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## **1. Introduction**

Speaking of Europe in terms of politics the term itself is most of the time automatically connected with the European Union (EU). 25 countries are already members of the EU and in 2007 two more countries will join the Union and the EU will then have a population of nearly half a billion. (cf.: <http://www.europa-digital.de/aktuell/dossier/sprachen/erweiterung.shtml>)

Europe is a continent with many different languages that are spoken either by millions of people or only by a small minority of people. However, any language is treated the same and guaranteed the status of an official language in the EU. Especially the eastern enlargement contributed to the fact that within the EU the number of official languages increased in the previous years. Not only the several languages spoken in the European countries, but also the different cultural backgrounds make it hard to see Europe as just one complete whole.

The member states growing together is an important issue in the European Union, however, the failure of the establishment of a common European constitution already in the first instance does not seem to contribute to the improvement of the situation.

This raises the question what has to be done to improve the situation. Is there, for instance, a common European language necessary in order to become more united? In quite a few languages there can already be observed a raising amount of Anglicisms. Hence, should English be the language to be established as the (only) official one or should other languages be considered as well? Can people in Europe be forced to accept this?

Apart from the language problem the cultural differences cannot be ignored or put aside, as the cultural issues are as important, and ought the European people not be made aware of them and learn to be (even more) tolerant?

These are all questions that will be attempted to be answered in this term paper.

First of all a survey that has been carried out among students will be presented and the results drawn out of them will be used in order to determine the contents of a Eurocompetence. The results will then be followed by presenting the idea how these contents could be conveyed already as early as school education starts.

## **3. Presentation of the survey**

In order to be able to constitute the elements and contents of a Eurocompetence that are most important, we carried out a survey among European students. The aim of this survey is, first of all, to get an idea what European students think about their continent. The result

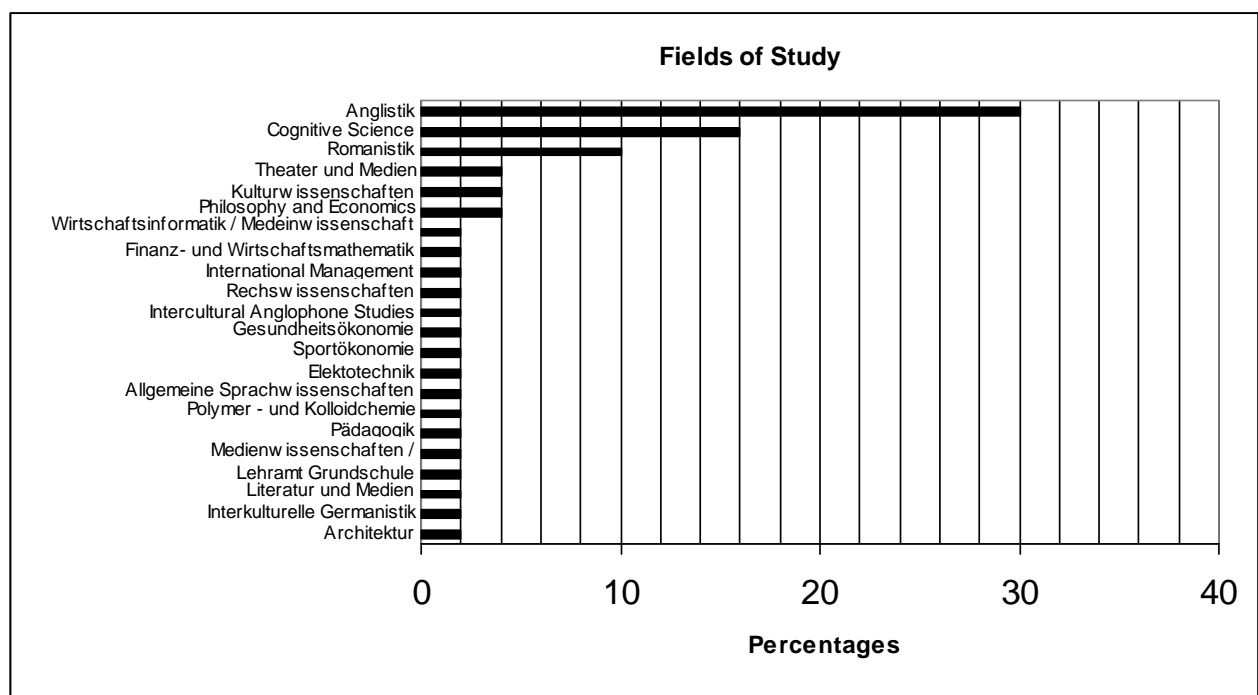
will help to understand what Europe actually means to young people, and how being competent for Europe might look like, i.e. what kind of knowledge has to be included, and if language learning should be included as well, and if yes, which language or languages should that be in order to form a program that aims for creating a Eurocompetence.

The majority of our informants are German, but there are also a few informants from other European countries. The subject of study, in some cases, has an influence on their answers, namely most of the informants who study intercultural German studies, at least once, mentioned intercultural competence at some instance. Including students of linguistics only would have distorted the results in the way that the informants would probably have guessed what we were aiming for. Therefore, it was tried to get informants from as many different fields of studies as possible, in order to eventually get a great variety of different answers and opinions.

### 3.1. Statistical Information

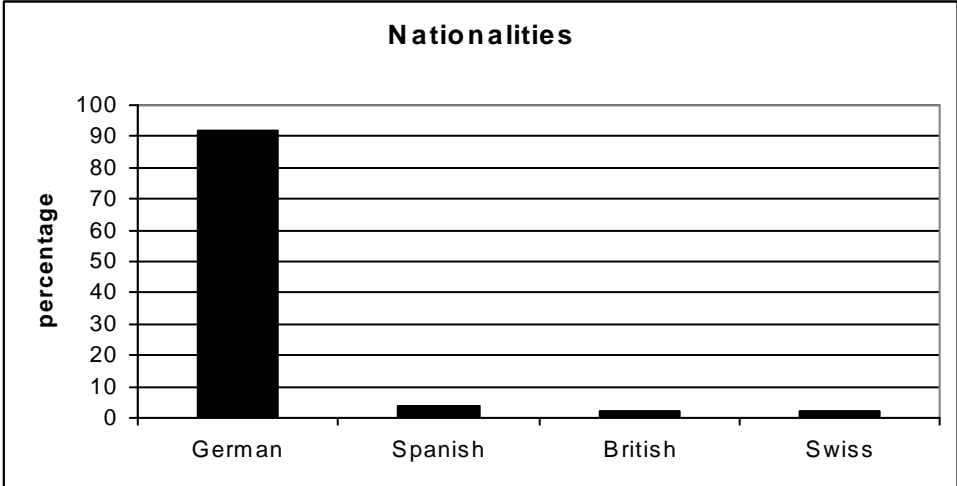
#### 3.1.1. Information about the informants

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the aim of the survey was to get as many students from as many different fields of study as possible. Altogether, 50 students took part in the survey. The largest group was presented by the students of English, followed by students of Cognitive Science and students of French<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid confusion or wrong translations the different subjects are listed in German.

Concerning the nationalities the survey was carried out among mostly German students (92%). There are only a few students from other European countries, such as Spain (4%), England (2%), and Switzerland (2%). Consequently, this survey presents, above all, the German perspective of the subject. The results of the same survey carried out among students from many different European countries may thus look different.

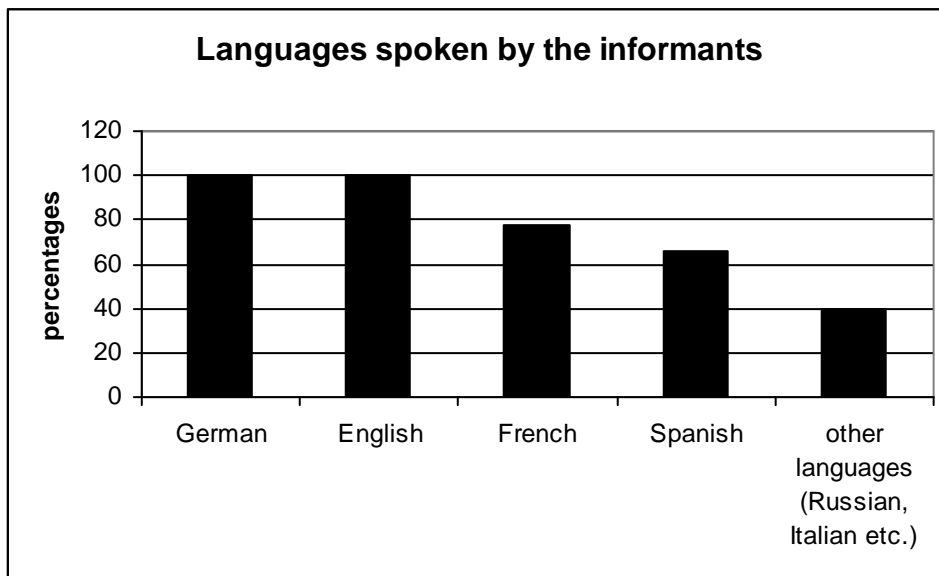


### 3.1.2. Languages

All of our informants speak German given that 92% of them were in fact German citizens. The informants from other countries also spoke German. 100% stated that they spoke English, or at least learned English at some point in their life.

English and German were followed by French, which is spoken by 78% of the informants, but was closely followed by Spanish, which is spoken by 66% of the informants. French still seems to have an important role in language learning; however, it seems to be overtaken by Spanish, as many of the informants stated that they would like to learn Spanish in the future, whereas only very few said that they would learn French.

The other languages that are spoken by the participants of the survey are, for instance, Russian, Danish, Swedish, Arabic, and Italian.



The following chapters will present and analyse the results of the survey in detail.

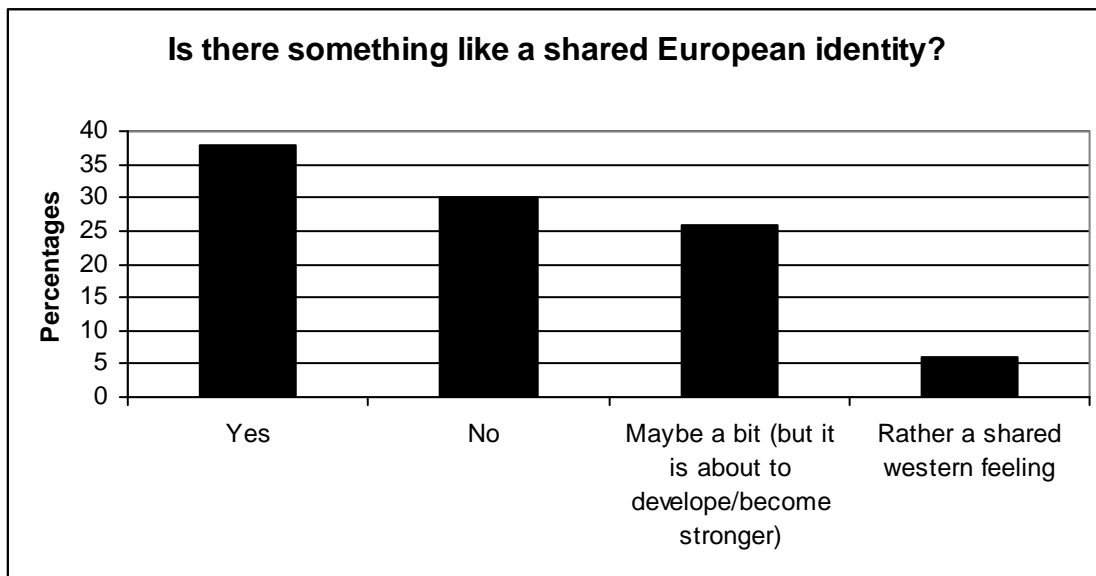
### 3.2. Analysis of the questions<sup>2</sup>

#### 3.2.1. Question # 1: “In your opinion, is there something like a shared European identity?”

The opinions of the informants differed a lot in this question. 38% of the informants stated that they thought there was definitely a shared European identity, while 30% definitely negated that there was one. 26% had the opinion that there was something like a shared identity, but it is not a very strong one yet, and furthermore it depends on the country how strong it was, as in some there may be a stronger feeling, whereas in other countries there might be less. 6% of the informants indicated that there is rather a shared feeling for Western countries that marks off Western countries from other (Eastern) nations and continents.

Although some of the participants were not sure, most of them stated that it is at least at its starting point and Europeans will probably develop a stronger common identity in the future. Thus, according to our informants, Europe seems on its way to become a real united continent, however, it seems that it is going to be a long and hard way as, for instance, the common European constitution has been dismissed in a poll carried out among the French and the Dutch citizens in 2005. (cf.: <http://www.europa-digital.de/aktuell/dossier/verfassung/>)

<sup>2</sup> There has been a German and an English version of the questionnaires. A sample of the English version can be found in the attachment on page 24.

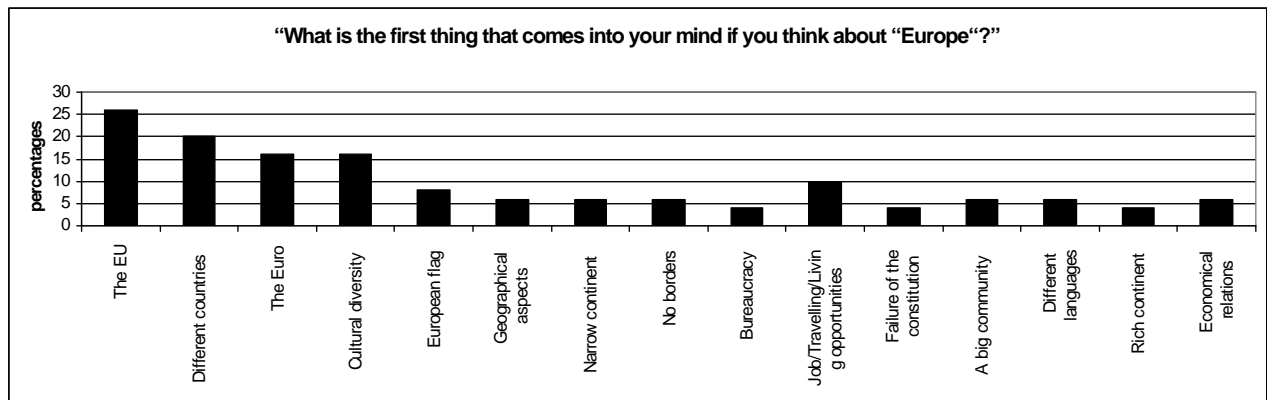


**3.2.2. Question #. 2:** “What is the first thing that comes into your mind if you think about “Europe“?”

Although there was a wide range of many different and interesting answers, some tendencies could be detected. First of all, there was a very positive attitude towards Europe altogether, and although a few negative aspects were pointed out, the majority of the informants related positive aspects to Europe.

26% informants first think of the European Union when thinking about Europe, and the names of certain countries come into their minds. Furthermore, the fact that there are no official boundaries anymore is considered as very positive by 6%. 20% of the participants of the survey also relate Europe to the variety of different countries; however, Germany, England, France, Italy and Spain were mentioned specifically as coming to their minds when thinking of Europe. The different cultures existing in Europe were also mentioned by 16%, and 6% explicitly mentioned that it is the different European languages that come to their mind when thinking of Europe. Europe is furthermore regarded as a big community by 6%, and it offers new job opportunities and allows Europeans to travel throughout the continent, which seems to be crucial to 10% of the informants. Further aspects that were mentioned were the European flag (8%), the Euro (16%), and geographical aspects such as the mental image of the continent on the map (6%). 4% first think of Europe as a rich country and 6% of the informants, first of all, think of the Economical relations between the European countries when thinking about Europe.

However, some negative aspects also come to the informants’ minds when thinking about Europe, such as the failure of the EU constitution (4%) and the bureaucracy within the EU institutions (4%).



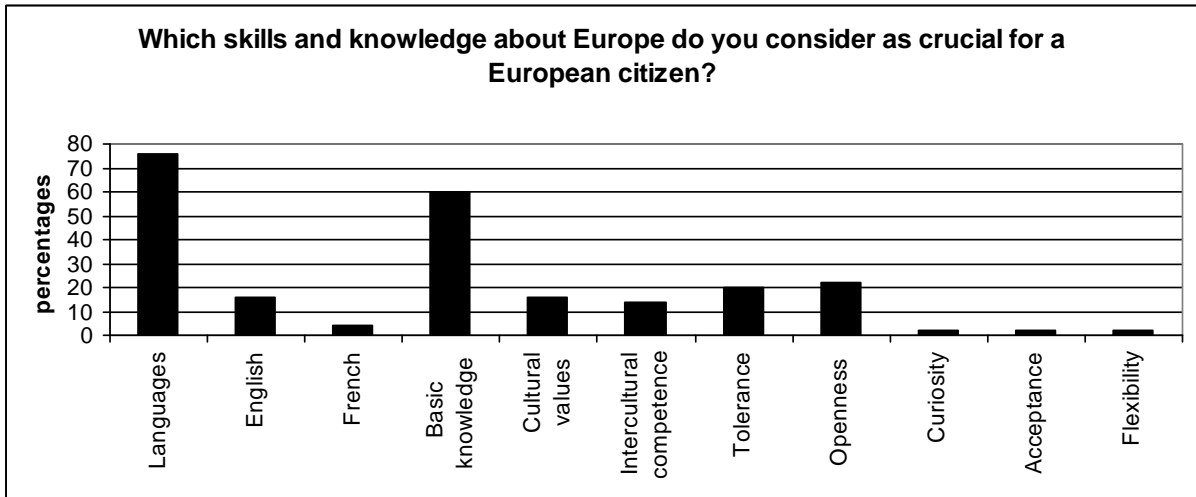
Further aspects mentioned were the common historical heritage of Europe, tolerance, security, a common foreign policy, the EU Eastern enlargement, and European sports events. Furthermore, economical progress, Europe as sort of an “antipole” of the USA, as well as the aspect that there are many differences between European countries was mentioned.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.2.3. Question # 3: Which skills and knowledge about Europe do you consider as crucial for a European citizen?

This question is especially important when it comes to defining the contents that are essential for Eurocompetence. The majority of 76% considers language skills as crucial skills for European citizens. 16% specifically mentioned the importance of knowledge of English in particular, whereas 4% mentioned French. 60% of the informants think certain basic knowledge of Europe in general should be considered as very important skills and knowledge. This includes knowledge about the member states, basic knowledge of European history and geography as well as the political systems of the countries. Furthermore, 16% of our informants mentioned that certain knowledge of different cultural values is important. In regard to the EU 16% think that European citizens should have basic knowledge about the institutions of the EU and the EU politics in general.

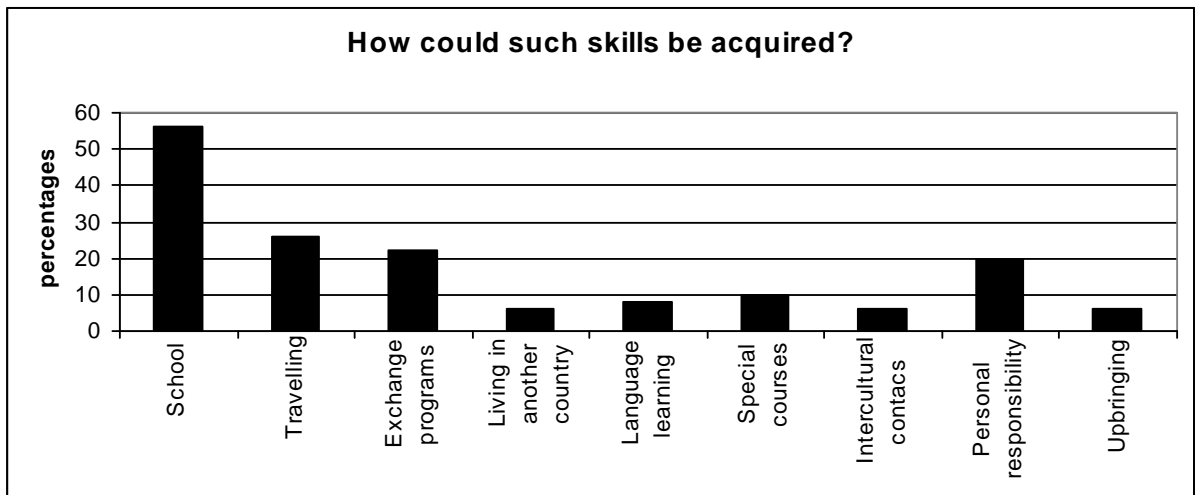
Intercultural competence is also mentioned by 14% as being essential knowledge for Europeans. Apart from certain specific knowledge it was also mentioned by 20% of our informants that tolerance is very important. Openness towards other cultures is considered as crucial for European citizens by 22%. Furthermore, curiosity towards other cultures, acceptance of other cultures and flexibility were mentioned by respectively 2% of the informants.

<sup>3</sup> Since these aspects were mentioned by respectively 2% they are not included in the figure.



**3.2.4. Question # 4: How could such skills be acquired?**

More than half of the informants, namely 56%, indicated that the skills mentioned in Question #3 should be taught at school primarily, and a few also pointed out that the situation at schools has to be improved to make sure that this happens. Furthermore, 26% of the informants also said that these skills could be acquired especially by travelling to foreign countries, not necessarily on a holiday basis. Exchange programs are considered as very helpful by 22%, and 6% consider living in foreign countries for some time, e.g. for internships or work, as important in order to gain these skills. Learning another language is also thought of as helpful by 8% of the informants. Furthermore, 10% think that special designed courses that ought to be promoted by the EU would contribute to the acquirement of important skills and knowledge. Moreover, 6% consider contacts with people of other cultures as crucial. 6% think that upbringing plays an important role as the basic knowledge concerning Europe ought to be conveyed by the parents. 20% of the informants think that it is up to everyone to acquire such skills and knowledge.



### **3.2.5. Question # 5: Which skills should be conveyed by a language competence programme?**

According to our informants a language competence programme should cover many different sections. 22% of our informants think that a program like this should cover more than just one language, but several different languages in order to eventually create a multilingual Europe. Also, 24% of the informants think that a language competence program should above all convey especially the use of everyday language of a foreign language in order to be able to deal with everyday conversations. This ability should, according to the informants, be gained in several different languages and not just one. However, according to 30% of the informants, especially knowledge of English seems to be important and should according to them be taught more intensively. Other languages that were explicitly mentioned were French (8%), Spanish (6%), Esperanto (2%), German (2%), and Italian (2%). Moreover, 8% explicitly added that Slavic languages should be included.

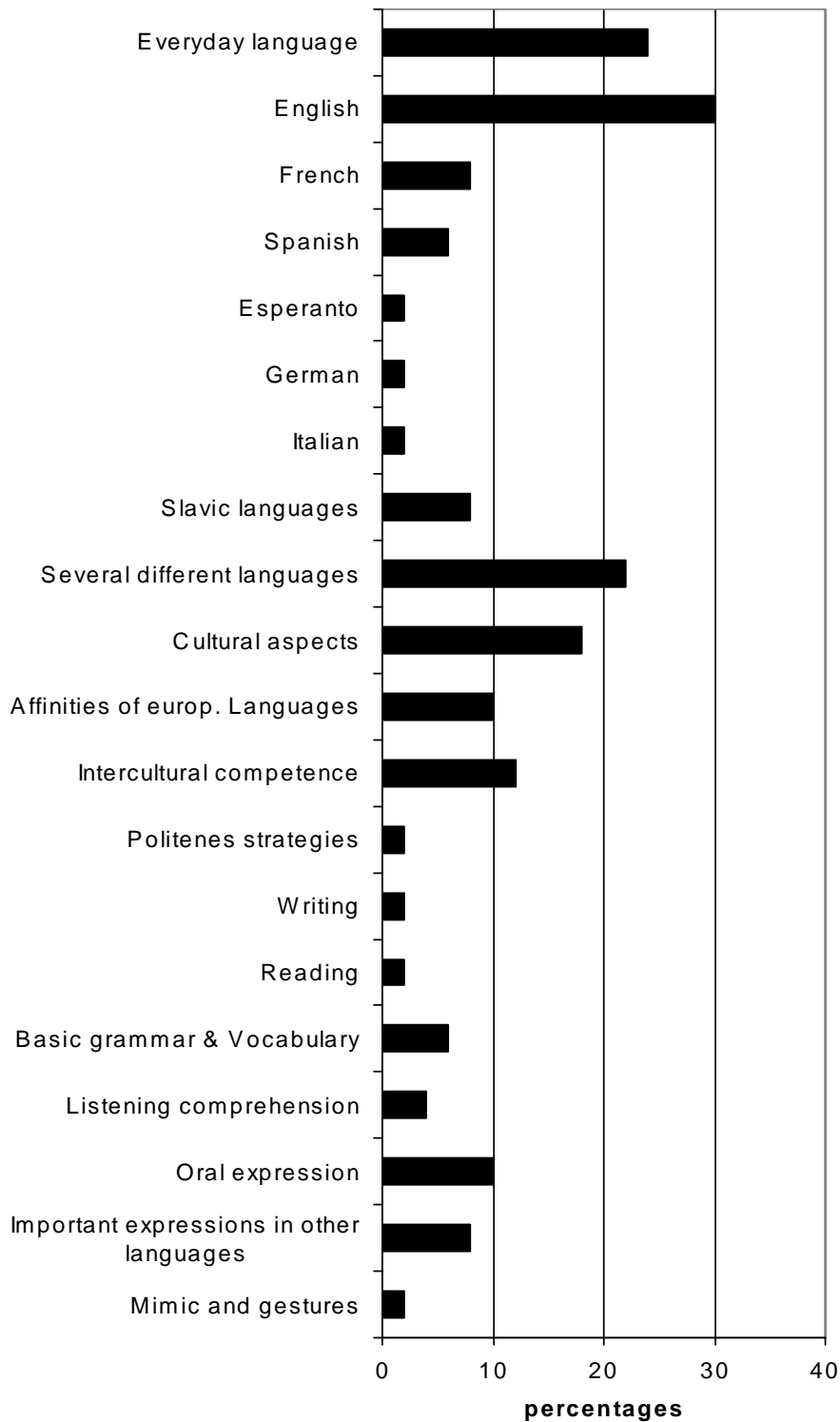
As important as language seems to be the conveyance of cultural aspects that are carried through language, as 18% mentioned.

Additionally, it seems essential to 10% of the informants to gain knowledge about the common historical roots, common elements and similarities of the European languages. Consequently, learners of a language competence program would be more aware of differences between languages.

Again, gaining intercultural competence as an important component of the program was pointed out by 12% of the informants.

2% also indicated that the program should, furthermore, convey politeness strategies and respect. The ability of writing and reading a foreign language is considered as important for the program by respectively 2%. The importance of the conveyance of basic grammar and vocabulary of a language was mentioned by 6%. Furthermore, listening comprehension is considered as important by 4%, whereas 10% explicitly stated that oral expression is very important for a program like this. 8% of the informants pointed out that knowledge of certain important expressions in other languages should be included in the program. Moreover, 2% said that a language competence program should imply knowledge about the meaning of certain important gestures and facial expressions within different cultures, which can result in misunderstandings, if not being aware of them or not knowing their meaning.

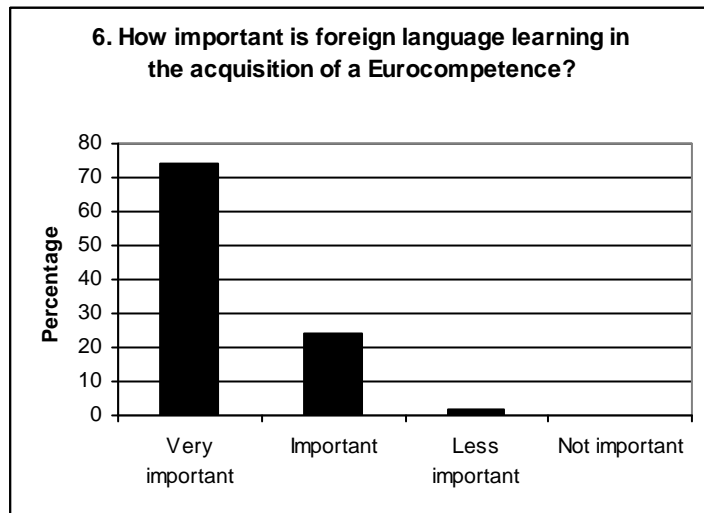
### Which skills should be conveyed by a language competence programme?



**3.2.6. Question # 6:** How important is foreign language learning in the acquisition of a Eurocompetence?

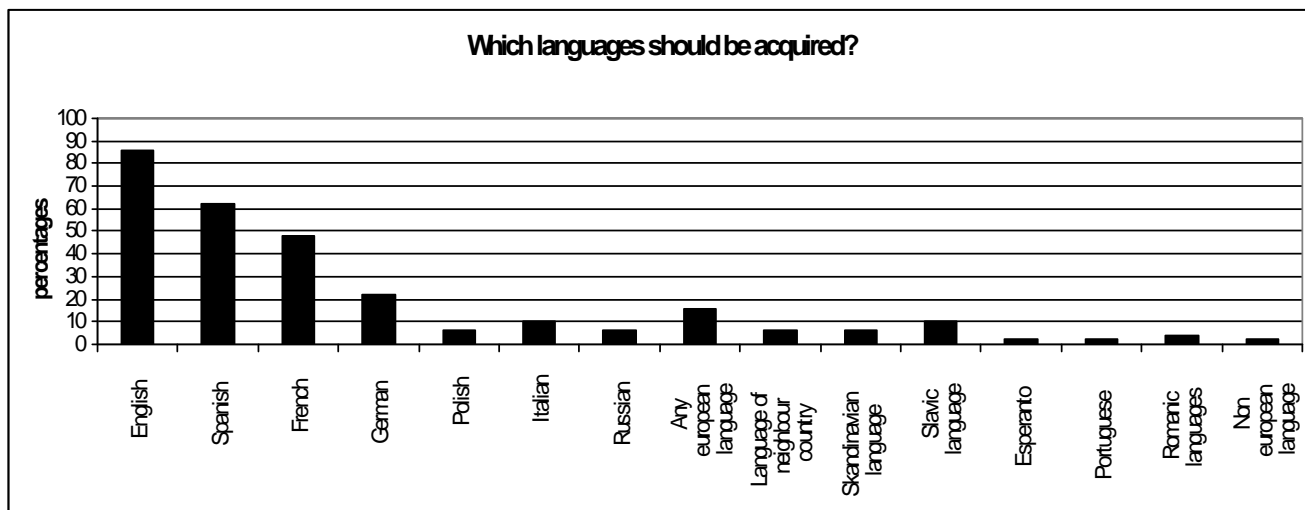
This question was answered quite clearly: The majority of 74% considers foreign language learning as very important; 24% still think that it is important, whereas the minority of 2% states that foreign language learning is less important.

This already indicates what will get more obvious in course of the analysis of the following questions, namely the importance of language for Eurocompetence.



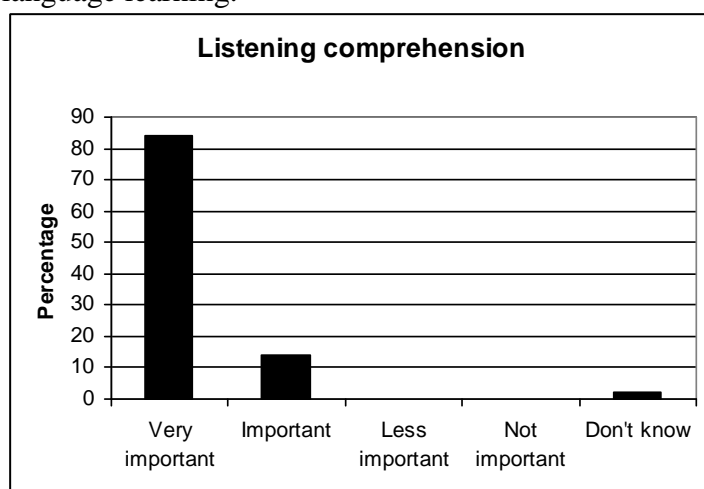
**3.2.7. Question # 7:** Which languages should be acquired?

The majority of 86%, first of all, ticked English as the most important language to acquire, followed by Spanish (62%) and French (48%). German also seems to be considered as an important language by 22%, which might have something to do with the fact that most of the informants were German; however, also the British informant ticked German. Italian and Slavic languages in general are respectively considered as important by 10% of our informants. Respectively 6% think that the acquisition of a Scandinavian language, Russian, Polish, and the language of a neighbour country is very important. The acquisition of Romanic languages is mentioned by 8% of the participants of the survey. Moreover, Esperanto and Portuguese are mentioned by respectively 2%. 2% also indicated that it should not necessarily be a European language, but could also be a non-European language instead. 16% of the informants pointed out that it ought not necessarily to be a specific language, but could be any language a European citizen would like to learn.



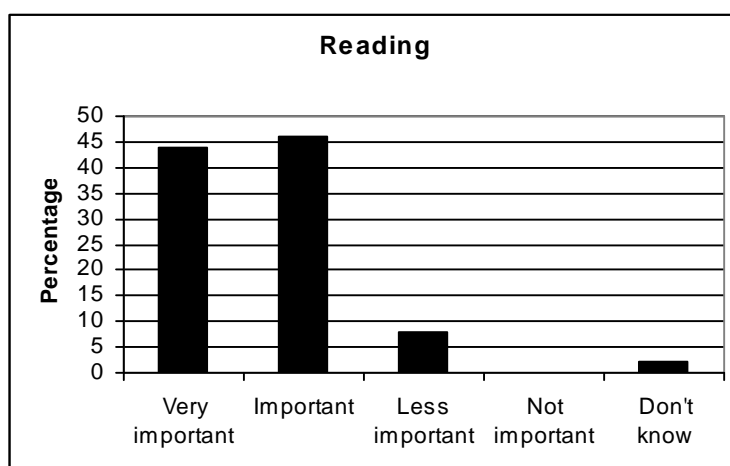
**3.2.8. Question # 8:** Which level should be acquired in these languages? How important are the following language competences?

Question #8 was subdivided into five categories. The informants had to assess the importance of “Listening Comprehension”, “Reading”, “Speaking”, and “Writing”, as well as the importance of “knowledge of proverbs and citations” that should be acquired in foreign language learning.

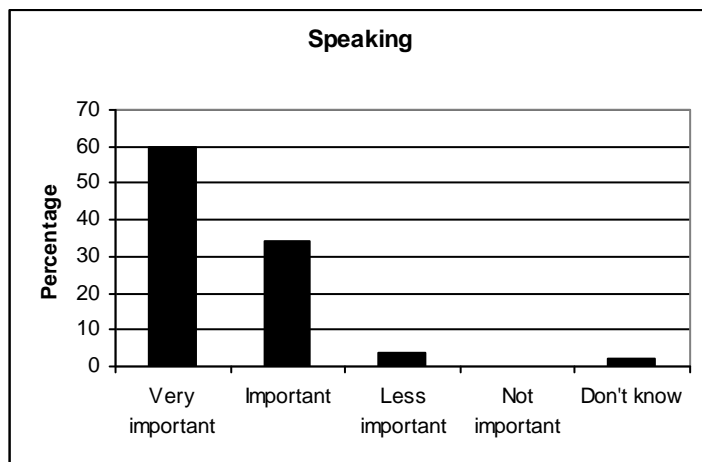


“Listening Comprehension” was considered as very important by most of the informants, namely 84%. 14% still considered it as important.

When it comes to the ability of “Reading”, according to the participants of the survey, the result is not as definite as the one of “Listening Comprehension”. There is only a very narrow difference between very important (44%) and important



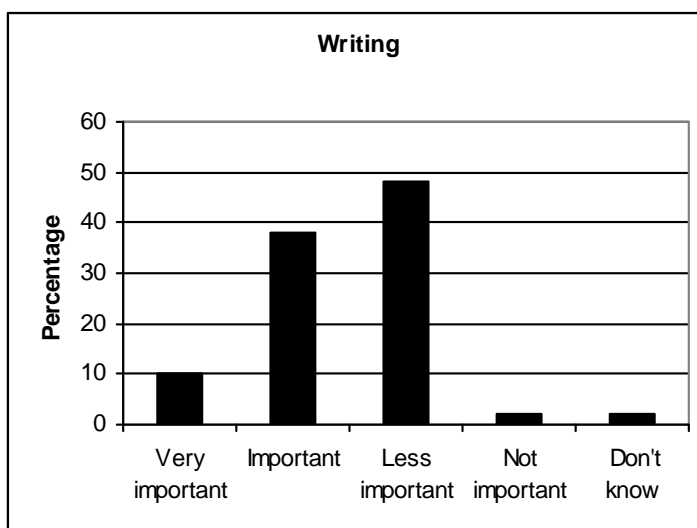
(46%). Moreover, 8% of the informants think that “Reading” is less important as a foreign language competence.



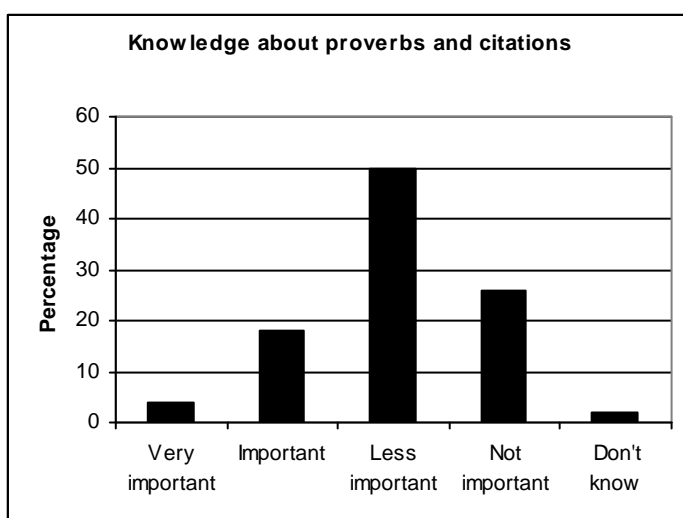
When it comes to the importance of being able to speak a foreign language the majority of 60% thinks that it is very important. 34% still consider “Speaking” as important, while a minority of 4% thinks of it as less important.

As far as the importance of “Writing” is concerned this language

competence is not considered as very crucial. 10% consider being able to write in another language as very important. It is still considered as important by 38% of the informants, whereas almost half of them, namely 48%, think of it as less important. A minority of 2% considers “Writing” as not important at all.



The last subcategory of question #8 is concerned with the knowledge about proverbs and citations in a foreign



language. Half of the informants think that this competence is less important, and 26% think that it is not important at all. 18% still think that knowledge about proverbs and citations is important, whereas a minority of 4% considers it as very important.

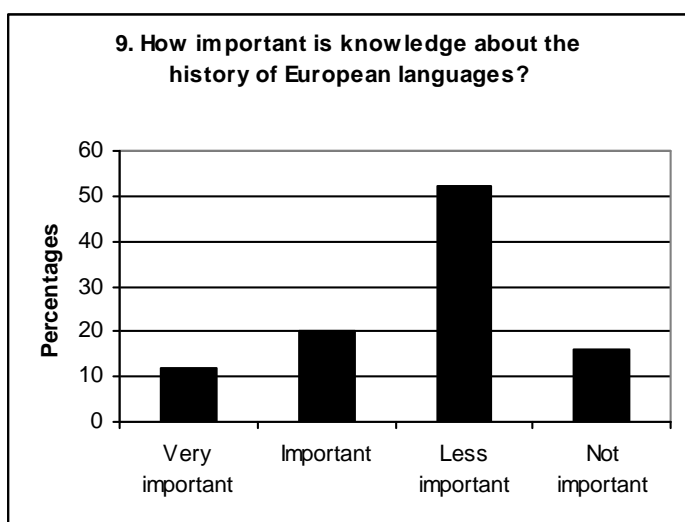
Taking all the answers of this question in consideration, the ability

to understand a foreign language, as well as being able to speak it, is considered as the most important aspects in foreign language learning. “Reading” is still considered as important, but

not as important as “Listening Comprehension” and “Speaking”. The ability to write in another language is not considered as very essential in language learning, and according to our informants knowledge of proverbs and citations is regarded as quite insignificant for foreign language learning compared to the other abilities.

Comparing the last answer to the fields of study of the informants the majority of those who considered the knowledge of proverbs and citations as important, or even as very important, were mostly students of either French or English linguistics. This might be connected with the instance that they are more aware of linguistic aspects in language learning as students of other fields of study are, as it is engaged with their studies.

**3.2.9. Question # 9:** How important is knowledge about the history of European languages?

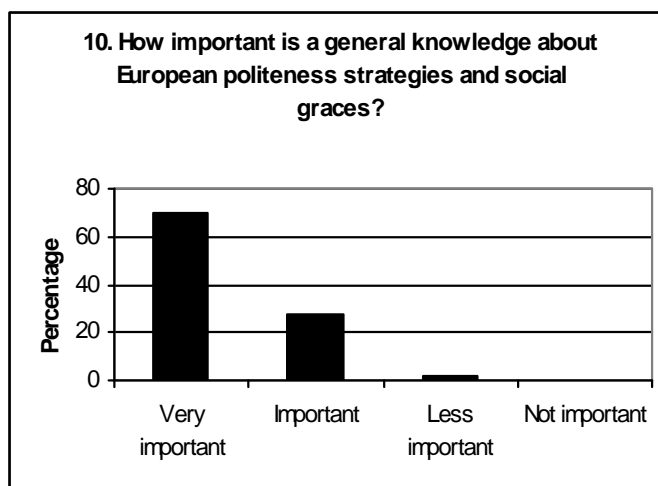


Knowledge about the history of European language is considered as less important by more than half (52%) of the informants, and even as not important at all by 16%.

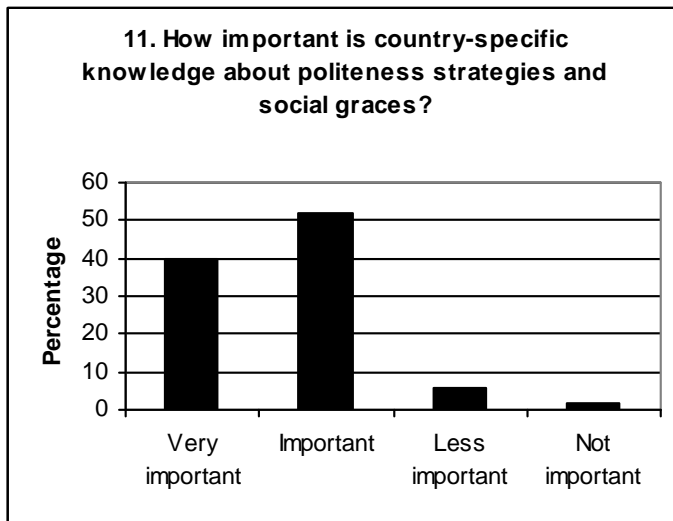
Still, 20% think that this knowledge is important, and 12% consider it as very important.

**3.2.10. Question # 10:** What do think? How important is a **general** knowledge of European politeness strategies and social graces? (e.g. salutations and leave-taking, compliments, apologies, pleas, how to say thank you).

A general knowledge about politeness strategies and social graces is regarded as very important by the vast majority of 70% of the informants. 28% still think it is important, and only 2% think that it is less important.



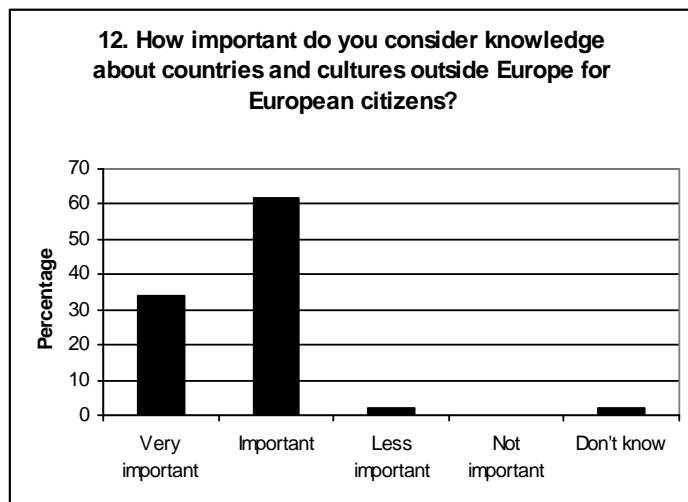
**3.2.11. Question # 11:** How important is **country-specific** knowledge of politeness strategies and social graces? (e.g. in some countries it is more important to address a people with their title than in other countries).



When it comes to a country-specific knowledge 52% of the participants of the survey think that this knowledge is important. 40% regard this knowledge as very important. A minority of 6% thinks that it is less important and only 2% consider it as not important.

**3.2.12. Question # 12:** How important do you consider knowledge about countries and cultures outside Europe for European citizens?

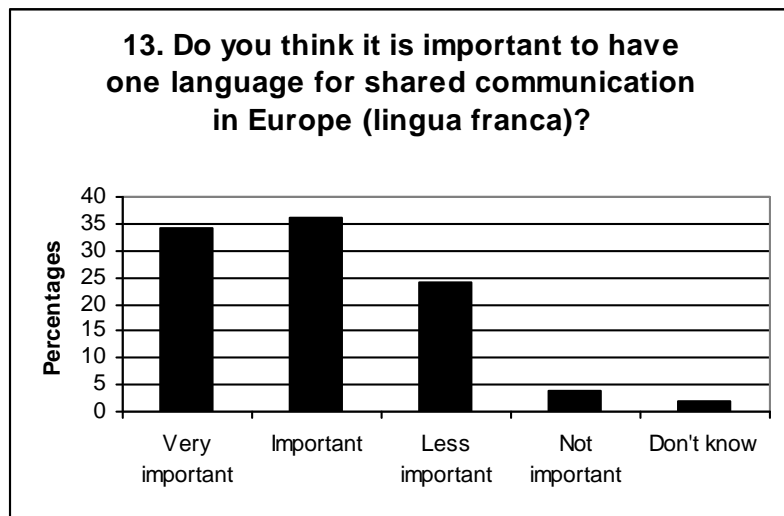
Even though the survey focuses on Europe, it also seems to be quite important to the informants to have and gain certain knowledge about countries and cultures outside their own continent. More than half of them (62%) think that it is important, and 34% consider it as very important. 2% think that it is less important.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> One informant gave two answers and could therefore not be included in result. Hence, this informant's answer is listed as "Don't know".

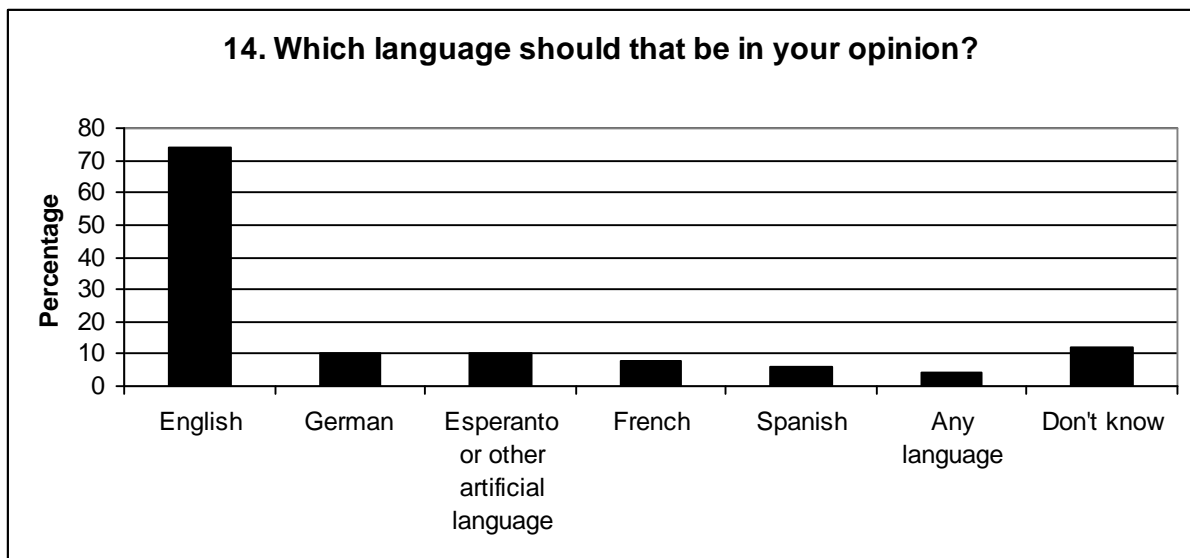
**3.2.13. Question # 13:** Do you think it is important to have one language for shared communication in Europe (lingua franca)?

34% of the informants think that a shared language in Europe would be very important, and 36% still consider it as important. However, 24% regard a lingua franca for Europe as less important, and 4% even have the opinion that a language for shared



communication would not be important at all.

**3.2.14. Question # 14:** Which language should that be in your opinion?



The majority of 74% think that English should be the European lingua franca. However, German (10%), French (8%) and Spanish (6%) were mentioned as well. Furthermore, 10% of the informants suggested that it could or should be Esperanto or another artificial language. 12% of the informants did not give an answer to that question. 4% stated that it should not be any specific language.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> It has to be added that quite a few informants mentioned English only, whereas others mentioned English and also other languages at the same time.

## 4. Language learning in the EU

Taking the survey carried out among European students into consideration, language seems to be a very important part of Eurocompetence. Language learning is also considered and regarded as a very important aspect by the EU, and thus, foreign language learning is promoted and supported by the EU.

In 2003, just a year before the (Eastern) enlargement of the European Union up to 25 members in 2004, the European Commission had launched an Action Plan for promoting foreign language learning and linguistic diversity. It is aimed for building on already existing programs that promote foreign language learning and the linguistic diversity. The emphasis is put on life-long language learning, as well as on the improvement of language teaching and the support of a language friendly environment. (cf.: <http://europa.eu:80/languages/de/chapter/27>)

Was 450 Millionen Bürger unterschiedlicher ethnischer Herkunft, mit unterschiedlichen Kulturen und Sprachen vor allem brauchen, sind Sprachenkenntnisse und kulturelle Kompetenz, um sich miteinander zu verständigen.“ (<http://europa.eu:80/languages/de/chapter/27>)

The aim is to promote all the languages – even the regional and minority languages – and provide more possibilities to learn another language, the use of the Internet in language learning and offering the opportunity to watch movies in the original versions with subtitles. (cf.: <http://europa.eu:80/languages/de/chapter/27>)

Therefore the EU subsidise programs such as the Erasmus program, which offers students in Europe to study for some time at a University in another European country as a part of their studies. (cf.: <http://europa.eu:80/languages/de/chapter/26>)

...nichts motiviert so sehr, die Sprache eines anderen Landes zu lernen, wie die Aussicht auf einen längerfristigen Auslandsaufenthalt. ERASMUS-Studierende haben Anspruch auf einen Sprachintensivkurs, bevor sie ins Ausland aufbrechen. (<http://europa.eu:80/languages/de/chapter/26>)

## 5. Eurocompetence

Taking the results of our survey into consideration, Eurocompetence certainly does not only include knowledge of language, but also knowledge of Europe in general.

In order to get a bit closer to the subject of Eurocompetence and what has to be done in European language policy in order to achieve it, first of all, the contents of Eurocompetence have to be defined closer.

So as to be competent for Europe as a European citizen from any European country, people would have to gain a certain knowledge that will improve the overall situation in Europe. The survey that has been analysed in the previous chapters already gives an idea what students

think is part of a Eurocompetence. First of all, foreign language learning is considered as very important or important by the vast majority. According to the informants, however, languages do not necessarily have to be studied until eventually everyone is fluent in a particular language. Language teaching and learning certain has to be focused on “partial skills” (Schröder 2004: 278). This can also be noticed in the answers given in the survey. Listening comprehension is considered as very important, as well as the skills “speaking” a foreign language and “reading” are considered as important, whereas writing does not seem to play such an important role. Hence, this would certainly have an influence on foreign language teaching, which will be discussed further on. Apart from the usual language learning, which especially includes grammar and vocabulary, politeness strategies and knowledge about social graces are also part of Eurocompetence. The informants of the survey have the opinion that a general knowledge as well as a country-specific knowledge is important, but it can be observed that there is a tendency towards considering a general knowledge as more important than a country –specific knowledge.

Even though language is a very important part of Eurocompetence, it does certainly not make up all of a Eurocompetence. Basic knowledge about Europe will also help to establish a shared identity and might enable the people of Europe to identify themselves with their continent and tolerate each other (more).

Since language is nevertheless very important for Eurocompetence this raises quite a few questions: Should there be one language for shared communication in Europe, as most of the informants of the survey think is important, and which one should that be.

#### **4.1. English as lingua franca?**

There is no doubt that English has already become some sort of a global lingua franca, despite the fact that it does not have the most speakers in the world and in Europe. (cf.: <http://www.europa-digital.de/aktuell/dossier/sprachen/lingua.shtml>)

In Europe English is spreading further and further. The EU officials are not sure yet if this development can be considered as good or bad, but it raises the question whether English could be established officially as the lingua franca in Europe.

Taking the survey into consideration again, more than 60% of the informants think that a language for shared communication in Europe should be English. The other languages that were mentioned fell way back behind English.

Moreover, English has become the most important language by far when it comes to science. In 1996 90.7 % of the scientific publications were published in English. Not only in the field of science, but also in political, economic and technical contexts had the importance rose,

internationally as well as in Europe itself. (cf.: <http://www.europa-digital.de/aktuell/dossier/sprachen/lingua.shtml>)

Nevertheless, establishing English as the one language in Europe that eventually has to be learned by everyone, involves problems. There will always be the danger for all the other languages to lose importance and status, which will probably bring out resentment against English. As a result the small minority languages will most likely lose more of their status than they already do at present, and might eventually disappear forever. This would cause a great loss for Europe with its many different languages that are so characteristic for it. The main problem with English is that the language is, most of the time, related with English or American culture, and is not considered as simply a language.

With all people, (...) language is bound to be a sensitive subject; it is surrounded with a great deal of emotion. Measures affecting the use of people's mother-tongues can easily be perceived as serious threats to individual and group identities." (van Els 2004: 46)

Furthermore, if English is established as the one language, considering the many different varieties of English, which one should be taught to European pupils?

Die britische Presse jedweder Couleur mokiert sich seit Jahren über das angebliche Brüssler Traumtänzerium: Englisch als Euro-Sprache sei die Lösung für den sprachlichen und kulturellen Partikularismus Europas und im übrigen faktische längst etabliert. Dabei gehen die sprachenpolitisch weniger Aufgeklärten unter den Briten freilich von britischem English als Leitvorstellung aus, womit sie nur Opfer einer Spielart europäischer Traumtänzerie werden, nämlich der, dass ein paneuropäisches Englisch auch in Zukunft noch am Londoner Standard orientiert sein werde. (Schröder 2004: 267)

Although it has to be considered that a completely new and artificial language could be established, the fact that English is, nevertheless, for the most parts already accepted and spoken by many people, cannot be ignored.

The problem with English as the one and only official language in Europe, however, would also confront with the issue of the policy of the EU that every single language has the same status and, hence, is equally important, as the EU...

...would like to avoid at any cost the situation that any minority group is denied the right to communicate in its own language, or – for that matter – that the group 's language is suppressed in any way or that the group in question is put at a disadvantage because of its native language. (van Els 2004: 45)

However, the fact that there are so many different countries and languages in Europe, establishing English as the lingua franca does not necessarily mean that all other languages step aside. The idea must be that multilingualism is set up all over Europe. This does not mean only the mother-tongue and English, but at least learn a further language and at best several more.

The mother-tongue and English could therefore be the basis for language learning, and the third language would then be learned as soon as possible. Hence, the establishment of multilingualism in Europe would be an important part of Eurocompetence.

## **4.2. Cultural aspects**

The basis for any kind of knowledge is mostly set during childhood, and continues and grows all the way through the school career. The majority of informants of our questionnaire argue that competences for Europe should be taught and learned at school. Although many different subjects, such as history, language learning or geography deal with aspects and facts concerning Europe there is no such thing as a subject that includes all essential aspects that have to deal with Europe, and would offer the pupils specific knowledge about their continent. Hence, it would be useful to have a subject that deals only with matters and issues concerning Europe. Especially certain knowledge about cultural differences, and differences in politeness strategies, and social graces could avoid, or at least help a lot in critical incidents in intercultural communication. Getting to know more about our European neighbours and their cultures might help to establish a better understanding of each other, and probably improve the relationships between people from different countries. This way stereotypes and prejudices might disappear and bring all Europeans closer together.

Eurocompetence, thus, seems to consist of both language and cultural aspects.

Introducing a special subject at school and making it a part of every school education of any European country seem to be the way to go. An attempt will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **5. “Europe” as a subject in school**

As mentioned before language is an important aspect to be considered in order to establish a shared European identity and to be competent for Europe. However, other aspects also have to be considered as well.

A shared identity and Eurocompetence cannot just be expected to establish. Without a doubt, there has to be put a lot effort into it, and how could this be done better as starting already at the earliest age possible – in school, pre-school or even kindergarten?

The idea is to have a special subject in school that provides the pupils with sufficient knowledge about Europe. The subject – here, simply called “Europe” – would exist of different categories that will help to set up a better understanding of Europe in general, as well as getting to know specific facts about the different countries, since stereotypes and

prejudices are always based on people not knowing enough about other cultures, values and ways of life that exist in other countries and which may often vary a lot from their own. Gaining knowledge already in early childhood would let these stereotypes and prejudices diminish, or at best even prevent them from developing at all.

## **5.1. The different parts of the subject**

### **5.1.1. History**

History should most likely make up an important part of the subject. This also seemed to be important to the informants of the survey we carried out among European students.

Knowledge in European history in general is included in this part. As this aspect involves a lot of topics that are already dealt with in ordinary history lessons this should only include aspects that are important for European relations and historical developments that have affected Europe and European relations, and maybe still do.

It could be started off by a general overview of the formation of Europe in the historical context. As the neighbour countries always play an important part the history of their relations, these should be pointed out. This way the pupils will understand their neighbour country in a better way and possible misunderstandings, stereotypes and prejudices might disappear.

Moreover, a brief overview of the history of the single European countries can be given. This could be a general overview about important historical events and dates. It could help to establish a better understanding of other cultures and countries.

Furthermore, the national information about the national holidays, and the reasons for them could be explained in greater detail. Certain important aspects concerning the history of the European language could also be included.

### **5.1.2. Geography**

This part of the subject should first of all start off with giving a general knowledge about the map of Europe. This includes the knowledge of the capital and the most important cities and regions of the European countries. This could be started as early as kindergarten. Maps of Europe will help very small children getting an idea of what Europe looks like already at a very early age.

It could be important to get information about certain regions that are growing and becoming important in an economic way in a European context. Information about the import and

export and the production of specific goods (i.e. goods that are typical for a country) should be conveyed to the students. This might already give an impression where future job opportunities are, as it is foreseeable that in the course of the globalisation and the growing together of Europe this will become more and more important in the future. In this context the most important industrial sectors of a country should be mentioned and, furthermore, their development and historical background could be explained.

All these features might also raise the question why a country developed this way and it might be related to its climatic factors.<sup>6</sup>

### **5.1.3. Civics**

The part of the subject that deals with civics almost certainly overlaps with the history component of the subject in some instances, as history already gives a short overview about the political systems and governments, the ones in the past as well as the present ones, of the European countries. However, civics can nevertheless be used to convey the political systems of each European country in greater detail. This includes the election system of a country and the structure of its political system. Furthermore, the civics component should also include the knowledge about the different kinds of government and the political leaders of a country. The differentiation between prime ministers, presidents and chancellors, and their work in their countries has to be pointed out to the pupils.

A further important aspect that ought to be included in the civics part should be the EU. Becoming more aware of what the EU does may even establish a stronger European feeling, as the actions are explained in detail and the EU government's importance is pointed out. This way, pupils are given an understanding of the single EU institutions and their functions and projects. Knowing the actions of the EU and what is aimed for with them might even identify the future generations stronger with the European government.

Moreover, the political relations between European countries as well as with non-European countries could be covered.

Another important aspect that should not be left out is the structure of society of the European countries. This could already, if not pointed out specifically as a component of the subject, include the different forms of politeness and different cultural markers.

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<sup>6</sup> If there is not an extra-cultural component, geography could already be used to teach some cultural features of a country that are related to geographical features, such as holding a siesta in Spain, which is related to the climatic features of the country.

Moreover, the differences between the different societies can be presented and might improve the understanding of each other and negotiate intercultural misunderstandings and differences.

#### **5.1.4. Economy and Law**

Again this component of the subject most likely overlaps with history and geography. The economical situation and the legal system of the EU as well as the single European countries could be explained to the pupils this way. The way the legal system of the EU and works can be pointed out, and hence, the pupils would get to know what is essential for them to know about the European Union. Some features about the law system and regulations etc. that are practiced in the various countries, and in what way the systems of European countries differ from each other can be pointed out. Especially differences between the economy and the legal systems could be pointed out, which again might play an important role for the future jobs of the pupils.

#### **5.2. Language and Culture**

Although English is spreading further and further within Europe this must in no way lead to bilingualism with just the mother tongue and English, when there is the chance to promote multilingualism of three or even more languages. The language issue seems to make up a great share of a Eurocompetence which should be an essential part of the education of the citizens of any European country.

The problem of this project, however, would be to convince pupils to learn a further language after they would already be fluent in the European lingua franca, and they would know that everyone in Europe does so as well. Consequently, making language learning more attractive for pupils should be one of the main goals.

Learning the first foreign language could be started as early as kindergarten (age 3-4) or pre-school (age 4-5). This way it could be taught in a playful way and without pressure. Learning at least one further language should be compulsory during everyone's school career in any country. Learning the second foreign language could then be started at the age English does (in Germany) at the moment – at the age of 10. It should be possible to choose the second foreign language freely according to everyone's interest, but it could especially be focused on the language of the neighbour countries.

The language aspect could also be included in the “Europe” subject in the way that similarities between languages are presented to the pupils - the *EuroCom* method could be used for this purpose (cf.: [www.vep-landau.de/bzf/2006\\_44/12\\_RezKempinger\\_135-137.pdf](http://www.vep-landau.de/bzf/2006_44/12_RezKempinger_135-137.pdf))

This way foreign language learning would most likely be encouraged, as it might make the pupils want to learn one of these languages as they will realise that because of similarities it is not as difficult to learn another language of the same language group.

Language, however, is a feature that might be a little problematic to be involved in the subject. As there are already language classes in school, it is not clear whether it should also be included in the subject “Europe” or just be kept up with ordinary language teaching.

One way of including it would be teaching the subject in a different language every year and this way give every language that is studied a chance. Thus, important terms are already conveyed in a foreign language and not only in the mother tongue. This could make it easier for future jobs. The teaching languages could then rotate every year –mother tongue, English and second foreign language.

Moreover, the language part could also cover the differences in politeness forms and communicative conventions that are used in European countries. Pupils will get to know why some people from another country seem overly polite or impolite in comparison to their own culture. Awareness of the differences in politeness strategies is raised and could eliminate future misunderstandings and reduce (negative) stereotypes that accrue in this context, when meeting someone from another country. The main and most striking differences regarding politeness and communicative differences can be pointed out and be explained. An intercultural understanding will be developed and the pupils will be aware that someone from another country is not impolite in what he or she is saying, but uses a different politeness strategy which implies politeness in his or her country although it might seem impolite to someone from another country.

Die relative Vielfalt der Sprachsysteme spiegelt sich auch in einer gewissen Vielfalt der Sprachgebräuche wieder. Slowaken etwa mögen auf Grund ihres knappen Redestils auf Fremde zunächst schroff wirken; die hat jedoch nichts mit Unhöflichkeit zu tun, sondern ist eben slowakische Höflichkeitskonvention (...). Im Restaurant fehlt häufig in Großbritannien ein Satz wie „Guten Appetit!“, in Spanien beim Abräumen des Geschirrs eine Frage wie „Hat es Ihnen geschmeckt?“. Dieses Fehlen ist normal, auch wenn es auf andere Europäer zunächst unhöflich wirken mag. (Grzega 2006: 210)

However, explicit knowledge about politeness strategies in certain languages could be covered in the language courses as well, whereas general politeness strategies and communicative conventions of the languages that are not learned explicitly should also be included in the “Europe” subject.

Höflichkeitskonventionen tragen dazu bei, dass die Menge der möglichen Reaktionen auf jeden gegebenen Sprechakt eingeschränkt wird und dass unter bestimmten stark rekurrenten situativen Bedingungen Sequenzen von Sprechakten und zum Teil von Formeln für ihre Realisierung antizipierbar werden. In dem Maße, wie derartige Antizipationen durch wiederholte Bestätigung verstärkt werden, kommt es zur Ausbildung routinisierter Sprechakt- und Formelsequenzen,

wobei letztere die Präferenz einer Gruppe bezüglich der sprachlichen Bewältigung von Standardsituationen reflektieren, um sozial anerkannt zu werden. (Coulmas 1981: 113)

### **5.3. Language teaching**

It is probably asked too much to also involve language and culture in the subject. Therefore, language teaching might have to be changed as well.

Not only for the language policy that has to be purchased in the EU institutions, but also in the context of language teaching at European schools, the eastern enlargement of the EU has a certain influence.

Not only for the language policy that has to be purchased in the EU institutions, but also in the context of language teaching at European schools, the eastern enlargement of the EU has a certain influence. The fact that there are several new official Slavic languages cannot be ignored and has to be included in the new concept of foreign language teaching. Of course, no one can be forced to learn any certain language; however, every pupil in Europe should at least be offered the opportunity to learn a Slavic language. The second language that is learned at school should therefore be the pupil's choice and could be any European language – as far as the school has teachers for that language.

What should be aimed for particularly is that learning English is not enough, just because of the reason that everyone understands it and it therefore seems not worth bothering to learn any further languages. Other languages have to be supported as well and a general willingness and enjoyment for language learning have to be established and supported.

As mentioned before teaching English could already be started at the earliest age possible, in kindergarten or pre-school. This would of course demand for specially educated and trained teachers.

It is proved that it is easiest to learn a language when starting as soon as possible. Children who grow up bilingual will always have advantages in their future life. They do not have to practice grammar or study vocabulary, but learn two languages at the same time. (cf.: Montanari 2002)

However, this is just a minority, but in regard to the great advantages it could be considered that a sort of bilingualism could be offered to every child.

What has to be considered in this context is that the countries with native speakers of English should be encouraged to learn another (European) language as compensation for not having to learn English.

## 6. Conclusion

Taking everything into consideration, there is a chance for Europe to finally become a united continent. Certainly a lot more has to be done by the EU, the single governments as well as the European citizens themselves.

Eurocompetence should for the most part consist of knowledge of European languages, but also of knowledge of cultural aspects, such as politeness strategies, and basic knowledge of Europe in general. Gaining a good and basic knowledge about the European continent will possibly advance a shared European identity. In order to improve the language situation in Europe multilingualism, with English as the first foreign language, could be promoted in any European country, because

**“Sprachen verbinden Menschen”** (Götze 2004: 337)

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## 8. Attachments

### 8.1. Survey

#### Questionnaire

Hello! Thank you very much for taking part in our survey! We are students of English Linguistics and are working on a project called “Eurocompetence“ that deals with the question which linguistic and intercultural skills should be acquired by Europeans in order to advance the European community not only on the political and economic, but also on the cultural level.

Based on your answers we want to develop a programme for teaching and learning such “Eurocompetences“.

1. In your opinion, is there something like a shared European identity?

2. What is the first thing that comes into your mind if you think about “Europe“?

3. Which skills and knowledge about Europe do you consider as crucial for an European citizen?

4. How could such skills be acquired?

5. Which skills should be conveyed by a language competence programme?

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6. How important is foreign language learning in the acquisition of a Eurocompetence?

Please mark with a cross.

Very important	Important	Less important	Not important

7. Which languages should be acquired?

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8. Which level should be acquired in these languages? How important are the following language competences? Please mark with a cross.

	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important
Listening comprehension				
Reading				
Speaking				
Writing				
Knowledge about proverbs and citations				

9. How important is knowledge about the history of European languages? Please mark with a cross.

Very important	Important	Less important	Not important

10. What do think? How important is a **general** knowledge of European politeness strategies and social graces? (e.g. salutations and leave-taking, compliments, apologies, pleas, how to say thank you). Please mark with a cross.

Very important	Important	Less important	Not important

11. How important is **country-specific** knowledge of politeness strategies and social graces? (e.g. in some countries it is more important to address a people with their title than in other countries). Please tick.

Very important	Important	Less important	Not important

12. How important do you consider knowledge about countries and cultures outside Europe for European citizens? Please mark with a cross.

Very important	Important	Less important	Not important

13. Do you think it is important to have one language for shared communication in Europe (lingua franca)? Please mark with a cross.

Very important	Important	Less important	Not important

14. Which language should that be in your opinion?

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15. Which languages do you speak?

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16. Are you interested in learning more foreign languages? If yes, which languages would you like to learn and why?

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17. Statistical information:

1. Please tick.

male	female

2. Age:

3. Study course:

4. Nationality:

5. Have you already been abroad (European countries) for a longer period of time?

## 8.2. German abstract

Diese Seminararbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, welches Wissen und welche Fähigkeiten ein Europäer besitzen sollte um kompetent für Europa zu sein.

Um dies zu erreichen wurde eine Umfrage unter europäischen Studenten durchgeführt. Die Befragten mussten sich zu verschiedenen Fragen zum Thema Europa äußern und die Wichtigkeit verschiedener Kompetenzen im sprachlichen Bereich bewerten. Anhand der Ergebnisse stellte sich heraus, dass Sprachkenntnisse einen großen Teil einer Eurokompetenz ausmachen, kulturelles Wissen und kulturelle Aspekte aber keineswegs außer Acht gelassen werden können.

Da sich solch eine Kompetenz nicht einfach von heute auf morgen vermitteln lässt, wurden Überlegungen angestellt, bereits in der Schullaufbahn der Europäischen Bürger ein Unterrichtsfach zu etablieren, welches eben diese Inhalte und dieses Wissen vermitteln soll. Die verschiedenen Bereiche dieses Faches wurden in Geschichte, Geographie, Sozialkunde, Wirtschaft und Recht, sowie sprachliche und kulturelle Aspekte unterteilt. Auf diese Art und Weise könnten Stereotype und Vorurteile bereits sehr früh widerlegt oder entstehen bestenfalls erst gar nicht. Trotzdem bleibt die Frage bestehen, in welchem Ausmaß Fremdsprachenkenntnisse in das Unterrichtsfach miteinbezogen werden sollen, oder ob diese weiterhin nur im Fremdsprachenunterricht behandelt und vermittelt werden sollen.

Des Weiteren stellt sich die Frage welche Rolle das Englische beim Thema Eurokompetenz spielen soll und darf. Obwohl die wichtige Bedeutung des Englischen auch von den Teilnehmern unserer Umfrage noch bestärkt wurde, sollte es nicht das Ziel sein das Englische über alle anderen Sprachen zu stellen. Anstelle dessen sollte alle Europäischen Sprachen gleich behandelt werden, um schließlich das Endziel „multilinguales Europa“ zu erreichen.