

***“Statistics in the Wake of Challenges Posed
by Cultural Diversity in a Globalization Context”***

Key Figures on Cultural Participation in the European Union

**Michail Skaliotis
EUROSTAT, Unit E3, Health, Education and Culture
Luxembourg**

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Abstract

This paper highlights the main aspects of cultural participation in the 15 EU Member States. The analysis is based on a specific *Eurobarometer* sample survey of some 16.000 individuals, which was carried out in autumn 2001. While it is fascinating to look at differences among Europeans' cultural behaviours and practices (*reading books / newspapers / magazines, watching TV, listening to the radio, going to the cinema, concerts, museums, theatre, using PC and internet, practising of artistic activities, etc*), the paper also underlines the importance of developing appropriate statistical instruments capable of providing quick and valid responses to cultural policy questions. In this respect, the analysis demonstrates the significance of international comparisons for both (i) national cultural policies and (ii) cultural actions at the EU level.

Background and purpose

The development of *harmonised* European cultural statistics is still at its infancy¹. The main reason for the late start and slow advancement of cultural statistics at EU level is the fact that Community competencies in the area of culture are limited. At EU level, we speak about *cultural action* (not *cultural policy*) and *cultural co-operation* (not *community decisions*)². In other words, the decision-making power in the field of culture rests with the Member States. It is therefore not surprising that the driving force behind developments in cultural statistics comes mainly from national authorities. It was in March 1997 that Eurostat--in response to a request from Italy and France--created a *leadership group (LEG)* with the task of 'developing cultural statistics capable of describing the European cultural scene and enabling inter-country comparisons to be made more easily'.

¹ Cultural Statistics in the EU: Final report of the LEG, Eurostat Working Paper 3/2001/No1.

² http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/overview_en.html.

Statistics on *cultural participation* was one of the three domains that were considered by the LEG. The other two domains were (i) cultural employment and (ii) cultural expenditure and financing. Like in other fields of statistics, the roadmap towards achieving internationally comparable figures and indicators on cultural participation is very long. The timetable can be very frustrating to cultural actors, planners and other decision-makers who are not impressed by mere methodological developments; they are in search of hard evidence. It is often impossible to persuade them that we would need 8 to 10 years of methodological work prior to the production of statistics. Already after three years of such work, we strongly felt that there was a risk of losing the achievements built by the LEG efforts, if we were unable to produce some basic indicators for international comparisons. In front of such a risk, we were in search of innovative solutions and we soon decided to launch an experiment, i.e. the organisation of a *Eurobarometer survey on the participation of Europeans in cultural activities*.

This paper presents the main results of the survey that was carried out in autumn 2001 in the 15 Member States, on the basis of the same questionnaire, using face to face interviews of a sample of 16.200 Europeans. The descriptive analysis highlights differences and similarities among EU countries with respect to reading habits, music, concerts, computer and Internet usage, radio and television, and practice of artistic activities. The potential use of these international comparisons for national cultural debate and cultural policy is straightforward. Publication of initial results, earlier this year, has just confirmed the attractiveness of EU comparisons for national users. Similarly, the findings are providing useful elements for managers and administrators of cultural actions at EU level (e.g. promotion of books and reading is just one of the areas for eligible projects to be funded in 2003)³.

For Eurostat and the Member States' statisticians who initiated and managed this survey, the whole operation is seen as an experiment in which, an opinion-type survey has been used for statistical purposes. Initial evidence suggests that there are several advantages in using such an instrument to obtain--extremely fast and at a low cost--policy relevant indicators on the participation of individuals in cultural activities. Certain weak aspects of the Eurobarometer, like *treatment of non-response*, *small sample size* and the necessity for *post-reweighting* can be improved. A detailed evaluation of the Eurobarometer is planned for next year.

It was not possible, in this paper, to analyse all the survey topics with the same detail. However, the results give a good overview of the various 'cultural' types of Europeans and illustrate the possibilities that exist for further analyses.

Reading books

There are various reasons for which people read books. The survey tried to cover the following possible categories:

- reading for work;
- reading for educational purposes (compulsory texts only);
- reading for educational purposes (non compulsory texts);

³ Official Journal of the EC, C148/4 of 21.06.2002, CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR 2003.

- reading for reasons other than work or study.

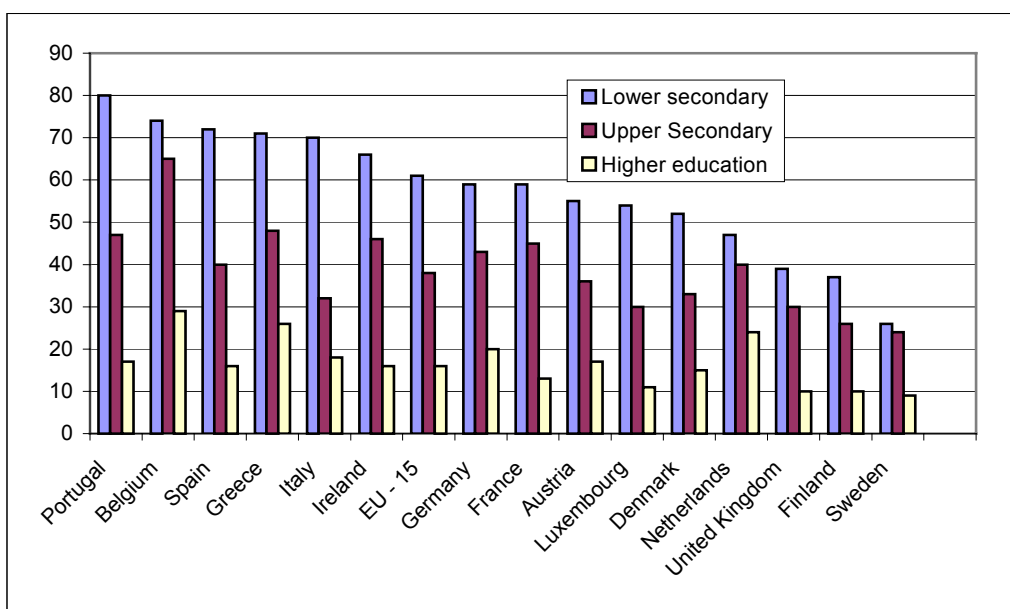
It is mainly the last category that can indicate if there is a 'strong or weak' reading culture in a given population. The EU average of 45 % hides some large differences among Member States: It is in Sweden (72%), Finland (66%) and the UK (63%) where high proportions of the population (15+) declared that they have read books for other than school or work related reasons; on the other side of the scale we find Portugal (15%), and Belgium (23%).

Table 1: Have you read any books in the last 12 months? (multiple answers possible)
(as a % of total population 15 years old and over)

	Yes, for work	Yes, for educational purposes (compulsory texts only)	Yes, for educational purposes (non compulsory texts)	Yes, for reasons other than work / study	No
Belgium	4	8	18	23	58
Denmark	15	19	17	55	33
Germany	15	16	21	40	41
Greece	5	11	9	36	54
Spain	5	12	7	39	53
France	9	11	18	40	43
Ireland	7	15	11	40	44
Italy	5	6	4	43	50
Luxembourg	13	10	8	56	35
Netherlands	10	14	9	53	37
Austria	12	14	21	43	38
Portugal	4	8	14	15	67
Finland	17	17	20	66	24
Sweden	15	23	17	72	19
UK	18	16	17	63	25
EU - 15	11	13	15	45	42

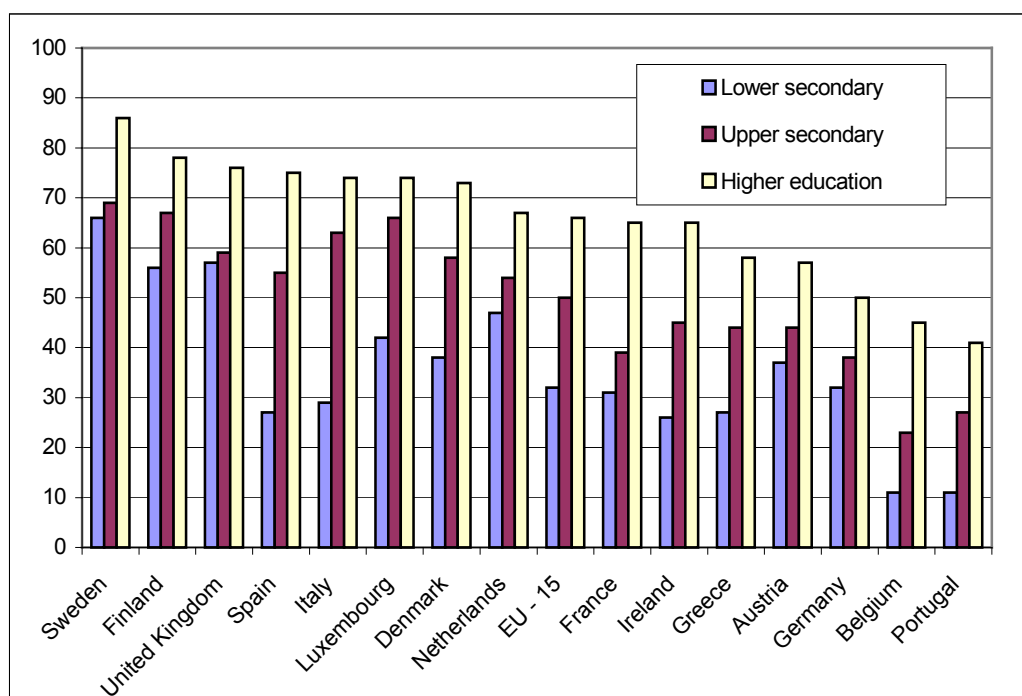
Another significant indicator is the proportion of the population having declared that they did not read any books during the last 12 months (the non-readers). There are five Member States where 50% or more of the population do not read books. These results have provoked substantial reactions and debates in the various media (Press, TV and Radio) in several countries. The level of educational attainment seems to be the main explanatory variable of the reading behaviour in all countries. Graph-1 and Graph-2 present the *non-readers* and the *readers* by level of educational attainment.

Graph 1: Non-readers (*) by level of educational attainment (%)



(*) persons who did not read any books during the last 12 months

Graph 2: Readers (*) by level of educational attainment (%)



(*) persons having read books for reasons other than work or study

There are relatively more women than men who declared having read books, over the last 12 months, for reasons other than 'work or study'. This finding was observed in all countries and it is valid for all levels of educational attainment.

Table 2: Reading books for reasons other than 'work or study', by gender
as a % of men / women 15 years old and over

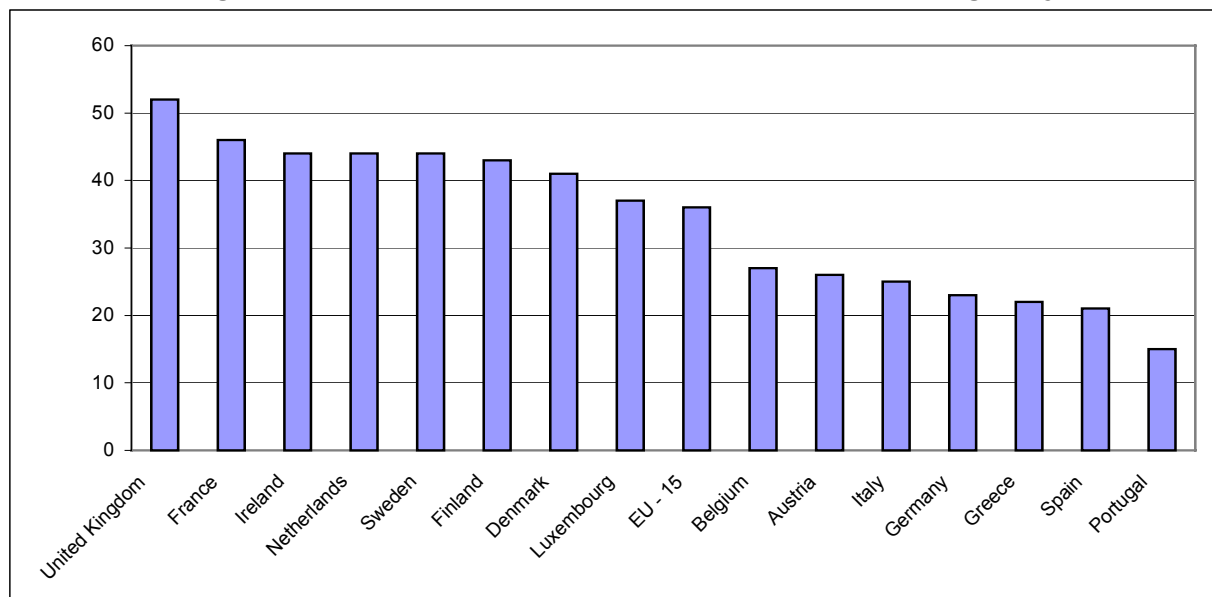
	Men	Women
Belgium	20	26
Denmark	45	64
Germany	35	44
Greece	28	43
Italy	36	50
Spain	37	42
France	37	44
Ireland	33	47
Luxembourg	52	60
Netherlands	45	60
Portugal	14	17
United Kingdom	58	68
Finland	61	71
Sweden	63	80
Austria	35	51
EU - 15	40	51

The survey has also attempted to classify the readers into 'weak', 'usual' and 'strong' by asking them a question about the number of books they had read during the last 12 months; the range used was '1 to 3 books', '4 to 7', '8 to 12' and 'more than 12 books'. For the purposes of this paper, we consider the last two groups together (8 books and more) to represent the category of 'strong readers'.

This question was asked within every category of 'reason for reading books'. In Graph-3, we look, once more, within the group of persons who declared that they had read books for *reasons other than work or study* during the last 12 months prior to the interview.

It is in the United Kingdom (52%) and France (46%) that we find the highest rates of 'strong readers', and in Portugal (15%), Spain (21%) and Greece (22%) the lowest.

Graph 3: Strong readers: Persons who read 8 books and more, during the year (*)



(*) as a % of those who declared that they had read books for reasons other than work or study, over the last 12 months.

Reading newspapers and magazines

Nearly half of Europeans (46%) read newspapers every day (5 to 7 days a week). Again, this average hides significant differences that exist among Member States: 78% of Swedes and Finns, 32% of French and only 20% of Greeks read newspapers every day. It is also interesting to note that in some countries the percentage of population who declared that they *never read newspapers* is not negligible (Table 3).

Similar differences are observed with respect to how frequently Europeans read magazines. It is in Finland (61%) and Luxembourg (52%) where most of the adult population (15 years and over) read magazines at least once a week (Table 4).

Table 3: Reading newspapers (% of population 15 years and over)

	5 to 7 days a week	3 to 4 days a week	1 to 2 days a week	Less often	Never
Belgium	31	12	14	17	23
Denmark	56	11	18	10	5
Germany	65	14	9	6	6
Greece	20	11	19	19	30
Spain	25	14	22	16	23
France	32	14	21	16	16
Ireland	53	20	17	7	3
Italy	33	17	17	18	15
Luxembourg	63	10	11	9	7
Netherlands	56	13	12	10	10
Austria	61	18	13	6	2
Portugal	25	16	15	18	25
Finland	78	11	6	3	(.)
Sweden	78	10	7	5	(.)
United Kingdom	56	12	17	6	9
EU - 15	46	14	15	12	13

Table 4: Reading magazines (% of population 15 years and over)

	Once a week or more	1 to 3 times a month	Less often	Never
Belgium	34	25	22	16
Denmark	47	22	15	12
Germany	46	28	16	9
Greece	18	15	21	46
Spain	18	25	28	29
France	39	29	15	17
Ireland	25	19	27	29
Italy	32	27	25	17
Luxembourg	52	21	13	14
Netherlands	44	21	17	17
Austria	30	28	29	12
Portugal	25	17	21	37
Finland	61	23	12	3
Sweden	35	35	20	9
United Kingdom	30	30	16	24
EU - 15	35	27	19	18

Some additional observations (not shown in the tables)

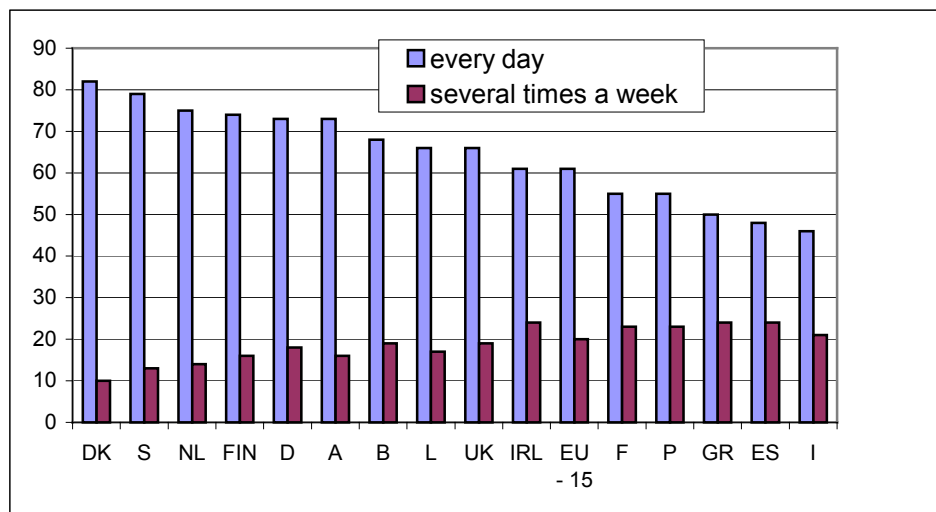
The rate of frequent readers (5 to 7 days a week) of newspapers is higher among men (53%) than women (39%); this rate increase with age: 25% of the 15-24, 40% of the 25 to 39, 53% of the 40 to 54 and 56% of the 55 years old and over read newspapers every day.

Weekly, or even more frequent, reading of magazines is more popular among women (41%) than men (28%).

Europeans and music

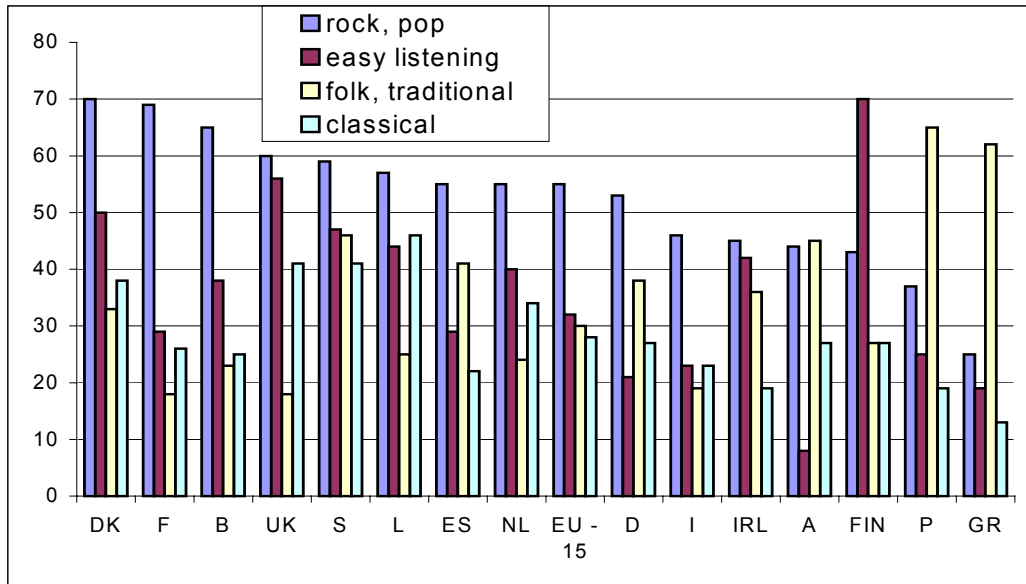
Music is part of the daily life of Europeans. 82% of Danes, 80% of Swedes, 78% of former East Germans and 75% of Dutch listen to music every day. They are using traditional ways of listening to music, i.e. radio and television (89%) and tapes / records / CDs / DVDs that are not connected to a PC (62%). It is worth to note that, in some countries, listening to music via CDs and DVDs on a PC is gaining importance: more than 15% in Luxembourg, Germany, UK and more than 20% in Denmark, Netherlands and Sweden.

Graph 4: How frequently do Europeans listen to music?



There are four kinds of music in the preferences of Europeans: 'Rock and pop' music is listened by 55% of Europeans, 'easy listening' by 32%, 'folk, traditional' music by 30% and 'classical' music by 28%. Graph 5, shows some interesting country comparisons with respect to the music preferences of Europeans.

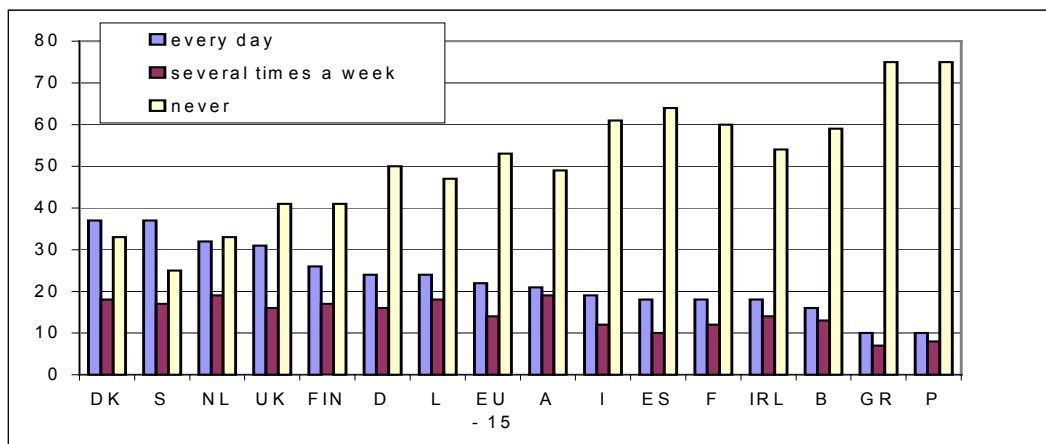
Graph 5: What kind of music do Europeans listen to?



Computer and internet usage

It seems that PCs and Internet have not yet completely invaded the working and private life of Europeans. More than half of Europeans (53%) declared that they never use a computer or PC; the highest rates of *non-users* are observed in Greece (75%) and Portugal (75%). On the other hand, in some northern European countries the picture is quite different. More than 50% of the population in Denmark, Sweden and Netherlands use a PC either every day or several times a week.

Graph 6: Frequency of PC usage (% of population 15 years old and over)



It should be underlined that the 1st question about PC / computer usage attempted to capture all possible situations, i.e. whether at work or at home or elsewhere. The wording of the question in English was: *'Do you use a computer or PC'?*....And the possible answers were: every day / several times a week / once a week / 1 – 3 times a month / less often / never / do not know.

The data allow some further analysis of the profiles of users and non-users according to age, gender, educational attainment, work status, etc. It is not surprising that PC users are more likely to be men (52%) than women (41%) and 15 to 24 years old (76%) than 40 to 54 (52%) or 55 years old and over (15%); similarly, a PC user is more likely to be a student (90%) or university graduate (83%) than someone who has--at the very best--completed a level corresponding to lower secondary education (22%).

The three most popular uses of computers or PCs in Europe are *'at home for leisure'* (67% of PC users), *'outside home for work or study'* (60% of PC users) and *'at home for work or study'* (54% of users).

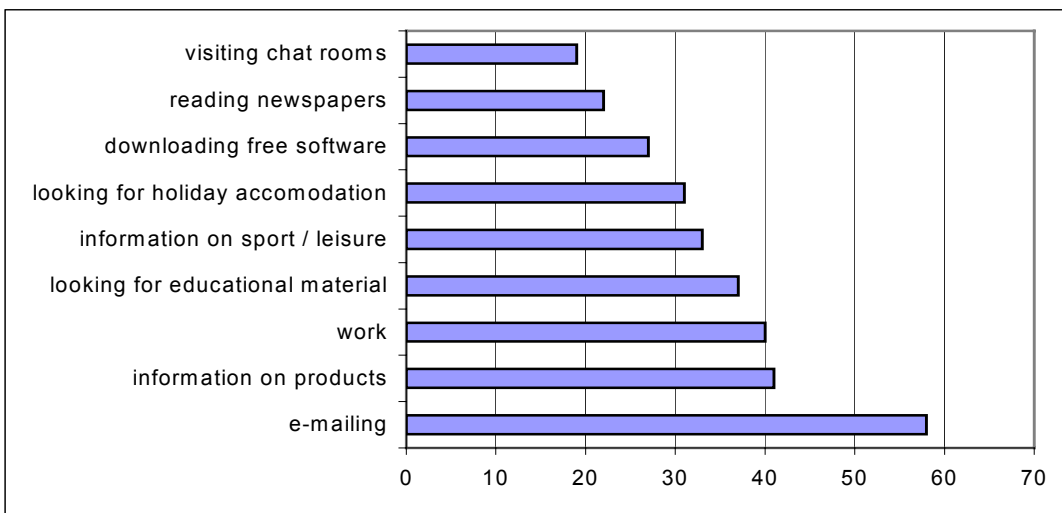
Table 5 and Graph 7 present some basic aspects of the Internet usage in Europe. Surfing the Internet is more frequent in Sweden (66%), Denmark (59%), Netherlands (54%) and Finland (51%) than in Italy (28%), Spain (26%), Greece (15%) and Portugal (15%). Internet is used for several different purposes. The Eurobarometer questionnaire listed 28 possibilities and graph 7 presents the 9 most frequent uses of Internet. Behind the European averages that are plotted in the graph, it is very interesting to look at the *champions* in every category.

- E-mailing: Denmark (77%) and Sweden (76%)
- Searching information on a product: Netherlands (50%), Sweden (48%), Germany and Austria (47%)
- For work: Germany (48%) and Austria (47%)
- Searching for educational material: Portugal (49%), Austria and UK (47%)
- Searching information on sport / leisure: Finland (45%), Luxembourg (43%)
- Looking for holiday accommodation: Sweden (44%), Luxembourg (41%) and UK (40%)
- Downloading free software: Netherlands (36%), Austria (36%) and Germany (32%)
- Reading newspapers: Sweden (42%) and Finland (35%)
- Visiting chat rooms: Spain (43%) and Austria (27%)

Table 5: Internet usage (% of population 15 years old and over)

	Every day	Several times a week	Once a week	1 to 3 times a month	Less often	Never
Belgium	6	11	3	2	3	72
Denmark	17	19	11	8	4	39
Germany	6	16	6	4	3	64
Greece	3	5	3	3	2	85
Spain	5	10	3	2	4	74
France	8	9	3	3	3	73
Ireland	7	10	9	4	6	62
Italy	7	13	3	3	2	72
Luxembourg	11	16	6	5	5	57
Netherlands	17	18	10	3	6	46
Austria	8	15	5	3	6	63
Portugal	2	6	2	2	2	85
Finland	11	20	8	6	6	47
Sweden	25	23	8	6	5	32
United Kingdom	15	16	7	6	5	51
EU - 15	9	13	5	4	3	65

Graph 7: What do Europeans use the Internet for?
(as a % of the population using the Internet)

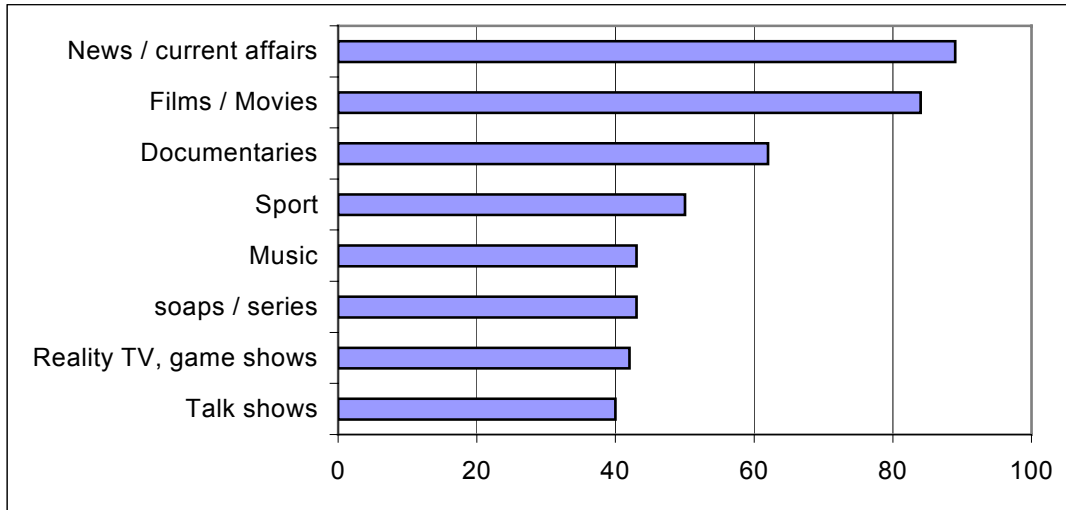


Radio and Television

Almost all Europeans (98%) watch television. There is quite a lot of convergence in the ranking of their most watched TV programmes. *News* and *Movies* are the top two preferences almost in all countries. Graph 8 presents the first 8 TV programmes that

Europeans watch. Once more, it is interesting to mention some *national* characteristics, which are not obvious in the graph.

Graph 8: What do Europeans watch on television?
(as a % of the population watching television)



- News and current affairs: Denmark (98%)
- Films / Movies: France (90%), Italy (90%), Germany (89%)
- Documentaries: Denmark (80%)
- Sport: Sweden (63%) and Finland (63%)
- Music: Former East Germany (63%)
- Soaps / Series: Belgium (70%), Ireland (64%), United Kingdom (64%)
- Reality TV / Game shows: Finland (66%)
- Talk shows: Finland (53%), Luxembourg (47%)

Gender, age and educational attainment also play a role in the individual preferences of Europeans with respect to what they actually watch on television. For example, *music programmes* are more popular among young persons (15 to 25 yrs old) (68%) than older people (40 years old and over) (36%). University graduates are more likely to watch *documentaries* (74%) than persons who have attained lower secondary education (55%). *Soaps / series* are much more popular among women (58%) than men (27%) while the opposite is observed with respect to watching of *sport events*: 76 % for men and 26 % for women.

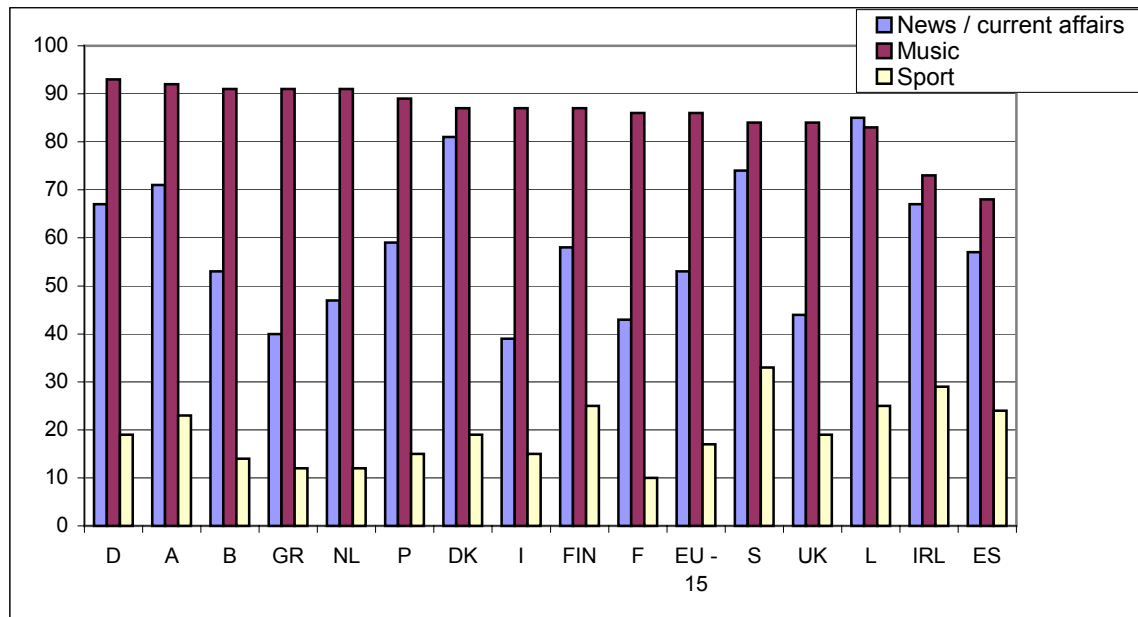
Nearly 60% of Europeans listen to the radio every day. The highest percentages of frequent radio-listeners are found in Ireland (77%), Luxembourg (76%) and Sweden (76%). The top three preferred radio-programmes in Europe are *music* (86%), *news / current affairs* (53%) and *sport* (17%). Graph 9 presents the percentages of listeners of these three programmes in the 15 Member States of the European Union.

There are very similar national patterns among those who listen to the radio and those who watch television:

- Music: Former East Germany (95%), Austria (91%)
- News / current affairs: Denmark (81%)
- Sport: Sweden (33%)

Differences in gender / age and educational level are also reflected in the behaviour of radio-listeners. A typical person listening to the news on the radio is most likely *male, university graduate and 55 years old and over* while someone who listens to a music programme is quite probably *female under 25 years old*.

Graph 9: What do Europeans prefer listening to on the radio?
(as a % of the population listening to the radio)



Cultural activities⁴

Respondents have been asked to recall the number of times, in the last 12 months, they had participated in various cultural activities by positioning themselves on a frequency scale. There was a separate (but identical) question for each of the 10 cultural activities that had been included in the questionnaire. The wording of the question(s) was the following:

Here is a list of cultural activities. How many times in the last 12 months did you.....?

The frequency scale was as follows: '1' = Never, '2' = one to three times, '3' = four to six times, '4' = seven to twelve times and '5' = more than twelve times.

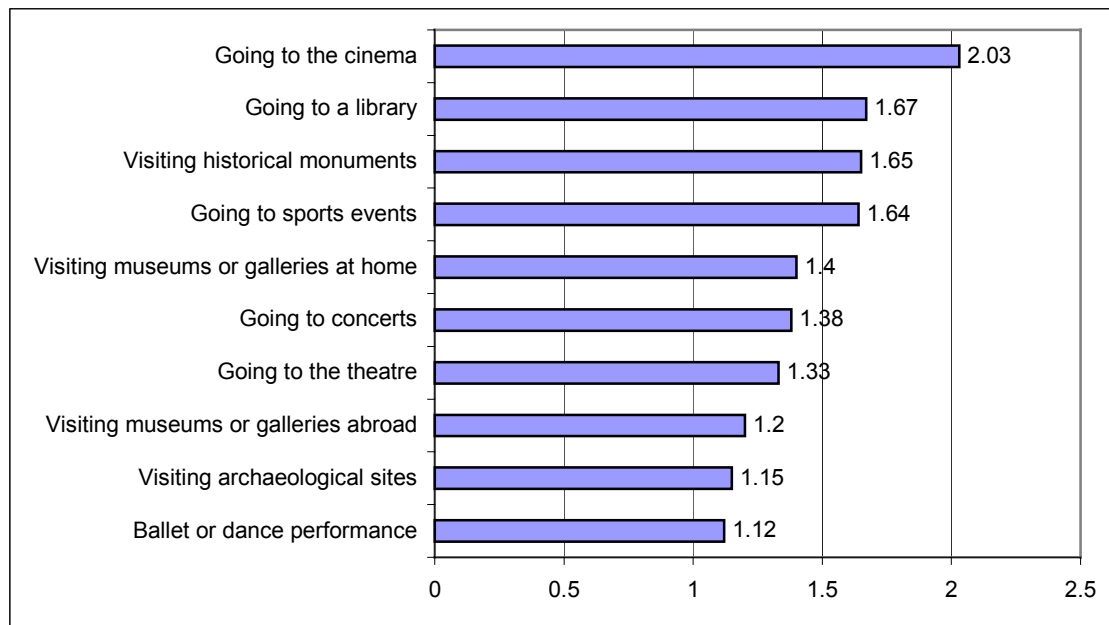
⁴ The 10 cultural activities were listed as follows: a) go to see a ballet or dance performance, b) go to the cinema, c) go to the theatre, d) go to sports events, e) go to concerts, f) go to a library, g) visit historical monuments (palaces, castles, churches, ...), h) visit museums or galleries in your country, i) visit museums or galleries abroad, j) visit archaeological sites.

Analyses of results of this particular question have attracted special attention (and continue to do so); reactions from the Media have been very similar to those that followed the publication of results with respect to the *reading habits* of Europeans. International comparisons have provoked strong national debates. Quite often, such debates have gathered additional information and analyses in order to answer questions of the kind: *Why are we so low? How can we explain that we are so different from our neighbours? I cannot believe these numbers! Can we look at some of the trends? etc...*

Going to the cinema is the most popular cultural activity of Europeans, while *attending a ballet or dance performance* is the least preferred activity (Graph 10). The Spaniards, Irish and British were those who had been more frequently to the cinema--during the last 12 months--than any other European citizen. On the other hand, the highest percentages of the population who *go to a library* were observed in the three Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark) the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

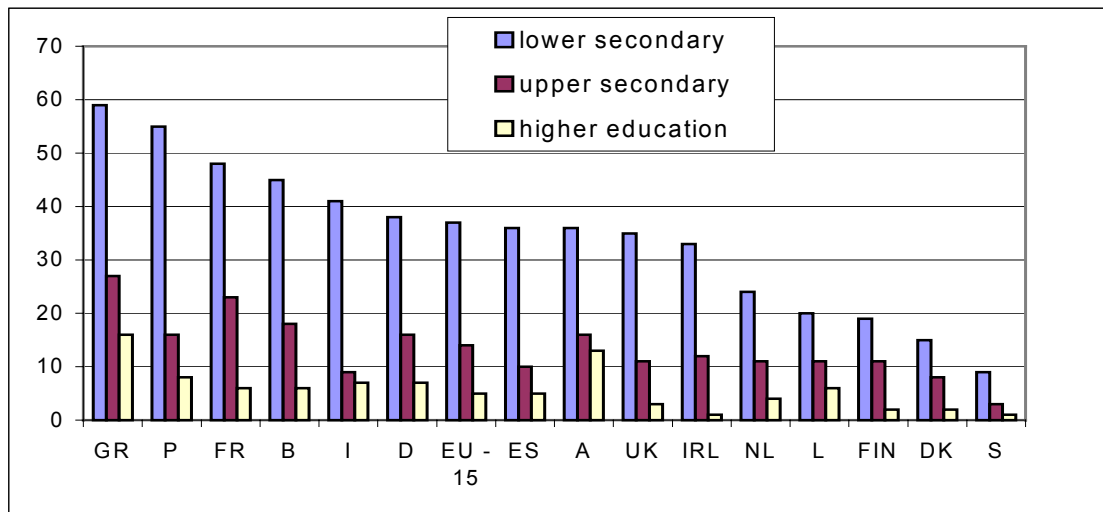
We have seen in previous sections that cultural behaviours are largely explained by differences in educational attainment levels. We can as well observe here that *participation* or *non participation* in the various cultural activities that were included in the questionnaire is strongly differentiated according to educational level. Graph 11 illustrates this situation for the part of the population who declared that they '*never participated in any of the 10 listed activities*' during the last 12 months.

Graph 10: Most frequent cultural activities of Europeans
e.g. On average, Europeans go to the cinema 1 to 3 times per year



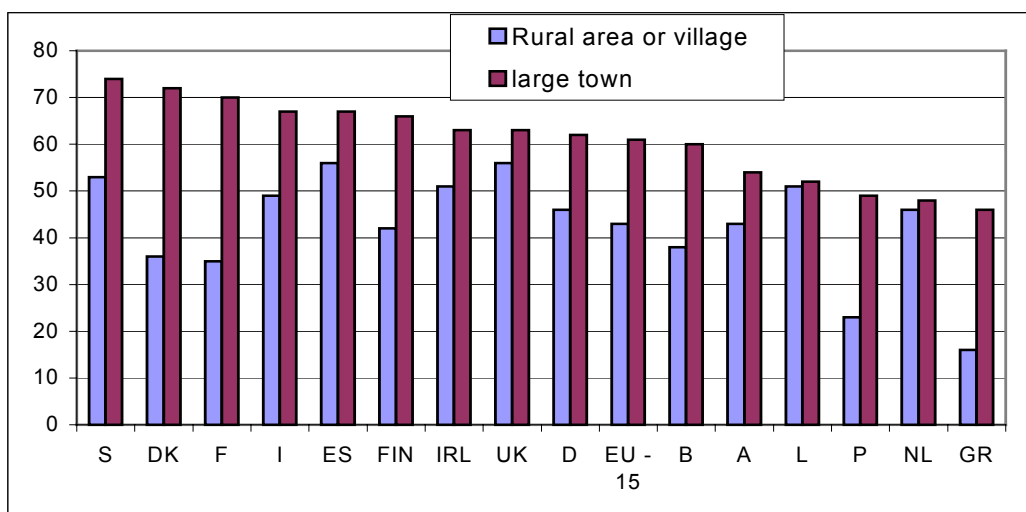
(a value of '1' is equivalent to 'never' and a value of '2' is equivalent to 'one to three times')

Graph 11: Non-participants by level of educational attainment
(persons who--during the last 12 months--had not participated in any cultural activity)



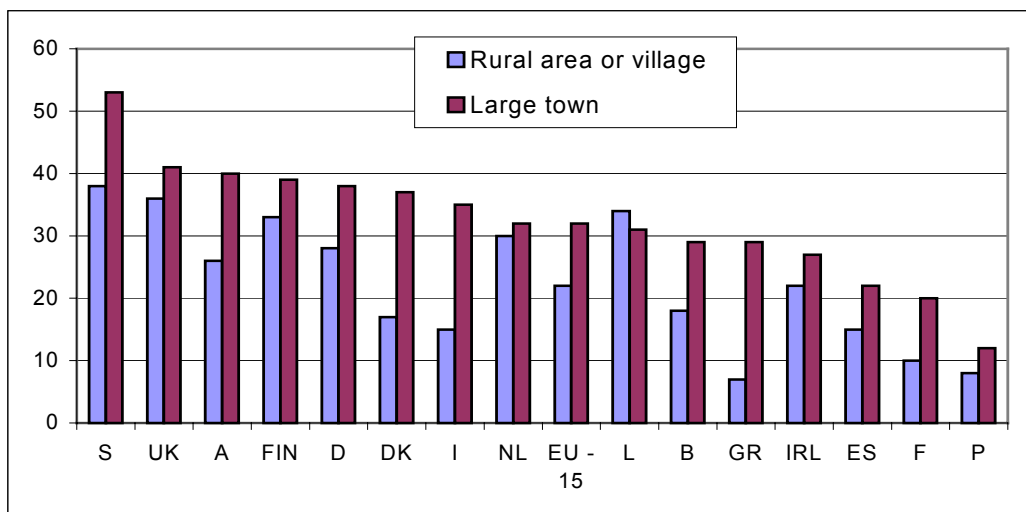
Participation in cultural activities is also a matter of *opportunities offered* to the population, i.e. adequate supply of cultural activities in terms of numbers and variety. In some countries cultural activities are highly concentrated in large towns. The comparison of participation rates for *going to the cinema* and *going to the theatre*, by degree of urbanisation is quite revealing.

Graph 12: Going to the cinema in rural areas vs large towns
(% of population who have gone to the cinema at least once during last 12 months)



Graph 13: Going to the theatre in rural areas vs large towns

(% of population who have gone to the theatre at least once during last 12 months)



On average, it is much more likely to go to the cinema or theatre for persons living in large towns than those living in rural areas or villages. Differences in participation rates for *going to the cinema*, can be as large as 1:3 (Greece) or 1:2 (Portugal, Denmark and France). Similarly, the greatest difference for the activity '*going to the theatre*' is observed in Greece: it is 4 times more likely to go to the theatre in large towns than in rural areas or villages.

It is interesting to note that *rural vs large town* differences with respect to *going to concerts* are not as big as for cinema or theatre. One possible explanation is that several concerts can be 'mobile' and 'travel' in the various regions of a country.

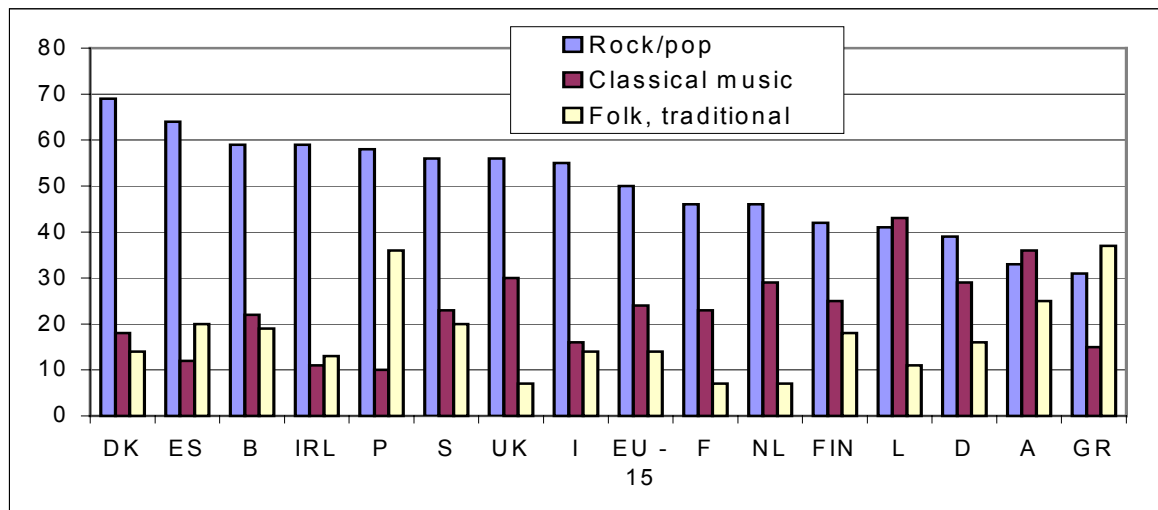
30% of Europeans declared having attended some concert(s) during the year. Among those persons, 50% have attended a rock/pop music concert. This rate reaches 69% in Denmark and 64% in Spain. Second most preferred kind of concerts are classical music concerts (24%), which are most popular in Luxembourg (43%) and Austria (36%).

On the other hand, folk and traditional music concerts come third in the preferences of Europeans (14%), and they are very much attended in Greece (37%) and Portugal (36%).

Graph 14 presents the distribution of the three 'most preferred kinds of concerts' within the European Union.

Graph 14: Europeans' most preferred concerts

(as a % of the population who attended concerts during the last 12 months)



Practice of artistic activities

There is a wide range of activities that can be classified as *artistic activities*. The survey has included a limited number of such activities. The interviewees were asked to say whether they had practised during the last 12 months--either on their own, or as members of a group or class--one or more of the following seven activities:

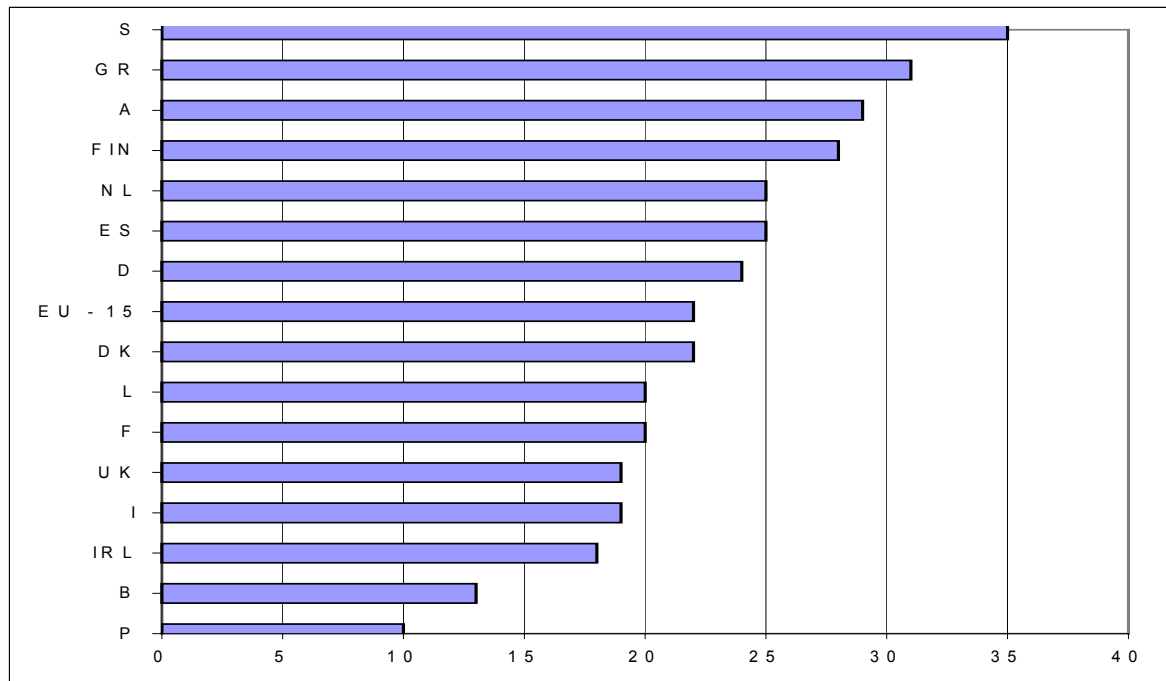
- Played a musical instrument
- Sung
- Acted
- Danced
- Written something
- Done some photography, made a film
- Done any other artistic activity (sculpture, painting, drawing, etc)

The results show that one in two Europeans have practised one or more of the above activities. *Photography, dancing and singing* seem to be the most practised activities. The data also indicate that there are very large differences among the various Member States. On the one hand, we see some *hyper active* countries like Sweden, Netherlands and Finland where 78%, 71% and 63%, respectively, of the population has practised some artistic activities and, on the other hand, the corresponding (*artistic*) rates in Portugal, Belgium and Ireland are as low as 21%, 32% and 34% respectively.

Graph 15 presents country by country comparisons with respect to the practice of *dancing* and Graph 16 illustrates differences in participation rates in artistic activities according to the two extreme educational attainment levels, i.e. higher education and lower secondary education.

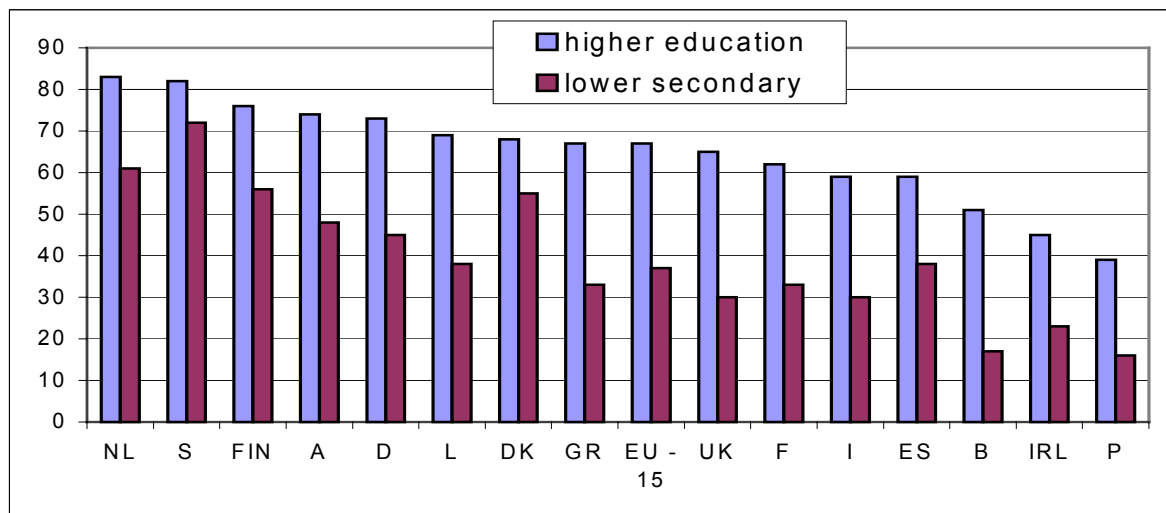
Graph 15: Europeans and dancing

(% of population 15 years old and over who have danced during the last 12 months)



Graph 16: Practice of artistic activities by educational level

(% of population 15 years old and over)



Discussion

It is perhaps the first time that internationally comparable data on the subject of 'participation in cultural activities' are presented for the 15 Member States of the European Union. They have filled an important gap and at the same time they have raised several debates in most Member States. The national discussions have mostly tried to explain the *reasons for* the

observed differences in cultural participation rather than to question the precision of the estimates. In some cases, it was necessary to bring into the discussion other relevant national sources of data that would have otherwise been (almost) unknown even to national policy makers. In this respect, international comparisons have helped to raise awareness on the existence of national data sources (e.g. surveys on reading, leisure, etc). The main objective of the Eurobarometer survey was to provide cultural policy stakeholders in the EU with comparable basic figures on cultural participation that could be obtained and published quickly and at reasonable cost. We believe that the main objective has been largely achieved. First detailed results were available within two months following the end of the fieldwork. The total cost of the operation, including fieldwork in the 15 Member States, translations of the survey questionnaire in all national languages, data editing, analysis, reporting and publication of the '*Highlights*' in 10.500 copies (in English, French and German) was about 600.000 Euro.

The Eurobarometer is an opinion survey instrument that has been used by the European Commission for many years. Its sample design and weighting procedures respect the standard minimum requirements we find in most sample surveys. Given the fact that Eurobarometers are not administered by Eurostat, we could not have substantial influence with respect to the desired statistical properties of the survey. Nevertheless, some important changes have been introduced. Firstly, the design and content of the questionnaire has been undertaken by statisticians working in the field of cultural participation. Several among them are responsible in their country for the running of surveys on leisure and cultural activities. Secondly, the results of the Eurobarometer have been post re-weighted according to educational attainment levels (by age, gender and region) that were obtained from the latest Labour Force Surveys.

In spite of these improvements, there is, however, some evidence suggesting that Eurobarometer results are, systematically, over-estimated. It is our intention and commitment to critically examine the reliability of the results obtained from this instrument. A detailed project in this respect is about to be launched.

In planning future improvements of such instruments, we should also take into account two additional issues, which have recently been underlined by experts of the domain. In order to improve international comparisons, there is a need to undertake research on how people in different countries interpret and understand words and concepts like 'concert', 'opera', 'museum', 'historical monument', etc. Moreover, we should question the adequacy / completeness of the list of activities and behaviours that have up to now been included in cultural and leisure surveys. Appropriate consideration should be given to a wider range of activities--less formal--which are linked to the concept of 'social capital'⁵.

⁵ See for example in the 'Leisure Survey 2002', Statistics Finland, where new questions have been added to address the issues of *social participation, social relationships, networks, trust and attitudes*.

References

All the results which are presented in this paper have been obtained from the analysis of the micro-data sets of the Eurobarometer No 56.0, which was carried out in the 15 Member States of the European Union, from 22/08/2001 till 27/09/2001

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Information about cultural actions at EU level and the related legislative acts can be found at the following website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/>