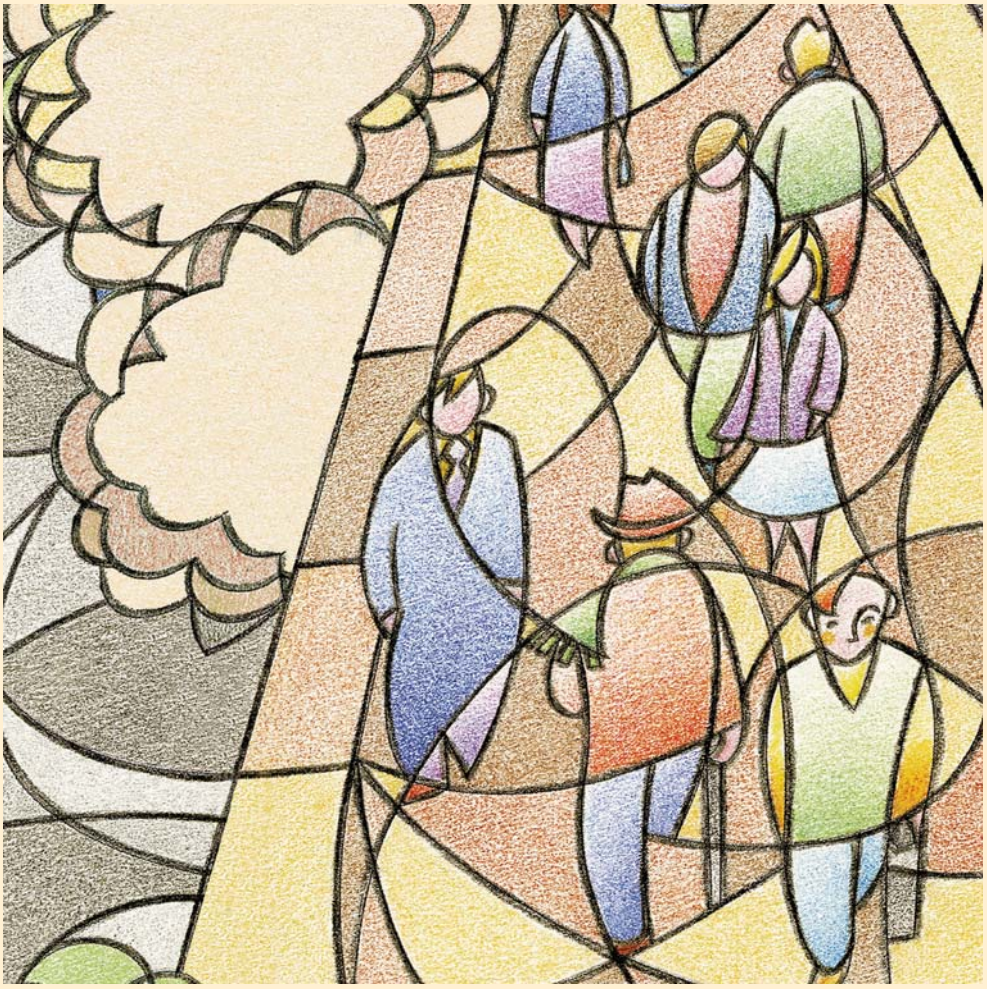
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

First European Quality of Life Survey: Participation in civil society



First European Quality of Life Survey: Participation in civil society

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Foreword

Diversity is one of the defining features of the enlarged European Union. With the prospect of further enlargement ahead, differences such as those in living conditions, quality of life and cultural traditions are likely to be more pertinent than ever. While the nurturing of cultural diversity lies at the heart of the European ideal, fostering greater cohesion is also a central priority.

Against this background, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has been committed to obtaining more in-depth information about how people live and how they perceive their circumstances. In 2003, the Foundation conducted fieldwork for its first *European Quality of Life Survey* in 28 countries: the EU25, the two acceding countries – Bulgaria and Romania – and one candidate country, Turkey. The survey was a questionnaire-based, representative household survey, which aimed to analyse how various life factors affect Europeans' quality of life. In particular, it addressed a number of key areas: employment, economic resources, housing and local environment, family and household structure, participation in the community, health and healthcare, knowledge/education and training.

The results of the Foundation's first *European Quality of Life Survey* were published in 2004. Since then, the Foundation has been engaged in more extensive analysis of how different aspects impact on individual quality of life in the EU. This activity has produced a series of in-depth analytical reports, which look at key components of quality of life across all 28 countries, identifying differences and similarities as well as policy implications.

This analytical report addresses the interesting theme of participation in civil society, exploring the diverse range of activities that constitute active participation. A central part of the analysis involves identifying factors that influence participation, or in other words understanding why some people are active in civil society and why others are not. In doing so, it underlines that wide range of factors – from individual to national resources and from sociological to historical influences – that determine the level and type of participation.

From a European perspective, the debate about active participation in civil society is more significant than ever, particularly in terms of the relationship between participation and people's social integration and life satisfaction. Similarly, the policy actions that European governments can take to promote a more active civil society – such as the promotion of education and internet usage, and the elimination of destitution – represent an important part of the debate on active participation, underlining the importance not only of new innovative measures but also of improving existing policies in this area.

We hope that the findings of this report will contribute to shaping EU policies aimed at solving such issues and at enhancing the level and quality of active participation across Europe.

Jorma Karppinen
Director

Willy Buschak
Deputy Director

Country codes

EU25

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
CZ	Czech Republic
CY	Cyprus
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
FI	Finland
FR	France
DE	Germany
EL	Greece
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
SK	Slovakia
SI	Slovenia
ES	Spain
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom

Acceding countries

BG	Bulgaria
RO	Romania

Candidate country

TR	Turkey

Abbreviations

EQLS	European Quality of Life Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
EU15	15 EU Member States (pre May 2004)
NMS	10 new Member States that joined the EU in May 2004
EU25	25 EU Member States (post May 2004)

Contents

Introduction

The term 'civil society' typically refers to organisations that mediate between the state and individuals. Political parties, trade unions, business associations, charitable bodies and cultural groups are all examples of civil society organisations. Informal social networks of friends, work colleagues or neighbours can also constitute the building blocks of formal organisations. While civil society organisations are independent of the state, their activities are often in the public interest. Such organisations can make collective representations to government about the direction of public policies, as well as interpreting these policies for their members. Thus, they have an important role to play in European society.

The expansion of the European Union in 2004 has increased the debate about active participation in Europe's civil society. Against this background, in 2003, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions launched the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) in 28 countries, examining key aspects of quality of life in the 25 EU Member States (EU25), the two acceding countries – Bulgaria and Romania – and one candidate country, Turkey. Specifically, the EQLS examined six key areas of quality of life: employment; economic resources; family and households; community life and social participation; health and healthcare; and knowledge, education and training. Since the Foundation published the results of this survey in 2004, it has been engaged in more in-depth analysis of key components of quality of life, based on the initial findings of the EQLS.

Among the series of analytical reports based on these findings, this report explores the extent to which Europeans do, or do not, participate in civil society. Along with the findings from the EQLS, the analysis is also based on results from the 2004 Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital (EB 62.2), conducted in 2004 in 27 countries (all countries except Turkey). Both of these surveys therefore cover nationally representative samples – in 28 countries in the case of the EQLS and in 27 countries in the case of the Eurobarometer survey.

Structure of report

Chapter 1 of this report begins by defining the concept of civil society, underlining the diverse range of activities that constitute participation in civil society. At the same time, it analyses the role of civil society participation, highlighting the importance of civil society organisations – both formal and informal – at individual and national levels. Given the evolving role and expanding size of the EU, the chapter also emphasises how the debate about active participation at the level of European society has emerged as an important consideration.

The analysis identifies four main types of civil society organisations – informal social networks, voluntary organisations, conventional political activities and transnational European public space. Chapter 2 of this report identifies the extent to which individuals in European countries participate in these four types of civil society organisations. Analysing all four types of participation is necessary because non-participation in one area does not necessarily indicate exclusion from public life.

Since participation varies within and between countries, Chapter 3 tests alternative explanations as to why some people are active in civil society while others are not, and explores the various factors influencing participation. Sociological theories attribute such variations to differences in individual resources, such as education, income and gender. Since social differences are found in

every country of Europe, this implies that pan-European factors are the major determinants of participation rather than national differences in history and institutions. In contrast, cultural theories postulate that history, institutions and distinctive national values account for these differences. Economic theories, on the other hand, emphasise the importance of aggregate national characteristics, such as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.

Insofar as national context is of primary importance, then the country one lives in will have a greater influence on participation than an individual's personal characteristics. The statistical analyses in Chapter 3 demonstrate under what circumstances and to what extent individual characteristics and national context are important. Moreover, the specific policy implications are discussed for each type of participation.

Chapter 4 looks at the implications of participation in civil society not only as an important activity in itself, but also for an individual's life satisfaction and social integration. The discussion finds that life satisfaction is far more widespread across Europe than participation in formal organisations of civil society. Life satisfaction is particularly influenced by factors that reflect social relationships rather than political activities. Non-participation in formal organisations does not mean that an individual is socially excluded – seven eighths of Europeans are involved in at least one of the four types of civil society, most often in informal social networks of friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

The chief policy actions that European governments can take to promote a more active civil society are, for the most part, measures to which they are already committed in theory. Such measures include, for example, the promotion of education and internet usage, the elimination of destitution and the reduction of crime. Ultimately, the promotion of an active civil society not only requires the adoption of innovative policies, but also greater efforts to make existing policies work better.

Role of civil society 1

Europeans can participate in a multiplicity of activities in society, ranging from local sports clubs to national political parties and, at European level, to organisations uniting people with common interests as diverse as the music of Mozart to working conditions regulated by the European Commission. In every community, there are local organisations to which individuals can become affiliated, along with informal social networks based on friendship, work or neighbourhood proximity. The broader the definition of civil society, the greater the range of choices that are available to people. However, it would appear that a relatively small proportion of a country's population regularly participates in civil society organisations at national level, and fewer still at European level.

'Civil society' is an elastic term that has been used – both historically and nationally – to refer to a variety of organisations or institutions (Hall and Trentmann, 2005). A common theme, however, is that civil society organisations occupy 'a space between the family and the state, a realm of differentiation in which free, independent and otherwise unrelated individuals pursue their self-interest in a spirit of mutual respect and within the limits of the laws' (Parekh, 2004).

The latter definition of civil society leaves open the distinction between participation in formal organisations and participation in informal networks of friends. It also leaves open the differentiation between organisations that are primarily political, such as parties contesting elections, or organisations that are only incidentally political, such as universities where teaching and research are the main priorities. Regardless of their priorities, Rueschemeyer (1998) stresses that formal or informal civil society organisations are politically relevant. In short, civil society organisations are in 'the public interest', a term that is frequently used without any clear definition (Segall, 2005).

Civil society organisations empower individuals by amplifying their voice and their interests (Sampson et al, 2005). On their own, individual members of society have little chance of acting effectively or of being heard by government. However, as a member of an organisation comprised of people who share a common interest, an individual's views can be directly relayed to the government both through representatives and the media. Through their participation in an organisation, members can also become more aware of the need to accommodate differences of opinion through discussions about promoting activities. The process of aggregating opinions into policy preferences extends to political parties and government.

Civil society is important because democratic governments require inputs from organisations that represent diverse interests in society. Some of these organisations represent specialised interests, such as groups representing disabled people, while others have broad concerns, such as those relating to the interests of trade unions or employer organisations. As civil society organisations are independent of the state, they can challenge existing public policies. Strong civil society organisations can set limits to the power of a potentially overbearing government – a point of particular significance in post-communist societies (Gellner, 1994).

The multi-level society that exists in Europe today runs in parallel to its multi-level system of governance. Individuals have the opportunity to participate in social activities at many levels – locally in their neighbourhood or workplace, nationally in institutions that unite people from many localities, and internationally in European-level organisations across country boundaries. The

institutions of the EU recognise this fact: Declaration 23 of the Maastricht Treaty makes a commitment to the importance of consultations and dialogue with institutions of civil society to complement the activities of the European Parliament and Council.[1] The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Committee, for example, provides an institutional role for the participation of members of organisations representing employers, workers and other interests (for example, consumers, academics, farmers) in deliberations of the EU, as does the Committee of the Regions.

An active civil society encourages participation at all times and in all places. Many organisations explicitly involve leisure activities, such as sports clubs, choirs and hobby groups. Individuals can participate in such organisations in the evenings and at weekends, and combine holidays with their intensive pursuit of leisure interests. The shortening of the working week and working year has afforded Europeans more leisure time: excluding the time required for sleep and other necessary activities, Europeans now have more time to spend in discretionary activities than in paid employment (Gershuny, 2002; Rice et al, 2006).

Civil society organisations can cater for people of any age. Collectively, the interests of young and old people are as numerous as those of citizens currently in employment, and their immediate concerns tend to be different from those concerning the working world. Civil society organisations range from youth clubs, boy scout and girl guide movements, to charities that specialise in helping elderly and sick people.

There is a diverse range of civil society organisations in Europe. Social networks involving informal relations between family and friends, between neighbours and, among those who are employed, between colleagues at work can bring people together on a daily basis. Individuals rely on informal networks for relaxation and as a source of help and emotional support. Putnam's theory of social capital (2000) postulates that formal organisations are created by formalising and aggregating informal social networks. However, this theory fails to demonstrate how intimate face-to-face relations can be organised in large-scale, impersonal, bureaucratic organisations that are central in modern society for the provision of many personal services, such as pensions and healthcare services (Coleman, 1990; Ladd, 1996; Edwards et al, 2001). Moreover, the geographical distance between informal local groups and European-level organisations is so great that the latter can only claim representative status; such organisations cannot relate directly to those they represent in the same way that local organisations can.

Formal organisations are the primary institutions of civil society because they can negotiate with government at local, regional and national level. North (1990) emphasises that formal and informal organisations can in fact be intertwined. However, informal groups cannot make commitments to government, other organisations or their members. Formal organisations provide top-down leadership and representation to government, as well as bottom-up services in the communities in which their members live. Thus, an individual who belongs to a local trade union branch or environmental group can be linked to a national headquarters that represents its members at national or even EU level. Without membership in formal organisations, individuals have no representation when issues are considered at national and European levels. Formal organisations in which membership is compulsory (for example, as a condition of employment or for a particular occupation) tend to have a more inclusive membership, while informal organisations, being voluntary, may have more committed members.

[1] See http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10714.htm and http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10717.htm.

In a democracy, elections are the primary institution for active political participation. Every citizen, from a certain age, is eligible to vote for a political party of their choice. In contrast with the specialised membership of many civil society organisations, a substantial majority of adults vote in a national election. Between elections, individuals can participate in political parties, contact public officials or their elected representatives, or join a group advocating a cause, such as prisoners' claims or women's rights.

The expansion of the EU in 2004 to 25 Member States, with a population of more than 400 million people, has increased the debate about active participation at the level of European society. The European Commission in Brussels is distant from local civil society organisations in terms of civil participation and is immediately accountable to only nationally elected governments. The European Parliament can claim to be directly representative of European citizens; yet, in 18 EU Member States, non-voters outnumbered voters in the 2004 European Parliament election (Rose, 2004a and 2004b). The development of the internet provides a means of instantaneous and inexpensive communication across Europe, thus creating the potential for virtual participation in a European public space. However, given the diversity of languages spoken at national level, trans-European communication requires not only good telecommunications, but also a common language (*lingua franca*) shared by all participants.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, people throughout Europe are now free to participate in civil society organisations if they wish to do so. The idea of 'a European society' does not of course imply that everyone must be equally active or active in the same organisations; interests and tastes differ. Nevertheless, democracy can be interpreted as placing an obligation on all citizens to play an active part in public life. Empirical evidence shows that while most individuals participate in some formal or informal organisations, the great majority of organisations involve a limited proportion of citizens. For example, while a substantial majority of Europeans vote, relatively few citizens belong to political parties. However, this 'minority' can constitute as many as 10 million people or more

Participation in civil society can be active or passive, since organisations can vicariously represent the interests of people who are not members but who have much in common with the active participants. For example, associations of motorists claim to represent the interests of all drivers, not just their fee paying members. It can be argued that it is economically rational for most people to opt for the 'free ride' approach – that is, by letting others pay dues, spend time at committee meetings and make the effort required to keep voluntary organisations active (Olson, 1965). However, if a cross-section of potential members did not participate in an organisation or were not even aware of its existence, this could result in professional staff or militant activists putting their own values and interests ahead of the majority they claim to represent (Michels, 1915).

At EU level, the distance between institutions in Brussels and citizens in the Member States can create 'areas where the European policy agenda is currently underdeveloped, not fully capturing emerging concerns among Europe's citizens' (Fahey et al, 2003). The recent referendum defeats of the draft European Constitution are a very public example of how popular participation can veto an agreement reached by the representatives of EU citizens at the highest levels of European society.

A final consideration in relation to civil participation concerns individuals who do not participate in civil society. Such individuals risk exclusion from deliberations on the formulation of public policies. Individual participation in civil society is thus important, not only for the benefits of an active society, but also in order to combat social exclusion, whether it arises from unemployment among people of working age or as a result of the social isolation of some elderly or young people (see European Commission, January 2005).

Forms of participation in civil society 2

Formal organisations are of central importance in representing individuals to national and EU governments. Conceptual categories such as 'the working class' depend on particular political parties, trade unions and related organisations to represent and advance their interests. However, to understand individual participation in civil society, the focus cannot merely be confined to organisations, since many organisations do not recruit individuals as members: rather, their members are other organisations. This is true, for example, of business associations whose members are limited liability companies or of national confederations consisting of dozens of trade unions with different and sometimes competing sets of members.

What is true at national level is even more relevant at European level. Typically, the members of interest groups represented in Brussels consist of national organisations or associations of organisations. While top-level associations of organisations can claim to represent individual shareholders or trade unionists indirectly, few of their national members will actually come into contact with those representing them in Brussels or may even be unaware that they are represented at European level.

The claims that institutions make about individual membership are rarely analysed. Statistics concerning membership in political parties are notoriously vague (Katz and Mair, 1994), because parties are reluctant to drop people from their membership list if they fail to pay their dues, in the hope of retaining their vote. A state church may claim to speak for an entire nation. Similarly, a church may claim as its members anyone who was baptised or born into a family that belongs to that church; however, weekly church attendances show that a limited or very small proportion of nominal members attend church regularly. Even before immigration led to the introduction of significant non-Christian populations to European countries, minority religions and a considerable proportion of secular citizens explicitly rejected the state church.

The limitations of organisational statistics are even more apparent in analysing informal social networks of friends, neighbours and work colleagues. While individuals are aware who their friends are, the idea of 'registering' friends in a centralised computer database is contrary to the personal and emotional nature of friendship. At the same time, although neighbours may be identified in terms of geographical grids or population registers, this does not necessarily mean that people who live close to each other share common interests or cooperate for collective action. Moreover, trade unions and professional organisations may focus on occupational groups – such as legal, clerical or maintenance staff – rather than on the place of work.

Relevance of sample surveys

To understand participation therefore, it is necessary to have data about individuals. This is best obtained from nationally representative sample surveys. Such surveys can not only ask questions about whether an individual participates in various types of activities, but may also explore social and attitudinal characteristics that influence participation. In order to examine national influences on participation, data needs to be obtained from a survey that asks the same questions in many countries.

The EQLS, commissioned by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, meets these specifications. In 2003, Intomart GfK interviewed, on behalf of the Foundation, nationally representative samples of approximately 1,000 respondents in 28 countries, in order to obtain comparable information about key aspects of quality of life. In total, 27,008 individuals were interviewed for the EQLS (Arendt, 2004; Nauenburg and Mertel, 2004).

Given the breadth of civil society institutions, no single questionnaire can cover all topics of interest in this context. Hence, this report also analyses data from a Special Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital (EB 62.2), carried out in 2004 on behalf of the European Commission, Directorate General on Employment and Social Affairs (2005). Between 22 November and 19 December 2004, TNS Opinion & Social Network interviewed 25,978 individuals in 27 countries – the same countries as those covered in the EQLS, with the exception of Turkey.

The number and variety of countries covered by the EQLS and the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital offer a robust test of generalisations about individual resources determining participation, regardless of national context. At the same time, coverage of more than two dozen countries increases the likelihood that the national conditions characterising a particular country may also be found in a group of countries, for example, countries with a high level of GDP per capita or countries in which corruption discourages individuals from participating in civil society institutions.

In line with the European society approach, the overall patterns of individuals' participation are first examined. This is done by grouping all respondents into a single extensive database and weighting each individual according to their country's proportion of the total population of Europe. Having established what is normal for Europe as a whole, explanations are then tested and grounded in social differences found everywhere (for example, between young and old people) and in national contexts (for example, densely populated countries where individuals may appear to count for little as against smaller European democracies).

Participation in informal social networks

Many EU programmes are explicitly directed at promoting social integration or preventing social exclusion. However, there are two very different, albeit complementary, ways of looking at how individuals relate to society: from the top-down position of governors or from the bottom-up position of citizens. The view from the top down primarily focuses on large-scale, impersonal institutions, such as national governments, the European Commission or intercontinental organisations such as the United Nations. In contrast, the view from the bottom up focuses on small-scale, face-to-face networks of friends, neighbours and colleagues at work; these relationships are of primary concern to the everyday lives of ordinary people. While causal connections can be made between political institutions that depend on the votes of millions of individual electors, the connections are distant. Hence, this analysis of individual participation in civil society starts with the most basic of informal social networks.

Types of participation

In a modern society, it is virtually impossible for any individual to live in total isolation from other people. However, the extent to which people are sociable, or mix with other people, varies

according to the type of sociability. For example, people who are part of a large household, whether a conventional family or a flat shared by students, may find it difficult to get time alone, while a retired person who lives alone may find it difficult to meet other people. Moreover, the frequency with which people have contact with others also varies. People in employment normally meet their work colleagues five days a week, while they may only meet friends or neighbours at weekends or less frequently.

The extent to which individuals are integrated into or excluded from informal social networks is a matter of degree. The Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital recognises this factor. Its measure of informal social contact classifies the frequency with which people meet according to six different categories: several times a week, once a week, two or three times monthly, once a month, less than once a month, or never. Since the frequency of meeting depends on context, questions are asked separately about meeting friends, work colleagues outside of working time, and neighbours (Table 1).

Table 1 Frequency of informal social relations, %

Frequency of meeting	Friends	Work colleagues	Neighbours
Several times a week	34	8	15
Once a week	27	11	14
Two or three times monthly	16	10	10
Once a month	10	11	9
Less than once a month	9	18	17
Never	4	42	35

Notes: Q. How often do you: meet socially with friends; meet work colleagues outside of working time; meet socially with neighbours? Results are based on interviews with 25,978 people in 27 countries, aggregated and weighted according to national population.
Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, 2004

The majority of people have friends. As the data in Table 1 indicate, the primary difference between individuals in this respect is the frequency with which they meet their friends. One third of the respondents (34%) report meeting friends several times a week, while another quarter (27%) indicate that they meet friends at least once a week. Altogether, over three quarters of Europeans meet friends at least several times a month. Only 4% report never meeting friends, while another 9% meet their friends less than once a month.

Meeting neighbours does not require much physical effort since, by definition, neighbours live nearby. Indeed, in the apartment blocks that characterise urban living, a person does not even need to go outdoors to meet neighbours. However, people do not choose their neighbours; this is a function of the property market, and the cost of housing will affect the socioeconomic status of neighbours. A common level of income and standard of living is not alone sufficient to make people become friends. Moreover, people who have to commute substantial distances to work each day or who work away from home for part of the year have less time to find out whether they have interests in common with their neighbours.

The Eurobarometer survey shows that 35% of respondents report never meeting their neighbours socially, inviting them into their home, nor joining them in other shared activities. Even though

proximity implies that people could meet their neighbours every day, only 14% of the respondents say they meet their neighbours once a week, while just 15% meet their neighbours socially several times a week. On average, 17% of respondents meet their neighbours socially less than once a month, compared with 27% of respondents who meet friends once a week. There may be, of course, an overlap between the two categories, since neighbours can also be friends. However, the pattern suggests that people prefer to make the extra effort required to meet friends rather than letting their place of residence determine who becomes their friends.

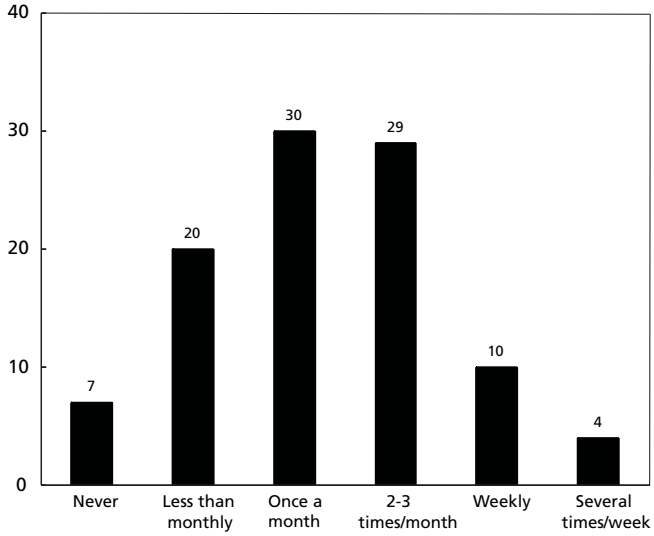
The majority of workplaces employ a number of people and many employees are paid to relate to their customers or suppliers. Insofar as an organisation's products involve interdependencies within a company, social networks can be formed through exchanges within the organisation and can help to maintain or improve output. Thus, the workplace has always produced sociability, as well as goods and services. Social networks are particularly likely to be formed in jobs in the services sector (where individuals often share an open-plan office, a coffee machine, a staff canteen) and in retail establishments (where sales people can chat with their colleagues when not serving customers). Employment in service sector jobs has been growing steadily throughout Europe. Conversely, unemployment not only reduces an individual's income, but also increases their risk of social exclusion, insofar as an unemployed person loses daily contact with people who used to form part of their social group.

In relation to the question about meeting work colleagues socially outside of working hours, over two fifths (42%) of respondents reported never meeting colleagues after work. This may be partly attributed to the fact that almost half of the adult European population is outside of the labour force, being either retired, students or at home. However, this is not the primary reason, since 35% of those who are in employment say that they never meet their work colleagues socially. One reason is that people who work in the same place may live a considerable distance from each other. Another reason is that office friendships are different from out-of-office friendships: the latter usually arise out of individual choice, whereas the former represent decisions made by employers without regard for matching employees as friends. A third reason could be that people who have been together all day want a break from work. For a minority of people, socialising at work can lead to long-term friendships. Among those who are currently not employed, 33% report that they sometimes meet their former colleagues from work, while 13% meet them at least once a week, compared with 20% of those in employment who have informal weekly contacts with work colleagues.

Index of informal social networks

Based on the results of the Eurobarometer survey, an index of individual participation in informal social networks was created by adding together the frequency with which a person meets socially with friends, neighbours and work colleagues. By dividing this result by three and rounding off the figure, a 'sociability index' was devised. The index comprises a six-point scale, from zero to five, where five corresponds to 'meeting people several times a week' or maximum sociability and zero denotes 'never meeting people' or an absence of sociability (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Frequency of informal social networks (%)



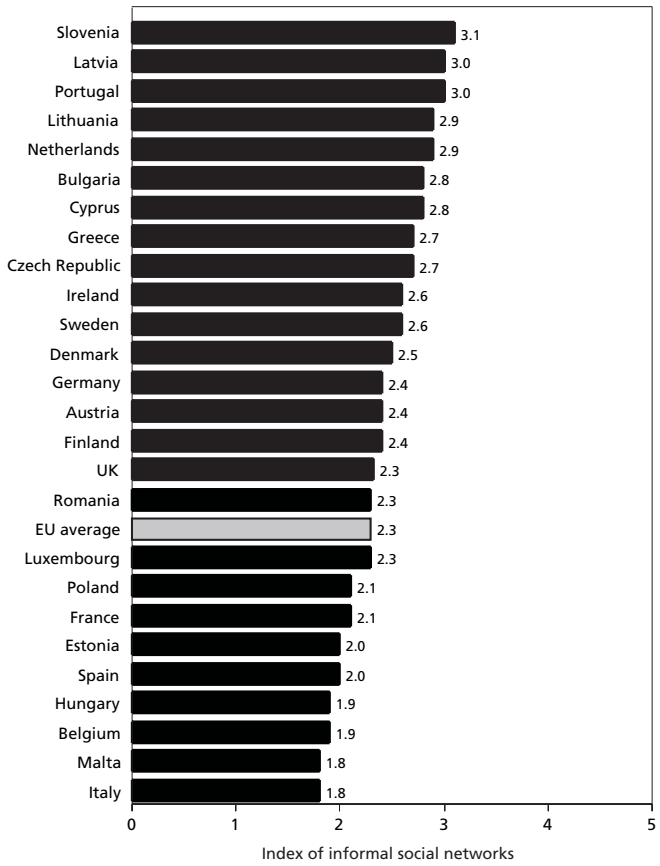
Note: Result show the average frequency (%) of meeting with friends, work colleagues and neighbours.
Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, 2004

As Figure 1 shows, an overwhelming majority of Europeans are socially integrated to a significant degree. Only 7% never or hardly ever socialise with friends, neighbours and work colleagues. At the other extreme, only 4% of the respondents meet these people several times a week. Almost three fifths of respondents fall into the middle category of the 'sociability index', engaging monthly or several times a month with all three networks, or even weekly with friends. Since over nine tenths of Europeans report that they are sometimes involved in informal social networks, even if their contacts and resources are below average, they cannot be described as being socially isolated. In practice, the index actually understates the extent of informal social networks because the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital did not include a question about relations within the family – one of the greatest sources of social contact and support. Since only 17% of the respondents reported living alone, the level of participation in informal social networks would have been substantially higher if a question about family social networks had been included.

The extent of informal social networking differs between countries, as well as between individuals. The level of informal social relations in each country was calculated by averaging the total score on the sociability index for all respondents in each country (Figure 2). Levels of informal social networking vary from an average of 3.1 in Slovenia to a comparatively lower average of 1.8 in Italy and Malta. The EU average of 2.3 reflects the likelihood that people have informal social contacts in all three networks more than once a month, or, if inactive in work or with neighbours, that they meet friends several times a month or weekly.

On the six-point index shown in Figure 2, differences in informal social contacts are substantial compared with the EU average of 2.3. Not only is there a significant amount of informal social activity in every European country, but there are also large differences within each country in the frequency with which people meet socially with friends, neighbours and work colleagues. The standard deviation of 1.2 reflects the finding that for two thirds of Europeans, involvement in informal networks averages between 1.1 and 3.5. One third of respondents differ even more from the EU average in this respect.

Figure 2 Index of informal social relations by country



Note: National average of index of informal social networks, where five denotes 'meets several times a week' and zero denotes 'never meets'.
Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, 2004

Participation in voluntary organisations

The link between voluntary organisations and public policy is much more direct and formal than that of informal social networks. In every society in Europe, there are hundreds of voluntary organisations catering for a myriad of interests and tastes. Therefore, individuals have a much wider choice of social outlets than simply socialising with friends, neighbours or work colleagues. The voluntary nature of these organisations implies a greater degree of commitment to an organisation than, for example, renting an apartment in a particular neighbourhood or being paid to spend time in an office or factory does. For such reasons, commitment to voluntary organisations should be as high as it is in informal social networks.

Voluntary organisations that represent the interests of members – whether they are trade unions, charities, consumer groups or professional bodies – normally maintain local branches where people can meet their fellow members.[2] Other characteristics of these organisations include: the

[2] While some organisations lack local branches and recruit members by direct mail or through the internet, this is rarely a characteristic of local sports clubs, choirs, trade unions, churches and other organisations (Figure 3). The American phenomenon of television churches and 'credit card' organisations is not, or at least not yet, prevalent in Europe.

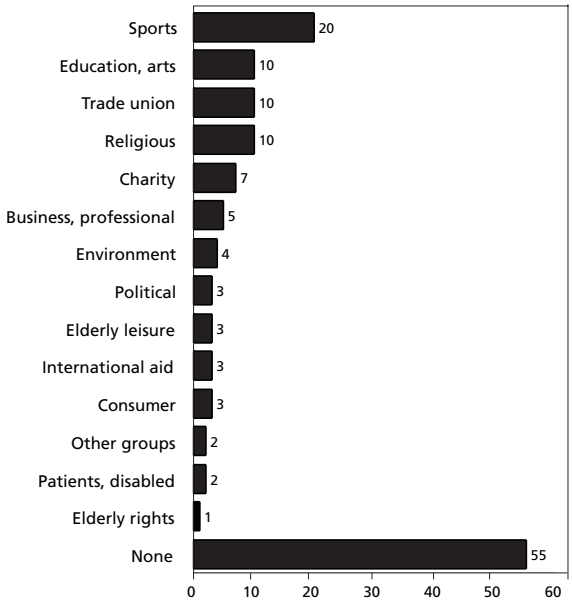
presence of national offices providing information and benefits in the interest of their members; holding annual meetings that deliberate about policy priorities; compiling information and conducting research to advance their interests; lobbying government to alter or introduce laws and regulations relating to their concerns.

Types of participation

The Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital reflects the diversity of voluntary organisations in the 27 countries surveyed. The latter survey featured a question asking respondents whether they belonged to any of 14 different types of organisations. In contrast with informal social networks, many of these voluntary groups are directly active in politics (most obviously political parties), but they also include groups concerned with international aid, the environment, consumer rights and causes such as women's rights. Many other voluntary groups are indirectly or intermittently concerned with public policy issues, such as organisations representing disabled people or consumer groups that are involved in lobbying producers of consumer goods or the government as the regulator of the market. Voluntary groups usually claim to act in the public interest, but deny that they are political in the party political sense.

Although voluntary organisations represent almost every taste and interest, just over half of the respondents (55%) of the Eurobarometer survey do not belong to any such organisation; almost half of the respondents (45%) report membership in many different types of organisations (Figure 3). Sports clubs are the most popular type of organisation, with one in five respondents reporting that they are a member of a recreational organisation. Cultural activities are also relatively important: 10% of respondents report belonging to an arts, music, education or similar type of organisation. These organisations often reinforce or enable people to form friendship networks based on common leisure interests.

Figure 3 Participation in voluntary organisations (%)



Note: Q. Now, I would like you to look carefully at the following list of organisations and activities. Please say in which, if any, you are a member.
Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, 2004

In contrast with sports and cultural clubs, which tend to offer members primary satisfaction through local participation, religious organisations and trade unions can connect people with national and European-wide movements. Belonging to a religious organisation not only allows people to meet with fellow members; the person in charge of the organisation can also offer instruction on public policies relevant to a particular religious faith. Religious orders may also be involved in running schools, hospitals and other charitable institutions, which receive considerable support from public funds. Compared with other voluntary organisations, membership of such organisations is relatively high, with 10% of respondents belonging to a religious organisation along with 7% of respondents being members of charities (that may have religious links). This is compatible with the EQLS data, which show that 19% of respondents report a weekly church attendance. Nonetheless, both percentages are lower than the membership figures often cited by national churches.

The 10% of respondents who report trade union membership represent about one sixth of the labour force in a typical European country. Of this proportion, one fifth constitutes retired workers. When individuals are required to join a trade union as a condition of employment, bottom-up affiliation to a union may be greater than reported membership. In such circumstances, individuals may not regard themselves as belonging to a voluntary organisation, but rather consider themselves as being committed trade unionists. A similar distinction between 'aware' and 'unaware' members can be found in some other types of organisations, such as religious organisations.

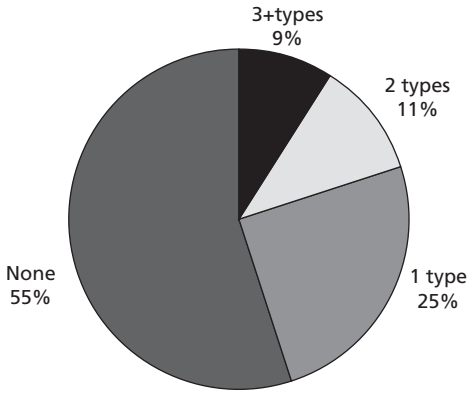
Voluntary organisations dedicated to promoting causes, such as animal rights or international aid, tend to have relatively small membership numbers; however, the average member may be more committed to the cause. In contemporary society, people may arguably assign a higher priority to ties that they choose rather than to affiliations that are given, such as their parents' religion. This hypothesis is consistent with the evidence from the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital: less than one in 20 retired people belong to an organisation concerned with elderly people's rights, while one in six belong to organisations that specialise in providing leisure pursuits for elderly people.

Index of participation in voluntary organisations

An index of organisational membership can be constructed by counting the number of organisations to which an individual belongs. Evidence from the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital shows a significant distinction between three groups in this context (Figure 4): 55% of respondents do not belong to any organisation; 25% of respondents indicate that they belong to one particular organisation; a further 20% report belonging to two or more organisations ('multiple joiners'). Of the latter group, about half belong to two organisations, while and the other half are members of three or more organisations ('serial joiners').

Multiple joiners are likely to be involved in conducting the affairs of civil society organisations, such as organising activities, raising funds and representing the local branch's views to national headquarters and to public officials. People who are members of a single organisation for a limited purpose (for example, singing in a choir) tend to benefit from the skills of other members, who are probably accustomed to booking rooms for meetings, organising concerts and applying for grants from public agencies.

Figure 4 Index of voluntary participation, by individual membership in organisations



Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, 2004

Participation in voluntary organisations varies more considerably in Europe than people's involvement in informal social networks (Figure 5). In Sweden and Denmark, on average, people are members of three and 2.5 organisations respectively; their high commitment to trade union and vocational organisations more than offsets a low level of commitment to religious organisations in these two countries. Almost all of the countries that are below the EU average of 0.9 for organisational membership were either once governed by a communist regime (which created artificial civil society organisations controlled by the state) or are Mediterranean countries.

Substantial differences can be found in the majority of European countries in relation to people's participation in voluntary organisations. In countries where organisational membership is high, the contrast is most prominent between multiple joiners and those who only belong to one or no organisation; in other countries, such as Italy, two thirds of the respondents do not belong to any organisation, a fifth belong to one organisation, while a tenth are members of two or more organisations.

Participation in conventional political activities

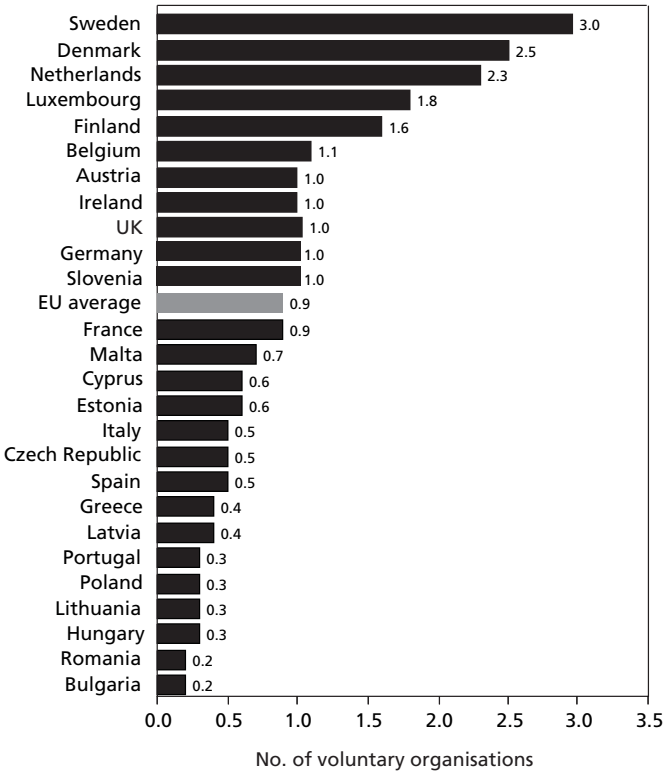
The struggle to achieve the right to vote for all men, and later for all women, has made voting a central activity in political participation. Nevertheless, the very fact that groups lobby for the expansion of the franchise shows that voting is not the only form of political participation. While political parties have tended to lose members in contemporary European societies, new forms of participation have emerged to complement conventional organisations of civil society. Academic studies routinely list up to a dozen different forms of participation that individuals may now engage in, ranging from conventional activities such as voting to unconventional activities such as sit-ins at public offices, boycotting, or buying a consumer product on political grounds (Pattie et al, 2004; Verba et al, 1995).

Types of participation

Among the indicators of conventional participation, voting remains pre-eminent in terms of mass involvement, as well as in relation to democratic theory. Despite widespread concerns of politicians

about an alleged decline in voter turnout, a majority of registered electors normally vote in national elections. However, considerable differences in voter turnout do emerge between the countries, ranging from extremely high, very high or high turnouts. A systematic analysis of turnout at national elections, from 1945 to 2003, found that across 15 EU countries, the average turnout stood at 83%, while the national turnout ranged between an average of 72% and 94%. In some countries, voter turnout appears to have fallen substantially in recent years, but equally, in other countries, turnout has remained stable or has even risen (Rose, 2004a).

Figure 5 Index of voluntary participation, by country



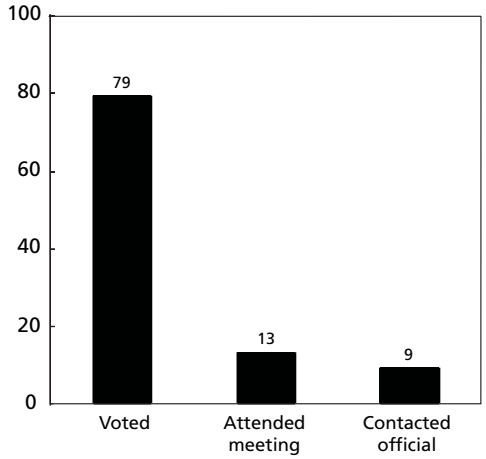
Note: Average number of organisations of which respondents are members.
Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, 2004

Results of the 2004 European Parliament election did not reveal a large drop in political participation across Europe; instead, it showed evidence of a 'Euro-gap', whereby citizens appeared to be much less interested in participating in European elections than in national elections. In the 15 older EU Member States (EU15), the European Parliament election voting was, on average, 22.4 percentage points lower than the level of voting in the country's most recent national election. In the 10 new EU Member States (NMS), the gap between voting levels in the national parliamentary elections and the European Parliament election stood at 28.7 percentage points.

In the EQLS, respondents were asked about voting in the most recent national election: the findings show that 79% of respondents replied that they had voted, 17% said they had not voted, while 4% were too young to have voted at the time (Figure 6). These replies are consistent with the

official turnout figures reported at national elections. However, it is misleading to characterise everyone who fails to vote at the most recent election as a permanent non-voter. A substantial proportion of those who do not vote at a given election may be prevented from doing so due transitory circumstances, such as illness or being away from home. Over the course of a decade or two, there can be considerable turnover, as some people unable to vote at one election return to the polls at the next election, and visa versa. The proportion of the European electorate who consistently do not vote is actually very limited; those who consistently refuse to vote on political grounds make up an even smaller proportion of the total electorate.

Figure 6 Types of political participation (%)



Notes:
Q.25 – Voting: Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last election held in this country?
Q.24a – Attending a meeting: Over the past year, have you attended a meeting of a trade union, a political party or a political action group, attended a protest or demonstration, or signed a petition?
Q.24b – Contacting an official: Over the past year, have you contacted a politician or public official (other than routine contact arising from use of public services)?
Results are based on interviews with 27,008 people in 28 countries, aggregated and weighted according to the national population.
Source: EQLS, 2003

As national elections usually take place only once every three or four years, involvement would be very high, but also infrequent, and investment of time very low, if voting was the only form of political participation open to citizens. Therefore, civil society organisations tend to offer people multiple channels for political participation: for example, the monthly branch meetings of a political party or an environmental group offer far more frequent opportunities for participation than a parliamentary election held once every few years.

In order to determine levels of participation in the long periods between elections, the EQLS asked respondents whether they attended meetings or took part in the activities of a trade union, political party or political action group. The replies show that most electors are only voters[3]: just 13% of the respondents reported that they had been involved in the additional channels of participation (Figure 6).

[3] It was not possible to analyse the fuller data on political participation contained in the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, because its question on voting referred to participating in a national election in the past year, and no election was held in the majority of the countries surveyed.

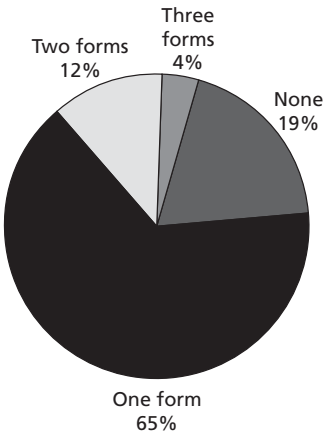
The nationwide distribution of public services offers alternative channels for the direct expression of individual views. A person can contact an elected politician or a public official in person, or by telephone, letter or email. A total of 9% of European citizens reported that they had contacted a politician or public official in the last year. While this percentage represents only a limited minority of the total adult population, in absolute numbers it corresponds to individual contacts made by over 30 million people across Europe.

Index of participation in conventional political activities

The results of the EQLS can be combined to create an index of political participation. This index shows the level of participation among individuals in relation to voting, attending meetings of civil society organisations and contacting public officials.

Across Europe, about four fifths of respondents (81%) participate in some form of conventional political activity (Figure 7). For most people, voting is their only form of activity. However, one sixth of the respondents also attend meetings or contact policymakers between elections, or both. This active minority is almost as significant as those who do not become involved in any form of political activity (19%).

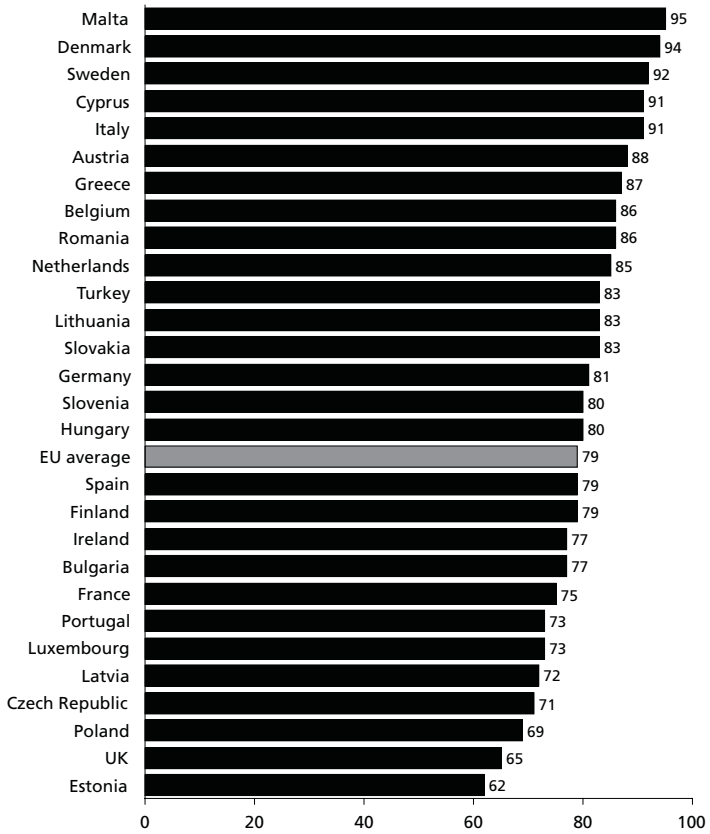
Figure 7 Index of political participation



Note: Results pertain to three forms of political participation: voting; attending meetings; contacting officials.
Source: EQLS, 2003

In every country, participation is divided between those who participate in public affairs, those who only vote, and those who are completely disengaged from conventional political activity. However, these proportions differ from one national context to another (Figure 8). In the five countries – Malta, Denmark, Sweden, Cyprus and Italy – over nine tenths of the population participate to some extent in public affairs. The UK and Estonia rank the lowest in terms of conventional political participation. In these countries, only three fifths of the population participate in any form of political activity; however, it should be noted that these figures still represent substantial majorities of the population. While the Estonian figure partly reflects the fact that over a fifth of adults are Russian nationals and are therefore ineligible to vote because they lack citizenship, the low rate of participation in the UK can be attributed to an abrupt drop in voter turnout since 1997.

Figure 8 Political participation by country (%)



Note: Results pertain to percentage of people participating in at least one activity.
Source: EQLS, 2003

From the perspective of civic idealists, who believe that every citizen should be frequently engaged in public affairs, conventional participation rates are unsatisfactory. On average, just one in 20 people attend a meeting or contact a public official at least once a year. However, the fact that the majority of citizens usually vote in national elections indicates a widespread sense of civic duty. If citizens calculated the economic value of their vote in the national context of millions of votes, it would 'pay' better to stay at home (Downs, 1957). The willingness of citizens to vote shows that money is not the only consideration. Even though voting is not compulsory in the majority of countries, most people use their vote. Moreover, even in countries where the legal obligation to vote has been abolished, turnout has remained very high. People appear to derive a 'civic' pay-off from fulfilling their duty as citizens, which may be enhanced by the pleasure obtained from being able to vote for or against a party of their choice (Schumpeter, 1952).

Participation in European public space

Many theories of participation assume that people are most likely to participate in bonding organisations comprised of people with similar interests and backgrounds. When members of a group have a number of common attributes, this facilitates group cohesion and solidarity. However, in modern societies, there is also a need for people to relate to large organisations that deal with issues outside of their everyday experience (Granovetter, 1985). Civil society institutions can bridge the large gap between individual experience and issues facing high-level decision-makers in

national governments and in the EU, for example, on how to allocate billions of euro between competing claims for welfare state benefits.

Habermas (1996) postulates that civil society institutions offer a 'public space' in which people can participate in an 'open egalitarian forum' of discussion, formulating policies independent of the government and mass media. He also believes that measures promoting practical discourse in a common public space will strengthen both the legitimacy and effectiveness of government. At EU level, this theory implies the need for a single European forum to allow for the exchange of political ideas, complementing the Single European Market for the exchange of goods and services.

The EU is facing unique challenges in terms of creating a public space for participation in democratic discourse. With a population of over 400 million citizens in the EU25, it is obviously impossible to recreate the same bonds that arise from participation in, for example, face-to-face meetings in a local community. Indeed, the enlargement of the EU to 25 Member States may compound the feeling among individuals that most participants in European affairs are 'not like us'. Low voter turnout in the recent European Parliament elections, for instance, indicates little demand at grassroots level for conventional participation in European politics.

Internet usage

If the EU wants to link its citizens to its institutions, it must devise bridging mechanisms to accomplish such a task. Instantaneous communication through the internet offers the greatest potential for the creation of a 'virtual' civil society across Europe, linking individuals and civil society institutions throughout Europe. Among the advantages of a European-wide 'virtual civil society' – provided at a marginal cost to the user – are the fewer time zones and shorter distances compared with, say, the Russian Federation or the US. Unlike earlier forms of communication, distance does not affect the cost of internet usage. Indeed, its speed and economy today make it particularly suitable for obtaining and exchanging information across national boundaries and continents.

Intergovernmental agencies, businesses and both national and transnational NGOs regularly use the internet to communicate across Europe (Della Porta and Mosca, 2005; Bruszt et al, 2005). Empirical studies on internet usage in more than 20 countries show that people use the internet for a multiplicity of purposes (Oxford Internet Institute, 2005; see also the World Internet Project[4]). The internet provides a source of information on many subjects, ranging from education and work to sports and public affairs. It is frequently used as a means of informal communication between family and friends. The internet is also used for formal communications, whether in the form of online shopping or sending a message to a political representative, a civil society institution or an online group sharing common interests.

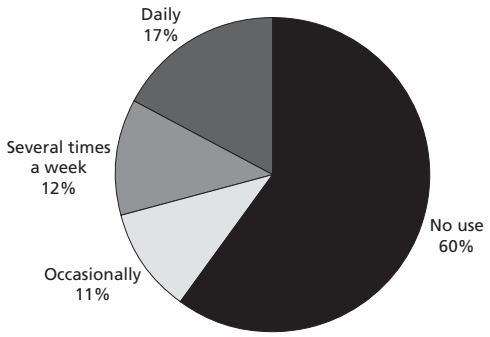
The proportion of Europeans using the internet is double that of people who attend public affairs meetings or contact public officials. Thus, whether or not people use the internet to follow public affairs, it still increases their opportunities for accessing all kinds of public policy information and for becoming involved in institutions of national and European civil society. A large proportion of people who are active in civil society use the internet: the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital found that 51% of those participating in voluntary work cited the internet as an important resource

[4] www.worldinternetproject.net

for this purpose – as high a percentage as those who indicated that a mobile phone was useful for this type of participation.

However, internet usage is not, as of yet, evenly distributed throughout European countries. The EQLS found that about 40% of Europeans interviewed in 2003 reported using the internet at least occasionally; this included 17% of respondents who reported using the internet each day and 12% of respondents who said they used the internet at least several times a week (Figure 9). Since 2003, the number of internet users is likely to have increased through a diffusion process similar to that of other telecommunications media, such as the television and mobile phones (International Telecommunications Union, 2006). In particular, the rolling out of broadband has increased the ease and frequency with which individuals can access the internet.

Figure 9 Frequency of internet usage, 2003, %



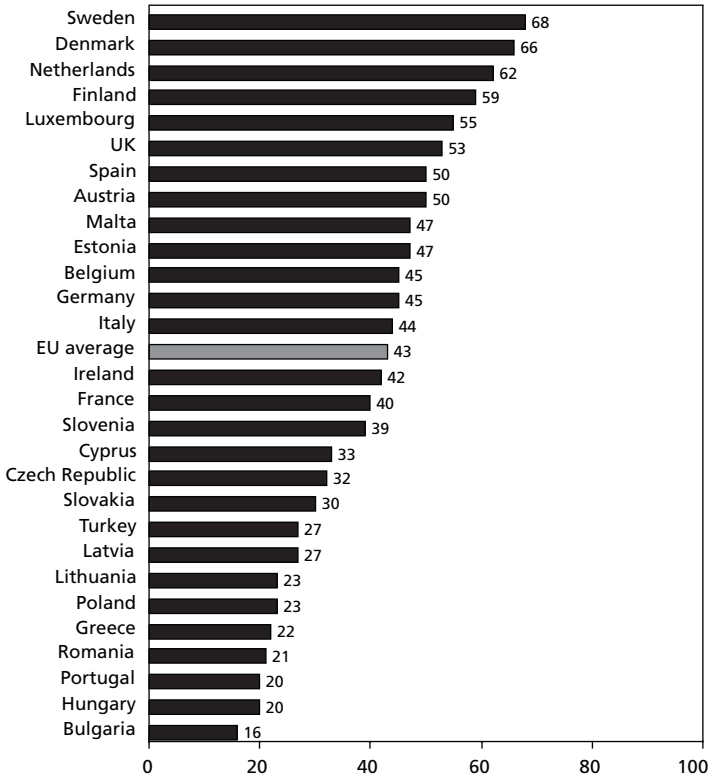
Source: EQLS, 2003

The level of internet usage varies according to national circumstances. However, the differences in internet usage between countries – such as between Sweden (68% users in 2003) and Bulgaria (16% users) – cannot be considered permanent (Figure 10). From a dynamic perspective, differences are better described in terms of early and late adopters of the internet (Rose, 2005a). Since the EQLS findings of 2003, internet use has increased in every European country and growth tends to be faster in countries where usage was previously lower.

English as a common language

While the internet provides the technological conditions for a 'virtual' European civil society, it also raises the entry requirements. Of paramount importance are the practical difficulties involved in communicating across a European public space. As Chandhoke (2004) emphasises: 'Underlying expectations of civil society is the assumption that the inhabitants can enter into a dialogue with each other and that they speak a common language.' Such a dialogue not only requires common 'spoken words, but also understanding'.

Figure 10 Internet use by country, 2003 (%)



Source: EQLS, 2003

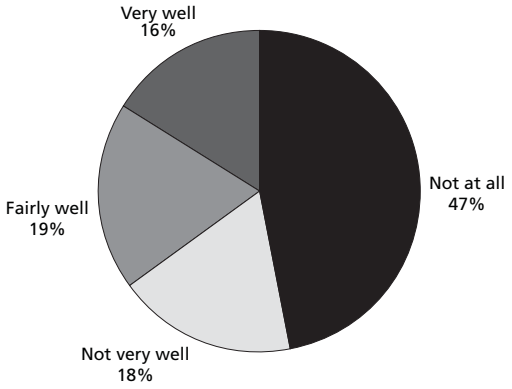
Today's EU25 encompasses some 20 different official national languages. No one language comes anywhere near to representing the national language of a majority of Europeans. Even though German is the official language of the largest block of EU citizens, Germany and Austria together make up only one fifth of the EU population. On average, the national language of each EU Member State is spoken by only about 2% of Europe's population. Moreover, the national languages in many countries, from Greece to the Netherlands or from Latvia to Portugal, are mutually incomprehensible.

At present, the only way in which the great majority of Europeans can communicate across national boundaries is by speaking a foreign language. On the grounds of greater comprehension and efficiency, therefore, there is a practical need for a common language to enable public discourse and the exchange of ideas across a network of people. In medieval times, the common language, or '*lingua franca*', was Latin; in Victorian times, it was French and today it is English. Transnational networking is, of course, possible in other languages, but there are limitations. For example, a website written in German confines discourse to a limited minority of German speakers in more than two dozen countries of Europe; similarly, internet discourse in French is accessible to only a limited minority of people in two dozen European countries.

In the EQLS, respondents were asked about their ability to communicate in English; overall, 53% of respondents indicated that they had some knowledge of the English language (Figure 11). Even after excluding respondents from the countries where English is the national language – namely the

UK, Ireland and Malta – an absolute majority of respondents still claim some knowledge of English. The degree of knowledge is nevertheless variable: the average respondent claims to be able to read English reasonably well; the proportion claiming great fluency is offset by those who say that they do not read English very well. However, since internet communication gives less fluent people an opportunity to re-read information and concerns topics that are well understood by people using English as a foreign language, the language skills needed tend to be less than those required in a standard school examination.

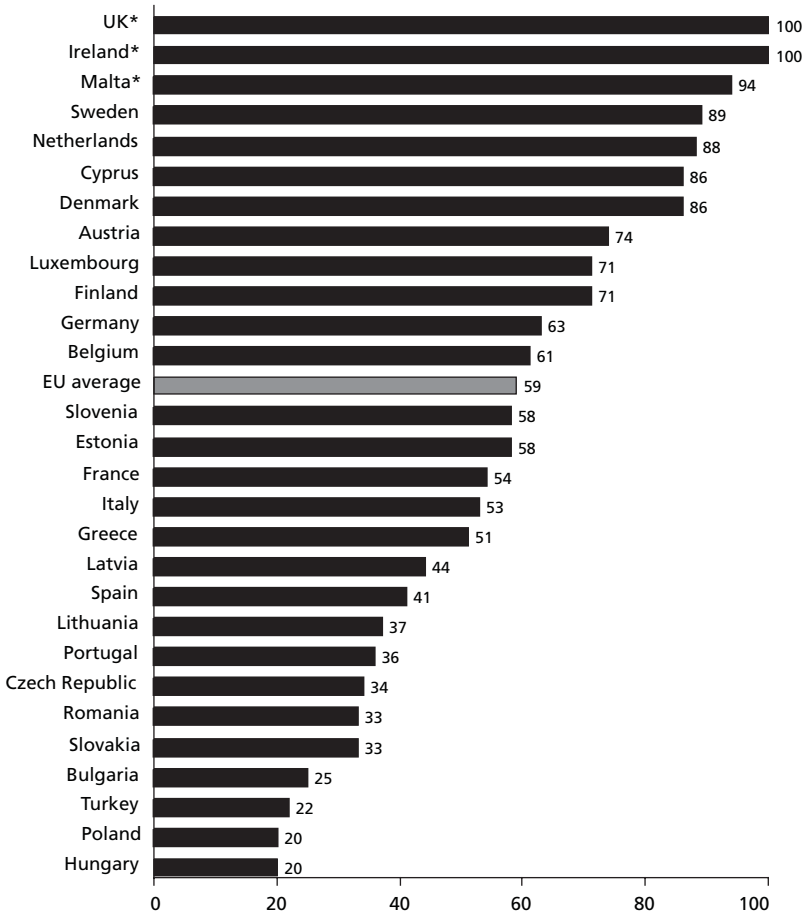
Figure 11 Knowledge of English language, %



Note: Q.51 – How well do you read English?
Source: EQLS, 2003

The assertion that English is the common language of Europe is reinforced by the fact that in two thirds of the 28 countries surveyed in the EQLS, at least half of the population have some knowledge of English. However, the level of knowledge varies substantially between countries (Figure 12). In Sweden and the Netherlands, almost 90% of adults claim to have at least a basic reading knowledge of English, while the average person in both of these countries considers their knowledge to be fairly good. At the other extreme, only 25% or less of the respondents in Bulgaria, Turkey, Poland and Hungary claim to have a knowledge of English.

Figure 12 Knowledge of English language by country (%)



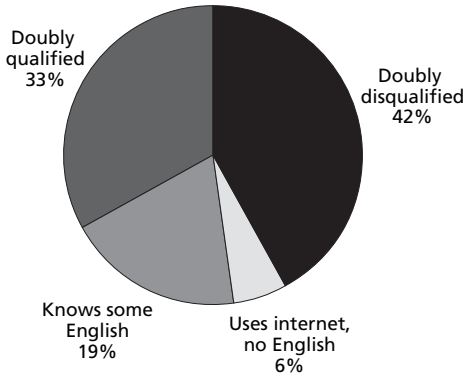
* English is official national language.
Source: EQLS, 2003

Ability to participate in European public space

Two requirements are necessary in order to participate effectively in European public space – use of the internet and knowledge of the English language. One third of European adults qualify on both these counts, in other words they are 'doubly qualified' (Figure 13). In addition, about one fifth of respondents (19%) have achieved the time-consuming qualification of learning English as a foreign language. As internet usage has increased significantly since the EQLS was conducted in 2003, it is likely that the proportion now doubly qualified to participate in a European public space is approaching two fifths of the adult population of Europe; among the population of teenagers who are not yet eligible to vote, the percentage will even be higher.

Even though knowledge of English is necessary to participate in European public space, most participants are not native English speakers (Table 2). In addition to the 50 million people aged 15 years and over who speak English in the UK, Ireland and Malta, some 185 million Europeans possess some fluency of English as a foreign language (EFL). Among the 148 million Europeans who can participate in European public space, the dominance of EFL speakers is greater still, as over half of native English speakers do not use the internet, while a large majority of EFL speakers do. Thus, 82% of those who are able to participate in European public space are what people in the UK would refer to as 'continentals'.

Figure 13 Potential to participate in European public space, %



Note: 'Doubly qualified' means knows some English and uses the internet; 'doubly disqualified' means knows no English and does not use the internet.

Source: EQLS, 2003

The concept of a European public space meets Habermas' (1996) criterion of an 'open egalitarian forum', since no one nationality dominates this space (Table 2). Owing to a combination of a large population, an above average proficiency of English and above average internet usage, Germany possesses the largest proportion of people capable of participating in European public space. Altogether, the six founding members of the EU account for 75 million potential participants in the European public space, compared with the 26.5 million participants in the three EU countries where English is the national language.

Table 2 Number of participants capable of accessing European public space, by country

	Uses internet	Knows some English	Doubly qualified
Germany	31,159,689	43,611,552	28,517,342
UK	25,129,082	47,456,118	25,097,524
Italy	21,497,494	25,562,218	18,353,076
France	19,205,815	25,373,099	16,225,190
Spain	16,549,679	13,644,990	9,943,192
Netherlands	8,089,177	11,519,829	7,809,955
Turkey	11,425,494	10,515,918	7,089,891
Sweden	4,936,155	6,493,571	4,840,427
Poland	6,851,796	6,214,277	3,981,112
Belgium	3,813,550	5,209,155	3,339,700
Romania	3,642,567	5,815,523	3,283,796
Austria	3,296,990	4,951,166	3,158,441
Denmark	2,893,106	3,769,471	2,799,400
Finland	2,493,355	3,020,909	2,342,739
Czech Republic	2,736,699	2,842,030	1,985,872
Greece	1,992,675	4,661,230	1,915,300
Portugal	1,760,020	3,109,720	1,619,229
Ireland	1,265,620	3,002,769	1,256,638
Hungary	1,647,708	1,688,188	1,091,237
Slovakia	1,251,159	1,313,363	938,809
Bulgaria	1,081,033	1,589,145	762,073
Slovenia	654,223	972,609	587,912
Lithuania	646,512	1,023,089	520,129
Latvia	500,140	854,305	432,616
Estonia	513,535	630,612	407,601
Luxembourg	190,890	262,530	172,991
Cyprus	164,972	415,679	161,832
Malta	148,059	294,636	148,059
Total	**175,537,194**	**235,817,700**	**148,782,085**

Notes: 'Doubly qualified' means knows some English and uses the internet.
Source: EQLS, 2003

Since people in less densely populated European countries tend to be more eager to learn foreign languages, smaller countries are collectively overrepresented in European public space. This situation is likely to increase as citizens in the 10 NMS countries catch up on their knowledge of English after generations of Russian domination. Moreover, insofar as citizens in smaller countries make a point of understanding the language of their larger neighbours, more so than larger countries do in relation to their smaller neighbours, such efforts can make discourse in smaller countries more effective (Rose, 2005b).

Factors influencing participation 3

The development of the EU and the concept of European citizenship underline the commonalities between people, regardless of the country in which they live. Since every European citizen has the right to vote and is free to discuss public issues, form organisations and travel, in principle every European could participate in many different types of civil society organisations. However, this does not happen in practice. Within every European society, people vary in the extent to which they take advantage of opportunities to participate in civil society. Moreover, there are differences between countries in the average levels of participation.

As each index of participation, described in the previous chapter, combines multiple indicators, they can show the extent to which participation is a matter of degree, for example, between those who are voters and those who also attend public affairs meetings or contact public officials as well as vote. The focus on the degree of participation rejects the polarised description of society as being divided into the 'haves' and 'have nots'; instead, this approach thinks in terms of influences that make people more or less likely to participate in civil society organisations. This is consistent with the European society model. It does not postulate uniformity in the behaviour of 400 million individuals. Instead, it assumes that the chief determinants of differences in individual behaviour are much the same whether one lives in a northern or southern European country, or in eastern or western Europe.

The bottom-up explanation of participation focuses on individuals' resources: people with more education, higher incomes or better health are more likely to participate in all forms of civil society because they have the skills, money and energy to become involved in public affairs. When the perspective is extended across the whole of European society, a top-down approach also becomes relevant. Differences between Europeans can be explained not only in terms of individual characteristics, but also in terms of different contexts, whether that context is defined in terms of urban or rural living or in terms of groups of countries with distinctive histories and institutions. For example, prior to 1989, there were marked contrasts between the civil society institutions of western Europe and those of the former communist states (Rychard, 1998; Howard, 2003). While the emphases on individual and national differences are not mutually exclusive, they differ in the weight they give to alternative explanations of participation in Europe.

Individual differences in all countries

Within a society, the population is differentiated along many lines, some biological (such as age and gender), others sociological or economic (such as education and income). These differences constitute social resources with potential theoretical relevance for the focus on participation in civil society. For example, the tendency for educated people to be more likely to participate in politics is expected to be similar in, say, the UK, Belgium and Bulgaria. Many socio-psychological studies of participation emphasise that individual attitudes and perceptions also modify the influence of biological, sociological and economic characteristics of individuals. More educated women, for instance, may feel more confident about participating in politics; people's age and income may influence their outlook on the importance of politics; those who are distrustful are less likely to participate in informal or voluntary organisations. The following hypotheses examine the range of factors that may influence people's decision to participate, or not to participate, in civil society organisations.

Hypothesis 1: Participation varies according to social resources and individual attitudes

While empirical studies consistently find evidence of the fact that certain social resources and attitudes exert a degree of influence on some forms of participation in civil society, the findings are not uniform (Kaase and Newton, 1995; Verba et al, 1995; Dalton, 2002). The development, for the purposes this study, of four different indices of participation provides robust means of determining under what circumstances and to what extent such social resources and attitudes, for example age, education or gender, influence participation. Many indicators in the EQLS and Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital are identical (for example, age and gender) and many are conceptually equivalent (for example, indicators of education and participation in religious activities). Where measures of potential importance appear in only one survey (for instance, questions about economic destitution[5] or about being discriminated against), they are included in the analysis of that survey.

A comparison of income levels within a particular country involves many difficulties, which are increased exponentially if comparisons are made across dozens of European countries, a majority of which retain distinctive national currencies (Fahey et al, 2005). Focusing on income differentials – that is, a household's income relative to other households in a country – has a strong theoretical justification. Scandinavians in the lower half of the national income distribution may feel relatively deprived by earnings that would put them in the top income quartile in the Baltic countries, while those in a higher income group in a Baltic country may feel better off than below-average northern European wage earners. Hence, the income indicator used in this context is an individual's position in one or other income quartile of their country's national income distribution.

The consequences of a low income are palpable to individuals who are forced to do without basic necessities. The EQLS assessed this aspect of people's lives by asking respondents three questions, namely whether their household lacked the financial means to pay for food, rent or utility bills for electricity or gas in the past 12 months. While the results show that more than two thirds of respondents had no trouble in meeting such needs, they also reveal that 14% of respondents cited difficulties in buying food, while 12% had difficulties paying for electricity and heat and 9% in paying their rent.[6] As long as the safety net of welfare state institutions is in place to prevent this from happening, the lack of necessities can be a temporary phase and households can resiliently bounce back (Rose, 1995a). The struggle to avoid destitution may stimulate political grievances and lead people to participate more in civil society; however, it may also be so debilitating that people could opt out of participation altogether (Schlozman and Verba, 1979).

In order to participate in civil society, an adult does not necessarily need to be an active member of the labour force. For example, students can take part in student and youth organisations and a minority of them may go on to become politically active. Retired people have more time to participate in civil society organisations, although the fact that older people tend to be more vulnerable to ill health may reduce their level of participation. The income maintenance programmes of the welfare state have separated income from employment. Over one quarter of

[5] Note: destitution is not the same as poverty in this context. In the EQLS, destitution is defined by the frequency of going without essentials such as food, rent money and utilities.

[6] The Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital did not collect income or destitution measures; this omission is only relevant if there are strong grounds for arguing that their inclusion would substantially alter the study's interpretation. Since income correlates with education and employment, which were included in the Social Capital survey, its influence could be registered indirectly. For evidence on this point, see Tables 2 and 3 in the Annex.

European adults receive a state pension; income is also provided through unemployment benefits, family allowances and maternity benefits. However, monetary compensation for being outside the labour force cannot substitute for the sociability that participation in the workforce provides and the increased awareness gained of the effect of civil society organisations and of public policies on employment. This implies that people in employment ought to be more likely to participate in civil society organisations.

Among the social indicators, age is the least problematic factor. Developing the habit of voting tends to come with experience; for instance, younger people may not be aware of the importance of registering to vote or, as students, may be living away from their homeplace where they are eligible to vote during an election. Moreover, young people may be more interested in sports or popular culture than in the actions of government. Older people have much greater experience of voting and other activities of civil society. They also have a particular incentive to participate, given their stake in major government programmes such as those relating to pensions or healthcare.

Insofar as political participation requires political knowledge, education ought to encourage participation in civil society. More educated people should be better informed about the problems of government and familiar with the differing views offered in a political discussion. Furthermore, they should be more capable of contributing to the system, whether this involves running voluntary organisations, influencing a discussion at a political meeting or consulting a foreign language website.

Gender differences are readily apparent at the highest levels of political participation. Even though changes are underway, women still remain underrepresented in national government cabinets and in the highest ranks of the EU. It is sometimes argued that women who have a dual role as wage earners and as carers of children or elderly relatives have less time to participate in civil society organisations. This can be tested with data from the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, which asked questions about the caring responsibilities of respondents.

Although lots of European countries have a state church, many citizens are either not active participants of that church, belong to a minority religion, or are secular in their outlook. People who go to church may be more inclined to participate in other civil society organisations that are promoted by the church or that are relevant to their religious commitments. They can meet each other during the week, as well as on Sundays, and may thus be drawn indirectly into other community organisations. Insofar as older people and women may be more likely to attend church, this could increase political participation among such groups, whose members, for other reasons, would otherwise be less likely to be active in such pursuits.

Ethnicity can affect participation directly through the existence of national societies that promote distinctive national traditions and values, for example, folk music rather than contemporary music. In interwar Europe, nationalist movements often invoked ethnicity as a justification for anti-democratic activities against ethnic minorities. These minorities can, in turn, join groups specifically dedicated to looking after their social and cultural interests, which are not catered for by majoritarian institutions of society, providing protection against discrimination. The diversity of ethnic minorities and their small size preclude analysis in this report. However, the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital did collect data about whether people had experienced discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

Theories of social capital emphasise the importance of trust in other people as an influential factor in participation in informal and formal organisations. People who trust others are said to be more likely to join civil society organisations and work collectively for common goals, while those who are distrustful pursue solitary activities and avoid engagement with others (Putnam, 2000). However, such theories have been challenged by the argument that trust is a consequence, not a cause, of participation in positive social activities (Dasgupta, 1988); empirical tests have found little evidence to support the causal importance of trust for participation (Newton, 1999; Uslaner, 2002). In the NMS countries, the experience of communist rule has generated widespread distrust and even 'negative social capital' (Mishler and Rose, 2005).

The concept of 'anomie' describes people who feel helpless when confronted by the challenges of life in contemporary society (Durkheim, 1952). The EQLS measured this feeling by asking people whether or not they felt excluded from society and whether life was so complicated that they found it difficult to cope. Since the two replies were highly correlated, the answers have been combined here to form an 'anomie scale'. Although the results show that more than two thirds of respondents felt completely or reasonably well able to cope with the problems of life, a significant minority of respondents are still lacking in personal confidence. People who lack confidence in their ability to cope with life's problems are less likely to participate in activities in which knowledge and self-confidence are often required.

People's attitudes towards politics are likely to influence their involvement in civil society organisations: the more positive these attitudes are, the more likely it is that people will be involved in organisations relevant to public policy. Insofar as all organisations involve a degree of politics when trying to build group consensus, people who are more positive about politics may be more inclined to become involved in civil society organisations. The Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital asked people how important politics was in their lives: 44% of the respondents indicated that it was very important or fairly important. The latter survey, along with the EQLS, also measured people's satisfaction with public services, of which people tended to be positive in their evaluations.

Hypothesis 2: Participation varies according to local and national contexts

By definition, participation is a social activity and opportunities to take part in such activities differ greatly both within and between countries. For example, people's readiness to go out at night to attend meetings can be affected by how safe they feel in their own neighbourhood. Similarly, their willingness to participate in European public space can be affected by whether they live in an English-speaking country or in a country where the *lingua franca* is a foreign language.

In an analysis of participation in individual countries, the only contextual influences that can be tested are those that vary within that country, for example whether the context is in an urban or rural environment, or a safe or unsafe neighbourhood. Moreover, conclusions from single-country studies cannot be generalised for other countries. Conversely, in surveys that cover over two dozen European countries, the influence of national context must also be taken into account. National differences can be economic (for example, the average GDP per capita) or political (for example, the extent to which the national government administers affairs transparently or otherwise). The more numerous and diverse the countries included in the analysis are – as is the case in Europe today, where countries have diverse institutions, societies and economies – the greater the potential influence the national context will have on participation.

Differences within countries

Crime rates within a country can differ significantly, ranging from high crime and low crime areas in each country. Official crime statistics document this variation, although they are notoriously subject to misreporting. The important focus with respect to political participation is not crime rates as such, but whether people feel safe enough to go out at night to meet people. For example, people who feel unsafe in their own neighbourhood would probably be less likely to participate in activities of civil society, while those who feel secure may be more willing to participate. In the EQLS, respondents were asked to what extent they felt it was safe to walk around their neighbourhood at night; the average respondent indicated that it was 'fairly safe'. However, there still appears to be substantial variations within every European country between people who feel 'very safe' and those who feel 'somewhat safe' or 'very unsafe'. Similar variations are found in the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital.

Given that politics involves the articulation of competing points of view, as well as encouraging a positive sense of harmony among members, civil society organisations may also create tensions between groups – for example between trade unions and employers. In the EQLS, respondents were asked if they had observed tensions between five different groups – rich and poor people, management and workers, men and women, old and young people, and different racial and ethnic groups. The statistical analysis shows that feelings of tension are not generalised, but that there is a strong correlation between the two measures of class tension – rich and poor people, and management and workers. The respondents' replies were combined to create an indicator of class tension. Accordingly, while the average European thinks that there is some degree of tension, but not necessarily a lot, there are differences of opinion within every society. The influence of class tension on participation is ambiguous: those who consider class tension to be high may be mobilised to participate in organisations aimed at advancing class interests; alternatively, they may be put off the idea of participation because they do not like the friction and disagreement inherent in political disputes.

The more densely populated an area is, the greater the number and variety of formal organisations in which an individual can participate. While differences between urban and rural areas are obvious, the direction of influence is problematic. The relative anonymity of big cities gives people the freedom to join organisations that represent unpopular or minority points of view; nonetheless, anonymity can also weaken the social ties that may encourage participation. While residents of rural areas may have fewer organisations at their disposal, they may have more interests in common, whether related to agriculture or rural isolation, or to improved conditions such as a demand for better roads. Furthermore, in a village people are more likely to know their neighbours and to meet them either informally or formally (Shucksmith et al, 2006).

Differences between countries

National histories invoke unique features of a country's national context to explain variations in participation, such as past struggles for independence or institutions formed a century or more ago (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). While the legacy of history is relevant, it is unrealistic to argue that former patterns cannot be altered. The boundaries of European states have changed radically three times in the past century, and two world wars have led to massive shifts in population involving millions of people. The evolution of the EU, in itself, is evidence of how institutions can change: from its original foundations in 1957 when it consisted of six countries, the EU's membership and

powers have expanded significantly to now cover 25 countries. Moreover, most of the 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004 were not independent states two decades ago.

Top-down approaches tend to assume commonalities among individuals within a country. Where the state acts collectively on behalf of the whole population (for example, in the European Council of Ministers), there is a justification for emphasising national uniformity. Theories of political culture similarly assume uniformity among individuals within a country or within a group of countries characterised as a single civilisation (Huntington, 1996; Inglehart, 1997).

At the other extreme, theories of national uniqueness imply that generalisation is impossible, as the determinants of participation will be different in every country. However, in a large grouping of 25 countries, it is hardly realistic to argue that there can be no similarities between at least some countries and that participation in each country is determined by influences unique to that country. Nevertheless, given the differences between European countries, it is also unrealistic to argue that individual participation in civil society is completely unaffected by distinctive national characteristics.

Grouping countries on the basis of one or more shared characteristics resolves the conflict between uniqueness and homogeneity. In the previous century, the 'Iron Curtain' divided Europe into democratic and one-party states; however, the communist regime imposed greater homogeneity in the former East European Bloc than has ever existed among the varied states of what was then known as Western Europe. The Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are socially cohesive, having experienced uninterrupted development of their civil society organisations for generations. Esping-Anderson (1990) has categorised European countries into clusters based on characteristics of their social welfare programmes, while Hall and Soskice (2001) have compiled scholarly studies on varieties of capitalism and differences between 'liberal' and 'social' forms (McMenamin, 2004).

However well defined a cluster of countries is at the core, problems remain in relation to characterising those countries on the margins. A reference to the 'Anglo-Saxon countries' of Europe can mean anything from three English-speaking countries as diverse as the UK, Ireland and Malta to historically Protestant parts of Europe, the latter of which divides Germany. Similarly, it is not helpful to group many different European countries together under the negative heading of 'non-Anglo-Saxon countries'. Thus, even if membership of a particular group can be clearly defined, it does not follow that those excluded from the group of countries share common characteristics. The European Central Bank, for example, groups together a dozen countries sharing a common currency; however, non-members of the Eurozone differ not only in their national currencies, but also in their economic conditions and policies.

To be sufficiently inclusive, characterisations of national context should be meaningful for all European countries. This makes it possible to identify the degree to which countries are similar or different to each other. Intergovernmental organisations, such as the EU or the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), produce a great variety of such standardised quantitative indicators. Moreover, international NGOs, such as Freedom House and Transparency International, produce worldwide characterisations of countries based on their assessments of how democratic or undemocratic the country's political system is or based on perceptions of corruption.

All the literature on comparative politics differentiates countries according to whether they have a parliamentary or presidential system, or a unitary or federal system of government.

If national characteristics are to account for differences between individuals, there must be major differences between the countries. Within Europe today, there is very little difference between countries in the extent to which they are democratic.[7] However, there are large differences in population and, insofar as population size affects participation, then participation in civil society may be higher in countries with only a few million people than in countries with tens of millions of people.

Hypothesis 3: Participation varies according to individual resources and national context (European society model)

Good intellectual and practical arguments can be made for using both the top-down and bottom-up approaches to explain differences in participation among Europeans. The bottom-up approach applies to the whole of Europe the same methods used to explain variations in participation within a country: people who differ in education, income and other individual resources and attitudes are expected to differ in participation regardless of where they live. Surveys provide data about individuals that make it possible to determine to what extent these differences are important, independent of national context.

The top-down approach emphasises differences between countries. This approach is normal in the literature of intergovernmental organisations, such as the EU or the United Nations (UN). Data about individual behaviour is aggregated into statistics showing the percentage of a country's population which has, for example, voted or which uses the internet. League tables are then published, ranking the countries from top to bottom according to the turnout at national elections or the percentage of internet users. These league tables can, in turn, be used to prescribe the best practice policies of international leaders. However, virtually every national statistic produced by aggregating the conditions of individuals implicitly underlines differences between people within the country. For example, if 75% of citizens vote, then 25% do not; and if 10% of people are unemployed, then 90% of the labour force is in employment.

The European society model views top-down and bottom-up approaches as being complementary rather than contradictory. It takes a multi-tiered approach to explaining why some individuals participate in civil society and others do not. At the bottom of this model are the individuals whose differing resources and attitudes may influence participation; at the top are the varying characteristics of countries which are also capable of influencing participation. Paying attention to differences between individuals within a country avoids the ecological fallacy of assuming that everyone in a country thinks the same simply because quantitative data are only available at national level or because a vocal politician or an engaging commentator talks as if this was the case. At the same time, recognising differences between countries avoids the individualist fallacy of assuming that each person can decide whether or how to participate without regard to political and civil society institutions (Robinson, 1950; Scheuch, 1966). This third hypothesis emphasises

[7] Among the countries included in the EQLS, Turkey is unique in that it is described as being 'partly free' (see, for example, www.freedomhouse.org). A separate analysis is required to examine the extent to which political participation in Turkey is influenced by this factor or by characteristics not found elsewhere in Europe, such as its Muslim heritage, or whether participation reflects differences in education, income and other socioeconomic characteristics relevant to all European societies.

how participation is likely to be influenced both by the individual's characteristics and by the characteristics of where they live.

By considering both the influences of individual attributes and the national context, it is possible to answer the following question: To what extent do bottom-up individual resources and top-down national differences influence the participation of Europeans? While recognising that participation in civil society organisations can be influenced in two complementary ways, it is not assumed however that these influences are of equal importance. Nor is it assumed that the influences will be the same for all forms of participation. Since four different forms of participation are examined here, the contingency of the model can show under what circumstances individual resources, as against national contexts, are more important for participation.

Method of analysis

The first aforementioned hypothesis accounts for participation in terms of individual characteristics (for details of each variable, see Tables 1a and 1b in Annex). This approach recognises a multiplicity of potential influences on participation. Simply showing the relation between a single influence and participation is inadequate; for example, describing the relationship between age and political participation does not take education into account, which tends to be higher among younger people. Multivariate statistics are thus needed to test the net impact of a particular characteristic on participation after controlling the effect of other potential influences.

Hypothesis 2 focuses on the effect of the national context on individual participation. The evidence presented in Chapter 2 consistently shows that the level of participation in civil society organisations differs between countries. However, it also shows how it is erroneous to conclude, for example, that all Swedes are active in conventional politics simply because the average level of participation is high, or that all Estonians avoid participation simply because it has one of the highest levels of non-participation. There is a dispersion of participation within each country (see Figures 2, 5, 8, 10 and 12). The coefficient of variation is a standard statistical measure of dispersion: the higher the coefficient, the greater the extent of differences between individuals. Across Europe, the coefficient of variation for participation in informal social relations is 0.52, while in voluntary organisations, it stands at 1.27; in conventional political participation, the coefficient of variation is 0.71, while in European public space, it is 0.85.

Hypothesis 3 emphasises that in order to understand participation in European society, it is necessary to think both in terms of the characteristics of countries, which vary across Europe, and of the substantial dispersion of individuals around national means, which occurs within every country. Multi-level hierarchical (MLH) modelling is the appropriate statistical method to use in this context because it can calculate the influence of national contexts on individual behaviour and the influence of individual differences (for a detailed statistical exposition, see Luke, 2004; Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). As MLH modelling is concerned with the national context as well as with individual characteristics, respondents in each country are weighted equally when analysing participation in informal social networks and in voluntary organisations.

As modernisation theories would predict, many characteristics of European countries are highly correlated with each other. A country that has a high level of GDP per capita is likely to have a

higher level of transparency in public administration than poorer countries, which are more likely to have less transparent systems. The inclusion of several closely correlated measures would create 'multicollinearity'[8], which can distort statistical results. Thus, the indicators of national context used in the subsequent sections are restricted to those that are statistically independent of each other – for example, population size and GDP. Since forms of participation differ, the selection of aggregate indicators varies. For example, living in a country where English is the national language ought to influence participation in European public space, while living in a country where corruption is high may discourage political participation.

Since both the EQLS and the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital collected extensive data about individuals, initially more than 30 different potential influences on participation were analysed for the purposes of this study. Those that consistently showed little or no influence were then discarded in order to focus on variables that have substantial influence on participation or where it is theoretically significant if they have little or no significant influence.

In the analyses outlined in the next section, the results (Figures 14 to 21) show those individual and national characteristics that have the greatest impact on particular forms of participation, net of all other influences. The impact is calculated by multiplying the unstandardised regression coefficient of a significant influence by the difference between the highest and lowest value in the distribution of that measure.[9] The results thus show the maximum impact on participation, for example, if an individual has a university education rather than just a primary education, or if an individual is living in an affluent rather than a poor European country. Since the effect can be positive or negative, some of the results show how the impact can rise up, while others point downwards. Tables 2 to 6 in the Annex of this report provide detailed statistical information for each MLH analysis.

Multivariate statistical analysis not only differentiates between those influences that are largely important for participation, but also provides a summary measure of the extent to which the whole set of influences can explain the variation between individuals in participation. In the analysis of survey data, the amount of variance that can be accounted for is limited by idiosyncratic influences on individuals, which no survey can expect to identify; it is also limited by the omission from the survey of questions relevant to participation, and by the relatively random element of measurement error in surveys. In MLH regression analysis, the statistic for variance explained is described by reference to the Ordinary Least Squares regression $R2^2$ statistic as Pseudo R^2. This measure of variance explained can range between 0.0% and an unattainable 100%. For technical reasons, the amount of variance explained in the analysis of survey data is normally much lower than that for aggregate census or economic data.

Policy implications depend not only on what statistical analysis shows to be significant, but also on the extent to which governments can adopt measures to influence social behaviour by developing or implementing policies. Insofar as individual participation is influenced by the design of political institutions (Macedo et al, 2005), governments may redesign institutions in order to encourage greater participation. For example, participation in the UK would probably increase if the parliament changed election day from a working day to the weekend, when people have more

[8] A statistical term indicating a case of multiple regression in which the predictor variables are themselves highly correlated.
[9] The relevant statistics used to calculate the impact can be found in Tables 1–6 of the Annex.

time to vote; voluntary organisations could also be encouraged to meet if local authorities provided convenient meeting places rent free. Moreover, participation could be encouraged as an offshoot of other policies. For example, assuming that education influences participation, government policies promoting education in an attempt to boost economic growth could also increase participation. However, there are other factors affecting participation, which the government may find more difficult to influence, such as the effects of old age. Moreover, insofar as civil society organisations are meant to be independent of government, this implies that governments should allow citizens the opportunity to form and participate in organisations that are not dependent on public policies.

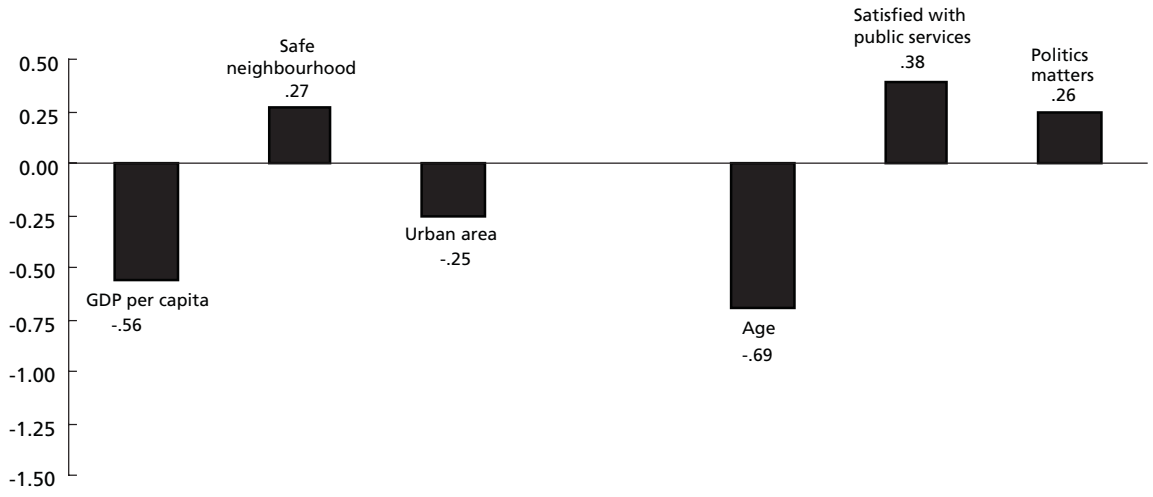
Influences on informal social networks

Informal relations are a basic part of social integration: to lack contact with friends, neighbours or work colleagues means being excluded from participation in everyday life. Evidence from the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital shows that only 7% of Europeans are completely excluded from social relations. However, it also shows substantial variations in the extent to which people mix socially with others (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Significant influences

Altogether, a combination of 15 different contextual and individual characteristics helps to explain 8.1% of the variance in participation in informal social relations. This figure is low in comparison with that of participation in voluntary organisations (see Figures 14 and 15). Moreover, the extent to which six major influences raise or lower informal social relations is also limited. Being old, for example, reduces informal relations by less than seven tenths of a point; living in a safe neighbourhood rather than an area with a high level of crime increases informal relations by only one quarter of a point.

Figure 14 Major influences on informal social relations (MLH model)



Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, 2004

The tendency of older people to engage less frequently in social activities is not a side-effect of retirement or the generally lower levels of education than younger people, as the effect is calculated

after the MLH analysis controls for all other influences. The MLH analysis also shows that young people are likely to have more frequent informal social relations. Young students, in particular, will have many opportunities to meet their friends informally since they tend to be free of family obligations and can meet friends each day at college or after work.

A country's GDP per capita also has a significant influence on participation, albeit largely a negative one. The more affluent a country is, the less frequently people engage in informal social relations. This may reflect a tendency for more prosperous societies to have better opportunities to participate in formal organisations and for people with higher average incomes to spend more money on leisure activities. In contrast, people in less prosperous countries may be more involved in informal social networks because they have less income to spend on participation in formal organisations.

European countries differ radically in terms of the size of their population. The population of Germany, for example, has over 200 times more people than Luxembourg. Differences in national population size don't appear to have any significant influence on informal social relations. However, within each country, size of population in the areas in which people live does have an impact on the frequency with which individuals meet others informally. People living in cities take part in informal social relations less frequently than residents living in rural areas; the latter are more likely to know the local people and may have fewer ways of spending their leisure time than their urban counterparts. Similarly, people who live in safe neighbourhoods are more likely to have informal social relations with friends, neighbours or colleagues after work.

Class-oriented theories of social relations predict that people who work together will also convene for leisure activities, thus creating a 'solidaristic' working class. However, this does not appear to be the case in practice. For instance, there is no significant relationship between being a manual worker and the frequency of informal social relations, nor is there any significant relationship between being employed and engaging more frequently in informal social relations. In contemporary European societies, having positive relations with others at work represents a segmented portion of everyday life; contacts with work colleagues tend to be confined to the workplace and have a limited spill-over into leisure time activities. Moreover, people outside of the labour force do not have a lower level of participation in informal social networks.

Although the statistical analysis finds that people who are more trusting of others are more inclined to engage in informal social activities, the impact is only slight at less than one sixth of a point on a six-point scale. Similarly, people who belong to religious organisations have more social contacts, but the impact is also limited. Women participate somewhat less often in informal social activities, unless they are carers, in which case their sociability increases slightly. The analysis also finds that people who report being discriminated against are not ostracised from society or without normal social supports: there is no significant difference between the informal relations of those who have been discriminated against and those who have not.

Policy implications

The extent to which most people in Europe are involved in informal social relations challenges forecasts of political or social disintegration arising from changes in European society over recent decades. While informal social activities are somewhat less important in more 'modern' sectors of

society – such as large cities in more prosperous countries –participation in such activities has only been reduced by less than three quarters of a point on a six-point scale. The findings also challenge concerns that the average level of involvement is not higher; to have the maximum score of five on the index of informal social relations (see Figure 2), people would have to have an extremely active social life, engaging several times a week in meetings with friends, neighbours or work colleagues.

Unlike voluntary organisations, which can be formed to advance political objectives, informal social networks are almost invariably formed without political goals in mind. Nonetheless, the MLH model finds a significant positive correlation between political attitudes and involvement in informal activities. People who are more frequently involved in informal meetings are more likely to be satisfied with public services and also to consider politics as being important. Insofar as there are discussions about the quality of public services among friends, neighbours or colleagues from work, the tone of the conversation is more likely to be positive than negative.

In a democratic society, there are limits to the extent to which governments can devise policies explicitly encouraging people to spend more time with friends, talk to their neighbours, or meet their colleagues more frequently after work. However, the analysis does identify government actions that could indirectly contribute to increased informal social relations.

Keeping neighbourhoods safe from crime is a key responsibility of governments. Increasing the sense of neighbourhood security can thus achieve two important aims: maintaining public order and, as a consequence, enabling people to go out to meet others more often. However, this objective is not easily achieved. For example, people may feel that their neighbourhood is under threat if they see more police patrolling the streets and more security devices installed. More informal meetings between young people on the streets may be regarded by the police as an indication of gang activity and may thus have the opposite effect of reducing contacts.

The low incidence of informal ties between neighbours is not necessarily evidence of a weak sense of community. Communities can be organised around common interests other than a common street address or postal code. The Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital shows that people frequently meet friends who do not live nearby (see Table 1). From the bottom-up perspective of the individual, it makes sense to make the effort to travel to meet preferred acquaintances, even if they do not live in the same ward or local authority area. The relatively weak ties between neighbours are nevertheless an obstacle to creating general-purpose community associations, whose membership reflects the neighbourhood in which people live; many people appear to have few interests in common with their neighbours, beyond the inadvertent fact that they share a common postal code. Given that employment patterns today encourage people to move between cities, or at least to move house within metropolitan areas, people's identification with any place will tend to be unplanned. Community organisations may spring up on an impromptu basis when a problem arises which requires collective action (for example, a proposal to build a road through a residential area or to close a local school). However, once the issue has been resolved, such single-purpose organisations tend to disband, although it is possible that they may also foster ties that lead to subsequent organised activity (Sampson et al, 2005).

While governments cannot prevent ageing, they can adopt policies that increase the social contacts of older people. The Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital indicates that the great majority of

older people are not interested in participating in voluntary organisations that are specifically dedicated to their interests or leisure pursuits (see Figure 3). While the home delivery 'meals-on-wheels' service or periodic visits from a home help, social worker or nurse are not so informal as a visit from friends, they can nevertheless help to prevent social exclusion. Based on the assumption that older people lack contacts because their friends as well as their offspring have moved away, the government could make special provisions for mobile phone facilities to be provided to elderly people (also as a useful health precaution) and for the provision of cheap internet access. For example, instead of, or in addition to, the UK's policy of funding 'passive communication' by providing free television licences to elderly people, the government could give free broadband access so that older people could communicate with children and grandchildren living far away.

Influences on voluntary organisations

The substantial differences between countries regarding the average level of membership in voluntary organisations is mirrored by the considerable differences within each country between members ('joiners'), people with specialist interests and non-members. Joiners are members of two or more voluntary organisations and they constitute 20% of European society (see Figure 4). People who belong to a single organisation have a special interest in a particular field – such as sports, music or the environment – and cannot be characterised by the wider term of 'joiners'. Their membership reflects a particular interest rather than a generalised predisposition to participate in collective activities; 25% of Europeans belong to just one organisation.

Europeans who do not belong to any of 14 different types of voluntary organisations cited in Chapter 2 are clearly not joiners (see Figure 3). Whether they can be described as being uninterested in civil society organisations is less clear cut. For example, the percentage of people who state their views on environmental issues when interviewed in a public opinion poll is far greater than the percentage of people who actually belong to an organisation promoting environmental causes. In as much as non-members differ in their views (for example, half favouring economic development before environmental protection), then non-members will be unrepresented or misrepresented.

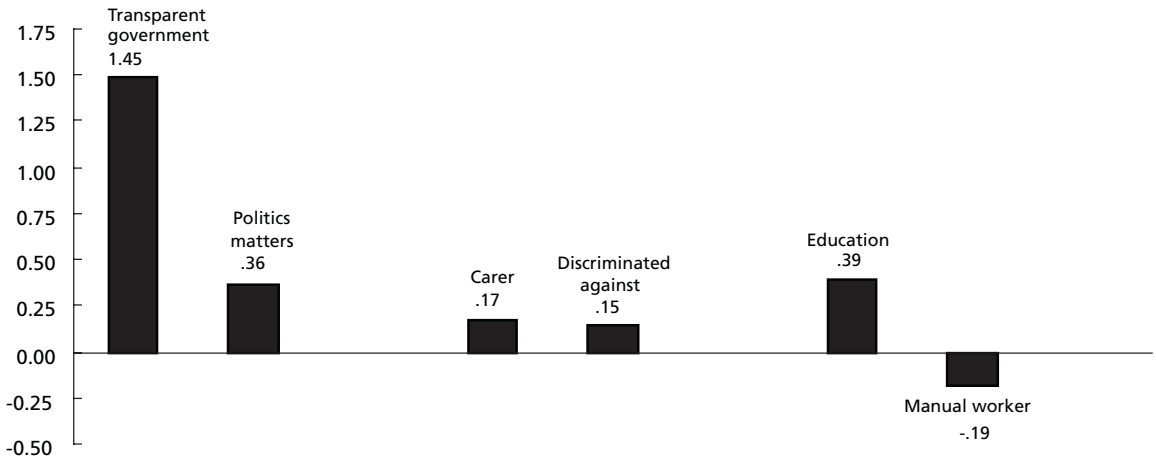
Significant influences

The MLH analysis shows that differences between joiners, specialist members and non-members are strongly influenced by a small number of diverse contextual and individual differences. Altogether, the statistical analysis accounts for 30.4% of the variance in participation in voluntary organisations (Figure 15).

The greatest influence on participation is clearly the extent to which the national government is perceived as being transparent and honest or as being corrupt. The influence of transparency in public affairs works both ways. In countries with a high degree of transparency, participation is boosted above the European society norm. However, in countries where there is a widespread perception of corruption, people are discouraged from participating in public affairs. Net of the impact of individual differences, high degrees of transparency can raise the level of participation in voluntary organisations by 1.45 points on a four-point index. The impact of transparency is more than nine times greater than the impact of trust in other people, which is only marginally significant. This implies that the transparency of national government is a function of

organisational integrity rather than as Putnam (2000) hypothesises – the trustworthiness of people you know and failing to take into account the fact that neighbours and governments vary in their trustworthiness (see Table 3 in Annex).

Figure 15 Major influences on voluntary participation (MLH model)



Note: Variance accounted for (Pseudo R^2): 30.4%
Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, 2004

The perception of voluntary organisations as being concerned with public policy – a major feature of civil society – is supported by the analysis: a belief that politics matters is significantly likely to increase an individual's likelihood of becoming a 'joiner' or a member of a specialist organisation. However, the decision to join an organisation is not motivated by dissatisfaction with public services or a readiness to protest against government: there is no significant association between being satisfied or dissatisfied with public services and belonging to a voluntary organisation.

Although the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital did not identify respondents in terms of their social class, it did collect data on education and employment, which tend to correlate with measures of social class. The evidence indicates that there is a degree of social bias in membership of organisations: university graduates are more likely to belong to a voluntary organisation than people with only a primary school education are, and the influence of education is not a function of age, which only has a minor impact. Moreover, after controlling for education, manual workers are less likely to become members of voluntary organisations. However, the impact of manual work is more substantial than that of being outside of the labour force. The combined impact of being a university graduate and in a non-manual job raises the index of participation in voluntary organisations by 0.57 of a point on a four-point scale when compared with poorly educated manual workers.

The specialist nature of voluntary organisations is reflected by the fact that two groups with distinctive needs – carers and those who feel they have been discriminated against – are more likely to belong to voluntary organisations. Carers can look to voluntary organisations for emotional support, having their needs met by the exchange of information and through assistance within the group – benefits that are immediately tangible. People who feel that they have been victims of discrimination are not excluded from society; in fact, they are more likely to belong to voluntary

organisations whose members share common characteristics, for example an immigrant status or a minority religion. These organisations can lobby government for fairer treatment of the group of people in question.

Governments are responsible for keeping the streets safe and for conducting their public affairs honestly and transparently. While transparency has a large impact on participation, there is no significant link between sense of safety and membership in voluntary organisations. This finding implies that people are more likely to be put off joining an organisation if they suspect corrupt administration than by the potential risk of becoming victims of crime on their way to a meeting.

Policy implications

From the top-down perspective of policymakers in a democratic political system, voluntary organisations are legitimate advocates of particular causes. Their central status as civil society institutions is often reflected by the fact that they may be consulted by government in relation to statutory rights. In as much as they are formal organisations staffed by bureaucrats and advancing their aims in an open manner, voluntary organisations complement the government's need to be seen as transparent when negotiating public policies. It is precisely because informal social networks are personal, that any influence that friends, relatives, work colleagues or neighbours might exercise on policymakers could be condemned as evidence of nepotism or corruption.

In cases where the government itself is less than transparent, people are less likely to want to participate in voluntary organisations. While this is understandable, it is not something that would be welcomed by the national chapters of Transparency International – a voluntary organisation campaigning for greater honesty and transparency in government. The MLH analysis suggests that while educated people, who may be better disposed to understanding the importance of transparency, are more likely to join voluntary organisations, they will also be discouraged from doing so if they perceive the system as being corrupt.

The fact that members of organisations are likely to be more educated and to regard politics as being important should offer a degree of reassurance to policymakers, who may perceive participation in terms of the mobilisation of protest groups voicing contradictory or impossible demands. The specialised information of civil society organisations, along with a realistic awareness of what the government can do, makes such organisations well qualified to participate in the give-and-take negotiations inherent in policymaking within a democracy.

The media's characterisation of pressure groups promoting their own specific interests conveys an impression of organisations that are acting against the common interest. However, in a complex modern society, most organisations are likely to represent particular interests and matters of common interest may be relatively scarce. The evidence that carers and people who are discriminated against are more active in voluntary groups is a reminder that specialised interests may take many forms, including those that often attract the sympathy of the general public.

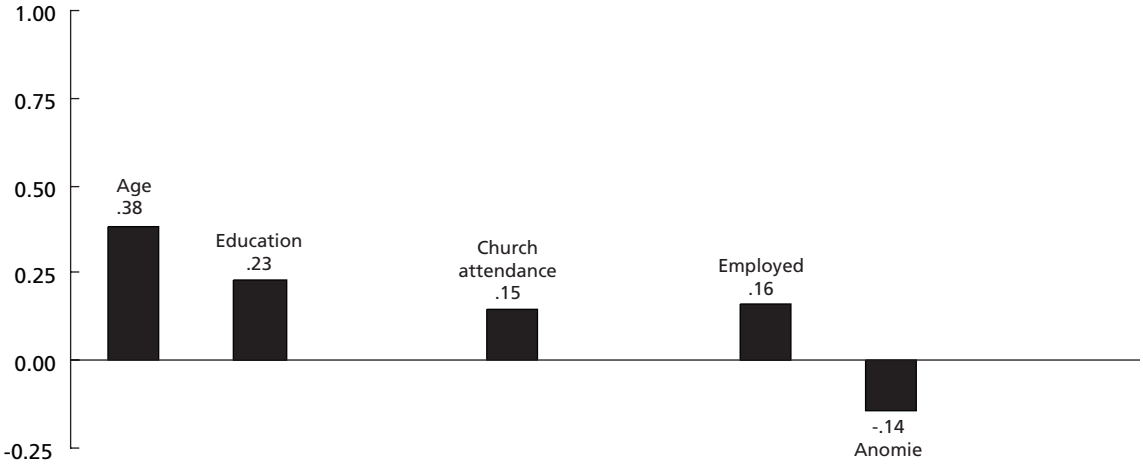
While specialist groups may represent relatively small minorities of individuals, such as blind people, the MLH analysis also points to larger minorities who are likely to be underrepresented in the political process because they do not belong to a voluntary organisation. One example is less educated manual workers. As a result of changes in the social and economic structure, this group

of workers is no longer seen as the equivalent of 'the working class'. In European countries today, people who are unambiguously manual workers are in a minority, while the average employee generally falls into the intermediate category, working in occupations that require more than the minimal education of an unskilled manual worker (for example, as a data technician or a salesperson). While labour and socialist political parties have historically represented low-paid, unskilled workers, changes in society have increased the electoral incentive to target more educated and middle-class voters.

Influences on conventional political participation

A majority of Europeans appear to behave in the same way in relation to each of the three factors included in the index of conventional political participation – namely, voting, attending meetings and contacting public officials (see Figure 6). Although a large majority of people (79%) vote in elections, an even larger majority never attend meetings of civil society organisations nor contact a public or elected official about a particular issue. Given the limited level of variation, except among minority groups, it is not surprising that the MLH model accounted for just 8.8% of the variation (see Table 2 in Annex).

Figure 16 Major influences on political participation (MLH model)



Note: Variance accounted for (Pseudo R^2): 9.1%
Source: EQLS, 2003

Significant influences

Age and education have the greatest effects in determining the extent of participation in conventional political activities (Figure 16). The older people are, the more likely it is that they will participate in such activities; similarly, the more educated people are, the more likely it is they will vote, attend meetings or contact officials. To a large extent, these influences compensate each other. While older people tend to have substantially lower education levels than younger people, the habits and experience gained through experience means that 87% of those aged 60 years or over report voting, whereas just 67% of those aged 30 years or under indicate that they vote. However, younger people are more likely to be educated and there is a greater likelihood that more educated people will vote. Some 75% of those aged 30 years or under with a university education report voting, compared with 60% of those with only a secondary education. Similarly, 92% of

those aged 60 years or over who have a university education take part in voting, compared with 89% of those who only have a secondary education.

The labour force is a central institution of society. Going to work occurs with far greater frequency than voting or attending a political meeting. At work, people see the effects of government policies on the economy. As a result, those who work are significantly more likely to participate in conventional political affairs than those who are not working. People who are not employed – that is, those who are economically inactive because they are outside of the labour force – are much more numerous and heterogeneous than the limited minority of adults who are classified as being 'unemployed'. The 'economically inactive' category is dominated by retired people, women in unpaid work at home and students. Since the majority of the labour force is middle-aged, this is a compensating advantage in relation to active participation, offsetting the lower participation potential of, for example, people who lack the time of retired seniors or who are less educated than their younger counterparts.

The importance of the social dimension of work is underlined by the fact that being employed has a greater effect on political participation than being in the top income quartile of a country. It also has a greater positive effect than being a manual worker. Moreover, the lack of social contacts from work has a greater negative effect ('anomie') on participation than being on the verge of destitution, which has very little effect (see Figure 16 and Table 4 in Annex).

Attending religious ceremonies and institutions is another form of engagement that also has a positive effect on conventional political participation. Very often, such attendance can positively influence participation to the same extent that going to work can. Given the variety of religions practised in Europe, the impact of attendance cannot be attributed to the teaching of any particular religion. Other things being equal, the participation of a retired person who attends a religious ceremony or institution can be the same as a secular person earning a good income from work.

While there is a statistically significant association between trust and participation, the interpretation is ambiguous, as it is consistent with the theory that trust in other people is a consequence of positive experiences in social engagement. Since the effect is only slight (see Table 2 in Annex), the choice between interpretations has no substantial relevance for the understanding of conventional political participation.

Theories of 'small is beautiful' imply that participation should be higher in rural areas, where people are more likely to know each other, than in large impersonal cities, where a single individual voice or vote is numerically trivial. While the MLH analysis finds that living in a city does reduce political participation, the effect is only very small, lowering the index of participation by just four hundredths of a point. Although there are substantial variations in population size between European countries, there is no significant relationship between the participation index and living in a country with a relatively small population or living in a country with a large population.

The difference between men's and women's participation in politics contrasts greatly in relation to participation at the elite and at mass level. Women make up the majority of the population in every European society, yet they represent a minority in every national parliament in Europe. The extent of that minority differs substantially between countries. However, at mass level, there is no significant relationship between gender and conventional political participation (see Table 2 in

Annex). Moreover, the effect of living in a relatively honest or corrupt political system has an equal influence on the participation of both men and women.

Policy implications

While citizens who are more than just voters represent a minority in Europe, so too are those who do not take part in any form of conventional political participation. In as much as participation is influenced by social differences, these differences tend to have compensatory effects. For example, any tendency among women to have lower participation levels because of being non-waged home workers is offset by the higher proportion of older women and women attending religious ceremonies. Few people possess all of the combined attributes necessary to increase their participation levels to the extreme ends of the conventional participation index.

Public policies already in place have indirectly encouraged conventional political participation. For example, education levels among younger and middle-aged citizens are higher than those among older people because governments have gradually made advanced secondary and university education more readily available. In the absence of these two major waves of educational expansion in the past fifty years, conventional political participation would be significantly lower. The provision of national health services has not only helped older people live longer, but also enabled them to become more active. Old age is positively associated with participation and, after controlling for other social attributes, poor health does not significantly reduce participation (see Table 4 in Annex).

Evidence from the EQLS implies that the long-term structural shift from women working at home to paid employment has contributed to reducing the influence of gender on conventional political participation. Rising levels of education among women and changes in gender relations have also encouraged participation in civil society.

The contraction of family size in the past generation, along with greater longevity, may reduce the proportion of the total electorate in employment. While a reduction in the number of people in employment will have a negative impact on conventional political participation, the increase in the proportion of retired people with higher education levels may have a positive effect on civil society participation. Thus, retired people with another two decades of good health ahead of them are likely to become relatively more important in this context.

Two particular influences on political participation are less likely to be subject to government influence – church attendance and income distribution. Even though many European governments recognise the presence of a state church, they leave it up to the individual to decide whether or not to attend church, while church officials are left to cope with falling or already low levels of attendance. Meanwhile, the effect of income on political participation arises from relative income differences within a society. While there are many ways in which a government can affect income distribution, half of the population will always be in the top two income quartiles while the other half will always be in the bottom two income quartiles. Reducing the differences between income quartiles is likely to have little direct effect on political participation; similarly, increasing mobility between income quartiles will have no direct effect, insofar as those who are upwardly mobile will make others downwardly mobile.

Influences on potential participation in European public space

Meeting the requirements for participation in European public space – namely through internet usage and some knowledge of English as the common language used – necessitates both individual and institutional resources. An individual must have the ability and available income to use the internet. At the same time, knowledge of English is influenced by government policy in relation to language teaching. Europeans educated in countries where the teaching of foreign languages is common, with English being the language of utmost priority, have a greater advantage over those educated in eastern European schools, where Russian was the foreign language most commonly taught.

The EQLS showed a high level of internet usage among Europeans in 2003: at that time, about 40% of those aged 18 years or over were internet users (see Figure 9). This proportion is likely to have grown considerably since then, as more adults go online and as internet-oriented teenagers become adults. The survey also showed a widespread knowledge of English: 52% of European adults claimed to know at least some English (see Figure 13). Since internet usage and knowledge of English are highly correlated (0.50), as of 2003 there were effectively three groups: those who used the internet and who had some knowledge of English (33%); those who either knew English or who used the internet, but not both (25%); and those without either of these skills (42%).

Significant influences

Insofar as individual resources are relevant, then participation in European public space should reflect how well individuals are educated. However, in as much as institutional resources are of relevance, then participation will be more influenced by whether a person is, for example, English or Italian. The MLH analysis accounts for 51.3% of the variance between those who are more or less likely to participate in European public space. Both institutional context and individual resources have a major impact, albeit more so in relation to the latter (see Table 5 in Annex).[10]

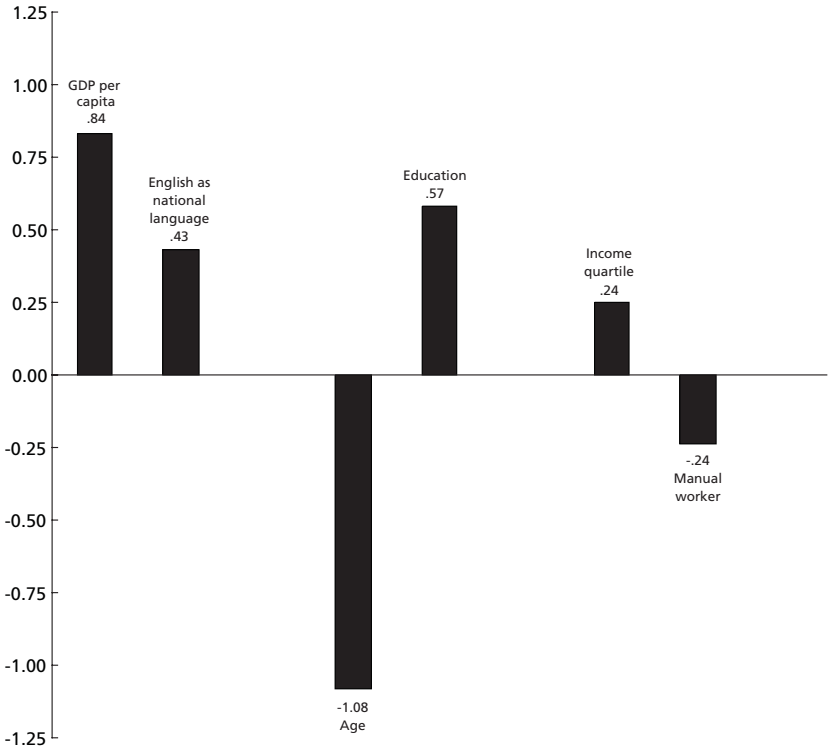
Age has a particularly strong impact on participation in European public space (Figure 17). In fact, its effect is three times greater than its impact on conventional political participation. Older Europeans were raised long before the internet was invented and when knowledge of English was less widespread. Today, more than half of European adults have been educated in schools where English is usually the first foreign language of preference. Moreover, most young people know how to use the internet by the time they leave school. Therefore, they have the opportunity to use foreign language, as well as domestic, websites. Younger Europeans are thus much more likely to be able to communicate in European public space than older Europeans, who are somewhat more likely to engage in conventional political participation.

Education also has a positive impact on participation in European public space, specifically by almost three fifths of a point, net of the effect of age and other influences. It can compensate for the recent development of the internet, since many middle-aged and some older Europeans have learned English at school in the days before computers were used in classrooms. For the youngest generation, compulsory education almost invariably provides the opportunity to access the

[10] *Note:* When the MLH statistical analysis is run separately, with either internet use or knowledge of English as the dependent variable, the results confirm what is reported here: namely, the dominance of age, education and national GDP per capita. When the analysis is run omitting those with English as their national language (the UK, Ireland and Malta), the results also confirm these findings.

internet. Even if young people are not good students, they will have school friends who can show them how to use the internet to search for downloadable pop music and other materials of interest, communicated in a *lingua franca*.

Figure 17 Major influences on potential participation in European public space (MLH model)



Note: Variance accounted for (Pseudo R^2): 51.3%
Source: EQLS, 2003

In theory, trust in other people ought to have a strong influence on internet usage, since it involves communicating with people whom the other person cannot see and with even more remote websites. Communicating in a foreign language demonstrates that the radius of trust goes beyond the population among which a national identity is shared. However, trust in other people only has a secondary effect on participation in European public space, increasing it by one eighth of a point.

A country's GDP has the greatest impact on participation in European public space from a national perspective. After controlling for all individual resources, the participation potential of people living in the most prosperous European countries is increased by four fifths of a point.[11] The impact of a high national standard of living is consistent with research on internet distribution globally (Rose, 2005a). The MLH analysis also confirms the importance of 'national income', as opposed to 'household income'. While being in the top income quartile of a country boosts participation by

[11] Since there is a very high correlation between the Transparency International (TI) 'Perception of corruption index' and GDP per capita, the TI index would produce a similarly substantial statistical influence on participation in European public space. However, the association would be theoretically spurious, as internet distribution within a country is far more attributed to economic factors, such as investment in telecommunications and discretionary income.

one quarter of a point, this is less than one third of the increase attributed to living in a high-income country. The same is true in relation to manual workers. Destitution has very little independent effect on participation, while being employed has no statistically significant impact. The effect of the national context is so great that, net of all other influences, low-income manual workers in high-income countries have a greater potential of participating in European public space than high-income non-manual workers in low-income countries do (see Table 3 in Annex).

Although learning a language is an individual activity, the likelihood of learning English reflects the national context. While growing up in an English-speaking country gives a child a head-start in learning English, this advantage does not necessarily create a language divide. Schools in every European country now teach English as a foreign language. In smaller countries, the importance of having a foreign language for work, as well as for pleasure, encourages high levels of attainment.[12] Thus, seven eighths of the population in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands have sufficient knowledge of English to read a newspaper or to browse an English-language website. Across Europe as a whole, more than half of the adult population report having some knowledge of English.

Despite the advantage that native English-speakers have (in the UK, Ireland and Malta), the two fifths of a point increase in participation which this advantage affords people is substantially less than the impact of youth, education or national prosperity (see Figure 17). Moreover, the advantage gained by growing up in an English-speaking country is lost if a person does not have internet access. For example, the UK ranks sixth among the EU countries in terms of the percentage of internet users (53%) – some 15 percentage points below that of Sweden (see Figure 10). As a result, the percentage of people qualified to participate in European public space is actually higher in Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Luxembourg than in the UK (see Table 2).

Policy implications

There is a consensus among European governments about the need to actively promote the use of the internet. An increase in internet usage is also being propelled by developments in the market and in technology. Since the EQLS was conducted in 2003, internet usage has grown and has tended to expand at a faster rate in countries that are below the European average; as such countries seek to 'catch up' for economic and efficiency reasons, a greater number of individuals are gradually increasing the number of ways in which the internet can prove useful.

Since the Treaty of Rome was first signed by six national governments in 1957, transnational contacts have increased enormously. At home, in the workplace and on holidays, millions of Europeans have had their life space expanded from local or national contexts to a transnational one. The introduction of the jet plane has made holiday and business travel relatively easy across national boundaries. Television has increased people's familiarity with and knowledge of foreign cities, while foreigners have become household names due to their achievements, for example in the world of sport. The diffusion of telecommunications technologies and the decline in postal services have increased the importance of telephone and internet communication. Meanwhile, the

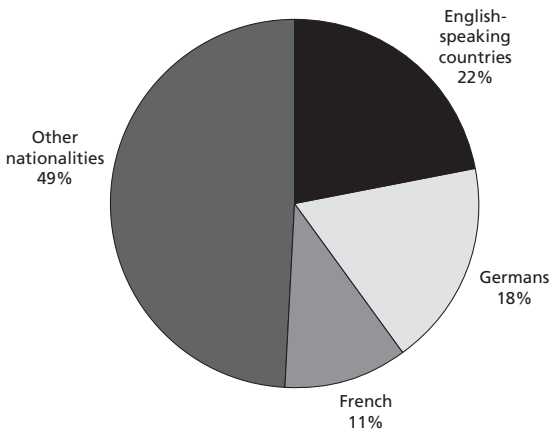
[12] Population size does not have a significant influence on participation in European public space today, as the behaviour of people from small Nordic countries is counterbalanced by the legacy of disadvantages from the communist era in eastern Europe.

fall of the Berlin Wall has led to the 'return' to Europe of more than 100 million people whose lands had long been an integral part of Europe. In the Single European Market, most European stores will be selling goods produced in a wide range of countries, while those in the Eurozone now pay for goods and services using a common European currency.

Communicating across national boundaries requires the use of a common language. On the grounds of efficiency, the case for having a single language increases with the number of languages in use in the marketplace; this is particularly relevant in a continent with two dozen national languages, compared with, for instance, two national languages for the whole of Latin America. International diplomacy has always required a *lingua franca* and it has tended to reflect political power (Crystal, 1997). In the Middle Ages, Latin was the common language, then French, while in the post-1945 communist bloc, it was Russian. In the past half-century, English has become the common language of European public space.

The websites of European governments demonstrate the growth of English as the *lingua franca*. Every government's website contains copious information written in its own national language or languages. However, because a national language will be spoken by only a limited minority of Europeans, websites usually also provide a translated version, especially in internationalised fields such as trade, science and technology. In this respect, English is invariably used for this purpose, although French or German is sometimes also used.

Figure 18 National distribution of English speakers, %



Source: EQLS, 2003

The adoption of English as a common language by dozens of European countries disperses power, rather than giving the UK the advantage of 'soft power' (Nye, 2004).[13] The fact that three quarters of people in European public space know English as a foreign language is a reflection of how native English speakers are very much in the minority (Figure 18). The pervasiveness of the English language means that governments of EU countries can efficiently negotiate policies in their national interest through English.

[13] A knowledge of English and access to the internet also empowers Europeans to participate in an international, as well as European, public space. See Rose (2005b) for a discussion on the involvement of the US in the international public space.

In a sense, the EU's policy of treating the national languages of all 25 Member States as official languages presents an obstacle to the development of a European public space. This policy reflects the origins of the EU as a community of six countries with four official languages in 1957. However, the expansion of EU membership to include dozens of diverse languages has resulted in many different language translations being required. In practice, EU business tends to be conducted on a bilingual basis in English and French. However, together they represent the national languages of less than one third of the EU population.

A policy of EU bilingualism would require the majority of Europeans to become trilingual if they wanted to participate in European public discourse. From an economic perspective, this is inefficient since the cost of a single foreign language as a *lingua franca* is much less than that of two languages. From a sociological perspective, trilingualism poses the risk of a very substantial increase in linguistic social exclusion. Whereas half of the adults in Europe have some knowledge of English, only a limited proportion of adults are fluent in both French and English.

Replacing the so-called 'democratic deficit' of the EU by electing a European Parliament with a common ballot and choice of parties would require a campaign delivering the same messages to the European electorate as a whole. The normal means of doing so today is through television transmission. However, if this was attempted under existing EU rules, instead of a campaign in the most widely shared language, namely English, it would require simultaneous translation or subtitles, which would emphasise social and linguistic differences. Similarly, a popular election of a President of Europe, in which European-wide television programmes featured candidates appealing to the electorate, would require very complicated provisions for simultaneous translation and/or subtitles.

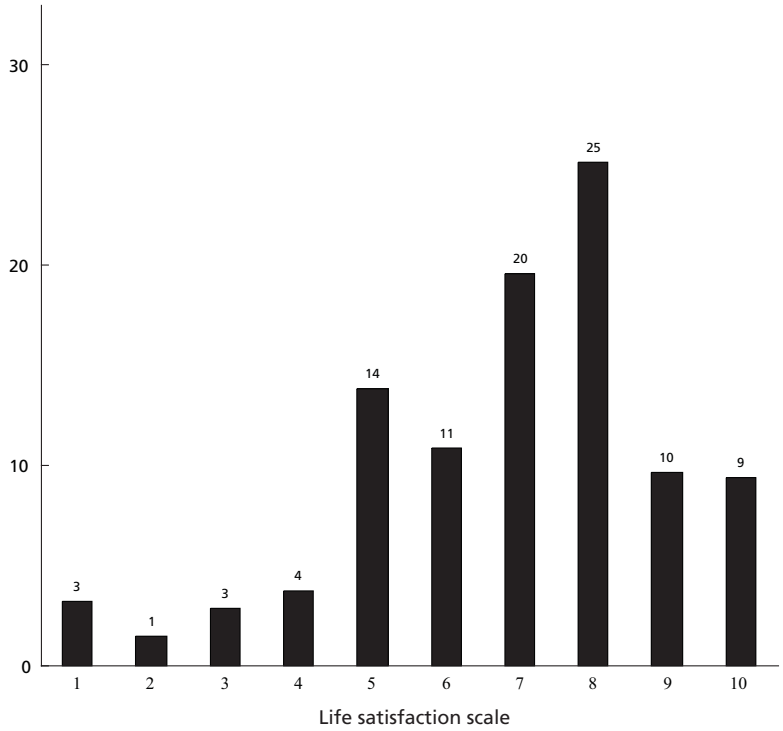
Impact on individual life satisfaction 4

Life satisfaction and participation

From the bottom-up perspective of ordinary individuals, participation in civil society is not so much an end in itself as it is a means of achieving life satisfaction. For example, meeting friends is not considered the motivation for forming a political action group (as social capital theory predicts may happen), but is rather intended as a means of enhancing life satisfaction. Similarly, people use the internet to communicate with friends and family, for entertainment, and as a source of information, rather than to influence EU politics. Voting, however, is the one form of participation that can be considered a civic end in itself. The uncertainty of the link between participation and life satisfaction raises the question: to what extent does participation enhance life satisfaction?

The EQLS featured questions about respondents' satisfaction with many different aspects of life, some of which concern everyone, such as health, and some of which concern sub-groups, such as parents of school-age children or people in employment (Böhnke, 2005). The general question about current satisfaction with life (Q.31 in the EQLS) is sufficient for this analysis, because it correlates very highly with the extent to which people are satisfied with the different domains of life.[14]

Figure 19 Life satisfaction among Europeans (%)



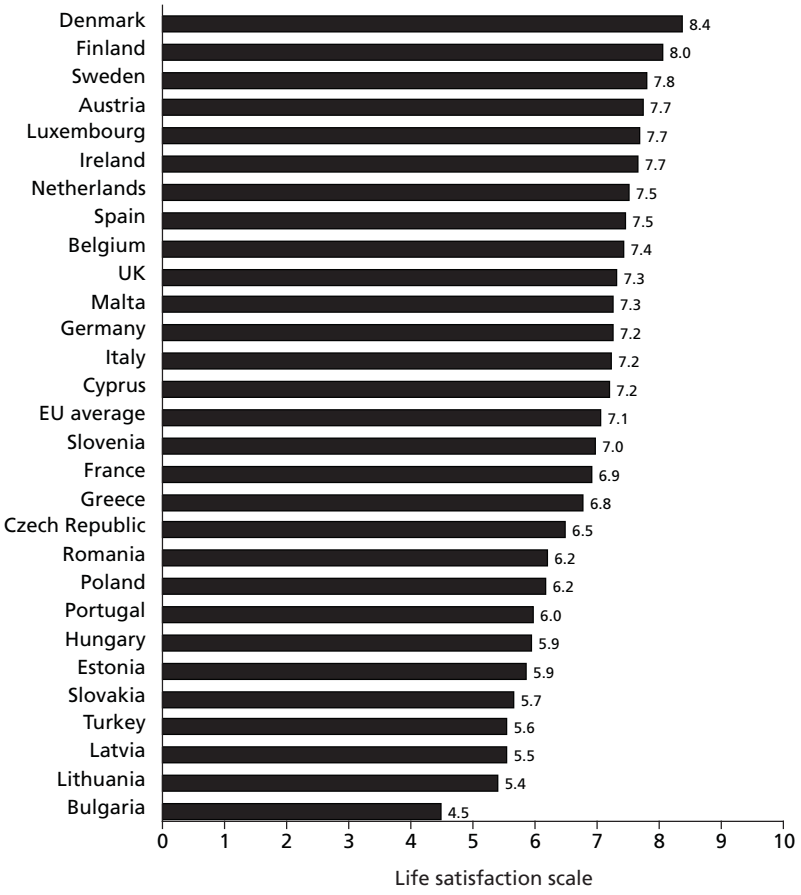
Note: Q.31 – All things considered, how satisfied would you say you are with your life these days? Answers are rated on a 10-point scale, where one means 'very dissatisfied' and 10 means 'very satisfied'.
Source: EQLS, 2003

[14] A statistical analysis combining EQLS Q. 31 (general life satisfaction) and Q. 41a-g (satisfaction with individual aspects of life) found that replies to all eight questions reflected a single underlying principal component that accounted for 46.3% of the variance and that had a value of 3.71 on an eight-point scale. The loadings were: general life satisfaction 0.76; standard of living 0.83; social life 0.75; accommodation 0.71; family life 0.68; health 0.62; education 0.55; present job 0.47. The less high loadings for education and job reflect the fact that many respondents do not have children in school and many are outside the labour market because of youth or retirement.

Life satisfaction is high among Europeans. On a 10-point scale, where one means 'very dissatisfied' and 10 means 'very satisfied', the EU average is 7.1. The chief difference is the degree to which people are satisfied with their lives. About one fifth (19%) rate their satisfaction in the top two categories, while the average respondent scores a satisfaction rating of eight on the scale (Figure 19). Altogether, five sixths of the respondents rate their life satisfaction above the median point on the 10-point scale, with only 11% scoring a satisfaction rating in the four lower categories. The tendency of Europeans to have similar degrees of life satisfaction is shown by the very low coefficient of variation (0.27) around the high average.

Differences also emerge between countries in relation to the average level of life satisfaction (Figure 20). This average is highest in Denmark (8.4) and Finland (8.0), and lowest in Bulgaria (4.5). Within every country, differences in life satisfaction between individuals are greater than differences between national means – and the lower the average level of life satisfaction, the greater the tendency for individual evaluations to be dispersed within the country.

Figure 20 Average life satisfaction by country



Source: EQLS, 2003

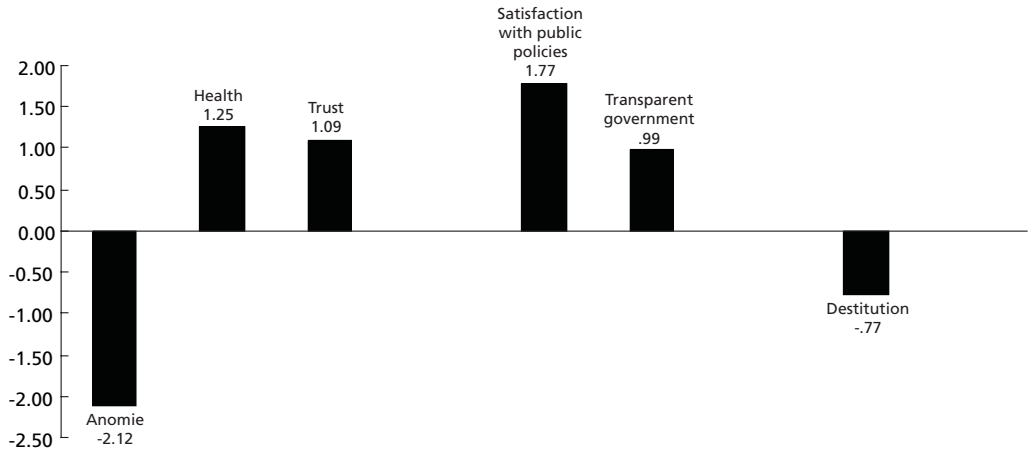
Influences on life satisfaction

The MLH model accounts for 40.1% of the variance in life satisfaction. The six major influences on life satisfaction are not the same as those for participation in civil society. 'Anomie', or a sense that

one cannot understand or control their life, has the greatest impact on life satisfaction (Figure 21). Net of all other influences, people who feel very helpless are likely to have a life satisfaction score that is halfway between being very satisfied and very dissatisfied.

The healthier a person feels, the more likely they are to be satisfied with life. Net of all other influences, good health adds 1.25 points to a positive assessment of life satisfaction. While it is possible that being satisfied with life makes a person feel healthier, health shows no significant effect on conventional political participation, while it only has a minor effect on participation in European public space (see Tables 4, 5 and 6 in Annex).

Figure 21 Major influences on life satisfaction (MLH model)



Note: Variance accounted for (Pseudo R^2): 40.1%

Source: EQLS, 2003

For the first time in this particular analysis, trust appears to have a substantial impact on individuals, adding an additional 1.6 points to a person's life satisfaction score. However, as with health, the direction of causation is disputable: trust may add to a person's life satisfaction, and/or people who are more satisfied with their life may be more ready to trust others. Given the evidence, it is safest to treat the statistical correlation as indicative of a two-way exchange of influence between life satisfaction and trust.

The MLH analysis also shows a strong relationship between satisfaction with public policies and life satisfaction in general. Up to a point, it could be argued that the positive policy performance of government in providing, for example, healthcare and security in old age makes people feel more satisfied with life. It could also be the case that people's level of satisfaction with their immediate personal circumstances will also tend to reflect their feelings about public policies.

People who live in a country where there is a good degree of transparency in political institutions have a life satisfaction score that is a full point higher than those who live in a country where the government is considered corrupt. The greater the transparency of national government, the higher the degree of life satisfaction will be. Net of all other influences, an honest government can boost its citizens' level of life satisfaction by almost a full point on the 10-point scale – an increase which is almost as large as that relating to trust in other people.

Individual economic circumstances also influence life satisfaction. Being very poor has a greater impact on satisfaction levels than being relatively well-off. People who are threatened by destitution tend to have a life satisfaction score over three-quarters of a point lower than those who have a sufficient income that enables them to buy everyday necessities. Being in the top income quartile of a country has a significant positive effect on life satisfaction. However, the positive impact of being relatively well-off is only half the impact of being poor.

The MLH analysis finds no significant correlation between life satisfaction and conventional political participation, and only a very limited link between life satisfaction and the ability to participate in European public space. The dissociation is reinforced by evidence that health and trust, which have a large impact on life satisfaction, have little or no impact on participation (see Tables 2–6 in Annex).

Policy implications

Although life satisfaction is a goal shared by all citizens everywhere, only a totalitarian state would claim that the government ought to be the sole source of individual life satisfaction. The high correlation between satisfaction with social life and family life and general life satisfaction is a reminder that informal social relations, largely beyond the reach of government, can be central to people's everyday lives. The significance of anomie in relation to life satisfaction is logical and strong. However, it would require great confidence in the social engineering capacity of government to expect laws and public money to have a major impact on the state of mind of a minority of people who feel helpless when confronted by the conditions of modern life.

Nevertheless, there are two major influences on life satisfaction that are the responsibility of governments – namely, the transparency of public administration and combating destitution. Each of these objectives is ostensibly a consensual goal of governments. However, the extent to which governments across Europe have successfully achieved these goals is variable, especially in relation to transparency. Increasing transparency and reducing corruption not only make for better government, but also help to promote the life satisfaction of citizens (see Figure 21). Insofar as increasing transparency increases trust in other people, it will also have an indirect influence on life satisfaction. Although economic prosperity and income maintenance grants have a substantial effect on destitution levels, poverty still exists and people who are destitute are more likely to be in poor health. Thus, policies targeting destitution may have the multiple effect of reducing poverty, improving health and increasing the life satisfaction of vulnerable and unhappy citizens.

Implications for social integration

Analysis of the four forms of participation in civil society shows that a majority of people vote, but do not participate in other conventional political activities, while a substantial minority of people are now able to participate transnationally across a European public space. A large majority of people are involved in informal social relations and a substantial proportion in formal (voluntary) organisations. However, within all European countries, differences exist in the extent to which citizens are involved in each form of civil society activity. Moreover, differences also emerge between countries in the average level of participation.

The MLH model demonstrates that many of the influences determining participation have a similar impact in all the countries. Some influences reflect individual characteristics, such as age or education, and these influences are likely to be common in most modern societies around the world. Other influences reflect national contexts, such as the level of transparency in the government or whether there is a high level of GDP per capita.

The existence of these common influences on participation encourages the need for European-wide policies aimed at promoting an active society. However, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, many policy implications are primarily related to the competence of national, regional or local governments. Moreover, some are outside the reach of governments at all levels.

Compensating participation

One theory concerning participation postulates that society is divided into a minority of activists and a majority of people who are passive or even excluded from civil society. The unevenness of participation raises the question: to what extent is participation or non-participation cumulative? In other words, are people who take part in one type of activity also active in another and is the same true of those who are inactive? If the latter scenario is the case, then society will be polarised between those who are active and who dominate all forms of participation, and the inactive, who are consistently uninvolved in civil society, with relatively few people in the middle.

Alternatively, participation may be compensating. For instance, an individual who does not participate in voluntary organisations may have above-average informal social relations, while those unable to engage in European public space may be involved in conventional political activities. Insofar as different forms of participation are compensating, the overall distribution will comprise more people in the middle than at the extremes.

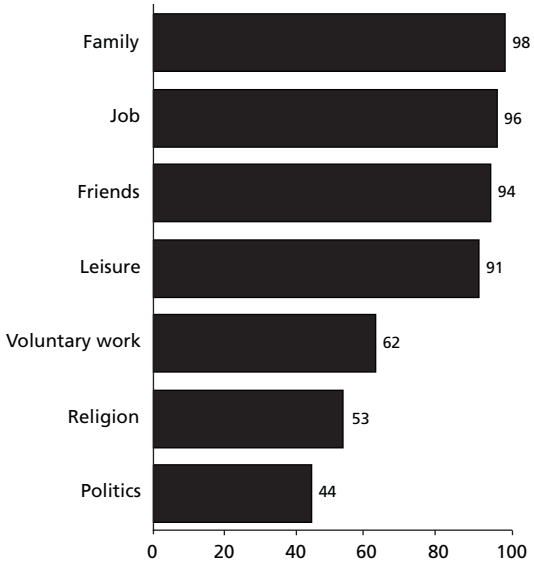
Each type of participation differs not only in name, but also in the type of people it attracts. There is very little correlation between an individual participating in conventional political activities and in European public space (r: 0.12), or between a person participating in informal social networks and belonging to voluntary organisations (r: 0.16). Since the indices of participation come from two different surveys – that is, the EQLS and the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital – two measures of cumulative activity must be calculated. Combining individual responses for conventional political activities and European public space shows a compensating pattern: 42% of the respondents are active in national politics and have the potential to participate in European public space; 39% of people are active nationally but not in European public space; and 11% of respondents participate in the virtual space of Europe. Only 8% of people are socially excluded because they do not vote and cannot make contact across Europe. Similarly, combining measures of social integration in informal social networks and formal (voluntary) organisations reveals evidence of compensating participation. Only 5% of people are excluded from both informal and formal organisations, while 19% of respondents are active in both types of organisations. The bulk of Europeans are either more involved in informal relations (53%) or in formal organisations (22%). Participation is therefore widespread in different forms of civil society, conventional and innovative, informal and formal, and relatively few people are completely excluded. However, just half or less of European citizens participate in voluntary organisations or can participate in European public space, and a majority of people limit their participation in conventional politics to voting.

While the concept of civil society recognises that there are limits to what governments can and should control, it also rejects the individualist fallacy that there is no such thing as 'society'. The importance of balancing these two concerns is especially relevant in the case of the new EU Member States, which for 40 years were suppressed by communist regimes that had control over ostensive civil society organisations and whose citizens now enjoy the right of freedom (Berlin, 1958; Rose, 1995b). It is also accepted through the EU's endorsement of subsidiarity.

Getting the balance right

Any consideration of government initiatives aimed at promoting greater participation in civil society raises the normative questions: how much participation is enough; and how much is feasible? Even an egalitarian such as Robert Dahl (1971) has recognised that there can be practical limits to participation. While Dahl strongly endorses a high level of conventional political participation, he accepts that this is inappropriate where considerations of expertise or efficiency are important. His concern with efficiency can justify, for example, the creation of an executive committee to run the affairs of a mass-membership civil society institution. Dahl's example of expertise is controlling the flight path of planes. Given the technical complexities of macroeconomic monetary policy, central bankers sometimes make the argument that monetary policy should be placed outside the sphere of electoral politics.

Figure 22 Importance of different spheres of life, by (%) of people replying 'very important' or 'fairly important'



Note: Q. Would you say that each of the following is very important, fairly important, not very important or not at all important in your life: family; friends; work; leisure; voluntary work; religion; politics?

Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital, 2004

For most Europeans, politics comes far down the list of social relations that are considered important in their lives (Figure 22). Family takes first priority, with 98% of respondents citing its importance, including 87% of people who say that it is 'very important'. In addition, over nine tenths of Europeans regard family, work, friends and leisure as being important. In contrast, only 11% of people cite politics as being very important; some 20% of respondents regard voluntary

work as being very important, while 22% of people cite religion as being very important. Even after adding in those who regard these factors as being 'fairly important', only less than half of people consider politics to be important, while religion and voluntary work rank alongside each other at the bottom end of the scale.

A universalistic ideal of citizenship postulates that everyone should participate in civil society organisations. Laws making voting compulsory are an example of such an approach. This dictum can be extended from voting to compulsory membership in corporatist institutions as a condition of employment or to universal access to the internet. An alternative approach is that each individual should have an equal opportunity to decide whether or not to participate in civil society. According to the theory of Rawls (1971), since no public goal can ever be 100% effective, a fair standard for evaluating participation is that there is equal opportunity. In legal terms, European citizens have an equal right to participate in civil society institutions. Empirically, this implies that the distribution of the benefits of higher education, well-paying jobs or political office should not involve discrimination on grounds of gender, race or ethnicity. Insofar as individuals differ in their participation in voluntary organisations, such differences should reflect individual tastes and choices.

Statistically, equal opportunity for participation can be implied by the failure of individuals' social characteristics to account for the large amount of differences in participation. In fact, the low level of variance accounted for in conventional political participation (9.1%) and in informal social networks (8.1%) demonstrates a high degree of equality, as well as in legal form. Given that 30.4% of the variance can be attributed to participation in voluntary organisations and 51.3% to European public space, this implies a bias in both fields. Such biases partly reflect differences in education and between manual workers and others, along with national differences in the transparency of government and in a country's per capita wealth, both of which have been seen to influence participation.

Policy strategy for a more active society

Governments have commitments to a variety of public policies that could, directly or indirectly, promote participation in civil society. For example, it determines the number of years of compulsory education in a country: in as much as more educated people are more likely to be involved in civil society, then public policy aimed at increasing the number of educated people in society ought to also increase participation in civil society. However, some government measures, such as drawing the boundaries that determine the population size for local and regional governments, have no significant effect on participation. Moreover, governments are better at implementing policies that affect what people have (for example, their income in retirement) than those that influence the emotional relationships between citizens and their loved ones (Allardt, 1993; Böhnke, 2005).

A starting point for priority measures aimed at promoting a more active society should be in areas where government has both established public responsibilities and a comparative advantage. Governments cannot deny their responsibility for transparency, as corruption within its own institutions involves a violation of laws by its own employees. Sample surveys indicate that relatively few people report having needed to pay a bribe to a public official in the past year. In contrast, the media gives national prominence to high levels of corruption in central government

where large public contracts are at stake, as does the 'Perception of Corruption Index' compiled by Transparency International (2005). As already outlined, the extent to which citizens perceive the government as being transparent or corrupt has a substantial influence on whether individuals participate in voluntary organisations and also on life satisfaction in general. The means required to make governments more honest are well publicised by national reformers, by intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank, and by international NGOs such as Transparency International.

The expansion of education in the post-war era has had a positive effect on participation, as more educated people are substantially more likely to participate in voluntary organisations, conventional political activities and European public space. While education is not the most important influence, its consistently positive effect is noteworthy. Moreover, education is also likely to improve the quality of participation, insofar as more educated people are better able to deal with the complex issues that often arise in organisational activities, especially at national and European levels. Given the major commitments that national governments have been making in recent decades to promote more education for a greater proportion of people, the quality and quantity of participation in civil society is likely to increase gradually in the future.

Age consistently influences participation, but in different directions. Older people are more likely to participate in conventional political activities and to belong to voluntary organisations; in addition, older people tend to have slightly higher levels of life satisfaction. However, they are less likely to participate in informal social networks or in European public space. In as much as this reflects life cycle differences, a person who participates less in politics when they are young will compensate by participating more when they are older.

There is also a balancing effect between different forms of participation: the greater involvement of older people in formal national activities is offset by the greater ability of younger people to participate in European public space. While governments cannot prevent ageing, they can adopt some measures to compensate for the effects of old age. For example, the problems faced by some older people in maintaining informal social relations could be addressed at local or neighbourhood level through home visits by voluntary organisations, which could receive public funding for such purposes, or by publicly employed social and health service carers. National governments could encourage elderly people to keep in touch with others through measures such as free telephone calls to distant relatives and free municipal transport, rather than by subsidising the passive watching of television with free TV licences. Indirectly, older people could be encouraged to use the internet through the setting up of centrally-provided websites specifically targeting their concerns, particularly their health needs.

A great advantage of multivariate statistical analysis is its ability to show which features of the economy influence civil society participation and which do not. For instance, the impact of a country's GDP on participation in European public space implies that governments of less prosperous European countries could stimulate a greater voice in European public space by achieving a higher rate of economic growth. Public policies could directly stimulate internet use by reducing monopolistic obstacles to the expansion of new telecommunications and generating cost reductions through deregulation and competition. Post-communist countries, with lower rates of GDP per capita and of internet use, are now showing signs of catching up by achieving faster rates of economic growth and more rapid diffusion of the internet (EBRD, 2005; Rose, 2006).

After controlling for the effects of age, education, transparency of government and high GDP, individual economic characteristics have a limited effect on participation in civil society. Manual workers, for example, are less likely to participate in voluntary organisations and in European public space. However, the negative effect of belonging to what is now a minority of the population is less than the positive effect of employment on participation in politics. Together, these findings imply that social integration could be promoted by giving manual workers more opportunities to acquire computer and internet skills; even if such skills are not needed for work, they could enable manual workers to pursue hobbies and to widen their social horizons. Notwithstanding the opportunities that occupationally oriented trade unions give for voluntary participation, manual workers are less likely to be active. This may partly reflect a lingering social unease among less educated workers or simply a preference for informal social networking. It may also indicate a tendency among unions to be increasingly dominated by non-manual workers, such as technicians, service workers and white-collar public employees.

In relation to income measures, destitution has the strongest effect, substantially decreasing life satisfaction. Destitution is defined in this context as the frequency of going without essentials such as food, rent money and utilities. Across Europe as a whole, 77% of people reported that they had no difficulty in meeting all these basic needs during the year; only 9% indicated that they frequently had trouble finding the money to pay for two or three of these necessities. Direct action to reduce destitution requires the improved delivery or redesign of existing policies. In principle, this should be feasible since such individuals are not socially excluded. The EQLS shows that, net of other characteristics, people facing destitution are not substantially any less likely to participate in civil society activities.

Without regard to average national income, people's position in a country's income distribution has a limited and secondary influence on conventional political participation and potential participation in European public space. Net of all other individual attributes, people in the top income quartile of a country are somewhat more likely to participate than those in the bottom income quartile. However, the extent of this impact is small compared with other influences (see Tables 4 and 5 in Annex). Moreover, political opposition to explicit attempts at income redistribution could produce a counter-mobilisation against it.

Promoting participation in European public space introduces the possibility of a potential conflict arising between competing policy goals. In terms of developing a European forum for the communication of ideas (for example, a campaign to elect a President of Europe), a common language should be afforded high priority on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness. However, a single common language is inconsistent with current EU practice, which favours bilingualism and multilingualism. Thus, encouraging the use of English, the current *lingua franca*, in countries where it is not the national language may be in conflict with cultural policies aimed at protecting the national language against what may be perceived as foreign incursions.

Promoting social integration in a more active European society and reducing social exclusion is a challenge that governments should be able to meet. Firstly, the great majority of citizens already participate in one or another informal or formal organisation; hence, the goal should be to increase the level of activity rather than to transform it. The rise in education and, to a lesser extent, in GDP will assist this process. Secondly, groups that participate less are normally not totally excluded from

society: for example, less educated manual workers still engage in work and their informal (as distinct from formal) social networks are not significantly below average. Overall, therefore, the primary actions that government could take to strengthen participation in civil society should involve promoting a higher level of economic growth, reducing corruption and increasing transparency within government.

Conclusions 5

The in-depth analyses of both the EQLS and the Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital reveal a number of significant findings in relation to the four indicators of civil society participation – namely, participation in informal social networks, in voluntary organisations, in conventional political activities, or in transnational European public space. Among its findings, the analyses reveal the following results:

- informal relations with friends, neighbours and fellow workers outside of the place of work – 14% of respondents have weekly informal relations; the average European engages at least once a month in such contacts; only 7% of people never have any informal contacts;
- voluntary organisations – 20% of respondents belong to at least two voluntary organisations, while 25% of people belong to one voluntary organisation; 55% of respondents don't belong to any voluntary organisation. Sports clubs, educational groups and music and arts societies are the most popular types of organisational membership. Explicitly, political organisations, such as political parties, have small percentages of members;
- political participation – 79% of respondents report that they vote, while only 13% attend political meetings, and 9% report contacting officials on a matter of policy. While 16% report two or three forms of participation, 19% report no such involvement. Thus, the average European citizen is a voter, but this is the extent of their political participation;
- communicating across European public space – dialogue across national boundaries requires both a means of communication and a common language. As of 2003, 40% of Europeans used the internet and 53% reported having some reading knowledge of English. Altogether, 33% of respondents could readily communicate across national boundaries using the internet or through English. Of this proportion, four fifths are bilingual, using English as a foreign language to supplement activities in their national language.

Naturally, there are differences in relation to each type of participation between individuals within each of the countries surveyed and also between countries in terms of the number of people who participate in civil society. The main influences that affect participation also vary for each indicator, as follows:

- informal relations with friends and neighbours – these relations are encouraged by factors including satisfaction with public services, living in a safe neighbourhood and believing that politics are important. Being older discourages informal contacts;
- voluntary organisations – a more transparent government encourages participation, while a corrupt administration discourages such participation. Education also encourages participation;
- political participation – older people are more likely to participate in politics, as are more educated people. However, the effects of these influences are much lower than those influencing participation in voluntary organisations;
- communicating across European public space – younger people are much more likely to have a knowledge of English and to use the internet, as are people who live in more prosperous countries and who are more educated. Interestingly, being a native English speaker – that is, a native of the UK, Ireland or Malta – has a limited effect on the potential to participate in European public space.

A total of 95% of Europeans participate in either voluntary or informal organisations, or both. Some 92% of respondents engage in conventional political activities or have the potential to communicate across national boundaries, or both. People who are not involved in one type of activity may compensate by being more involved in another. For example, older people are more likely to vote, while younger people are more likely to engage with others or with organisational websites through the internet. A very small percentage of Europeans are completely excluded from participation in one or another civil society organisation.

Since civil society organisations are intended to be voluntary and independent of government, there are limits to the actions that governments can take to directly promote participation. However, governments can indirectly encourage greater participation by affecting certain policies, such as:

- increasing transparency and reducing corruption in government;
- promoting more education;
- increasing the country's GDP;
- promoting internet usage among older people;
- eliminating destitution among those in extreme poverty;
- developing policies to encourage less educated manual workers to participate;
- making all neighbourhoods safe.

These recommendations underline the importance of improving existing policies and of introducing new measures. The indirect influence of such policies on people's participation in civil society is capable of achieving a twofold benefit: for example, increased transparency in government would not only enhance government efficiency and be favourable for the economy, but could also encourage more people to become active in civil society organisations.

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Annex

Additional tables

Table 1a Variables from European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)

	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Dependent variables				
Political participation	1.00	0.69	0 (None)	3 forms
European public space	0.95	0.85	0 (None)	2 (Uses English and internet)
Life satisfaction	6.78	2.19	1 (Least)	10 (Most)
Contextual variables				
Transparent government[1]	6.17	2.05	2.8	9.9
Population (millions)	19.64	24.02	0.40	82.44
GDP per capita PPP (thousands)	18.99	9.12	5.92	45.43
English national language	0.11	0.31	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Individual variables				
Age	45.73	17.61	18	83
Education (age finished)	2.11	0.72	1 (15 or less)	3 (20+ years)
Female	0.52	0.50	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Religious attendance	2.13	1.93	0 (Never)	5 (Weekly)
Urban area	0.56	0.50	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Safe neighbourhood	2.96	0.87	1 (Very unsafe)	4 (Very safe)
Employed[2]	0.50	0.50	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Manual worker[3]	0.29	0.45	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Income quartile	2.50	0.99	1 (Lowest)	4 (Highest)
Destitute: rent, food, utilities	0.31	0.63	0 (No)	2 (Yes)
Class tension[4]	2.22	0.58	1 (None)	3 (A lot)
Policy satisfaction	5.85	1.79	1 (Least)	10 (Most)
Trusts people	5.39	2.30	1 (Least)	10 (Most)
Health, self-assessed	3.06	1.14	1 (Very poor)	5 (Excellent)
Anomie	1.89	0.82	1 (Least)	4 (Most)

Notes:

1. Transparency International scores for 2001, except Cyprus (2003) and Malta (2004).
2. Includes self-employed people.
3. Includes manual workers now retired.
4. Mean of replies to questions on tension between rich and poor people, and between workers and management.

Means and standard deviations computed with national results weighted equally, 27,008 respondents in 28 countries.

Source: EQLS, 2003

Table 1b Variables from Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital

	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Dependent variables				
Informal contacts[1]	2.46	1.19	0 (Never)	5 (Several times a week)
N organisations belonged to[2]	0.81	1.03	0 (None)	3 or more
Contextual variables				
Transparent government[3]	6.17	2.05	2.8	9.9
Population (millions)	19.64	24.02	0.395	82.44
GDP per capita PPP (thousands)	18.99	9.12	5.92	45.43
Individual variables				
Age	3.46	1.71	1 (15–24 years)	6 (65+ years)
Education (age finished)	2.06	0.69	1 (15 years or under)	3 (20+ years)
Female	0.52	0.50	0 (Male)	1 (Female)
Belongs to religious organisation	0.16	0.37	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Urban area	1.91	0.77	1 (Rural)	3 (Large town)
Safe neighbourhood	3.03	0.77	1 (Very dissatisfied)	4 (Very satisfied)
Employed[4]	0.58	0.49	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Manual worker[5]	0.30	0.46	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Satisfied with public services	2.73	0.61	1 (Very dissatisfied)	4 (Very satisfied)
Politics matters in own life	2.28	0.92	1 (Not at all)	4 (Very important)
Trusts people	1.74	0.89	1 (Can't be too careful)	3 (Most can be trusted)
Discriminated against[6]	0.18	0.49	0 (None)	In 2+ areas
Carer[7]	0.18	0.39	0 (No)	1 (Yes)

Notes:

1. Mean for informal contacts with friends, colleagues and neighbours.
2. From a list of 14 different types of voluntary organisations.
3. Transparency International scores for 2001, except Cyprus (2003) and Malta (2004).
4. Includes self-employed people.
5. Includes manual workers now retired.
6. On grounds of sex, racial and/or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation.
7. Looking after someone who is dependent and needs help.

Means and standard deviations computed with national results weighted equally, 25,978 respondents in 27 countries.
Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital (EB 62.2) 2004

Table 2 Informal social relations (MLH model)

Variance accounted for (Pseudo R2): 8.1%				
		Standard		
	Coefficient	Error	T-ratio	Effect
GDP per capita PPP	-0.01	0.01	-2.67	-0.56
Safe neighbourhood	0.09	0.01	6.06	0.26
Urban area	-0.11	0.02	-4.52	-0.21
National population	-0.01	0.00	-1.64	*not significant*
Employed	0.02	0.04	0.45	*not significant*
Manual worker	-0.03	0.02	-1.12	*not significant*
Age	-0.14	0.01	-12.78	-0.69
Satisfied with public services	0.13	0.03	4.56	0.38
Politics matters in own life	0.09	0.01	7.26	0.26
Female	-0.20	0.03	-7.91	-0.20
Trusts people	0.07	0.01	6.08	0.15
Belongs to religious organisation	0.11	0.03	3.83	0.11
Carer	0.07	0.02	2.73	0.07
Discriminated against	-0.01	0.02	-0.31	*not significant*
Education	-0.02	0.01	-1.92	*not significant*

Note: Effects shown are significant at .01 level or better.
National results are weighted equally.
Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital (EB 62.2), 2004

Table 3 Voluntary organisations (MLH model)

Variance accounted for (Pseudo R^2): 30.4%				
		Standard		
	Coefficient	Error	T-ratio	Effect
Transparent government	0.20	0.02	8.20	1.45
National population	0.00	0.00	-1.81	*not significant*
Safe neighbourhood	0.02	0.01	2.34	*not significant*
Urban area	-0.02	0.01	-1.15	*not significant*
Manual worker	-0.19	0.02	-10.75	-0.19
Employed	0.08	0.02	3.26	0.08
Education	0.19	0.02	10.29	0.39
Politics matters in own life	0.12	0.02	7.66	0.36
Carer	0.17	0.02	9.93	0.17
Trusts people	0.08	0.01	6.88	0.16
Discriminated against	0.08	0.02	3.96	0.15
Age	0.03	0.01	3.44	0.13
Female	-0.09	0.02	-4.34	-0.09
Satisfied with public services	-0.01	0.01	-0.44	*not significant*

Note: Effects shown are significant at .01 level.
National results are weighted equally.
Source: Eurobarometer Survey on Social Capital (EB 62.2), 2004

Table 4 Conventional political participation (MLH model)

Variance accounted for (Pseudo R^2): 9.1%				
		Standard		
	Coefficient	Error	T-ratio	Effect
Safe neighbourhood	0.02	0.01	2.95	0.05
Urban area	-0.04	0.01	-3.03	-0.04
Transparent government	0.03	0.01	2.28	*not significant*
Population	0.00	0.00	-0.99	*not significant*
Policy satisfaction	-0.01	0.00	-1.95	*not significant*
Employed	0.16	0.01	12.67	0.16
Income quartile	0.03	0.01	6.40	0.10
Class tension	0.04	0.02	2.69	0.09
Manual worker	-0.09	0.01	-7.65	-0.09
Destitute	-0.03	0.01	-3.54	-0.05
Age	0.01	0.00	7.74	0.38
Education	0.11	0.01	12.09	0.23
Religious attendance	0.03	0.00	6.82	0.15
Anomie	-0.05	0.01	-4.48	-0.14
Trusts people	0.01	0.00	3.46	0.08
Female	-0.02	0.01	-1.27	*not significant*
Health	0.00	0.00	-0.32	*not significant*

Note: National results are weighted equally.
Source: EQLS, 2003

Table 5 Potential participation in European public space (MLH model)

Variance accounted for (Pseudo R^2): 51.3%				
		Standard		
	Coefficient	Error	T-ratio	Effect
GDP per capita PPP (Purchasing Power Parity)	0.02	0.00	4.30	0.84
English national language	0.43	0.09	4.57	0.43
Policy satisfaction	-0.02	0.00	-5.51	-0.14
Population	0.00	0.00	-1.55	*not significant*
Urban area	0.12	0.02	6.57	0.12
Safe neighbourhood	0.03	0.01	3.48	0.08
Manual worker	-0.24	0.02	-10.48	-0.24
Income quartile	0.08	0.01	13.35	0.24
Destitute	-0.04	0.01	-3.93	-0.08
Employed	0.03	0.02	1.15	*not significant*
Class tension	-0.02	0.01	-2.04	*not significant*
Age	-0.02	0.00	-20.67	-1.08
Education	0.29	0.02	11.76	0.57
Anomie	-0.06	0.01	-8.74	-0.18
Health	0.03	0.01	5.40	0.12
Trusts people	0.01	0.00	5.94	0.12
Female	-0.05	0.01	-4.83	-0.05
Religious attendance	0.00	0.00	-0.81	*not significant*

Note: Effects shown are significant at .01 level.
National results are weighted equally.
Source: EQLS, 2003

Table 6 Life satisfaction (MLH model)

Variance accounted for (Pseudo R^2): 40.1%				
		Standard		
	Coefficient	Error	T-ratio	Effect
Transparent government	0.14	0.03	5.14	0.99
Population	0.00	0.00	1.61	*not significant*
Safe neighbourhood	0.02	0.01	1.15	*not significant*
Urban area	-0.06	0.03	-2.21	*not significant*
Destitute	-0.39	0.03	-14.84	-0.77
Income quartile	0.13	0.02	7.01	0.39
Manual worker	-0.12	0.03	-3.66	-0.12
Employed	-0.07	0.04	-1.96	*not significant*
Class tension	-0.06	0.02	-2.44	*not significant*
Anomie	-0.71	0.02	-28.30	-2.12
Health	0.31	0.02	17.65	1.25
Trusts people	0.12	0.01	13.78	1.09
Religious attendance	0.06	0.01	6.04	0.28
Age	0.00	0.00	3.11	0.24
Female	0.10	0.03	3.12	0.10
Education	0.00	0.03	0.01	*not significant*
Policy satisfaction	0.20	0.01	16.67	1.77
European public space	0.09	0.03	2.70	0.18
Conventional political participation	0.04	0.02	1.50	*not significant*

Note: Effects shown are significant at .01 level.
National results are weighted equally.
Source: EQLS, 2003

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The expansion of the European Union in 2004 has increased the debate about active participation in Europe's civil society. This report explores the diverse range of activities that constitute active participation, including in its scope both informal social networks and the more formal organisations and associations. Its findings are based on two major surveys – the Foundation's 2003 European Quality of Life Survey *and the 2004 Eurobarometer* Survey on Social Capital *– carried out across both old and new Member States.*

The report identifies the key factors that influence participation, and underlines the wide range of factors – from individual to national resources and from sociological to historical influences – that determine the level and type of participation. It highlights the role governments can play in introducing initiatives aimed at promoting greater participation, which can enhance a citizen's sense of involvement in their society and increase personal satisfaction.

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