

The background of the cover features a photograph of three young people (two women and one man) smiling and holding the European Union flag. The flag is blue with twelve yellow stars arranged in a circle. The image is partially obscured by a semi-transparent blue overlay containing text and logos.

INEES

Introduction to EU
Education for
Secondary Schools



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



How well do we know each other?

*Secondary-school Students' Attitudes towards the European Union –
Research Results*

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Secondary-school Students' Attitudes towards the European Union - Research Results



SECONDARY-SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION - RESEARCH RESULTS



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of the European Union



PUBLISHER:

Novi Sad School of Business
Vladimira Perića-Valtera 4
Novi Sad

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ISBN:

Novi Sad, April 2022

The publication *Secondary-school Students' Attitudes towards the European Union - Research Results* was prepared within the framework of the Jean Monnet project "Introduction to the European Union: Education for secondary schools," number: 610767-EPP-1-2019-1-RS-EPPJMO-PROJECT, funded by the European Union and co-financed by the Provincial Secretariat for Finance.

CIP - Каталогизacija у публикацији
Библиотеке Матице српске, Нови Сад

061.1EU:316.654-053.6(497.11)

KOLIKO se dobro poznajemo? [Elektronski izvor] : rezultati istraživanja o stavovima srednjoškolaca o Evropskoj uniji / [autori Ana Jovičić Vuković ... et al.]. - Novi Sad : Visoka poslovna škola strukovnih studija, 2022

Način pristupa (URL): <http://inees.vps.ns.ac.rs>. - Opis zasnovan na stanju na dan 29.4.2022. - Nasl. s naslovnog ekrana.

ISBN 978-86-7203-199-7

a) Европска унија - Ставови средњошколаца - Резултати истраживања – Србија
COBISS.SR-ID 65102857

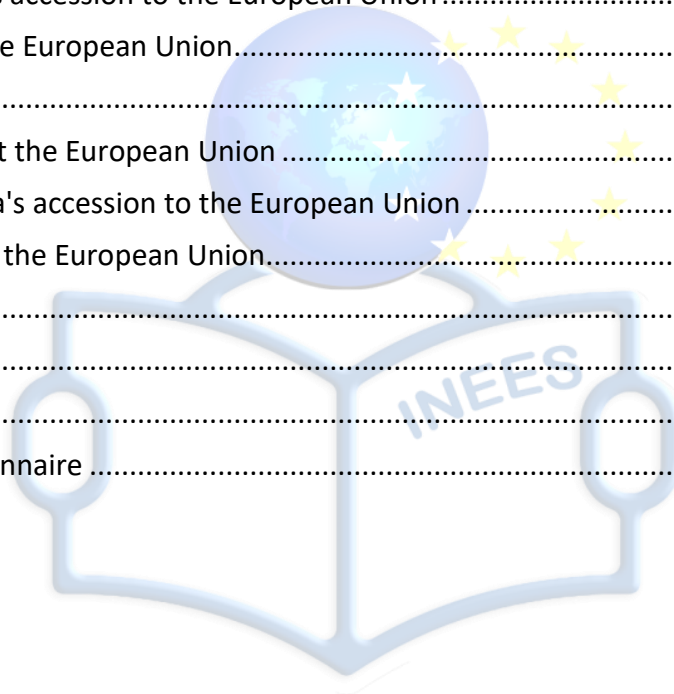
Cover illustration: Greek City Times. Source <https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/12/15/europe-sets-2022-year-of-youth-to-empower-and-celebrate-young-people/>



The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects only the views of the authors and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

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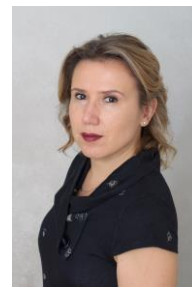


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Introduction

Joining the European Union is a strategic priority of the Republic of Serbia. Previous research has shown that citizens' support for European integration has varied over the years (Institute for European Affairs, 2020; European Policy Centre, 2019; Ministry of European Integration, 2019). The latest survey, conducted on the general population in December 2019 by the Ministry of European Integration, indicates a minimal increase in support of European integration. However, the question arises as to whether this is the case among young people.

Several reports and surveys on citizens' views regarding the European Union and Serbia's accession to the European Union are published annually in Serbia. However, there have not been many reports focusing only on young people aged 15 to 20, i.e., secondary school students. This population usually appears as one of the segments in reports covering all age categories, where it is not given any special attention. Additionally, such reports often do not specifically analyse essential issues for young people, such as opportunities for study, employment, internships, volunteering, etc. Research in which young people are singled out as a particular category has shown that young people generally have a neutral attitude towards the EU and that there is a tendency for negative attitudes to grow (KOMs, 2018).

The Student Association BEUM research (2014), which focused on secondary school students, indicates a noticeable increase in Euroscepticism among young people. Encouraged by the fact that young people, i.e., secondary school students, will be the ones to decide on Serbia's entry into the EU in a future referendum, we have decided to conduct research focusing on the young.

In line with the above, this research has two objectives:

- First, to synthesise and present the attitudes of young people through a literature review, i.e., research that has been conducted so far, but to focus on the results regarding secondary school students;
- Second, to get a comprehensive insight into the views of this age category on the European Union, their willingness to support Serbia's EU accession process, as well as other important issues concerning the European Union, through primary research on a sample of secondary school students in Serbia.

Therefore, the results of this research will be a basis for further study and for the creation of measures and activities for the development of proposals for advocacy campaigns and other activities aiming at informing and educating young people on EU-related topics. Also, the report can serve as a significant source of information for all the stakeholders dealing with young people and EU-related issues, for whom the European Union membership can be particularly important.



Review of previous research

Citizens' attitudes towards the process of Serbia's accession to the EU, with a particular emphasis on the secondary-school population

This chapter offers a brief overview of previous reports on citizens' views on the issues regarding relations between Serbia and the European Union in the last seven years, i.e., from 2014 to 2020. We will specifically focus on the results concerning young people as a separate age category.

The latest published results include a survey entitled ***European Orientation of Serbian Citizens - Public Opinion Poll***, conducted regularly by the Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia. The 2019 quantitative field survey covered 1,050 citizens on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, excluding Kosovo and Metohija. The results provide an insight into citizens' attitudes, but the young are not distinguished as a particular category.

The survey recorded a slight increase in the support for the EU membership, from 53% in July 2019 to 54% in December 2019. The percentage of those opposed to EU membership fell to 24%. Regardless of the changes, still, only slightly more than half of Serbian citizens support Serbia's entry into the EU.

Out of the total number of respondents, 39% have a positive association with the EU, while the number of citizens who have a negative association with the EU has increased slightly. 42 % think that Serbia's membership in the European Union is positive, whereas 22% think it is negative. The results indicate a reduction in the number of those who believe membership is neither good nor bad for Serbia.

According to the respondents, the benefits that the European Union offers to Serbian citizens are more employment opportunities (16%), the path to a better future for young people (16%) and the possibility to travel freely to EU member states (15%).

Furthermore, there are more citizens who believe that they personally would not benefit from Serbia's accession to the European Union (30%) than those thinking that their country would not benefit from it (26%).

The Institute for European Affairs and Ninamedia conducted research in 2019 on a sample of 1,206 respondents on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, excluding Kosovo and Metohija. The results were presented in the publication ***Serbian Citizens' Attitudes towards the EU (2019)***. The data collection method was CATI, a quantitative survey through computer-assisted telephone interviewing.

Key research results showed that the majority of Serbian citizens (43.1%) rate the relationship between Serbia and the EU with a grade 3, 23.8% with a grade 2, 15% with a grade 1, 13.9% with a grade 4. In contrast, only 4.1% of respondents rated the relationship with a grade of 5.

On a scale from 1 to 5, the average rating of Serbia-EU relations is 2.68. Young people aged 18-29 rated the relationship with a slightly better - 2.83. Also, respondents with a university degree and residents of the region of West Serbia with Šumadija rated the relations better.



Picture 1. Publication *Serbian Citizens' Attitudes towards the EU (2019)*¹

53% of the respondents support Serbia's membership in the European Union, 40% do not, while 7% did not know how to express themselves on this issue. Most respondents who support Serbia's EU membership are over 60 years old.

Regarding benefits from the cooperation, 62% of the respondents believe Serbia benefits from the cooperation with the EU (respondents aged 30 to 45 and over 60 and those with a university degree), whereas 30% believe that Serbia does not benefit from cooperation with the EU. Only 8% did not know how to express themselves on this issue.

Additionally, 27.1% of the respondents believe Greece is Serbia's biggest friend, slightly less cited Germany (25.7%), 11.6% do not know how to express themselves, while only 8% mentioned other countries. 31% of respondents think Serbia's biggest enemy in the EU is Croatia, 28.7% list the United Kingdom, 14.9% Germany, while 19.3% do not know. 22.5% of the respondents believe that Serbia has the best relations with Hungary, 21.7% listed Bosnia and Herzegovina, while 18.2% mentioned Montenegro. Also, 52.9% believe that when it comes to relations with neighboring countries, we have the worst relations with Croatia, while 31.9% mention Albania.

Regarding information about the European Union, 46% believe there is insufficient information about the EU (mostly women, respondents with primary and secondary education, and residents of Eastern and Southern Serbia). The most significant number of the respondents state they most often receive information about the EU from the Government of Serbia through the media (29.3%). As a source of information, 19.5% of respondents cited schools, universities, and personal contacts. Family, friends, and personal contacts, are cited by 16.2% of respondents. As a source of information, 15.5% of respondents mention NGOs, the media, and personal contact.

If a referendum on Serbia's EU membership were called tomorrow, 48% would vote *in favour* (more residents of Western Serbia with Šumadija than other regions), 35% *against* (mostly

¹ Source: The Institute for European Affairs and Ninamedia Research (2019). *Serbian Citizens' Attitudes towards the EU, public opinion poll*, The Institut for European Affairs, Belgrade. <https://iea.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Stav-gra%C4%91ana-Srbije-prema-EU-mart-2019-final-2.pdf>



residents of Vojvodina), 9% would not vote, while 8% do not know how they would vote. **Young people aged 18 to 20 said the following: 44.3% would vote *for*, 38.5% would vote *against*, 10% would not vote, and 7.2% did not know how they would vote.**

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FEZ) recently published results of research on youth - ***Youth in Serbia 2018/2019***. The study was conducted on a sample of 1,170 respondents aged 14 to 29 (selected using the random sample method). The Centre for Free Elections and Democracy (CESID) directly interviewed respondents from 22 January to 1 March 2018 in 48 places in Serbia (excluding Kosovo and Metohija).



Picture 2. Publication *Youth in Serbia 2018/2019*.²

The results showed that most young people do not trust the institutions of the president, parliament, government, media, and trade unions. The same applies to all the international institutions analysed: the EU, the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for European Security and Co-operation (OSCE), the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

When asked whether Serbia should join the EU, a third of respondents believe that Serbia should join the EU (36%), while more than a quarter of them do not share that opinion (27%). Many young people did not know the answer (26%) or did not even answer this question (11%).

The report states that the young people who have a less pronounced sense of national pride and attachment to Serbia are those who oppose Serbia's entry into the European Union.

Accession to the EU is more supported by young people who identify with Europe to a greater extent. The more strongly one identifies with the Serbian nation, the less inclined they are to the idea of joining the European Union.

56.1% of the respondents stated that Serbia should join the EU, and 43.9% said it should not.

² Source: Friedrich Ebert Foundation: Youth in Serbia 2018/2019. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/belgrad/15295-20190411.pdf>



The usual fears regarding Serbia's accession to the European Union, such as the negative effects on the Serbian economy or national identity, are not so common among young people. On the contrary, **most young people actually believe that there are positive effects on the economy, political system and cultural identity.**

Although many young people have not given a 'valid' answer to these questions, young people who see the negative effects of European integration are in the minority. When it comes to perceptions of the impact of accession to the European Union, one significant and very pronounced factor is the initial position on whether Serbia should or should not join the EU. Those who believe Serbia should join the European Union see far greater positive effects on the Serbian economy, political system and cultural identity.

In addition to the body of research focusing only on Serbia, the report ***Balkan Barometer 2019*** (2019) focused on six countries from Southeast Europe (North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Serbia) and included 6,120 respondents aged 18+.



Picture 3. Publication *Balkan Barometer 2019*³

When asked whether they see EU membership as a positive, negative, or neither positive nor negative, respondents from Serbia are predominantly neutral on this issue (38%), followed by those with a positive attitude (32%). 21% have a negative attitude, and 9% do not know the answer. Compared to other countries in the region (North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania), Serbia has the highest percentage of neutral answers and the highest percentage of answers with a negative attitude toward EU membership.

When asked what EU membership means explicitly for them, respondents from Serbia mainly indicated that it implies freedom to travel (29%), economic prosperity (28%) a, and freedom to study and work in the EU (28%). For 15% of the respondents, there is nothing positive about the EU, while 16% believe joining the EU means losing economic sovereignty.

³ Source: Balkan Barometer 2019.

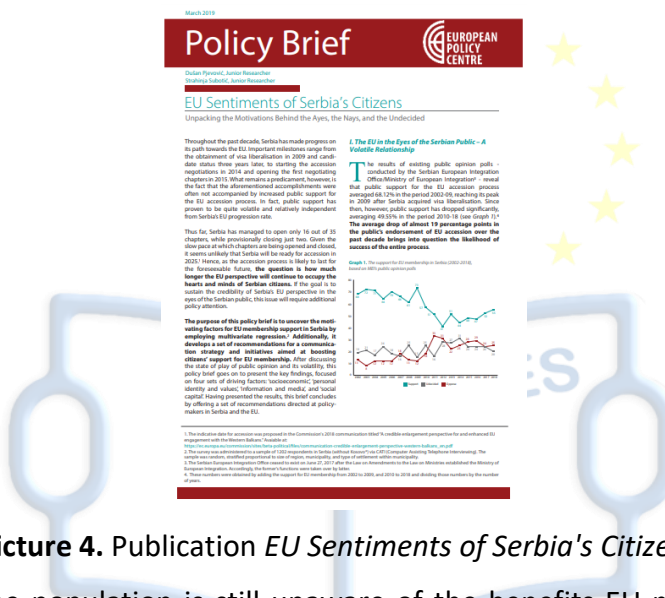
https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2019.pdf

When asked when they expect Serbia to become an EU member, the highest percentage of respondents from Serbia believe this will never happen (33%), while 21% think that it will happen by 2030.

In December 2017, the Centre for European Policy (CEP) surveyed citizens' attitudes towards EU accession. 1,202 citizens from the territory of Serbia (excluding Kosovo) were interviewed by telephone.

CEP's **EU Sentiments of Serbia's Citizens report** (2019), showed that 46.80% of the citizens support EU accession, 25.38% are against it, and 27.82% are indecisive on this issue.

CEP research showed that the most important reasons for supporting EU accession are socio-economic, i.e., the citizens who stated that they are financially stable tend to support EU membership more. Also, the citizens who believe that membership will positively affect the economy of the Republic of Serbia are more supportive of the membership.



Picture 4. Publication *EU Sentiments of Serbia's Citizens*⁴

A significant part of the population is still unaware of the benefits EU membership could bring. When asked if they had heard of any EU-funded projects, 72% of Serbian citizens responded negatively. This is somewhat worrying, given that the EU has been the most significant donor in Serbia since 2000. The results also show that the more liberal values people hold (those who are more open, less religious, and more ready to accept other people), the more they are prepared to support the EU membership.

Also, this report states that if citizens believe that the EU accession will positively affect their economic position or the economic situation of the entire state, they are more likely to be in favour of Serbia's EU membership. In addition, the commitment to this option is also present among citizens who have more liberal attitudes. Similarly, supporting Serbia on its path to the EU depends on the amount of information respondents have on the EU, how interested they are in

⁴ Source: Centre for EU policies (2019). EU Sentiments of Serbia's Citizens, Belgrade. <https://cep.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/EU-Sentiments-of-Serbia%E2%80%99s-Citizens-1-1.pdf>



the EU topics, and their social inclusion (social capital) level. However, socio-economic factors have by far the greatest influence on citizens' attitudes towards the EU and, above all, the belief that EU membership will positively affect the national economy.

The research *Evaluation of the Effects of the Civic Education Course - 10 Years After (2019)* also indicates that young people are generally 'Euroscptics'. A minority of young people believe that **Serbia's entry into the EU is an important matter and most find it difficult to name some of the undisputed benefits of this process, except for improving relations with other countries (49%), increasing the quality of education (42%) and employment rate (44%).** Fear of large companies (44%) and foreign capital/ownership in national wealth (40%) are aspects of EU accession that most often worry young people.

The National Youth Council of Serbia – NYC conducted significant research among the young in the period from May to July 2018 on a sample of 1,200 young people aged 15 to 30 on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The results were published in the *Alternative Report on the Position and Needs of Youth in the Republic of Serbia (2018)*.

When it comes to the first reaction to the notion of the European Union, **the largest number of young people were neutral and indifferent (40%), 33% had a negative reaction, and only 27% reacted positively.** Also, the report states that when the new results are compared with the results from 2017, the number of young people that perceives the EU negatively increased. When asked whether they support Serbia's entry into the EU, 43% of young people said yes, 38% said no, while 20% do not know.



Picture 5. *Alternative Report on the Position and Needs of Youth in the Republic of Serbia* ⁵

⁵ Source: The National Youth Council of Serbia (2018). *Alternative Report on the Position and Needs of Youth in the Republic of Serbia – 2018*, Belgrade. <https://koms.rs/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Alternativni-izves%CC%8Ctaj-o-polo%C5%BEaju-i-potrebama-mladih-2018..pdf>



When asked whether they think life would be better if Serbia joined the EU, 18% do not know, 24% think it would be better, 22% think it would be worse, and 36% think it would be the same. **Compared to the answers from 2017, the percentage of young people who believe they would live worse after Serbia enters the EU increased.**

Regarding the question of whether the EU guarantees peace and stability for Serbia, the mean values fell from 2.5 in 2017 to 2.2 in 2018 (rating scale 1-5). When asked if Serbian people would lose their national identity by joining the EU, the mean value was 2.6 in 2017, and 2.5 in 2018.

As for the opportunities Serbia's EU membership brings, the mean values are as follows: membership brings more travel for young people - 3.8 in 2017 and 3.7 in 2018; membership brings better job opportunities and more earnings - 3.7 in 2017 and 3.4 in 2018; membership brings better quality education - 3.4 in 2017 and 3.2 in 2018. All values varied from 2.9 to 3.8 in 2017, but slightly lower values were recorded in 2018 (2.6 to 3.7). The values were lower in 2018 than in 2017 for all the claims offered: Serbia will be safer; Serbia's reputation in the world will be increased by joining the EU; entering the EU will ensure the rule of law, human rights protection and faster democratisation. The results regarding Serbia's reliance on the EU in foreign policy remained the same, although the support for Serbia's EU entry fell in 2017 and 2018.

The results of this research indicate that negative attitudes toward the EU and Serbia's European integration tend to grow among young people.

Furthermore, in April 2017, the European Movement in Serbia and the Faculty of Political Sciences conducted a survey on the territory of Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohija), as a part of the *Europe for Me* project, to collect information on the degree of preparedness of citizens to make an informed decision at the future referendum on Serbia's EU membership. The primary target groups were youth, the media and the general population in Serbia. The results (*Serbian citizens' Attitudes towards the European Union, 10-17 April 2017*) indicate that:

- Young people have the least confidence in the European Union and, of all age groups, are the least supportive of Serbia's entry into the EU;
- The content about the European Union shared by the media is difficult to understand, and every third respondent states that the news about the EU is boring;
- Disinterest in following political developments and news about the EU, and the lack of information generate prejudice and lead to confusing, unfounded and irrational attitudes, especially among the older population.

The survey included young people aged 18-34. **The results show deep mistrust of the EU (60.2%) and the non-governmental sector (61.6%).** Also, there are more young people who believe that they are informed (51.7%) than those who think they are not; and they get informed via the new media (68.8%). When asked who they trust when they want to find some verified information on the EU, the largest percentage of the young, compared to other respondents, answered that they do not trust anyone (48.3%). 50.8% believe they are sufficiently informed to make a decision in the referendum, and 55.4% would vote to join the EU. It is concluded that the great support of young people to enter the EU is a myth. **The research clearly shows that being well-informed directly and significantly raises support for Serbia's entry into the EU.**

The European Movement in Serbia and the Faculty of Political Science also researched young people's attitudes - ***Serbia and Europe in the Eyes of the Young (2016)***. The survey was conducted in April 2016 on a random stratified sample of 979 respondents aged 15 to 29, on the territory of Serbia, including Kosovo and Metohija. The research aimed to examine the attitude of young people in Serbia towards the socio-political situation in the country, European integration and Serbia's membership in the European Union, as well as their opinion on participation in political processes in the country, membership in political parties and voting.



Picture 6. Publication *Serbia and Europe in the Eyes of the Young*⁶

Respondents aged 15-18 accounted for 21.3%, while secondary school students accounted for 23.4% of the total sample of respondents.

Regarding the geographical aspect that most defines their identity, for 16.4% of respondents it is the place where they live, for 16.7% the geographical area where they live. 9.5% think it is Europe, and 13.5% the whole world. The largest number of the respondents, 43.9%, stated that this was Serbia.

When asked who Serbia should rely on in the EU, the largest number of respondents said it was Russia (42.6%), and 34.1% stated they did not look at politics in such a way. Out of the total number of respondents, 19.4% declared that it would be the EU, while 3.9% mentioned the USA. As the largest donor in Serbia, the respondents mentioned the EU (22.3%), Russia (21.3%), the USA (3.8%), Japan (5.9%), China (4.7%), and Germany (5.4%).

Regarding information about the EU, the largest number of respondents stated that they were partially informed (42.5%). A similar number of respondents think they are mostly well-informed or have little information about the EU (24.3% and 21%, respectively). 7.8% believe

⁶ Source: Faculty of Political Sciences and the European Movement in Serbia (2016). *Serbia and Europe in the Eyes of the Young*, <http://www.arhiva.emins.org/uploads/useruploads/vesti/Srbija-i-Evropa-u-o%C4%8Dima-mladih,-istrazivanje-stavova-mladih,-jun-2016.pdf>



they are very well-informed, while the smallest number of respondents think they have almost no information (3.9%).

To the three questions testing how informed the respondents are about the EU, 51-53% answered correctly, while between 47 and 49% did not know the answers to the questions.

The dominant Source of information about the EU is TV (30.8%), followed by Internet newspapers (29.2%), Internet portals (15.8%), social networks (11.7%), newspapers (7.3%) and radio (1.2%), while 6.3% of respondents stated that they do not get informed.


When it comes to EU-related information in secondary school curricula, 8.2% think that there is enough, and 44.4% believe that there is some but not enough information. The highest percentage, 47.4%, believes that there is no information. 50.6% of young people have a positive association to the term EU, whereas 49.4% of young people have a negative association.

As positive aspects of life in the EU, most young people mention jobs (42.2%) and a well-organised society (26.8%). In terms of negative aspects, young people declare that they have no reason to live in the European Union (42.4%), i.e., that they would feel like second-class citizens there (23.7%).

Regarding the impact of Serbia's entry into the EU, 39% of young people believe that it would be positive, 37% that it would be negative, and 24% think that nothing would change. The current situation would improve according to 54% of respondents, it would deteriorate according to 25%, while 21% think nothing would change.

Young people believe they (33.7%) and politicians (32.6%) would profit the most from joining the EU. Asked if they support Serbia's entry into the EU, 40% of young people say they support it, 33% do not, and 27% have a neutral attitude.

Table 1. Eurosceptics characteristics

EUROSCEPTIC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• male• aged 15 to 18• from the rural environment• primary or secondary education• locates his identity locally• in favour of cooperation with Russia• rarely travels or has never travelled to EU countries• has no contact with EU peers• has never heard of any EU-funded projects	

Source: Faculty of Political Sciences and the European Movement in Serbia (2016). Serbia and Europe in the Eyes of the Young, <http://www.arhiva.emins.org/uploads/useruploads/vesti/Srbija-i-Evropa-u-o%C4%8Dima-mladih,-istrazivanje-stavova-mladih,-jun-2016.pdf>

Interestingly, based on these results, Eurosceptic and Euroenthusiast profiles were developed. The socio-demographic characteristics of the Eurosceptics are as follows: they are young people of secondary school age, from a rural background, with primary or secondary education, and are oriented locally. A more detailed description is given in Table 1.

In contrast, a Euroenthusiast is a female, aged 19 to 29, from urban environment, with a university degree, who locates her identity as cosmopolitan, globally (see Table 2 for more details).

Table 2. Euroenthusiast characteristics

EUROENTHUSIAST	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • female • aged 19 to 29 • from urban environment • university education level • locates her identity globally and cosmopolitan • in favour of cooperation with the EU • often travels to the EU countries • has regular contact with EU peers • has heard of or knows of an EU-funded project

Source: Faculty of Political Sciences and the European Movement in Serbia (2016). Serbia and Europe in the Eyes of the Young, <http://www.arhiva.emins.org/uploads/useruploads/vesti/Srbija-i-Evropa-u-o-C4%8Dima-mladih,-istrazivanje-stavova-mladih,-jun-2016.pdf>

Another important study involving the young is **Youth Attitudes towards the EU (2015)**, conducted by the European Movement in Serbia and the Youth Forum in April 2015, on a sample of 163 respondents aged 16 to 25.

Respondents agreed that Serbia belongs to Europe and the European cultural heritage (42.3% completely agree and 28.3% mainly agree). Young people disagreed (28% completely, 23.8% mostly) with the statement that only political elites would benefit from Serbia's EU accession. **Out of all the respondents, 17.7% see Serbia's membership in the EU as unrealistic, while 22.1% did not rate the statement, and 23.3% of the respondents mostly disagreed with the statement.**

When it comes to changes, most young people agree that Serbia's EU accession will bring increased youth mobility (45.4% completely, 18.4% mostly) and improvement of education conditions (37.4% mostly agree, 23.3% completely agree). However, the results indicate that the respondents also believe there will be an increase in the 'brain drain' trend (35% completely agree the trend will continue, while 27.6% mostly agree). In addition, the young believe Serbia's entry to the EU will bring changes in investments and jobs (32.3% mostly agree, and 16.6% completely agree).

Most young people believe decisions important for Serbia will be made mainly in Brussels (43.6%). Most respondents (38.4%) believe Serbia's EU entry will not jeopardise the Cyrillic script. Also, 35.6% believe Serbia's reputation in the world will grow by joining the EU.



The first positive associations to the EU are learning, curiosity and progress (55.5%). As for negative associations, respondents most often associated the European Union with the words: lie, fraud and blackmail (26.2%).

The first associations to the term *the EU Member States* are the following: regulated society (57.1%), better training and employment opportunities (42.3%) and quality of life (25.2%). Of the negative connotations, respondents associate the term *EU member states* with strict and rigid rules (20.9%), loss of national identity (19%) and inaccessible and cold people (10.4%). When it comes to Serbia's EU integration, respondents stand by their views regarding the first association with the EU, with a slightly smaller percentage (50%) of those for whom the process of Serbia's EU integration refers to learning, curiosity and progress, while 35.4% associate the process with the terms lie, fraud and blackmail.

Regarding personal attitude towards Serbia in the EU, 31.3% of the respondents stated Serbia's membership in the EU means nothing to them, which can be justified by the general lack of information about the situation in the EU and the fact that citizens do not know what the consequences of EU accession are.

When it comes to the time when Serbia will join the EU, the majority of respondents (46.6%) estimate that Serbia will join the EU in 10 to 15 years, 9.2% believe it will take more than 15 years, and only 6% think Serbia will enter the EU in less than five years. 11% of respondents did not choose any of the offered answers, while as many as 27% are convinced that Serbia will never join the EU.

Finally, the only research providing relevant data in the context of this project was ***Research on the informedness of the Students of Belgrade Secondary Schools about the EU*** conducted by the Student Association BEUM with the support of the EU Delegation in RS and the EU Info Centre. It was carried out in 2014 on a sample of 1,038 students from 30 Belgrade secondary schools.

This research was informed by the previous findings regarding the existence of Euroscepticism and uninformedness about the European Union among secondary school students and the lack of research in this age category. The study aimed to draw attention to the poor informedness of secondary school students about the European Union, lack of knowledge and education in this area, and lack of adequate information channels.

The research method was *ad hoc* quantitative research. The results showed that:

- 70.3% of the respondents rated their knowledge of the EU with 2 or 3 (on a scale of 1 to 5);
- 32.8% of the respondents want to know more about the EU;
- The most common method of getting informed about the EU are the media (66.1%);
- 43.5% want to be informed about the EU via the Internet (19.6%) and television (23.9%);
- 25.4% of respondents do not want to be informed about the EU.

Asked about how they would vote at Serbia's EU entry referendum, the highest percentage of the young people said they would vote *against* (38.4%), and 25.8% would vote *in favour*. Others would not vote or would not know how to vote in the referendum.

When it comes to the main associations to the EU, the highest percentage said it was freedom of travel (15.4%), loss of cultural identity (14.4%), and a stronger voice in the world (9.1%).



When asked about their general opinion on the EU, the highest percentage of young people stated it is neutral (43%), 34% have a negative view, 16% have a positive opinion, and 7% do not know what opinion they have.

The authors of the research indicate that the results speak in favour of the following facts:

- Student awareness is slightly higher than expected, but with much room for improvement;
- Poor informedness on EU institutions;
- Students are mostly aware of their level of knowledge about the EU;
- A third of pupils want to be further informed about the EU;
- Students are generally interested and want to be more involved - a potential to promote education about the EU;
- There is room for better integration of education about the EU in schools;
- Students are mostly informed about the EU via the media - a potential problem;
- More opposition to the European Union than approval (38% and 25% respectively);
- A high percentage of pupils are indecisive regarding entry into the EU (36%);
- A significant disparity between the main associations on the EU and the general attitude towards the EU - positive associations, negative attitude;
- Parents' education level and family financial situation impact students' attitudes towards the EU.

The authors recommend carrying out further activities to educate secondary school students, which would be operationalised within strategies and plans involving various actors (schools, NGOs, government institutions, parents and other educational centers). Other suggestions for improvement are more frequent extracurricular interactive educational (peer) activities on EU topics and the inclusion of secondary school students as a sensitive and future-oriented group in EU-related decision-making processes.

Chapter Summary:

Research dealing with citizens' views on the EU and Serbia's EU accession mainly focuses on citizens over the age of 18. A relatively small number of surveys which deal with youth as a special category (*Youth in Serbia 2018/2019 (2019)*, *Alternative report on the position and needs of young people in the Republic of Serbia (2018)*, *Serbia and Europe in the eyes of young people (2016)*, *Youth attitudes towards the EU (2015)*) indicate that a large percentage of young people (more than 1/3) would vote against Serbia's entry into the EU. Additionally, a significant number of the young do not know how they would vote or would not vote. Young people's reactions to the EU are mostly neutral and indifferent, and the number of positive reactions is the smallest. Also, negative perceptions of young people concerning the EU are growing. A large portion of the young state Serbia's entry into the EU would not bring a better life to Serbia's citizens. Furthermore, a growing percentage believes life would be worse if Serbia became an EU member. Compared to other age categories, the young have the least confidence in the EU and the least favour Serbia's entry into the EU. Also, a large percentage believe there is none, insufficient or not enough information about the EU in school curricula. A third of young people believe that Serbia will never join the EU, and the majority estimate that this will happen in 10 to 15 years.



There is a considerable gap in the literature on the young and the EU, with the 2014 ***Survey on Informedness of Students of Belgrade Secondary Schools about the EU***, being the only research focused on secondary school students. The problem is that since then the situation might have changed. Also the survey focused only on Belgrade, which limits the possibility of generalisation. Therefore, there is a need for further research into the current attitudes of the secondary school students, who will be deciding on Serbia's accession to the EU, and for designing additional activities aimed at empowering the young in order to equip the young with relevant information and knowledge about the European Union.

Research methodology

The survey of secondary school students' attitudes about the European Union and their information and knowledge about the European Union was conducted within the Erasmus + Jean Monnet project "Introduction to EU - Education for secondary schools - INEES", number: 610767-ERR-1-2019-1-RS-EPPJMO -PROJECT, approved and funded by the European Commission EACEA.

The research was conducted in two phases, from November 2019 to February 2020 and from December 2020 to January 2021.

995 students from 25 secondary schools from Serbia participated in the research. The sample consisted of secondary school students from four regions in Serbia - Vojvodina, Belgrade and the surrounding area, Western Serbia and Šumadija, Eastern and Southern Serbia.

The first part of the research was conducted in the classical paper-pencil form. Field research was conducted in 6 cities in Serbia on a sample of 387 secondary school students. An anonymous questionnaire was distributed to secondary school students during classes. All the participants were informed about the research objectives and the INEES project, within which the research is conducted before the start of the survey. The students completed the questionnaire during regular classes and during informational and educational events at the schools they attend.

In the second phase, an anonymous online survey was conducted online as classes were taught online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After approval by the secondary school management, the questionnaires were forwarded to individual teachers, who shared the link on the online platform used during classes. Students completed the questionnaire on a voluntary basis and were informed of the reasons and objectives of the research. In addition, the questionnaire was available online on the INEES project website, the EUTutor platform and the EUTutor Facebook page.

In the second phase of the research, a total of 608 validly completed questionnaires were obtained.

For the needs of the research, a questionnaire was created (Appendix 1), which consisted of four parts, i.e. a total of 30 questions. The first part of the questionnaire is related to demographic data - gender, place of residence, age, school name, educational profile, the year the student attended, success during the previous school year, mother's and father's education level and the financial situation of the family. One question referred to the geographical determinant the respondents are most connected to. The questions in the second part were about information about the EU - how one can get informed, how respondents perceive the level of their own data, whether



information about the EU is obtained in secondary school, what kind of information is obtained, whether respondents were, and how much, interested in obtaining information about the EU.

The third part of the questionnaire examines respondents' views on Serbia's accession to the EU - when Serbia will become a member, the quality of life in Serbia after Serbia joins the EU, how they would vote at a referendum on Serbia's EU accession, the main association and general opinion on the EU, do they have confidence in the EU. The respondents also assessed the positive and negative aspects of joining the EU and the impact of Serbia's entry into the EU on their lives.

The fourth part of the questionnaire refers to general knowledge about the EU, knowledge of EU values and institutions, and the financial assistance mechanisms and conditions that Serbia needs to meet in order to join the EU. One set consisted of five test questions on well-known facts about the EU, where respondents answered with *Yes*, *No* or *I do not know the answer*, and the other was selfassessment.

The collected data were analysed through the SPSS for social sciences. The statistical methods used to analyse the results are frequency analysis and descriptive statistics.

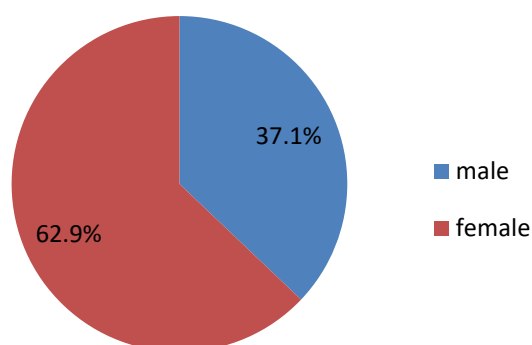
Research results

In the next part, the results will be presented. First, there is an overview of the sample's socio-demographic characteristics and then the results related to secondary school students' knowledge about the EU are given. Next, the answers concerning Serbia's accession to the EU are covered, while the last part presents the respondents' knowledge of the basic features of the EU.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

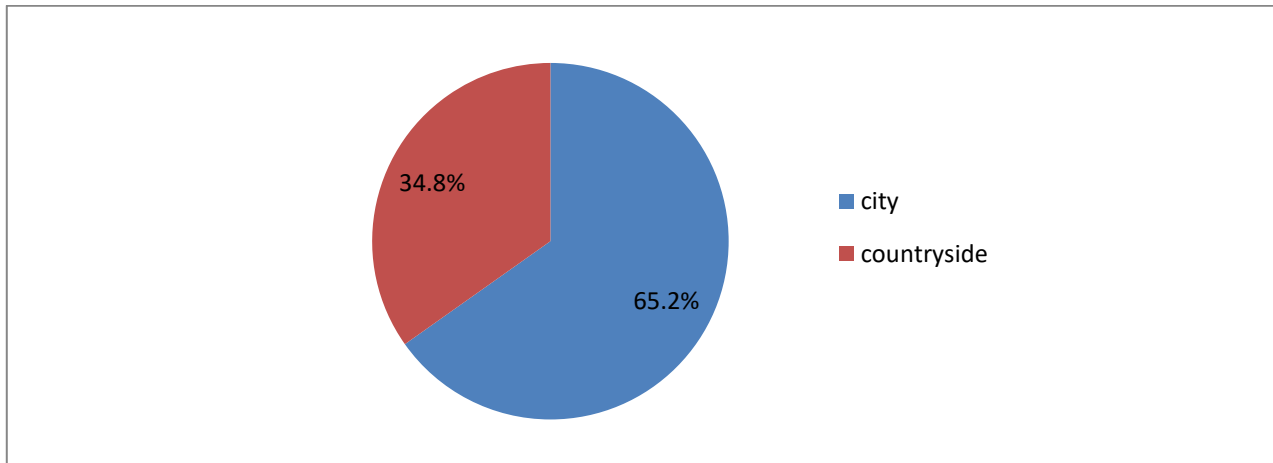
Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents include gender, place of residence, age, school name, educational profile, the year the respondent is currently enrolled in, success during the previous school year, parents' education and information on the family financial situation. In terms of gender, 368 male respondents (37.1%) and 625 female respondents (62.9%) participated in the survey.

Graph 1. Distribution of students by gender



Source: authors' research

Graph 2. Distribution of students by place of residence



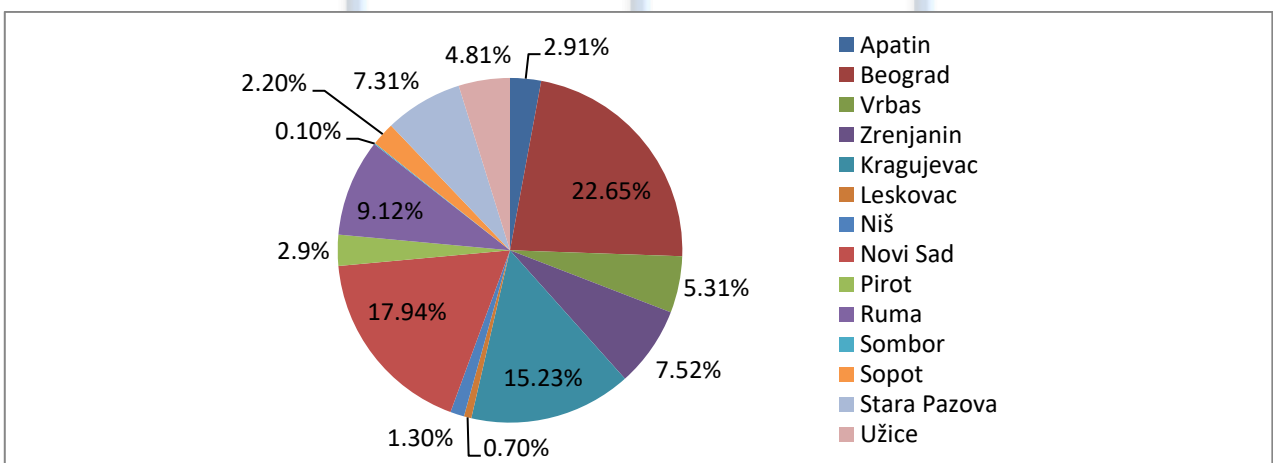
Source: authors' research

Regarding the place of permanent residence, the largest number of the respondents stated they live in a city (646 respondents - 65.2%), while 345 respondents stated they live in the countryside (34.8%).

Twenty-five secondary schools in Serbia participated in the research. The number of respondents varied from 1 to 185 per school.

Schools are located in 14 settlements in Serbia. The research covered four regions of Serbia: Vojvodina, Belgrade and its surroundings, Western Serbia and Šumadija, Eastern and Southern Serbia. The respondents are mainly from Belgrade (225), followed by Novi Sad (178) and Kragujevac (151). Graph 3. shows the percentage of respondents by places where the secondary school is located.

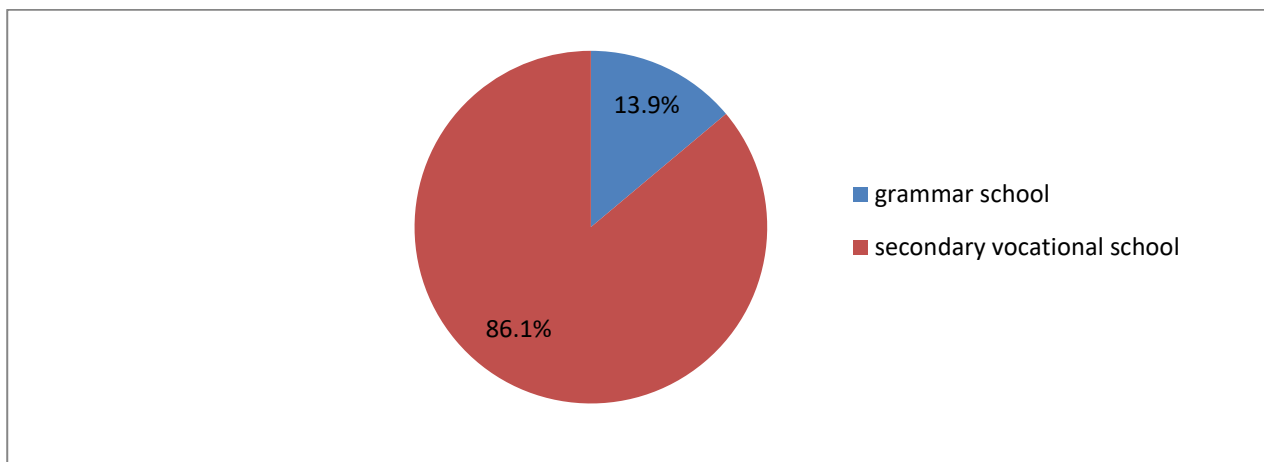
Graph 3. Distribution of students based on the place where they attend secondary school



Source: authors' research

Based on the school type, the largest number of respondents attend secondary vocational schools - 86.1% (849), while 137 respondents are secondary general education school students (13.9%).

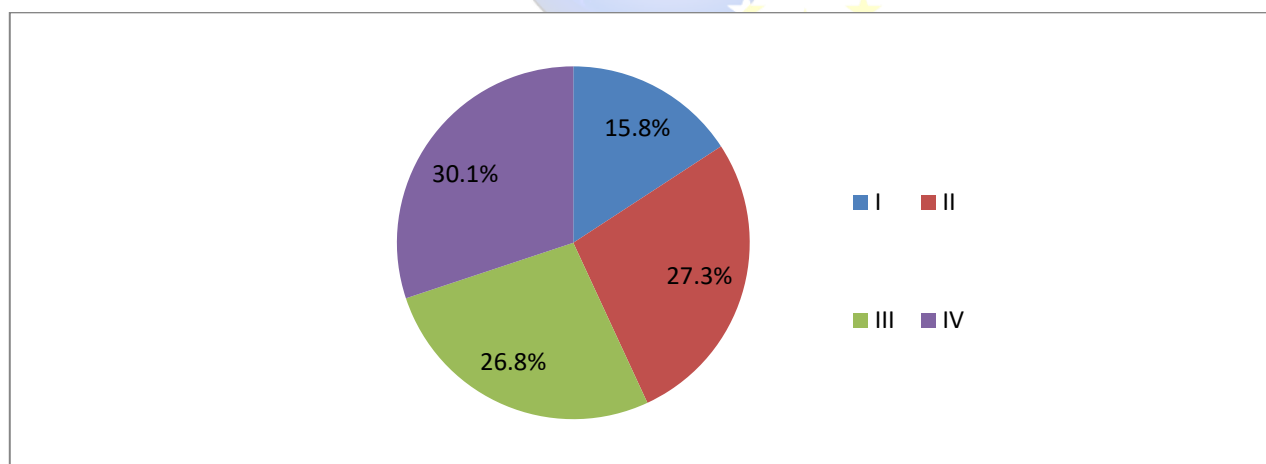
Graph 4. Students based on the type of the secondary school they attend



Source: authors' research

Based on the year they are currently attending, the smallest number of respondents are first-year students (155), followed by third-year students (263), second-year students (268) and fourth-year students, who form the majority of the sample (296) (see Graph 5.).

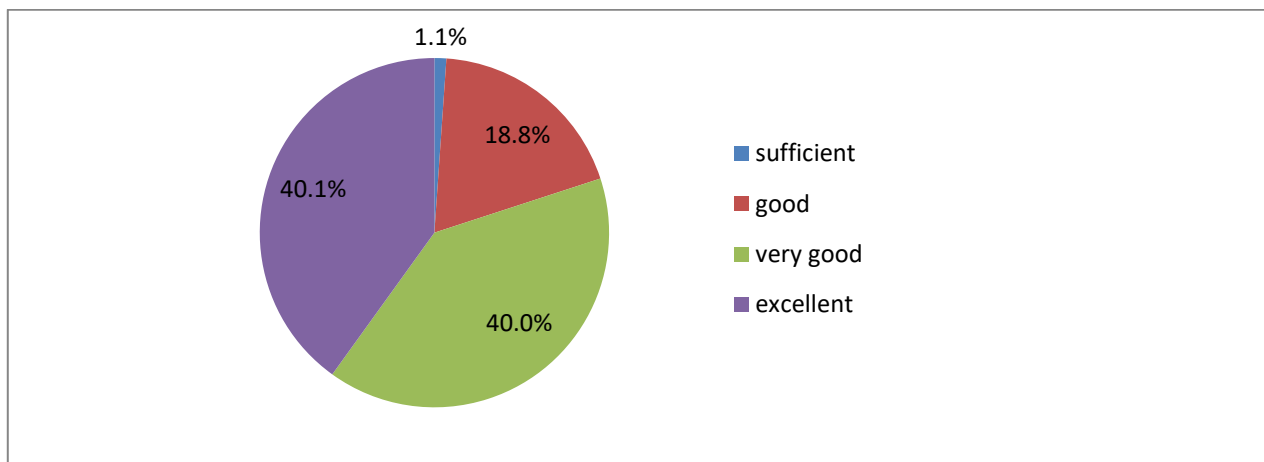
Graph 5. Distribution of students based on years they are attending



Source: authors' research

In terms of success in secondary school in the total sample, the largest number of respondents ended the previous school year with excellent results (40.1%), or very good results (40%). This is followed by respondents who completed the previous grade with good results (18.8%), while the number of respondents with sufficient success is the lowest (1.1%).

Graph 6. Students based on the previous school year final average grade

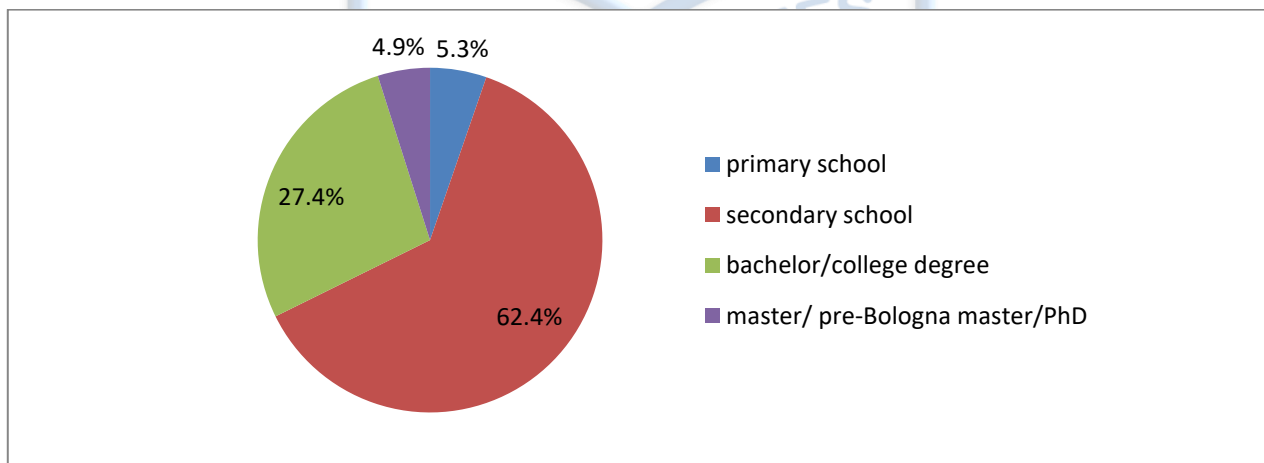


Source: authors' research

Regarding the education of parents, the results indicate that the largest percentage of respondents have completed secondary education.

The mothers of the respondents mostly finished secondary school (62%), followed by mothers who completed bachelor studies (including academic and professional tertiary institutions) (27.4%). There are significantly less mothers who finished only primary school (5.3%) or have obtained a master's, a pre-Bologna master's (*srb. magistar*) or a PhD. degree (4.9%).

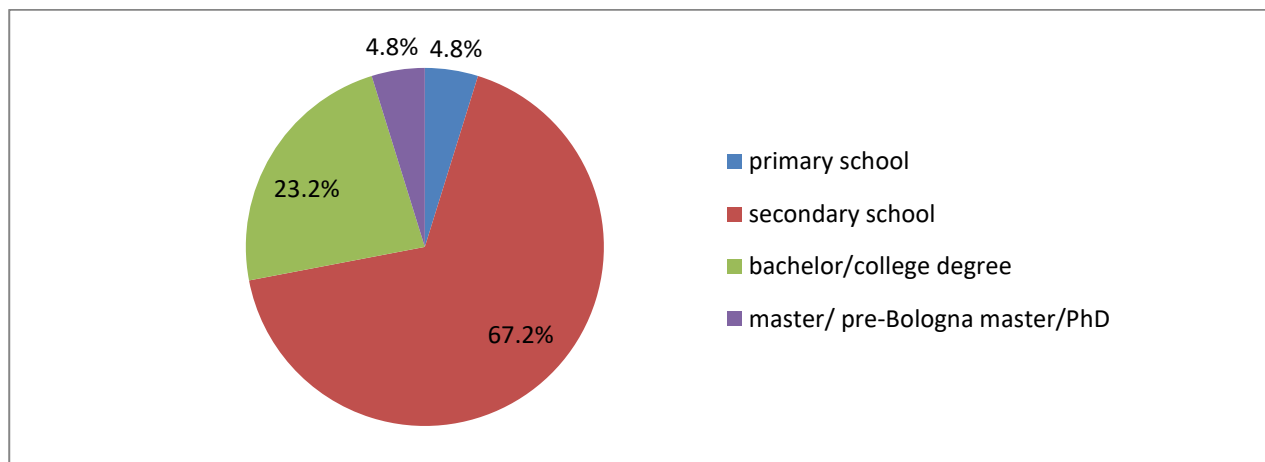
Graph 7. The distribution of students based on mother's educational level



Source: authors' research

Furthermore, most of the respondents' fathers have completed secondary education (67.2%), 23.2% have a bachelor's degree, while there is an equal number (4.8%) of those with primary education and those with a master's, pre-Bologna master's (*srb. magistar*) and PhD degrees.

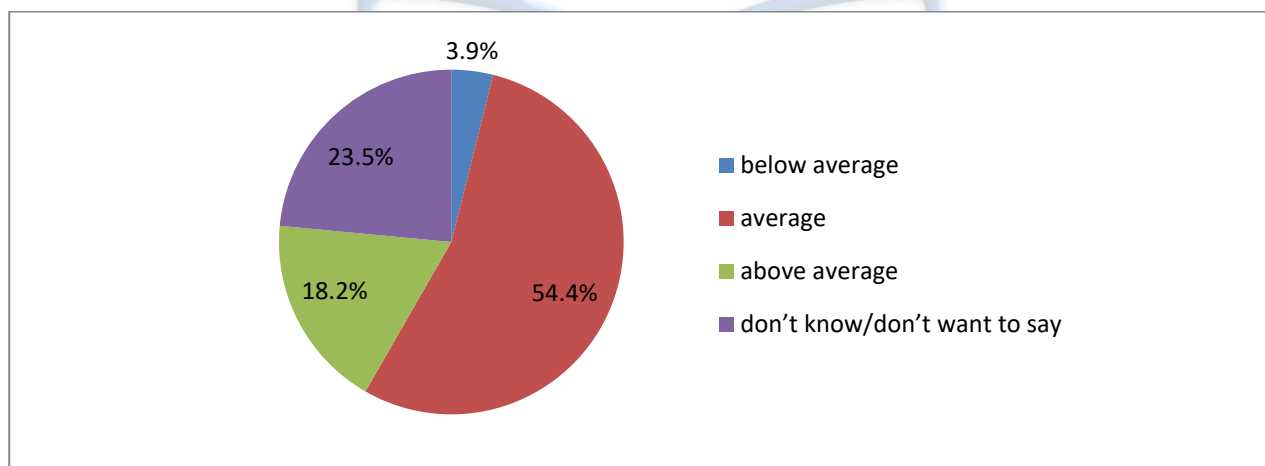
Graph 8. Distribution of students according to the educational level of the father



Source: authors' research

When asked about the financial situation of the family, the largest number of the respondents stated that the financial situation of the family is average (54.4%). 23.5% could not assess or did not want to comment, while 18.2% stated their family's financial situation was better than average. The smallest number of respondents stated that their family's financial situation was worse than average (3.9%).

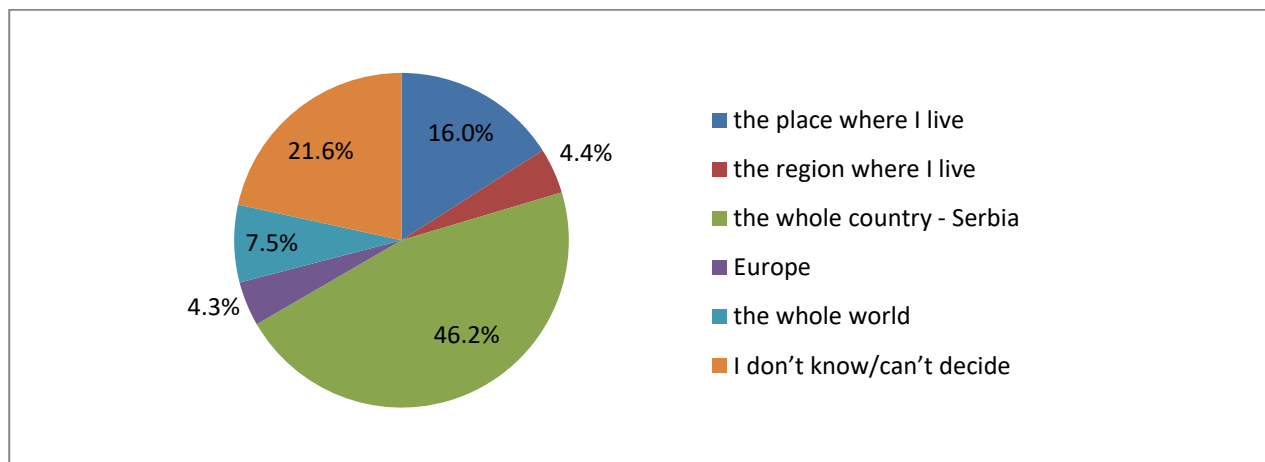
Graph 9. Distribution of students by their family's financial situation



Source: authors' research

When it comes to where the respondents feel they belong to, secondary school students in Serbia mostly listed the country as a whole - Serbia (46.3%), followed by respondents who could not decide (21.6%), and those who opted for the place where they live (16%). On the other end of the spectrum, are those who stated that it was Europe (4.3%), i.e. the region where they live (4.4%), or the world (7.5%). 21.6% of the respondents did not answer or could not decide.

Graph 10. Distribution of students by the place they feel they belong to

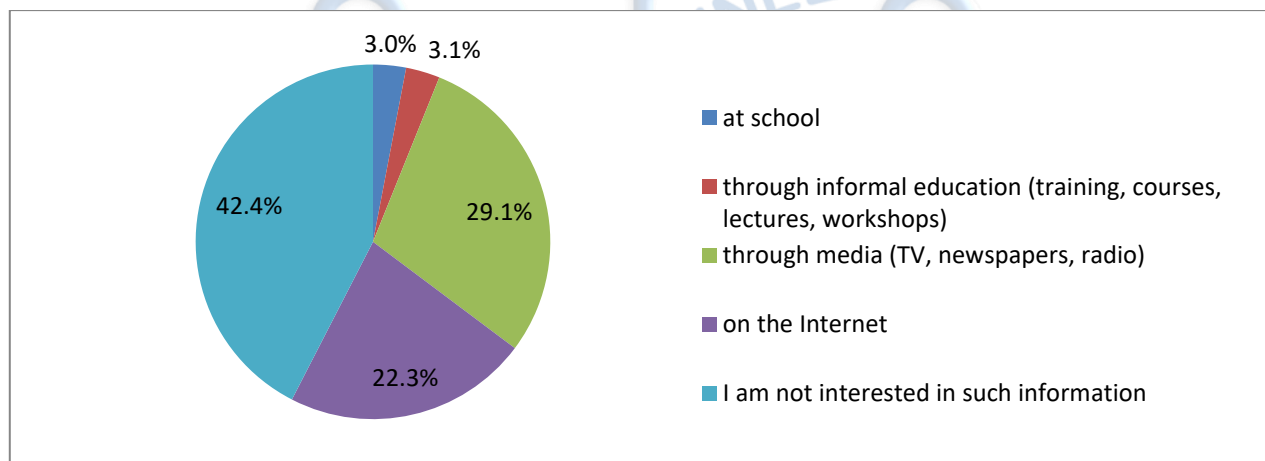


Source: author's research

How informed about the European Union

The results show that secondary school students in Serbia are mostly uninterested in getting informed about the EU (42.5%). When it comes to the channels through which they are informed, the respondents mostly state these are the media (TV, newspapers, radio), followed by the Internet (22.3%), while formal and non-formal education are represented by 3% and 3.1%, respectively.

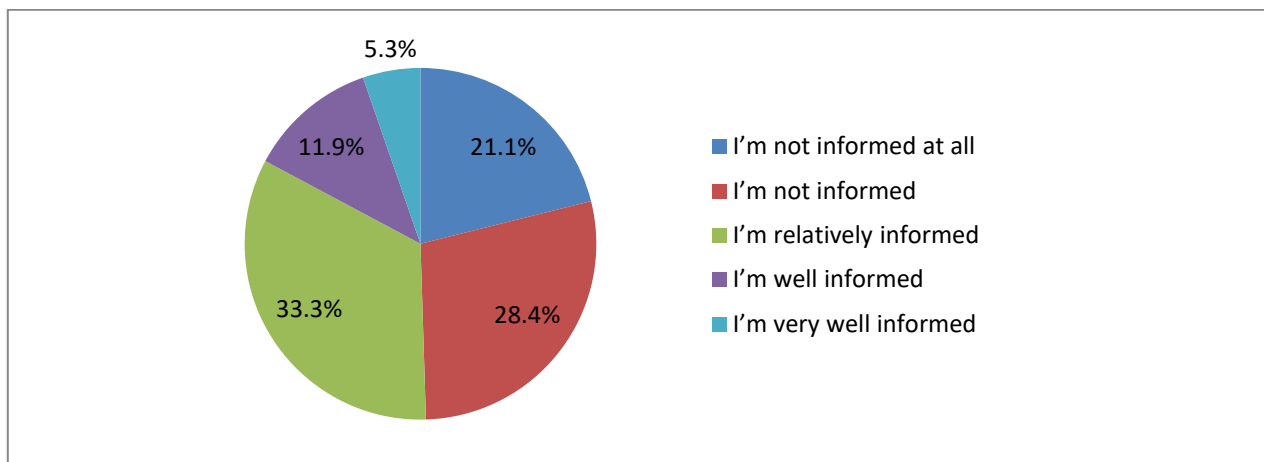
Graph 11. How do you most often get information about the European Union?



Source: authors' research

When it comes to how informed they are about the European Union, the respondents assess it with an average of $M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.11$, on the Likert scale from 1 to 5. Regarding the frequency of responses, the largest percentage of respondents think that they are not or not informed at all - 49.5% and a large part think they are moderately informed (33%). 11.9% feel they are well informed, whereas only 5.3% feel they are very well informed.

Graph 12. How informed are you about the European Union?



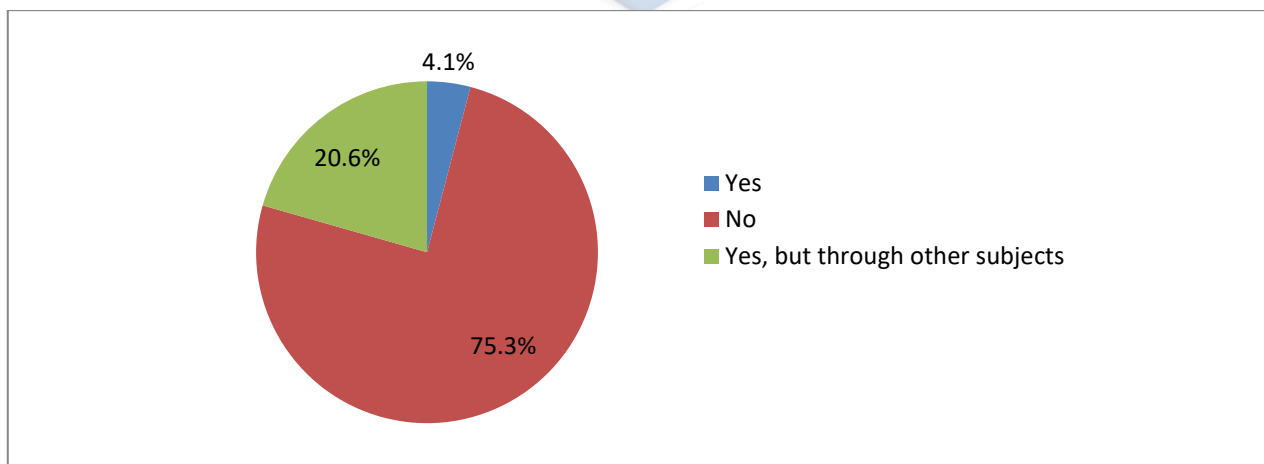
Source: authors' research

When asked whether they learn about the European Union in school within a particular subject, the largest percentage of the respondents stated they do not learn about the EU (75.3%). 20.6% stated that they learn about the European Union within other subjects, while only 4.1% of the respondents stated they study within a particular subject about the EU.

When asked in which subjects they studied about the European Union, the respondents mentioned the following subjects: Geography, History, Economic Geography, Civic Education, Geopolitics, Fundamentals of Economics, Fundamentals of Geopolitics, Fundamentals of Labor Law, Business Economics, Monetary Economy and Banking, Principles of Economics, Financial Business, Entrepreneurship, Law, Tourist Destinations of the World, Tourist Geography, Sociology, National Economy, English Language, Serbian Language and Literature, Public Finance, Physical Education, Constitution and Citizens' Rights.

In the answers to the open-ended question, some of the respondents reiterated that the European Union is not mentioned in their classes.

Graph 13. At school, do you study about the European Union within a specific subject?

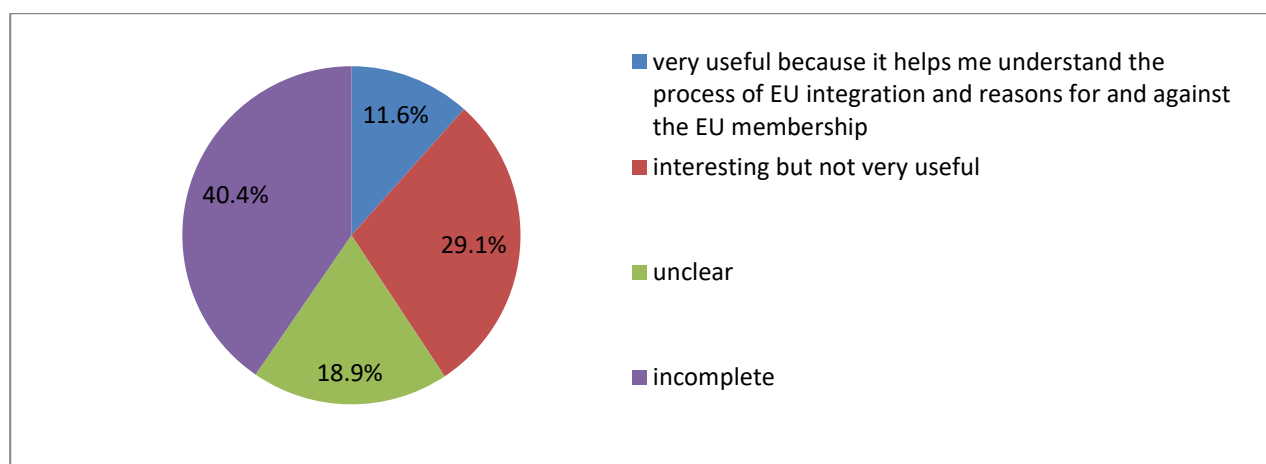


Source: authors' research



When asked to rate the information they receive about the European Union at school, the largest percentage of the respondents stated that such information is incomplete (40.4%), 29.1% found such information interesting but not useful, 18.9% think that such information is useful, while 11.6%, or the smallest percentage of respondents, think that this information is very useful because it helps to better understand the integration process and the reasons for and against the membership.

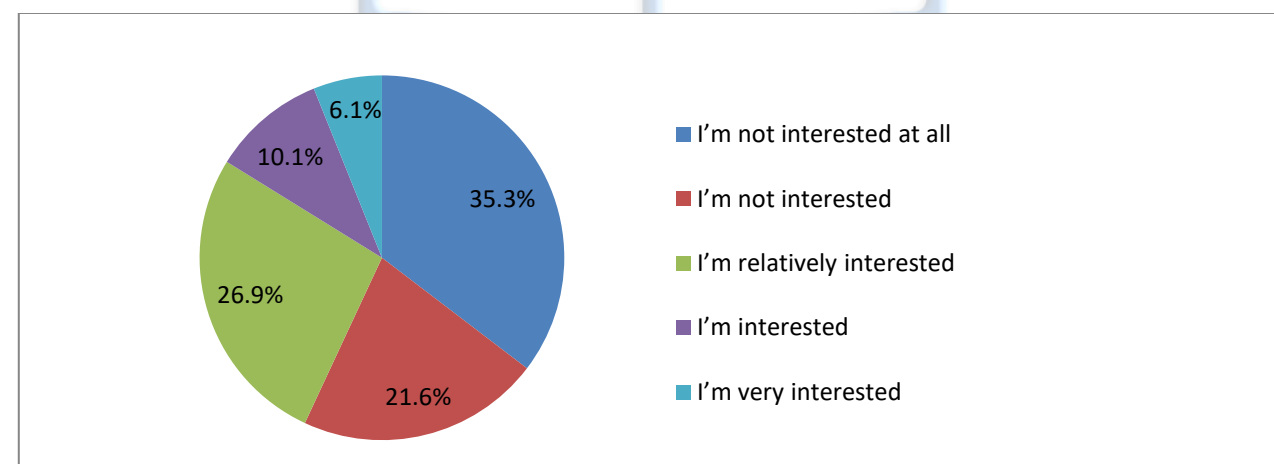
Graph 14. How would you describe the information on the EU you receive at school?



Source: authors' research

When it comes to how interested students are in getting information about the EU, the mean is $M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.21$, on the Likert scale from 1 to 5. When looking at the frequencies of individual answers, the largest percentage of respondents stated that they were not interested at all (35.3%) or that they were not interested in the information about the EU (21.6%). 26.9% are moderately interested, while 16.2% are interested or very interested in getting information about the EU.

Graph 15. How interested are you in getting information about the European Union?

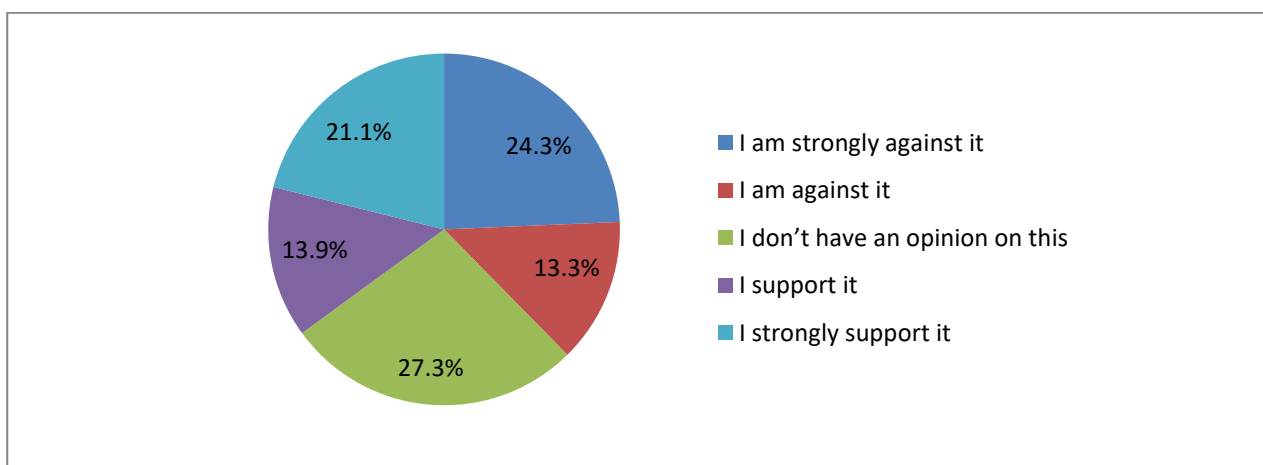


Source: author's research

Positions on Serbia's accession to the European Union

The average score regarding the extent of support to Serbia's accession to the EU was $M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.44$, on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Inspecting the frequencies, it was determined that the answers are relatively evenly divided among those who support and those who do not support Serbia's accession to the European Union (35% and 37.6%, respectively). Almost a third of the respondents (27.3%) do not have an opinion on this issue.

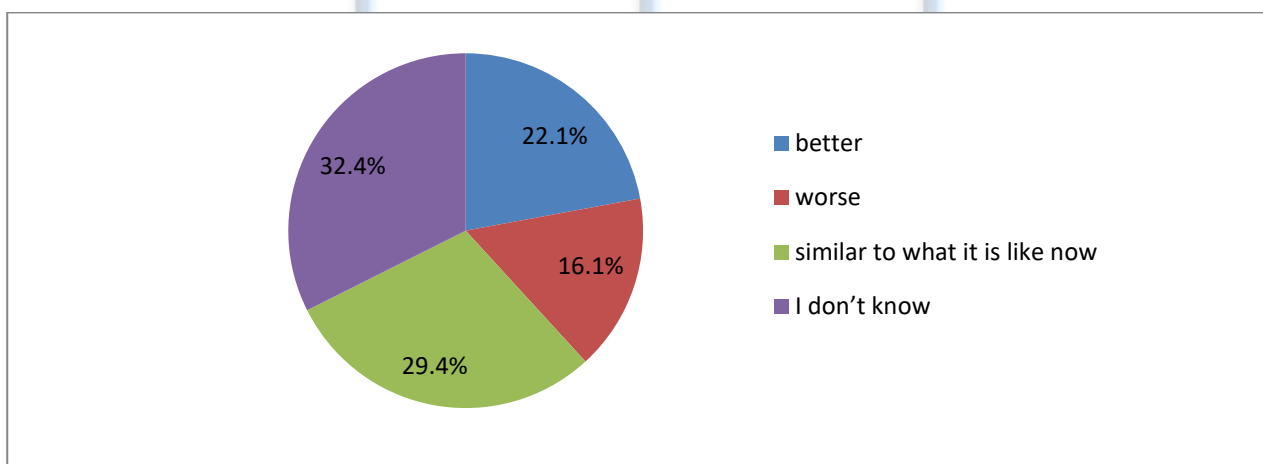
Graph 16. To what extent do you support Serbia's accession to the European Union?



Source: authors' research

The largest percentage of respondents (32.4%) do not know how they will live in Serbia after Serbia's accession to the European Union and 29.4% believe that it will be the same as today. There are more respondents who believe life will be better when Serbia becomes a member (22.1%) than those who think that life will be worse (16.1%).

Graph 17. What will life be like in Serbia after its entry into the European Union?

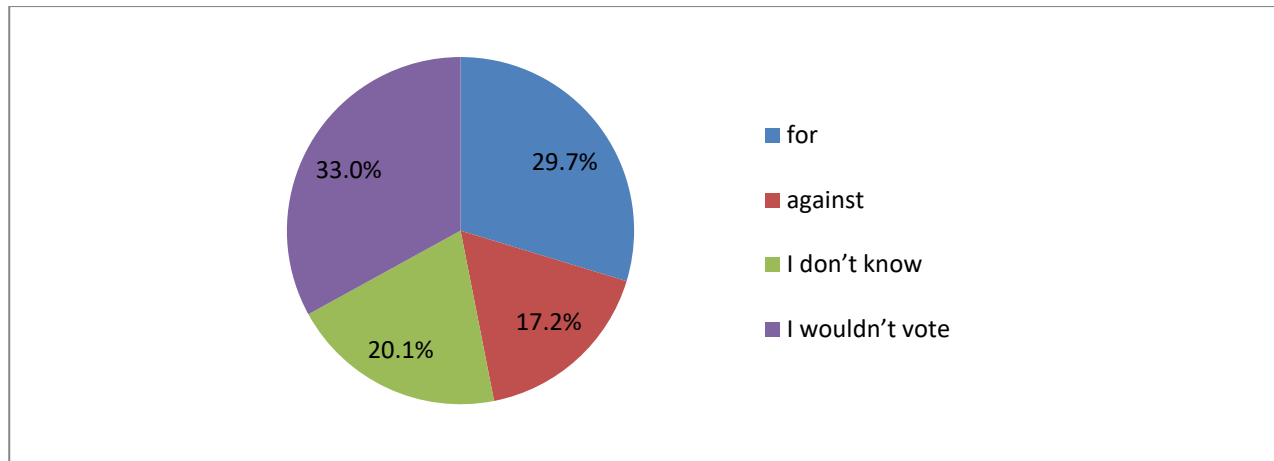


Source: author's research

When asked how they would vote if a referendum on Serbia's accession to the EU were held tomorrow, the largest percentage (one-third) said they would not vote (33%), and a similar

number (29.7%) would vote for Serbia's accession to the EU. 20.1% of respondents would not know how to vote, while the lowest percentage said they would vote against joining the EU (17.2%).

Graph 18. If the referendum on Serbia's entry into the EU were held tomorrow, how would you vote?



Source: authors' research

The answers to the open-ended question on reasons why they would not vote to join, included:

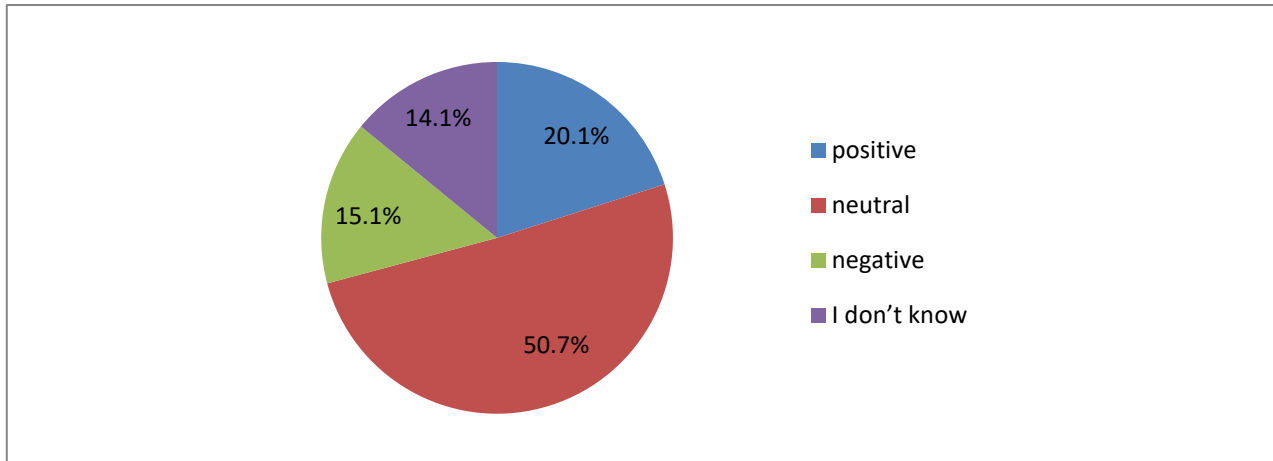
- "Even greater debts";
- "There would be no change for the better";
- "A lot of rules and restrictions on the development of Serbia";
- "I don't have a good opinion of the EU";
- "Everything will be more expensive";
- "Countries in the European Union are in crisis, the EU is falling apart";
- "Serbia is not ready for the EU";
- "Prerequisites for Serbia's entry into the EU and recognition of the independence of Kosovo and Metohija";
- "Bad attitude of EU members towards Serbia and its value system."

As the main association with the European Union, the respondents mentioned the following:

- "Travel without a passport and space without borders";
- "Better life standards";
- "Organised society";
- "Exploitation of smaller countries by larger countries";
- "Law and order";
- "Free trade";
- "A better future";
- "Brain drain";
- "Unnecessary rules";
- "Breaking the friendship with Russia."

When asked what their general opinion is about the EU, half of the respondents (50.7%) have a neutral opinion, 20.1% have a positive opinion and 15.1% have negative attitudes towards the European Union. Also, 14.1% do not know how to express their position on this issue.

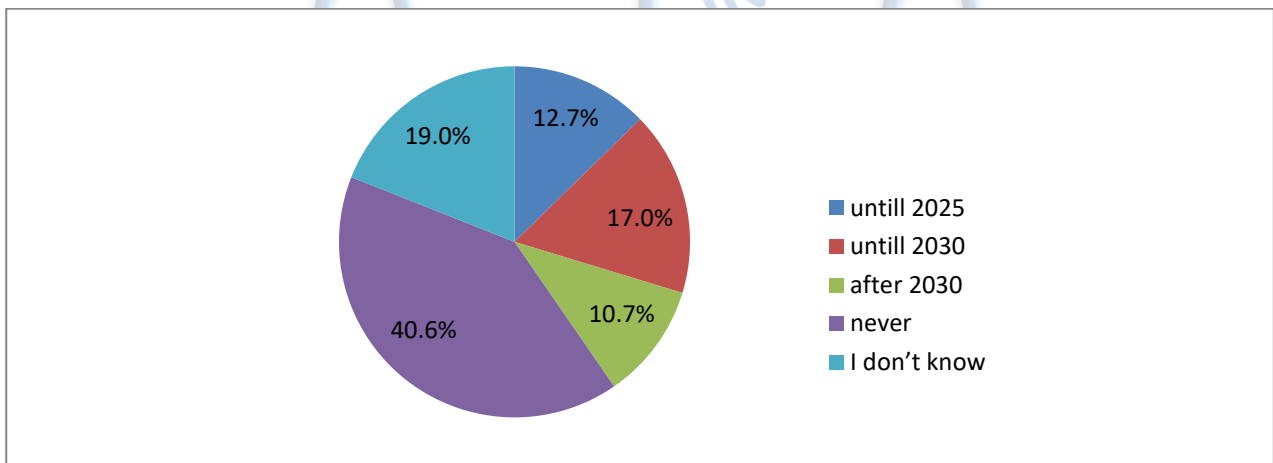
Graph 19. What is your opinion on the European Union in general?



Source: authors' research

When asked when Serbia will become a member of the European Union, the largest percentage believe that it will never happen (40.6%), and 19% said they did not know. 12.7% are optimistic, stating that this will happen by 2025, 17% believe that it will be by 2030, and the smallest percentage think that Serbia will join the European Union after 2030.

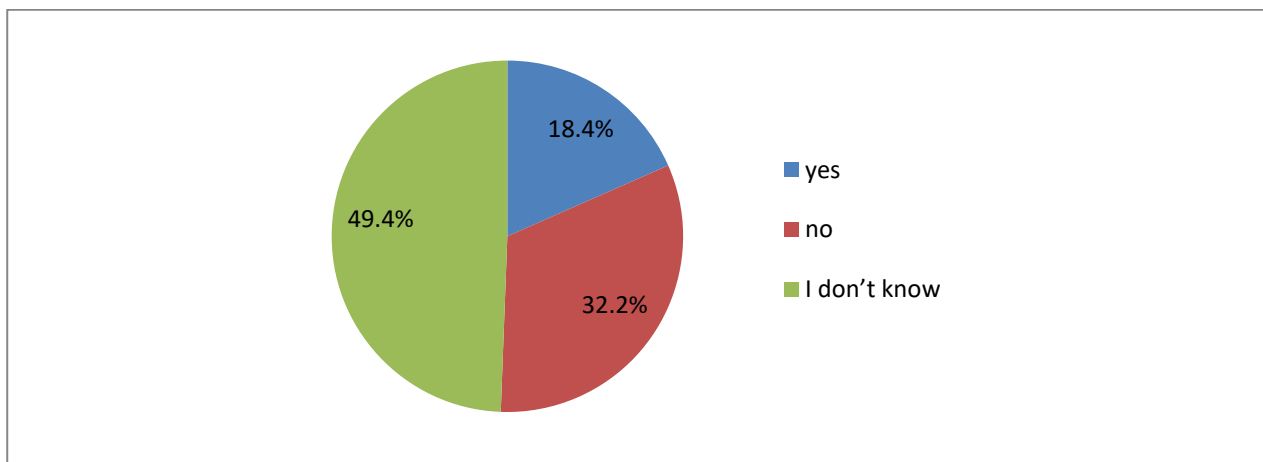
Graph 20. When do you think that Serbia will become a member of the EU?



Source: author's research

When asked if they trust in the European Union, half of the respondents answered that they do not know (49.4%). There are more respondents who do not trust the European Union (32.2%) than those who do (18.4%).

Graph 21. Do you trust the EU?

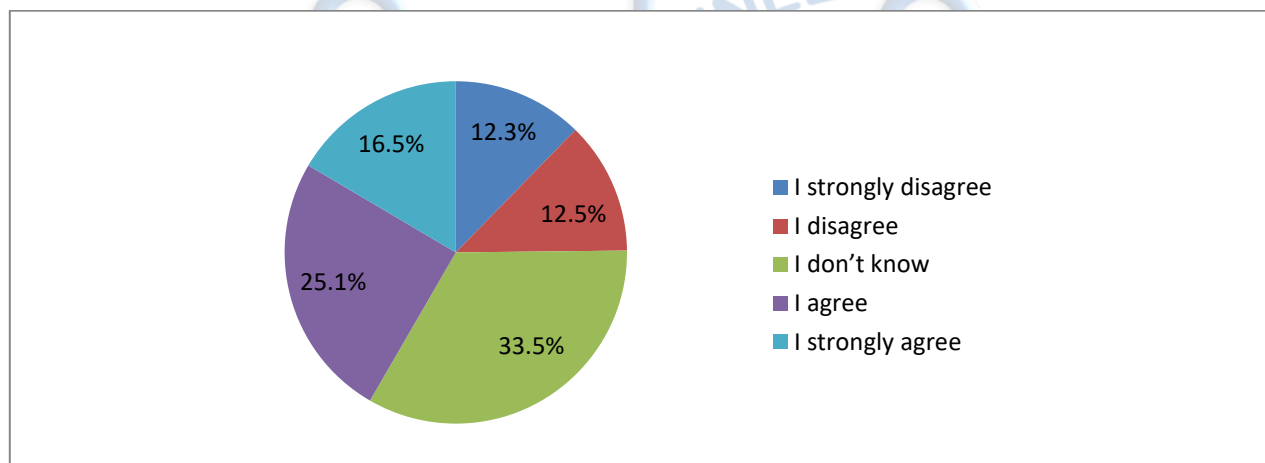


Source: author's research

The respondents assessed the positive and negative sides of Serbia's membership in the European Union on the Likert scale from 1 to 5.

Regarding the statement that Serbia's membership in the European Union will bring Serbia better and faster economic development, the largest percentage of the respondents (33.5%) said they have no opinion on the issue, 24.8% disagree with the statement, while 41,7% of the respondents agree.

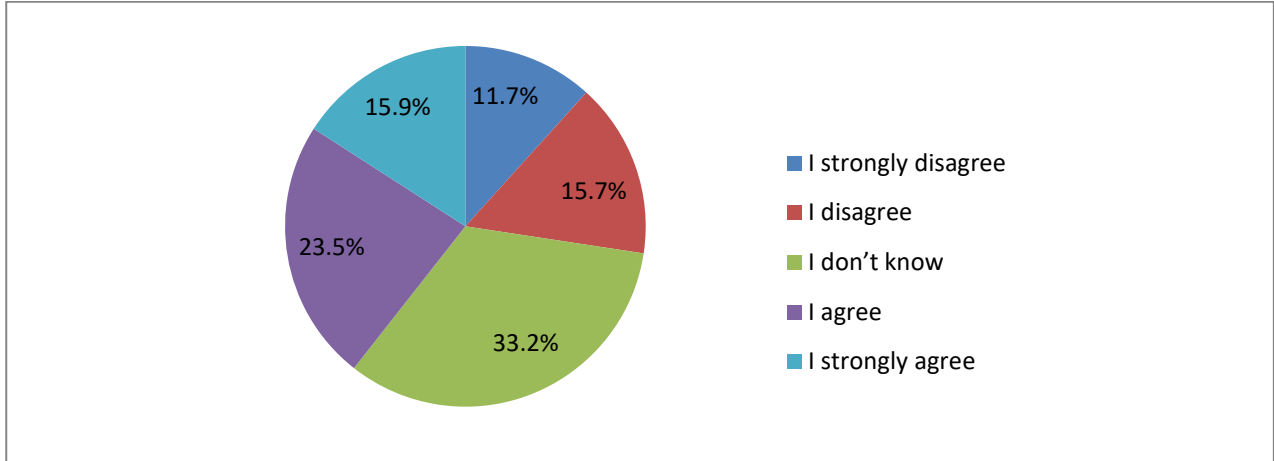
Graph 22. Do you think that EU membership would contribute to a better and faster economic development?



Source: authors' research

Regarding the standard of living, 33.2% of the respondents do not have an opinion, 39.4% believe that the standard of living will be at a higher level, and 27.4% believe the living standard will not improve.

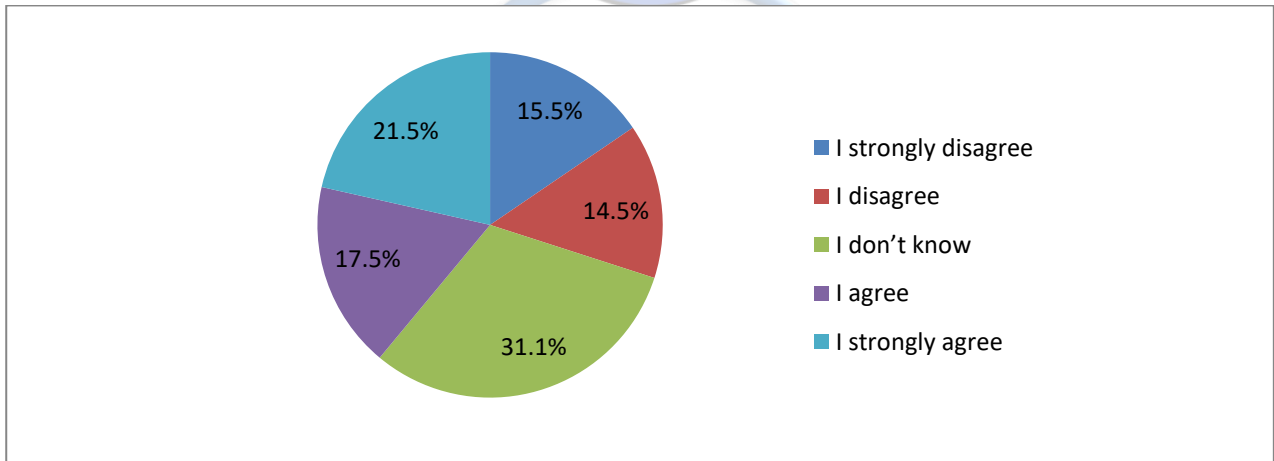
Graph 23. Do you think that EU membership would contribute to the improved standard of living?



Source: author's research

When it comes to getting to know other cultures and peoples, the largest percentage (39%) agrees that the EU membership will contribute to that, 30% disagree with this statement, while 31.1% of respondents do not have a position on this issue.

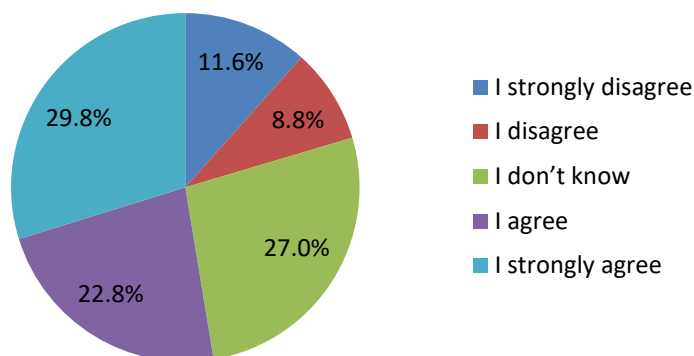
Graph 24. Do you think that EU membership would contribute to learning about the cultures and religions of other nations?



Source: authors' research

52.6% of the secondary school students believe that Serbia's membership in the European Union will bring better employment opportunities, 27% do not have an opinion, while the smallest percentage of students do not agree with it (20.4%).

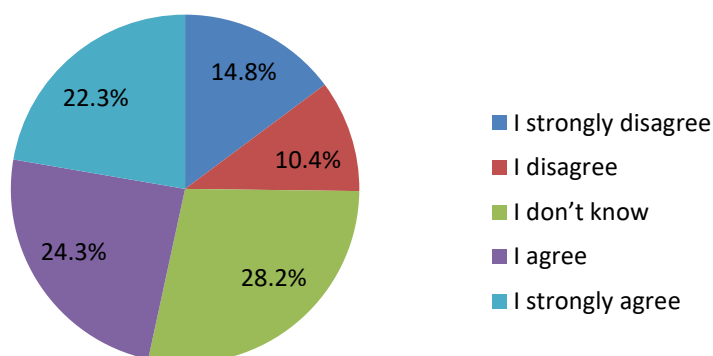
Graph 25. Do you think that EU membership would contribute to better employment opportunities?



Source: authors' research

Most respondents, almost half (46.6%), agree that EU membership will contribute to a better and higher quality of education, 28.2% have no opinion, while 25.2% have a negative attitude on this issue.

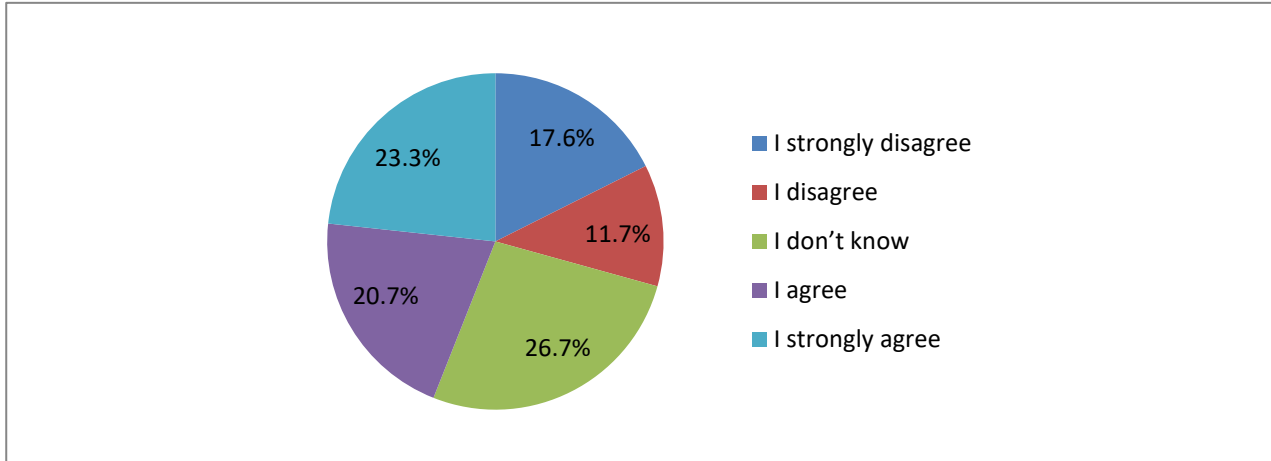
Graph 26. Do you think that EU membership would contribute to a better education?



Source: authors' research

When it comes to better military protection of Serbia as a result of the EU membership, the largest percentage of the respondents (44%) agree with this statement, 29.3% do not agree, while 26.7% do not have an opinion on this issue.

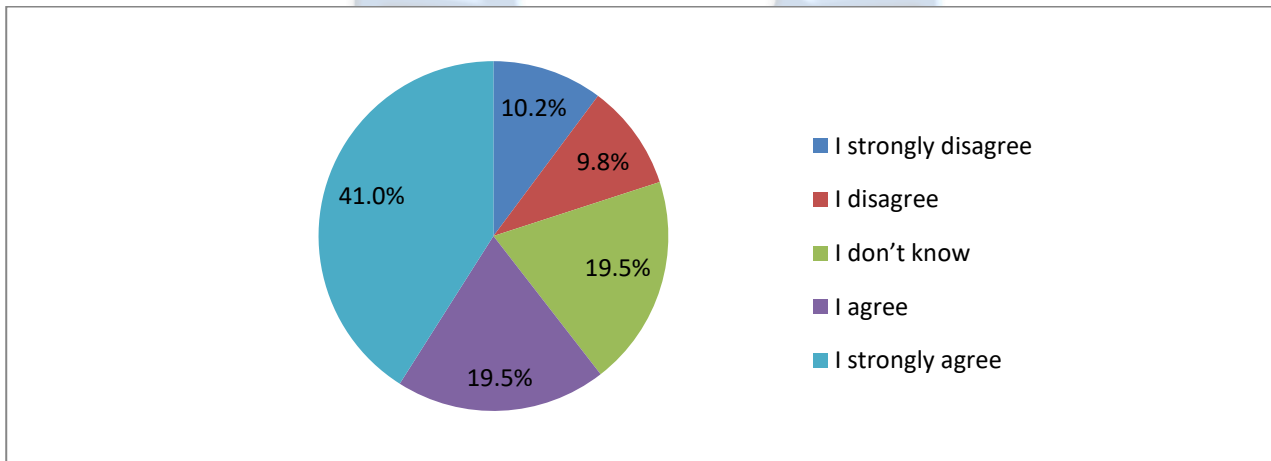
Graph 27. Do you think that EU membership would contribute to better military protection of Serbia?



Source: authors' research

Regarding the benefits of Serbia's accession to the EU, 60.5% agree that there would be greater opportunities for travel and making friends, while 19.5% have no opinion, and the share of respondents who disagree is the smallest (20%).

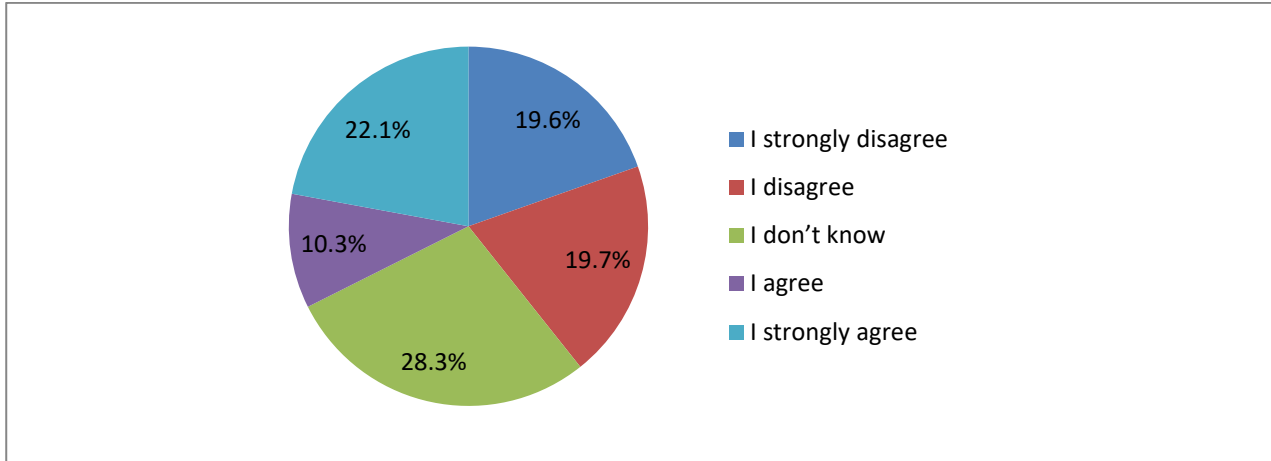
Graph 28. Do you think that EU membership would create more opportunities for travel and making friends?



Source: authors' research

The largest percentage of respondents disagree (39.3%) that Serbia's membership in the European Union will contribute to endangering the national identity of the Serbian people, 28.3% disagree, while 32.4% agree with the statement.

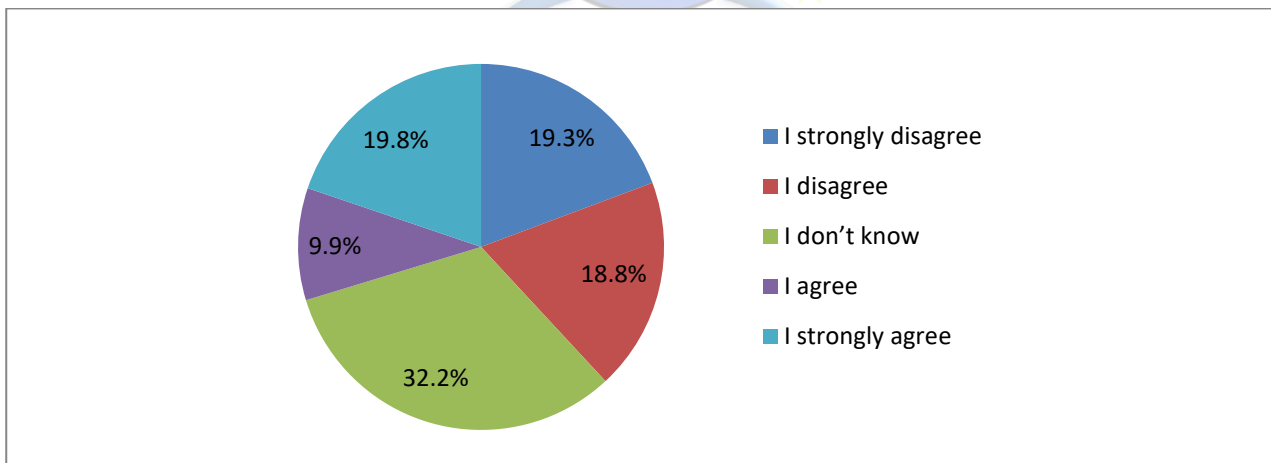
Graph 29. Do you think that EU membership would endanger the national identity of the Serbian people?



Source: authors' research

The largest percentage of the respondents (38.1%) believe that the membership will not violate the sovereignty of Serbia, 32% do not have an opinion, while 29.7% think it will violate the sovereignty.

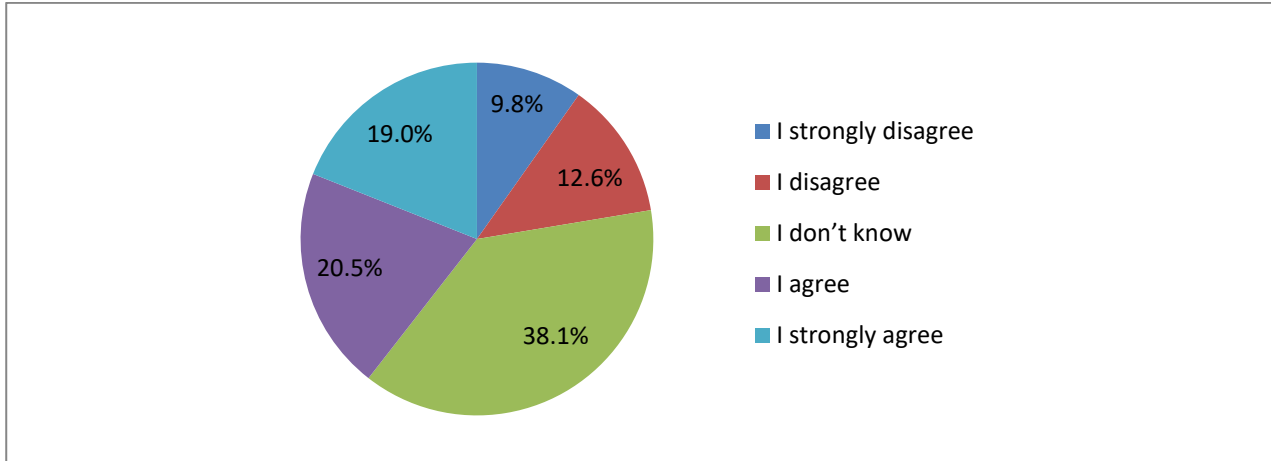
Graph 30. Do you think that EU membership would violate the sovereignty of the Serbian state?



Source: authors' research

When it comes to increased opportunities for economic exploitation of Serbia after joining the EU, the largest percentage of students agree with this statement (39.5%), followed by respondents who do not have an opinion on this issue (38.1%), while 22.4% of the respondents disagree.

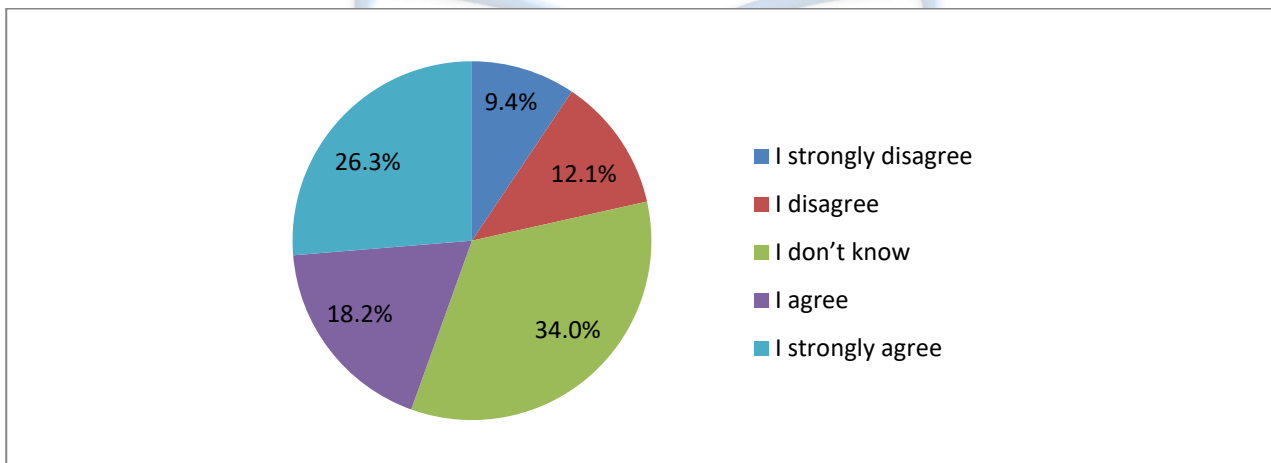
Graph 31. Do you think that EU membership would increase the possibility of economic exploitation of Serbia?



Source: authors' research

44.5% of the respondents agree that the EU membership will make Serbia dependent on other developed European countries, followed by respondents who do not have an opinion (34%), while the smallest number of respondents do not agree with this statement (21.5%).

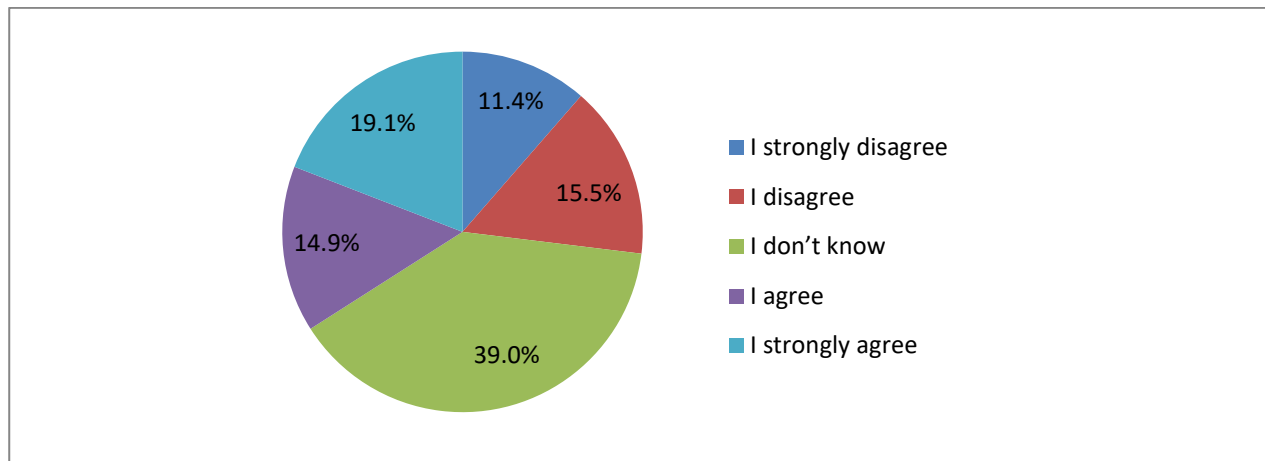
Graph 32. Do you think that EU membership would make Serbia dependent on other developed European countries?



Source: authors' research

Most respondents (39.1%) do not have an opinion regarding the standards and measures that can limit the development of Serbia, and the result of Serbia's membership in the European Union. 34% of the respondents agree with this statement, while the lowest number of the young people disagree (26.9%).

Graph 33. Do you think that membership in the EU would limit Serbia's economic development with its standards and measures?



Source: authors' research

Regarding the descriptive statistics of the membership's positive aspects, the mean values are moderate, ranging from $M = 3.15$ (refers to a better knowledge of cultures and religions of other peoples) to $M = 3.7$ (greater opportunities for travel and making friends).

Table 3. Positive aspects of Serbia's accession to the European Union - descriptive statistics

Positive aspects of Serbia's accession to EU	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Better and faster economic development	981	1.0	5.0	3.209	1.2198
Higher living standards of people	982	1.0	5.0	3.162	1.2129
Getting to know the cultures and religions of other nations better	982	1.0	5.0	3.151	1.3332
Better employment opportunities	981	1.0	5.0	3.504	1.3113
Better education	980	1.0	5.0	3.290	1.3230
Better military protection of Serbia	978	1.0	5.0	3.258	2.1592
Greater opportunities for travel and making friends	980	1.0	5.0	3.713	1.3546

Source: authors' calculation

When it comes to the negative aspects of Serbia's membership in the EU, respondents largely agree with the statement that the membership will make Serbia dependent on developed European countries ($M = 3.9$), while the lowest value is in the case of endangering the country's sovereignty ($M = 2.92$).



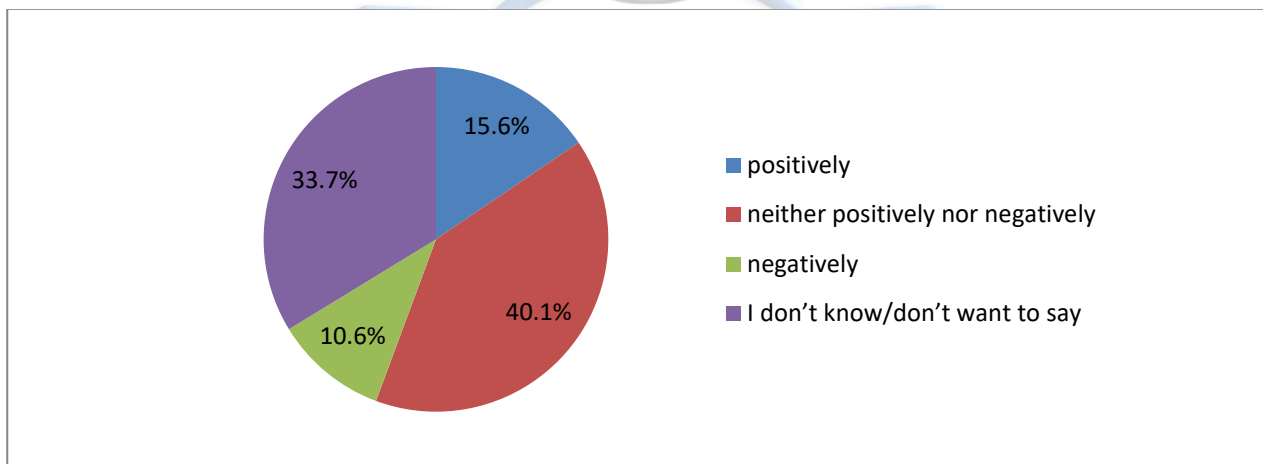
Table 4. Negative aspects of Serbia's accession to the European Union - descriptive statistics

Negative aspects of Serbia's accession to the European Union	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
It threatens the national identity of the Serbian people	981	1.0	5.0	2.957	1.4027
It violates the sovereignty of the Serbian state	980	1.0	5.0	2.921	1.3586
It increases the possibilities of economic exploitation of Serbia	980	1.0	5.0	3.263	1.1890
It makes Serbia dependent on developed European countries	977	1.0	5.0	3.399	1.2546
It limits the economic development of Serbia with standards and measures	979	1.0	5.0	3.147	1.2272

Source: authors' calculation

When asked how the membership will affect them personally, the largest percentage of the respondents (40.1%) believe that they will not feel a positive or negative impact, 33.7% do not know how to answer or do not want to comment. 15.6% of the respondents believe in the positive impact of membership (on them personally), while the smallest number believes that Serbia's EU membership will affect them negatively (10.6%).

Graph 34. How will the EU membership affect you personally?



Source: authors' research

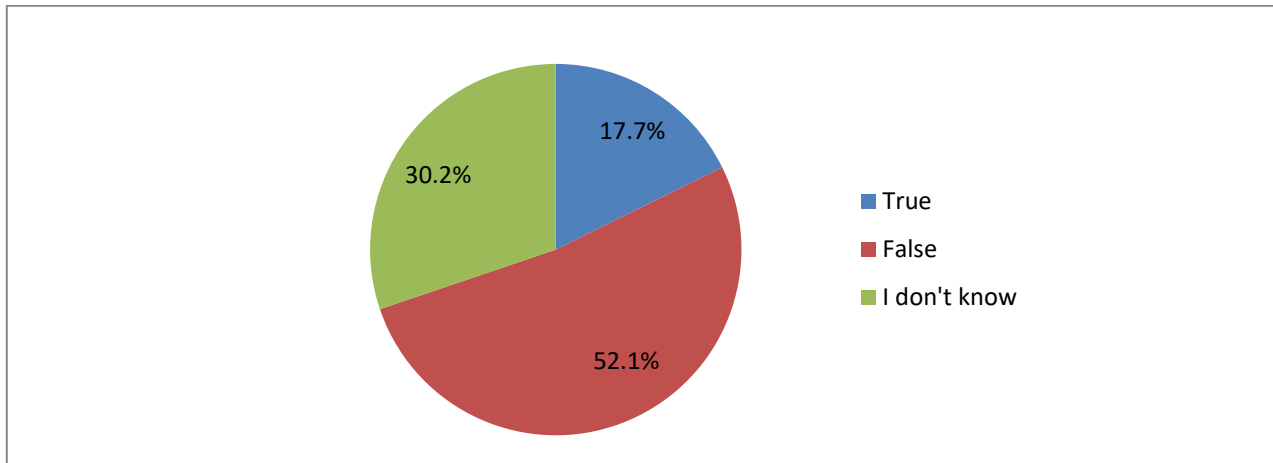
Knowledge about the European Union

The first part of the test on secondary-school students' knowledge of the European Union included questions that referred to well-known facts about the European Union. The aim was to gain insight into the knowledge of the basic features of the EU in the secondary school population.

When asked whether the EU headquarters is in the Hague, the largest number, i.e. more than half of the respondents (52.1%) answered negatively, which is the correct answer.



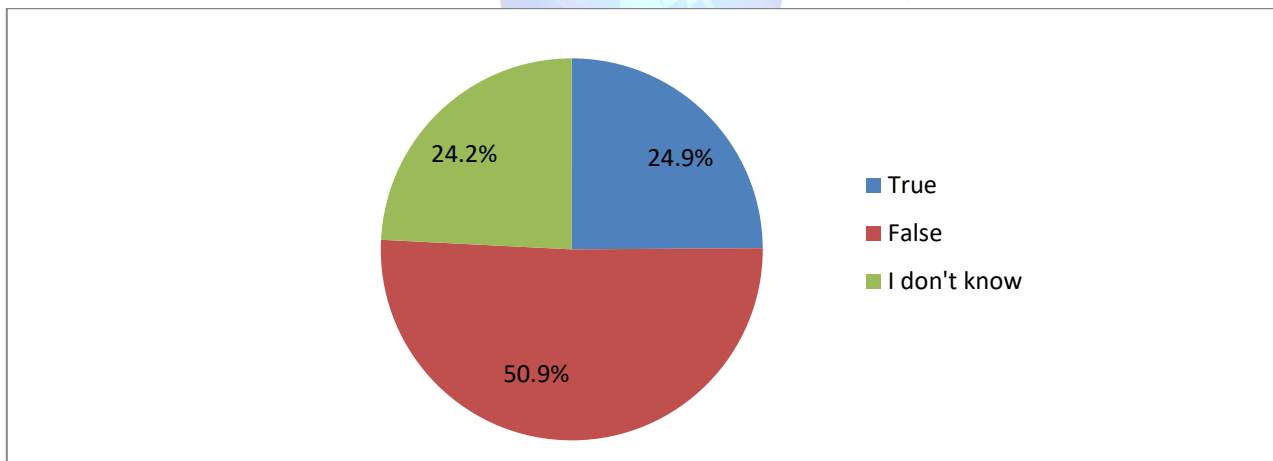
Graph 35. Students' answers to the statement: The EU headquarters is in the Hague.



Source: authors' research

Half of the respondents (50.9%) knew that Switzerland is not a member of the European Union.

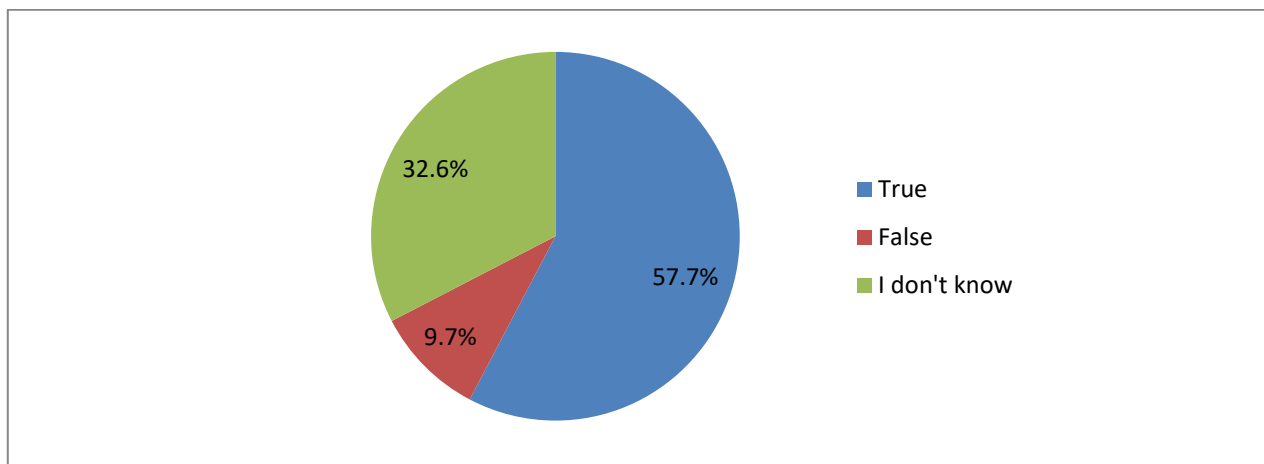
Graph 36. Students' answers to the statement: Switzerland is a member of the EU.



Source: authors' research

57.7% of the respondents knew that the Republic of Croatia was the last to join the European Union.

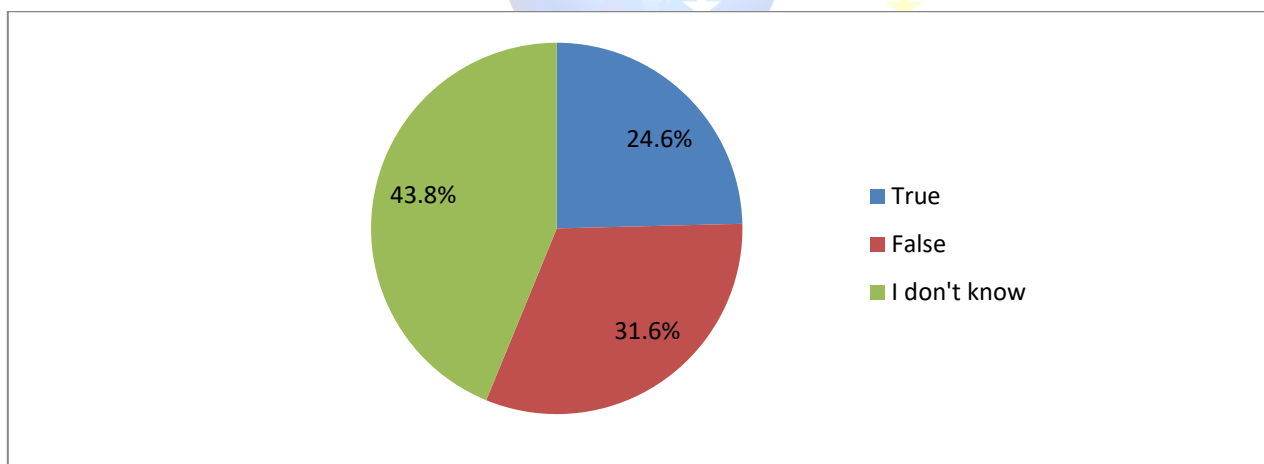
Graph 37. Students' answers to the statement: Croatia was the last to join the EU.



Source: authors' research

The largest percentage of secondary school students said they did not know how many members the European Union currently has (43.8%).

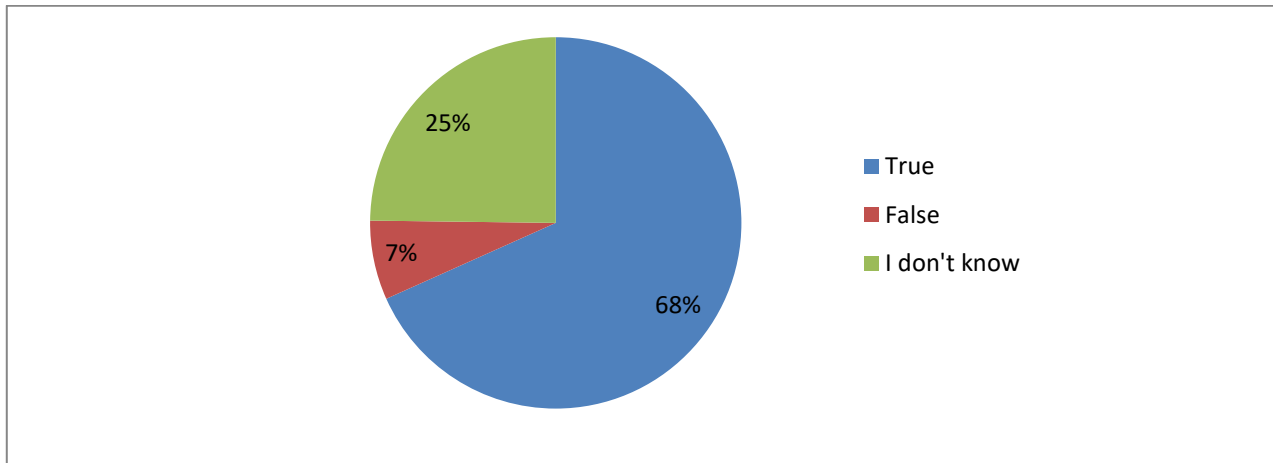
Graph 38. Students' answers to the statement: The European Union has 26 members.



Source: authors' research

The majority of the respondents (68%) knew that the Republic of Serbia has the status of a candidate for membership in the European Union.

Graph 39. Students' answers to the statement: Serbia has the status of a candidate for the EU.

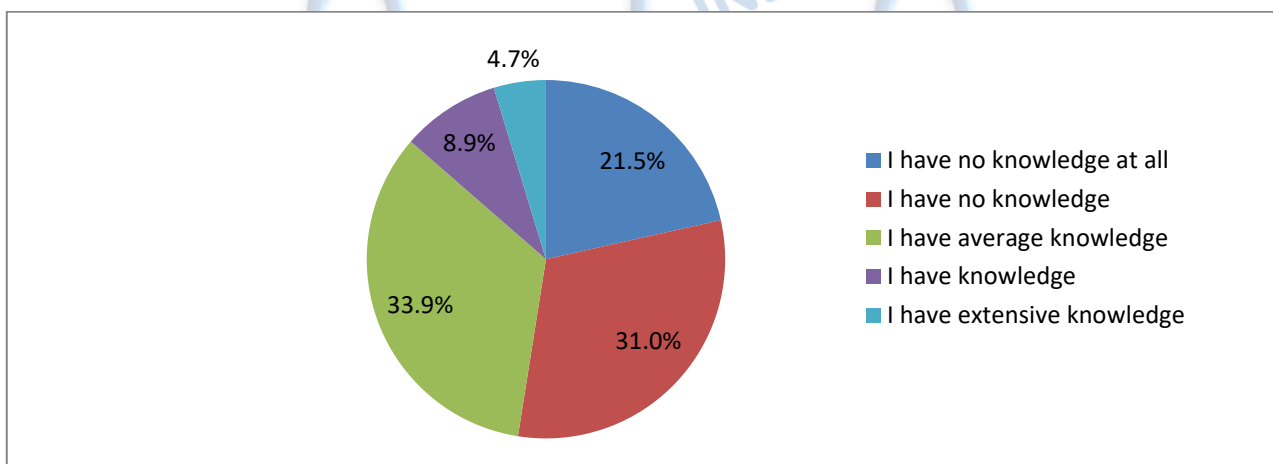


Source: authors' research

It can be concluded that half of the secondary-school students have elementary knowledge of well-known facts about the European Union, and that between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ of respondents do not know the answers to the questions on the EU.

Respondents' selfassessment of knowledge about the EU indicates that respondents mostly rate their knowledge as average (33.9%), 31% think they have no knowledge, or that they have no knowledge at all (21.5%). Only 13.6% of the respondents believe they have knowledge of the European Union.

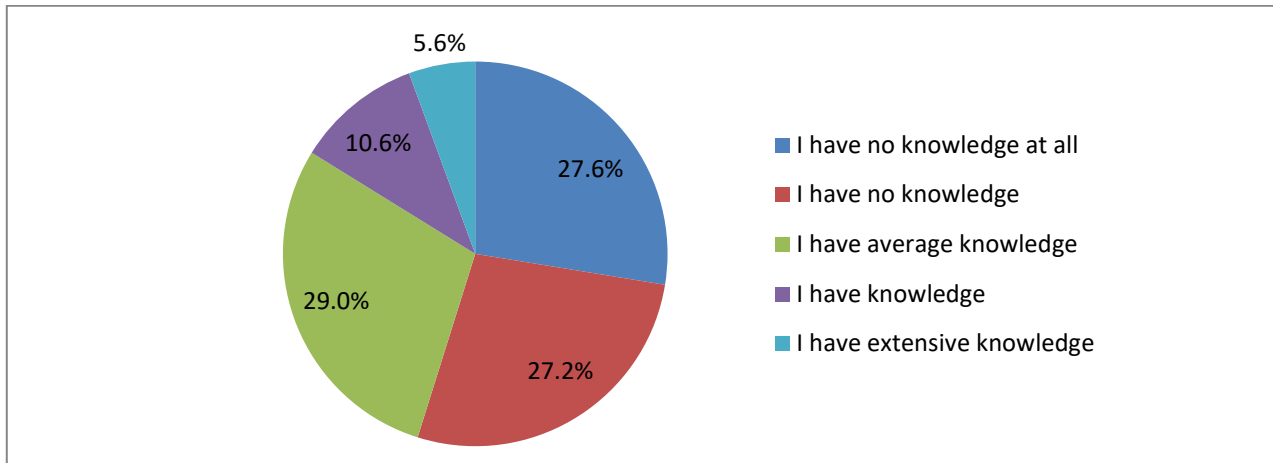
Graph 40. How would you rate your knowledge of the European Union?



Source: authors' research

When it comes to the values of the European Union, the largest percentage of the respondents state that they have average knowledge (27.2%). Nevertheless, the overall results show that the majority of students do not have much knowledge or do not have any knowledge at all of the European Union values (54.8%).

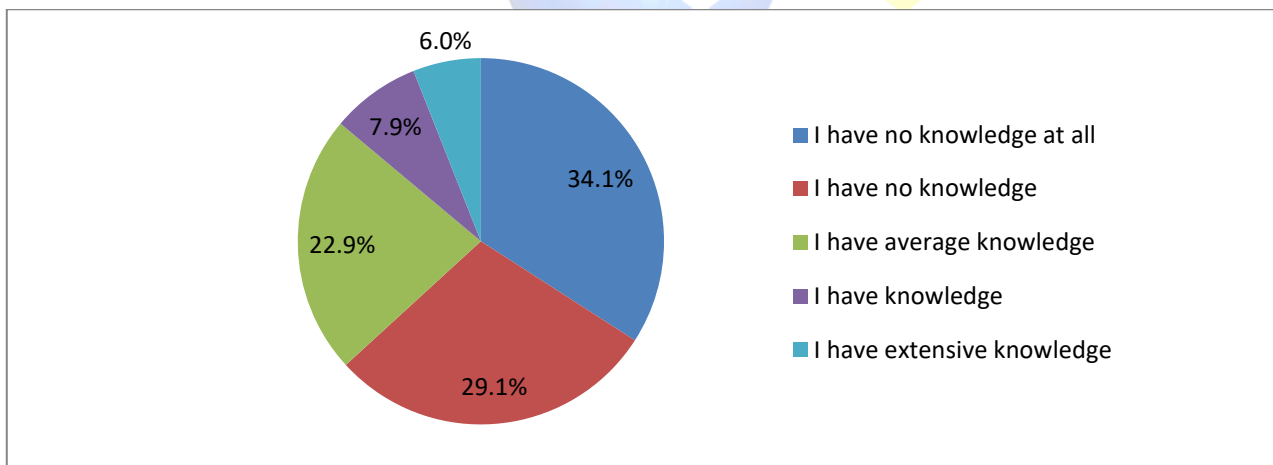
Graph 41. How would you rate your knowledge of the European Union values?



Source: authors' research

When asked what they knew about the EU institutions, most respondents said they have no or no knowledge at all (63.2%), while only 13.9% have knowledge on this topic.

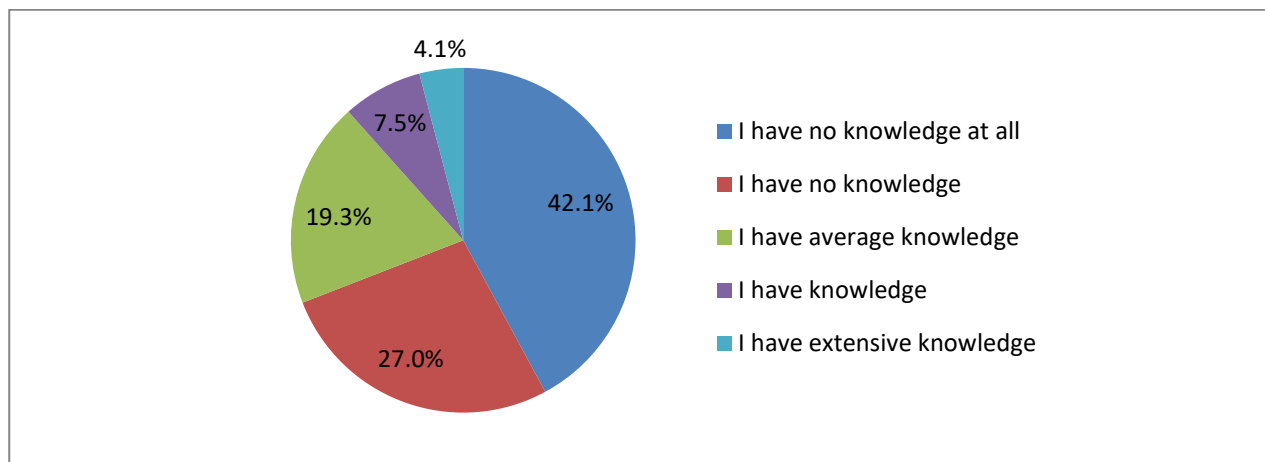
Graph 42. How would you rate your knowledge of the European Union institutions?



Source: authors' research

When asked about the European Union's financial support programs for Serbia, the percentage of the respondents who do not have any knowledge/information on this topic is even higher (69.1%), while only 11.6% believe that they have knowledge about this.

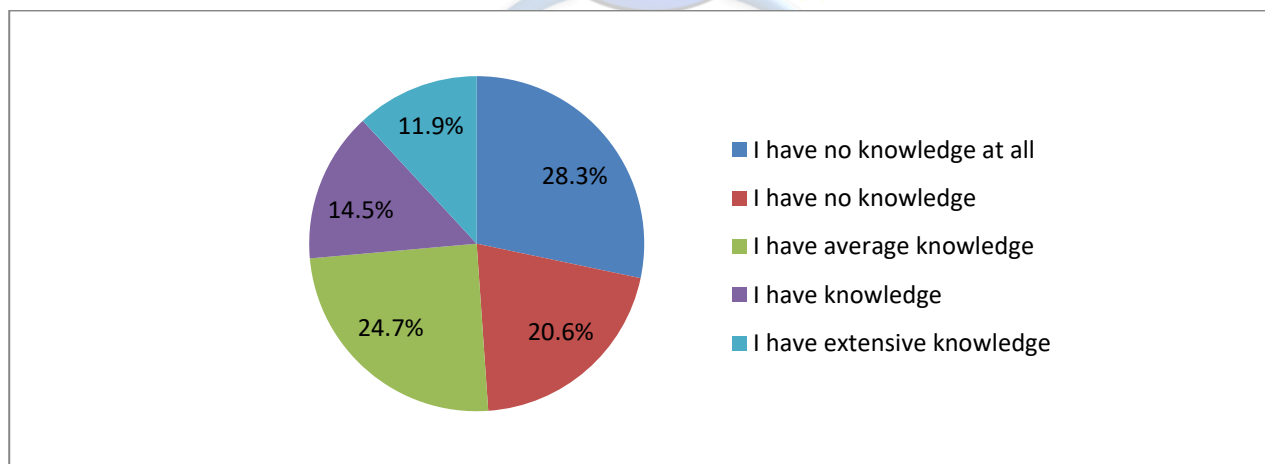
Graph 43. How familiar are you with the European Union's financial support programs?



Source: authors' research

When asked about the conditions that Serbia needs to meet in order to become an EU member, 48.9% of the respondents stated that they have no knowledge, while 26.4% stated that they know the conditions, and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the respondents said they have average knowledge on this topic.

Graph 44. How well do you know the conditions that Serbia needs to meet in order to join the European Union?



Source: authors' research

The results of the research show that the respondents rated their level of knowledge about the EU with a mean value of $M = 2.44$, which indicates that they believe they have a moderately low level of knowledge about the EU.

Similar results were obtained for the knowledge of the EU values ($M = 2.39$) and conditions for Serbia's accession to the EU ($M = 2.61$), which were rated the highest. The respondents rated the lowest the information they have on EU funds ($M = 2.04$) and EU institutions ($M = 2.22$).



Table 5. Knowledge of the EU - descriptive statistics

Knowledge about EU	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Knowledge level on EU	977	1.0	5.0	2.443	1.0670
EU values	976	1.0	5.0	2.394	1.1579
Institutions	977	1.0	5.0	2.227	1.1742
EU funds	976	1.0	5.0	2.044	1.1319
Terms for accession	975	1.0	5.0	2.610	1.3450

Source: authors' calculation

Discussion

The results of the survey conducted on 995 secondary school students from 25 secondary schools in Serbia show that young people in Serbia are insufficiently informed about the EU-related topics, and that the topics of the European Union, the process and the importance of Serbia's accession to the European Union are either minimally present or not covered at all in formal secondary education curriculum. Moreover, research findings show that secondary school students, in addition to being uninformed, are largely uninterested in these topics. The results indicate that half of the surveyed secondary school students do not have a clearly defined position on the European Union, nor on Serbia's membership in the European Union. This population is predominantly neutral, i.e. indifferent, while there is a similar percentage of negative and positive opinions on the European Union. Although more than half of the respondents know the basic facts about the European Union, young people believe that they do not have enough knowledge about the EU-related topics. Further below, the obtained results are analysed in more detail.

Information about the European Union

Young people consider their awareness of the European Union to be average ($M = 2.51$). Moreover, the percentage of young people who think that they are adequately informed about the EU is significantly lower than the number of those who feel they do not have enough real information about the EU (17.2% and 49.5%, respectively), with the latter amounting to almost a half of the sample.

When it comes to the information on the EU, the results of the survey show that to a large extent (42.5%) young people are not interested in the information of this kind, and that they use various media and the Internet as the main information channels.

An interesting and at the same time worrying fact is that in a very small number of cases, secondary school students receive information on this topic through education, both formal and informal.

The largest percentage of secondary school students do not study at all about the European Union (75.4%), and only 20.6% learn about the EU within some of the school subjects.

Secondary school students generally rate the information they receive at school as incomplete (40.4%), while only 11.6% of respondents say it is useful for their understanding of the importance of the EU and Serbia's EU accession process (Jovičić Vuković, Damjanović, Papić-Blagojević, 2022).



Furthermore, secondary school students rate their interest in getting informed on the topic of the European Union low ($M = 2.29$), i.e. more respondents are not interested in the topic of the European Union.

This indicates that young people are mostly not adequately informed about the EU-related topics and the process of Serbia's accession to the European Union. Information on this topic is not much present in secondary education, and incomplete information that secondary-school students have on this topic is mostly received through the media and the Internet. Moreover, a worrying fact is that the majority of respondents are not interested in being informed about this topic. Given the results obtained, the key recommendation is to introduce the topics on the European Union in syllabuses of various subjects and to approach this topic from different perspectives. In addition, enriching the existing secondary school curricula with this topic, without significant curriculum changes, can also be important for improving the knowledge and interest of students. However, it is crucial to adjust the material so that this topic is presented in a simple, interesting and accessible way. In this process, the support of teachers can be crucial, because, to a large extent, their interpretation and willingness to speak affirmatively about the European Union can influence the development of positive attitudes among young people and increase their interest in the European Union. This process can also be supported by higher education institutions, as the cooperation of secondary and tertiary education institutions can significantly improve the quality of education in Serbia (Jovičić Vuković, Damnjanović, Papić-Blagojević, 2020; Jošanov-Vrgović et al., 2020).

Support for Serbia's accession to the European Union

The opinions of secondary school students regarding the support for Serbia's accession to the European Union are divided - 35% support it, while 37.6% do not. It is significant that almost a third of the respondents do not have an opinion on this issue.

The fact that also speaks of the indecisiveness of secondary school students about the EU is that most respondents do not know how life in Serbia would change after its entry into the EU, i.e. they think it would be the same as today. Secondary school students generally do not see Serbia's membership in the European Union as an opportunity for the improvement of the quality of life (Damnjanović, Jovičić-Vuković, 2020).

The optimistic finding is that in the referendum on the EU, the majority of secondary school students would vote for joining (29.7%), while a significantly lower percentage of respondents would vote against (17.2%). It is interesting that almost a half of the respondents would not vote, i.e. do not know how they would vote, **which once again confirms the vague and indifferent attitudes of young people on this topic.** As the main reasons for voting against Serbia's entry into the EU, secondary school students state that they do not believe in a better quality of life in the EU, that the EU is in crisis, but they also cite the imposed preconditions for Serbia's accession.

50.8% of the respondents have a neutral attitude toward the European Union, 20.1% have a positive opinion, and slightly fewer have a negative view towards the European Union (15.1%). Moreover, 14.1% do not know how to express their position on this issue. Associations on the topic of the European Union are mostly positive, and are mostly related to a better standard of



living, traveling without borders and organised society. However, there are negative associations as well, such as brain drain, unnecessary rules, severing the friendship with Russia.

When asked when Serbia will become a member of the European Union, the largest percentage of the young believe that it will never happen (40.6%), 19% said they do not know, while a smaller percentage believe that it will happen in the next 5 or 10 years.

The results show that almost a half of the **young people do not have a clearly defined position** on the issue of trust in the EU. The lowest percentage of respondents have positive opinion on the European Community (18.4%).

According to the respondents, key positive aspects of joining the European Union are greater opportunities for travel, making friends and better job opportunities. On the other hand, young people believe that membership could be negative for Serbia because of Serbia's dependence on developed European countries, and that Serbia's economic development could be limited by standards and measures.

The young people are mostly indifferent regarding the EU membership and its impact on them personally. 40.1% of the young think that joining the EU will not affect them neither positively nor negatively, while 33.7% do not know or do not want to state their opinion. Only 15.6% of the respondents have a positive view on this issue.

A half of the surveyed secondary school students do not have a clearly defined position on the European Union, nor on Serbia's membership in the European Union. Also, a neutral or indifferent attitude is extremely pronounced, while negative and positive attitudes towards the EU are generally equally distributed.

It is necessary to provide young people with better information in order to reduce Euroscepticism and prejudice against the European Union. This can be done by introducing the topics about the European Union in both formal and informal education. It is especially important to activate people who are indifferent or neutral on this issue and to help them develop their positions based on adequate information. It is possible to increase the interest by highlighting the positive aspects of the membership, but also by using innovative ways to inform the students (such as online educational platforms, innovative teaching aids, etc. which are suitable for the young).

Knowledge about the European Union

The results of the test questions indicate that in 50% of cases the respondents know the basic facts about the European Union. Also, the results show that secondary school students mostly know that Serbia is a candidate for the membership, while most of the respondents do not know how many members the European Union currently has. On the other hand, for each question on the EU, more than 30% of the respondents did not know the answer (Jovičić-Vukovic, Papić-Blagojević, 2020).

These results were also confirmed by the students' selfassessment of their knowledge about the EU. The secondary school students mostly stated that they have limited knowledge about the EU. Similar results were obtained regarding the knowledge of the EU values (conditions for accession, knowledge of the European Union funds and financial support, and European Union institutions).



This indicates that there is a lack of information about the EU when it comes to well-known facts, and the assumption is that similar results would be obtained when it comes to information on specific aspects of the EU, which are important for young people.

The continuous education of secondary school students and the cooperation of various stakeholders (government, NGOs, educational institutions, etc.) could have a positive impact on increasing information and knowledge about the European Union and through that shape the views of young people.

Activities should encourage young people to deal with this topic, by researching and presenting the topics that are important to them, by organising various events and opening a discussion on the European Union, in order to better inform young people about the accession process, positive and negative effects the membership will produce at the macro and micro level.

If they are provided with complete, accurate, clear and timely information regarding the European Union, young people will develop their attitudes, understand the benefits and positive aspects of the membership, and be more supportive of the process of Serbia's accession to the European Union, or could even cast the decisive vote in favour of the membership.

Conclusions

Serbia's entry into the European Union will bring numerous benefits to the citizens of Serbia, especially young people, and will result in the improvement of the country's image (Jovičić-Vuković, 2018). A stable political environment, guaranteed by the European Union, will influence the creation of a stable economic and business environment (Božić-Miljković, Jovičić-Vuković, 2021), in which young people will have more opportunities to get employed or start their own business (Jovičić-Vuković, Papić-Blagojević, 2018; Jovičić-Vuković, Jošanov-Vrgović, Jovin & Papić-Blagojević, 2020). Moreover, the space of the European Union for young people will be a space without borders, in which they will be able to work, live, study and travel without administrative restrictions. However, despite the obvious and numerous benefits that Serbia's entry into the European Union can bring, the research results showed that secondary school students do not have a clear position on the EU or the process of joining Serbia, and that a neutral position towards most issues related to this topic prevails. One of the reasons, as this research shows, is the lack of real information and knowledge about the EU among the secondary school students.

One of the main problems identified in previous, but also in this research, is a **significant lack of EU-related topics in educational programs**. Insufficient EU-related topics in secondary school curricula is **why most young people often form their views and opinions on the European Union based on incomplete information**.

Therefore, it is crucial to provide various information and content about the EU by developing new modern activities which will enhance knowledge acquisition, thus enriching the formal and non-formal education curricula with the EU related content. In addition, the power of the current intensive digital transformation in education can be harnessed as although it requires the improvement of teachers' competencies (Burns et al., 2020) it also requires the use of innovative methods in youth education. Therefore, it can have a positive impact on young people's interest in EU issues and bring about a greater understanding and support for Serbia's EU accession process.



Within the framework of the INEES project, two types of content aimed at informing the young were developed. Both materials will contribute to enriching the existing educational programs and developing a new approach to education (Jovičić Vuković, Papić-Blagojević, Damnjanović, 2022).

1. EUTutor Web Platform

The innovative web platform was created with the aim of ensuring the existence and easy use of various content created during the INEES project, such as an electronic handbook, PowerPoint presentations, viPART lessons, tests, quizzes and other materials, on the subject of the European Union and European integration. In this way, more flexible and creative ways of learning will be encouraged, as many students, professionals, policy makers and others will be reached, and the wide use of materials will be ensured even after the end of the project.

The platform aims to ensure a wide dissemination at the national and regional level, and provide access to educational materials, to both teachers and students and the general public interested in European Union issues, and thus ensure the improvement of knowledge and awareness of young people and the wider community on the advantages and importance of joining the European Union during and after the completion of the project (Jovičić-Vuković, Njegić, Damnjanović, 2020).

2. EU Handbook for Secondary schools

The Handbook on the European Union was created with the aim of providing the necessary knowledge and information about the EU in a systematic, simple, interesting, easy to understand and accessible way. The Handbook provides a high level of flexibility and the material can be easily implemented and incorporated into the classes from different fields (economics, law, geography, sociology, civic education, specialised vocational subjects). The topics from the Handbook are accompanied by viPART lessons and quiz tests. The Handbook provides a comprehensive picture of the EU, with the aim of acquiring basic and deepening previously acquired knowledge on the EU as well as better understanding of the nature and concept of the EU, the importance of EU accession, and the role and possible influence of individuals in the EU accession process (Damnjanović et al., 2021).

Conducting regular research focused on the youth and using it to design innovative ways of informing them, as well as opening discussions and developing cooperation among all relevant stakeholders (schools, governments, NGOs and others) can contribute to a better understanding of the importance of Serbia's EU accession process and the opportunities that the membership will bring. It can also result in a long-term positive change in the opinion of young people about the European Union.



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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire



With the support of the
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Secondary-school Students' Attitudes towards the European Union

*This questionnaire has been created with the aim of gathering information on the attitudes of young people about the European Union. The research is conducted by the Novi Sad School of Business within the project **Erasmus+ Jean Monnet: Introduction to EU - Education for Secondary Schools (INEES)**, funded by the EACEA, EU. **

Please answer all the questions in full and thank you in advance for your time. The questionnaire is anonymous, and the research results will be presented collectively. For more information visit the site <http://inees.vps.ns.ac.rs/>

I PART - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA					
Circle the answer or fill in					
1.	Your gender is:	Male		Female	
2.	You live in a:	City		Village	
3.	How old are you?				
4.	The name of your school:				
5.	The place of the school:				
6.	Educational area/department:				
7.	School year:	I	II	III	IV
8.	Final average grade in the previous year:	sufficient (passing)	good	very good	Excellent
9.	Mother's education:	Primary school	Secondary school	Bachelor's degree (university or tertiary education college)	master/ pre-Bologna master/ PhD
10.	Father's education:	Primary school	Secondary school	Bachelor's degree (university or tertiary education college)	master/ pre-Bologna master/ PhD
11.	Family financial situation :	Below average	average	Above average	I don't know/ I don't want to say

II PART – IDENTITY

12. Which of the places below best describes where you belong to? Circle

- | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. The place where I live | 2. The region where I live | 3. The whole country - Serbia |
| 4. Europe | 5. The whole world | 6. I don't know, I cannot decide |

*The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



III PART – INFORMEDNESS

13. How do you get informed about the EU and Serbia's accession to the EU? Circle

1. I learn about the EU in school 2. Through informal education (trainings, courses, lectures, workshops)
3. I follow the media (TV, newspapers, radio) 4. Via the Internet 5. I am not interested in such information

14. How informed are you about the EU?

Rate on a scale from 1 (not informed at all) to 5 (very well informed)

1 2 3 4 5

15. Do you learn at school about the EU within a subject dedicated to the EU? Circle

1. Yes 2. No 3. I am learning at school, but in other subjects

16. If you do not have a subject dedicated exclusively to the EU, please write in which subjects you learn about the EU: (Complete) _____

17. How would you describe the information on the EU you receive at school: Circle

1. Very useful, because it helps me understand the EU integration process and reasons for and against the EU membership
2. Interesting, but not very useful 3. Unclear 4. Incomplete

18. How interested are you in getting information about the European Union?

Rate on a scale from 1 (I am not interested at all) to 5 (I am very interested)

1 2 3 4 5

IV PART – ACCESSION TO THE EU

19. To what extent do you support Serbia's accession to the EU?

Rate on a scale from 1 (I don't support) to 5 (I fully support).

1 2 3 4 5

20. In your opinion, what will life in Serbia be like when it joins the EU? Circle

1. Better 2. Worse 3. Similar to now 4. I don't know

21. If a referendum on Serbia's membership in the European Union were called tomorrow, how would you vote? Circle

1. For 2. Against 3. I don't know 4. I wouldn't vote

22. If you would vote against, state your reason: (Complete) _____

23. What is your main association to the EU: (Complete) _____

24. What is your opinion on the EU in general? Circle

1. Positive 2. Neutral 3. Negative 4. I don't know

25. When do you think Serbia will become an EU member? Circle

1. by 2025 2. by 2030 3. after 2030 4. Never 5. I don't know

26. Do you have trust in the EU? Circle

1. yes 2. no 3. I don't know



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27. Positive and negative aspects of joining the EU are:

Rate on a scale from 1 (I completely disagree) to 5 (I completely agree)

1. Better and faster economic development	1	2	3	4	5
2. Higher standard of living	1	2	3	4	5
3. Getting to know other nations' cultures and religions better	1	2	3	4	5
4. Better employment opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
5. Better education	1	2	3	4	5
6. Better military protection of Serbia	1	2	3	4	5
7. Greater opportunities for travel and making friends	1	2	3	4	5
8. It threatens the national identity of the Serbian people	1	2	3	4	5
9. It violates the sovereignty of the Serbian state	1	2	3	4	5
10. It increases the possibilities of economic exploitation of Serbia	1	2	3	4	5
11. It makes Serbia dependent on the developed European countries	1	2	3	4	5
12. It limits the economic development of Serbia with standards and measures	1	2	3	4	5

28. What impact will the EU membership have on you personally: Circle

1. positive 2. Neither positive nor negative 3. negative 4. I don't know/ I don't want to say

V - KNOWLEDGE OF THE EU

29. Test Circle

The capital of the EU is the Hague.	True	False	I don't know the answer
Switzerland is an EU member.	True	False	I don't know the answer
Croatia was the last to join the EU.	True	False	I don't know the answer
The EU has 26 members.	True	False	I don't know the answer
Serbia is the EU candidate.	True	False	I don't know the answer

30. Knowledge - selfassessment

Rate on a scale from 1 (I have no knowledge at all) to 5 (I have extensive knowledge)

Your level of knowledge of the EU	1	2	3	4	5
Your knowledge of the EU values	1	2	3	4	5
Your knowledge of the EU institutions	1	2	3	4	5
Your knowledge of the EU financial support programmes	1	2	3	4	5
Conditions Serbia has to meet to join the EU	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you!