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European Identity in the Regions of European  
Identities

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# European Identity in the Regions of European Identities

Roland Brandtjen

## ABSTRACT:

*Gibt es eine europäische Identität? Der Begriff "europäisch" hängt davon ab, was der Einzelne unter "Europa" versteht. Es kann durch sprachliche, religiöse, rechtliche, geografische, kulturelle, historische, wirtschaftliche oder politische Konzepte definiert werden. Oft ist es eine sehr individuelle Mischung aus allen Konzepten. Manchmal wird "Europa" auch als Synonym für "die EU" verwendet. Diese Arbeit versucht jedoch weder "Europa" noch "europäisch" zu definieren. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit, als Diskussionspapier, ist es zum Diskurs über die Existenz einer solchen Identität beizutragen. Es zeigt die Ergebnisse von Umfragen, die 2020, 2021 und 2022 in allen Regionen Spaniens, des Vereinigten Königreichs, Frankreichs, Italiens und Deutschlands durchgeführt wurden. Die spanischen autonomen Gemeinschaften und Städte wurden in allen genannten Jahren befragt, Italiens Regionen und die Regionen des Vereinigte Königreich in den Jahren 2021 und 2022 und die deutschen Bundesländer und die Regionen Frankreichs im Jahr 2022. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass es eine europäische Identität mit interessanten Unterschieden über die Jahre hinweg gibt. Unabhängig von der Zugehörigkeit zu einer europäischen Organisation, wie z.B. der EU, fühlt sich die Mehrheit der Teilnehmer in fast allen befragten Regionen als Europäer.*

*Does a European Identity exist? "European" depends on the individual concept of what signify "Europe". It could be defined by linguistic, religious, legal, geographic, cultural, historical, economic, or political concepts. Often it is a very individual mix out of all concepts. Sometimes "Europe" is use as a synonym of "the EU". This work does try to define neither "Europe" nor "European". The aim of this paper is to contribute as a discussion paper to the discourse on the existence of such an identity. It shows the results of surveys in 2020, 2021 and 2022 made in all regions of Spain, the UK, France, Italy, and Germany. The Spanish autonomous communities and cities have been surveyed in all the mentioned years, Italian regions and the regions of the UK in 2021 and 2022 and the German Länder and French regions in 2022. The results show that there is a European Identity with interesting differences over the years. Regardless the connection to a European organisation, such like the EU, the majority of the participants of almost all surveyed regions feel European.*

## KEYWORDS:

European Identity, France, UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, Europeanization, Europe

## AUTHOR



**Prof. Dr. Roland Brandtjen** is professor at IU international University GmbH. As a European Studies scholar, his expertise lies in collective identities and their influence on politics. His focus is on the European integration process of regions of Germany, Spain, France, Italy and the UK, as well as all recognised micronations of Europe in relation to the concept of independence. He has studied and worked in Europe at home and abroad. He completed his doctorate at the RWTH in Aachen.

## Introduction

Does a European identity exist? Nowadays, it seems difficult to perceive a genuine European identity. The reason is simple, but the roots are complex: it lacks that relationship of fidelity and reciprocity indispensable for the classic concept of “one people”.

The concept of the ‘European people’ can’t have the same meaning used for the national context, because the European identity can’t take into consideration just common principles and traditions among the European States.

This paper does not attempt to clarify what exactly the European identity is, but whether it exists in the different regions of the large Western European states. This existence is to be quantified by means of the question "Do you feel European? The basic idea of this research is to create maps to visualise the European feeling.

The aim of this paper is to contribute as a discussion paper to the discourse on the existence of such an identity. For this purpose, it is first explained what a European identity is according to the literature. The difference between ethnic, national, regional, and European identities is explained. This is followed by an explanation of the data collection method and evaluation. The data and possible explanations are then presented. In order to maintain an overview, the data is initially separated, analysed and visualized in the survey years.

The work ends with a conclusion, the bibliography and an annex including the used data and the translations into the languages.

## Collective identities vs. individual identities

Identity is understood as the self-description of an individual or a group, which is emotionally or intellectually based on identification objects (Hüttmann & Wehling, 2009, p. 205). In other words, it explains who one is or who several are, including who one wants (or several want) to be (Rüsen, 2006, p. 27). Self-categorization Theory underlies this concept and states that due to this identity, a feeling of belonging and self-esteem, considered essential for humanity, is provided (Davis, 2008, p. 556; Fitjar, 2010, p. 3; Hogg, 1995, p. 556 f.). Individual identity – so called numeric identity – concentrates on the equality of individuals and their own opinion towards it ( $A=A$ ), whereas collective, or generic, identity focuses on differences ( $A \neq B$  but  $A=A$ ) (Dose, 2011, p. 61). The objects of identification are characteristics which need to be noticed either externally or situationally or by one’s own confirmation – i.e. the same behaviour of several individuals in a unique or dangerous situation or one’s own opinion or will (Kadelbach, 2008, p. 11). Processes of discrimination occur faster if they concern a topic of higher (individual) importance. (Bilgrami, 2001, p. 7150) Typical perceptions for a collective identity could be common appearances, language, or even sense of community (Dose, 2011, p. 61; Hüttmann & Wehling, 2009, p. 205). Sense of community helps to create a cultural or national identity (Malinova & Casula, 2009, p. 287 f.; Rüsen, 2006, p. 28). The active process of perception is essential to creating feelings of identity and includes both the conscious and subconscious will of identification. If an individual does not like a group or another person, he or she will never identify with them but will develop an identity to separate him- or herself from them (Brinthaupt, 2008, p. 551 f.).

In considering the concept of identity – both numeric and generic – it seems obvious that a strong feeling of identity appears to be more evident in smaller groups than in bigger ones, depending on the importance of the individual objective concerned (Bilgrami, 2001, p. 7150).

## THE IDENTITIES AND THEIR IMPORTANCES

National identity is a feeling of homogeneity among members of a group that views itself as significantly different from other nationalities. (McCartney, 2008, p. 416; Gilland & Goldmann, 2001, p. 167) The idea of national identity has changed over time from being understood as a concept of loyalty towards a regime to the contemporary concept of a feeling of identity among people. (Hirschhausen, 2008, p. 52 f.; Dose, 2011, p. 65 f.) This identity can be enforced in a relatively short process of percipience, i.e. through an historical event (Brinthaup, 2008, p. 552) – the declaration of independence or the concession of certain forms of self-government. Any collective identity – especially national identity – refers to a common concept of social order (mentioned before as sense of community) and is often linked to a certain structure of power. (Bach, 2008, p. 17) It can be said that cultural or national identity is characterized by processes of institutionalization. (Hüttmann & Wehling, 2009, p. 205) Institutionalization, in this case, means the creation of an organization, for example a development association, an institute, a political party or even a kind of governmental organization, which promotes and concerns certain objects of identification. (Bach, 2008, p. 17 f.)

Nevertheless, several contemporaneous collective identities are not precluded. So-called multiple identities make more diffuse the relevance of a national identity. (Schmidt M. G., 2010, p. 531) The question is whether these identities are potentially oppositional – i.e. two different national identities like the Flemish and Walloons in present-day Belgium – or more or less peacefully coexisting as an ethnic group integrated into a nation, like the Rhaetic-Romances in Switzerland. (Craigie, 2009, p. 369 f.) The question concerns what the difference is between nations and ethnic groups. Is Europe a ‘nation’ on its own? Before devoting time to these questions, a closer look at identity, objectives of identity and political institutions will be taken.

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## POLITICAL IDENTITY

Political movements, such as the conservation or peace movements in the '70s and '80s and their resulting policies, represent objects of identification. These movements changed political policies in many countries, leading to a ban on the construction of new nuclear power plants, for example, and represented objects of non-identification with the actions of serving politicians. To increase people's identification with the government, political representatives needed to change their policies. (Korte, 2006, p. 73 f.) This showed that neither the state nor political institutions possess public sovereignty. The people themselves do.

Political identity is therefore a collective identity characterized by the object of identification observing the political actors and their resulting policies. It arises from a conjunction of the performance of political actors and the wishes of the people, formed by its national identity. (Bogdandy, 2005, p. 336) Only if the political identification is high can a governmental organization receive its legitimacy. Problems might arise if there are several contemporaneous, opposed, national identities, like the Scottish identity and the British one. In such a case it is more important that the majority of the inhabitants, regardless of their feelings of national identity, accept the boundaries of the political

community as legitimate, i.e. the political identity. (Smith, 1983, p. 21 f.; Craigie, 2009, p. 368 f.; Henders, 2010, p. 25) In other words, a political system can only be successful with the acceptance of its inhabitants. (Mandry, 2009, pp. 109-112; Henders, 2010, p. 33) In cases where this acceptance is not given, due to the inhabitants' distinctive identity, another institution might be created to govern competing power centres, i.e. autonomous authorities (Henders, 2010, p. 10 f.)

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### ETHNIC IDENTITY – ETHNICITY

Ethnic identity – or ethnicity – is the self-conceptualization of a person and his or her ideas about other individuals, resulting from a process of identification based on perceived cultural differences or common origin and is strongly tied to national identity. (Díaz-Andreu, 2001, p. 4818; Goldmann, 2001, p. 11) It includes, among others, language and culture as objects of identification and also the origin or history of the ethnicity. Compared with national identity, ethnicity however focuses more on the past. (Law, 2008, p. 9 f.) Examples include ethnic groups like the Sinti and Roma, and Aramaean or German minorities in former Soviet countries. National identity, however, connects more to political identity than to ethnic identity. (Dose, 2011, p. 66 f.) Ethnicity does not necessarily lead to the kind of nationalism that aims to be separate and self-governed. Ethnic identity tends to result more in a group that tries to incorporate itself and to reach acknowledgement and protection within a wider nation state or a society, which amends its laws and institutions to accommodate the subgroup's actual or perceived cultural differences. (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 11 f.)

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### REGIONAL IDENTITY

Regional identity is the common feeling of people in a certain region that they belong to the same group. Different from the previous three forms of identity, regional identity often arises from the motivations of politicians or social scientists and not necessarily from the population. Nevertheless, it is based on objects of identification such as a common history, a similar political structure, a similar culture or confrontation of similar problems and challenges. (Dose, 2011, p. 69)

The main difference to the aforementioned forms of identity is the strong focus on an area rather than an ethnic group or nation. Regional identity is a common feeling present in several different nations and ethnic groups. If it includes different nations and ethnic groups with their own unique identities and nationalisms, how is a common regional identity possible? The literature suggests that internal diversity itself provides its reason to exist. Influenced by nationalism – each single approach to enhancing a nation – and facing a common challenge and/or at least one common object of identification like the geographical region itself – these factors help to create regional identity. (Dose, 2011, p. 70; Hirschhausen, 2008, pp. 56-59; Vike-Freiberga, 2008, p. 65 f.; McCormick, 2010, p. 5) Regional identity can supplement national identity at one point but compete with it at another. (MacIver, 1982, p. 300 f.) However, a political system like the EU, as a regional partnership, can only be successful with the acceptance of its inhabitants. (Mandry, 2009, pp. 109-112)

### EUROPE AND ITS IDENTITY

What is Europe and what role does it play in integrating the process of identity? Europe through history has been a description of a territory with divided political, economic, and social borders and with no

sense of common identity. After WWII this definition changed. Europe has become less politically and culturally divided and now describes a region of strong economic cooperation. (McCormick, 2010, p. 64) It seems to be important to state the Europe and its identity is not a synonym for the EU.

As said before, a sense of identity can relate to a region, a nation, an ethnic group, or a political structure. The European identity seems to be a mixture of regional and political identities. Without this connection among European citizens, democratic legitimacy for the European institutions – not only those of the EU – would be completely lacking. (Dose, 2011, p. 71; Schneider, 2016, p. 145; Kaelble, 2009, p. 208; Gilland & Goldmann, 2001, p. 181; Bogdandy, 2005, pp. 332-333, 356, 360)

It is very hard to define European identity objectives. Notions such as a common language, culture, history<sup>1</sup> or religion<sup>2</sup> are not particularly suitable. (Cerutti, 2009, p. 254) Other objectives of identity need to exist. The pure will to form a society, common beliefs, and opinions – such as respect for human and fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law – or the will to achieve solidarity represent these objectives. The EU, as an organizational example, describes itself as a “community of common values”, (Kadelbach, 2008, p. 12; Brasche, 2008, p. 11; Schneider, 2016, p. 145; McCormick, 2010, p. 4) although the EU itself clearly states that European identity is additional to a nation’s own. (Dose, 2011, p. 71; Schneider, 2016, p. 145; Kaelble, 2009, p. 208; Gilland & Goldmann, 2001, p. 181; Bogdandy, 2005, pp. 332-333, 356, 360) In this definition, it seems to need another national identity to identify as European.

Five ideas describe European identity among its citizens: (1) the superior Europe, (2) the internal Europe, (3) the global Europe, (4) the civilization ‘Europe’ and (5) the diverse Europe. Number 1 describes Europe as a highly advanced society in all possible human areas, such as science, politics and lifestyle. The internal Europe, however, takes the approach of a minimal common European culture different from the rest of the world’s cultures. Number 3 sees Europe as a global actor, helping to modernize the world. In number 4, Europe is considered as one civilization in friendly competition with others, which might afford a reason for a sense of European identity. Finally, the motto of the EU, “unified in diversity”, describes the fifth idea of the European sense of identity. (Kaelble, 2009, p. 189 f.; Schmidt V. A., 2006, p. 19 f.) In this paper, it is not important to find the dominant concept of European identity, but to check the existence of a common feeling of European belonging in the displayed regions.

Additionally, the notion of a European identity seems to be important in establishing external borders from others, but also in establishing internal political order. (Kadelbach, 2008, p. 9; Bogdandy, 2005, p. 354) It explains who you are if you are European or want to be European. European identity also differentiates oneself from the non-European. (Rüsen, 2006, p. 27; Bogdandy, 2005, p. 336) It encourages the population to feel connected to Europe as a separated space, promotes solidarity and loyalty among the population and towards Europe and is the basis for all activities relating to European policy. (Hüttmann & Wehling, 2009, p. 205; Schneider, 2016, p. 145)

The Eurobarometer is a series of public opinion surveys carried out by the European Commission. It is a qualitative investigation of the motivations, feelings, and reactions of the public towards certain topics. Every year there are surveys with the same or very different questions. In each member state of

<sup>1</sup> Europe’s cultures and historical aspects are too widespread to be common for all Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Even Christianity is too strongly divided to be called “common”.

the EU selected social groups participate, to provide a high level of representativeness. In the years 1992, 1993, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, they asked the selected EU citizens, “Do you see yourself as ...?”. The respondents had five options to choose from: “only (NATIONALITY)”,<sup>1</sup> “(NATIONALITY) and European”, “European and (NATIONALITY)”, “European only” or “None”. (European Commission, 2020) Diagram 1 shows the results of these surveys. According to the results, less than 3% feel none of the possible answers. Between 30 and 45% of the respondents felt only (NATIONALITY). All the rest seems to possess some kind of European identity up to only European identity.

Outside the EU setting, only rarely has a population been asked about its European identity. In 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 the population of the Faroe Islands and of the Isle of Man stated in an online survey their feeling of belonging to Europe. Diagram 1 shows that between 81,3% and 72,4 % of the Faroese respondents and between 49,4% and 35,5 % of the Manx respondents identified themselves as being European. (Brandtjen R. B., Europeanized Separatism and Micro-Nations - Secession to gain full EU-Membership? An Analysis of the Isle of Man and the Faroe Islands, 2019, p. 171 f.; Brandtjen R. , 2022, p. 21)

Neither society is part of the EU. (Føroya landsstýri, 2018) These surveys show that there might exist to a certain extent a feeling of European identity in relatively remote societies outside the EU.

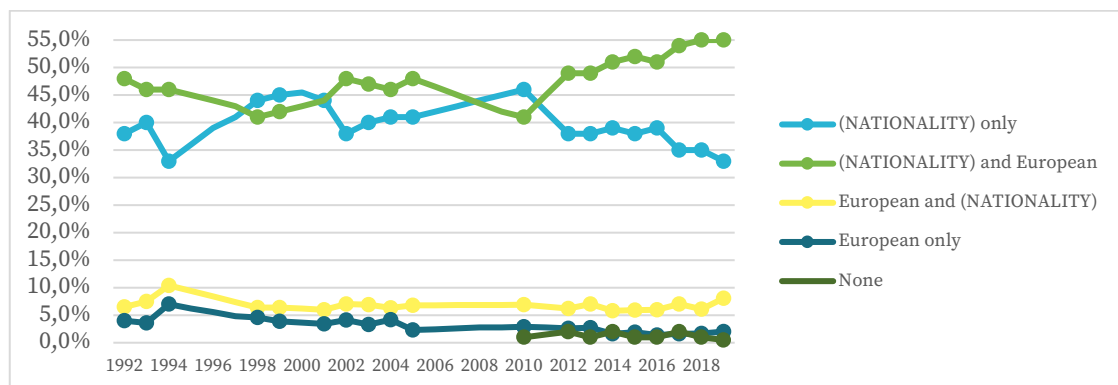


Figure 1: In the near future, do you see yourself as ...? (European Commission, 2020)

Unfortunately, the representativeness of the later surveys has not been proven, which represents the main critique of these surveys. Regarding the Eurobarometer, some authors criticise the methodology and therefore its results. (Føroya landsstýri, 2018)

<sup>1</sup> (NATIONALITY) represents the placeholder for the individual nationality of each respondent.

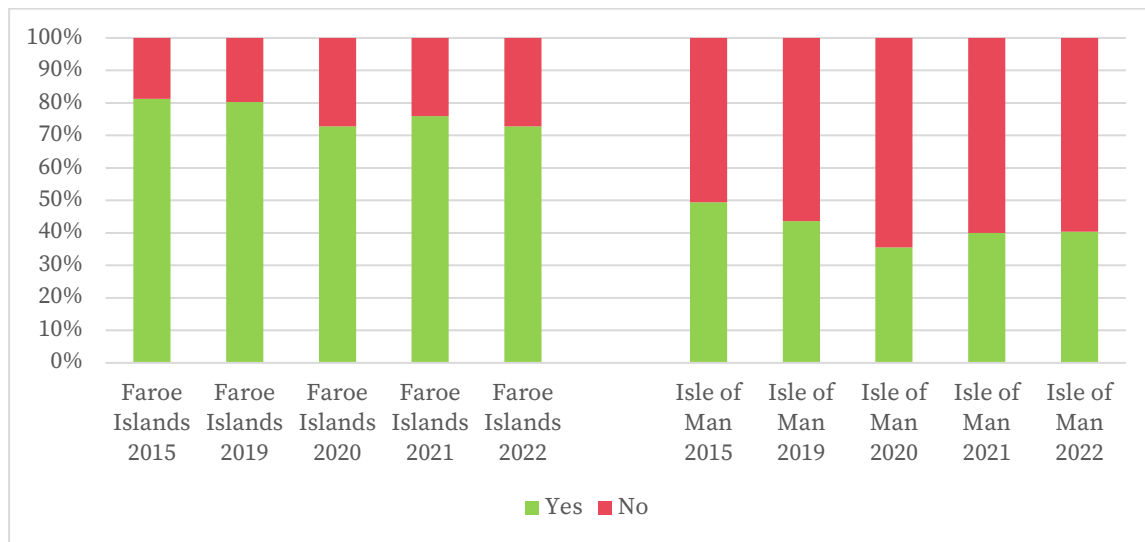


Figure 2: Do you identify yourself with being European? – Results from the Faroe Islands and the Isle of Man in 2015 (Brandtjen R. B., *Europeanized Separatism and Micro-Nations - Secession to gain full EU-Membership? An Analysis of the Isle of Man and the Faroe Islands*, 2019, p. 173 f.; Brandtjen R. , 2022, p. 21)

## Methodology

The data reported here were conducted in all regions (administrative regions such as federal states) in the states of France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom. For this purpose, quantitative research was offered in the form of individualised quantitative online-based surveys in the respective languages of the regions. By means of virtual snowball sampling, these surveys were promoted via social media of Facebook and Twitter and given to the population of the target group. For this purpose, relevant hashtags of the respective regions were set, regional media (e.g. TV Melilla in the Autonomous City of Melilla) were contacted and disseminated in region-related interest groups (e.g. FALE in Normandy or OSCEC in Extremadura).

This type of sampling serves to find participants in e.g., hard-to-reach groups of people. A person in such a group who participates in the survey gives the questionnaires to other people in their network or arranges participation in the survey. It can increase the representativeness of the results by the diffusion of the survey into the corresponding group of participants. (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004; Atkinson & Flint, 2001)

Challenges of a virtual snowball sampling might be the community bias, the lack of definite knowledge as to whether or not the sample is an accurate reading of the target population and that the target population might not always have access to the Internet. (Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Häder, 2006)

The surveys in the UK take place annually from March to April, in Germany from May to June, in France from June to July, in Italy from July to August and in Spain from August to September. The Spanish polls were published for the first time in 2020. In the UK and Italy, the polls were launched in 2021 and in Germany and France in 2022. They are totally anonymous and fulfil the requirements of the DSGVO.

All surveys were offered in the official state language as well as in co-official, recognised, regional and minority languages where possible. To avoid misunderstandings, the surveys were translated by official translators. Thus, it was offered in about 86 languages.

The transfer of the results to the population still needs to be clarified. Due to the subject matter and the nature of the sampling, there are more men than women among the participants in all regions. In all regions, on the other hand, very few (less than 1%) have indicated that they do not belong to the binary gender groups. The age groups between 30 and 49 are most strongly represented in all regions. Younger and older groups are underrepresented. On average, participants have at least vocational training or higher. academics are overrepresented. Only the income groups of all regions are fairly evenly distributed.

The final challenge to the data is that a region is defined the same in all countries. Thus, a region is a federal state in Germany and an autonomous city or community in Spain. In the United Kingdom, however, the constituent countries and Cornwall (because of its cultural and historical distinctiveness) have been defined as regions. In Italy and France, on the other hand, regions are legally defined. Particularities such as the region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol, which exists de jure but has relatively little de facto relevance for the population, have not been considered here. However, it is also confirmed that the regions in France were restructured in 2015. This reorganisation has come under great criticism from one of the participants.

## European Identity in different Regions – the results of 2020 - 2022

The following data is based on the question "Do you feel European". This question was translated into the corresponding questions and participants could either agree or disagree. There was no degree measurement.

As mentioned before, the answer to this question depends on Europe's own concept. Europe can be understood as a cultural community. However, this raises the difficulty of defining the borders. Even a purely geographical definition of Europe would exclude areas such as the Canary Islands or Cyprus. Europe could be defined in religious terms. The question would be which religion is purely European. Countries like Albania and Turkey, for example, would be excluded from a Christian definition with its Islamic majority. If one takes state borders to define Europe, areas on other continents such as French Guyana belong to Europe. Difficulties would then arise with countries like Russia with a European part. Political borders in the sense of European organisations, the affiliation of a state to Europe changes depending on the respective organisation. In the countries studied here, the EU is often perceived as synonymous with Europe. What is interesting about this is that the United Kingdom would then no longer be a "European" country. (Central Intelligence Agency, USA, 2021; Böge, 2007, p. 17)

This work does not seek to capture or clarify the individual definition of the participants. The only purpose is to capture the European identity.

### 2020

Figure 3 shows the results of the survey in 2020. In this year, only the regions of Spain were surveyed initially. It is striking that in all regions a high proportion (of at least 77 %) fills in as Europeans. The average level of agreement across all regions is 85.9%, with 7 regions below this average and 12 above it.

This year, relatively many people took part in the surveys. In Melilla, 323 people took part in the survey, which is the smallest sample of the year. The total number of participants in Galicia in 2020 was 2284,

which is the largest sample size in Spain this year. Nevertheless, the Galician feeling of being European was 83.6%, which represents the second lowest level of agreement.

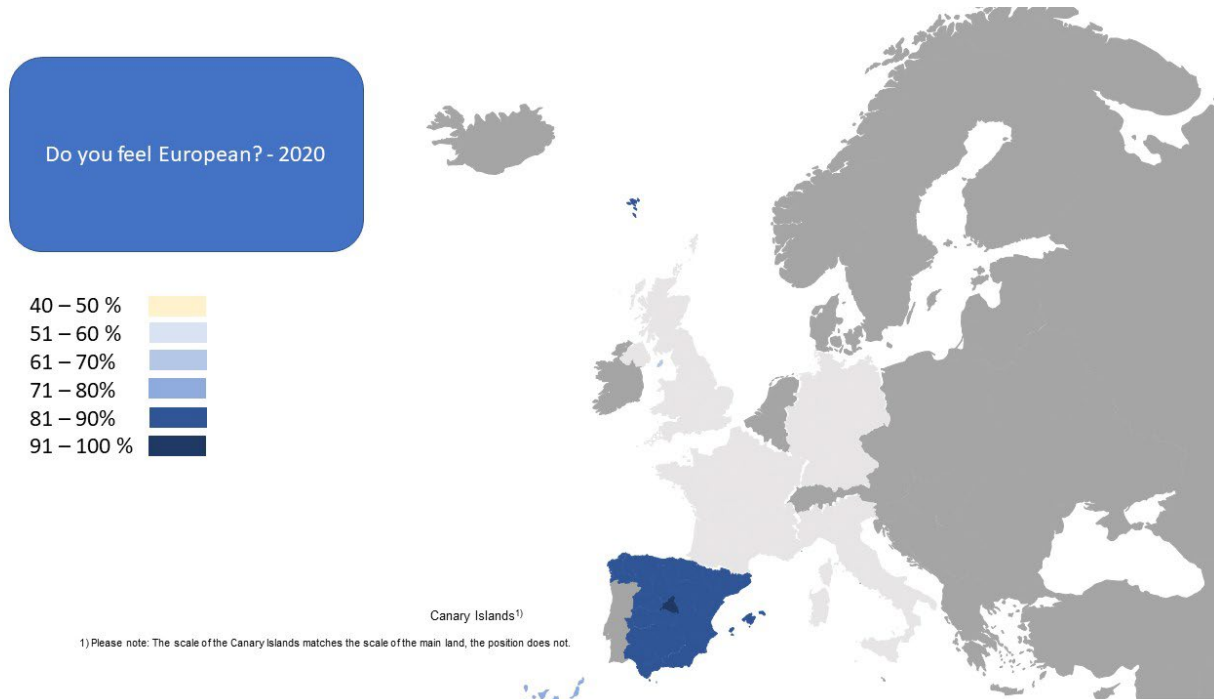


Figure 3: Do you feel European? – 2020 (own interpretation)

In the Comunidad de Madrid, the capital region of Spain, the highest number of people (90.5%) feel European this year. This feeling is lowest in the Islas Canarias in the Atlantic with 77.2 % agreement. One possible explanation could be Madrid's relatively high proportion of non-Spanish people or the high cultural diversity of the region's inhabitants. This could also apply to the Canary Islands, but the Canary Islands are more of a tourist destination than a place where many people settle integratively. Certainly, the distance of the Canary Islands from the European mainland could also be a reason for the result.

Catalunya is in 2nd place in terms of the number of participants, but with 86.4% approval it is only just above the average for all regions. In 2nd place in terms of the smallest number of participants is the Autonomous City of Ceuta. Considering that the total population in Ceuta and Melilla is the lowest of the Spanish regions, the low number of participants is no longer very surprising. Nevertheless, approval of the European sentiment is above average in both autonomous cities, 86.9 % in Melilla and 88.2 % in Ceuta. The special position of the two cities on the African mainland could have been an argument for a low approval rating. However, both Ceuta and Melilla are border towns with Morocco. The European identity could therefore represent in these cities more a political than a geographical or regional identity.

In 2020, the R-value between the number of participants and the outcome of the confirmed feeling of being European in Spain was -0.30991784. Thus, in 2020, there was just a moderate negative correlation between the data. This means that the more people participated, the lower the number of confirmations of the European feeling. Figure 4 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the number of participants and the European feeling.

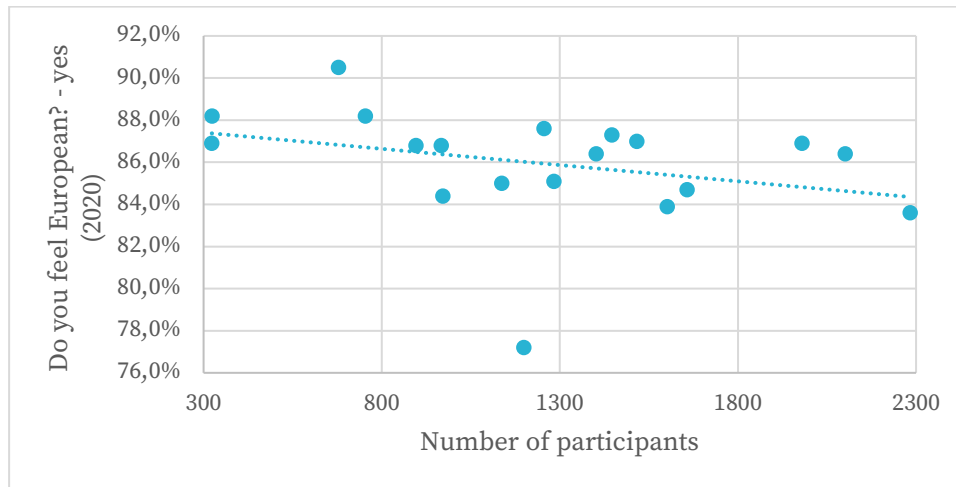


Figure 4: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the Spanish surveys in 2020

In conclusion, it seems to exist a very high European feeling in the Spanish autonomous communities and cities in 2020.

## 2021

Figure 5 shows the results in 2021, the year in which the regions of Spain were surveyed again. Added to this are the regions of Italy and the United Kingdom.

The willingness to participate was highest in Scotland with 1196 participants. In Italy, the Regione del Veneto (the Venetian region) ranked first with 1186 and second in all regions in terms of number of participants. In Spain, as in the previous year, Galicia had the highest number of participants with 1104. This also represents the third place in comparison with all the regions surveyed this year. Compared to last year, the number of participants has decreased by 51.66%.

Reasons for the high number of participants in these regions could be due to topics such as Brexit, independence referendums and regional political events. (V., 2017; Brandtjen R., 2022) The decline in Galicia could be due to the repetition of the survey. The so-called panel mortality can be due to various reasons, such as lower interest due to previous participation. (Williams, 2015, p. 18)

Melilla has the lowest number of participants, with only 4 people taking part in 2021. The low participation may be due to the comments posted on social media at the time of the survey. These comments showed a clear pro-Moroccan ideology, with the aim of influencing the survey results in the direction that the population of Melilla favours integration into the Moroccan state. Ceuta is the runner-up with 54 participants. This corresponds to a participation reduction of 82.72 %. Here, too, the lower willingness to participate could be a repeat effect, as in the case of Galicia. With 176 participants, Umbria in Italy has the third lowest participation. Umbria is the 4th least populated region in Italy, which could be an explanation. Ceuta is the runner-up with 54 participants. This corresponds to a participation reduction of 82.72 %. Here, too, the lower willingness to participate could be a repeat effect, as in the case of Galicia. With 176 participants, Umbria in Italy has the third lowest participation. (GWIND SRL, 2023) Umbria is the 4th least populated region in Italy with the second lowest population density, which could be an explanation. This could be explained by the much higher number of participants in smaller regions or regions with a lower population density.

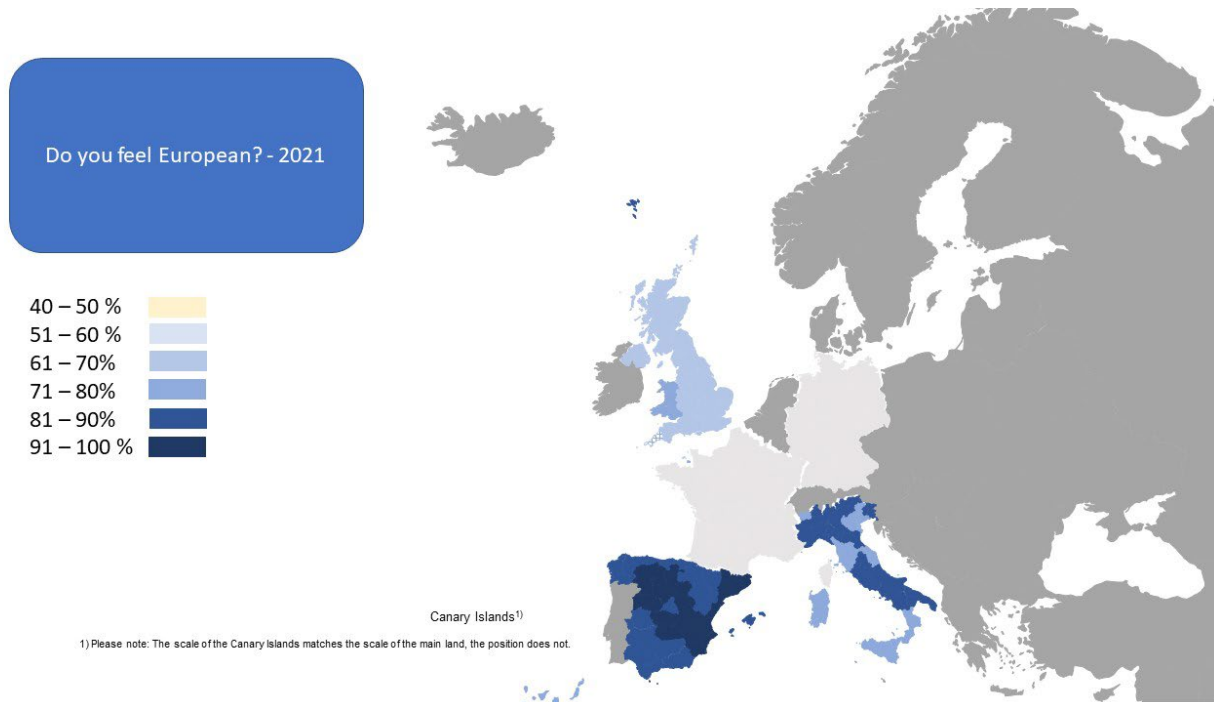


Figure 5: Do you feel European? – 2021 (own interpretation)

In Spain, the average of the regions is 88.07% of the European feeling. Compared to the previous year, it has increased by 2.17 %. The reasons for this could be the change in the number of participants. On average, the participation in all Spanish regions reduced by 62.36%. The strongest reduction of participation has been with 98.76% in Melilla and with 82.72% in Ceuta. La Rioja with 74.4% reduction of participation follows the two autonomous cities. The lowest reduction of participation has the Región de Murcia with 45.76% and Asturias with 47.94%. On average, this feeling of being European has increased by 2.4% in the respective regions. Melilla with + 15 % and the Canary Islands with - 9.1 % are outliers here. Only in 6 Spanish regions, Andalucía, Extremadura, the Comunidad de Madrid, the Islas Canarias, Cantabria, and Aragón, possess a slide reduction in the European feeling (except of the canary change of -9,1%, the reduction lays between -3% and -0.7%). Galicia and Catalunya are the Spanish regions with the most participants, with the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla having the lowest percentage. On the other hand, these two cities are the Spanish regions with the highest value of European identity. As already mentioned, this could be due to the low number of participants. Right behind them are the region of Comunitat Valenciana (Valencian Community) and Castilla y León, at 91,7% each. The Islas Canarias (Canary Islands) represent again the region with the lowest confirmation of a European identity feeling with 70.2%. With an R-value between the number of participants and the confirmed European feeling of -0.2351, there is a weak negative correlation. It follows that the more people participate, the lower the confirmed feeling of being European. Figure 6 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the number of participants and the European feeling.

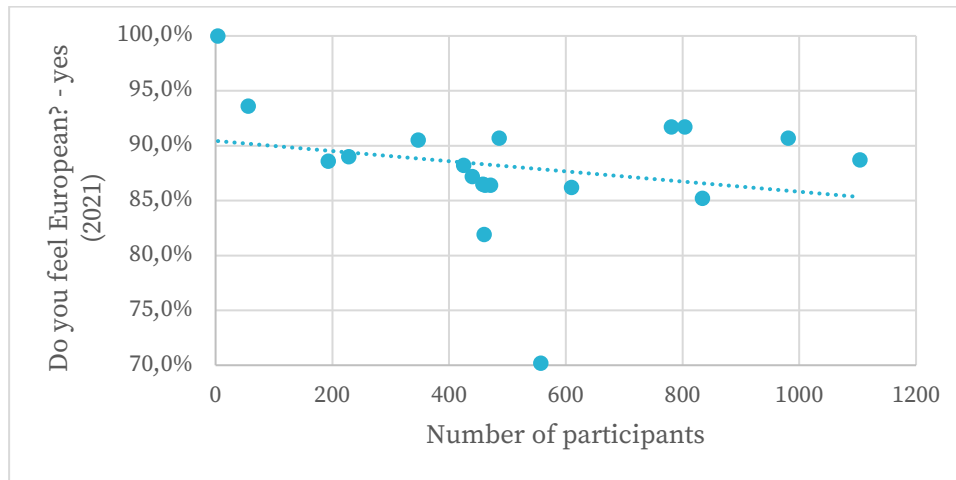


Figure 6: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the Spanish surveys in 2021

The feeling of being European in 2020 compared to 2021 in the regions of Spain has an R-value of 0.700625, which corresponds to a strong positive correlation. So, it seems that the higher the value in 2020, the higher the value in 2021. Figure 7 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the Spanish results regarding the European feeling of 2020 and 2021.

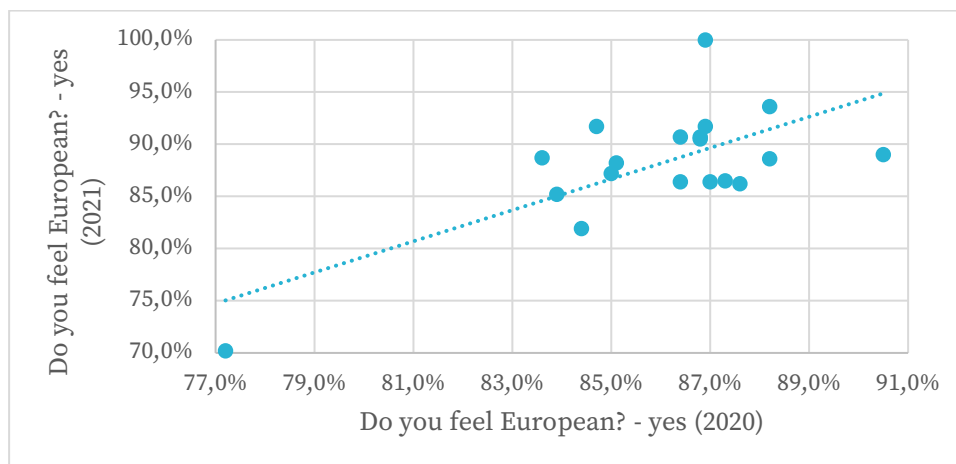


Figure 7: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the comparison of the Spanish results of 2020 and of 2021

The average in Italy of European sentiment is 81.25%, putting it in 2nd place after Spain. The lowest value is found in Tuscany with 71.3%. The highest value, on the other hand, is found in the region of Trentino-Alto Adige / South Tyrol with 89.8%. On average, the northern regions provide with the highest confirmation of an European feeling in Italy. This might be a result of the borders with other countries and the stronger necessity of economic, political, and cultural cross border cooperation. Island regions like Sardegna with 79.2% and Sicilia with 76.2%, but also so called “continental islands” like the Valle d’Aosta (Aosta valley) with 79.5% rather show a smaller European feeling within Italy. (Munenzon, 2016; Ferdinand, Oostindie, & Veenendaal, 2020; Brandtjen R. B., 2021) These results might support the idea of a connection of the necessity of cross broader cooperation and European identity feeling. As a counterargument for that would be the results of regions in south of middle Italy and south Italy. However, it seems that the number of participants represents a clearer argument for the result. The correlation between the confirmation of Europeaness and the number of participants represents a value of -0,1856, which results in a weak negative correlation. In other words, the more people who take

part in the polls in Italy, the greater the likelihood of a lower result on European identity. Figure 6 shows Figure 9 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line regarding the results and number of participants in the Italian surveys.

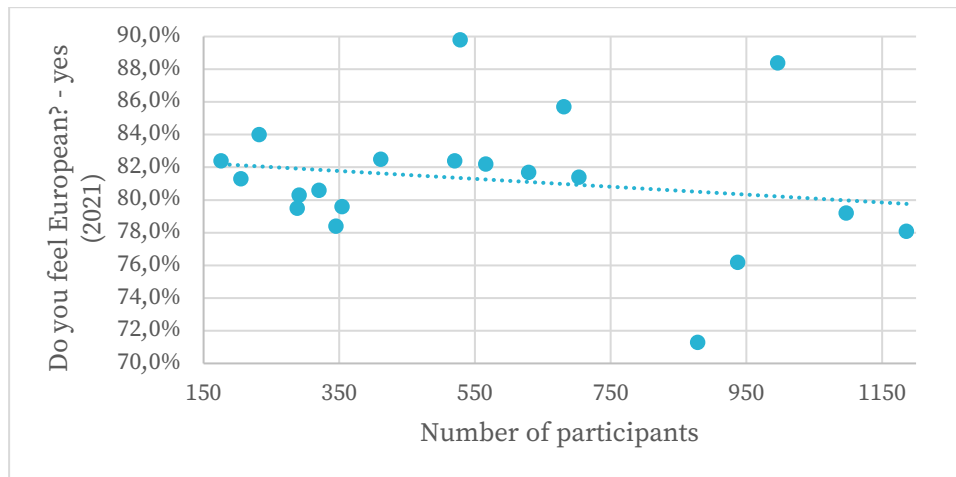


Figure 8: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the Italian surveys in 2021

Participants in the United Kingdom reported feeling European at an average of 69.06%. What is surprising is that despite the possibility of equating "Europe" with "EU" and then not feeling more European in the event of a simultaneous Brexit, there is still such a high value of feeling European. Participants in England and Northern Ireland rated their European identity lowest, at 64% each. The highest value is in Wales with 76.8%. The result in Northern Ireland could be due to the EU-GB border dispute in Northern Ireland shortly after Brexit. (Edgington & Kovacevic, 2023) The results in England could be due to the cultural and political hegemonic power within the United Kingdom. (Easton, 2018; Little, 2018) Although the values are still very high. Unlike the Spanish and Italian regions, the R-value for the UK surveys between the number of participants and the feeling of being European is 0.09196955. This corresponds to a weak positive correlation. So, the more people who took part in the surveys, the higher their sense of European identity. Figure 9 shows the control measure and the trend line of the UK surveys 2021.

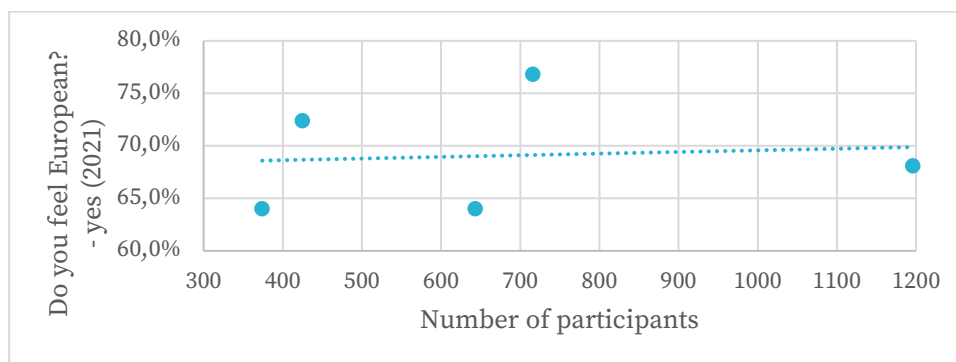


Figure 9: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the UK surveys in 2021

## 2022

Figure 10 shows the results of the European identity in 2022 in the different regions of Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and, for the first time, France, and Germany. The lowest number of participants this

year is the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen with 31 participants, followed by the Spanish autonomous cities of Melilla with 37 and Ceuta with 38 participants, as in previous years. The highest number of participants are in Catalunya with 942, in Galicia with 820 and Scotland with 691 participants. The latter could be since the entire survey also asks about the desired degree of autonomy for the respective region and thus in the latter areas the issue seems very attractive.

In terms of the affirmation of feeling European, 3 French overseas territories are in the lower positions in 2022: Guadeloupe with 43.8%, Martinique with 50% and French Guiana with 52.3%. If the French regions and the German Länder had not been surveyed, Northern Ireland would be in last place, as in the previous year, with 55.9%.

The 3 areas with the lowest number of participants are also the ones in 2022 with the highest percentage of European feeling: Melilla with 96.8%, the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen with 95.5% and Ceuta with 94.3%.

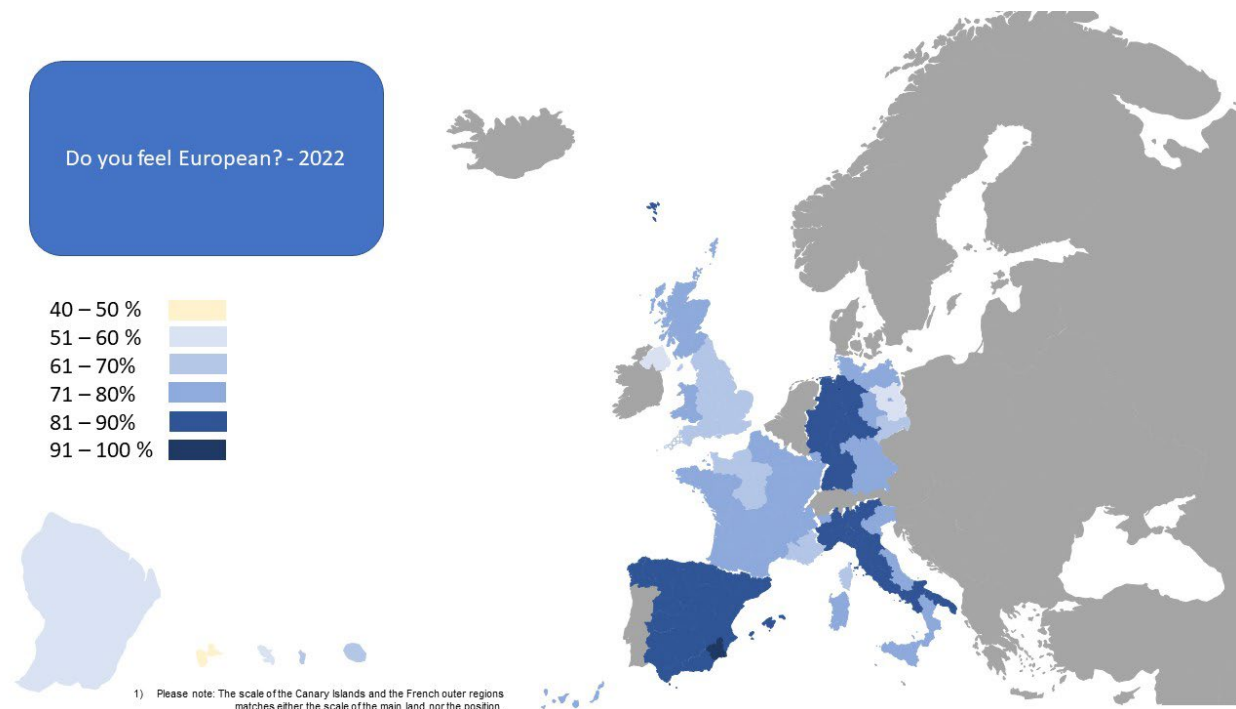


Figure 10: Do you feel European? – 2022 (own interpretation)

Like 2021, the highest average 2022 European identity is in Spain with 86%. Compared to the previous year, this average has changed by -2.35%. On average, the number of participants in the Spanish regions has increased by 28.56%. Excluding Melilla, however, this average is -15.69%. Melilla had only 4 participants in 2021, which increased to 37 participants in 2022. Without this outlier, the general number of participants has fallen again compared to the previous year. Only in 3 Spanish communities (except Melilla) was there an increase in the number of participants: The Community of Madrid with 47.81% growth, La Rioja with 33.16% and Andalucía with 2.55%. The greatest decrease is found in Castilla y León with -44.43% and Cantabria with -39.57% change. Once again, the decline in the number of participants could represent the usual reasons for panel mortality. The increase in the number of participants in Madrid and La Rioja could be due to the increased interest in the topic. The small increase in Andalucía seems more coincidental than justified. The lowest percentage of agreement to

be European in the Spanish regions is, as in previous years, again in the Canary Islands with 75.6% in 2022. This still represents an increase of 7.69% compared to the previous year, but a reduction of 2.07% compared to 2021. On average over the 3 years, the European identity of the participants is 74.334%. The average reduction in the Spanish region was 2.2% compared to 2021. The largest decreases in European identities were in Navarre with -9.1%, Galicia with -7.2% and in the Valencian Community with -6.3%. On the other hand, the greatest increase in this indication was in the Canary Islands with a growth of 7.7% and Extremadura with 2.8%. Interesting are small changes in European sentiment in Asturias and Cantabria with +0.2% each. With an R-value between the number of participants and confirmed European feeling of -0.34291, a weak negative correlation in the Spanish regions can be seen in 2022. This also means, as in 2021, that with a lower number of participants, a higher confirmation of a European feeling is given. Figure 11 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the number of participants and the European feeling in 2022.

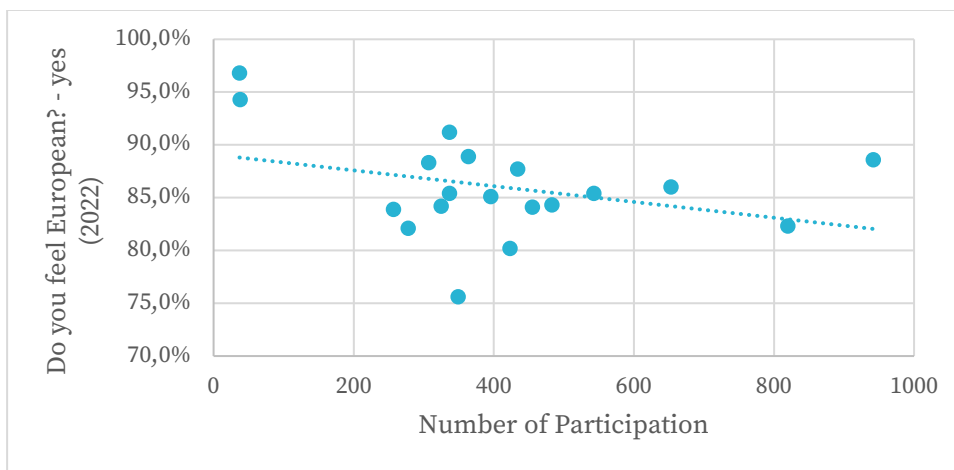


Figure 11: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the Spanish surveys in 2022

The feeling of being European in 2021 compared to 2022 in the regions of Spain has an R-value of 0.8330481, which corresponds to a strong positive correlation. So, it seems that the higher the value in 2021, the higher the value in 2022. Figure 12 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the Spanish results regarding the European feeling of 2021 and 2022.

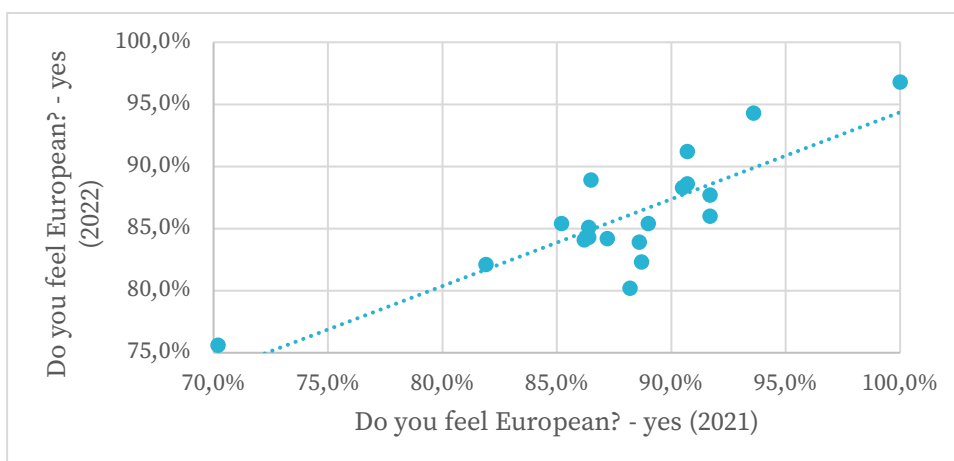


Figure 12: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the comparison of the Spanish results of 2021 and of 2022

Like 2021, the second highest average 2022 European identity is in Italy with 80.3%. Compared to the previous year, this average has changed by -1.23%. On average, the number of participants in the Italian regions has decreased by 13.21%. The largest decrease in participation is found in Sicily with -51.44%, in Sardinia with -49.86% and in Puglia with -45.58%. Once again, the decline in the number of participants could represent the usual reasons for panel mortality. 6 of the 20 Italian regions show an increase in the number of participants. The highest increase is in the regions of Umbria with 64.77%, Friuli-Venezia Giulia with 46.96% and Molise with 37.56%. One reason for the increase in participants in Molise and Umbria could be the fact that both are among the least populated regions in Italy and that the 2022 surveys found the more interested groups of people in the Snowball sampling. In the case of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, unlike in 2021, the survey was offered not only in Italian but also in the regional languages Friulian, Venetian, Slovenian and German. This could have greatly increased the willingness to participate. In the regions of Marche with -2.03% and of Lazio with +6.25% the change in the number of participants was the smallest. The lowest percentage of agreement to be European in the Italian regions is, different to the previous year, in the Sicilian region with 74.1% in 2022. This represents a decrease of 2.76% compared to 2021. This is followed by Molise with 75.8% and Calabria with 76.8% approval of the European sentiment. The average reduction in the Italian regions was 0.9% compared to 2021. This feeling is strongest in the regions of Trentino-Alto Adige with 87.5%, Emilia-Romagna with 85.7% and Campania with 84.8%. The strongest change compared to the previous year was in Lombardy with -8.7% and Tuscany with +12.9%. It is interesting to note that despite the change in the number of participants, the confirmation of the European feeling in the regions of Emilia-Romagna and Piemonte have changed to 0%. In both years, these are 85.7% in Emilia-Romagna and 81.7% in Piemonte. With an R-value between the number of participants and confirmed European feeling of 0.13036, a weak positive correlation in the Italian regions can be seen in 2022. This also means, different to 2021, that with a higher number of participants, a higher confirmation of a European feeling is given. Figure 13 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the number of participants and the European feeling in 2022.

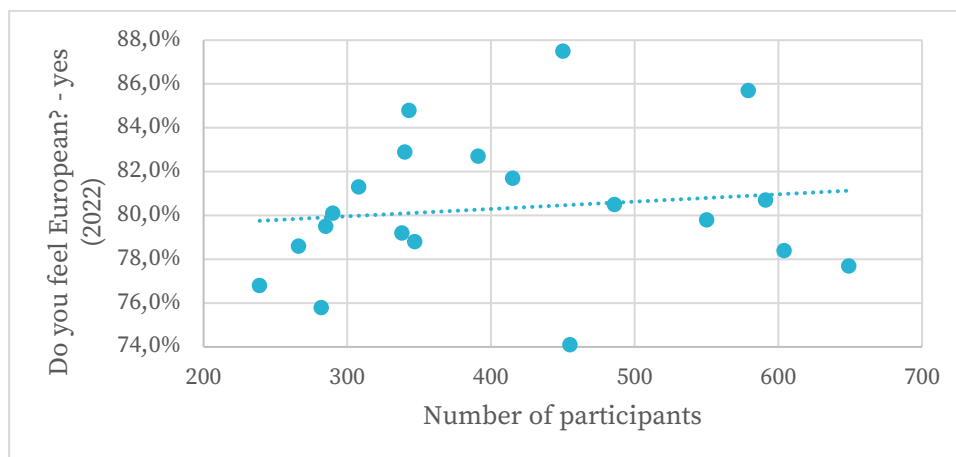


Figure 13: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the Italian surveys in 2022

The feeling of being European in 2021 compared to 2022 in the regions of Italy has an R-value of 0.55670, which corresponds to a strong positive correlation. So, it seems that the higher the value in 2021, the higher the value in 2022. Figure 14 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the Italian results regarding the European feeling of 2021 and 2022.

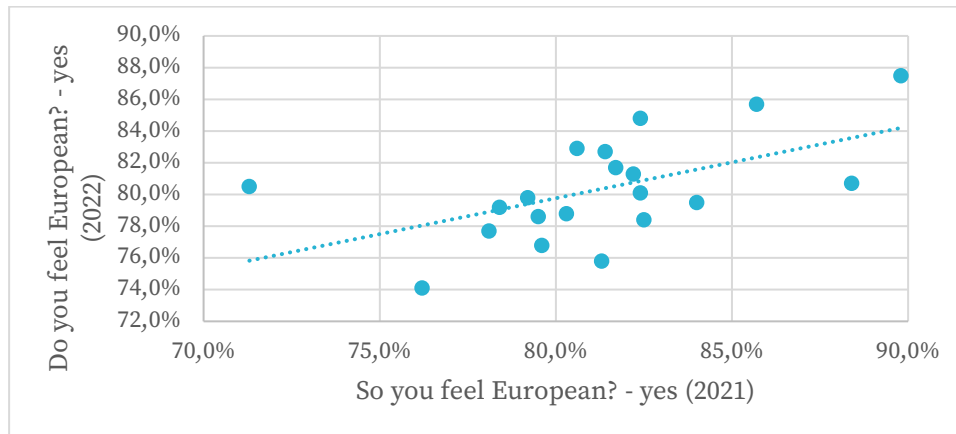


Figure 14: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the comparison of the Italian results of 2021 and of 2022

2022, the survey was also conducted in the German federal states. with a confirmed European identity of 78.5% on average, the Federal Republic is in 3rd place. In general, it can be said that the willingness to participate was lowest in Germany of all the states. The lowest number of participants was in the free Hanseatic city of Bremen with 31 participants and the highest in Baden-Württemberg with 129 participants. One possible explanation could be that in Germany, with the rise of very populist issues in recent years, there has been greater concern that research on identities is more of a manipulative exercise to promote populist ideologies. At least, this was often communicated in the comments on the survey in social media. European sentiment seems to be highest in the Nordic city-states of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen with 95.5% and the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg with 86.5%, followed by Lower Saxony with 85.5%. This feeling seems to be lowest in some East German federal states of Brandenburg with 57.7%, Saxony with 60.6% and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern with 70.3%. One reason for this result could be the recently found dissatisfaction with democracy in the East German federal states. (Decker, Kiess, & Brähler, 2023) However, a clear connection is purely speculative. With an R-value between the number of participants and confirmed European feeling of -0.40753, a weak negative correlation in the German Länder can be seen in 2022. This also means, that with a lower number of participants, a higher confirmation of a European feeling is given. Figure 15 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the number of participants and the European feeling in 2022.

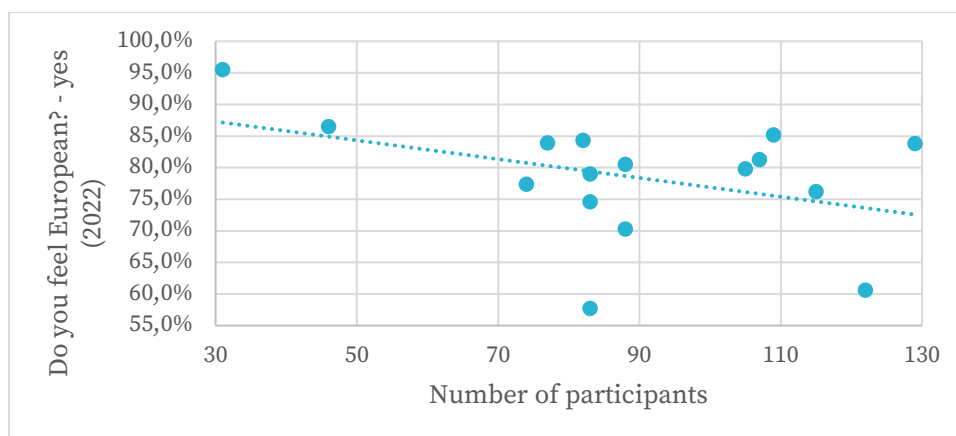


Figure 15: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the German surveys in 2022

Different to 2021, the UK represents the 4<sup>th</sup> rank of the European Identity feeling with an average confirmation of 67.2%. On average, the number of participants in the regions in the UK has decreased by 44.1%. The largest decrease in participation is found in Wales with -61.59%. the smallest decrease is found in England with -29.24%. Once again, the decline in the number of participants could represent the usual reasons for panel mortality. The lowest percentage of confirmation to be European in the regions of the UK is, as in the previous year, in Northern Ireland with 55.9% in 2022. This also represents a decrease of -12.7% compared to 2021. In 2022, the rank has changed to the second lowest confirmation in Cornwall with 65.8%. It also represents the second strongest decrease in the European identity by -9.1%. The highest value of European feeling is found in Scotland with 74.5% and Wales with 71.7%. Compared to 2021 the highest increase of this vales is found in Scotland with +9.4% and England with 6.3%. These results might be due to a lower satisfaction with the UK polity and the scandals with the former prime minister. (Reuters, 2023) With an R-value between the number of participants and confirmed European feeling of 0.59825, a weak positive correlation in the regions of the UK can be seen in 2022. This also means, different to 2021, that with a higher number of participants, a higher confirmation of a European feeling is given. Figure 16 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the number of participants and the European feeling in 2022.

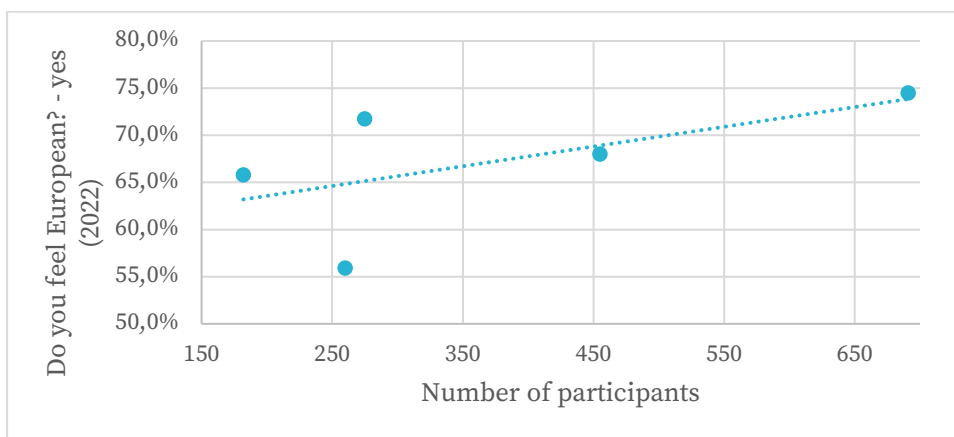


Figure 16: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the UK surveys 2022

The feeling of being European in 2021 compared to 2022 in the regions of the UK has an R-value of 0.48180, which corresponds to a weak positive correlation. So, it seems that the higher the value in 2021, the higher the value in 2022. Figure 17 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the Italian results regarding the European feeling of 2021 and 2022.

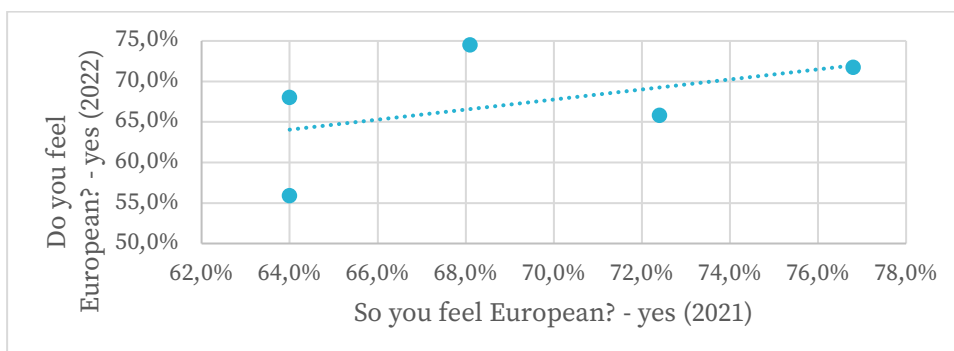


Figure 17: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the comparison of the UK results of 2021 and of 2022

With an average of 66.1% in confirmation of European feeling, the French regions are on the last rank. The willingness to participate was similar to the Spanish, and Italian regions, but with a very low participation in Mayotte with 41 participants, Guadeloupe with 52 participants and Martinique with 53 participants. The most participants are found in Brittany with 269 participants. Brittany also shows the most confirmation of being European with 77.3%, followed by Nouvelle-Aquitaine with 75.7% and Bourgogne-Franche-Comté with 75%. It could be possible that these values are results of the cultural and linguistic cross-border connections and cooperations of these Regions: Brittany with its strong Celtic connection to Ireland, Wales, the Isle of Man, Galicia and Scotland, Nouvelle-Aquitaine with the Occitan and Basque cooperations to Spain, Andorra and Italy and Bourgogne-Franche-Comté with the linguistic connections through Franco-Provençal and Frainc-Comtou to Italy and Swiss. However, a counterargument would be the regions of Grand-Est with 72.1% and Corsica with 61.6%. Both have cultural and linguistic connections to Italy, Germany or Belgium but represent the lower middle ranks. The lowest confirmation of feeling European are found in the 4 of the 5 French overseas regions; Guadeloupe with 43.8%, Martinique with 50 %, French Guiana with 52.3% and Réunion with 61.4%. Only Mayotte with 65.5% is close to the average value. Due to the geographical position and the individual political connections and issues to the French state might be an argument for this. With an R-value between the number of participants and confirmed European feeling of 0.78170, a strong positive correlation in the French regions can be seen in 2022. This also means, that with a higher number of participants, a higher confirmation of a European feeling is given. Figure 18 shows the measure of dispersion and the trend line between the number of participants and the European feeling in 2022.

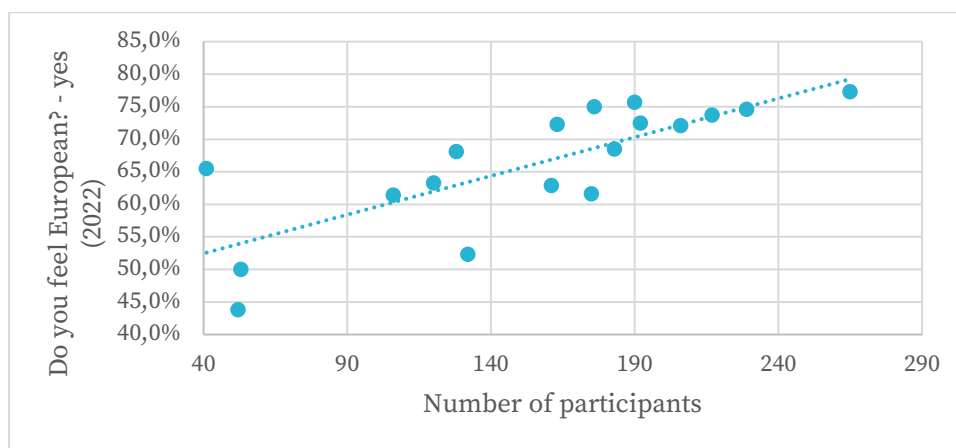


Figure 18: Measure of dispersion and trend line of the French surveys in 2022

## Conclusion

In general, it should be noted that a high level of European identity is confirmed in all the regions surveyed in all years. the only exception seems to be Guadeloupe 2022. Even in the regions of the United Kingdom, despite the political dispute between the state and the eu, and despite the Brexit, the majority affirm to feel European. However, the latter also shows the challenge of what the individual defines as "European" and thus as "Europe". It is obvious that the supranational organisation EU does not equal "Europe". This paper does not attempt to clarify this question.

As a discussion paper, it attempts to contribute to the debate on the existence of a European identity in the regions of Spain, Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom. It can be seen that in all years

the Spanish autonomous communities and cities have on average a higher European identity than the other states. Followed by the northern and central Italian regions and western Germany. European archipelagos on other continents, such as the Canary Islands, Guadeloupe or Martinique seem to have a lower European feeling than the other regions of their respective states. A clear correlation between the number of participants and the European feeling can be found in each year. In general, with the exception of surveys in the UK, and in Italy and France in 2022, there is a negative correlation.

However, in each country there is clearly a positive correlation between the results on European identity and the previous years. This may be due to, with some regions as an exception, panel mortality. The individual reasons for the results cannot be clearly proven and must be examined individually. the possible reasons mentioned in this paper are not proven and are only intended as possible explanations. Furthermore, it is not clarified here whether the results of the samples can be transferred to the populations.

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## Annex:

**DATA**

<b>SPAIN</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS 2022</b>	<b>EUROPEAN FEELING 2022</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS 2021</b>	<b>EUROPEAN FEELING 2021</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS 2020</b>	<b>EUROPEAN FEELING 2020</b>
ANDALUCIA	483	84,3%	471	86,4%	1516	87,0%
ARAGON	455	84,1%	610	86,2%	1256	87,6%
ASTURIAS	543	85,4%	834	85,2%	1602	83,9%
CANTABRIA	278	82,1%	460	81,9%	972	84,4%
CASTILLA - LA MANCHA	307	88,3%	347	90,5%	967	86,8%
CASTILLA Y LEON	434	87,7%	781	91,7%	1657	84,7%
CATALUNYA	942	88,6%	981	90,7%	2101	86,4%
CEUTA	38	94,3%	56	93,6%	324	88,2%
COMUNIDAD DE MADRID	337	85,4%	228	89,0%	679	90,5%
COMUNITAT VALENCIANA	653	86,0%	804	91,7%	1980	86,9%
EUSKADI	396	85,1%	462	86,4%	1402	86,4%
EXTREMADURA	364	88,9%	458	86,5%	1446	87,3%
GALICIA	820	82,3%	1104	88,7%	2284	83,6%
ISLAS BALEARES	325	84,2%	440	87,2%	1137	85,0%
ISLAS CANARIAS	349	75,6%	557	70,2%	1199	77,2%
LA RIOJA	257	83,9%	193	88,6%	754	88,2%
MELILLA	37	96,8%	4	100,0%	323	86,9%
NAVARRA	423	80,2%	425	88,2%	1284	85,1%
REGIÓN DE MURCIA	337	91,2%	486	90,7%	896	86,8%

ITALY	PARTICIPANTS 2022	EUROPEAN FEELING 2022	PARTICIPANTS 2021	EUROPEAN FEELING 2021
ABRUZZO	347	78,8%	291	80,3%
BASILICATA	285	79,5%	232	84,0%
CALABRIA	239	76,8%	354	79,6%
CAMPANIA	343	84,8%	520	82,4%
EMILIA-ROMAGNA	579	85,7%	681	85,7%
FRIULI-VENEZIA- GIULIA	604	78,4%	411	82,5%
LAZIO	340	82,9%	320	80,6%
LIGURIA	391	82,7%	703	81,4%
LOMBARDIA	591	80,7%	996	88,4%
MARCHE	338	79,2%	345	78,4%
MOLISE	282	75,8%	205	81,3%
PIEMONTE	415	81,7%	629	81,7%
PUGLIA	308	81,3%	566	82,2%
REGIONE DEL VENETO	649	77,7%	1.186	78,1%
REGIONE SICILIANA	455	74,1%	937	76,2%
SARDEGNA	550	79,8%	1.097	79,2%
TOSCANA	486	80,5%	878	71,3%
TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE	450	87,5%	528	89,8%
UMBRIA	290	80,1%	176	82,4%
VALLE D'AOSTA	266	78,6%	288	79,5%

UK	PARTICIPANTS 2022	EUROPEAN FEELING 2022	PARTICIPANTS 2021	EUROPEAN FEELING 2021
CORNWALL	182	65,8%	425	72,4%
ENGLAND	455	68,0%	643	64,0%
NORTHERN IRELAND	260	55,9%	374	64,0%
SCOTLAND	691	74,5%	1.196	68,1%
WALES	275	71,7%	716	76,8%

<b>FRANCE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS 2022</b>	<b>EUROPEAN FEELING 2022</b>
AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES	192	72,5%
BOURGOGNE-FRANCHE-COMTÉ	176	75,0%
BRETAGNE	265	77,3%
CENTRE - VAL DE LOIRE	120	63,3%
CORSE	175	61,6%
GRAND EST	206	72,1%
GUADELOUPE	52	43,8%
GUYANE	132	52,3%
HAUTS DE FRANCE	163	72,3%
ÎLE-DE-FRANCE	128	68,1%
MARTINIQUE	53	50,0%
MAYOTTE	41	65,5%
NORMANDIE	161	62,9%
NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE	190	75,7%
OCCITANIE	217	73,7%
PAYS DE LA LOIRE	229	74,6%
PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR	183	68,5%
RÉUNION	106	61,4%

<b>GERMANY</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS 2022</b>	<b>EUROPEAN FEELING 2022</b>
BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG	129	83,8%
BAYERN	115	76,2%
BERLIN	74	77,4%
BRANDENBURG	83	57,7%
FREIE HANSESTADT BREMEN	31	95,5%
FREIE UND HANSESTADT HAMBURG	46	86,5%
HESSEN	107	81,3%
MECKLENBURG-VORPOMMERN	88	70,3%
NIEDERSACHSEN	109	85,2%
NORDRHEIN-WESTPFALEN	82	84,3%
RHEINLAND-PFALZ	77	83,9%
SAARLAND	83	74,6%
SACHSEN	122	60,6%
SACHSEN-ANHALT	83	79,0%
SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN	105	79,8%
THÜRINGEN	88	80,5%

## QUESTION “DO YOU FEEL EUROPEAN?” IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

Alsatian	Fiehle-n-ìhr éich europäisch?
Aragonese	Se siente europeu?
Aranese	Se sent europèu?
Asturleonese	¿Siéntese européu/-a?
Breton	Hag en em santout a rit europat?
Catalan	Se sent europeu?
Cornish	A omglewegh Europek?
Corsican	Ti senti europeu ?
Danish	Føler du dig som europæer?
Dutch	Voel je je Europeaan?
Eonavian / Galician-Asturian	¿Síntese europeo/-a?
Euskera / Basque	Europearra sentitzen zara?
Extremadurian	Se sienti uropeu/-a?
Fala	¿Se sinti europeio/-a?
Faroese	Kennir tú teg sum evropeara?
Franco-Provençal / Arpetan	Vos sentéd-vos eropèen?
Friulian	Ti sintistu european?
French	Vous sentez-vous européen?
Galician	Síntese europeo/-a?
Gallo	Sent'ous-ti uropeyen?
German	Fühlen Sie sich europäisch?
Greenlandic	Europamiusut misigivit?
Guernesiais	Vous sent-ous Ûraopéen?
Irish	An mbraitheann tú Eorpach?
Italian	Ti senti europeo?
Ladin	Te sènteste europeich?
Ligurian	Sciâ se sente europeo?
Lombard	Luu al/Lee la se sent europeee?
Low German / Low Saxon	Föhlt Se sik europääsch?
Lower Sorbian	Cujošo se europski?
Luxemburgish	Fillt Dir lech europäesch?

Manx

Mòcheno

Neapolitan

Norman French

North Frisian (Fering)

Occitan

Piemontese

Portuguese

Sater Frisian

Sardinian

Scots

Scottish Gaelic

Sicilian

Slovenian

Spanish

Suomi

Swedish

Tabarchino

Ulster Scots

Upper Sorbian

Valencian

Venetian

Welsh

Er lhiat dy vel oo dty Europeeanagh?

Heart ir enk an europear?

Te siénte airopeo?

Vos sent-ouos uropéien?

Feelst dü di euroopeesk?

Se sent europeu?

I sentive europeu?

Sente-se europeu?

Fäile Jie Jou europäisk?

T'intendes europeu?

Dae ye feel European?

A bheil thu a 'faireachdainn Eòrpach?

Ti senti europeu/europea?

Se počutite Evropejca?

¿Se siente europeo/-a?

Tunnetko itsesi eurooppalaiseksi?

Känner du dig europeisk?

Te senti europeu?

Dae ye feel European?

Čuješ so europejsce?

Se sent europeu?

Te séntito de ser Europèu?

Ydych chi'n teimlo'n Ewropeaidd?