic policy and common defence policy.
4. Direct democracy is over-rated (especially when it comes to sophisticated issues that are better left to professional politicians).
5. Rising inequality is a bigger problem than sluggish growth.

After the completion of the test followed a thorough discussion of each of the 14 topics; I made a presentation and responded to questions and observations. Participants were free to change their initial responses if they were convinced by better arguments; only few of them (less than 5 percent) chose to do so.³

2. Discussion

I framed the general discussion about values stating that the EU had three categories of promises: some on which it has delivered, some on which it has delivered although it shouldn't have and some which it has never promised but for which it was held accountable nevertheless.

The three promises on which the EU has delivered are:

- a) **Ensuring peace on the continent for the last 70 years.** My assumption in making this point to students in their early twenties was that they had little historical memory and that they took peace in Europe for granted, as if it were always there. I reminded them that after three or four generations from the last major war (1815 or 1945) people tend to forget and history repeats itself. In this context, I argued that it was mostly the EU which preserved the peace among its members in the last 70 years. On the contrary, NATO could not prevent war between two of its members (Greece and Turkey⁴, in 1973), nor between non-EU member states (Yugoslavia in the '90es, Ukraine in 2014).

³ Psychologists call this a "confirmation bias": people dislike to change their initial opinion, because emotions usually prevail upon rationality. Nevertheless, some of them accept to change their view when faced with better arguments

⁴ None of them member of the EU at the time.

The students did not raise any relevant questions on this topic. It is important to mention that, at the time of the discussions, I didn't know the results of the test; nor did anybody else.

- b) **Ensuring freedom to travel, study and work across the continent.** Again, my assumption was that youngsters born post-1989 did not acknowledge the importance of free movement. I reminded them that during the split of the continent travelling across the Iron Curtain was almost impossible, let alone possibilities to study or to work. I also drew attention that giving in to populist politicians that tend to reinstate national or regional borders might hurt all of Europe.

On this, topic, one student asked if I was not confounding the EU with the Schengen Area. I responded that technically she is right, but in practical terms this distinction meant nothing, since around 20 percent of intra-EU migrants are Romanians (which are not part of the Schengen Agreement).

- c) **Increasing the general level of well-being in all member states.** My comment was that, despite criticism, all EU-member states are better off now than at the moment of their accession, notwithstanding the effects of the financial crisis. Even if some of them have lost in relative terms (i.e. vis-à-vis the EU average), all of them have gained in absolute terms, so that the average EU citizen is incomparably richer today than he/she was 15, 20 or 30 years ago, and this is true for employed, unemployed, pensioners etc. Again, on this topics there were no relevant questions.

The three promises on which the EU has delivered, but which it should never have made are:

- d) **Defending multiculturalism (ethnic, religious etc.) in the hope that completely different visions of the world can somehow coexist**

My (politically incorrect) view is that, instead of encouraging integration of the newcomers the way America did its melting pot, Europe has promoted increasing cultural, ethical, and religious differences. This has resulted into ghettoization from Marseille to Stockholm. Busy not to lose the hearts (and the votes) of its new citizens, Europe has lost the hearts (and the votes) of its previous citizens. Especially, the refusal

to recognize the Judeo-Christian character of Europe was resented as a betrayal by the silent majority.

Instead, Europe should promote a model where immigrants are invited to integrate or, absent integration, forced to leave.

On this topic I was asked whether I do not advocate the disappearance of a founding principle of Europe. My reply was that indeed, if this is the only principle uniting Europe, it is not worth preserving either.

Some students wrongly accused me of limiting freedom of speech and diversity. My answer was that one should not confound freedom of speech (to be welcomed) with unwillingness to integrate (to be condemned).

The most interesting and disturbing comment was when I was compared to Nigel Farage or other nationalistic leaders in Europe. I answered to those students that they have got me completely wrong: while my criticism was made in order **to strengthen** Europe, the nationalists' criticisms are meant **to destroy** Europe.

- e) **Defending moral relativism (gay marriage, drugs use, abortion).** Europe prides itself (wrongly) for allowing all kinds of deviations, in the name of full and unrestricted liberty. However, it does not pay attention to the corrosion of moral values and of society as a whole. The periods in which this happens are usually preceding large human conflicts: for instance the years preceding WWI were years of comparable moral laxity. Decision-makers that allow societies to go to the extremes with what is allowed are playing with fire, because absence of moral rules breeds monsters.

On this topic, I had by far the largest number of comments. One student asked me who is to define rules, when their definition varies so widely. My answer was that the basic moral rules (do not kill, do not lie, do not steal etc.) are not only Universal, but also innate (any child recognizes them naturally).

Another question was whether I proposed punishing offenders (gay people etc.). I replied that this is not a question of punishment, but of recognizing what is right from what is wrong (morally) and of reducing the field of what is acceptable from virtual infinity to something narrower. Moreover, normal people (non-cheating, non-drug using heterosexuals) should not feel inferior-as they often do in Western societies. The

moral table of values should be returned upside down, unless we want to live in a sick society.

Then, some others asked me what difference there is between soft drugs and alcohol, for example. I replied that while there are few people that would kill for an extra bottle of wine, there are quite a lot of people who would kill for an extra dose of drugs. And the difference between light and hard is irrelevant: you usually start with “light” drugs and end up with “hard” ones.

Finally, somebody made the economic argument about drugs, saying that since there is a demand for them, it should be accommodated. My answer was that not everything for which there is demand should be supplied: for instance, in Romania there is a demand from foreign tourists to kill hundreds of wild animals in organized hunts; this kind of tourism should be prohibited, notwithstanding existing demand.

f) Pacifism taken to the extreme

Convinced of its moral superiority (?), Europe has preached, for the last 50 years, the concept of *soft power*, abandoning even the idea of a European army. That was exactly the mistake made by the Kingdom of Tibet, who thought that it was morally and religiously superior to its neighbours, so they wouldn't dare to attack it; we all know how this story ended. Being rich and defenceless (like Europe) is the worst position to be in. And until this changes, Europe will be regarded with paternalism from Washington, with irony from Moscow and with condescendence from Beijing.

No relevant questions were asked on this topic.

Finally, the discussion turned to the things Europe has never promised, but it is held accountable for them, nevertheless. In essence, citizens accuse Europe for not having instated Heaven on Earth:

g) Forgiving debt for individuals and for states

This goes directly against the moral principle which says that debt should be repaid (at least for as long as we live on Earth, and not in Heaven). And even if Europe could - by some miracle - forgive debt, the private markets would not and they would continue to penalize the offenders.

h) Abolishing macroeconomic constraints

Here we are talking about the importance of deficits and of (public and private) debt in promoting or hindering economic growth. Unfortunately, the international debate is poisoned by (neo)-Keynesian economists, who argue for growth through higher deficits and through higher indebtedness. According to them, every state is solvable at any moment in time and it can buy its exit from crisis by borrowing and spending more, while repaying the debt and reducing the deficits in good times. There are (at least) two fallacies with this argument: first, it so happens that in democracies, usually, good times are not used for repaying debt, because nobody wants to tighten the belt while “the music is playing”. Second, and more importantly, I argued that Keynesian-style economics (borrow till oblivion, because the markets will not care) were devised for the hegemonic powers of their time (Britain in the '30 es, USA since the '50 es). In no other country can excessive accumulation of deficits go unpunished. In other words, what is acceptable for the USA is **not** acceptable for countries like Romania, Portugal, Italy or even France.....

The conclusion is that the majority of countries cannot get out of a crisis through expansionary fiscal policies, but have to undergo a painful fiscal and structural adjustment.

Surprisingly, I got a lot of approvals from the audience on this topic.

i) Guaranteeing the well-being of every EU citizen

I argued that for as long as we live in a market economy there will always be winners and losers. The society should try to compensate the latter, but there is no way it could ensure a high standard of living for each individual. It is important not to confound equality of chances and equality of rights (to be protected) with equality of income (unnecessary and counter-productive).

In a nutshell, it is not Europe's fault if individuals have invested it with unrealistic hopes. I finished by saying that Europe should confront the huge deficit of historical and economic knowledge of its citizens, by explaining them that there is no free lunch. For every good and service obtained, a price must be paid in solidarity, generosity, sacrifice or compromise.

Here again, I received no comments.

The second part of the discussion was dedicated to policies at the EU level. The main thrust of the debate was how to streamline and to add efficiency to a mechanism, whose *modus operandi* is often suboptimal.

a) Policies at EU level should be adopted by majority voting, not by consensus

I mentioned the fact that no federative structure can work properly if unanimity is required: minorities need to submit to majorities. In the initial USA, the Fathers of the Constitution requested 7 states (of the initial 11) to agree, if a vote had to be adopted. Small steps in this direction have been recently taken in Europe, but not enough was done.

The question I received from several students was why should any country enter into the logic of majority voting if it risked losing on important (for itself) issues?

The answer I gave was that the Westphalian, nationalistic logic of nation-states (post 1648) is at odds with the federal logic. In the latter, a state cedes sovereignty on several issues, but is more than compensated by being part of a larger and stronger entity. I brought the example of the state of South Carolina, which has a total GDP equivalent to Romania's (around 180 billion USD). If it were an independent state, its weight on the international arena would be similar to Romania's, i.e. almost negligible. But being part of a large federation (albeit by submitting to some policies it would not necessarily choose by itself), South Carolina projects upon the world stage a power magnified manifold.

b) States breaching fiscal criteria should be penalized automatically (not subject to political judgment).

My argument was that a penalty that is never applied shows lack of seriousness. The recent debate in the Commission, whether or not to sanction Spain and Portugal for exceeding their fiscal targets, where a penalty of zero (!?) was proposed, borders on the ridiculous. Offenders know that they can easily get away without penalties and this kind of attitude undermines the morale of all member states.

c) Common monetary policy should be reinforced by common fiscal policy, common diplomatic policy and common defence policy

My argument was that, under a federalist logic, monetary policy cannot exist without a (common) fiscal policy. Moreover, economic policies have to be complemented by diplomatic means and, if needed, by military means.

Students have asked me how irreconcilable national differences in Europe could be reconciled. I answered that these differences are not larger than those in China, for instance, between Uighurs, Tibetans, Mongols, Han Chinese etc., or in India, where Buddhists coexist with Christians, with Sikhs, with Muslims and so on. Supra-national states can find ways to accommodate diversities that are larger than in Europe, provided there is a common ethos. Does this mean that in the future, we will not be supporting our “national” football team? Not at all, but our “national” football teams will be something like the competitors in the Major Basket Association or in the National Hockey League of the USA, each representing the traditions of a state.

Also on this topic I was asked how do I view the decision of Germany to accept large numbers of immigrants from the Middle East, while several states from Central and Eastern Europe have refused to do so. My reply was that Germany was **right** not to confound the acceptance of immigrants from war-torn countries with the issue of terrorism. However, Germany was **wrong** for not having had (since the ‘60es) a policy to integrate those newcomers. Lack of integration is the one that breeds conflicts. By the same token, states like Hungary, Poland, and Romania were **wrong** for equating the problem of immigrants with that of terrorism. The answer is not in stopping justified immigration, but in fostering quick integration, while at the same time reinforcing anti-terrorist surveillance.

d) Direct democracy is over-rated (especially when it comes to sophisticated issues, that are better left to professional politicians)

Based on the Brexit example, students seemed to agree that some issues are too sensitive to be left for decision to a uniformed (or misinformed) public. My argument was that in a Swiss canton direct democracy can work, because a wrong decision taken by voters affects maximum a couple of hundreds of thousands citizens. But when a

country of 50 million takes the wrong decision, affecting the existence of another 450 million, then we have a totally different outcome.

e) Rising inequality is a bigger problem than sluggish growth

My contention was that rich countries, close to the production possibilities frontier, should not be over-ambitious about promoting economic growth, because it is limited by the endowment with factors (capital, labour, total factor productivity).

Second, even if high growth could be achieved, it is very debatable how of it would be felt by ordinary citizens, given the general trend of rising inequality in the last 20 or 30 years (well documented by Thomas Piketty in his “Capital in the XXIst Century”).

Therefore, my opinion was that developed nations should pay more attention to the distribution of wealth, rather than to the creation of wealth, which is inherently limited.

I have not received comments on this issue.

3. Results of the test

After the discussion, I collected the papers which were distributed and completed at the beginning of the session. As already mentioned, students were free to change their initial assessment, but only a tiny minority chose to do so.

After a few hours of computing, the final results of the test gave an interesting picture. Using a methodology pioneered by Jonathan Haidt in his masterpiece “The Righteous Mind”, one can infer that the sample of students represents a balanced mixture between left-leaning political preferences (those favoring notions of “care”, “co-operation”, “freedom”) and right-leaning preferences (those embracing notions of “authority”, “team play”, “sacredness”). If only policy-makers in the EU could be so well balanced!

The results of the test are the following:

I Values

1. The EU has been important in preserving peace in Europe in the last 70 years

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	10	7	2	
EU	10	15	1	
Non-Europe		5	2	
Total	20	27	5	

Despite my initial fear that the lessons of history were lost on the young generation, it turned out that the vast majority of students recognized the role of the EU in preserving peace in Europe. More than 90 percent of the total agreed with this statement, the majority being overwhelming for students originating from the EU (more than 96 percent). Also a large majority (89) percent of non-EU European nationals agreed, while the response was more muted for non-European students (71 percent).

2. The EU is very important for the freedom to travel, work and study throughout Europe

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	14	5		
EU	21	4	1	
Non-Europe	3	4		
Total	38	13	1	

The understanding of the EU in promoting freedom of movement is impressive (with more than 98 percent of students in agreement). Then again, this is a result to be expected, given that this group of students are themselves beneficiaries of this freedom of movement. Interestingly, non-EU European students and non-European students are unanimous (100 percent), while for EU students we have one contrarian vote, making the share of this group's approval 96 percent.

3. The EU has increased the general level of well-being in all member states

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	2	13	3	1
EU	3	16	6	1
Non-Europe	1	3	3	
Total	6	32	12	2

On this statement there is a strong majority that agree (73 percent overall), albeit in a more muted form (61 percent only “somewhat agree”). There is still an important reservoir of goodwill on which the EU can count, at least among educated young people. For EU citizens, we have exactly the same rate of approval (73 percent, of which 61 percent “somewhat agree”). More enthusiastic about this capacity of EU to generate well-being are the non-EU Europeans (almost 79 percent), which might be due to their aspirations to join someday. Less enthusiastic are the non-European students (57 percent).

Overall on the measures that Europe has promised and delivered upon, there is wide recognition of this fact. Maybe it is time for the Commission and for the European Parliament to be more assertive about what Europe has achieved so far and not to let the initiative to the “doomsayers”.

4. The EU should continue promoting multi-culturalism.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	6	11	1	1
EU	13	8	5	1
Non-Europe	7			
Total	26	19	6	2

Honestly, I did not expect such a high rate of approval for this topic (more than 86 percent). For EU students, it is slightly less (81 percent), but it grows to 89 percent for non-EU

Europeans and to 100 percent for non-Europeans. In a way, this proves the success of one of the “founding myths” of Europe. But is it a success worth having? What are the beliefs, customs, traditions that form a distinctly European ethos? For what values would be an European willing to sacrifice? How can be achieved in Europe the dictum “*E Pluribus Unum*”, so important in the USA? If everything is acceptable, where does one drive the line?

These questions should be answered first by the European elites and only then addressed to European citizens.

5. The EU should continue promoting moral relativism

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	6	10	3	
EU^{*)}	6	13	6	1
Non-Europe	1	2	2	2
Total	13	25	11	3

^{*)} One non-answer from a Polish student

Here again, surprisingly to me, students are more inclined to listen to the official line, than to think independently. “Freedom of choice” is considered more important than “authority” or “sacredness”. We have the image of a hedonistic society, where everything is accepted in the name of freedom. Could it be the case that Europe has grown more individualistic than the USA? A success of sorts...

The proportion of students agreeing with the statement is 74 percent overall, but it grows to 76 percent for EU citizens and to 84 percent for other Europeans. Only non-European students tend to disagree, the rate of approval being 43 percent. Traditional values are much more important in countries like those of Africa, as it came out during the debate.

Like the previous question, this one shows an inclination of the youth to vote on the left of the political spectrum. Then again, this is what they hear from the political elites of Europe. Could it be that the European elite is too much preoccupied with freedom and with political correctness? Food for thought.....

6. The EU should continue promoting disarmed pacifism

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	9	2	4	4
EU	6	8	9	3
Non-Europe ^{*)}	3	2	1	
Total	18	12	14	7

^{*)} One non-answer from a Nigerian student

This is a much more disputed topic. While a majority of students (59 percent) believe the official point of view, there is a significant minority (41 percent) that thinks that being rich and defenceless is a dangerous position to be in. Especially balanced are the views in EU (54 percent in favour of disarmed pacifism), while in the rest of Europe this share goes to 58 percent and in the rest of the world to 83 percent. Apparently, fears of an armed Europe have not subsided yet in the world, decades after the last Europe-induced conflict.

7. The EU should forgive debt for individuals and for states

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	1	5	10	3
EU		9	7	10
Non-Europe		4	2	1
Total	1	18	19	14

The answers to this statement represent one of the biggest surprises of this test. Despite having voted on the left side of the political spectrum to questions 4 and 5, students have made clear that they do not expect bail-outs by the EU (although this might be interpreted in a number of ways⁵). A majority of respondents (63 percent) are against debt forgiveness by the EU, a figure similar to EU students (65 percent) and to non-EU European students (68 percent). Only the non-European citizens display a small preference for EU bail-outs

⁵ For instance perhaps, it doesn't preclude them to expect bail-outs by individual states.

(57 percent). It is as if students realize that those states and individuals that get over-indebted have only themselves to blame and that equality of treatment also requires responsibility and proportionality (concepts from the centre-right). Are the Eurocrats able to understand this message?

8. The EU could (and should) promote growth through higher deficits

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	2	7	8	2
EU ^{*)}	3	5	13	13
Non-Europe	2	4	1	
Total	7	16	22	15

^{*)} Two non-responses from Germany and Romania

The young and educated seem to reject the gimmick of deficit spending for growth. Consciously or unconsciously they seem to realize that rising oneself by the bootstraps, as predicted by neo-Keynesian economists, cannot work in the vast majority of countries. Thus, 54 percent overall reject this kind of solution, the proportion rising to 67 percent in the case of EU citizens. It declines slightly for non-EU Europeans (52 percent **against** deficit spending). The only ones seeming to accept this kind of solutions are non-European students (86 percent **in favour** of deficit spending).

9. The EU should guarantee the well-being of each citizen

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	12	4	1	2
EU	5	15	5	1
Non-Europe	5	2		
Total	22	21	6	3

On this one, apparently wishful thinking got ahead of the common sense. Students overwhelmingly seem to believe in the culture of entitlement, where every citizen has

the right (by birth) to live well if he/she is born in the EU. Overall, 82 percent of the students believe this is the case, and 77 percent of EU students. The proportion rises to 84 percent for non-EU European students and to fully 100 percent for non-Europeans. Another example of a founding myth which gives rise to unrealistic expectations. Eurocrats should start explaining that Heaven on Earth cannot be obtained and that more modest ambitions are in order. Otherwise, they will be the victims of their own overblown ambitions.

II Policies

1. Policies at EU level should be adopted by majority voting, not by consensus

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	2	4	11	2
EU ^{*)}	3	9	10	3
Non-Europe	4	1	1	1
Total	9	14	22	6

^{*)} 1 non-answer from a Polish student

Students seem to have troubles in accepting one of the cornerstones of federalism, majority voting (only 45 percent accepted it as a better alternative to consensus). From their questions it was evident that many of them have never been explained the differences between the Westphalian (national) approach and the federal one. Again, European elite has only itself to blame, because for too many years unanimity was sought and presented as necessary. This might have worked in an Europe of 6 states, but hardly in on Europe of 28 states. 48 percent of EU students agree with the idea of majority voting, but only 31 of non-EU Europeans. Strangely, the ones agreeing to majority voting are non-Europeans (71 percent).

2. States breaching fiscal criteria should be penalized automatically (not subject to political judgment)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	2	10	5	2
EU	3	12	11	
Non-Europe		6	1	
Total	5	28	17	2

This is one of the most interesting results of the test. Contrary to popular belief, students seem to accept the necessity of enforcing penalties for states that fail to comply with their promises (63 percent of the total). While EU students are more ambivalent, but still in favour of automatic penalties (57 percent), there is a clear preference for penalties enforcement at the level of non-EU European students (63 percent) and of non-European students (85 percent).

3. Common monetary policy should be reinforced by common fiscal policy, common diplomatic policy and common defence policy.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	3	8	6	2
EU^{*)}	2	11	8	4
Non-Europe	2	4		1
Total	7	23	14	7

^{*)} One non-response from Germany

Overall, there seems to be a majority favouring another tenet of federalism (59 percent). Strange enough, this comes not as much from EU students (only 52 percent of whom favour common policies), but more from non-EU Europe (58 percent) and from non-Europe (86 percent). Maybe in the latter case the historical experience of having been part of empires or of federations plays a role. This experience is lacking in most of the EU states and it has not been promoted by public awareness.

4. Direct democracy is over-rated (especially when it comes to sophisticated issues that are better left to professional politicians)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	3	9	6	1
EU	4	14	7	1
Non-Europe		6	1	
Total	7	29	14	2

Here we have another surprising result, since most of the students (69 percent overall) seem to admit that “people **do not** always know best”. This humble view might have been influenced by the Brexit vote. Scepticism is shared by EU students (69 percent), by non-European students (63 percent) and by non-European ones (85 percent).

5. Rising inequality is a bigger problem than sluggish growth

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Non-EU Europe	5	10	3	1
EU ^{*)}	12	7	4	1
Non-Europe	2	1	3	1
Total	19	18	10	3

^{*)} Two non-replies from Germany and Poland

An important majority (71 percent) of students think that the world they are about to enter is not a fair place. Even if, from previous questions, we allow some bias of this sample to left-of-the-centre polices, this warning should be heeded. European elites seem to have put too much emphasis on growth as a saviour, forgetting that if the fruits of growth are not shared in an equitable way, people might not react positively. A more balanced approach between growth and fairness is probably needed. Both EU and non-EU European students feel badly about it (both with 79 percent), but only 43 percent of non-European students.

4. Conclusion

This test might not have been conducted by the best rules of the statistical science. Nevertheless, it gives some interesting insights about the positioning of young educated people vis-à-vis the problem of European values.

Many of the conclusions are counter-intuitive and “politically incorrect” showing that the young generation has a deeper understanding of problems than it is generally assumed. Replicating this kind of testing on a much larger scale might give the political leaders of the European Union the courage to take some steps which have been considered too risky hitherto.

Bucharest, September 9th, 2016