

2 ENCOURAGING LIFELONG LANGUAGE LEARNING

The second chapter reviews the opinions of Europeans on issues related to multilingualism. Their assessment of the **usefulness of knowing languages**, their **motives for studying languages**, their **views on children learning languages** and their **preferred ways to learn** are all examined.

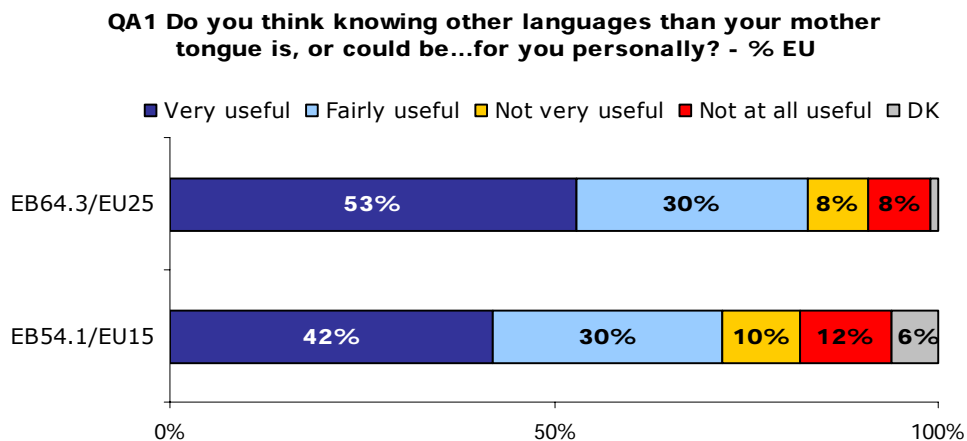
Lifelong language learning refers to the aim of spreading the benefits of multilingualism to everybody throughout their lives, starting in childhood. In order to reach this target, challenges such as **how to encourage people to learn and what are the best ways to teach and learn languages** have to be met.

2.1 Usefulness of Language Skills

2.1.1 Perceived Usefulness

- **A large majority considers that knowing foreign languages is useful-**

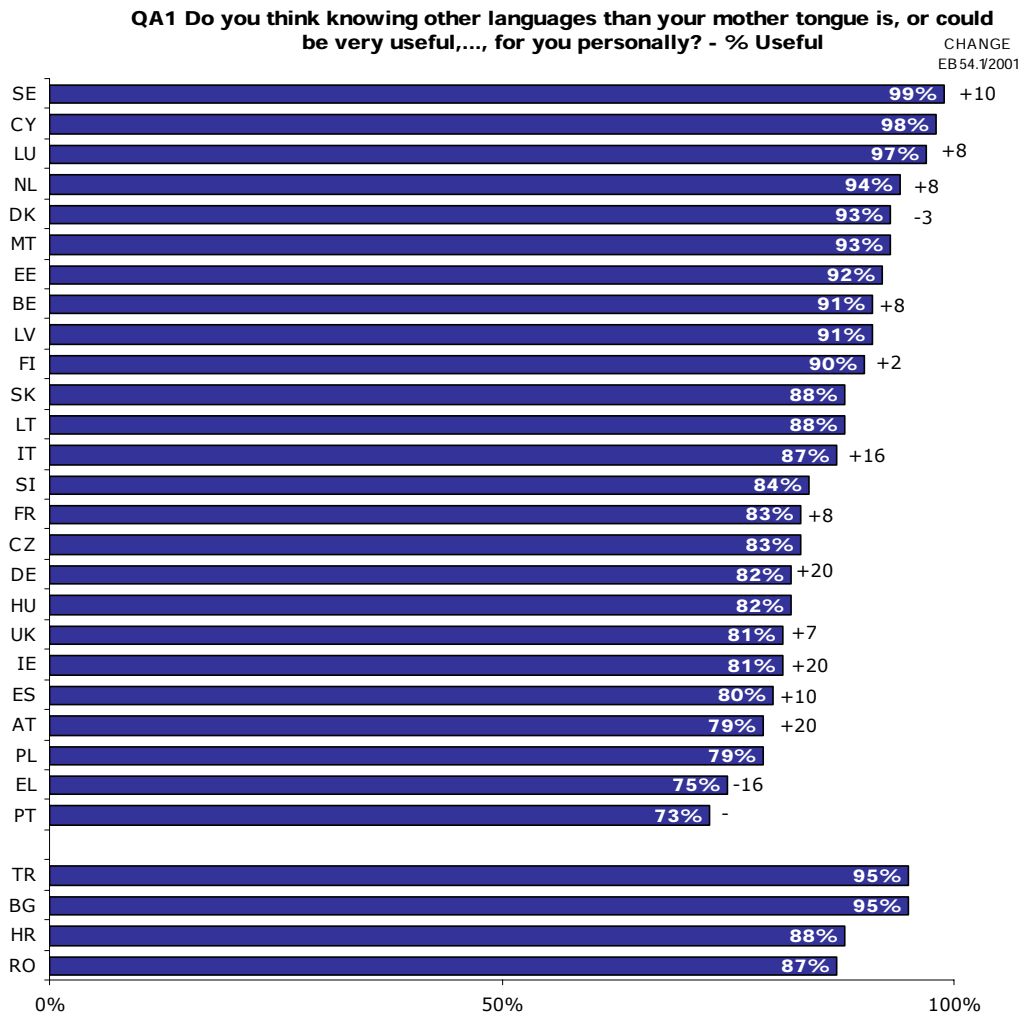
Source Questionnaire: QA1



The vast majority of Europeans (83%) believe that knowing foreign languages is or could be useful for them personally. In fact, over half (53%) of the respondents perceive language skills to be very useful.

Recognition of the benefits of competences in languages is increasing. In comparison with the results of 2001²⁸, an 11 points increase from 42% to 53% is observed in the share of those rating language skills as very useful. At the same time, the proportion of those who do not consider knowing foreign languages to be very useful or at all useful drops by 6 points over the course of four years (from 22% to 16%).

²⁸ EB54.1 *Europeans and Languages* in http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_147_summ_en.pdf



In every country polled, a distinct majority acknowledge the advantages of foreign language skills, with scores ranging from 73% in Portugal to 99% in Sweden.

Practically everyone in Sweden (99%), Cyprus (98%) and Luxembourg (97%) recognise the benefits of knowing languages other than their mother tongue. Even in countries where fewer citizens speak several languages, about three quarters evaluate language skills as beneficial, this being the case in Portugal (73%) and Greece (75%).

Over the last four years, **a positive trend can be noted throughout the old Member States, with the exception of Greece and Denmark.** A sharp rise of 20 points is detected in Germany, Austria and Ireland, followed by a 16-point jump in Italy. No change occurs in Portugal.

Strong agreement on the benefits of multilingualism is also perceived in the candidate and acceding countries. 95% of Turks and Bulgarians consider that knowing foreign languages is useful and, 88% of Croatians and 87% Romanians are of this view.

QA1 Do you think knowing other languages than your mother tongue is, or could be very useful, fairly useful, not very useful or not at all useful for you personally?

	% Useful
EU25	83%
AGE	
15 – 24	94%
25 – 39	91%
40 – 54	86%
55 & +	69%
EDUCATION	
15	64%
16-19	84%
20+	94%
Still Studying	98%
Place of birth	
Surveyed country	83%
EU	90%
Europe outside EU	91%
Outside Europe	94%
Parents' birth	
2 born country	82%
1 country EU	87%
2EU	93%
At least 1 outside EU	92%
OCCUPATION	
Self-employed	89%
Managers	96%
Other white collars	92%
Manual workers	86%
House persons	76%
Unemployed	81%
Retired	66%
Students	98%
Language learner	
Very active	99%
Active	98%
Non-active	77%
Spoken languages	
None	70%
One language	91%
Two languages	97%
Three languages+	96%

Despite the strong consensus prevailing among respondents, some already detected patterns occur between the socio-demographic categories.

The younger the respondent and **the longer the education** he/she has, the more useful skills in languages other than their mother tongue are rated.

This is also the case for those with a **multicultural background**, especially if the respondent is born outside Europe or his/her parents are born in a different country than the country of residence.

Within the occupational group, **managers and students** stand out as benefiting from multilingualism, while fewer pensioners perceive multilingualism as personally advantageous.

Finally, it can be pointed out that **even those who are passive** with respect to language learning or who **do not speak any foreign languages** consider that learning languages other than their mother tongue could benefit them personally.

As a general conclusion, it would appear that **those who assess knowing languages other than their mother tongue as useful also tend to be active in language learning and master at least one language apart from their mother tongue.**

QA1 Pensez-vous que connaître des langues autres que votre langue maternelle est, ou pourrait être, très utile, assez utile, pas très utile ou pas du tout utile pour vous personnellement ?

QA1 Do you think knowing other languages than your mother tongue is, or could be, very useful, fairly useful, not very useful or not at all useful for you personally?

	TOTAL	Very useful	Fairly useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	DK	Useful	Not useful
UE25 EU25	24682	53%	30%	8%	8%	1%	83%	16%
BE	1000	68%	23%	6%	3%	-	91%	9%
CZ	1029	53%	30%	11%	6%	0%	83%	17%
DK	1031	73%	20%	4%	3%	0%	93%	7%
D-W	1007	55%	27%	9%	7%	1%	83%	17%
DE	1557	53%	29%	10%	8%	0%	82%	18%
D-E	550	44%	33%	10%	13%	-	77%	23%
EE	1000	66%	26%	3%	4%	1%	92%	7%
EL	1000	52%	23%	8%	18%	-	75%	25%
ES	1025	47%	33%	8%	10%	3%	80%	18%
FR	1012	53%	31%	6%	10%	-	83%	17%
IE	1000	47%	34%	6%	9%	3%	81%	15%
IT	1000	56%	31%	6%	6%	1%	87%	12%
CY	502	85%	13%	1%	0%	0%	98%	1%
LV	1000	57%	34%	6%	3%	0%	91%	8%
LT	1011	60%	28%	6%	6%	0%	88%	12%
LU	501	80%	17%	1%	1%	0%	97%	2%
HU	1015	56%	25%	10%	8%	1%	82%	17%
MT	500	76%	17%	4%	2%	0%	93%	7%
NL	1031	63%	30%	4%	2%	0%	94%	6%
AT	1002	44%	36%	11%	9%	1%	79%	20%
PL	1000	51%	27%	11%	10%	1%	79%	20%
PT	1000	32%	41%	9%	16%	2%	73%	25%
SI	1030	50%	34%	11%	5%	0%	84%	16%
SK	1044	58%	30%	7%	4%	1%	88%	11%
FI	1017	61%	29%	5%	5%	0%	90%	10%
SE	1054	85%	14%	1%	0%	0%	99%	1%
UK	1321	49%	33%	10%	8%	0%	81%	18%
BG	1004	77%	18%	1%	1%	3%	95%	2%
HR	1000	68%	20%	3%	8%	2%	88%	10%
RO	1002	62%	25%	4%	4%	5%	87%	9%
TR	1005	76%	19%	2%	2%	1%	95%	4%