

The impact of Europeanisation on the Bulgarian Geography in Higher education

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Bulgaria and Europeanisation

- ▶ Transition from centralized government to democratization
- ▶ Re-discovering Europe and European values
- ▶ total change of the economy rules and legislative framework
- ▶ Integration into European dimensions- social, economic and cultural

What was the Bulgarian Higher education before 1990?

- ▶ in 1989 we had an archaic higher education model designed to serve a doctrinaire society with a centrally planned economy
- ▶ Limited access to higher education
- ▶ narrowly specialized course programmes

What happened?

- ▶ The reform of the sector began with the restoration of university autonomy through the 1990 Act on University Autonomy
- ▶ The real institutional autonomy that resulted, coupled with the growing demand for higher education and changed social and economic environment

The result is:

- ▶ Very fast growth of the academic sector- now in Bulgaria we have more than 50 universities- too much!!!!!!!!!!!!
- ▶ Programs are mainly affected by the demands of the labor market
- ▶ The quantity is not equal to quality!!!
- ▶ The tree level structure of the higher education was successively introduced
- ▶ The accreditation system was implemented

Geography and Europeanisation

- ▶ The whole curriculum of geography was changed- from “Sovietization” towards “Europeanisation”
- ▶ Geography in the Universities is experiencing “post-factum” the “enthusiasm” of transition- many new courses and programs (especially in the graduate level)

Some examples...

- ▶ “Geography of Western Europe” became “Geography of EU”
- ▶ Many courses were introduced- “Regional policy in EU”
- ▶ MSc program in European studies was introduced
- ▶ Soon geography program in English will be introduced

But more interesting- what is happening with the students

To be able to see this, a small survey was conducted:

▶ Period: end of May 2004

▶ Target groups:

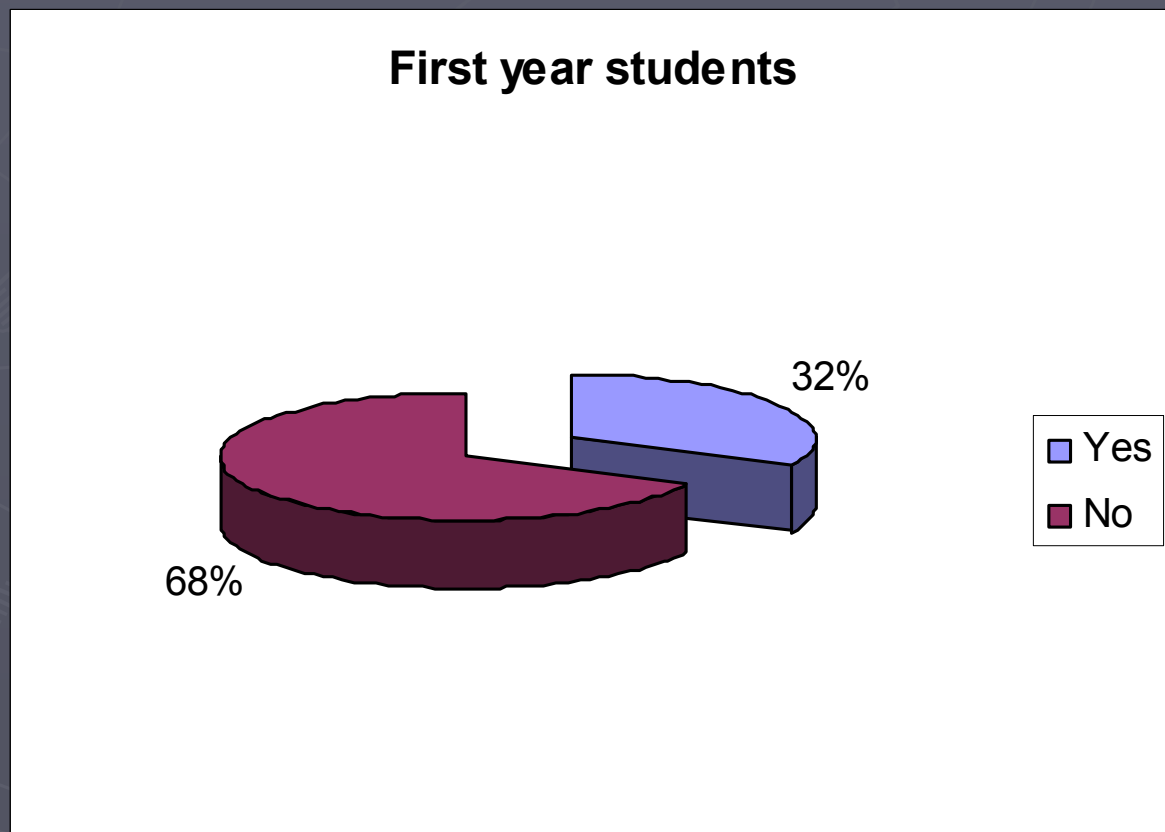
- 65 first year geography undergraduate students
- 53 last year geography undergraduate students

Questions:

- ▶ Do you speak any EU language?
- ▶ If yes, what language do you speak?
- ▶ Are you intending to study somewhere in Europe?
- ▶ What is your opinion about the new Geography curriculum at Sofia University?
- ▶ Do you think that with geography degree you can find job in Bulgaria different than as a teacher?

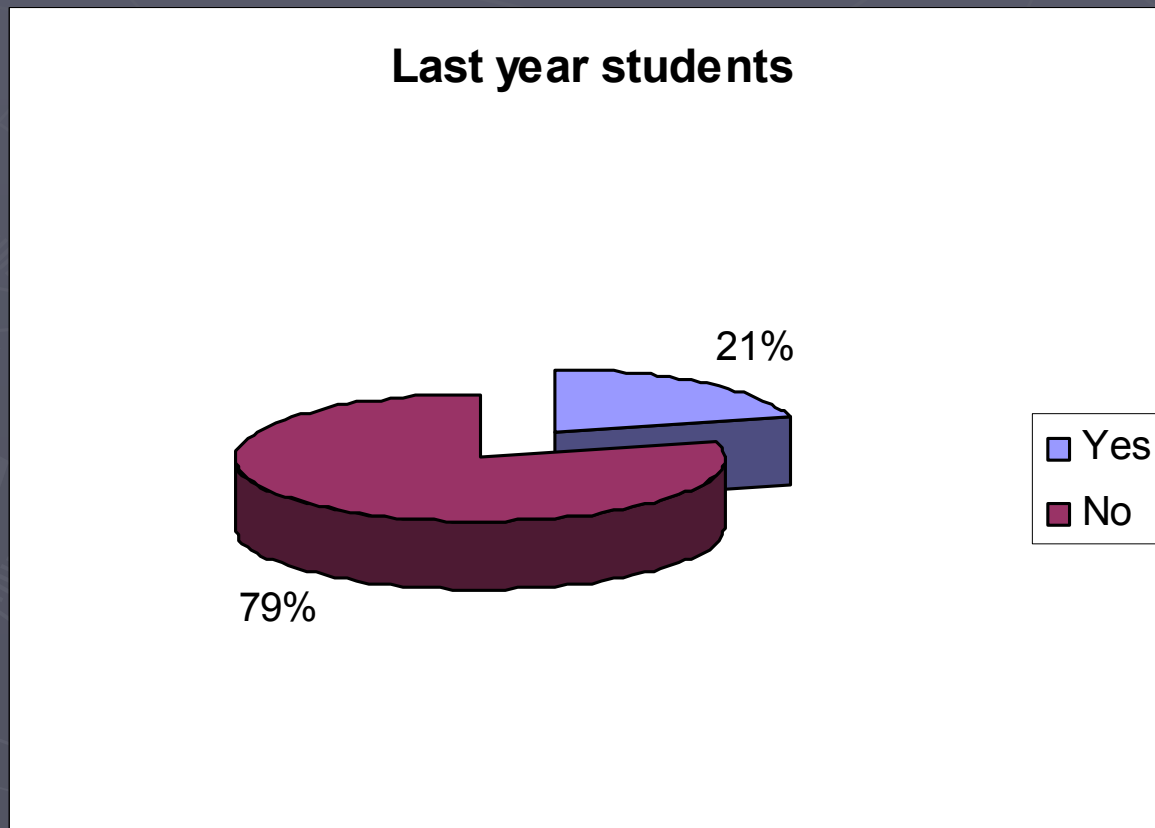
The answers:

- ▶ Do you speak any EU language?



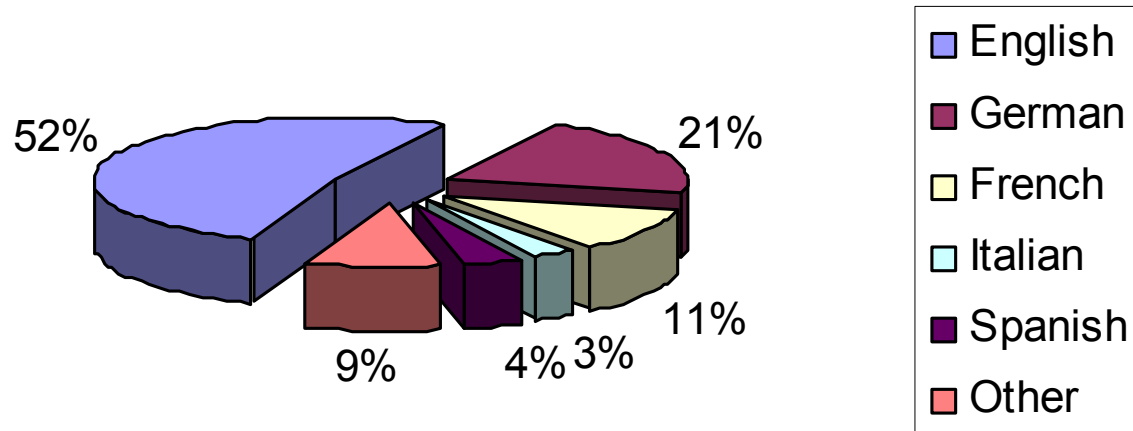
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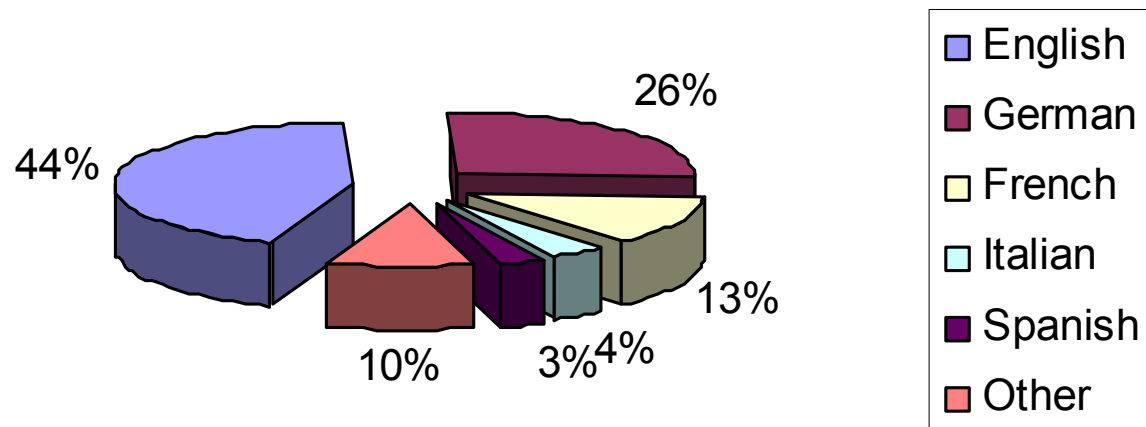
If yes, what language do you speak?

First year students



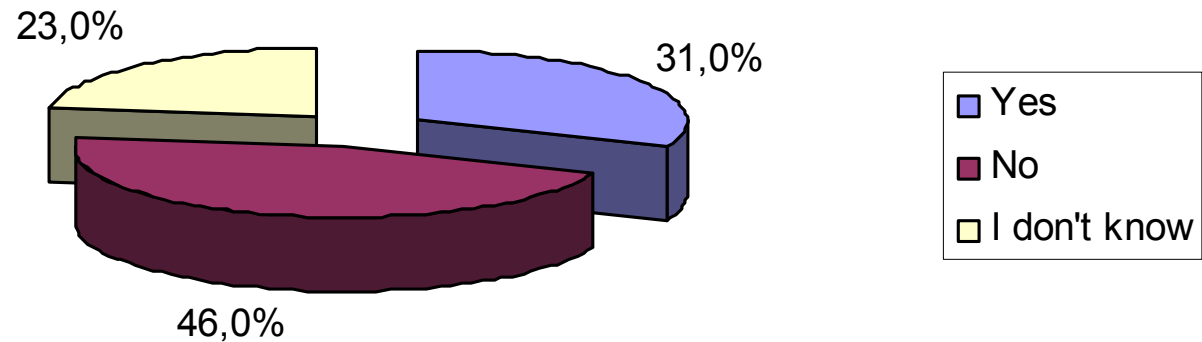
If yes, what language do you speak?

Last year students



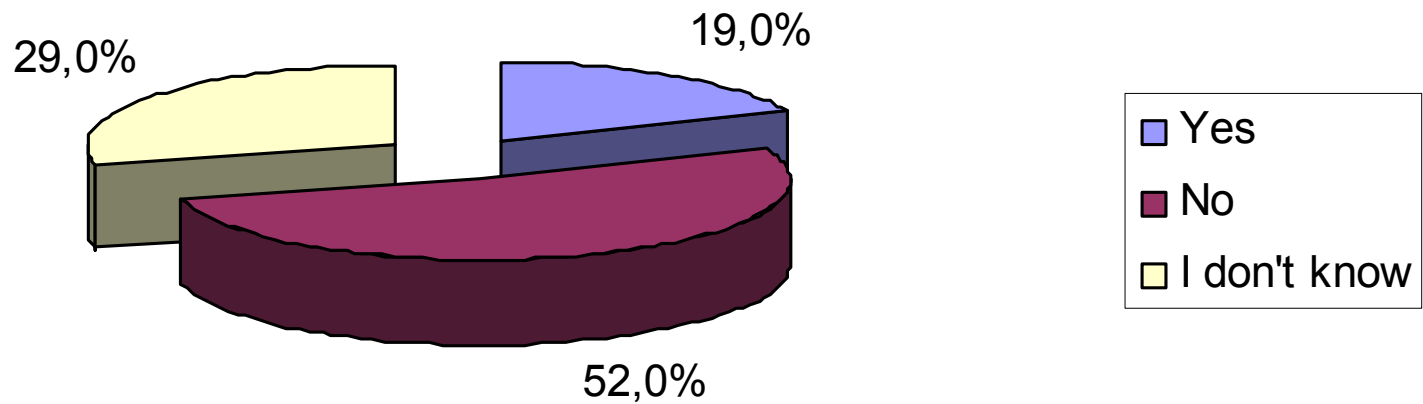
Are you intending to study somewhere in Europe?

First year graduates

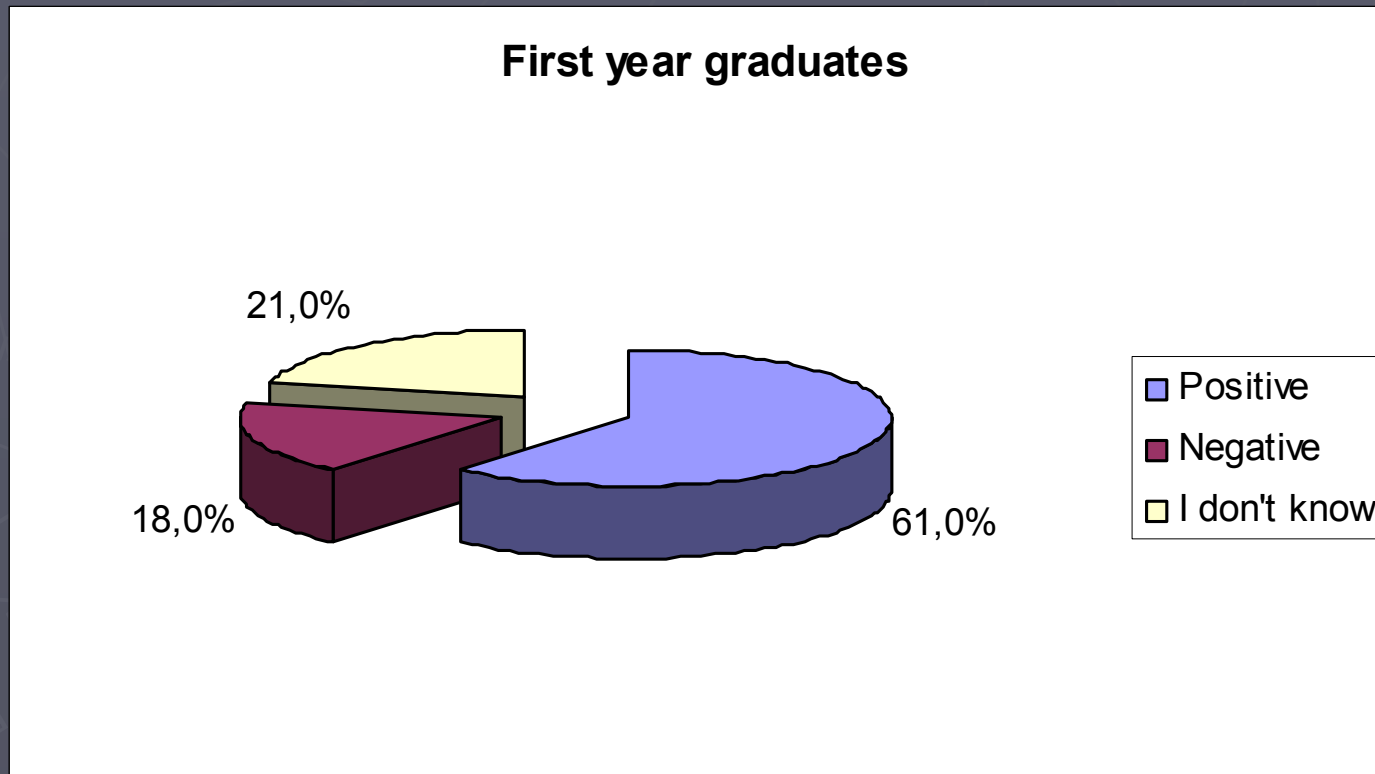


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Last year graduates

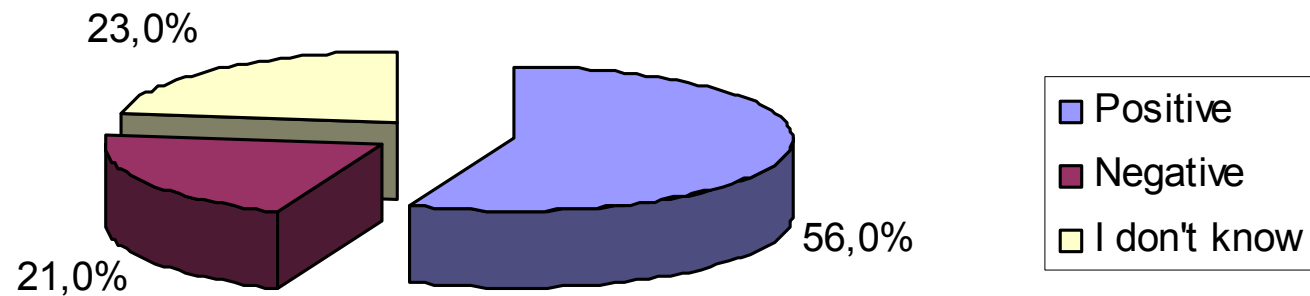


What is your opinion about the new Geography curriculum at Sofia University?



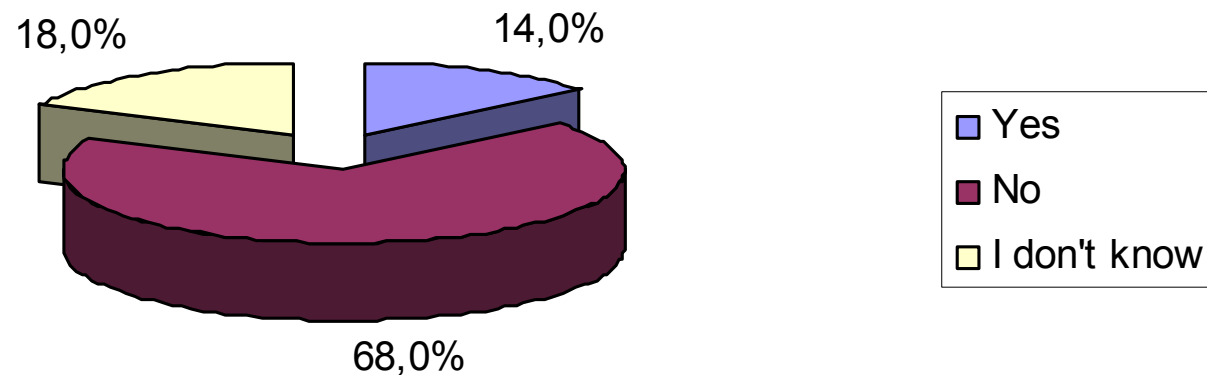
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Last year graduates



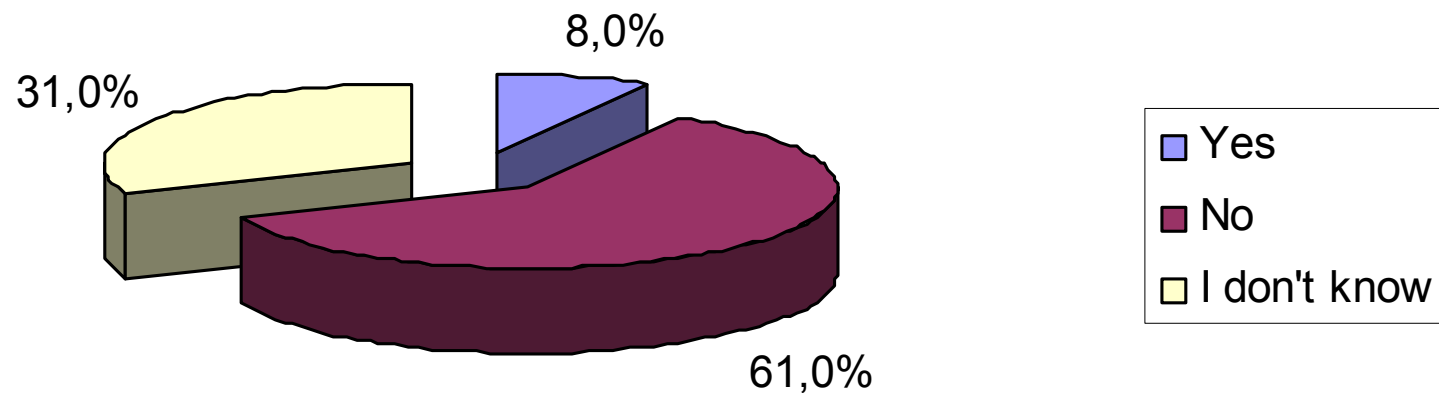
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First year graduates



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Last year graduates



General question: Do you think that the education will give you a successful career?

- ▶ two-thirds of the students believe that good education is crucial to achieving success in life
- ▶ However, 59 % of students also believe that education in itself is not a sufficient guarantee for a good career
- ▶ 17 % state the need for further training after graduation.
- ▶ 28 % state that if they have a chance, they will train in EU country

Conclusions:

- ▶ There is a clear trend of increasing the amount of students, speaking EU languages.
- ▶ The English language is the major foreign language, spoken by geography students
- ▶ The amount of students, who are tinking to continue their education in EU is significantly increasing
- ▶ The students are accepting the changes in geography programs as something positive, but they still not believe that this degree will give them a successful career

Future?

- ▶ To continue its successful social mission, Bulgarian higher education, including in the field of geography) must reform itself in such a way as to respond adequately to the changing conditions of its environment
- ▶ Bulgarian higher education must compete with other national education systems to preserve its attractiveness both to domestic and international students.

- ▶ To achieve this goal, higher education institutions must both prove that they provide quality education and guarantee to their partners from other European universities the “value” of the academic qualifications and titles they award