

Long abstract – Monographic section

YOUNG PEOPLE BEYOND STEREOTYPES

Edited by Carlo Buzzi

Visions of Europe and trust in science of the Italian students

Valentina Tudisca, Nicolò Marchesini e Adriana Valente

The paper explores the possible relationship between trust in science and opinions about Europe, its system of values - perceived and desired - and the feeling of identity of the Italian secondary school students, represented by the Provincial Student Councils of Italy, based on a survey carried out in 2021 within the “Futures for education and Europeanness” project.

The results of the study, which involved 1,197 male and female students aged between 16 and 20 years, confirm high levels of trust in the scientific community, considered as the most reliable source of information, while social networks, influencers and bloggers - contrary to clichés - rank in the last places.

From the comparison between the opinions of those who declare greater trust in the scientific community and those showing less trust, differences emerge with respect to the visions of Europe.

A first difference is found at an identity level. The "trustful" declare a more “open” sense of belonging: 57.2% feel part of their nation, followed by the world (53), local community (53), Western society (50), Mediterranean area (48.8); for the "mistrustful" the sense of identity is primarily rooted in their local community (53.9), followed by their nation (40.2), while broader dimensions - West, Mediterranean area, world - awaken a feeling of belonging in less than a third. Europe is in last place for both groups, although with a gap of almost 20 in favor of the trustful (40.6%).

A second difference in views is found regarding Europe and its values. The distrustful show greater closure at both cultural and political level: almost half of them believe that Europe and their countries should be protected from "cultural contamination"; 40.2% believe that their country should be independent from Europe decisions and only 22% believe that European institutions should have a degree of autonomy in decision making larger than that of single states, requests decidedly less felt by the trustful. At the same time, if the majority of the trustfuls think that Europe should cooperate more with other Western countries (59.2%) and, more generally, with the rest of the world (74.3), the percentages for the distrustfuls are much smaller (36.3 and 50). What the two groups have in common, instead, is the severe judgment on Europe's actions in terms of solidarity during the pandemic.

However, it is in the visions of the "future" of Europe that the difference in openness to the world, protection of rights and participation becomes even more evident. When asked about the factors that could contribute to making them feel more European (Fig.4), the Councils put at the first place having more opportunities to join cultural exchanges with schools from other countries,

Long abstract Welfare & Ergonomia 2/2023

YOUNG PEOPLE BEYOND STEREOTYPES

Edited by Carlo Buzzi

a desire felt more by the trustful (84.9%) than by the distrustful students (53.9%). In second place we find a greater commitment of Europe in the development of green economy, testifying to the urgency of addressing the issue of environmental sustainability, also in this case an issue felt more by the trustful (82.3%) than by the distrustful. The visions of a desired Europe for the trustful also concern the right to health: 82% would feel more European if common European policies were implemented to promote citizens' health and if Europe promoted a fair distribution of vaccines throughout the world; also these requests are less felt by the distrustful students (54 and 42%).

Furthermore, those who are trustful would feel more European if Europe promoted equity and solidarity between the world's peoples (79.8%) and were committed to the protection of human rights in the world (72.5%), issues that are less decisive for those who are distrustful (40 and 36%).

Political participation has a different weight for the two groups as well. The trustful would feel more European if they could engage with other young Europeans in political initiatives for environmental sustainability (78%), social inclusion (77.7), protection of minorities (74), while less than half of the distrustful consider participation as decisive in the construction of a European feeling.

Finally, it is important to consider that trust in the scientific community is higher in lyceums than in technical and vocational schools: we hypothesize that socio-economic variables may also play a role in determining this trust. Therefore, the importance of fighting against inequalities emerges in both determining trust in science and building a vision of an open, supportive and participatory Europe.

Cite me: Valentina Tudisca, Nicolò Marchesini, Adriana Valente, Visioni di Europa e fiducia nella scienza della comunità studentesca italiana in "WELFARE E ERGONOMIA" 2/2023, pp 173-187, DOI: 10.3280/WE2023-002012

Long abstract Welfare & Ergonomia 2/2023

YOUNG PEOPLE BEYOND STEREOTYPES

Edited by Carlo Buzzi

Fig.4. Agreement with factors that could contribute to make students feel more European for the two comparison groups and the total, aggregate percentage values of "much" and "very much".

