

## Half of Europe's Citizens Know 2 Languages

Saturday, September 24, 2005

(09-24) 04:57 PDT BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) --

Half of European citizens speak a second language, according to a European Union survey released Friday.

The poll, conducted in June across Europe, found that tiny Luxembourg had the highest percentage of bilingual citizens, with 99 percent of those questioned saying they could master a conversation in a second language.

Hungary had the lowest number with 29 percent of its citizens able to speak another language. Britain was second last with 30 percent.

The survey also found that almost eight out of 10 students — ages 15-24 — can have a normal conversation in at least one foreign language.

In the United States, by contrast, 9 percent of Americans speak both their native language and another language fluently, according to a U.S. Senate resolution designating 2005 the "Year of Foreign Language Study."

In the European survey, English was identified by 34 percent of respondents as their second language, followed by German which was a second language for 12 percent, then French which was spoken as a second language by 11 percent, according to the survey.

Spanish and Russian are spoken as a second language by 5 percent of those surveyed. Russian has become more common due to its widespread use in the 10 mostly eastern European countries that joined the EU last year.

It is not, however, listed as one of the EU's 21 official languages, and so receives no funding from EU education programs.

The poll, which surveyed 29,328 people across the 25-nation EU, Turkey, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania, was released to coincide with European Day of Languages on Monday, which aims to promote the study of languages. The survey had a margin of 3.1 percentage points.